LABOUR LEFT BRIEFING

Job losses, poverty pay...

There is an alternative!

inside... ● US lies on Sudan bombing ● NEC elections ● Public sector pay ● Anti terror legislation ● Russia's crisis

Labour Left Briefing

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

LLB is an independent voice and forum for socialist ideas in the Labour Party and trade unions. It is managed by an editorial board elected at its AGM. Both EBs and the AGM are open to all supporters. We are happy to offer a right of reply to all members of the labour movement and we welcome criticisms and contributions. All the articles in *LLB* reflect solely the opinions of the authors, writing in a personal capacity, unless otherwise stated.

- **Editorial Board:** Graham Bash, Tony Dale, Liz Davies, Mark Donoghue, Jenny Fisher, Jon Green, Simon Hewitt, Simon Kennedy, Des Kirkland, Liz Knight, John Leonida, Leonora Lloyd (Co-Chair), Sue Lukes, Dorothy Macedo (Co-Chair), Mike Marqusee (Political Correspondent), Fiona Monkman, Mike Phipps, David Pope, Jon Rogers, John Stewart, Alistair Ward (Editor).
- **Production Team:** Graham Bash, Gary Drostle, Louise Kawakami, Des Kirkland, Dave Lewney, Leonora Lloyd, Dorothy Macedo, Mike Marqusee, David Pope, Eddie Tucker, Alistair Ward. Web site editor: Chris Croome (chris@atomism.demon.co.uk).
- ***LLB advertising:*** £10 per column inch; £30 for 1/8 page; £55 for 1/4 page; £100 for 1/2 page; £175 for a page. 1/2 price for campaigns and strikers.
- ***LLB* email list:** Send an email to llb_list@atomism.demon.co.uk with "join list" as the subject and your email address in the body of the message.
- ***LLB* web site:** http://www.labournet.org.uk/llb "The best link page is maintained by *Labour Briefing* which lists virtually all the Labour sites currently available (but airbrushes out the Fabians and *Progress*)" — Paul Richards, LCC, in *Tribune*.
- The copy deadline for the November issue is Monday 12th October. If you wish to contribute please phone us first.

We reserve the right to edit all articles.

Briefing Club

Every month someone must win £15, £10 or £5. By joining the Briefing Club for as little as £1.00 a month, you will have a good chance of winning monthly prizes and 100% chance to ensure LLB can thrive. Send cheques (made out to *Labour Left Briefing*), or write for standing order or direct debit forms to: LLB, PO Box 2378, London E5 9QU. **Last month's winner:** Ron Huzzard (get well soon Ron).

AGENDA

Public sector pay, Jim Mortimer on job losses, Clinton, London Kurdish Centre attacked, new terror legislation 4-9

NEC elections, contributions from all Grassroots Alliance candidates, Labour Party Conference, *Progress*, the Alan Simpson column 10-15

Supernurses, Tameside strikers, the Geoff Martin column 16-17

Russia, South Africa, Ireland, Labour's ethics, MAI, US bomb lies, Brazil, the Michael Hindley column 18-25

New Labour economics, the welfare state. 28-29

Reviews, Fight Racism, Periscope, Correspondence, AOB

Front cover photo of Bank of England: Paul Mattsson.

"*LLB* is a marvellous magazine. If you don't subscribe to it I hope you will" — Tony Benn.

Annual subscription (10 issues): £14 ordinary, £20 supporting sub, £30 overseas.
Cheques payable to *Labour Left Briefing*.

Name .....

Address .....

..... Tel/Fax/Email .....

..... Donation ..... Total .....



I wish to pay by direct debit and receive three FREE copies ❑

I wish to take ..... copies on a trial basis to sell ❑

Return to *LLB*,
PO Box 2378,
London, E5 9QU

There is an alternative

AS JOB LOSSES sweep the country and income inequality widens by the day, Labour Party members have been disheartened to hear the Government's repeated cry, "There is no alternative". This assertion is as fraudulent today as it was when Thatcher uttered it. It is true that we live in a global market place and must address that reality. But it is also true that we can use government policies to shape, regulate and ultimately transform that marketplace. After all, it was government policies in the 80s, in this country and elsewhere, which unleashed the deregulated monster of speculative capitalism whose bottomless appetite for profit has shaken one economy after another in the last few months.

Blair and his coterie have sung many hymns to the glories of a globalised economy; it is not now acceptable for them simply to walk away from its most recent victims, with a shrug of the shoulders, saying there is nothing they can do about it.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Brothers in arms: Bill Morris, Eddie George and John Monks.

Recent job losses are in large part a direct consequence of Gordon Brown's irresponsible decision to hand over interest rates to the Bank of England, a decision whose negative ramifications – not least for the prospects of exercising democratic control over the economy – were spelled out in *LLB* and other left journals at the time.

If we have job losses and widening income inequality in a period of growth, what will happen when a real recession hits? New Labour's uncritical embrace of big business has left our Government and our Party vulnerable in the extreme. We simply do not have the policies or the mechanisms in place that can offer basic protection to working people and their families in the difficult times ahead.

These policies and mechanisms have been advocated repeatedly, in many forums, by a wide array of left and centre critics of the Government. Many of them were articulated at the TUC by John Edmonds, Bill Morris, Rodney Bickerstaffe and others. The question for the unions now is: what will they do about pressing the Government to listen to its own voters? When will they use their strength? When will they start giving support to those, like the Grassroots Alliance candidates, who are fighting their causes within the Labour Party?

New Labour and the fat cats

RUPERT MURDOCH'S proposed take-over of Manchester United is not only bad news for football. It's bad news for democracy. On conflict of interest grounds alone, the bid should be vetoed by the Government. Indeed, if the Government – in this case in the person of Peter Mandelson – approves the take-over, it will be seen by millions as a gross sell-out of the public interest to a private, extremely wealthy individual, who happens to have done some big favours for Tony Blair in the recent past.

LLB has warned again and again about the need to check the growth of Murdoch's empire. But the issues raised by the Man U take-over go beyond Murdoch himself. This Government has embraced and indeed celebrated the power of big business. It has exalted personal 'success' and huge concentrations of private wealth. It cannot protect the interests of the majority while it is engaged in placating and frequently promoting the demands of such a tiny minority.

While austerity and restraint are preached to public servants – teachers, nurses, social workers, librarians, road sweepers and others whose hard work ensures we live in a civilised society – the Government lauds and even creates 'fat cats', like Chris Woodhead. Teachers, like football fans, are not alone in feeling abused and ripped-off by a Government they helped elect.

Sticks and stones

IT IS ONE of the ironies of recent Labour Party history that many contributors to this journal now find themselves in closer agreement with Roy Hattersley than with Neil Kinnock.

As readers of the former Labour leader's diatribe in the *Guardian* will know, he regards *LLB* and those who support it as "Trotskyites" and "selfish parasites". Well, Neil, you know the old nursery rhyme about sticks and stones. We invite readers to peruse this issue of *LLB* and decide for themselves whether its contents merit this description. In our pages this month, they will find informed discussion on public sector pay, job losses (by Jim Mortimer, former General Secretary of the Labour Party), civil liberties, European Monetary Union, and other issues. What readers will not find is knee-jerk adulation of the Government, or excuses for the anti-social behaviour of big business.

Throughout the NEC campaign the "Members First" candidates and their spokespersons have harped on about the 70s and 80s. In contrast to the Blairites' obsession with the past, *LLB* and the Grassroots Alliance as a whole have insisted on addressing the issues facing the Labour Party in the present and future. These are the issues raised at the TUC and the issues cited by voters in exit polls when asked why they backed Labour at the last general election. Whatever the result in the NEC ballot, the socialist critique of New Labour will become increasingly pertinent and pressing. ❑

LLB page 3

Public sector pay: anger rises

Dave Statham, Brent East CLP, analyses how public sector pay has fallen behind the private sector and inflation. Will New Labour keep the lid on it?

THE BLAIR Government is continuing the Tory practice of squeezing public sector pay. Not content with phasing in pay awards, the changes to review bodies are likely to worsen the situation for public sector workers. In future, review bodies will be required to take affordability, ie. departmental spending limits, into account along with the Government's 2.5% inflation target and other targets on output and efficiency.

Despite government promises that review bodies' independence will not be undermined, many in the trade union movement are clearly unconvinced. Even the TUC General Council has concluded that the staging of review body awards is in danger of becoming a norm. The rejection of a 4% pay offer by BBC staff in the summer, and the likelihood of industrial action soon, should have served as a warning to the Government that public sector workers have had enough of pay restraint. Earnings in the private sector have risen by as much as 6.2% this year when public sector increases have struggled to top 3%. But this is not just a short-term trend. A significant pay gap has opened up between the private and public sectors over the last six years.

Lamont's 1.5% limit on public sector pay rises in 1992-3 was followed by a freeze on pay bills. Pay rises could be negotiated provided they were funded from cost savings, alongside other savings targets. Although a variety of deals were done in different parts of the public sector, the overall effect was to curb the level of pay settlements. Figures from the Labour Research Department show a gap between the overall settlement mid-point for the public and private sectors of 1.5% in 1993, 0.2% in 1994, 0.5% in 1995, 0.5% in 1996 and 0.3% in 1997. In 1998 settlements in the public sector ranged around 3% while the private sector level was 3.6%. The cumulative shortfall in the public sector, with this latest gap of 0.6%, adds up to 3.6%.

However, the actual gap in earnings, taking bonus payments, overtime, performance pay and so on into account, is more like 10%. Between January 1992 and April 1998 average earnings in the private sector rose by 31%, as measured by the Average Earnings Index. Over the same period, public sector earnings rose by only 20%, showing that as the economy picked up in the mid 1990s public sector workers were left behind.

As a result of these trends, average full-time earnings in the public sector are now lower than in the private sector while in 1992 they were slightly higher. Comparisons made on an occupational basis show that in only two out of eight major occupational groups did public sector workers earn more in 1997 than their private sector counterparts (see table). In 1992 the tally was four out of eight. The public sector has more professional workers, "personal and protective service" jobs (police, fire, health), and "associate professionals" (technicians), with fewer operatives and craft workers than the private sector.

Occupational earnings (£) in the public and private sectors per week

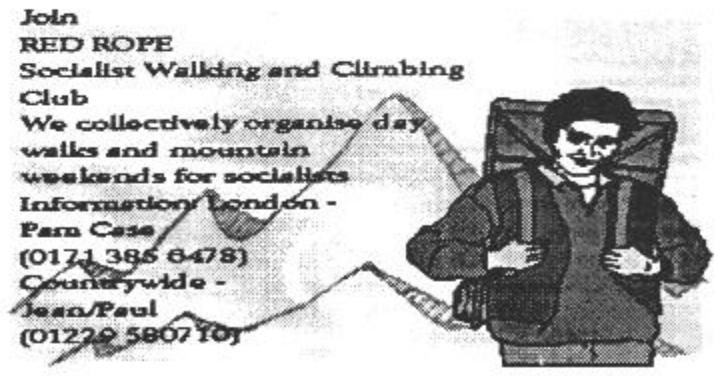
	public	private
managers and administrators	476.10	561.20
professional occupations	480.30	541.60
associate professional and technical	378.30	490.80
clerical and secretarial	249.10	263.10
craft and related	307.00	336.90
personal and protective services	334.80	210.60
plant and machine operatives	298.40	300.20
other occupations	275.30	238.00

Others in the public sector will be watching developments in the pay review bodies with interest, even if they are not directly involved. Pay levels for the police and fire services are determined by formulas, with the police having received an increase of 4% in September. But negotiations in civil service agencies, in local government, and in further education where a new national agreement is being drawn up, will all be influenced by the Government's handling of the pay review body groups.

Currently review bodies cover doctors, nurses, professions allied to medicine and related groups in the NHS, and their recommendations are taken as a guide for other health workers. There are also review bodies for school teachers in England and Wales, the armed forces, and senior staff in judicial, military, and civil service posts, along with parliamentary salaries. But this may be about to change.

An independent review committee is currently looking into pay problems in higher education, with a report due at the end of the year. The Association of University Teachers argues that there is a "two-tier public service", with staff not covered by pay review body arrangements falling further and further behind those who do have such arrangements. Its call for a pay review body for higher education has won employer support, but it remains to be seen whether the current review will lend its backing to this proposal.

An extension of the review body system will inevitably have an impact on pay across the public sector. But unless this is coupled with a willingness on the part of the Government to try to close the pay gap between the public and private sectors, discontent could turn to anger and the BBC staff could be the first of many.



LLB page 4

The losses in manufacturing – there is an alternative

Former General Secretary of the Labour Party, Jim Mortimer, argues that workers don't have to be thrown on the scrap heap.

THE EFFECT of high interest rates on manufacturing industry is there for all to see. Thousands of jobs are being lost. High interest rates not only add to the costs of industry; they are also directly responsible for the high exchange rate of the pound. Currency speculators invest in sterling because the rate of return is higher than they would receive from investments in other currencies.

A high exchange rate for sterling means that when British exporters' prices are translated into foreign currency, the price expressed is higher than it otherwise would be. This makes British manufactured goods uncompetitive, leading in turn to a fall in orders and unemployment in Britain.

But who is responsible for setting the rate of interest in Britain? It is a committee of bankers and economists set up by Gordon Brown on behalf of the Labour Government. Previously the job was done by the Treasury, in other words by the government.

Thus the transfer of the responsibility for interest rates to a committee of bankers and academic economists at the Bank of England is an abdication of responsibility. When Labour was elected, the British people had no advance notice that it was New Labour's intention to hand over the control of interest rates and hence the exchange rate to such an independent committee.

When the 1945 Labour Government nationalised the Bank of England it was precisely for the opposite reason now advanced by Gordon Brown for relinquishing control of interest rates. In 1945 Labour said it was essential that the public interest should prevail in the operations of the Bank. At that time many Labour MPs remembered the disastrous role of the independent Bank in exacerbating the conditions leading to the slump and the cuts in social welfare in the early 1930s.

Labour was right in 1945 and it is wrong now to hand over control to the independent committee. Even worse, the terms of reference of the independent committee point its attention to only one variable. That variable is the rate of inflation. The target is 2.5% per year. Such terms of reference should be unacceptable to all trade unionists and socialists. The fundamental purpose of economic activity, including both interest rates and the exchange rate, should be to promote human welfare. For working people, this means primarily a policy for full employment and rising living standards.

The independent committee now responsible for the rate of interest does not have a high level of employment as one of their objectives. To put it bluntly, their real purpose is to prepare Britain for monetary union by meeting the convergence criteria of the Maastricht Treaty. If this means more unemployment so be it! It is a disastrous policy.

Serious as this criticism is, there are wider grounds for concern. It is not just interest rates and the exchange rate that are causing a downturn in British manufacturing industry. There is also the depression that has overtaken parts of the capitalist world, above all Japan. In Russia, the crude adoption of the "free market" of capitalism has led to a halving of production, unpaid wages for millions of workers, the disintegration of the social services and an enormous crime rate.

Britain now needs public intervention in the economy to ensure that more and more productive capacity – and workers – are not thrown on the scrap heap. There should be capital projects for local authorities, regional development agencies and the public sector in general to take up the ever-growing slack.

Where should the money come from? From redistributive taxation. The most foolish of the commitments of New Labour was to maintain unchanged the rates of taxation on high incomes. Billions were handed to the rich in the years of Tory rule. Since then, they have grown even richer.

The need to arrest and reverse the decline of manufacturing industry is socially far more important than New Labour's commitment to low taxation on the rich.

MSF London Regional Council

Union rights now

Minimum wage: £6 per hour

Stop the witch-hunts

President: Sue Michie

Secretary: Hugh MacGrillen

Letters from America

Three US socialists assess the impact of Clinton's crisis on the cause of labour.

I DIDN'T VOTE for Bill Clinton. A majority of voters did and all opinion polls since the Lewinsky business broke in January indicate that he would win an election held now. Nevertheless, there is a good chance that Clinton will be forced to resign – by his own party.

The US left has responded in two ways. Many of those who, like me, have long argued that we need a new party on the left, have delighted in Clinton's troubles. His betrayal of what few principles he had left leaves him with few partisans on the left, and many hope that a weakened Democratic Party will open the road for a new beginning. Others on the left, the overwhelming majority, see the right-wing fanatics led by Ken Starr as the harbingers of an American fascism. This is an exaggeration, but there is a real problem in ignoring the threat that the fundamentalist right presents. It will not help our cause if Clinton is bought down by these people using these methods. Dismissing the threat altogether ignores the character of the threat.

The new fundamentalist right is hostile to US democracy. They do not trust the electoral majority and are deeply hostile to the unions, to those who still benefit from what's left of the New Deal welfare state, as well as to recent immigrants and African Americans – people who are not "real Americans". Any means is legitimate to defeat this threat to "traditional values": even wire-tapping the President and staging a constitutional crisis over an irrelevant private matter.

But if it is light-minded for the left to take comfort from Clinton's crisis and ignore the real danger from the right, it is equally foolish to see Clinton (or the Democratic Party) as a defense against the right. At the merest hint of opposition from the right, Clinton (and his party) cave in and appease it. The first break in Democratic Party ranks came from three Senators from the Democratic Leadership Conference – the organisation of "New Democrats" previously chaired by Clinton himself! All three have been at loggerheads with Clinton recently because he is weak on backing their plan to gamble Social Security funds on the stock market. They are not part of a right-wing conspiracy.

This is simply a crime of opportunity.

Like Clinton, the people who run the Democratic Party are prisoners of the right because, like Tony Blair, they refuse to allow themselves to be outflanked on the right. But they may find themselves in serious trouble with their key constituencies. The Congressional Black Caucus has so far refused to be stampeded into calling for Clinton's resignation. Most of the politically active women's groups (but not most women Democratic office-holders) have taken the same hard line attitude towards the Starr witch hunt. Will they eventually collapse? Or will they force the Democratic Party leadership to stand up and fight? Who knows. Either way the behaviour of the party leadership is likely to leave a bad taste in the mouths of the party's most loyal supporters. This might provide a starting point for the left.

● Ernie Haberkern is Director of the Center for Socialist History in Berkeley California and is currently working on the fifth volume of Karl Marx's *Theory of Revolution* to be published by Monthly Review Press.

