LABOUR
40p FORTNIGHTLY
# BRIEFING
No. 103 May 23rd-June 5th 1990

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40p

**DON'T PAY THE POLL TAX!**

# BURN THE BILLS!

**Up and down the country, local Kinnockite leaderships are attempting to rubbish and even witch-hunt those of us who say "Burn the Bills!"**

Nonetheless, we continue to advocate mass non-payment of the Poll Tax.

In the recent Council elections, strenuous efforts were made by national and regional Party bureaucrats to eliminate non-payment candidates from the selection process.

During the actual elections some Party leaderships were paranoid about candidates even mentioning the non-payment campaign.

Several thousand of my own ward leaflets were withdrawn because I put a non-payment line in my personal statement.

A small number of non-payment campaigners have been elected. Local wards and even local constituency Parties have adopted non-payment positions.



PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood.

*Lambeth Councillor Steve French starts the burning.*

## By Dave Kellaway
## Newham Councillor
**(elected May 3rd; personal capacity)**

Here in Newham, seven Councillors have signed a non-payment statement and one of the local CLPs has adopted the same policy.

In neighbouring Tower Hamlets there are a further eight Councillors and at least two in Waltham Forest. Around the country there are more — in Leicester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Brighton, and elsewhere.

Working with the Anti-Poll Tax Federation we need to link up all the non-payment Councillors to discuss how to build strong anti-Poll Tax unions in their areas. In many places we know there are non-payers, but they are not organised.

Nationally Kinnock has attacked us for being "illegal" and/or a *Militant* front.

Locally they have added other arguments to put pressure on local Poll Tax activists.

They say local Labour Parties have to follow mandates from local election campaigns carried out along national policy lines.

They argue that withholding Poll Tax will mean cuts in services and jobs, if the money does not come in. They warn that non-payers will increase the Poll Tax for everyone else next year.

They even suggest the anti-Poll Tax movement is manipulating the "poor and vulnerable".

How do we respond? Non-payment Councillors were open about their position at every stage of the election process. Many Labour Parties did not even discuss non-payment; most manifestos did not say anything at all about it.

Most important: the army of non-payers in each area provides a powerful mandate for any local Labour Councillor.

As for our campaign causing cuts, this is a bit rich coming from Councils (like Newham) which have made cuts in order to "keep the Poll Tax down".

In any case the Poll Tax issue will not be decided Council by Council — the budgetary implications will be felt throughout the country.

Anti-Poll Tax Unions are already building links with Council workers and the trade unions to fight the Poll Tax *and* cuts.

As for the argument that we are "selfishly" making other people pay more next year, this accepts that the Poll Tax cannot be defeated this year.

This attempt to "blame the victim" is like all the old defeatist arguments about strikers causing inflation or plant closure.

Finally, the "manipulation" argument says it all about how the Kinnockites view working people — a mindless mass of gullible individuals not able to make up their own minds or take independent political action.

Nobody is saying that the non-payment campaign will make things easy for Labour Councillors. But it is the failure of our leaders really to lead on the Poll Tax that has trapped Labour Councillors in the middle — between the Tory government and the people Labour is supposed to represent.

Next year if the Poll Tax is not defeated, Labour Councillors will be attacked again by government spending cuts. We in the anti-Poll Tax campaign are the realists, taking practical action to defend local government and local services.

**LABOUR – TAKE THE POWER!**

## Letters

# WRITEBACK!

**We welcome your letters!**
**Disagree with something? — write in.**
**Agree with something? — write in.**
**Want to raise a new idea? — Write in.**
***Let's hear your views!***
Write to: Writeback, Labour Briefing,
PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY.
Please send letters for the next issue to arrive by Wednesday, May 31st if possible.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

## The London effect: back to the Kray days

Dear *Briefing*,

Peter Chowney's assertion (*Labour Briefing* 102) that in London "the picture is favourable to Labour" is seriously flawed.

Labour in London was an unmitigated disaster. The idea that this can be explained by reference to the gains that Labour were defending from 1986 is nonsense.

Since 86 the attack on local government has intensified:

- rate-capping has become firmly established;
- grant levels and central subsidies have been dramaticallly reduced;
- services have been privatised;
- local planning controls have been removed;
- the ILEA has been abolished;
- Council rents have been massively increased;
- thousands of jobs have been cut;
- service charges have escalated while direct services have been reduced;
- the Poll Tax has been introduced, along with capping.

Any and each of these singular attacks should have consolidated opposition to the Tory government. Collectively, they should have ensured a Labour landslide in London. This did not happen.

Even where there were gains, these were less emphatic than in other parts of the country.

### Brent

The loss of Ealing and Brent, the increased majority for the Liberals in Tower Hamlets, the "bought" Tory victories in Wandsworth and Westminster, and the failure to take control of any Council apart from Merton are, at the very least, severe setbacks for Labour in local government.

I would argue that what happened in London was essentially what Tory strategists expected and still expect to happen across the country as a result of the Poll Tax.

The economic function of the Poll Tax is clear, but the political purpose needs to be re-stated: it is to depoliticise local government, to remove local elections from the arena of ideology, and to project Local Authorities exclusively into the realm of management.

At the core of this Tory strategy is Labour's unwillingness to fight against the Tax at a local level.

The London Labour Parties colluded in this on an unprecedented scale.

The election campaign was the most insipid, reactionary and inherently conservative that Labour has fought since local government became a central part of the political agenda in the late 1970s.

Kinnock and his advisors were allowed to turn the election into nothing more than an opinion poll.

The election, especially in London, was never about taking control of anything and this was reflected in the Borough Manifestos, most of which could have been written by the old Alliance.

### Policy

In London, Labour Councils have accepted the inevitability of the Poll Tax with a political response which defies even cynicism. Not one manifesto or policy statement issued a direct challenge to it.

The consequences of this suicidal fatalism were the local election results. The working class were offered a practical choice between either Ron or Reggie Kray.

Ron's strategy, adopted by Labour, was the "protection" of services via a high Poll Tax. But this form of "protection" constitutes a direct assault on the incomes of the poorest members of the community.

Reggie's strategy, adopted by the Tories, was the "protection" of incomes via a low Poll Tax. This form of "protection" constitutes a direct assault on the services provded for the most vulnerable members of the community.

Given that "poor" and "vulnerable" are often interchangeable in practice, the choice offered by the Rons and Reggies blurs the political distinction between Labour and Tory.

It becomes a pragmatic, rather than a political choice, between different forms of extorted "protection". Do you want your arm or your leg broken?

The 1986 elections held in the wake of the Miners' Strike, the GLC abolition, and the campaigns against rate-capping, were deeply political campaigns, with Labour Councils at the forefront of resistance.

### Retreat

Since then, London Labour Councils have been in perpetual retreat.

In 1990, London became the first area to suffer the direct electoral consequences of "New Realism"; and the Tories believe that Kinnock will help them extend it to the rest of the country.

*Steven Taylor*
Camden

## CORRECTION

*Briefing* would like to apologise to Paul Hubert and readers in Bradford for a number of errors that crept into Paul's front page piece in the last issue.

1. The edited version of the article states that "if the previously safe Tory ward represented by Pickles and the two Lord Mayors whose casting votes gave him power had been at stake in this election, the city wide swing would have given it to Labour."

In fact, a seat in this ward *was* at stake and a further swing of under 2% would have given it to Labour.

2. "Normally Conservative school governors and heads have been up in arms at the cuts they are suppose to make". This should have been "conservative" with a small "c".

3. The published piece states that "Mohammed Riaz, who defected to the Tories just ahead of deselection by his own local Labour ward, promised to lead the 'slaughter of Labour'".

Originally Paul referred to Asian voters defecting to the Tories as "the slaughter that didn't happen", picking up Kenneth Baker's phrase about the national results. Riaz himself did not use the phrase.

4. The inertia of the local Labour leadership, according to the edited version "was symbolised by the refusal of the Labour leader, Phil Beeley, to give up a well-paid job in Wakefield Local Authority in sufficient time to qualify as a candidate."

The point of the original was that Beeley *failed* to do so because he couldn't make up his mind, not that he *refused* to do so.

He made sure that he got a safe ward after being deselected elsewhere and then lost it and his chance to be Leader "in power" — through indecision rather than deliberate choice.

5. Following the point about Labour's problems of operating within the existing Poll Tax system and local Tory budget, a sentence was cut out which said that "it is clear that bogus cuts announced before the election leave more real cuts to be made in the coming months."

## Ealing: the inside story

Dear *Briefing*,

As a member of Ealing North CLP I'd like to suggest some reasons why Labour failed so seriously in Greenford and Northolt which Peter Chowney (from Hackney!?) seems largely unaware of.

It was in this area that the election was lost. Fourteen out of the 17 lost Labour seats were here.

First, Labour has never recovered from the 65% rate increase in 1986. This followed a massive victory by Labour but this support vanished overnight in the face of the rate rise. It must now be seen as a tactical error.

The Tories have been stirring up racial hatred, focused on the planned mosque in Northolt. Racism is a serious problem here as we've witnessed on the streets doing anti-Poll Tax work.

In 1986 the Labour Party was elected with a good manifesto. The local Council has followed the national Party's move to the right.

This year they effectively Poll Tax-capped themselves and have carried out serious cuts all in the name of "effective administration".

In Ealing North CLP itself membership is at an all-time low. One ward, Ravenor, has only 20 members.

No real campaigning has been done for three years. Meetings are interminably bureaucratic, largely non-political and hence poorly attended. All this comes at a time when Labour is riding high in the polls!

The election campaign was lacklustre. The only leaflet which came through my door extolled one candidate's support of QPR but failed to mention his politics!

The left was not mobilised, unlike in 86, largely due to dissatisfaction with the Council's actions and the drift rightwards.

Whilst out campaigning on the Poll Tax, we witnessed an Ealing North CLP stall, supported by right wingers, equipped with bland, glossy brochures and one slogan: "The Poll Tax is a Tory Tax!".

They thought the Poll Tax *itself* would be enough to save them.



PHOTO: Tom Loucas

*Poll Tax battles in Trafalgar Square caught Labour wrong-footed.*

The consistent work of the Anti-Poll Tax Unions in the Borough (which always laid the blame squarely on the Tories) certainly won some votes for Labour.

It's a mistake to think elections are won weeks beforehand. They are won months, possibly years before.

We need to rebuild Ealing North CLP around socialist policies. There will be plenty of opportunities to use active campaigning against the new Tory Council to rebuild our support.

*Neil Cousins*,
Ealing CLP

## Apologies and more on anarchy

Dear *Briefing*

Since the article I wrote on the Hackney Poll Tax demonstration seems to have caused a lot of concern, I think perhaps I should reply.

On reflection, I believe I was tactically wrong to refer to anarchist groups in the way I did. In the light of events the following Saturday at the national demonstration, my article was, at the very least, unhelpful.

### Hackney

The subsequent suspension of Andy Murphy by Hackney Council was disgraceful and in any case unlawful. If Andy feels that my article contributed to his problems, then I apologise.

There are, however, questions emerging, e.g., "objective" reporting. Outraged Lambeth comrades suggested that we should leave objectivity to the capitalist press — a position which I find quite extraordinary.

I thought the purpose of a left press was to expose the lies of the mainstream media, not to create our own. There may be circumstances where reporting of events will be selective — but where do we draw the line?

There is also the question of anarchist politics and its uneasy relationship with socialism. There are plenty of historical examples of anarchists working with socialists, including the Spanish Civil War and the Russian Revolution.

This is fine as long as both are struggling against a capitalist central state.

But where socialists "control" the state machinery, either locally or nationally, conflict arises in that anarchists believe all state organisation to be oppressive.