DEFENDING CLINTON within the labour movement means keeping alive the tired idea that the Democratic Party – and the state – can be transformed in the interests of the working class. The best thing that could come out of this fiasco would be if the rank and file revolted in the unions, forcing unions to abstain or look more closely at how political funds are spent. This would help us redefine labour politics. US labour radicals need to evaluate where we're at and where we need to go. So who cares what happens to Clinton? We need to be more concerned with the workers. Let's get out away from a fascination with the rich and powerful and back to the basics of educating, organising and liberating our class.

● Bob Rossi is a union organiser and lives in Oregon.

CLINTON'S DETRACTORS continually cite the "character" issue. They are correct, but for the wrong reason. Clinton has demonstrated his lack of character by being the most pro-business, anti-labour Democratic President since Woodrow Wilson. He bears little resemblance to Clinton the candidate who masqueraded as a populist. Clinton's defenders always cite the "strong economy". If this is measured by concentrating more wealth in the hands of the few, or by how working people are bamboozled into believing that a higher stock market means better economic conditions for them, then, yes, Clinton has "strengthened" the economy.

Should Bill Clinton be impeached because he engaged in sexual activities with a young White House intern and then lied about it? No, there are more important issues. Perhaps the affair may open the eyes of some working people to the fact that the Democratic Party is virtually indistinguishable from the Republican Party. Working people need to ally themselves with other democratic, progressive groups to recruit and elect candidates at all levels of government who are responsive to Main Street rather than Wall Street.

● Rich Stonestreet lives in Charleston, West Virginia and worked for education trade unions for 25 years.

Independent Labour Network

Campaigning for Democratic Socialist Values

Labour Party Conference
Fringe Meeting

Hugh Kerr MEP

Monday 28 September - 6.30 pm

Blackpool Light Craft Club

contact: Mike Davies 0113 262 4442

Hugh Kerr is Independent Labour MEP for Essex West and Hertfordshire East

The Greens in the European Parliament

LLB page 6

Kurdish refugees – persecuted in London

Sheri Laizer from Haringey's Kurdish Community Centre fears that the new anti-terrorist legislation will encourage repressive regimes to increase their harassment of refugees here.

SHORTLY after midnight on 21st August, arsonists firebombed the premises of the Kurdish Community Centre in Haringey, north London. Kurds who frequent the Centre arrived on Friday morning to discover extensive areas of their London sanctuary burned beyond recognition.

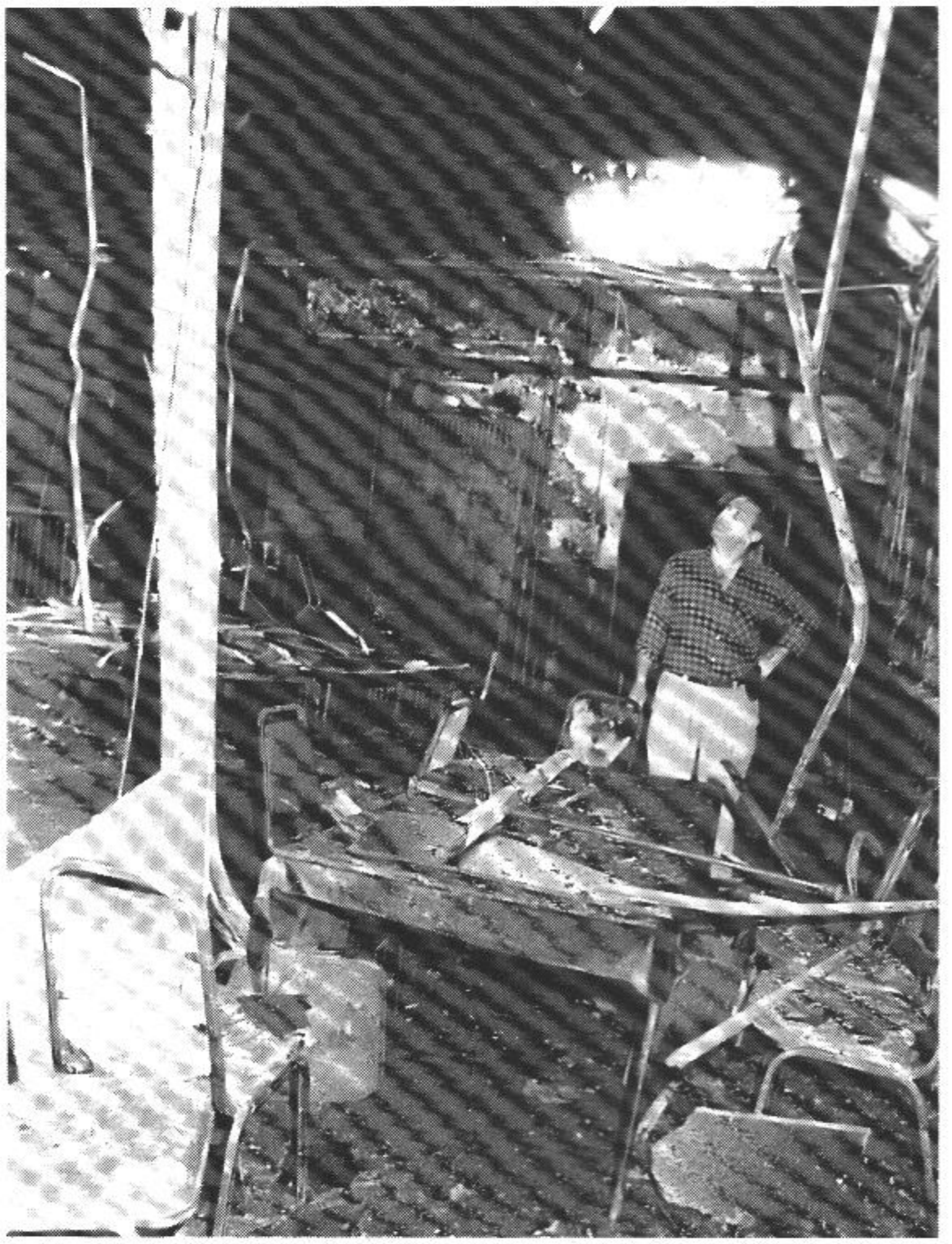
After nine hours of examination by officers of the CID and Fire Brigade, responsibility for the building was again returned to officials of the Centre. Refugee women and children openly wept as they looked through windows shattered by the explosion, the roof, doors and window frames charred to cinders. The scene was all too reminiscent of the war they have so recently fled in their devastated homeland where more than 3,000 Kurdish villages have been razed and burned by the Turkish army.

Clients have been using the Centre since October 1989. Hundreds of Kurdish people attend the centre on a daily basis to get access to welfare support, attend training courses in English and computing, and get together to update on the situation within the war zones back home.

It is likely to take some weeks before forensic evidence yields information about how the incident, which is being treated as a serious arson attack, was organised. Since the attack Inspector Paul Morris, the new Community Relations officer for Tottenham Police, has continued to update the community in person at the Centre on the progress of the investigation.

Although on occasions homeless refugee families do stay overnight at the Centre, during the attack the building was fortunately empty. The Centre has suffered three previous arson attacks and two police raids – serious incidents which have compounded the trauma experienced by the many refugees who look upon the Centre as a second home.

Kurdish refugees have been the target of a smear campaign and vilification by the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police in recent years investigating how the Kurds in exile raise money for solidarity back home, or in support of MED TV, the world's sole Kurdish television station. The police witch-hunt reflects the strong politico-economic links developed between the British and Turkish governments. Britain is a major supplier of arms to Turkey, weapons which are being used against the Kurds in the fourteen year old war in the south east.



Haringey's Kurdish Community Centre.

Community representatives have lobbied the local authority to start repairs to the building as soon as possible before the complex requirements of its Kurdish clients seriously impact on social services, but it is predicted that the building will not be fully operational until summer 1999. Should there be further setbacks local councils will be unable to meet the immense level of casework or supply the varied Kurdish, Arabic and Turkish-speaking interpreters which the Centre offers. More than sixty trainees who have started their courses behind schedule are also affected. The courses are financed by grants awarded by the European Social Fund and Haringey Heartlands and represent a vital component of refugee resettlement and social integration. Around six hundred Kurdish people marched to Tottenham Police Station to demand a serious investigation into the arson attack and an end to police discrimination. Nine months ago Special Branch raided the Centre seizing valuable documents. The investigation – labelled Operation Demijohn – has yielded nothing. The incident has however undermined the confidence of the Kurdish community in the British authorities and police and has seriously damaged the work of the Centre leading to job losses and frozen funding. Community leaders are determined to bring a case against the police for damages.

The Centre is being represented by Gareth Peirce who was instrumental in securing the release of the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four. ❑

LLB page 7

New Terror Bill – legislate

Paul May of the Britain and Ireland Human Rights Centre looks at some recent history to show that the new legislation will lead to less justice.

THE DECISION of both British and Irish governments to introduce the new measures were greatly influenced by repeated assertions in the media and elsewhere in the days following the Omagh atrocity that police "know" who are members of the Real IRA and other dissident Irish republican groups.

Those who hold to this belief might consider events that took place just a few weeks before Omagh. On Friday, 10th July, ten Irish people were arrested amid massive publicity in London and the Irish Republic in a joint operation against the Real IRA by Metropolitan Police Anti-Terrorist Squad and Garda Siochana officers.

Anti-Terrorist Squad head John Grieve claimed his officers had foiled an imminent bombing attack on London due to take place "within minutes". Tony Blair hailed the operation as "very important and successful". Irish premier Bertie Ahern praised police for providing "further evidence of the extremely effective co-operation which is maintained between the security forces on both sides."

Rather less publicity was given to the fact that six of those held were released without charge just three days later. 28-year-old London-based Irishman Rory Hearty was seized as he was driving past the British Library on his way to his North London home. Mr Hearty, who strenuously denies any interest or involvement in any Irish republican group, has told the Britain and Ireland Human Rights Centre how on his release police casually informed him they had destroyed his car (with which he used to make his living as a courier). The oppressive use of handcuffs during the arrest severed the tendon to one of his thumbs. Months later, police have still not returned personal documents to him such as his driver's licence and passport. He has been unable to work since the arrest.

Sub-judice rules prohibit comment on the cases of the four remaining accused except to say that the case of one of them, 21-year-old Elaine Moore, has become a major *cause celebre* in the Irish Republic with persons of the eminence of former Irish Foreign Minister Peter Barry and Fine Gael presidential candidate Mary Banotti MEP coming forward to lodge substantial bail securities for her.

In media briefings after the London arrests, police told journalists they "knew" those held were Real IRA members. They have yet to explain how those very same suspects turned out to be entirely innocent just a few days later. There is every possibility that had the Act been in place in July, these innocent people may well have been charged under the legislation.

The squalid catalogue of miscarriage of justice cases over the past 30 years is littered with instances of senior police officers who "knew" – irrespective of hard evidence – that the suspects were guilty.

On these grounds, West Midlands officers were able to use extreme violence and threats to force false confessions from the Birmingham Six. Because they "knew" she was guilty, West Yorkshire police felt no compunction in changing the contents of successive "confessions" from Judith Ward until they achieved one that was loosely plausible.

The police "knew" Carole Richardson and Paddy Armstrong of the Guildford Four were bombers so they merely threatened to arrest and charge witnesses who had seen them many miles away at the time of the Guildford bombing.

On 12th November, the Court of Appeal begins hearing the case of Irishman Danny McNamee sentenced to 25 years imprisonment in 1987 for conspiracy to cause the 1982 Hyde Park bombing and other explosions. Danny has consistently protested his innocence.

Some idea of the strength of the evidence supporting his claims may be gathered from the fact that his case was the very first referred by the newly established Criminal Cases Review Commission. After his trial, senior Anti-Terrorist Squad officers held media briefings about how they "knew" Danny McNamee was a senior IRA member. Those same officers will probably not be on hand to account for their false accusations when the court frees and exonerates him after 12 years' wrongful imprisonment.

Important concessions were achieved in the days leading up to the publication of the draft legislation. For example, the belief of a senior police officer will not, as first envisaged, be sufficient on its own to secure a conviction. Nevertheless, legislation which replaces belief, supposition and outright prejudice for hard evidence should never have reached the statute book. The Act must be repealed at the earliest opportunity.

The innocent victims of Omagh, Ballymoney and elsewhere deserve justice. It will not be achieved by sending yet more innocent people to prison.

Remember the Guildford Four

Jeremy Corbyn, MP writes: On 1st September there was an unusual sight in Parliament. Outside the Vote Office (where MPs collect publications) there was a queue of MPs all griping in a desultory fashion about the wheels of government, "presidential methods" and "rows at the top". The cause of all this was the new, latest, most severe and "draconian" anti-terror Bill.

Government lawyers were at pains to point out to Ministers that the European Convention on Human Rights required minimum standards of evidence to gain a conviction. This caused delay after delay in publishing the Bill. Journalists who normally know more than MPs were variously told "next week", "tomorrow", "by 1pm", "4.30 latest", "around 5.30", "before the evening".

Annoyed MPs finally got copies at 6pm just as the office was closing. Eighteen hours later we were debating it in the House and within 36 hours it had passed all its Parliamentary stages in the Commons, gone to the Lords and got Royal Assent from the Speaker who seemed to have a copy of HER signature to pass it. All in sixty hours. This new law flies in the face of the general thrust of Northern Ireland legislation passed this year – which increases rights and gives greater transparency in judicial matters.

The last time Parliament rushed into laws like this was when the Prevention of Terrorism Act was passed. The first person ever arrested under the PTA was Paul Hill of the Guildford Four who spent the next decade and a half proving his innocence. Only seventeen Labour MPs managed to attend and vote against this Bill. We must now start monitoring it and prepare to oppose its renewal next March.

LLB page 8

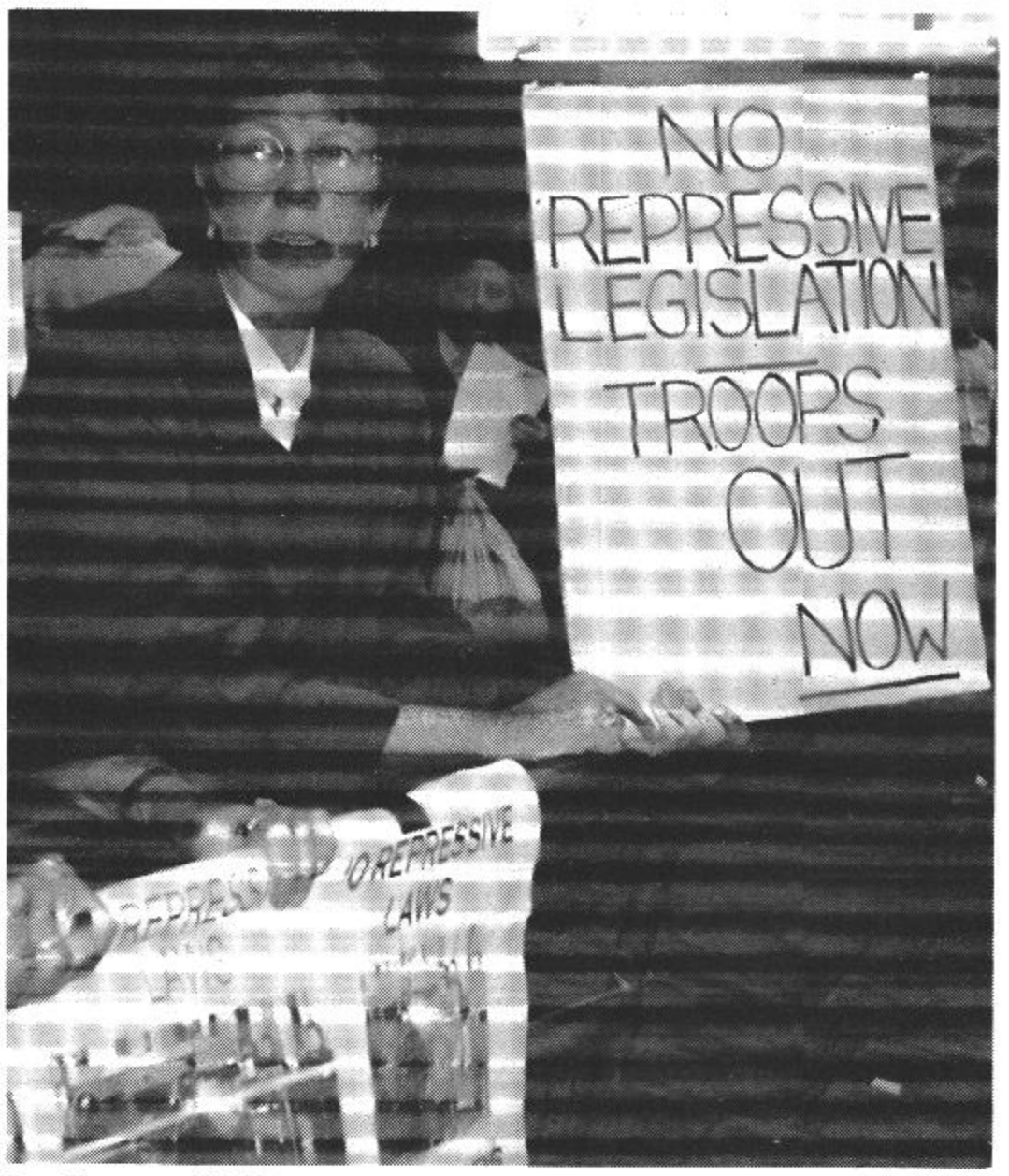
in haste, repent at leisure

Liz Davies, barrister and NEC candidate, casts a critical eye over the enigmatic provisions of the Government's new "anti-terror" legislation.

THE Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Conspiracy) Act 1998 is a classic case of bad law, enacted in haste. The coincidence of the bombings of the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the Omagh bombing a day later enabled the Government to cobble together two distinct measures, designed against two wholly separate activities, and to use public grief and shock to rush the whole thing through Parliament.

MPs from all parties denounced the speed in which the legislation had been drafted, and the lack of time available to read, digest and debate a complex Bill. Catching the Omagh bombers is a matter for police detection. There was never any lack of criminal offences with which to charge them: murder, conspiracy to murder, possession of explosives. The new Act adds nothing to these, and does nothing to make the apprehension or conviction of the bombers more likely.

The first part of the Act allows the previously existing offence of membership of a proscribed organisation to be proved on the oral evidence of a police officer of the rank of superintendent or above, corroborated by the silence of the accused on being questioned under caution. In Northern Ireland, unlike the rest of the UK, tape-recording of interviews in police stations does not take place (there are tape-recording facilities but there is no requirement to use them).



Parliament 1/9/98.

Suspects are allowed access to a solicitor before they are questioned, but the solicitor cannot observe the interview. There can be no independent record to prevent bullying or threats made during an interview or to confirm the exact words of the suspect. All notes will be taken by a police officer. From now on, no suspect will have the option of remaining silent, as silence will be taken to confirm the suspicion of a police officer that the suspect is a member of a proscribed organisation.

The provisions raise an Orwellian vista. The suspect's silence may be deemed sufficient grounds for a senior police officer to presume membership of a proscribed organisation. And once that suspicion is formed, the suspect's silence is then sufficient to confirm the suspicion. Membership of a proscribed organisation carries a maximum sentence of ten years.

Chris Mullin, speaking during the debate, said that during his researches into the Birmingham bombings, he had spoken to many young members of the IRA. The reasons they most frequently gave for joining the IRA was resentment over Bloody Sunday or internment. What a shame the Government did not learn the lessons of that bitter and failed experiment in arbitrary detention. The people likely to be arrested under the new provisions will be young men and women sympathetic to the Republican cause. Their arrests will inevitably fuel resentment in the nationalist community and could destabilise the peace process.

We are told that the second part of the Act has been contemplated by the Government for some time, and the bombings of the US embassies merely provided an excuse to introduce it. The provisions are dense and impenetrable, even to a lawyer. Robert Marshall-Andrews, MP and QC, professed himself unable to understand at least one crucial section of the Bill. What activity the new provisions are seeking to curb is unclear. Conspiracy to commit a murder in this country is already an offence, as is conspiracy in this country to commit a murder in another country.

The provisions seem to aim at conspiracy in this country to commit "acts of terrorism" in another. During the debate, various MPs asked about the distinction between freedom fighters and terrorists, whether supporters of the ANC in this country during the 1970s and 1980s would have been caught by the new Act, and whether there was a legal or moral distinction between terrorist acts against a democratic government and those against a despotic government. No clarification was given.

The bombings of US embassies, followed by the attack on Sudan and Afghanistan, and now the hasty enactment of the new "anti-terror" laws in the UK, have fuelled a racist and xenophobic panic about "Islamic terrorists", who are conflated with Muslims and people from the Third World in general. Civil liberties are precious. History shows that they are easily compromised at times of panic, and then only reclaimed after long and bitter experience.

The 17 Labour MPs who voted in the Commons against the new anti-terror bill: Irene Adams, Tony Benn, Harold Best, Dennis Canavan, Robin Corbett, Jeremy Corbyn, Ann Cryer, John Cryer, Tam Dalyell, Bill Etherington, Bernie Grant, Lynne Jones, John McAllion, John McDonnell, Kevin McNamara, Robert Marshall-Andrews, Kerry Pollard, Brian Sedgemore and Dennis Skinner.

LLB page 9

Labour's National

The story so far

Tim Frost reviews the Grassroots Alliance campaign for the constituency section of Labour's NEC. Results of the ballot will be announced on 30th September.

WILL THE Millbank Tendency dare hold NEC elections next year? The experiment of restructuring the NEC, designed to rid the Party's top committee of troublesome lefties like Livingstone and Skinner, has been a disaster for them. The campaign for the constituency seats has given expression and focus to the undercurrent of unease among Party members over Government policies, and the absence of a functioning democracy in the Party has been exposed.

The Grassroots Alliance slate was born out of recognition that the feelings in the Party which had swept Ken Livingstone on to the NEC in 1997 would seek similar expression in 1998, but that without the advantage of the name recognition of MPs, a more concerted and united campaign would be needed than in past NEC elections. In the short time available, discussions between left and centre groupings (contrary to press reports, not held in London restaurants) were necessarily ad hoc. Nonetheless, agreement was reached on a slate of six credible and diverse candidates and a clear statement of principles.

Leaflets were circulated to CLPs with the result that Grassroots Alliance candidates secured nearly one third of the nominations made (though the six comprised fewer than one third of the candidates standing). The coming together of a genuinely broad left was warmly welcomed by activists, who threw themselves into the Grassroots Alliance campaign. Alliance candidates spoke at more than 50 local meetings. Thanks to the combined efforts of CLPD, Labour Reform, the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups, and hundreds of rank-and-file socialists, thousands of leaflets were circulated to Party members and trade unionists.

Tribune and *LLB* gave extensive coverage to campaign developments. Through the mainstream media (which only took an interest in the Alliance after it became apparent that it enjoyed extensive support in the Party), millions have been made aware that there is opposition within the Labour Party, and that there are alternatives to current Government policies.

The Grassroots Alliance has addressed two widely held and inter-related concerns. The first is the inadequacies of Government policy in tackling urgent social need, long-term social injustices and impending economic crisis. The second is the inability of Party members to use the current structures of the Labour Party to press the Government for change on these and other matters. Increasingly, Party members are frustrated by meetings, conferences and consultations that only require them to rubber-stamp the Government line.

The campaign has also highlighted problems and dilemmas for the future. With the decline in attendance at Party meetings – and the decline in the number of meetings which can be attended – most members read our leaflets or heard about our campaign in the isolation of their own homes. Can the forces that came together in the Alliance find ways of bringing people together in democratic, collective activity? If not, how will we be able to make the weight of opposition in the Party felt all year round?

We must also press the Party to devise a code of conduct for internal Party elections and debate which ensures that we never again see the kind of abuses practised by ill-advised supporters of the Members' First slate. By the time the ballot closes, Members First will have outspent the Grassroots Alliance by one hundred to one. They have been given access to membership lists, Cabinet-level public backing, the benefit of not very subtle intervention from the Party's General Secretary – and even Neil Kinnock has been wheeled out at the eleventh hour with his recollections of the 80s.

Where we go from here will be clearer after the results are known, but even at this stage the importance of further developing the coalition of forces which has backed the Grassroots Alliance candidates is obvious. The opposition to the Government was always there. Now it is visible. Our next task is to make it matter.

Hello, will you work for the Government or wreck it?

ANDY WALKER, Secretary of Ilford South CLP writes: On 11th September one of our CLP members was contacted by a Ross Black, employed by a telephone agency in Brighton. He was phoning on behalf of an organisation called Members First.

He asked for her by name and wanted to check whether she had yet voted. He then gave her details of what to do if she had not received her ballot papers by 25th September and stressed that she could vote by telephone.

In answer to her question about Members First he explained that this was a group of activists who wanted to ensure that the NEC "worked with the Government and supported it, not like the splits and factions of the 1980s". He suggested that she contact Steve Bassam and gave her his telephone number. He gave her the names of the six candidates she should vote for, which were the names of those on the Members First slate.

He said he had been given her details by Members First. Although she had recently rejoined the Labour Party (and might look like a new member on a list) she had previously belonged to the Party for over 25 years. She told me that she had never experienced this sort of canvassing for NEC elections before and wanted to know who gave out her telephone number without her permission. The member later informed me that she had rung Lord Bassam who owned up to passing a database to the telephone agency. He informed her that he had received the database from Progress Publications. They have assured her that she is not on their database.

LLB page 10

Executive elections

We are from the Labour Party

Jacqui Brown, Brent East CLP, reports on an interesting phone call.

I RECEIVED a telephone call at home on 8th September from a woman who said she was calling from the Members First Committee. She asked if I had received my ballot paper for the NEC election and I confirmed that I had.

She then went on to say that this was the first NEC election where ordinary members could have their say and elections were not limited to MPs, etc. She said she was speaking on behalf of a group of activists who wanted to see a partnership between Parliament and the ordinary members rather than a return to the old days of splits and conflict, and the Party was asking for me to vote for six candidates for the NEC. She then read me the names of the Members First slate.

I asked if she was one of the candidates and she said no, she was employed by the Party to contact members, and she worked for a company called Personal Telephone Fundraising. I said, "so you're not even necessarily a member of the Party," and she confirmed this.

I said I was a little confused and asked who she meant by the Party – was this the NEC, or the parliamentary party? She seemed a bit taken aback, but then said no, she didn't mean the Labour Party itself, and she should have said it was the Members First Committee who were asking me to vote for these six. It sounded very much as though she had been reading from a prepared script, and had been thrown a bit off balance by my questions.

I said I was a bit concerned, as she would obviously not be able to answer my questions and that I would want to ask what they stood for and why I should vote for them, as otherwise it would seem a bit undemocratic. She said she quite understood, and gave me a phone number I could call. She said she wasn't sure if it was the right department, but she was sure they could put me on the appropriate people.

I phoned the number she gave (0171-802 1374) and got an answerphone message saying "the Labour Party National Constitutional Office is closed." I phoned back on 10th September and spoke to a woman in the office. She said she was unable to help me. I asked if she had any idea who could have given out my phone number, but she claimed not to know, nor was she able to give me the phone number to contact the Members First Committee, though she said people had told her it was based in Brighton.

I looked up the telephone number of Personal Telephone Fundraising, which is indeed based in Brighton. They gave me the home phone number of Lord Steve Bassam – 01273-291138. So far, Lord Steve has not returned my answerphone messages asking for more information.

Reflections on the campaign trail

Liz Davies reviews her experiences as a candidate for Labour's NEC.

WE CALLED ourselves the Grassroots Alliance because we wanted to give a voice to the many Party members who worked to elect a Labour Government but now find that Government deviating ever further from their ideals of social justice and democratic politics. Our campaign has been sustained throughout by those much derided beasts of burden – the anonymous activists, the people who really make history.

It's a strange experience to hear yourself denounced by the General Secretary of the Labour Party on national radio – because you wrote him a private letter. It's strange to find yourself and your politics excoriated by people who know nothing about either – besides what they've been told by spin doctors. But throughout, I've been buoyed up by countless expressions of solidarity from people with no access to the media.

It's these people whose voluntary commitment has made the Grassroots Alliance campaign work on the ground. At meetings organised by supporters of the slate around the country, I've been privileged to take part in serious and well-informed debates on the issues that matter: the minimum wage, ethical foreign policy, interest rates, transport policy, welfare benefits, pensions, privatisation, as well as the nuts-and-bolts of Labour's new policy-making structures.

I have also spent hours on the telephone talking to journalists. I have discussed the principles on which the Grassroots Alliance is founded: Labour Party democracy, redistribution of wealth and power, defending and enhancing the welfare state. I have discussed in detail my views on the *Fairness at Work* White Paper, on housing and homelessness, civil liberties, feminism and human rights. Hardly a word of this ever found its way into print. Instead, I have found myself labelled as "Trotskyite" (which I am not) or "hard left" or "Old Labour" – none of which accurately describes my socialist, feminist and democratic convictions, or my track record of practical public service.

I've been lucky in that a handful of sympathetic journalists have tried to correct the caricature peddled by their colleagues, and plenty of commentators have extracted a laugh from the frantic machinations of the Millbank Tendency. But on the whole, my experience has been that journalists have taken the lazy route and retreated into the safety of hopelessly dated stereotypes.

I spent some time discussing political issues with a journalist from the *New Statesman*, only to read, when the article came out, that if I was elected it would not be for my political beliefs – there was no mention of what those beliefs might be. When another journalist at the *New Statesman* suggested a debate between myself and a candidate from Members' First, I readily agreed – but never heard another word. Presumably Members' First were not interested.

None of this should blunt our determination to use all available avenues to get our message across to the Labour Party and the general public. What terrified Millbank and irritated sections of the media was the fact that it was people at the base of the Labour Party – not think-tanks or columnists – who proved to have their finger on the pulse, who articulated the concerns about poverty, low pay, inequality, and rights at work shared by millions. Should I be elected to the NEC, I will continue to work with those people and speak up for their priorities whenever and wherever I can. ❑

LLB page 11

Labour's National

Grassroots Alliance candidates assess the campaign.

Mark Seddon

WHEN SOME of us decided to meet to discuss how we might bring together a pretty broad group of organisations and individuals with a view to standing candidates for the NEC I was nervous about our prospects. Of course what had brought us all together was a shared belief in democracy, accountability and democratic socialism. But without much in the way of resources, no matter how strong our argument, I believed that we would be steamrollered by the party machine. Yet no sooner had we settled upon the idea of a Centre Left Grassroots Alliance, we were approached by many others who wanted to join us, not least two of the candidates who have stood under the Members' First ticket, Michael Cashman and Terry Thomas! I had no objection to the latter – provided Terry could see fit to sign up to our declared aims. Unfortunately, that was not to be the case, and the rest, as they say is history.

I know that our campaign has struck a chord because Labour Party members of all persuasions tell me so. But not just Labour Party members, many who have left the Party, others who have become disillusioned with the political process and also those who simply believe in justice and democracy have expressed the same view. The campaign has rekindled hope that Labour can once again become a pluralist party and there is a strong argument for keeping the Grassroots Alliance as a going concern when these elections are over.

The reactions from some elements of the Party establishment has, on the other hand, sometimes veered on the hysterical. We will document the systematic abuses that have taken place in these elections and publish them in *Tribune*. They should stand as a warning that the democratic process can be corrupted by the unscrupulous and those with money who wish to buy influence. I suspect that the conduct of these quite extraordinary NEC elections, and I include the PLP section elections as well, will have shocked many Labour Party members and others besides. There is no doubt in my mind that one of the first motions that should be brought before the NEC, should any of us be elected, is one that enforces a strict ceiling on expenditure for all NEC elections and strict rules for how all internal elections are conducted. Otherwise the cancer will spread.

Cathy Jamieson

THE GRASSROOTS ALLIANCE has had tremendous support in Scotland. Nominations for Alliance candidates came not just from those traditionally on the left, but also from many ordinary Party members who are concerned about the direction the Party is going in. We didn't need many meetings in Scotland – early plans to organise these were shelved because activists were clearly indicating from the start where their votes were going, so we concentrated on getting leaflets out to as many branches and individuals as possible. This was only possible due to the hard work and commitment of individuals, who in many cases tramped round doors in their areas delivering them – not for us the expensive mailshots or ads in the press!

Cathy Jamieson



The meetings I attended in England gave me a chance to update Party members on the political situation in Scotland, to hear first-hand about the issues facing the Labour Party in the English regions, and to argue the case for having Scottish representation on the NEC. Not surprisingly, many of the issues raised by members north and south of the border were similar.

Party members everywhere are absolutely clear that there should be no return to the bad old days of the Tories, and desperately want Labour to succeed in office. But they are also concerned about the Party's shift from traditional Labour values and principles towards an over-reliance on the private sector, and the continued eroding of Party democracy.

The high point of the campaign for me was seeing how ordinary Party members became outraged at the personalised attacks in the press on the Grassroots Alliance. For many people this was the moment when they realised just how powerful the party machine was, and many publicly declared that they would vote for the Alliance. I also suddenly discovered lots of people who I didn't even know were in the Party – some in politically restricted posts – who quietly told me they'd voted for us!

Whatever the final outcome of the vote, this campaign has been a moral victory for us, as we have clearly shown that we are far more in touch with the grassroots. The motivation shown by members indicates there is a sound base for the future.

My only slight reservations have been that thanks to the media, my footballing allegiances have now become more widely known than my politics, and despite my promotion of all things Scottish, *Newsnight* cruelly exposed me as the owner of an "English" Springer Spaniel!

Attention Conference delegates

National Policy Forum, vote for: Scotland – Bill Butler, Johann Lamont; North & Yorks – Gerald Ramsden, Eddie Hart (Youth); Central – Russell Cartwright, Jenny Holland, Paul Madeley (Youth); London – Kumar Murshid, Dorothy Macedo, Teresa Pearce; West Midlands – Andy Howell, Cherry Mosteshar; South East – Anne Belworthy; South & West – Ray Davison, Bernadette Hartley
CAC, vote for: John Aitken, Doreen Cameron, Audrey Wise.

LLB page 12

Executive elections

Christine Shawcroft

IF YOU WANT to travel to interesting places and meet interesting people, don't join the army, stand for the NEC. For the last few months I've travelled around constituencies I hadn't known existed and spoken to union branch meetings where most members had given up and left the Labour Party. The British railway timetable has been my bedside reading. But in spite of the "it's Tuesday so this must be Croydon" feeling the whole thing has been well worth it. I've met people whom I would never have met otherwise. In discussing politics with them I have had my faith in the good sense and bedrock commitment to traditional Labour values of grassroots members reaffirmed.

I never have a sense of being on the extreme left of the audience. And I'm not talking about the meetings organised by local Campaign groups, but ordinary branch and GC meetings. It's been clear to me that what might be called "left" demands of full employment, a decent minimum wage, index linked pensions and universal welfare benefits are actually mainstream views held by most grassroots Party members, who consider them to be common sense and non controversial.

For the future, the neutrality of the Party machine has to be insisted upon and transparent rules set for canvassing and spending limits. However, Sawyer's attempts to blame the Grassroots Alliance for everything from England losing the World Cup to global warming may have increased our vote. Next year, unless they abolish voting, the vote for left candidates will increase as tensions between the leadership and membership get stretched further. We must make sure that our campaign is better co-ordinated from the start, discover the art of active campaigning, and find ways of reaching ordinary members in an OMOV ballot.



Christine Shawcroft

Andy Howell

RUNNING FOR the new constituency section of the NEC has been a fascinating experience, not least because it tells us a lot about the real democratic credentials of those floating around Labour's leadership.

Creating a genuine section for constituency members was a step forward. But having taken such a step many on the right seem unable to cope with ordinary members expressing their own opinion. They will defend the principles of *Partnership in Power* to the hilt, but only in rhetoric and not in reality.

The Grassroots Alliance has won both the political argument and the media campaign. It should be a salutary lesson to New Labour that on any one particular issue or campaign they could be turned-over by a back-kitchen operation. They have yet to recognise the fact that they have had to spend well over £100,000 to back up the opposition because many ordinary members are deeply unhappy.