Ironically, I would probably find my own politics a good bit closer to theirs than many other *Briefing* comrades in that I believe in the ability of working class people to organise themselves, and the futility of participating in local state structures just because they're there.

To say some anarchist groups are implicated in promoting violent confrontation with the police and state is a bit like saying the Bolsheviks were implicated in the October Revolution.

I would fully agree that there are circumstances where violent confrontation is legitimate (although not in building a campaign of mass Poll Tax non-payment).

The question is not the legitimacy of violent confrontation — it is the nature of the state itself and the need for state organisation. In this, socialists and anarchists are worlds apart.

Peter Chowney
Hackney

## Mulling over Ealing

Dear *Briefing*,

The comments in the Periscope column in the last issue concerning Ealing NALGO and Secretary Chris Morey were both unnecessary and a little sectarian — whatever people's perceptions of events during a rather chaotic day in the London Borough of Ealing following the unexpected Tory victory.

Both Ealing NALGO and Chris Morey have maintained consistent positions against cuts and threats of redundancies and along with the NUT have been involved in supporting the local "Fightback" campaign from its inception.

There are also *Briefing* supporters who are NALGO Executive members.

*Briefing* should be a little more careful before launching offensive attacks on individuals.

As regards the article by Peter Chowney on the results of the Ealing local elections; it's true, the most significant fact was the swing to the Tories in the largely white and comparatively affluent (with a high percentage of owner occupiers) working class areas of Northolt and Greenford.

Maybe this should not have been that surprising.

This area, geographically distant from the centre of Ealing, has been largely ignored by the Labour Party.

The local CLP is in disarray and following the 60% rate rise after the election of Labour in 1986, there was a significant swing to the Tories in the national election that followed.

This area has a history of National Front type activity and (as Peter correctly points out) is now a base for Tory right winger Harry Greenway, who has stirred up racist and homophobic hysteria against the Council and its policies.

However, the fact remains that the local Labour Parties failed to go on the offensive against the disgraceful election propaganda of the Tories.

Many households received just one Walworth Road-type leaflet which introduced the candidates and told voters where their children went to school, etc.

The Tories concentrated on the various Town Hall units, arguing that these were the reason for the high Poll Tax.

The coming to power of an administration which will be managed in true "Wandsworth style" by Conservative Central Office is a bitter blow, but should be used as a lesson elsewhere.

*Martin Allen*,
Ealing NUT

## Contact Briefing

**Thanks to all sellers and readers for an appreciative response to what we agree is a marked improvement in Labour Briefing. Please note that a rush of letters has pushed Periscope on to page 10.**

**Articles and correspondence should be sent to *Labour Briefing*, PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY; as should payment for invoices (including subscriptions) and money for paper sales in the "London" area. Payment for paper sales outside the "London" area should be sent to 39 Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB. You can telephone Briefing on 081(and we're proud of it)-809 3927, most profitably Tues-Friday.**

**Next issue: No. 104: Deadline for articles Tuesday May 30th.**

**Published by Labour Briefing: PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ.**

Editorial

BRIEFING
LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

# Kinnock's policy package: a declaration of war

The policy statement adopted by Labour's NEC with only Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner dissenting is a declaration of loyalty to Britain's ruling class.

It makes clear that a Kinnock government would maintain the Tory anti-union laws, nuclear weapons, membership of NATO, and the vast bulk of Tory privatisation, would increase the powers of the unaccountable European Council of Ministers, would try to keep down public sector pay, would refuse to tax the rich, and make no effort to save jobs in the private sector.

In its promise not to "spend more than we can afford" and to prioritise "anti-inflationary" measures, it signals unmistakably that it will continue the Tory policy of starving the NHS, education, housing, pensions, and benefits.

The more positive aspects of the document — defence cuts, a Scottish Assembly and regional assemblies in England and Wales — sink beneath the dead weight of its commitment to "the market".

This latest policy package is not what Labour Party members have been working for since 1979. It is not what trade unionists (including teachers, miners, nurses, ambulance and railway workers) have fought for.

It is not what pensioners, Council tenants, people with disabilities, single parents, the homeless and the millions living in poverty are hoping for from a Labour government. It is not what millions of Labour voters turned out to support on May 3rd.

Nonetheless, it was enthusiastically supported by the overwhelming majority of the NEC.

The trade union delegates on the NEC were all too willing to swallow the outlawing of solidarity action and mass picketing (not to mention the dangerously undefined powers of "industrial courts"). All of them should be brought to book by their members.

On the ground, more and more Labour Party members and trade unionists understand that we cannot rely on the Tories losing the next Election. We have to go out and win it.

The months and years between now and the next General Election will be dominated by two questions: how can we beat the Tories? And what kind of Labour government do we want when we win?

In *The Guardian*, Hugo Young observed: "Labour's fondest wish is to be regarded as the party which made Britain safe for capitalism. What has been the point of Mr Smith's journeys round the lunch tables of the City, if not to convince them that they have nothing to fear?"

## "Sensible"

Of course Young and his fellow Fleet Street pundits think this is "sensible". But they also think it is "still not enough". Smith won kudos from merchant bankers and industrialists, but the real feelings of the capitalist class were clearly revealed by the rise in the Stock Market on May 4th — when, in the wake of the local election results, it became clear that Margaret Thatcher would not be going just yet.

The anonymous power-brokers in the City know that whatever John Smith may say now, however Neil Kinnock tries to dampen down expectations now, a Labour victory in a General Election would usher in a new era of working class struggle.

Such a government will inherit a disastrous economic situation from the Tories. Within a capitalist context (to which the new policy statement is committed) there will indeed be little room for manoeuvre.

Kinnock's reliance on the ERM to keep down inflation (backed up by public sector pay curbs) and on a limited "peace dividend" (most of which will go to conversion of existing defence jobs and plant) to pay for social welfare measures will soon be exposed as grossly inadequate to the demands of the movement.

Under pressure from capital and its domestic and international guardians (including those in Washington and Brussels) from one side and an explosion of pent up expectations from the other, Kinnock will resort to austerity and authoritarian measures to shore up the former against the latter. That is the unambiguous message of the new policy package.

Kinnock, Hattersley, Smith (as well as Beckett, Short, and Richardson) have now told us just where they stand. Our response must be unequivocal, loud, and clear.

Opposition to Kinnock's latest attempt to dish up watered-down Thatcherism as some kind of new-fangled "market socialism" is bound to increase within the Party and the unions.

Our job is to encourage, organise, and mobilise this opposition, constructing alliances across the unions, the Labour Party, and the mass campaigns, rebuilding a left capable of resisting the onslaught of Kinnock's New Realism.

We have to outline and argue for the socialist policies which are the only realistic answers to Britain's deepening economic, social, and political crisis.

Behind the headlines

# The "hooligan story":

# Tabloids warm up for World Cup

**Football is booming in England.**

**Attendances are up for the fourth year in succession.**

There have been few major incidents of hooliganism and the national team has not been beaten for two years. The World Cup is almost upon us.

Altogether, it is a time when most people who support football should start to feel a rising tide of excitement within.

But all is not as it seems. Many people fear that there could be a major outbreak of streetfighting in Italy involving Englishmen.

The problem is that the scale of the problem of football violence has been distorted out of all proportion by the British press and the government.

But by continuing to give football violence such a high profile and by continuing to proclaim loudly the obstacles to be put in its way, those forces are encouraging violence.

"If you want a bundle, come to Italy," seems to be the message. Even Jack Charlton is appealing to the government and the press to shut up.

One of the problems is that football

By ERIC WARBING

hooliganism sells newspapers, and it sells them for a number of reasons.

First, street violence lends itself nicely to three inch banner headlines.

"Riot" screamed one paper after a pitch invasion at Chelsea two years ago. "World War Three" yelled *The Sun* after scuffles during the European Championships in 1988.

Second, the football hooligan story is universal. It doesn't matter if you are appalled or excited, interested in football or not, the story appeals.

And if you are a really clever editor you can generate both sympathy and animosity for the hooligans in one headline.

For example, after an attack on English supporters in 1988, *Today* used the front page headline, "Nazis Gas our Thugs", evoking the nationalism of the Second World War and the war over the Malvinas, whilst at the same time appearing condemnatory.

Most papers are currently in training for the World Cup — with Leeds and Newcastle fans providing plenty of material for the hacks.

There have been positive moves within football terrace culture over the past few years. The growth in the fanzine movement is an obvious example.

Yet the largest slice of publicity ever given to a fanzine occurred a few weeks ago when a hooligan magazine called *GIT* made the front page of *The Sun*.

The tabloid press also has the power to set the agenda for British news reporting in other media.



*"Fascist ideology is ingrained..." — England "supporters" in Albania.*

TV reporters have said that they have been criticised by their bosses in England for not reporting on minor skirmishes which have finished up as front page news in the tabloids.

Violence associated with football occurs the world over, but there is a specific problem with English football in that the perpetrators of violence more readily travel abroad.

Domestically, the problem is no worse, and probably far better, than in many other European countries. However, it is fair to say that no other European country's football supporters carry the same threat when travelling abroad.

Fascist ideology is certainly ingrained in the minds of many of the organisers of violence and it would appear that the petty English nationalism of the English yob overseas is much the same as the petty English nationalism of the tabloid press.

They feed off each other. They seem to need each other. Perhaps the only way of eliminating one is to eliminate both.

Labour Party Young Socialists
FIGHT the IDENTITY CARDS
Democracy For Football Fans

## DEBATE

# The kind of Socialist paper we need

**The latest issue of the Socialist Movement Newsletter raises the possibility of the Socialist Movement producing its own periodical. BRYN GRIFFITHS of Tottenham CLP starts a debate on the kind of paper the left needs and examines how a Socialist Movement periodical would affect *Labour Briefing*.**




PHOTO: Wayne Edington

*Tony Benn, founder member of both the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs and the Socialist Movement, addresses the Labour Briefing fringe meeting and 1989 Labour Party Conference.*

***Labour Briefing* has an excellent record as a left wing paper.**

**It stood firm against the realignment of so many of its natural supporters while maintaining its characteristic openness.**

It is to *Briefing's* credit that it recently carried a right of reply by a group of Anarchists active in the anti-Poll Tax unions.

*Briefing* offers a clear perspective for campaigns such as the Poll Tax but it also reflects the real debates that are taking place in the movement.

Its greatest strength is a deep rooted commitment to the practice of united front work and its determination to fight for the leadership of the labour movement — at all levels.

Those activists who have been involved in *Briefing* for many years will need some convincing that another paper or periodical would offer us the opportunity to improve on what we already have.

The most attractive feature of a possible Socialist Movement paper is that it could reach a wide audience.

Essential to its success would be winning key Campaign Group figures to supporting it.

What we need to ask is would such a paper organise larger forces and build greater unity on the left in the struggle for a Labour government and against New Realism.

If a Socialist Movement paper could build such a unity it would be sectarian and it would cut across *Briefing's* united front approach to oppose it.

As we are entering a pre-election period our political intervention must be razor sharp.

We must fight politically and practically for a Labour government and in doing so pose the need for a socialist alternative in opposition to the semi-Thatcherite one supported by Kinnock and adopted by Labour Conference.

This task means drawing on historical experience to point out what the consequences of the current policies would be. The paper must centre its coverage around a socialist campaign for a Labour victory.

A Socialist Movement paper which linked its trade union wing with Labour Party Socialists in such a campaign would be a tremendous boost and would deserve our enthusiastic support.

In this respect the Socialist Movement's work with the Plaid Cymru and Green lefts is a problem.

Whilst the participation of the socialist Greens in the recent Red and Green conference was a positive experience and one which we would like to repeat, there are big political differences.