The campaign for the NEC – and the National Policy Forum – puts an end to the lie about the modern left. These campaigns feature people who are standing not just to stake out a point of principle but to do a proper political job.

Last year the centre and left took a significant number of places on the NPF and the 'energy' in new structures is coming from the left in the constituency section as it seeks to develop modern policies from traditional aims and values.

The irony facing Labour is that many of these left wing delegates are committed to making the new processes work as well as possible, and as democratically as possible, even though they may have opposed *Partnership in Power*. Indeed one of the problems of those trying to make the new system work is that the Party is not investing proper resources and staffing behind political education and the new consultation systems. It is the left that is arguing for proper funding and support.

Ultimately we have shown that there is still a real place within Labour for traditional policies of democratic socialism and redistribution. Over the last two years the new co-operators of the left have concentrated on what has bound them together rather than what has separated them, and as a result have achieved some notable success.

If the broad centre-left alliance were to take this co-operative philosophy into the mainstream policy debate then we really would be entering interesting waters. Perhaps, you can now see why such huge amounts of money have been spent in trying to block our way to the NEC. Can we risk extending such co-operation into policy areas? I think we should. Many ordinary members, both left and centre, will expect us to try.

Desperate or what?

You can't fault Members First for their thoroughness in spreading the word. One copy of their mailing sent to 70,000 Party members, according to the *Guardian*, was received by Liz Davies. Worse was to come, when Christine Shawcroft received two copies of the mailing. Were Members First trying to break the Alliance by starting internal competition between candidates? We shall never know: both candidates had already voted.

"The Grassroots Alliance is a real breakthrough in Labour politics. It may not have establishment backers who can afford full page adverts in national papers but the Alliance has something better ... roots within the Party.

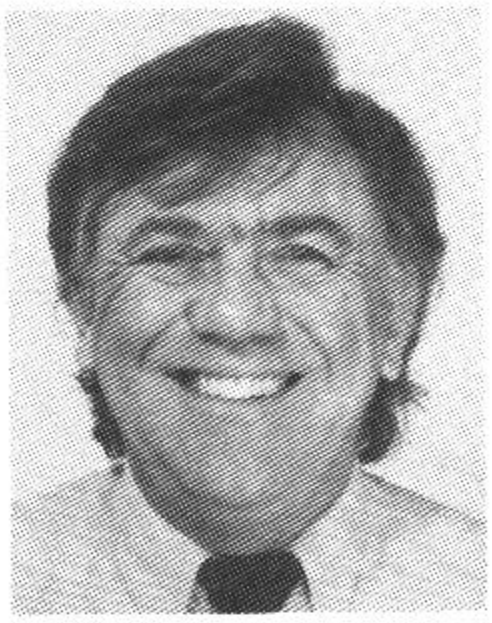
The networking and co-operation between left and centre-left groups in the Party was a triumph to behold." – *Alan Simpson MP.*

LLB page 13

Blackpool – our priorities

Pete Willsman, veteran campaigner for Party democracy and NEC candidate, spells out the key issues facing Conference

LLB READERS WILL be well aware that the opportunity to submit resolutions to this year's Annual Conference has been severely curtailed. Each CLP has only been permitted to submit either a constitutional amendment or a "contemporary motion". The guidance circulated by Millbank allowed contemporary motions on "Party issues not addressed in the NEC Report". CLPD is concentrating its Conference activity on the following three issues:



Pete Willsman

- **CLPs' right to choose**

The NEC will be proposing rule changes at Conference that will introduce an approved list for parliamentary candidates. Quite disgracefully, and contrary to previous practice, these rule changes will not be seen by delegates until they reach Blackpool.

It is not difficult to imagine how an approved list would be employed to prevent those out of step with the leadership from becoming parliamentary candidates.

To counter this threat eleven constituencies have submitted a constitutional amendment that would enshrine in the Rule Book the right of CLPs to select the parliamentary candidate of their choice, without interference from Millbank.

Unfortunately (and somewhat ludicrously in this situation) existing procedures provide that this constitutional amendment will disappear and simply be remitted to the NEC. It is therefore necessary to carry a contemporary motion demanding that the rule change from the eleven CLPs be taken this year, alongside the NEC's proposals. This contemporary motion is a top priority. An approved list could not only be used to debar progressive candidates in the future but, as we have already seen in Scotland, it could be used to stop existing MPs from standing as Labour candidates. In any event, it would be used as a device to intimidate and control MPs.

- **Opposition to Proportional Representation**

The Jenkins Commission on voting systems is due to publish its conclusions shortly after Conference. This convenient timing is hardly a coincidence! It is quite possible that a referendum will be held before the 1999 Annual Conference.

It is therefore vital that the issue is discussed at Blackpool and a clear line given to the NEC. The existing Conference policy is in favour of first-past-the-post and this position needs to be emphatically endorsed. Contemporary motions to this effect are on the agenda. Several unions, particularly the AEEU, are aware of the significance of this issue and have been circulating model resolutions to their branches.

The unions believe that majority Labour governments (even Blairite ones) are better for their members than Tory or Lib Dem coalition governments. PR would consign majority Labour governments to the history books.

- **Women-only shortlists**

The contemporary motion on this subject welcomes the Equal Opportunities Commission's recommendation that parliamentary selection be removed from the scope of the Sex Discrimination Act. It calls on ministers to bring forward the necessary legislation to achieve this.

The contemporary motion instructs the NEC to present to the 1999 Annual Conference rule changes re-introducing mandatory women-only shortlists in 50% of Labour-held seats that fall vacant, until such time as at least half the PLP are women.

Progress – two steps backwards

Eddie Tucker takes a look at selfish parasites and sneering sectarians who infest the labour movement (based around *Progress* magazine).

"A NEW EDITOR, Jo Tanner, was appointed only weeks ago. She said yesterday that she did not know who funded the magazine," commented the *Observer* on 12th July. As Draper resigned the directorate of his Frankenstein's monster, right-wing pressure group Labour First chose *Progress* to advertise its slate for the NEC.

Just how *Progress* gets mailed out to Labour Party members, in clear breach of the Data Protection Act, can be seen by its letter to MPs. "As always, we are keen to provide the magazine to as many activists as possible. In order for us to do this we are reliant on the receipt of current GC lists. Please can you send us yours..." wrote Derek Draper last year. Further controversy dogged the magazine and its quasi-formal relationship with the national Party, despite it being a commercial operation by a particular faction within the Party. A recent letter signed by Margaret McDonagh to Party members told them that *Labour Active*, a campaigning newsletter targeted at constituency activists, had been "merged" with *Progress*.

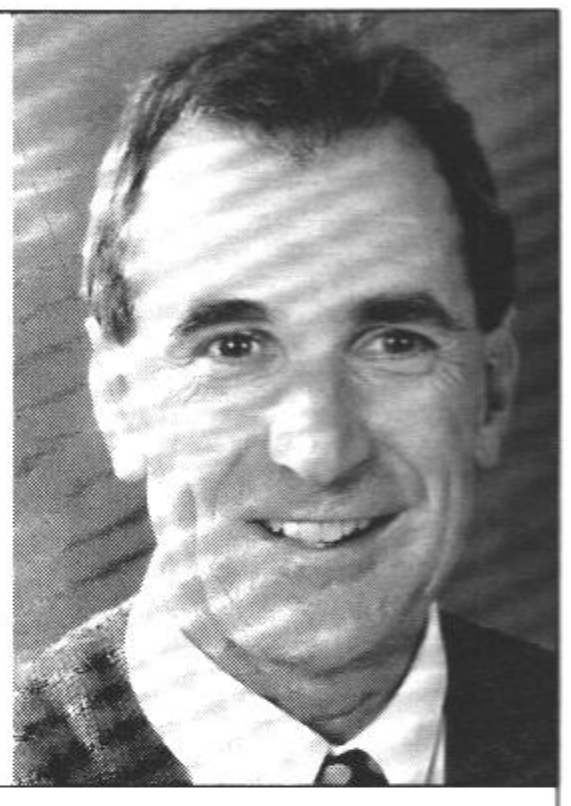
Mr Sawyer denies this, adding that it was "inappropriate to send out information in this way", reported *Tribune*. "Progress works closely with Walworth Road to provide additional activity which complements the work in key seats that Party HQ rightly concentrates on", stated the journal itself. Patron Gerald Kaufman MP neglected to reply to Party members who wrote to him complaining about the way Party membership lists were being abused.

The future of the secretly-funded magazine (remember Draper went on TV saying the Labour Party should accept funding from any source) looks a lot shakier than Draper's own. It looks set to become embroiled in yet another croneygate scandal. In its latest issue Robin Cook is offering tea at the Foreign Office as a prize for those recruiting subscribers to the magazine; aside from the fact that the Foreign Secretary should have better things to do with his time, how much taxpayers' money will this cost? It says something about the state of *Progress* that it is organising no meetings at Labour Party Conference.

LLB page 14

the Alan Simpson column

The Secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs.



Is the honeymoon over?

WHEN BILL MORRIS cautioned the TUC (and the Government) about British entry into the European Single Currency he fired the first salvo of real politics to have come out of the TUC for a long while. When John Edmonds followed him with a presidential address that attacked "the politics of the pig trough" and demanded a more interventionist approach to economic policy, it was clear that the honeymoon is over.

Job losses and plant closures across the north of England and in Scotland may be small echoes of the collapse in Russia, South East Asia and Latin America, but they are real enough to make the trade unions stand up and bark. The question now is who, or if, they will bite.

For all the briefings being spun from Millbank and Downing Street it is clear that "the project", and the economics it rests upon, has run into serious difficulties. The mantras are simply disappearing into the sands of public disbelief. No matter how often the Chancellor repeats the assertion that monetarist policies are the "right policies", it is clear that they are more a part of today's problems rather than tomorrow's answers.

No one wants to return to boom-bust, stop-go or the madness of 15% interest rates, but these spectres from the past are also uncomfortable parts of where we are now. We face the ludicrous combination of a boom in consumer (credit) spending and a bust in manufacturing. There is nothing more profoundly stop-go in an economy than companies that stop production and workers told to go sign-on. Any fool can close down production. The act of genius (and the responsibility of government) is to keep producers producing, workers in work, and whole communities and regions in a state of well-being. Few, even outside the north-east, would say that this is where the legacy of Tory economic policies has taken us.

Even waving the fear of 15% interest rates at people doesn't sit comfortably with handing interest rate policy over to the Bank of England and saddling the UK with rates which are twice as high as most of our competitors. Nor does it acknowledge that the 15% interest rate crisis was when Britain had locked the pound into the absurdity of the ERM. Bill Morris was too kind to point out that this is what, in principle, the Chancellor still wants to do over Maastricht and the Single Currency.

Thanks in particular to work done in UNISON, the trade unions are beginning to cotton on to the fact that the (much hated) Private Finance Initiative (PFI) is a necessary part of the Maastricht obligations. If government debt and government borrowing have to be reduced then private funding of public services will have to replace public funding. The constraints on public welfare spending will have to be further squeezed by the obligation to pay out (higher) interest charges on private finance before paying workers' wages. None of this bodes well for public sector spending, public sector pay or public sector security.

ALL THE "golden rules" we are being urged to live our lives by are no more than the rules of European monetarism. So, when trade union leaders call out for more economic intervention, progressive taxation, job protection and public investment, they are voicing a fundamental challenge to the world of de-regulated, free-marketeering that Thatcher helped create and which Labour has inherited. It is foolish or disingenuous to suggest that a Single Currency can shelter Europe from the destructive powers that unrestricted capitalism currently enjoys. The answer lies not in a currency (nor even in interest rates) but in a willingness to re-regulate capital markets and to place overriding social obligations on the way capital is allowed to function.

When Labour ministers look at the redundancies that have already been announced they will know that many are in the high-tech, high-skill areas that were supposed to be our economic salvation. To suggest that these job losses can be set off against the new jobs created in Britain over the last year is just fatuous. Most are at the other end of the scale – short term, low skilled, and low paid by any standards. Workers moving from Windows 98 to cleaning windows 99 are hardly likely to see this as the embodiment of social success or economic achievement. It is a measure simply of their marginality in the new world order.

When trade union leaders strike out and reject such a view of the world, they are only saying publicly what the Party has been saying privately since the election. When the public threw the Tories out in May 97 it wasn't because they had tired of the packaging of exploitative free market economics. Society had tired of the contents (and its consequences). Now it is beginning to say so.

This is not a warning to be spun away in sound bites. It is just a warning. Labour should heed it well.

LLB page 15



Supernurses – supercon

Helen Wetherley, UNISON staff side secretary at Kingston Hospital, and a nurse, reports.

TONY BLAIR HAS announced that the Government is to create new supernurse posts in the NHS to recognise and reward experienced nurses who don't want to lose patient contact in order to further their careers. Blair seems to think that this measure will inspire thousands of new hopefuls to join the profession, as well as the jaded souls currently struggling to provide adequate care to patients.

The Government obviously recognises that nursing recruitment and retention is a big problem – in fact it has reached crisis level. In many areas we are seeing beds closed due to staff shortages, and the frightening consequences of that for people who need the service don't need to be spelt out. Unions have already told Labour, as if it didn't know, that pay is the issue they need to address – piddling around with impressive titles isn't fooling anyone. Yes, Labour have inherited a rotten legacy from the Tories but inherited it they have, and in failing to meet the hopes and expectations in them, they are rapidly exacerbating the problem.

The vibe we're picking up now is that the mood among traditionally docile nurses is heading towards strike action. Our history shows that industrial action is the only thing that has got us better pay, and nurses know that pay is the most important factor in solving the crisis we're in. Furthermore, what incenses nurses is that managers are refusing to publicly acknowledge the scale of the problem, so there seems to be no end in sight.

These people will not strike for their own ends but because they cannot see any other way to make a positive difference to the service. I believe that our union leaders have a responsibility, not only to their members but to the public, to start building for strike action, if that's what it takes, to highlight the disaster we are facing before it's too late.

I'm scared. I'm scared for my family and for everyone who believes the NHS is there to provide for their care when they need it. Because the NHS can't do so, and without serious action now it never will.

Tameside's uncaring plc

Tony Dale
Manchester Central CLP

THE LATEST demonstration in support of the sacked Tameside care workers took place in Ashton, Greater Manchester on 12th September. Four hundred joined the demonstration in support of the 250 sacked workers.

The dispute was sparked in January when Tameside Care Group served the workforce with 90 day notices to terminate their existing contracts, impose cuts in pay and holidays and to abolish sick pay. The workforce voted overwhelming for strike action in a ballot organised by their union UNISON. Tameside Care refused to withdraw the notices and the strike started on 30th March. The 90 day notices became effective in May – sacking all the strikers.

Privatisation of Tameside's care homes lies behind the dispute. In 1990 eleven residential homes and one nursing home were transferred to a company which later became Tameside Care. Pay and conditions have been under attack ever since. The privatisations have resulted in a worse service to residents – who back the strikers.

Tameside Care is refusing to reinstate the sacked workforce or even offer them any other form of reasonable settlement. Tameside's Labour Council has a major shareholding in the company and Labour MP Andrew Bennett is a trustee.

- The strike is now entering its sixth month and deserves your support. Messages of support and donations (payable to "UNISON Tameside Branch") to: Tameside UNISON, 29 Booth Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 7LB.

Tameside care workers at the TUC.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON.

CWU elections

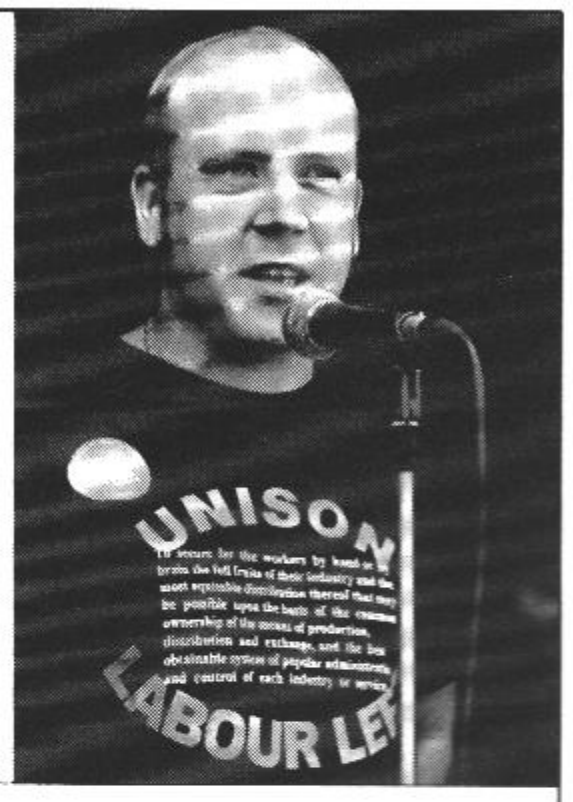
The new senior Deputy General Secretary for the Communication Workers Union is former Joint General Secretary, Tony Young. Only 23% of the union's 300,000 members voted. Broad Left candidate, Bill Fry, gained a respectable 29.53% of the vote. The main support for Fry was in postal branches; Young predominated in BT engineering branches. A third candidate, Jenny Ainsley gained 21.38% predominately from the operator and ancillary branches within BT.

The lesson to be learnt by the left is to have a unified strategy across all sections of the union in future campaigns.

LLB page 16

the Geoff Martin column

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



● I understand that a bunch of greasers calling themselves the "Second Term Group" are planning to hold a fringe meeting at the Labour Party Conference advocating the end of the Party/union link. Good, I'll certainly be there, if I can find out where it is, as it makes quite a change for these clowns to operate in the public arena rather than skulking around in the Millbank shadows.

Mind you, it's easy to understand why these self-styled "Blairite shock troops" are feeling a bit cocky at the moment. With Stephen Byers at the Treasury and Mandelson himself at the DTI two of the biggest enemies of organised labour are now in key Cabinet positions. These have got to be the worst government appointments from the trade union point of view since Thatcher handed the employment brief to Tebbit back in 1979.

It would be easy to dismiss the "Second Term Group" and their fellow travellers as a bit of a joke. Some in the trade union movement do and it's a big mistake. They're busy spreading their poison and they need to be taken on and taken out.

A revival of the Keep the Link campaign is long overdue.

● Who was surprised to find that Blairite lobbyists have been working for Murdoch on knocking the few remaining teeth out of the *Fairness at Work* legislation? Even the news that some unions are lobbing money at the same firm of lobbyists while they're busy working for the devil himself shouldn't raise too many eyebrows. There are plenty of Blairites who've parachuted themselves into full time jobs in the unions who despise the ordinary members and see it as their job to deliver organised labour bound and gagged at the Number 10 doorstep. If they can slide a few grand from the members subs to their former mates from the LCC while they're at it then so much the better.

● Get ready to see New Labour exposed in all it's sleazy glory over the Murdoch/ Man Utd. business. The future of football is in the hands of Peter Mandelson and I just cannot think of a scarier prospect than that. No one has grovelled longer and harder to Murdoch over the years than Mandelson and yet he will now sit in judgement over whether or not the dirty digger should be allowed to destroy the beautiful game. Don't get me wrong, I'm not for a moment suggesting that football is currently run by a bunch of benevolent philanphropists for the benefit of the fans. Of course it's not but the Murdoch takeover of the Mancs is all about creating a monopoly combining both the purchaser and the provider. That's exactly what the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is there to prevent.

Will it? With Mandelson at the helm? Not a chance – but at least New Labour will be flushed out as a bunch of hangers-on to the coat tails of global, *laissez faire* capitalism. Millions of football loving men and women up and down the country will know that they've been conned. Frankly, if Mandelson and the rest of the Cabinet fail to act it will be an even more stark example of New Labour ditching everything the labour movement stands for than the axing of Clause IV.

I have no doubt that Party members will be up in arms and our job is to harness that anger in every single constituency.

● Super-nurses, super-teachers, super-cops even super-caretakers now! What's going to be the next wheeze from super-smarm and his groupies? Does the Government seriously believe that anyone working in the public sector is actually taken in by all this crap?

Fact: the public services in London are collapsing as staff are driven out by low pay, low morale and a Government that's sold public sector workers down the Thames and hasn't even got the decency to admit it when they've been rumbled.

Nursing turnover in inner-London has now hit 27%. That means that hospitals are having to recruit their entire nursing workforce every three and a half years when the nurses themselves simply aren't there to recruit. Is it any wonder that hundreds of hospital beds are closed because of staff shortages?

Has nobody bothered to tell Frank Dobson that you can't "create" 15,000 new nursing posts when the nurses he expects to fill them just don't exist. What's he going to do – grow them in his airing cupboard?

● I was delighted to hear John Edmonds talking about strikes in the public sector over the squeeze on pay while the greedy bastards are stuffing their bank accounts a la Derek Draper. But the time for talk is over. We need to convince our members that a serious fight over pay is long overdue.

Industrial action doesn't just drop out of the sky. It needs to be built for, campaigned for and worked for and sometimes, once the idea takes hold, it generates a momentum all of its own as happened in the NHS back in 1988.

People are getting angry and that anger will boil over at some point. At the moment too many angry people are choosing to walk away from the public sector all together because they can't see any way forward. That's the challenge for the public sector unions.

● Is it any surprise that the Viagra story is generating so much heat when the media is dominated by white, middle-aged, well-paid men? You can bet your boots that there wouldn't be such a fuss if it was a cure for sickle cell anaemia or thalassemia that was being rationed!

LEADING WITH THE LEFT

What is behind

Hillel Ticktin, Reader in Russian and East European Studies, University of Glasgow, explains why the transition to capitalism in Russia seems to have failed.

THE ECONOMIC crisis in Russia is best regarded as a trigger for the world wide decline in stock markets and currencies rather than as its cause. It would be hard to see it otherwise as Russia has been in a sharp economic crisis for around ten years, since the Law on the State Enterprise, passed under Gorbachev, first introduced the USSR to market disciplines. On the other side, it is clear that the world is in oversupply over a large range of goods and commodities and the Russian debt default looks like the first of many to come.

In 1992 Yeltsin removed controls over prices and started a rapid de-nationalisation. Technically, privatisation is largely completed and has gone beyond countries like Poland or the Czech Republic in its extent. But while the latter countries appear to have made a limited transition to capitalism, Russia and the Ukraine have failed to do so on most criteria. Production is below half of what it was in 1990, itself not a good year. Investment is below one fifth of what it was in 1990 and down to around 5% on that year in the metal and engineering industries. Living standards have dropped catastrophically to between half and 20% of earlier levels.

Indeed, since workers may not be paid for months or years and what they receive is often a pittance, around $50 to $100 per month or less, exact comparisons are futile. Some sectors of the population have suffered even worse. Women, pensioners and the intelligentsia are in an appalling position. Pensions are not paid and the old can die of starvation or neglect. Women have often lost their jobs, under conditions where creches and nurseries have closed down or begun to charge unaffordable sums. Education and health workers have frequently struck, usually for the simple payment of salaries. Many research workers have lost their jobs, emigrated or been reduced to penury because of the poor or non-existent pay.

Few societies have suffered such a massive decline in such a short time in the absence of war. The wonder is that there has been no insurrection until now. In short, society is massively unstable and the future unpredictable. This much has been obvious for at least six of the almost seven years since the USSR came to an end and it has not led to much worry in the West.

What then has changed? The stakes are very different today compared to 1990-2. Then Yeltsin had mass support. He had done a deal with the miners whose strikes had shaken the regime, and the workers supported him against the Communist Party, whom they identified with the managerial elite. Capitalism did not have majority support but a market with egalitarian features was widely supported. Yeltsin was seen to be against privilege which he had attacked inside the Communist Party. In 1992 he promised that the standard of living would rise in six months and when that failed he asked for another six months. By 1998 he is seen as a failure, as dishonest and as someone who has delivered the opposite of what he had promised. In short, he has no popular support. Since he was the main instrument for the "reforms" or the introduction of capitalism, capitalism itself is now in question.

The removal of price controls led to massive inflation which ended only when the printing of money was limited after April 1995. As a result, enterprises had no money and went over to a system of barter, frequently not paying wages. Two-thirds of enterprises work on a system of barter, with money occupying up to 20% of turnover. Of course, this is hardly capitalism or the market. A further consequence is that taxes are either not paid or paid in kind. As a result the budget is massively in deficit and financed by government bonds bought by Russian and overseas banks and institutions.

Up to half of the budget is now devoted to the payment of interest, further exacerbating the problem. Either tax collection had to rise or a default was inevitable. Yet the tax take could not rise as long as the barter economy continued. Furthermore, the criminalisation of the economy made tax collection a dangerous enterprise, with some 41 tax inspectors killed in 1996. Taxation of the ordinary worker, who was either not paid or received a pittance, made little sense. The government turned to the big companies like Gazprom, Chernomyrdin's company, but as it was not paid by many of its customers, like the Ukraine, it too could provide only limited relief before turning against the government itself.

Russia had a surplus on its balance of trade until recently. It is now negative, due to the decline in oil and gas prices. It also had an illegal outflow of an estimated $20 billion a year. It was therefore financing the West, rather than the other way around. The amounts flowing in were very limited and it is only in the last two to three years that it has received substantial sums from the IMF, from its privatisations and from bond issues. Both IBM and Phillips withdrew from production inside Russia, indicating that direct investment in industry was highly constrained. In effect, the elite used the inflow of capital into Russia to place money in Western banks or buy property in London, San Francisco and elsewhere.

Under these circumstances, one has to ask why any sane investor should put their money into Russia. The answer lies in the vast surplus of funds sloshing around the world looking for higher returns than those obtainable on the Western bond markets. At some point, the Russian merry-go-round had to come to an end, either because the Russian state could not pay the interest or because it lacked the foreign currency to pay foreign creditors.

Russia could of course print money as it did until April 1998. This is probably the only short-term solution to avoid a social crisis. It could lead to considerable inflation but it may not do so if the economy expands with state investment, given the massive undercapacity in the Russian economy. This will end the attempt to monetise the economy. That is why the West is opposed to such a solution. The whole transition itself is now at stake. In order to get to the market or capitalism, money had to be introduced as money. Under the old Soviet system, the rouble did not function as money. Contacts, the place in the queue, the position in the social hierarchy, were all more important

LLB page 18

the Russian crisis?

than the rouble for the acquisition of goods. The enterprise, in turn, obtained goods on an organised basis, which was sanctified through the central plan. The rouble played little role for the enterprise. Profits were unimportant and any enterprise could obtain more roubles by requesting them from the bank, particularly to pay wages.

To go over to the market, profits had to play the central role and that meant that the economy had to be monetised. The removal of price controls in 1992, the control over monetary emissions from April 1995 and the balancing of the budget were supposed to achieve this. Instead, the economy has turned to barter, with non-payment of wages and pensions and borrowing of money from the West. President Clinton, Michel Camdessus of the IMF and various economists have argued that the transition failed because it did not go far enough. Therefore, expenditure must be cut, welfare payments reduced, subsidies removed and bankruptcies forced. With enterprises forced to pay their debts in money or go bankrupt, and with mass unemployment under conditions of exceptional austerity, money will be introduced as money. Profitable enterprises will then emerge and the economy will take off.

It is not clear whether Clinton really knows what he is talking about. Camdessus is obliged by his position to talk in these terms. But if these measures were introduced the result would be the opposite of what is intended. There would almost certainly be mass disorder. Whether there would be a coup, an insurrection, the break-up of Russia, the possible emergence of Russian chauvinism with pogroms and wars or all of these is unknown. But it is certain that they are made much more likely by these measures, given the level of mass humiliation over such an extended period. It is also certain that anti-capitalist forces will grow very quickly under these conditions.

It is because the Russian elite realises that such a solution is so dangerous that they are not taking that road. It is also true that sections of the present financial elite are in trouble and need a lifeline. Hence they have joined forces with the industrial elite to produce a Keynesian/protectionist alternative. Indeed if the currency is subject to exchange controls as in China or Malaysia and money is printed, there will be no transition to capitalism but the economy will revive. It will be inefficient, uncompetitive in the world market, and technologically backward but it will provide employment, goods and food for the population for a few years. It cannot last for obvious reasons, and the workers are likely to demand direct control over production sooner rather than later, but it is the only viable option for the Russian elite. They always have the option of decamping to the West if things get out of hand.

The economic crisis in Russia is not likely to come to an end for some years. The present convulsions may well be long gone when stability comes to that part of the world. On the other hand, the transition to capitalism in Russia has almost certainly failed and that creates an extra element of instability in the world economy.

Socialist greetings

from the

Socialist Campaign Group of MPs



Red in High Places

TRIBUNE

Every week, TRIBUNE carries all the news and views from Labour and the Left. TRIBUNE is essential reading for all those keen to keep up to speed with events in the New Labour Government and in touch with the campaign to save the Welfare State.

Tick the top box on the form below and save 20 per cent on the normal three month subscription rate. Or tick the bottom box to receive details of our half price Direct Debit special offer with a free sample copy of TRIBUNE.

❑ I enclose a cheque for £10 made payable to Tribune Publications Ltd and crossed "not transferable" for a three month special offer subscription to TRIBUNE.

❑ Please send me a free sample copy and details of your half price Direct Debit subscription offer.

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Send the completed form to: **Tribune Subscriptions, Freepost, 308 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8BR** (no stamp needed).

Labour Left Briefing

South Africa: the struggle against privatisation

Charlie van Gelderen writes: Organised labour in South Africa, led by the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) is waging a strong campaign against the ANC-headed government's privatisation moves. This is very significant as COSATU is an integral part of the alliance that forms the government. The campaign is a further indication of the growing rift between the government and organised labour.

Among the state owned industries earmarked for privatisation are large sections of the transport network. This includes the world famous Blue Train, the baggage handling services, and parcel carrier. South African Airways is also scheduled for privatisation by next April. Public Enterprises Minister, Stella Sigeau, has announced that several new privatisation initiatives will be announced shortly.

Thousands of council workers took to the streets in Johannesburg in September in protest against the privatisation of municipal services. Services in Johannesburg's five municipalities were seriously disrupted as Municipal Workers' Union and Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union members embarked on a march through the city.

In Durban, delegates to the national conference of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) passed a strong resolution to campaign against school privatisation. SADTU warned that privatisation was already creeping in with the introduction of user fees in schools.

In a press statement on September 9th, COSATU launched its anti-privatisation campaign. The statement contends that "The ANC government was voted into office on the promise that they would bring a better life to all South Africans. We believe they need to honour this promise and take responsibility for delivering basic services to the people of this country".

COSATU's opposition to privatisation has been stimulated by fears aroused by the proposed privatisation of the water industry. It cites a report from the French Audit Court, which was highly critical of their water privatisation reporting widespread irregularities and corruption.

In France, the price rose by a national average of 47.7% from 1990 to 1994. In Argentina, the connection fee was so high that communities continued to live without water until they were granted a five year period to pay the connection fee. The French owners, Lyonnaise Des Eaux, simply increased the price of water to compensate.

According to Rick Allen, director of consulting and finance at Price Waterhouse Coopers, in the first six months of this year, global revenues from all privatisations amounted to $45 billion.

The unions do not believe that privatisation will do anything toward solving South Africa's critical economic ills – 37.6% of those of an employable age are looking for jobs. Privatisation can only lead to more workers being thrown on the scrap heap and increasing profits for the global investors.

South African abortion rights under threat

SOUTH AFRICA has had one of the most liberal abortion laws in the world for almost a year now. In areas of high population it is already having an effect on the previous high rates of illegal abortion. Clearly, it is much too liberal for some and earlier this year the law was challenged by three organisations as "unconstitutional" in the high court.

All three were fundamentalist Christian groups – Christian Lawyers, Christians for Truth in South Africa and United Christian Action. They are very small organisations, two are based in Kwa Zulu Natal, and have connections with international anti-choice groups.

They lost their case but an appeal is expected, probably promoted by Doctors for Life.

Join the Troops Out Movement

Campaign For British Withdrawal From Ireland

The Troops Out Movement has two demands

Troops Out Now

Self Determination for the Irish people as a whole

We use the current happenings in the North of Ireland to focus our work on the bankruptcy of British rule in Ireland.

We campaign:

- **for equality and justice**
- **against job discrimination**
- **against sectarian marches**
- **for the release of all political prisoners**
- **for the disbanding of the RUC**
- **against repressive legislation**

We organise meetings, protests, pickets, demonstrations, speaking tours, street stalls, etc. and an annual delegation to Belfast.

Return the slip below to: Troops Out Movement, PO Box 1032, Birmingham B12 8BZ. Tel. 0961-361-518

I would like to join the Troops Out Movement and send a cheque/postal order to the value of (please tick) unwaged £4 ❑, waged £13 ❑, high waged £21 ❑.
I would like more information on TOM ❑

Name ..... **Tel** .....

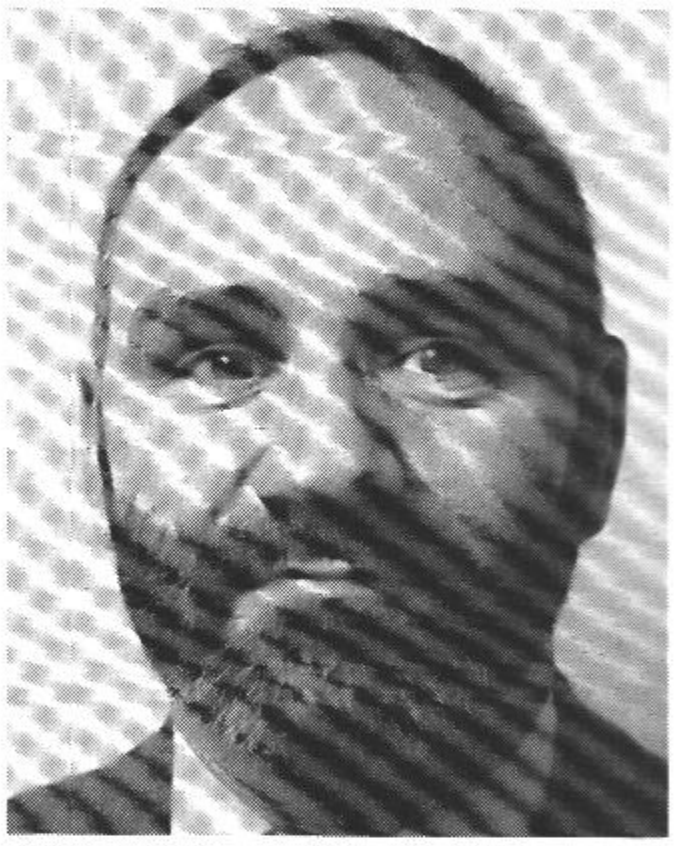
Address .....

.....

LLB page 20

Seizing the day

Sinn Fein's Alex Maskey calls on Tony Blair not to shore up the union.



Alex Maskey

1998 HAS brought tragedy, despair, hope and optimism to the people of Ireland and I know to many people in Britain also. Indeed, observers from around the world have keenly focused on developments in the Irish Peace Process.

When Gerry Adams came face to face with Ian Paisley in the Assembly – perhaps with naivety but certainly with an honest optimism he told him: "I want to be your friend". But hope and wishful thinking alone won't unlock the potential for peace represented by recent steps forward in the long walk to equality and justice for all the people of both these islands.

To really seize the day, we need a commitment from all sides to decommission the mindset of yesteryear and come together to build an entirely new dispensation based on equal rights and equal respect. Sinn Fein will not shirk its responsibilities in shouldering its share of the burden of making peace but neither should any shade of unionism be allowed to hide indefinitely behind the skirts of the "No" unionists.

The summer past has brought its own horrific share of reminders of the cost of squandering the opportunity now presenting itself. During the Siege of Garvaghy and Drumcree Mark IV, hundreds of nationalists were put out of their homes and the Quinn children burnt to death. August brought us the awful carnage of Omagh. Can any serious politician really wish to return to the bitter past rather than move forward to a new tomorrow?

Yet obstacles remain. Decommissioning, the invention of the beleaguered John Major during his desperate attempts to cling onto power with the assistance of the unionists, has once again raised its head. Ulster Unionist spokesman Ken Maginnis has described this as "a post-condition" to the Good Friday Agreement which Sinn Fein signed in good faith and with the full expectation that all parties, including the unionists, would not go back on their word.