In our dialogue with the Greens, *Labour Briefing* would argue that a class perspective and thus the Labour Party and the trade unions are central to environmental politics.

Whilst the Greens would argue for building their Party, we would have a perspective of building a green socialist wing of the Labour party which was capable of challenging Kinnock.

Such a problem would be difficult but perhaps not insurmountable if it were not for the thorny problem of elections.

### Socialist

Would members of the Greens and Plaid Cymru support a socialist campaign for a Labour victory? I doubt it! Could we sell a paper that didn't clearly support Labour? Certainly not!

A paper as broad as the Socialist Movement would have to be extremely open, democratic, and accountable. *Briefing* supporters are used to high standards in this respect and should not settle for less.

A left paper is not just a source of information. It must also be an organiser, grouping its supporters to fight for the policies of the paper.

A paper which did not organise its supporters in democratic structures and in an accountable editorial team would confine itself to commentarism and would be the complete antithesis of *Labour Briefing*.

### Top-down

At times the Socialist Movement has tended to be a bit of a top-down organisation.

The debate reported in *Briefing* no. 102 on democratising the Socialist Movement is crucial to its development and the acid test it must pass before it can go forward confidently to produce a paper.

A Socialist Movement paper which used its pages to organise its supporters would have to be an activist paper.

Agitational in character, the paper would have to support campaigns and report the debates of left activists in the Labour Party and the trade unions, reaching beyond Socialist Movement supporters.

Anything less would be a significant step back from *Labour Briefing*.

In this respect the Socialist Movement has both strengths and weaknesses. Its trade union conference was tremendous but some of the Movement's supporters seem to view the hurly burly of the Labour left with a little distaste.

Even worse some, such as those around the Socialist Society, sometimes counterpose their long term objective of a new party to a fight for leadership at all levels of the Labour Party in the here and now.

*Labour Briefing* is committed to helping transform the Socialist Movement into the kind of organisation that could produce the kind of paper I have outlined.

I am *not* convinced that such a transformation has taken place, although we have made significant steps over the last year — not least the establishment of Labour Party Socialists.

If *Labour Briefing* was to give its full support to a Socialist Movement paper the logic would be to close *Briefing* and pool our resources.

But before this happened, we would have to be convinced that the new paper was even better than *Briefing*. And we would have to have a full meeting of all our supporters and readers before such a decision was made.

In setting the debate rolling I have argued that a Socialist Movement paper that was agitational, activist orientated, democratic, and clear in its attitude to the Labour Party would be a tremendous step forward.

In assessing the proposals we must be supportive but we must also be severely critical when the paper fails to meet these essential criteria.

This article must open the debate and other *Briefing* supporters must contribute, especially those who dramatically disagree with my views.

This debate must be one of our most thorough. In the meantime we must continue to build *Briefing* groups and improve the range of coverage in the paper, particularly reaching out to those involved in campaigns.

## Trade Union Committee

# The Poll Tax and the Unions

**The gap between the radical mass popular movement against the Poll Tax and the New Realist dominated trade unions is huge.**

**This was clear on the massive anti-Poll Tax protest on March 31st: 200,000 people and hardly a trade union banner in sight!**

A week later the TUC held its anti-Poll Tax rally in Central Hall, Westminster. The message from this invitation-only event was "the Poll Tax is evil, but you must comply with the law and pay it."

But the Poll Tax is clearly a massive issue for the unions, whether the right wing recognise it or not. The Tax is directly eroding living standards and transferring money from the poor to the rich.

Trade union members who refuse to pay will face wage arrestment by their employers. Local government workers, postal workers, civil servants, and others are expected to collect and administer the Tax.

There will be mass redundancies and attacks on the wages and working conditions of Local Authority workers, and all workers will suffer losses through cuts in services and loss of local democracy through the Poll Tax.

Many individual trade union members are refusing to pay and need and deserve the support of the organised labour movement. The TUC should be leading the struggle — not condemning those who say they will not pay.

**By ALAN THORNETT**

It was with this in mind that the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee put out a call, on the March 31st demonstration, for a conference on the trade unions and the Poll Tax.

The leaflet called for a conference to be organised jointly between the Socialist Movement and the National Anti-Poll Tax federation and appealed for trade union organisations to sponsor the conference. Within a couple of weeks over 50 had done so.

Unfortunately, this move to maximise unity did not find favour with the Federation. At a meeting with the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee they rejected a joint conference and said they had already taken up the initiative themselves.

They had already circulated a leaflet calling a conference in Liverpool on June 23rd. The Socialist Movement was offered no part in organising it. A committee had already been set up.

At its meeting on June 12th the SMTUC gave support to the Conference on June 23rd and will organise for it in the unions. It did not feel, however, that that Conference alone will adequately address the issue.

The Conference leaflet entitled "Fighting the Poll Tax in the Workplaces" does not address the issue of job losses and such an early date does not give time to organise delegations through the trade union branches, which takes several months.

It was also felt that the Liverpool Conference may well not provide the kind of working conference which is needed in this situation.

*Labour Briefing* supporters should therefore back both conferences and urge supporters to attend both.

The discussion started in June can be extended in September. There is still time to develop a challenge to New Realism which is so seriously hampering the struggle against the Poll Tax.

## Stevens inquiry

# Defending the indefensible

**The Stevens Inquiry into collusion by members of the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Ulster Constabulary with loyalist paramilitary organisations has been hailed as an example of British "glasnost". PIERS MOSTYN reports.**




PHOTO: Jim Thain

*The Irish in Britain Representation Group, marching to free all political prisoners.*

**Some members of the RUC and UDR have passed information about Republican activists to loyalist groups.**

**The admission is supposed to be evidence of the government's commitment to transform the sectarian image of the RUC and UDR and thus address nationalist grievances.**

How much of this is true and how much yet more propaganda?

As usual, due to the "sensitivity" of the issues, 99 per cent of the Report will never be made public, and any serious analysis of it is ruled out.

### Irish

This hasn't stopped politicians from all the British and Irish "constitutional" parties rushing to comment — each managing to extract from it justification for their particular position.

It's like discussing the subtleties of a conjuring trick on the basis of a magician's claim that he has a rabbit in the hat but can't take it out for security reasons.

The Report is just the latest in a long tradition of British inquiries, commissions and tribunals aimed at boosting the credibility of security institutions under fire.

Enough criticism has to be made to ensure the exercise has some credibility, but the underlying purpose is always to bolster support and promote cosmetic reform as the solution.

This is how successive governments have dealt with internment, Bloody Sunday and torture. The exception was John Stalker, who went one step too far in suggesting a handful of RUC men operated a shoot-to-kill policy. Everyone knows the result.

From the little we know about the Stevens Report, a number of fundamental flaws in its conclusions are clear.

First, it rejects any notion of an *institutional* problem in either organisation investigated.

It reinforces the "bad apple" explanation (further justifying flying visits by Margaret to proclaim her total confidence in the UDR as a whole).

But the "bad apple" explanation flies in the face of a 20 year history of known involvement of RUC and UDR members in murders, shootings and other loyalist paramilitary activities.

A proportion of these cases have resulted in conviction. If the problem comes down to isolated rogues, why are they so widespread and consistent in their activities?

Second, a clear decision has been made to allow the UDR to draw most of the flack as a means of protecting the RUC.

Stevens has denied the existence of a loyalist "inner circle" operating at the upper echelons of the RUC.

It was *RUC* officers in their hundreds who engaged in the much publicised raids of the homes of a few UDR men.

To date the RUC has remained more or less unscathed — in line with the whole drift of post-Accord policy by which the Ulsterisation policy inaugurated in the 70s has been updated.

### Promote

Ulsterisation sought to divest Britain of direct responsibility for the situation in the North of Ireland and promote it as a "local squabble".

British political and military withdrawal is aimed for, to be substituted by local security forces and devolved political power — in many respects a return to pre-1968 Stormont.

However, the transparent sectarianism of the UDR and the total hostility of the nationalist population (even the middle class SDLP is calling for its abolition) led to the RUC being pushed more to the forefront.

Political leaders from the South, the SDLP and the British Labour Party (in the form of an enthusiastic Kevin McNamara) have actively called for the RUC to be given more responsibility.

They have endorsed it as "non-sectarian" and "impartial".

The nationalist population — whose homes are regularly wrecked by RUC raiding parties and relatives brutalised in RUC interrogation centres — have always taken a different view.

The RUC has never, since the days when it was transformed from the colonial Royal Irish Constabulary at partition, been anything else but a sectarian paramilitary Protestant force.

Third, the ambit of the investigation assumed a very narrow definition of the "problem" in the first place.

The passing of "suspect" lists to the UDA, UVF, etc., is of little consequence compared to the removal of wholescale armouries of guns and the direct organisation of loyalist hit squads.

Finally there are the so-called "reforms". A procedure whereby the RUC passes information on potential UDR recruits to a British army vetting team is patently meaningless.

### Police

A very small proportion of the hundreds of thousands of sympathisers of the loyalist paramilitaries will have criminal records or even police files of a type to raise eyebrows.

And anyway, the very people who compile such information are themselves prime suspects — whatever Stevens' attempts to exonerate them.

Then there is requirement that recruits swear a binding oath that they do not belong to any paramilitary organisation.

It can only be a matter of time before that little joke finds its way into Ben Elton's repertoire.

Security organisations whose whole existence stems from and is designed to defend the sectarian and artificial statelet of "Northern Ireland" will never have the confidence of those who aspire to a united Ireland.

Seventy years of history proves it. They have to be disbanded and disarmed as part of a general withdrawal of Britain from Ireland.

### Death

No step short of this is capable of confronting the threat posed by the UDA and UVF death squads that riddle the RUC and the UDR.

## Labour Party Socialists
## Model resolutions for Party Conference

At its founding conference in Sheffield (attended by 350 people) Labour Party Socialists agreed to support a number of model resolutions for the Party's Annual Conference.

The resolutions concern arms conversion, economic policy, the NHS, and Tory anti-union laws. Another resolution calls for a special, democratic conference of the Party to review policy in light of the recent major changes in European and international politics.

Copies of the model resolutions are available from the *Briefing* office.

## Embryology Bill

# Small votes, few hurt!

**"Moderation" prevailed in the House of Commons committee debating the Embryo Bill.**

**David Wilshire's amendments to prohibit the creation of "fatherless" children by DI or infertility treatments under the Bill and to prevent women being given access except together with a man were defeated by 13 votes to 4.**

Ann Widdicombe then withdrew her amendment to make the "welfare" of the child paramount.

These attempts to strengthen and ideologically reinforce the already restrictive contents of the Bill were, no doubt, encouraged by Tory Party Chairman Kenneth Baker's recent speech.

Baker blamed crime, miscellaneous social disorder, moral breakdown, football hooliganism and bad manners on single mothers, bringing up children without a male role model.

However, the government did not support the proposals on the day, arguing that they were unnecessary additions. The issues had already been dealt with in the Lord Chancellor's clause concerning the "welfare" of children.

**Rebecca Flemming**
**Women for Socialism**

Jo Richardson's "equal opportunities" amendment was also defeated 9:7. This would have enabled the Statutuory Licensing Authority (SLA) not to give or to revoke licenses of clinics that discriminate in their provision.

The opposition claimed this would add nothing to the Bill.

The government has kept a tight grip on the Bill, allowing deviations neither to the right nor the left, though at times it has been the government's method rather than its intentions that have separated it from its more extreme fringes.

Lesbians and single women will be as effectively prevented from gaining access to DI and new reproductive technologies (NRTs) by the welfare clause as they would have been by Lady Saltoun's amendment.