The British Government must now play a leadership role in ensuring that the "No" unionists do not succeed in their attempts to wreck the Agreement by bullying David Trimble into going back on his requirement to take part in an Executive with Sinn Fein ministers. The defeat of bigotry, injustice and inequality must not be undone. It is incumbent on Tony Blair to play a proactive role which aims to resolve the causes of conflict rather than shoring up the union. He, more than anyone else, holds the key to the ending of discrimination by ensuring a fully inclusive and democratic process which enables all shades of opinion to be fully involved on the basis of equality.

For nationalists and republicans, it is crucial that there is no prevaricating on those all-island aspects of the Agreement such as the North-South Ministerial Council and the Cross-Border Implementation Bodies, the establishment of the Executive, and appropriate representation for Northern nationalists in the body politic of the South through references and voting rights in Presidential elections as well as participation in the Dail.

Nationalists and republicans are at one in their conviction that fundamental change must flow from the Good Friday Agreement. Second-class citizenship must end. Partition must end with national self-determination. We must work to ensure the international community does not become a passive observer. We want you to put your shoulders to the wheel also to ensure our new beginning starts today. We want to work with our unionist counterparts in full and equal partnership. We offer the open hand of friendship. For the cause of freedom, justice and peace, for democracy and all our children, it is a hand I truly hope they embrace.

TOM delegation to Belfast

Mark Donoghue reports: I was lucky enough to go to Belfast with the Troops Out Movement in August. The delegation was a mixture of trade unionists, Labour Party members and people who were interested in the situation in Ireland. We went on several excursions. We visited a prisoner in Long Kesh, we went to the Garvaghy Road in Portadown, we went to Conway Mill and were given a talk by Sinn Fein Councillor Tom Hartley.

The visit to the Garvaghy Road will stay with me for ever. I had not realised how bad the social conditions of the Garvaghy Road were. The people of the Garvaghy are lucky to have as their leader Brendan MacCionnaith. He is a man of great courage and he has a masterful understanding of the political situation and the history of the conflict. The delegation also went on the annual Anti-Internment March.

The visit was one of the most important events in my life. I realised for the first time that the nationalist community has suffered from political attempts to destroy their self esteem and morale. I witnessed a great confidence in the Sinn Fein leadership and a sense that there is no alternative to the Good Friday Agreement. The armed struggle is over and people no longer want a return to the cycle of violence of the Troubles.

I saw a community that knew where it was going and how it was going to get there. A community that was proud of its past, committed to the present political strategy and looking forward to a future free from violence and sectarianism. The political awareness and insight of the nationalist community was amazing.

During part of my visit I had the pleasure of staying with Eoin O'Broin, the Sinn Fein Youth National Organiser. Eoin's insight and intelligence was incredible. I expect to read about him in the future. The delegation is a great experience and I can recommend it to anyone who has ever thought of going to Belfast or the six counties. ❑

LLB page 21

Ethical foreign policy or business as usual?

Steve Hogan

WHEN Robin Cook became Foreign Secretary in May 1997 it seemed that the winds of change were at last going to blow through the corridors of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Within days he committed Britain to an ethical foreign policy. Cook's Mission Statement made promotion of human rights its central pillar. A few weeks later came the ground breaking statement in Parliament that the Government would no longer "permit the sale of arms to regimes that might use them for internal repression or international aggression".

As almost eighteen months later we approach the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is obvious that Robin Cook's changes were cosmetic with business as usual at the Foreign Office. His ethical foreign policy amounted to little more than a PR exercise.

In spring, TV news programmes showed British-supplied water cannons, armed personnel carriers and tanks being used to repress pro-democracy protests in Jakarta. The Government allowed the delivery of Hawk aircraft to Indonesia, notwithstanding incontrovertible evidence that such aircraft were used in the genocide of the East Timorese resulting in the deaths of over 200,000 people.

Despite Cook's historic statement on arms sales, the Government approved 66 licences for export of equipment to Indonesia, including small arms, ammunition and armoured vehicles. Only six export licences were refused and 15 were granted during the unrest in March to May of this year.

Turkey is infamous for its human rights abuses: trade unions and human rights organisations are routinely brutally suppressed, while the military engages in aerial bombardment, the razing of villages and constant incursions into Iraq in its systematic repression of the Kurds. This has not prevented the Government allowing the UK company Heckler and Koch to provide the Turkish military with a new generation of HK33 5.56 mm assault rifles by setting up a production line in Turkey. Nor did Turkey's record of internal repression and international aggression stop Turkish and British officials signing a defence industry co-operation agreement when George Robertson visited the country this September. This came on top of an earlier $160m deal for a British company to supply the Turkish army with radio equipment.

There is a marked difference between what Labour says and what it does. In opposition Derek Fatchett promised unequivocally that Labour would impose sanctions on Burma. The Burmese Generals continue to harass and imprison pro-democracy activists including National Labour Democracy MPs. Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, herself under house arrest, has called for full economic sanctions on Burma, but the Government refuses to impose them. It is also backing the EU's legal battle against sanctions on Burma by 21 US cities who are refusing to give contracts to companies which trade with the Burmese regime.

Behind all this is the commercial interests of the British company, Premier Oil, which has substantial interests in Burma. The Government claims not to encourage trade, investment and tourism with Burma, but is not prepared to do anything which restricts the profits of Premier Oil.

Since 1945 Atlanticism has been the keystone of British foreign policy, and this Government remains committed to that principle. From Blair's backing of US missile attacks on Afghan villages and Sudanese pharmaceutical factories to the supporting of sanctions which have caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, it is clear that democracy and human rights come second to aiding and abetting US imperialism.

Atlanticism is why Britain has been at the forefront in pushing for the eastward expansion of NATO, ratifying membership of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. Expanding NATO rather than promoting peace and security through the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe ensures that the US keeps a foothold on European soil, so remaining a power in Europe.

In 1996 Britain, with France and Germany, established the concept of a European Security Defence Identity. This new NATO structure effectively entrusts the US to protect the interests of all the great powers so that they do not need their own independent capabilities. Britain's nuclear weapons can only be used with US compliance since they depend upon the American satellite guidance system.

NATO expansion opens up huge new markets for American and British arms' companies to exploit. It is less convenient for the citizens of NATO's new members facing huge cutbacks on state spending on basic social needs to pay for the military equipment required to bring their military into line.

Britain's geopolitical interests for years meant turning a blind eye to gross human rights violations in the Middle East. This has not changed significantly in the last 18 months. There is little evidence of government efforts to discuss human rights and democracy with the brutal regimes of the Gulf States. The worst offenders are Saudi Arabia and Bahrain where pro-democracy activists and dissidents face arbitrary detention, torture and death for their political opposition.

The UK is prepared to ban arms sales or impose sanctions on some countries because of concerns about human rights and good governance while providing military training and equipment or investment in other countries with equally appalling records. Despite Robin Cook's much trumpeted ethical foreign policy, human rights activists have learnt that when they hear Government Ministers and Foreign Office spokespersons talk of "constructive engagement" as their preferred tactic this is merely Orwellian doublespeak for "business as usual".

What counts with New Labour is Britain's geopolitical or commercial interests. When these come into play ethics can be conveniently and quietly forgotten.

● Steve Hogan works as a parliamentary researcher for Jeremy Corbyn MP.

LLB page 22

New drive for the MAI

After the successful campaign earlier this year to delay the signing of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, western governments promised more consultation with concerned pressure groups. Instead they have stepped up secret negotiations. Caroline Dumonteil reports.

DESPITE THE announcement of a six-month delay in talks on the MAI following last October's demonstration outside the OECD, negotiations designed to get agreement on the more controversial issues have in reality never stopped. The New Transatlantic Marketplace, also apparently rejected in Paris, was agreed the following May, merely by changing the venue to London and the name to Transatlantic Economic Partnership. The meeting, hosted by Tony Blair, took place without any public discussion or publicity. The OECD have also published *Open Markets Matter*, a piece of blatant propaganda, with its biased use of statistics and dubious assumptions. which marks a low point in the reputation of the organisation.

A pattern is emerging in which informal meetings are held in various capitals where the resident ambassadors are used as proxies for the OECD states. One was held in Geneva between the NGOs, followed by a second one between UN officials, the NGOs and the trade unions. Participants were shocked by what they felt was UN's adoption of a pro-big business position.

Another meeting took place in London at the DTI, also involving resident ambassadors. This was to discuss, informally of course, the accession of developing countries to the MAI. One official was concerned that no announcement was made about the discussion as no decisions were taken. The meeting was only an informal "chat". Clearly someone somewhere has taken a decision on the strategy underlying these meetings. The goal is said to be 'dialogue with' civil society. Yet they are mostly unpublicised, closed and run on the assumption that there is a consensus on the philosophy of the free market.

Across the Atlantic, various attempts have been made to protect citizens from the impact of international trade agreements. In the US an amendment put to the vote in Congress aiming to protect state, local and tribal laws from the provisions of the World Trade Organisation was lost by only 28 votes. In Canada, the Canadian Liberty Committee has launched a petition to stop the country entering the MAI because this is tantamount to selling off its sovereignty. Under the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Canadian government has been forced to back down in its case to protect its right to ban the petrol additive MMT. Despite new evidence that the manganese it contains damages the nervous system, the government has had to settle out of court with Ethyl Corporation for nearly $20 million.

Some indication that the demands of the anti-MAI movement are raising hackles was shown by the crude tactics of the Geneva police on 27th August against a seminar on globalisation and resistance organised by People's Global Action. Speakers at the seminar included international economists, representatives of people's movements, workers from human rights and other organisations and journalists. Susan George of the Observatoire de la Mondialisation had spent the whole of the previous day lecturing there.

After a week of surveillance by police on the ground and by helicopter, at 7.30 am about 40 of them raided the building, searched the belongings of participants, confiscated property and arrested all 50 people there. They were from 17 different countries, and included a six-year old child. During the raid, the police admitted that their action was illegal and were heard using racist and sexist language, including anti-semitic comments. Though most of the property was eventually returned and the detainees released, this stupid action shows how the critique of the impact of globalisation is unsettling those trying to push through trade liberalisation measures as the world economy slides into recession.

Meanwhile, moves are being made to pass some of the MAI's aims to other international financial organisations, such as giving the IMF the role of policing international trade agreements. The US has suggested that if the MAI cannot be completed within the OECD, it will be forced to pass the matter to the World Trade Organisation, although it would really prefer it to remain within the OECD, since this would give more comprehensive "investor protection".

The anti-MAI campaign continues with a week of action in all participating countries at the end of September ahead of an international gathering in Paris in October to coincide with the next OECD ministerial meeting.

LLB AGM

The left and the Labour Government

11am to 5pm
Saturday 14th November 1998

Somers Town Community Centre,
150 Ossulston Street, London NW1
Speakers include: Liz Davies, Cathy Jamieson,
Ken Livingstone MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Geoff Martin

- **Conference fringe meeting – *Reclaim the Labour Party!* 8pm, Monday 28th September, St John the Evangelist Church, Church Street, Blackpool (opposite Winter Gardens). Liz Davies, Mark Seddon, Ken Livingstone MP, Christine Shawcroft, Geoff Martin, Michelle Gildernew, (Sinn Fein). £1**

- ***Quiz night and social.* 8.30pm, Thursday 1st October. Whites Bar, 15 Cedar Square, Blackpool. Prizes, raffle. £3.50/£2**

LLB page 23

Exclusive: US lies on Sudan bombing exposed

Mike Marqusee reports on scientific research exposing US-British claims about chemical weapons manufacture in Sudan.

A LITTLE-NOTICED article in an American magazine casts grave doubts on the credibility of the US justification for the recent bombing of a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan. After the bombing, US officials claimed that the presence of a chemical called EMPTA in a soil sample taken from the area proved the factory was producing VX nerve gas, and therefore justified the lethal Cruise missile attack.

However, the 31st August issue of *Chemical & Engineering News*, which is published by the American Chemical Society, makes it clear that no such inference can reasonably be drawn from the presence of EMPTA in a soil sample.

In an article entitled, "Soil sample is key to US missile strike in Sudan", *C&E News* points out that EMPTA (O-ethyl methylphosphonothioic acid) is a Schedule 2 compound under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). This means that it is recognised as a 'dual-use' compound with a variety of legitimate uses unrelated to weapons manufacture. According to *C&E News*, EMPTA is used "in making fungicides, pesticides, and antimicrobial agents." This would confirm the Sudanese Government's claims about the nature of the factory.

Under the CWC, of which the US is a signatory, compounds used only to produce chemical munitions are classified as 'Schedule 1'. Schedule 3 compounds are 'dual use' but generally used in large quantities for other purposes. Since US negotiators have agreed that EMPTA is a schedule 2, not a Schedule 1 compound, and since it is known to be regularly used for legitimate commercial purposes, US government statements claiming that its presence in a soil sample justified passing a death sentence on civilian workers in Sudan was clearly bogus.

C&E News reporters pressed the US government for details on the soil sample. According to the magazine, officials refuse to provide information on: "1. where the soil sample was collected (in or outside the plant); 2. who collected it; 3. what the sample's chain of custody had been; 4. how much EMPTA was in the sample; 5. what other chemicals were also detected; 6. what lab analyzed the sample."

A research chemist in the USA has informed *LLB* that in the absence of such details, no scientific conclusions could possibly be reached regarding the sample. "No US court would accept a soil sample in evidence, for example in an environmental law case, unless all these questions were answered," she said. "Yet it appears that the US government considers such scanty and dubious evidence sufficient to pass a death sentence on people in a foreign country."

In August, Defence Secretary George Robertson was quick to proffer unequivocal support to the US action on the basis that US intelligence had irrefutable "proof" that the factory is Sudan was manufacturing chemical weapons. Robertson should be pressed to withdraw that false assertion. *LLB* urges Labour MPs to secure an immediate inquiry into the whole affair.

Where now for Brazil's Workers Party?

Mary Hutchison, a Brazil specialist, academic and human rights activist, who researched the PT for five years, fears the worst for the Workers' Party (PT) in the forthcoming presidential elections.

THE MAIN CHALLENGER to incumbent President, Fernando Henrique Cardoso in October's Brazilian general election is the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT) candidate, Luis "Lula" da Silva, as it has been in the previous two elections of 1989 and 1994.

The PT has broken the mould of Brazilian party politics. Since its foundation in 1980, the PT has doubled its number of elected representatives at all levels at each election. In 1994 it won two governorships and became the fifth largest party in Congress.

However, in the face of the relative success of Cardosa's currency stabilisation plan the PT is unlikely to win. It has also abandoned hope of reversing privatisations which it opposed, settling instead for a moratorium on new ones. On the other hand the real, still shadowing the US dollar, is overvalued. Domestic manufacturing has suffered and interest rates have leapt to 50% in an attempt to stem capital flow. With unemployment running at 8% both Lula and Cardoso have made employment generation a lynchpin of their manifestos. Cardoso's achilles heel is his neglect of social issues. This is the PT's strong point. Cardoso concentrated on holding the exchange rate and instituting constitutional reform while the public health system collapsed, forest fires raged in Amazonia and thousands of landless peasants marched on Brasilia.

The PT has found itself, however unfairly, wrong-footed by Cardoso's pretensions to the creation of a new form of social democracy in the region. He engaged with Blair's "Third Way" project. Peter Mandelson, on a recent trade trip, publicly attacked the PT as too "backward looking". Similar disregard was shown by Nelson Mandela, despite the PT's political association with the ANC.

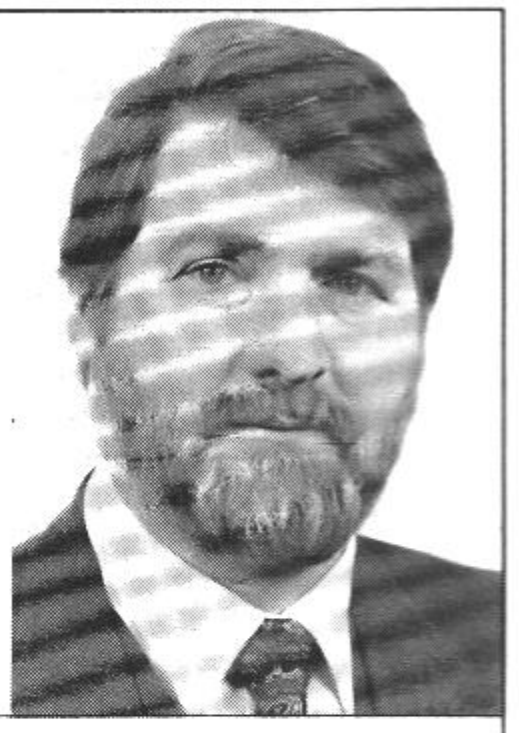
Alliances with other parties of the centre-left will also not help in the elections. Leonel Brizola, leader of the left populist Democratic Labour Party (Partido Democratico Trabalhista) is running as Lula's deputy. His nationalist rants have been damaging.

The PT faces a watershed. Lula is unlikely to run again. He has been the party's figurehead since he led the Metalworkers Union – which initiated the PT's foundation. The PT will need to regain the direction it has lost in the last four years. If it manages to hold on to, or increase, its total of deputies and governors, defeat in the Presidential elections will not undermine its importance as a voice for the poor in Brazil, and its incalculable contribution to Brazilian politics.

LLB page 24

the Michael Hindley column

Michael Hindley MEP comments on Labour's Conference Document on Europe.



MY ANNUAL conference documents arrived in a neat plastic wallet with the logo of the *Daily Express* on the cover and an exhortation to "express yourself today". Inside, the guide to the fringe has a sleeve proclaiming "your conference 98 fringe dayplanner is attached with the compliments of UPS". UPS was earlier this year locked in an acrimonious dispute with the unions in the USA about their plans to cut wages and reduce all employees' employment rights. UPS is "pleased to sponsor" the fringe guide, happy to be, I presume, operating in a Britain which Blair describes as the least regulated labour market in Europe.

The section of the National Policy Forum's report to Conference on Europe is Pangloss meeting Saatchi and Saatchi; Voltaire's famous line that all is for the best in this the best of all possible worlds is a neat paraphrase of this banal document.