These rebuffs for the fundamentalist right increase the possibility of a more explicitly discriminatory amendment being tabled at the Report Stage of the Bill in June, as they feel that the balance of forces is better in the House as a whole.

It is therefore crucial that people continue to raise the issue and lobby MPs, over what sometimes seems to be becoming a forgotten campaign in the euphoria following the abortion vote.

# STAC calls June 4th rally

**The STAC/FFC campaign has decided to call a rally and benefit.**

**They will be on June 4th at Wesley House in London, in order to press STAC's demands for abortion on request, now that STAC has defeated the anti-abortionists on 24th May.**

The campaign plans to meet with CADI to ensure that equal access to donor insemination and infertility treatment forms a central part of this meeting.

The third and final reading of the Bill is likely to take place during the week beginning June 4th and this explains STAC's decision to call the London rally on that date.

**By VALERIE COULTAS**

In South London choice activists are planning an anti-Operation Rescue picket outside an abortion clinic in Brixton where harassment of women seeking abortions is on the increase.

The Labour Women's Action Committee and NAC are both planning to raise the abortion and reproductive rights issues at the upcoming Labour Party Women's Conference.

**For more details of the above activities contact: STAC, c/o 4 Wild Court, London WC2B. 071-405-4801**

## Constitutional Proposals

# More power to the Lords?

**Has anyone noticed Labour's plans for constitutional change amidst the betrayals on policy questions?**

**Socialists ignore these at their peril, for their implications are staggering.**

By Mike Phipps
Woolwich CLP

I write "Labour's plans", but it would be more accurate to describe them as the brainchild of Roy Hattersley. In outline they would:

•replace the House of Lords with a second chamber elected on a PR basis;

•give this new House the power to block laws affecting the basic rights of the individual for the lifetime of a parliament;

•create a "supreme court" to make sure this second chamber upheld people's rights fairly.

### Complaining

Many people are rightly complaining that the government has trampled on long held rights — the right to silence, to free expression, to demonstrate.

Labour is moving with the tide in calling for parliamentary safeguards against tyrannical governments — but there are grave dangers in Hattersley's approach.

A "Bill of Rights" merely enables the law makers of the past to check the powers of the law makers of today.

### Weapon

Against Margaret Thatcher that would be useful. Against a Labour government it would be yet another weapon in the hands of the ruling class to thwart measures against their interests.

A charter protecting the individual would not have stopped much of Thatcher's legislation. It would more likely be used against collective trade union power — like the European Court ruling at the end of the 70s against the closed shop.

### Powerless

The House of Lords is totally undemocratic, but largely powerless. The problem with reforming the upper house is that if it is made more democratic, the pressure is on to give it more powers.

This is precisely the trap Hattersley has fallen into. He wants a reformed second chamber to be able to block any Bill that endangers basic human liberties for the lifetime of a parliament.

This would be an insidiously conservative mechanism. All second chambers are blocking bodies. The function of this one would be to thwart an elected Labour government in carrying out its policies.

The problems of political struggle cannot be settled by changing a few rules of the game. The establishment — the top civil servants, the House of Lords, the City financiers, etc. — is stacked against the left.

Socialists have always argued for the removal of these constraints on a democratically elected government. That is why we support the traditional Labour commitment to abolish the House of Lords — and not its reform.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

*...let alone the monarchy!*

Asked recently on TV what he would do if this new second chamber failed to uphold rights, the inventive Roy responded:

"There has to be something that takes the place of the House of Lords sitting in its legal capacity. There has to be a Supreme Court."

The British judiciary is one of the most class ridden, "racially pure", male dominated, elitist, unrepresentative, and unaccountable institutions in the world.

Are we really going to give it the power to overrule parliament and the voters and make policy?

The logic of this is the US position where an unelected court can decide the fate of millions of women by outlawing abortion on the grounds that it interferes with "human rights"!

### Views

Hattersley's plans are only that — the views of one man. Conference has not voted on them, but then again, that is quite normal these days.

These proposals would be unlikely to be introduced until Labour had won two successive elections. However, they should not be allowed simply to go through on the nod. They are regressive and should be opposed.

One of the great advantages for the ruling class is the flexibility of its constitutional arrangements, under which the people are still subjects and the state remains highly centralised.

Labour's proposed changes do not address this. By vesting power in a new court and upper house, they would continue to deny people direct access to and control over the affairs of government.

## LOCAL ELECTIONS

### Hither Green

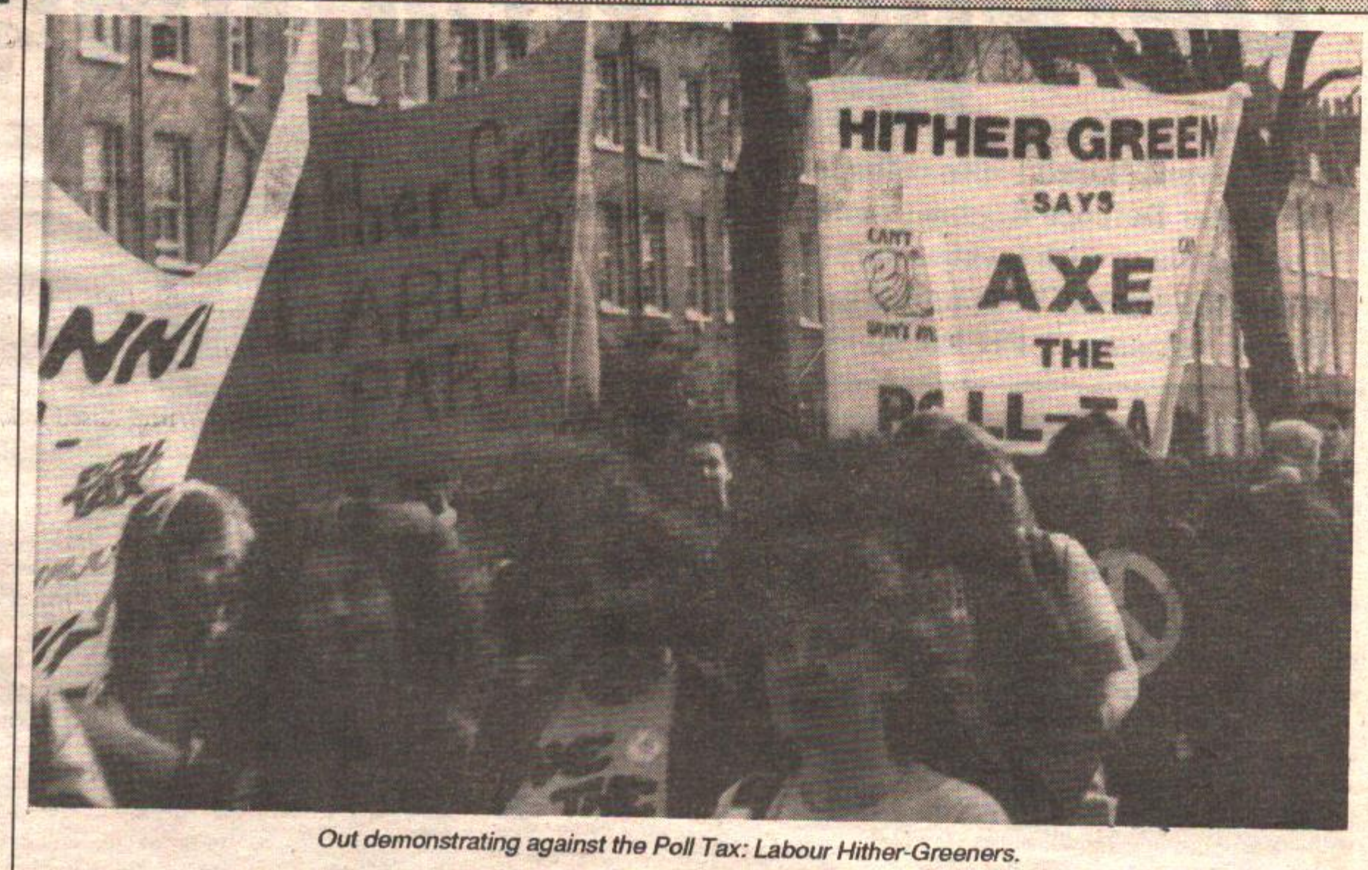



PHOTO: Dan Carter

*Out demonstrating against the Poll Tax: Labour Hither-Greeners.*

# Socialists romp home

**Explain this one on the "Loony London Factor", Mandelson!**

A swing of 30% to Labour has made Hither Green ward the safest in East Lewisham, with our majority rising from 88 in the 1988 by-election to 1,100.

This tremendous result was the culmination of four years hard work by the previous Councillors and by branch members in a variety of community and Party activities.

It was the politics of the branch that stood out most over the last four years — opposition to Council cuts and rent rises, support for dialogue with Sinn Fein, opposition to the wasteful Town Hall extension, and support for the campaign of non-payment and non-collection of the Poll Tax.

By DAN CARTER

The activity of the Lewisham Anti-Poll Tax Union and its local group, Hither Green Community Resistance, did much to put the Poll Tax issue high on the agenda and give a high profile to one candidate, Councillor Pat Waylett.

Pat has been fined for not registering and has pledged not to pay the Tax.

The support for the mass non-payment campaign was featured in the branch's election address and in press reports.

As we have always said, people respect politicians who stick by their principles, and having had our Councillors disciplined by the Labour Group at various times in the past appears to have done no harm.

The campaign proved that you can stand by socialist principles and still be electorally successful, provided you have a strong enough base in the community, tenants associations, and local campaigns.

Pat Waylett's success in becoming the Councillor with the safest seat in the constituency will increase pressure on him to stand for the marginal parliamentary seat against Sports Minister Colin Moynihan.

### Ealing

# Why the Tories won in West London

**As the trauma and disbelief begin to subside, the post mortem is well underway in Ealing.**

**Hard headed assessments of the difficult four years ahead are being made and determined opposition to the first wave of redundancies and cuts in services is being organised.**

There is as yet no left consensus about what went wrong.

The Tories did well in most of West London, gaining Hillingdon and reducing the Labour majority in Hammersmith & Fulham. Labour lost control of Brent. Only in Hounslow did the litany of disasters stop.

West London is relatively prosperous. There are pockets of serious unemployment, but the white working class has not done too badly under Thatcher.

The 40-30 majority in Ealing disguises how close the vote actually was. The Conservatives gained only 1% more of the total vote than Labour (44% against 43%) and Labour's vote slightly improved.

In five wards the vote was so close that neither party gained all three seats.

The Tory improvement on their 1986 performance was almost entirely at the expense of the Liberal Democrats, who lost their remaining seats on the Council.

The election was lost in the predominantly white working class Ealing North Constituency, where the swing to the Conservatives was more than 10%, and Labour's 15 Councillors were reduced to two.

By Bob Wood
Ealing Southall CLP,
Ealing NALGO

Modest gains for Labour were recorded in two overwhelmingly Asian wards in Southall and relatively modest losses in the more affluent middle class areas of Ealing and Acton.

Labour was elected in 1986 after eight years of Tory control on a radical manifesto which emphasised equalities issues and pledged to redress the years of neglect suffered by Southall and some other parts of the Borough.

With hindsight, not enough was promised for the working class as a whole. The left did not succeed in building the necessary alliances between the working class and the oppressed. Neglect of Southall was replaced by neglect of Greenford and Northolt.

Despite the manifesto, the natural right wing majority soon asserted itself on the Labour Group and was supported by the majority on the Local Government Committee.

The right was either unable or unwilling to confront the left politically. The Party's Annual Borough Conference was abandoned as the new leadership increasingly appealed over the head of the Party to "public opinion".

Concessions were made to racism by dismembering the Race Equality Unit and to homophobia (only one job-share post was ever dedicated to lesbian and gay issues) — legitimising the Tory attacks on equal opportunities.

No stable financial strategy was ever devised. A damaging 65% rate rise was followed by cuts in services. Further cuts have resulted from Poll Tax capping.

Decision making was centralised and the Group leadership became less and less accountable. Demoralisation inevitably set in at the base of the Party.

As elsewhere in London, candidates were only found with difficulty and dire organisation doubtless made a difference to the vote in several very close wards.

While the Tories begin to dig in under the watchful eye of Conservative Central Office, the local right wing are blaming the left for the consequences of their own action and are suggesting further policy retreats.

The left must make no apologies, and demand a democratic debate — not to apologise for its opposition to racism and homophobia but to discuss ways of winning these policies in the working class as a whole.

## Labour Party Socialists founding Conference

# Labour left begins the long haul

**Over 350 socialists met in Sheffield on May 19-20th to start rebuilding the Labour left.**

**The large turnout was only the first of the weekend's many positive points.**

The detailed and comradely discussion that featured in many of the workshops and the election of a broad-based, non-sectarian national steering committee were others.

Initiated by the Socialist Movement, this inaugural conference of LPS offers us a firm basis on which to build for lifting our Party from the reactionary slough of the Kinnock years.

The latest policy revisions helped fire the determination of those present to make the Conference a success — a sound springboard for the fightback inside the Party.

### By Steve King Hornsey and Wood Green CLP

Alice Mahon MP opened the conference, reminding us that the current witch-hunt was a sure sign of the Party hierarchy's sterility.

John Nicholson from Manchester and Martha Osamor from Tottenham spoke of their own experiences at the recieving end of the latest viciousness.

Former deputy leaders respectively of Manchester and Haringey Councils, they have both been swindled out of possible parliamentary seats and subsequently "investigated" by the NEC.

The up-beat message from both was the importance of remaining in the Party.

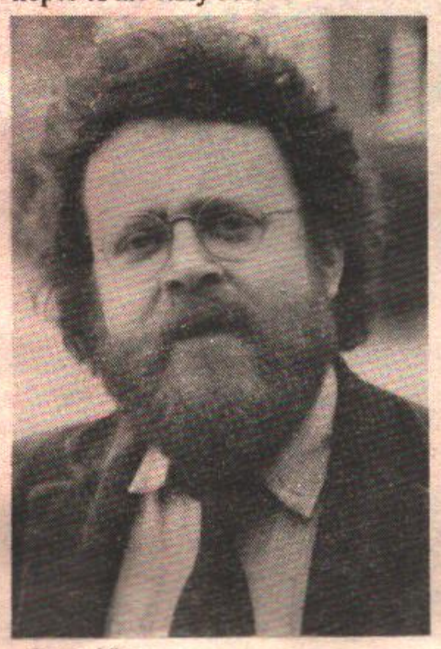
It is the only party looked to by the mass of the working class to reflect its needs and concerns, the only party able to act on these, and therefore the only party in Britain to which socialists should give their time and effort.

These key themes reappeared throughout the weekend.

On Saturday afternoon I attended the workshop on local government — a dominant battleground for the left in the 80s which produced more than its share of casualties.

Unsurprisingly, comrades at this workshop were subdued. We were regaled with horror stories of the new Tory administration in Ealing and the only relatively less unpleasant behaviour of some Labour councils.

There is a clear danger of some comrades writing off local government as an action area for the left following our defeats there, particularly after the high hopes of the early 80s.



*Steve King*

NALGO comrades were particularly concerned about the lack of left organisation in their union and there was general concern over the lack of links between local CLP and union lefts.

In Saturday afternoon's plenary, Reg Race made a powerful and detailed analysis of the the NEC's latest policy revisions.

This document will undoubtedly become known for the phrase: "Business where possible; government where necessary". As Reg said, this should alert anyone remotely on the left of the danger we currently face.

Liz Williams of Wallasey talked about the witch-hunt in her area. Her description of the manoeuverings of Frank Field and his infamous dossier on the left in thre Wirral raised much amusement.

Field's actions are highly farcical but they also contain elements of tragedy involving not only Paul Davies (who defeated Field in the Birkenhead reselection contest) but all women in the Party.

Field's ramblings, as quoted by Liz, are so deeply sexist that any acceptance by the NEC of any part of his dossier will confirm beyond doubt that women are not wanted by Labour.

Well over half the comrades who turned up on Saturday remained for Sunday — a highly positive verdict of the Conference organisation and content.

There were a number of campaigning workshops on the Sunday morning. I attended the session on Democracy in the Labour Party.

Considerable furore had been raised by a statement in the Guardian to the effect that LPS was in favour of abolishing the block vote. Once again, *The Guardian* got it wrong. LPS, not having even met at the time, could decide no such thing.

In the end, this workshop covered a number of related issues, the main one of which was the nature of the Party's link with the trades unions and what should or should not be done about it.

Bryn Griffiths of Tottenham and Mandy Moore of Bolsover opened the debate, both of them illustrating how the Party was moving ever further away from being a mass party with an active membership.

There was general agreement on the need to refound the Party on a new, wider basis. Certain gains, such as mandatory reselection, need to be defended but we should not confine our agenda to the defense of existing structures.

There was a marked divergence of views on the Party's relation to the unions, including the question of whether or not the left should defend the block vote.

Proposals to reduce the trade union vote at conference to 60% were generally welcomed. Bryn Griffiths suggested that the block vote could and should be democratised. Others felt it had to be scrapped.

Many comrades were unhappy with the undemocratic nature of the trade unions. Some called, in effect, for their replacement within the Labour Party structures by new and different working class organisations.

Others argued that the unions had to be democratised from within and that it was vital to maintain Labour's links to the major existing organisations of the working class, however critical we might be of the way they now operate.

Clearly, LPS will be debating these and other points at its AGM in October. Comrades should make use of the period until then to discuss these points. As ever, *Labour Briefing* will be happy to provide a forum.

In the closing plenary, Paul Gosling from Leicester, offered us another harrowing tale of nepotism, corruption, and undemocratic and anti-socialist activities in his local Labour Party.

He went on to outline the opportunities for the left at this time.

He believed there was wide support for LPS within the Party; in particular, he saw it as an ideal forum for educating and co-ordinating the left opposition and mobilising Labour Party action against the Poll Tax.

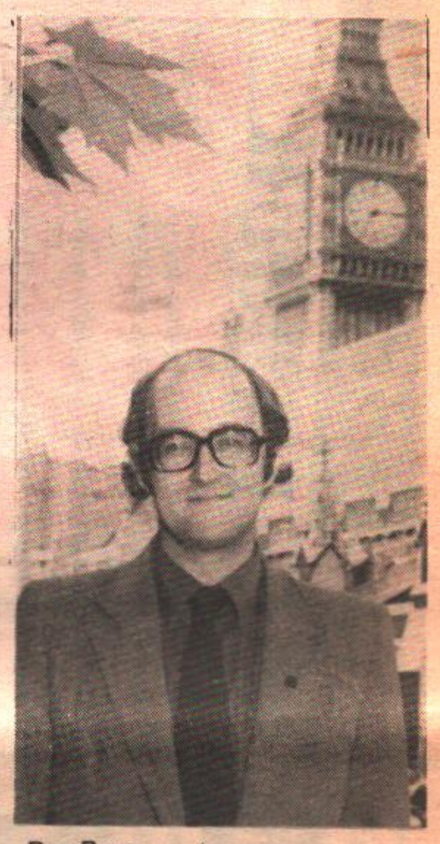
Reg Race wound up the day with an inspirational rallying call. Campaigning priorities were agreed, model resolutions for Party Conference were adopted and the results of the ballot for National Steering Committee were announced.

This was a heartening conference marked by exemplary comradely behaviour. Many expressed confidence that the basis for a genuinely non-sectarian left had been established.

### Negative

On the negative side, there were too few women and very, very few black people. This surely reflects the general situation inside the Party.

The oppressed, the dispossessed and disadvantaged are being scapegoated for Labour's defeats and driven out of the Party.



*Reg Race*

LPS has a major job on its hands, not least in demonstrating to people outside the Party that socialists within it have not jumped on the white male pro-market bandwagon, still believe in equality and will take action to make it a reality.

## Reselection

# Labour MPs in jobs-for-life closed shop bid

**They have already supported Tory laws to end the closed shop for thousands of ordinary workers.**

**Now Labour's leadership is planning to set up its own exclusive pre-entry closed shop for its favourite group of workers: Labour MPs.**

### By JANE WELLS

The March NEC agreed to circulate yet another "consultation" document which confirms the left's warnings about Kinnock's hidden agenda on Party democracy:

- the end of mandatory reselection;
- the end of MPs' accountability;
- the end of the trade union link;
- and even less say for ordinary Party members.

Irrespective of any responses to the "consultation", Kinnock will attempt to push rule changes through this year's Conference.

By ring-fencing MPs' jobs and hanging a "members only" sign on the gate, the Labour leadership is determined to protect sitting MPs from reselection, unless a majority of CLP members request a contest in a postal ballot.

In effect this means a vote of no confidence on the sitting MP before reselection could take place.

The proposed new rules are even more draconian than those in the notorious pre-1981 days, when MPs could not be dislodged without a GC vote of no-confidence.

Under those conditions, there were hardly ever any deselections — and when votes of no confidence were passed, as in the case of Reg Prentice, it had to be followed up with three years of aggro before any contest took place.

### NEC

Under the NEC's new proposals, Reg Prentice (who went on to become a Tory Minister) would still be Labour MP for Newham North East (had he not died last year).

The new proposals mean an end to reselections of sitting MPs; no more women or black MPs — despite the leadership's hypocritical hot air about the new-look Labour Party.

### PLP

The existing domination of the PLP by white middle class men will continue well into the next century.

It's not difficult to see what Labour's leaders are up to.

Ex-Labour MP Robert Kilroy Silk, regular columnist for the *Times*, is clearly party to information on internal Labour Party matters well in advance of us ordinary members.

Last Febuary, he explained: "Before the next General Election Neil Kinnock will abandon the mandatory reselection procedure that Labour MPs have to undergo each parliament...

"the real reason, as we all know, is that a future Labour government would never be able to function, let alone govern, under the present system of holding its MPs accountable to the CLPs..."

The stakes are high — so high that even Kinnock's constituency cronies in the LCC have woken up to the scale of the threat (many of these former bright young things have their own prospective parliamentary careers to consider, after all).

Among their model resolutions for this year's Conference is one opposing any "trigger mechanism" for reselections.

The left is campaigning around the single demand that MPs should present themselves before the membership once in every parliament.

### OMOV

The fight to keep accountability and union involvement in local selection contests, and to prevent a switch to "One Member One Vote" will also be waged at this year's conference.

### Model Resolution circulated by CLPD

This Conference reaffirms its own decision that "the need for accountability at all levels" be met by "mandatory reselection for sitting Labour members of Parliament" and supports the provisions embodied in the Party Constitution for a mandatory selection procedure once in the lifetime of every parliament, in which ward branches, affiliated trade union branches and other affiliated organisations have the automatic right to nominate the candidates of their choice.

Conference is therefore extremely concerned by the proposals that this important right should in future be withdrawn in Labour-held seats unless the Constituency Labour Party first decides by a ballot to proceed with normal selection procedure. Any time this happens it will inevitably be portrayed by the mass media as a vote of no confidence in the sitting MP.

Conference believes that this practice would be seriously and needlessly divisive. It would effectively free Labour's MPs from the obligation to carry our Party policy as decided by Conference. It would also further set back the legitimate aspirations of Labour women who would lose their present right to be included in the parliamentary shortlist if nominated.