Though I do not expect to read the historical truth in such reports, I am still taken aback by lies. On "Common Foreign Policy" we read that the EU under the UK Presidency reacted "quickly, effectively and in a united way to the international crisis in Iraq..." In reality the other heads of state were furious that Blair gave immediate and unconditional support to Clinton's threats of bombing Iraq without even consulting his fellow Europeans.

The section on Employment and Economic Reform will certainly have pleased our sponsors and could have been written by them. Our triumph during the Presidency of the EU was that "our ideas of...adaptable labour market were endorsed" and now we must create the "right environment for competitiveness to flourish". This is Newspeak for Blair continuing to be the Thatcherite battering-ram for British capitalism to further erode the social-democratic consensus model of economic planning. It is noticeable that the German SPD is taking some time and effort now to distance itself from the Blairite worship of market economics.

The document makes quite a fuss about "opening up Europe", not to be understood as opening up our borders to refugees, economic or otherwise; indeed elsewhere in the now obligatory "checklist" of achievements we read that Labour's record has "maintained Britain's frontier controls." No, opening up means "transparency", presumably to match the *Daily Express* sponsored cover. Labour "has got Europe working on the things that our people actually care about". This is not a reference to the 18 million unemployed. Our achievements already include a "record number of open meetings of the Council," EU documents on the Internet and the "on-line information service about the EU."

ACTUALLY IT is not "transparency" that our people actually want – our people actually want jobs and a halt to the decline of the welfare state. The trade unions and manufacturing industry now share a critique of the monetary policies followed by New Labour at the behest of City interests. There is a distinct possibility of forging an alliance for jobs against a high pound and high interest rates; however Blair is ideologically set against such a Wilsonian coalition and in Gordon Brown he has a Chancellor of Snowden's monetary orthodoxy. Our vision for Europe has no critical appraisal of a Single Currency.

I agree with one very important commitment in this document, and that is to support a rapid expansion of the EU. With depressing inevitability, the document fails to spell out the full implications of this. Blair is clearly following the Thatcherite line that there should be no more transfers of powers to the European level and there should be no more money, for the ceiling of the EU's budget will be the same until 2006. This means that the absorption of poorer countries in the east will have to be done within the present budget which means less money than the poorer regions of this country have been used to receiving.

The implication for regional planning and local government, often Labour-led, are profound. Since 1979 a string of Labour-led authorities have beaten a successful path to Brussels to obtain compensation to offset the cuts from our own national treasury. At the same time many of those Labour politicians have been swept up with optimism about a "Europe of the regions", cross-border schemes to circumvent tight and blinkered national treasuries. The idea that New Labour, with its fiscal orthodoxy and centralised state, will allow such local initiatives to continue is illusory. There are very important questions here about the future of Europe which sadly find no echo in what could easily pass for the chairman's report to the shareholders of Blair plc.

Ilford South CLP sends greetings to Conference delegates

Towards a democratic Labour Party

Blair PLC – shareholders' report

New Labour

Going back to Keynes won't help – we need a radically new economic approach, argues Robert Deans, North East Cambridgeshire CLP.

NEW LABOUR rejects the "totalising ideologies" of the left and the right and is claiming instead to be building a "new coalition of ideas" at the "radical centre" of British politics. It claims to be moving debate beyond the realms of narrow party-based sectarianism into a non-political and non-contentious sphere where dogma is replaced by values and confrontation by consensus.

This has resulted in the Party abandoning its traditional egalitarian and redistributive concerns in order to secure the electoral backing of the City, Middle England and the media. The price of this Faustian pact is becoming clearer as New Labour, ever ready to demonstrate its trustworthiness to its new sponsors, pursues policies that are hostile to the interests of its traditional supporters.

New Labour is constructing a political ideology built upon the foundations of economic liberalism, social conservatism and political authoritarianism. It not only legitimises free market capitalism, but also subordinates policy to it. This is no better exemplified than in the twisted rhetoric that seeks to make a virtue out of its proposals for labour market flexibility and welfare reform.

Ideologies are always for someone and for some purpose. Of particular concern are those, like New Labour's, that purport to be for every one equally and which appeal to popular sentiment for their legitimacy. However, beneath the surface lies the reality of who wins and who loses. Other interests exist and hard choices really do have to be made. New Labour is not only failing to challenge the structures and relationships that create inequality and poverty, but is also guilty of protecting them through its espousal of a conflict-free politics that accepts the dominance of global capitalism.

Economic policy has always been a servant of the ideological struggles that rage within and between political parties and the Labour Party is no exception. Two perspectives have dominated this debate: the classical free market view and the Keynesian. The fundamental disagreement between the two centres on the role of government in the management of the economy.

Those on the centre and right of the political spectrum identify with the classical perspective that while capitalist economies are subject to periodic shocks, market forces operate quickly and efficiently to restore equilibrium to its full employment and potential output level. All the principal schools of thought within the classical tradition accept that a) prices and wages are relatively flexible; b) aggregate supply is determined independently of aggregate demand; c) people's price and wage expectations adjust rapidly to shifts in aggregate demand; and therefore d) fiscal and monetary policy is ineffective in changing levels of output, employment and growth. These concepts are essential to the classical argument that government intervention to stabilise the economy is neither necessary nor desirable.

> *"The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist."* J M Keynes.

Those on the left tend to identify with the Keynesian perspective that capitalist economies are inherently unstable and market forces suffer various rigidities and co-ordination failures that prevent them from making the required adjustments to restore equilibrium to its full employment and potential output level. The principal schools of thought within the Keynesian tradition accept that a) prices and wages are inflexible downwards; b) aggregate supply depends on the level of aggregate demand; c) people's expectations of prices and wages adjust slowly to shifts in aggregate demand; and therefore d) fiscal and monetary policy is effective in changing levels of output, employment and growth. Likewise, these concepts are essential to the Keynesian argument that government intervention to stabilise the economy is both necessary and desirable.

Political parties have always tended to embrace theories whose vision of the economy and the role of government are the same as their own. However, when economics is made to serve a political purpose, concerns about the appropriateness of the theories being used can too readily be ignored. Contrary evidence is too often rejected and supportive evidence uncritically accepted. The assumptions upon which the classical and Keynesian perspectives are based are neither acknowledged nor questioned by the political parties who use economics to give credence to their views about the proper role of government.

If economics is to be used constructively by politicians then its hidden structures need to be made more explicit. This raises important questions about how economists conceptualise reality. These issues are of crucial concern as decisions concerning the methodology to be used in economic enquiry affect, if not substantially determine, the theories that are subsequently developed and the policies prescribed.

Thus, while at first sight it appears that the classical and Keynesian perspectives are diametrically opposed to each other, they actually have much more in common than is realised for they are both products of the same paradigm that dominates mainstream economic research. Both rely on general equilibrium theory with its requirement for continuously clearing and competitive markets, rational expectations and maximising behaviour. However, despite major criticisms concerning the realism of its assumptions and its relevance to modern industrial economies, its support within the economics profession and among politicians is undiminished.

The most influential school of thought within mainstream macroeconomics is new classical theory. The analysis is classical because it assumes that wage and price flexibility restore the economy to a position of full employment and potential output. It is new because it assumes that this wage and price flexibility is almost instantaneous due to the operation of rational expectations. In such a world, government cannot, in the

LLB page 26

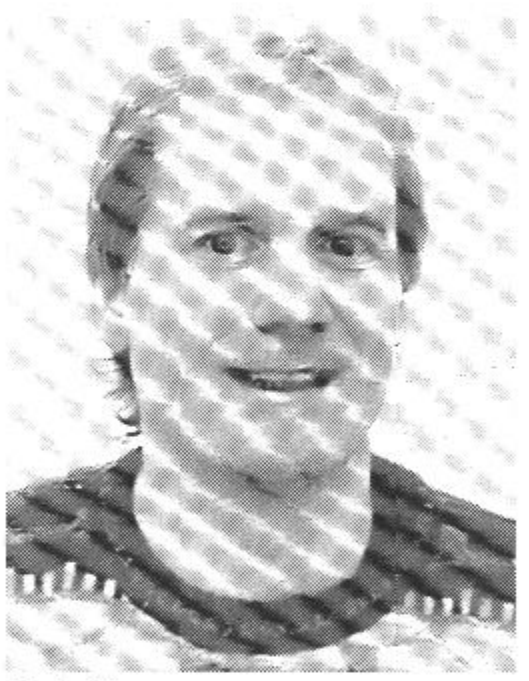
goes to market

short run, directly influence output and employment, either by monetary or fiscal policy, because the effects of any measures taken will be fully anticipated and counteracted.

Instead the role of government is to pursue sound finances through restraining public expenditure, balancing its budget, reducing public debt and controlling inflation. Intervention should be limited to supply side policies designed to improve labour market flexibility and promote liberalisation and deregulation. It is only by enabling the structural adjustments required to compete within the global economy that government can increase the long run level of potential output, reduce the natural rate of unemployment and thereby promote stable growth.

The stranglehold on macroeconomic theory by the classical tradition cannot be underestimated. It confirms the prejudices of economists and politicians on the centre and right that the scope for governments to improve macroeconomic performance through demand side interventions using either monetary or fiscal policy is very limited. Instead governments are urged to put their trust in the self-correcting forces of the market and concentrate on improving the supply side of the economy.

As the political orientation of the Labour Party has shifted from the left through the centre to the right so has its taste for economic policy. It should be no surprise that New Labour is purging the Party of all traces of its former Keynesian profligacy in favour of a more contemporary classical austerity. Indeed, the continued support of business demands that it does so and consequently New Labour now favours free markets with all the zeal of the repentant sinner. The demands of capitalist accumulation are increasingly dictating New Labour's approach to economic and social policy and explain why labour market flexibility and welfare reform have become such a confession of faith and test of orthodoxy among the followers of New Labour's "Third Way".



Rob Deans

For those of us who do not accept New Labour's view the way forward is not to find refuge in the certitudes of a bygone era. The Keynesian tradition has singularly failed to provide an alternative foundation upon which to challenge the assumptions of neoclassical economics. An ideological shift is required which reflects seriously on the methodology most appropriate to economic enquiry and which instead of justifying the enslavement of humanity seeks to emancipate it from the tyranny of inequality and poverty. The urgent task still remains to develop a radical economics that responds to the concerns of those who do not share New Labour's belief in the beneficence of the market to meet the real needs of real people in the real world.

Greetings to all socialists

from Alf Lomas MEP

Let's keep up the fight for socialism

Alf Lomas MEP
Ground Floor
Queensway House
275/285 High Street
Stratford, E15 2TF

Tel: 0181-519 8114

Parliamentary Group of the Party of European Socialists

LLB page 27

The threat of welfare reform

Mark Donoghue, North East Hertfordshire CLP, fears that New Labour attacks on the welfare state have not ended.

NEW LABOUR'S welfare reform programme is about to start again and will cause the left its most difficult task to date. The left has always been at home in defending the welfare state and opposing the policies of governments whose aim is to cut it. We should now also articulate a new approach which is ready to meet the demands of the future.

Our main aim should be to expose the real ideology of New Labour's welfare reform, comprising the Maastricht criteria, EMU and the desire to cut expenditure. The Maastricht criteria, which have seen some of the lowest increases in public spending in the history of the welfare state, are a farce. Countries like Germany, France and Italy all break them but are being allowed to join. New Labour has bought the Maastricht criteria lie and has pursued it even more vigorously than the Conservatives. It is a crime that New Labour is pursuing this policy in spite of the massive poverty and social problems it will cause.

Secondly, economic and monetary union could lead to one of the greatest economic depressions ever. The Central European Bank will control interest rates and will have the power to fine governments if their deficits run outside the criteria. This will lead to severe pressure on public spending. Alexandre Lamfalussy, founder of the Central European Bank, has said that the biggest pressure will be on pensions, health care and social security. This is a declaration of war on the ill, old, unemployed, young and disabled. The last New Labour plank is that of cutting expenditure, due to the acceptance of the Conservative legacy of low government spending and reductions in taxation. Under this Government the level of social security will fall further in proportion to GDP – even after the money added by the Comprehensive Spending Review. The UK is one of the lowest welfare spending countries in Europe, with 24% compared to Sweden (46%) and France (35%).

New Labour would do well to remember what happened to previous Labour governments that cut welfare. Ramsay MacDonald's benefit cuts in 1931 led to Labour being out of office for 14 years. Hugh Gaitskell's cuts to the NHS budget in 1951 led to 13 years in opposition. Roy Jenkins' and Denis Healey's cuts in public spending both led to election defeats. Clearly, history shows that the public will not vote Labour if it cuts public expenditure as it is still seen as the defenders of the poor and the guardians of welfare.

The Welfare Reform Green Paper gave a glimpse of what New Labour really proposes to do. First, it will tackle fraud. It states that there is £4billion worth of fraud in the system. However, this figure changes every few months and the Benefits Integrity Project has yet to unearth any such evidence.

Work is to be prioritised in the New Labour vision of welfare. This could mean low benefit levels in the name of increasing work incentives and stopping benefit for those claiming it for too long.

The second tier pensions which are popular with New Labour are also worrying. New Labour wants a partnership between the public and private sector, inspired by Chile and General Pinochet. In Chile the entire pension system has been privatised. How are people on a low income going to be able to afford a second pension? What we may see emerging from the plans is a return to the pre-World War II welfare state. This was characterised by means-testing of all benefits and benefit controlled by "friendly societies" or local government.

The task of the left must now be to highlight the ideologies and policies of New Labour's approach to welfare reform. We must also begin to articulate our own programme. For a start the welfare state can no longer perform under a monetarist economic policy, as a result of which levels of unemployment have gone up. It also needs to break the effects of poverty traps, caused when people move off benefits and into work only to find they are worse off. Increasing the value of universal benefits can tackle this. Also, the tax and national insurance systems must be made to help those on benefit and on low pay. To help lone parents and women who want to work, but cannot due to the lack of child care resources, the state should provide free or subsidised childcare. This would mean that more women would be able to get employment without losing most of their pay in childcare.

The State Earnings Related Pensions Scheme (SERPS) must be revived along the lines of Peter Townsend and Alan Walker's pamphlet, *New Directions for Pensions*. Means testing must be reduced – administration costs for this take a larger proportion of the budget than universal benefits. John Hills, Professor of Social Policy at LSE, has written that administration costs in 1991-92 represented 1.3% of the total costs for retirement pensions, 2.2% for child benefit, 11.8% for income support and 45.2% of the Social Fund. Universal benefits cost a couple of per cent of their total budgets to administer, whilst means tested benefits cost a great deal more.

Selective and means-tested benefits are inevitable but the basic system should be dominated by universal benefits. David Piachaud has forecast that poverty in the UK from 1997 to 2002, will increase from 350,000 to 1,950,000. If ever there was a statistic that should motivate people it is this. We must use this to oppose the Government's policies and argue for a completely reformed welfare state for the next century.

Sutton & District Socialist Campaign Group

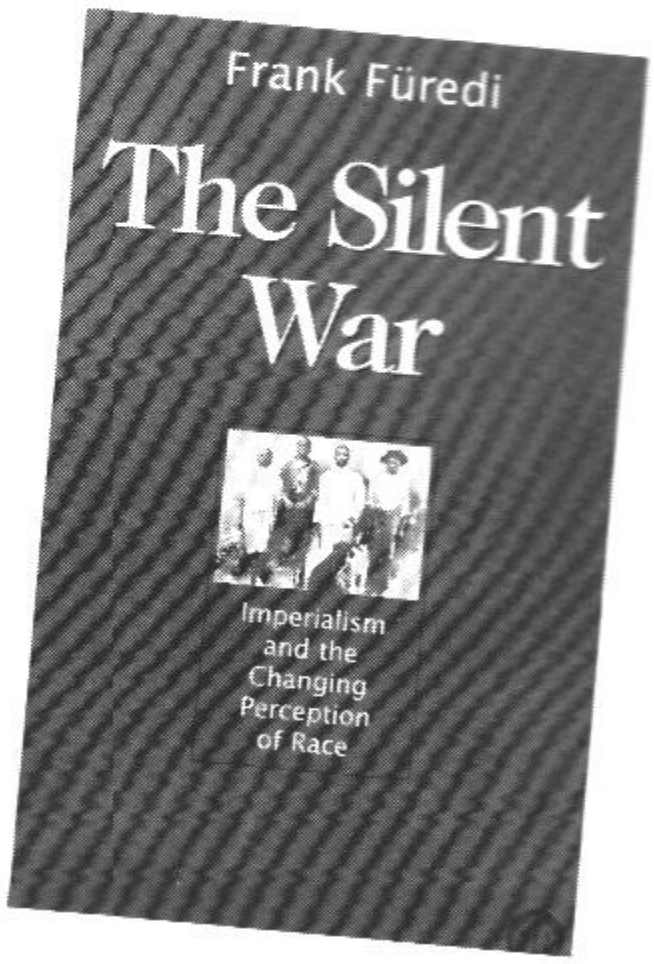
Comrades unite to ditch Tory policies

The Red Flag still flies

LLB page 28

Dissembling discourses

Mike Phipps reviews The Silent War *by Frank Furedi, published by Pluto, price £14.99 (paperback) and* After Diana, *edited by Mandy Merck, published by Verso, price £10.00 (paperback).*



THE IMPERIALIST world order created at the end of the last century was constructed on an open belief in white racial superiority. So widely shared was this assumption that even declared enemies could come together on a basis of racial solidarity. Thus at the start of the First World War, the German High Command proposed to the Allies that the neutrality of African colonies be respected as "it was important for all white men to maintain their hold over inferior black races".

Even progressive opinion was affected: Beatrice Webb wrote of the "impending catastrophe" of an invasion of "outcasts from Southern Europe, migrants from Algeria, and from coolies from China – a bigger



tragedy than any hypothetical defeat by an army of Germans". By the inter-war period, argues Furedi, a form of racial pragmatism operated. Overt displays of white racism were increasingly seen as counter-productive, leading to clashes of colour with destructive results for the property-owning whites. After World War II, racism was a discredited doctrine. The question arose: how to preserve the racially constructed world order while abandoning the discourse of white supremacism?