In the interests of party unity Conference therefore resolves to uphold the principle of the automatic right of branches to make a nomination for parliamentary candidates once in the life-time of every parliament.

# HOW *NOT* TO PAY YOUR POLL TAX

LABOUR BRIEFING

## Not paying the Poll Tax is easy!

**For the best part of a year in most cases — in some cases more — you will have to do nothing at all!**

Of course, while doing nothing as far as your individual Poll Tax is concerned, you should make every effort to become involved in your local anti-Poll Tax group.

Not paying the Poll Tax is not just an individual act — it is part of a collective, mass protest, which will be more successful the more people are united in doing it — or rather, *not* doing it — together.

Non-payment is the most direct, simple and effective means of making a protest against the Poll Tax.

The government and many local Councils are busy trying to scare people into paying. Don't be intimidated! There are clear legal limits to what local Councils can do to non-payers.

Above all, there is safety in numbers. Get together with other non-payers on your street, estate, or in your neighbourhood or workplace — and make sure everyone has up-to-date information about how *not* to pay the Poll Tax.

NON-PAYMENT OF THE POLL TAX IS NOT A CRIMINAL OFFENCE.

You cannot get a criminal record simply for failing to pay it. It is a civil matter between the non-payer and the local Council, which can only act within the limits of the Poll Tax and other legislation.

In trying to recover unpaid Poll Taxes, your local Council has a number of options.

Which ones it will and will not pursue is largely a matter of the policy it adopts. For example, your Council can make a commitment now not to use bailiffs against non-payers.




PHOTO: Tom Loucas

*The Poll Tax has brought people on to the streets — but timidity from the official labour movement. Above: 31st March demo in London — just about all the trade union banners on the demo are captured in this shot.*

## 1. YOUR POLL TAX BILL

Your local Council will send you a bill and after that (unless you have indicated otherwise) a Poll Tax payment book with ten slips for instalment payments.

The first thing that happens if a bill remains unpaid (or if one instalment remains unpaid) is that the local Council must issue you with a final reminder.

They are required by law to do this before pursuing the matter any further in court. The law does not specify how long after payment is due the reminder must be issued. It could be months before you receive a reminder.

When a reminder is finally issued to you it will require you to pay all or part of your Poll Tax within seven days.

If at the end of seven days you still haven't paid (there is no need to make any other response at this stage; in fact, it's best if you simply ignore the reminder), the Council has the right to proceed to court.

Note: you will lose the right to pay by instalments if you fail to respond to this notice within seven days. But as you don't intend to pay at all, this is no problem!

## 2. THE COUNCIL GOES

## 4. DEDUCTION OF BENEFITS

The Council can issue an order to the local DSS office to deduct unpaid Poll Tax from income support. Other benefits — such as sickness, unemployment, invalidity, or retirement pensions cannot be touched.

The DSS is not allowed to deduct more than 5% of your income support — even if that 5% is not enough to cover the amount of your Poll Tax over a whole year.

This means in practice that the Council cannot get its hands on more than £1.75 per week for a single person and £2.75 per week for a couple.

The DSS must inform you in writing in advance of any decision to deduct your Poll Tax from your benefit. It must also inform you of your right to appeal against the decision.

You can appeal on the grounds that you do not receive enough income support to make the deduction or that you have other debts which are more pressing than the Poll Tax.



## 6. "DISTRESS WARRANTS" — THE BAILIFFS

A "distress warrant" is simply a warrant for the Council to employ bailiffs to seize or "distrain" goods owned by the non-payer.

No Council is required to use bailiffs. It is a matter of policy for each Council to decide. In practice, the Council will send in bailiffs only when other tactics have failed.

You will probably receive notice from the Council that they intend to apply for a distress warrant if you don't pay up. You will also probably receive notice of the bailiffs intention to visit.

If bailiffs are coming, make sure you have as many witnesses to all the events as possible. Make sure you write down everything they say and do.

Your local anti-Poll Tax group should organise the largest possible presence of neighbours, activists, lawyers, local trade unionists, Councillors, MPs, and so on. Have cameras ready!

Bailiffs are *not* allowed to gain entry by breaking down your door. They cannot smash windows or force them open.

They can use force to lift a latch or turn a door handle to see if the door is open

# TO COURT

If the Council decides to pursue the matter in court (and it is not required to do so in law, merely allowed to), it must apply for what is call a liability order.

The Poll Tax law says that non-payment cases must come before a magistrates court. Magistrates courts are already over-burdened with a backlog of cases.

It is likely to take your local Council a very long time indeed to get you into court — if they ever get you there.

Eventually, the Council will ask the court to grant it a "liability order" — which allows it to take certain steps to recover the unpaid Poll Tax from the non-payer.

You will receive a summons asking you to appear before the court to explain why you have not paid.

You are not required to attend but you should. You are entitled to legal representation. Contact your local anti-Poll Tax group as soon as you get a summons!

Remember you have still not committed any criminal act and you are not on trial for a crime. The police are not involved at all.

In court, the Council has the right to demand information from you such as: your place of work, your income, etc.

Failure to respond to these questions is punishable by a fine of £100 (£400 for giving false information).

You can defend yourself against a liability order by showing in court that:

- you have actually paid the Poll Tax (at any time up to the moment of the hearing);
- that you are not entered on the Poll Tax register;
- that the local Council has not followed the rules in billing you or sending you a reminder;
- that you are on the register elsewhere (you cannot be liable for Poll Tax in two Councils).

You can also explain to the court your reasons for not paying — can't pay, won't pay, or a combination of both! However, this will not get you off the legal hook!

# 3. HOW CAN THE COUNCIL TRY TO GET YOUR POLL TAX?

If the court grants a liability order, it is up to the Council to decide which of three methods of collecting the unpaid Poll Tax it wishes to use. It cannot use all three at once.

The three methods are:

- benefit deductions;
- attachment of earnings,
- a "distress warrant", i.e., using the bailiffs.

In Scotland, local Councils were given powers to have bank accounts frozen. This is not possible in England and Wales. Mortgage and HP payments cannot be touched.


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*Follow the Aberdeen example! Anti-Poll Tax Union members scare off the bailiffs; police are powerless.*

# 5. ATTACHMENT OF EARNINGS

If you are employed, the Council can get an "attachment of earnings" order.

This means that your employer will be forced to deduct a certain amount of your unpaid Poll Tax bill from your wages and pay it directly to the Council.

If you earn less than £152 per month no attachment can be made (the Council will then get a "distress warrant" — see below).

If you earn more than that, the maximum amount that can be deducted increases the more you earn.

For example, if you earn between £152 and £220 per month, £5 can be deducted each month.

If you earn £220 to £260, £8 can be deducted; between £260 to £280, £11 can be deducted; between £280 and £300, £14 — and so on.

If you are already under an "attachment of earnings" order because of another debt, nothing can be deducted for the Poll Tax until the previous debt has been paid off.

If you change jobs while under an attachment of earnings order, you must inform the Council of the details of your new employer, etc.

If you are under an attachment of earnings order you will be expected to contribute a small amount each month to your employer's costs.

Employers are required by law to enforce an attachment of earnings order. However, employers are reluctant to perform the function.

*The Financial Times*, amongst others, has warned that attachment of earnings because of Poll Tax non-payment has "potentially disastrous consequences for industry and commerce."

Poll Tax non-payment is not and should not be grounds for discipline at work or dismissal. Where such threats are made, union organisation is the best response.

If you think at some stage you might be subject to an attachment of earnings order for non-payment you should raise this in your union branch now.

Get together with other non-payers in your workplace to ensure full union support.

They can enter by a window if it is partly open.

Inside, bailiffs can use force to open any internal door which is locked to them. If they fail to gain entry once, they can come back to try again as many times as they like without informing you.

Bailiffs must act within the law and are liable in both civil and criminal courts if they do not.

Bailiffs must have written authorisation from the local Council, a copy of the enforcement regulations, and a memorandum of the amount owed in unpaid Poll Tax.

They cannot damage your goods — and they cannot use or threaten to use force against your person.

Bailiffs cannot seize clothes, bedding, or the tools of your trade. They cannot seize goods which are fixed to the floor or attached to the fabric of the building.

They cannot seize goods which belong to relatives (other than a wife or husband), hired video or TV. Goods belonging to children under 18 cannot be seized.

Goods can be protected from seizure by transferring ownership to another — but only if this is done before the distress warrant is issued. In shared households bailiffs are bound to be confused over who owns what.

Bailiffs will identify goods to the value of the Poll Tax you owe and then tag them.

They may ask you to enter into a "walking possession" agreement — which means they leave the identified goods on the premises in your keeping while a date and place for a sale is arranged.

There is no fixed time limit between the bailiffs' visit and the sale of any goods they seize. If you pay the Poll Tax at this stage your goods cannot be sold.

Police play no part in carrying out distress warrants and cannot assist bailiffs in doing so — though they may be on hand to prevent a "breach of the peace".

If your goods are seized and sold for the value of the Poll Tax you owe, that is the end of it. You have committed no criminal offence and have no criminal record.

# 7. IMPRISONMENT

In Scotland there is no provision for imprisonment for non-payment of the Poll Tax. In England and Wales the law clearly states that imprisonment is only a last resort when all other means of recovery have failed.

Local Councils will not be able to even consider imprisonment until attempts made by the bailiffs to secure sufficient goods have failed.

If they decide to proceed here — and no one yet knows whether any Council will go this far — they must apply to a magistrates court for a summons.

If you receive a summons you must appear before the court.

The Local Authority must then prove that you have failed to pay your Poll Tax through "wilful refusal". The court has the power to sentence you to up to three months in prison.

Payment of the Poll Tax at any time will either stop you going to prison or release you immediately when you're inside.

★ At any stage of the process you can stop the Council from proceeding further and avoid any penalties simply by paying your Poll Tax.

However, for the mass non-payment campaign to be fully effective, as many people as possible must take non-payment to the end.

We are confident that the government will retreat on the Poll Tax long before they get most of us into a magistrate's court for the first stage of the process.

★ In Scotland, over one million people have either not registered, not paid, or are in serious arrears. More people are joining the non-payment movement all the time.

Very few "poindings" (valuation of goods by bailiffs) have even been attempted and not one has been successfully carried out.

★ Just think: will it be possible for your local Council to issue tens of thousands of reminders, apply for thousands of summonses, order thousands of benefit or wage deductions, issue thousands of bailiffs warrants?

In Scotland Councils could still be chasing people who did not pay last year in five years time.

★ If you have already paid an instalment on your Poll Tax you can still join the non-payment campaign. Simply fail to pay the next one!

If, for whatever reason, you've already paid the whole of your Poll Tax you can still be part of the non-payment campaign by supporting others and by not paying your Poll Tax next year — if the Tax is still around by then!

"What Will Happen If I Don't Pay the Poll Tax?"
Legal questions and answers on the community charge
By the Poll Tax Legal Group.
Pamphlet available from PO Box 1335, London N16 6YR. Price £1.

# Labour's medium term gastronomic strategy

**It is not quite true to say that the Labour Party is aiming to win the next Election by letting Thatcher lose it.**

**The Labour leadership have in fact got a reasonably definite economic policy (more's the pity, when you read it).**

It is about to be launched publicly in the form of a tidy-up of the Policy Review, and has been substantially leaked to the press.

By Jamie Gough
Holborn and St Pancras CLP

Nor can it be said that the Labour front bench do not campaign for their policy.

John Smith has been lunching continuously in the City. According to an *Economist* poll of City opinion, Labour's policy is considerably more popular than the Tories'.

Smith received a similarly warm reception in Washington.

Now Walworth Road is preparing for its "Industry 2000" campaign, which consists of John Smith & Co. having meetings with businesspeople in the constituencies (oh yes, and meetings with trade unionists too).

The party leadership *is* busy getting support, where it *really* matters.

As for the character of the policy, Margaret Thatcher was dead right: "Labour's Medium Term Gastronomic Strategy". In other words, it is entirely designed not to give anyone indigestion at those pleasant lunches.

Not that it is identical to the Tory's policy. The present contradictory interests of British capital can be addressed in a number of ways.

John Smith's has significant differences from Thatcher's, though it is no better for the working class.

## Money and growth

**The document is more enthusiastic about joining the Exchange Rate Mechanism than Thatcher is.**

**One reason is that they hope, probably rightly, that this will enable interest rates to be somewhat lower for a given value of the pound.**

But it also means that Smith is happy to have less control of the value of the pound. He will not have to resist pressure to reflate the economy by letting the pound drop, since the matter will be "out of his hands".

In other words, the intention is to continue the Tory's basically deflationary strategy, and *build it in* through a fixed exchange rate.

This intention is made even clearer by the pledge to continue to control inflation by credit restraint.

The Tories are using high interest rates to choke off demand for borrowing. Labour would introduce credit controls, where the government tells the major banks how much they can lend.

These are supposed to allow interest rates to fall. In fact, the shortage of credit will allow the banks to charge the same high interest rates.

The freedom that now exists in world financial markets will anyway allow firms to avoid controls.

The nub of all this is that any reflation that might do something about the four million unemployed is ruled out. As the document says, "there will be no irresponsible dash for growth under Labour."

In the event, Labour would be even more deflationary than the Tories are now because the balance of payments will be even worse by that time.

The document rules out making the Bank of England, or a future European Central Bank, independent of government.

Translated into policy, this means that they do not give absolute priority to a stable currency over all else. But nor do most of the British capitalist class.

## Industrial policy

**"Private business must do what it does best; the public sector should do what it does best.**

**"Business where possible, government where necessary."**

Kinnock has recently added that "of course" most of the economy must be in private hands — so much for Clause 4.

Water and some parts of the electricity industry will be renationalised, and the stake in BT raised from 49 to 51%.

The rest of the privatised industries — BAe, BA, British Steel, British Gas, etc. — are to remain in private hands.

This policy is justified with a fashionable and misleading characterisation of "markets": "Labour ... endorses the efficiencies and realism which markets can provide."

Most people hearing this will think of *markets in consumer goods and services*, and agree that, no, we don't want to be told what colour socks we have to wear.

But what the Labour leadership is actually talking about is *markets in the means of production*. These have realistically and efficiently given us four million unemployed.

In the private sector, Labour says it wants a "qualitative change" towards high productivity, high quality, high tech, environmentally sound industry, instead of cost competitive, low quality production.

Hurray! The pattern of a hundred years is about to change! How?

Firms wanting to takeover others would have to provide more information on their investment plans.

This is supposed to lessen the threat of takeover, make firms less worried about their short term share price, and stick to long term strategic plans.

For some firms it will have a small effect of this sort. In most of these, it will enable them to maintain their long term strategies of... low cost, low quality production.

Firms will be forced to spend 0.5% of their turnover on training, on pain of a levy. Regional public investment funds will be set up, to provide soft loans and venture capital to small and medium firms.

Examples of such funds have existed for many years — the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies. Through being much more strongly directive than John Smith is likely to be, they have somewhat strengthened those national economies.

That's all: enough to put a very slight brake on the slide of British industry. Well, that's all except for the EC's industrial policy.

The document calls for a strengthening of the powers of the Council of Ministers, through majority voting instead of unanimity, and of the European Parliament.

The real content of the industrial policy is to harmonise Britain with other EC countries, and to let 90% of policy be made by the EC.

## Pay

**The document rejects an incomes policy as "unworkable" (very principled).**

**Anyway, they expect not to need it. They are relying on a combination of deflation and continuing high unemployment, keeping most of the anti-trade union laws, together with agreements with the trade union leaderships.**

How these agreements will work was indicated in a recent speech by Norman Willis (remember him?). He made a plea to industrialists to maintain centralised bargaining in industries, and to discuss industrial strategy there.

In exchange, he pledged that the unions would "help to hold back inflation" with "reasonable" pay demands.

We can anticipate that these cosy discussions, with the Industry Minister sitting in, will be a regular fixture under a Labour government.

Perhaps Mr Willis's scintillating ideas on industrial strategy will achieve the revolution that Kinnock and Smith have in mind? At any rate, the logic of the whole policy package is towards severe pay restraint and cuts.

This is because there is a contradiction between holding sterling at a fixed level relative to the Mark in the ERM, and Britain's rate of productivity increase, which is currently way below West German levels and will deteriorate further.

This circle can only be squared by large wage reductions relative to Germany, so as to keep unit production costs, and thus sterling, roughly in line.

## Public spending

**"We will not spend more than Britain can afford," that is, more than the City approves of.**

**That means that public spending will not rise substantially as a proportion of GDP.**

Given that output will be in the doldrums, the result will be that public services and public sector pay will remain at their existing miserable levels or worse.

The government is currently paying back around £10bn of the public debt a year.

Public expenditure could therefore rise by 5% without even borrowing anything, and thus still leaving the accumulated debt declining in real terms. But that would conflict with the tight money policy.

Income tax and National Insurance contributions are to be reformed in a progressive direction, though the top aggregate rate of tax of 59% is well below the 1979 level of 83%.

A new form of the rates will be introduced, that is, a regressive tax but not as regressive as the Poll Tax.

These improvements will be partly cancelled by the introduction of new "green taxes", which bear most heavily on the poor.

These are necessary because the Labour leadership doesn't have the bottle for the alternative, which is to *impose* green policies on industry.

The (anyway mixed) tax changes are the only concession to the working class in the whole policy.

They are sugar on the pill of an industrial and monetary policy which is a few degrees more interventionist and corporatist that Thatcher, and through these means, just as anti-working class.

## Periscope

### Travis-ty

*The Guardian's* stable of ventriloquist's dummies operated from Walworth Road appears to have been swollen by the addition of political correspondent Alan Travis.

Travis' report of the Sheffield Labour Party Socialists Conference managed to get the number attending wrong (200, instead of 350 — including 320 paid registrations).

He also spiced up his report with the highly original gimmick of putting the word "comrades" in inverted commas. Hilarious, Alan. And so fresh!

A fortnight earlier he penned an account of the local election result in Haringey straight out of the mouths of Walworth Road press officers.

He got the actual result wrong (he could have checked the *Evening Standard* for that) as well as claiming — inaccurately — that "ultra-left" Councillors had been "deselected" (left Councillors and candidates were barred from standing by the NEC and the GLLP).

*The Guardian* was informed of these errors but refused to print a correction.

### Without comment

Our NEC wants to end mandatory reselection of MPs in part because "significant difficulties are anticipated in ensuring necessary voting attendance by MPs in the House of Commons whilst the reselection procedure is taking place in their constituencies and they need to be frequently absent on week nights."

### Moles' hole

*Tribune* has a habit of covering items from Tower Hamlets Labour Party in its gossip columns.

Just after the local elections, *Tribune* noted that Tower Hamlets Councillor (Paddy Little) had *not* attended the Count; but instead had gone off to drown his sorrows with ward members as Labour failed in its attempt to win the Council.

*Tribunites* were gleeful that the said Councillor, whom they castigate for being a *Militant* supporter, lost his seat.

Alas, *Tribune's* Mole in Tower Hamlets has a short memory. Older hands recall that Paddy prefers going for a drink with the ward members who have done the work in the election to posing round the Count. He avoided the 1986 Count (where he won the seat) for the same reasons.

Maybe the Mole's memory would have been jogged had he bothered to work in Tower Hamlets during the election campaign.

Indeed, he has not been seen in the area since he informed a local Executive Committee investigation panel that he had been leaking internal Party documents and invented witch-hunting material to the local bourgeois press in the interests of the Party.

We are glad to see that some in Tower Hamlets are less slipshod in their research.

No sooner had our last issue appeared on the streets than the office of Peter Shore (MP for Bethnal Green & Stepney) was on the phone, asking for back issues of *Labour Briefing* since the General Election.

Not that Peter Shore's interests range too wide. Back issues he wanted: but only the parts of those issues covering London affairs!

## Things they say!

# Excerpts from the new Policy Review

**The policy document approved by Labour's NEC on May 15th has not yet been seen by Party members — but *Briefing* can reveal that it includes the following:**

- "Private business must do what it can do best: the public sector should do what it does best. Business where possible; government where necessary."
- "We will not spend nor will we promise to spend more than Britain can afford."
- A National Investment Bank will be created "opeating at arm's length from government and on strictly commercial lines."
- Labour will continue to build Sizewell B nuclear power station.
- Labour will preserve the "right to buy" Council homes and has no commitment at all to a general housebuilding or refurbishment programme.
- Labour does not now call for the ending of NHS prescription charges.
- Labour in office will enact laws that are "even handed between employers and trade unions" including a "a new industrial court to deal with the whole area of industrial disputes ... [with] full powers of enforcement and damages, but legislation will prevent the total sequestration of a trade union's income and assets in a way which paralyses the union in all its lawful business."
- Labour will introduce a new statutory code to limit the numbers of pickets.
- "We agree with James Baker, the United States Secretary of State, that NATO's role should be political rather than military."
- There is no clear commitment to defence cuts, only the following: "international negotiation can make possible reductions in UK defence spending far beyond anything envisaged in last year's Labour Party Conference."

An unnamed Walworth Road official told the Daily Telegraph:

"The package will be presented to Conference as an Executive statement that is either accepted whole or rejected, and any policy resolutions submitted by Constituency Labour Parties or trade unions alongside it will simply be noted by Party leaders."

# BOOK REVIEW



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

*Early example of direct action from the Green Party: founder member takes direct action in protest at "eclectic abstractionism".*

# Which way for the Greens?

*Getting There*, by Derek Wall, *Green Print*, £4.49.

**By Mike Phipps Woolwich CLP**

**_Getting There_ is a useful and popular exposition of the environmental crisis facing the world.**

**The problem begins with how to tackle this crisis!**

Derek Wall starts by recognising that Greens have no real strategy except an electoral one, and in any event, that global ecological problems cannot be solved in one country alone.

But he rules out a perspective of socialist transformation as the key to solving the crisis as "the interests of the worker have been confused with that of the boss."

The failing of Marxism, he claims, is that it rejects utopians, thus leaving "the door open for the excesses of Stalin and Mao." This kind of political sloppiness undermines Wall's whole approach to strategy.

Wall, however, is not afraid to discuss utopias. A future green society would be one where "power, violence and greed will still exist but be seen as vices rather than virtues."

"Advertising will shift from persuading to informing. Farming will go organic... Medicine will become holistic, ... so as to keep us healthy and happy on less than the present NHS budget." Fine — but how?

Wall starts from the correct point that environmental preservation and capitalism are incompatible.

It is therefore a step back into confusion to ask "Would the British army allow Green governments to function in peace?" Would they hell!

Wall's lack of a coherent theoretical framework leads him to eclectic abstractionism.

Addressing the question of what kind of leadership the Greens need, he rejects traditional hierarchies by reference to Michel's "iron law of oligarchy."

But he is silent on what kind of party and structure *is* necessary if the key objectives of ecologists are to be achieved.

With electoralism rejected, Wall seems in danger of retreating into lifestyle politics and creating isolated examples of sound ecological living.

*Getting There* is a welcome but flawed contribution to a Red-Green debate.