The Silent War examines this evolution in policy. One "solution" was an ideological attempt to "eternalise" racism. In this scenario, western colonial oppression is really small beer compared to age-old ethnic or tribal rivalries, the Indian caste system and other pre-imperialist antagonisms. This might be more credible were it not for the cynical role played by colonial powers in fuelling and stoking these antagonisms. Another approach – very common in today's media – is to emphasise the moral difference between western civilisations and Third World societies in order to shore up the perception of a superior North and an inferior South.

Thus even a quality newspaper could report, "Rwanda is a society where deception and dishonesty are the most highly esteemed values." Were this so, the logic presumably runs, then genocide there would not be like genocide here. Africa is "different", and ideas like universal human rights should not apply. Postmodernists even give this amoral standpoint a left gloss by arguing that notions of human rights are a European colonial import grafted onto Africa's "different" reality. *The Silent War* gives a good historical overview of this policy shift but unfortunately stops at the threshold of analysing this new discourse – perhaps Furedi's next project?

MANDY MERCK'S collection *After Diana* is a timely and well-publicised collection aiming to explore the meaning of last year's irrational and intolerant grief-fest. Subtitled *Irreverent Elegies*, it tries to demythologise the Diana cult and lay bare its roots. It sneers and swipes ironically at all the claptrap written about Diana Spencer since her death – but it also contributes some more of its own.

Take Judith Williamson, for example: "I found myself weeping as I took in the news. The death of this young woman who was already so vulnerable seemed like the deliberate blow of a cruel world" and further on: "When I walked around Kensington Palace I was moved to tears." Or Elizabeth Wilson: "The love of Princess Diana and Dodi Al-Fayed, extinguished at the very moment of its consummation, becomes forever operatic."

Nothing very irreverent there. Glen Newey opts for simple personal abuse, dubbing Diana "a vacant dumpling", "Medusa on crack" and "toff totty." Pretty radical, eh? Christopher Hitchens observes that the immediate aftermath of her death became for the media "a time when everything depends on how people feel" and not at all on what, if anything, anyone "thinks". But even he confesses, two pages later, to having been moved by the funeral. Linda Holt deconstructs the notion of Diana as a feminist icon, peddled by Linda Grant, Bea Campbell and others.

But nothing here surpasses *LLB*'s assessment a year ago that the entire episode was "symptomatic of the retreat from reason and democracy characteristic of this phase of capitalism. In her life and death the pre-modern met the postmodern, the world of feudal right and blood status entered the media-refracted "society of the spectacle". The result should alarm all those who want to live in a community shaped by informed, critical, genuinely pluralist debate."

Berwick & District TUC

For socialism and real democracy

Defend people not big business!

LLB page 29

Justice for Ricky Reel

John Stewart reports: One year on from the death of Lakhvinder "Ricky" Reel his family are no closer to knowing the reasons for his death. With disturbing echoes of the Stephen Lawrence case the police showed an indifference to Ricky's initial disappearance, downplaying the possibility of any racial attack, and leaving the family to search for him and appeal for witnesses for a week before his body was discovered in the River Thames at Kingston. Even now the family are having to organise meetings and speaking tours to raise awareness of the circumstances of Ricky's death.

Ricky was last seen alive on October 14th 1997. He and three Asian friends had been to a club in Kingston and on the way home, were racially abused and attacked by some white youth. A week later Ricky's body was found in the Thames. The police immediately concluded that he had accidentally fallen into the river while urinating and died instantly. They refused to investigate any other possibilities and closed the case. An independent pathologist hired by the Reel Family, having conducted a second post-mortem and visited the site of Ricky's death, has concluded that there are serious problems with the police's conclusion and that "a third party involvement cannot be excluded".

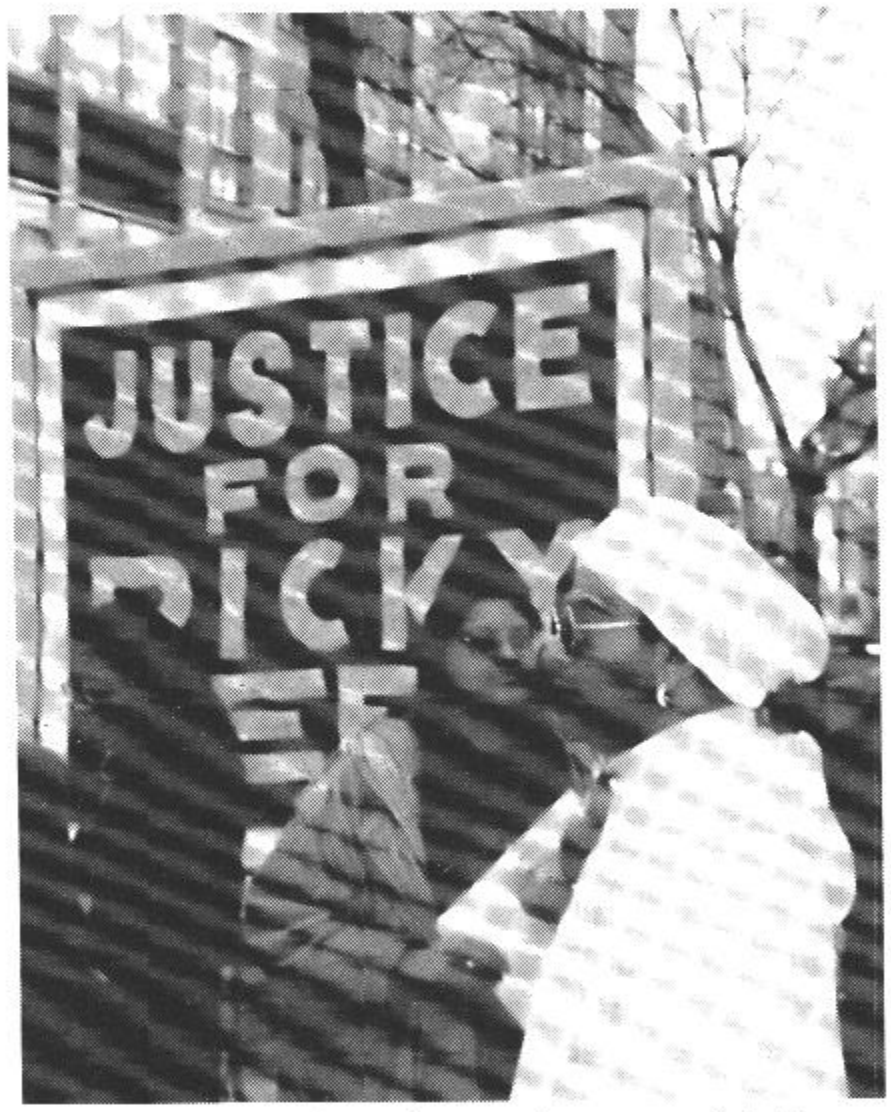


PHOTO: ED HALL

Sukhdev Reel (left) and campaigners outside the Home Office 9/3/98.

Ricky's mother, Sukhdev Reel, is now campaigning to persuade the authorities to carry out a thorough and competent investigation into the circumstances of her son's death. The family want to know why it took the police seven days after Ricky's disappearance to take any action, why the possibility of a racist attack was immediately discounted and why no attempt was made to stage a reconstruction of the events in order to bring forward witnesses. The campaign is now calling on the Home Secretary to intervene, removing the original officers who failed to take Ricky's death seriously and installing a new police team to investigate his death.

- The campaign is organising a candlelit vigil at Wood Street, Kingston on October 14th to mark the anniversary of Ricky's death. For more information on the campaign contact The Monitoring Group at PO Box 304, Southall, Middlesex UB2 5YR or phone 0181-843 2333.

Pauline must stay

Pauline Necua Ndombele, an Angolan asylum seeker, is being supported by the staff, parents and governors of her son's school, Brent NUT and Brent Trades Council. She asked for asylum as soon as she arrived in England because she fears for her own and her children's safety if forced to return to Angola. Her husband was a high profile member of UNITA, the far-right insurgent organisation. Her request for asylum was turned down in August 1996, as was her appeal. Her lawyers are seeking a judicial review because of bias shown by the adjudicator who cast doubt on Pauline's credibility, refusing to believe that she is genuinely terrified of what might happen to her and her children if made to return to Angola.

She alleged, wrongly, that Pauline had not been married to her husband and would not therefore be in any danger as a result of his past activities. She did not question Pauline on this matter – in fact she and her husband were married, lived together for more than six years before he disappeared when the fighting reached the town they had fled to and had two sons. Pauline's genuine fear is obvious to anyone who talks to her.

She formed a new relationship more than a year after her arrival in Britain and hit the headlines early in December when she gave birth to twin girls (one in Wembley High Road and the other in the ambulance on the way to the hospital). These babies are stateless. They know nothing of Angola. Romaric, her five year old son, barely remembers it and Jimmy, her oldest, is flourishing at school here and does not want to go back. Though in this country less than two and a half years, he is one of the best writers and spellers in his class and is expected to excel at secondary school when he transfers in September. Contact NCADC for more info on 0121-554-6947.

Dennis and Romain must stay

DENNIS MARCEL Tchokogoue-Momeni and Romain Tamiam fled Cameroon where they were members of the Social Democratic Forum – the main opposition party – in fear of their safety. In May 1997 Dennis was beaten up by police. He has since had problems with his kidneys. When leaving an SDF meeting, he was attacked by two people who held a gun to his head and sprayed tear gas in his face.

Romain was arrested in August 1996 after speaking at an SDF meeting criticising the government and held for three months. For the first eight days of imprisonment his hands and feet were tied together and he was regularly beaten for 30 minutes at a time. At a Home Office interview in December 1997 Romain was denied asylum as he was not a member of a party liable to persecution. The Home Office also expressed doubts over the authenticity of documents concerning his arrest and imprisonment.

Although Cameroon claims to be a multi-party democracy it is clear that regular harassment and torture of opposition supporters takes place. In mid 1997 SDF supporters were arrested in the South West of Cameroon. Five detainees died in police custody probably as the result of torture and/or lack of proper medical care. Between January and October 1997, 170 people died in prison.

Since then that figure has increased. The editor of *Le Messager*, an opposition newspaper, was imprisoned for two years. Titus Edzoa a former Secretary of State of the governing party, the RDPC, was imprisoned after standing against the current president Paul Biya in last year's presidential election. It is clear that Romain and Dennis will be in severe danger if they are forced to return to Cameroon.

- **For more information contact: Romain and Marcel must Stay Campaign, PO Box 6580, London E6 3TL.**

CORRESPONDENCE

Your feature on privatisation (*LLB*, September) was very timely. To date the Government's plans for privatisation in the NHS and local government have been given too little attention. However I would emphasise that for education, the Private Finance Initiative presents a more immediate and fundamental threat to public education than the Education Action Zones.

In Dave Morris's own borough of Haringey the Council is planning to privatise the running of all secondary schools. Whether or not McDonalds will be putting in a bid I do not know. Local campaigning against the privatisation of Haringey's schools is under way.

For more information contact Haringey UNISON, 48 Grand Parade, Green Lanes, London N4 1AG, tel. 0181-211 0558.

Glynn Rowlands,
London, N17

I'm also against the Omagh bombing, but I think it is a bit much for *LLB* to say "the horrific Omagh bombing has been condemned, rightly, by virtually every politician in Britain." It's one thing for people who support Irish freedom to be against the bombing, but quite another to give support to capitalist politicians condemning it. There is also an article in September's *LLB* by *An Phoblacht/Republican News* editor Brian Campbell. Wouldn't it have been a bit braver if *LLB* had have given the space to a group that is still trying to get British imperialism out of Ireland? In the South, a new set of repressive measures is being introduced to smash up people and organisations opposed to the new imperialist settlement (aka the "peace process").

With the opponents of the 'peace process' besieged on all sides, the left needs to give them a voice. Sinn Fein is now completely respectable and can get itself lots of media coverage without the left press giving it more, whereas those who are still banned need the column space!

Philip Ferguson,
Canterbury,
New Zealand

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



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



Farringdon Road foibles

From the moment ***The Guardian*** backed the Grassroots Alliance slate in a cautiously worded editorial, Millbank initiated a high-pressure campaign to swing the paper back into line. So how did the top brass at Farringdon Road respond? Did they tell Millbank to get stuffed, as any self-respecting editor or journalist would do? No, they caved in, and since the editorial have printed numerous articles, columns and letters attacking and frequently misrepresenting the Alliance, while giving positive coverage to Members First candidates, including two photo features which simply reproduced these candidates' descriptions of themselves, including the false claim that Margaret Payne was Ealing's "first black councillor".

Neil Kinnock's diatribe against Liz Davies, the Alliance and *LLB* was not only printed in full on the comment pages, but much of it was reproduced, without any critical comment, as a major front page article.

When Liz Davies asked David Leigh, the *Guardian*'s stand-in editor, if she could write an article in response, she was refused – a decision that apparently provoked ferocious argument among *Guardian* journalists. Roy Hattersley, Luke Harding, Hilary Wainwright, Neil Kinnock – it seems just about everyone has been permitted to comment from afar on Liz Davies and what they take to be her politics, while the numerous policy statements Davies herself issues go unreported.

Of course, all praise to *The Guardian* for printing the exposes on Members First's big money tactics and dubious telemarketing initiative. But no praise for trying to placate the Government by printing other features at its request.

Fraud Unit Fraud

The London based **Fraud Investigation Team**, launched amid a fanfare of benefit fraud-busting rhetoric, and lauded as such by Tory Ministers, has run up a phenomenal bill of £3m. In two years, it has produced a grand total of just one prosecution. Might they be prosecuted for fraudulent use of public funds?

Labour's Conference?

Labour's Conference Guide is always good for its directory of **anti-Labour stands** and this year is no exception. It includes rail privateers Connex and Railtrack, pharmaceutical giant Merck, Sharp and Dohme, anti-union Mirror Group, Police Federation, Nestle, Express Newspapers, Independent Healthcare Association, anti-union British Airways, BNFL and no less than three pro-hunting groups. So who's setting the agenda?

New Interventions

- theoretical quarterly
- dedicated to internationalism, radical socialism and critical Marxism
- independent of the left sects and Geoffrey Robinson
- Send for your free sample back copy to PO Box 485, Coventry CV5 6ZP

AOB

"I have intimate knowledge of that factory and it just does not lend itself to the manufacture of chemical weapons" – *Tom Canaffin, British Engineer, on the factory Clinton bombed in Sudan.*

"Perhaps some of the unemployed Bangladeshis in London could find jobs if they looked for them a little harder" – *Teresa Gorman, MP for Billericay.*

"The rules of the Labour Party were bent and broken" – *Lord (John) Evans on the imposition of Cambridge graduate TV-producer Michael Wills over the AEEU's Jim d'Avila in Swindon North.*

"I had my spell as an adversarial class warrior" – *John Monks,* Tribune, *11th September.* (Sorry, we must have blinked.)

Will anyone stand up to Murdoch?

Jeremy Corbyn, MP for Islington North and Arsenal fan, fears that Mandelson will play ball with Rupert Murdoch.

THERE WAS a time when Labour stood for public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. The new Clause IV put paid to that. Now New Labour craves business approval for whatever new policy turn is proposed. This is nowhere more true than in government relations with media tycoons.

Many in the Party were rightly suspicious when Tony Blair was the guest speaker at Rupert Murdoch's world executives' conference in Australia in 1996. The spin was that it was leadership being clever – as if this were a justification. the *Sun* supported New Labour but as ever, being even cleverer, the *Times* didn't.

Since May 1997, when not involved with a hugely expensive and tasteless circulation war with *The Mirror*, the Murdoch papers have been supportive of the more right wing moves of the Government, but drawn a line over the Euro.

The trip by Gordon Brown to the executives' world gathering in the US this year is seen as a confirmation of the relationship between Government and Murdoch who has sought and gained the same kind of relationship in Australia, South Asia and China. This is a corporation whose ambitions are boundless and quickly gobbles up the entire political establishment wherever it wishes to go. Compared to Murdoch, William Randolph Hearst and "Citizen Kane" were men of modest ambition.

The Murdoch empire has grown from its Australian base to cover huge areas of South Asia, North America and Europe. The pattern has been a familiar one. To Murdoch, sport is the battering ram of widening influence and market share, and together with political influence and the creation of satellite channels, the media regime is thus fixed. No government has ever really stood up to Murdoch or sought to encourage either quality newspapers or television.

He gets television rights for popular sports, then forces people into buying subscriptions. He then forces a bidding war – with publicly owned television being either unable to pay enough or having to make huge cuts elsewhere to compete.

The plan by Sky TV to buy Manchester United, and with it a huge access to TV and golden chips in the Euro sports TV stakes, gives Murdoch control of the product (football), the marketing and distribution systems. This is a monopoly if ever there was one and it has to be stopped.

There was a time when the Party was firmly of the view that Murdoch was an over-powerful, anti-union press baron who had to be stopped. Some of us have never forgotten the brutal sacking of 5,000 print workers at Wapping. That defeat lost thousands of print and media jobs, and created a regime of unstable short-term employment for those who remain.

Murdoch's influence has been a malevolent one with job losses and anti-union activity being the norm, and the production of appalling "popular" newspapers and tabloid television. Now Rupert has bought his way into millions of homes as he takes squillions of dollars out of them.



Concern for newspaper quality led to a policy of ending cross ownership of different outlets. If implemented, Murdoch would have been forced to settle for some titles and no television or vice versa. Hardly revolutionary stuff but at least a recognition of the need for diversity in the media.

All of this was dropped ahead of the election and after Blair's long weekend in Australia, and since the election there has been no real pressure on the empire at all. There seemed to be a clear attempt to drive the *Independent* out of existence by underpricing the *Times* and even this was not challenged.

This time a new area has been entered with football clubs (created with working class supporters' money) being the target. The supporters will pay the price in tickets, shirts and Sky subscriptions. Football supporters will find that in the long term there will be a dumbing down of all media to the level of Rupert – and you don't get much lower.

The decisions that will have to be taken by Peter Mandelson will have enormous consequences. To cave in to Murdoch will be seen as payback time and will increase the monopoly power of News International. The question of sport will not matter.

- The campaign to stop the Murdoch take-over is c/o Manchester United Independent Supporters Association. Contact: Andy Walsh, 0161-283 9561, 0370635483 (mobile), 0161-872 5996 (fax), or AndyWalsh@compuserve.com (email).

Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd (TU), 4 Forster Road, London N17.