# REVIEW of REVIEWS

# Charter 88 cures cancer

**We've seen a flurry of articles in recent days from supporters of Charter 88.**

***The Guardian* ran a series by well known Chatterers, proving a point previously made by the *Sunday Correspondent's* David Blake: the Charter means anything you want it to mean.**

The prize goes to the Charter's chair, Beverly Anderson. She reasons thus.

Citizens of the United States are "vigorously assertive" compared to the wimpy Brits. The USA has a written constitution. Ergo if we had one the wimps wouldn't "just sit there".

Ms Anderson was born in Jamaica, so perhaps it is unfair to place her in the political frame which seems common to the Charter 88ers: 19th century liberalism.

It's much nicer to be a liberal than a conservative, so we ought not to be too hard on them — but really, Ms Anderson!

Might the behaviour and attitudes of US citizens be connected to the fact that they are the most powerful nation on the planet, while the sun began to set on the British Empire round about 1880?

**By GEOFFREY SHERIDAN**

David Blake knocked Charter 88 for six. The US constitution is a political football, he noted.

For example, for a while before Reagan packed the Supreme Court, the clause which forbids "cruel and unusual" punishments had been interpreted to mean that capital punishment was out. Now it's back in.

There is also the matter of McCarthyism.

And who would interpret a British constitution? Why, those outstanding democrats, the judges.

The US constitution was not much help to the Vietnamese when Kennedy and his successors were "vigorously assertive" over there, but a constitution promulgating freedom of information, etc., would be worth having.

The thing is it is not likely that rights will be won, still less defended, through vigils held by the literati. Perish the thought, but surely this calls for class struggle.

Charter 88 is silent on workers' rights: no mention of trade unions, or anything really nasty like the right to strike.

This might have something to do with the need to get the Liberal Democrats on board. Something for almost everyone...

# BOOK REVIEW

# A righteous revolution

*Antichrist in 17th century England*, by Christopher Hill, *Verso*, £9.95 (paperback).

**"In the spring of 1649 six rank and file soldiers of the New Model Army... entered the parish church of Walton-on-Thames and symbolically abolished the sabbath, tithes, ministers, magistrates, and the Bible."**

**By Mike Phipps Woolwich CLP**

This revolutionary act was carried out in the name of the fight against "The Antichrist".

George Winstanley, outstanding figure among the Diggers, called on the poor to occupy common land and form collective farms.

True Christians, he argued, should neither buy nor sell. His reason: the lettering round English coins added up to 666, the number of the beast, the Antichrist.

Christopher Hill's *Antichrist*, now reissued by Verso after 20 years, is a fascinating account of how human activity can be progressive, whilst its ideological justification may seem to us as bizarrely superstitious.

Of course, personifying the enemy in any struggle is always good for morale. And making it "the Antichrist" was a logical response to the royalist belief in the divine right of kings to rule.

But why did the notion of Antichrist so predominate at this particular time — the English Revolution in the mid 17th century?

Hill says: "What we are discussing here is a great revolution in thought, which we feebly call the separation of religion from politics. ..

"The obviousness of the conclusion, once arrived at, has prevented us from appreciating the difficulties of the journey."

It is not accidental that "the Antichrist" appears in other European bourgeois revolutions right up to the mid-19th century.

Before the superstitions of an epoch could be swept away, it was necessary to destroy the societies which produce them.

# NALGO

## Local government pay

# Leaders turn to jelly over peanuts offer

**Local government employers have offered Council office workers an 8% rise in their main pay.**

**This offer, nowhere near NALGO's £1500 flat rate claim, would further reduce Council workers' wages in real terms.**

Forty per cent of local government staff are below the low pay threshold and all staff are hit by inflation of 9.5% and sky high mortgages.

For those living in the south-east, the offer will raise regional weightings by the same rate as main pay.

London weighting would increase to just under £2,000 when many other large employers offer supplements of well over £2,500.

NALGO has rejected this initial offer and is to meet the employers again on May 31st to hear their final offer.

By Fred Leplat
Islington NALGO

So far NALGO's campaign amongst its members for the £1,500 flat rate claim has been low key. No lobby of the talks has been organised, and the leadership now intends to separate the campaign on main pay from the one on regional weightings.

Although NALGO members are reluctant to take strike action for two years in a row over pay, there is a real anger over London weighting which could be turned into action.

## NALGO elections

# Left gains and ballot disarray

By Fred Leplat
Islington NALGO

**The surprise result of NALGO's ballots for a new General Secretary and National Executive Committee were announced nearly a month late.**

**In a 23% turnout of its 750,000 members, Alan Jinkinson polled 50%. He was backed by the NEC and the *Morning Star* and is the current Deputy General Secretary.**

The far left fielded two candidates.

Roger Bannister, Secretary of Knowsley branch and recently expelled from the Labour Party, stood on a Broad Left platform and won 23% of the vote. He came second in eight of the union's eleven districts.

Chris Goody of the Workers Revolutionary Party, the only woman standing, received 3% of the vote.

Sid Platt, District Organiser for the East Midlands and politically similar to Jinkinson, polled 24%.

The 26% share of the vote won by the far left clearly reflects the radicalisation within NALGO in recent years through struggles such as rate-capping in 85, last year's pay strike, and now the Poll Tax.

A quarter of the membership clearly rejected the failed strategy put forward by Jinkinson, Platt and the rest of the NALGO leadership for the fight against the cuts and the attack on conditions.

The result of the National Executive election were more disappointing. Although Roger Bannister was elected, the left failed to win any seats.

The official explanation for the delay in announcing the result of the ballot was the size of the ballot and the legal requirement for independent scrutineers.

However, there were several instances of branches getting either two sets of ballot papers or not enough.

Furthermore, after complaints from Sid Platt that Jinkinson had a privileged access to a 1990 list of branch officers for his mailshots, all candidates were offered a list for £50.

Halfway through the balloting, there were much publicised rumours that Bannister was going to win. Supporters of Jinkinson were trying to scare members and ensure that they voted.

Although it was never likely that Bannister would win, the NALGO bureaucracy must now be seriously worried by this large vote for the left.

**PERGAMON 23**
**One year fighting for workers' rights!**
**Saturday 26th May; March and rally**
**Assemble 11.30am**
**Pergamon Press gate, Headington, Oxford**
**London coaches 9.00am,**
**National Gallery, Trafalgar Square**
**Details: Pergamon NUJ 0865-60762**

## Haringey Schools

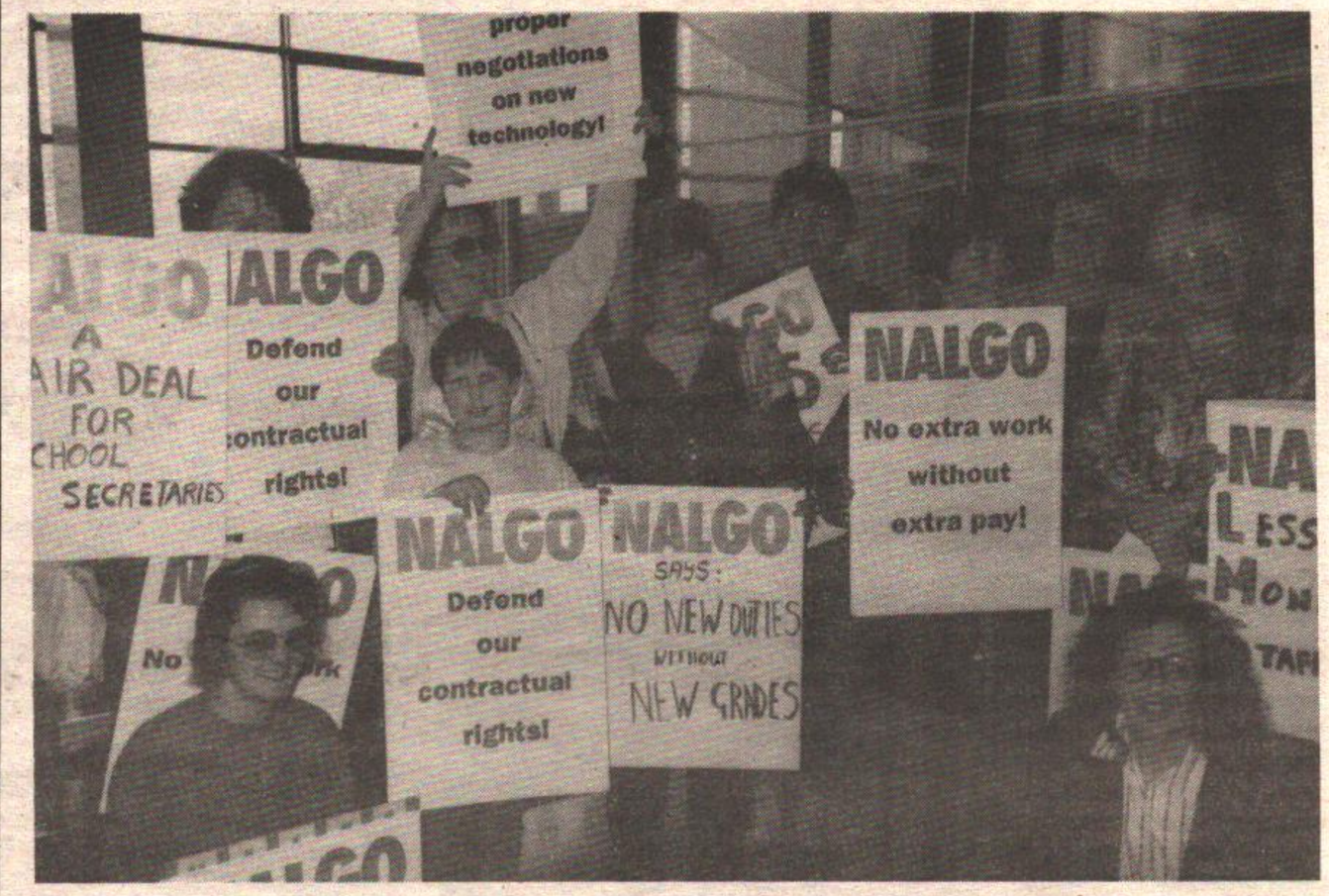



PHOTO: Glyn Rowlands

*NALGO members lobby Haringey Education Sub-Committee on April 24th 1990.*

# Secretaries take action!

**Amid the wealth of publicity focused on Tory attacks on education, little attention has been paid to the plight of school support staff.**

**Secretaries, technicians, nursery nurses and welfare assistants all face major attacks on jobs and conditions over the next few years.**

Headteachers and governors will now have the final say on grievance disputes and disciplinaries. Hours, job descriptions, and grades of new staff will be entirely at their discretion.

Industrial action over a school based issue will be deemed secondary action and support from staff employed in other schools will be unlawful.

Manual workers — cleaners, school meals staff — face the additional threats of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) and privatisation.

But it is administrative staff in schools — "school secretaries" — who are likely to bear the brunt of the additional workload arising from local financial management.

Many new duties, ranging from personnel functions to admin support for governors will fall upon their shoulders.

### Massive

Massive computer networks are being introduced to monitor and administer school budgets, keep pupil records, and allocate teachers and rooms to the curriculum.

This is all being done "on the cheap" without sufficient resources being allocated for training and regradings for secretaries.

Secretaries are almost without exception women and receive very low pay. In some areas they are paid as low as Scale 1-2, with a reduction because they are part time.

Often they are not paid during the holidays and have to sign on!

### Descriptions

They may not have agreed job descriptions, but are responsible for everything, working in cramped conditions with little privacy.

Previous industrial disputes have improved conditions slightly for Haringey secretaries, but they are still paid very little for the work they do, and they are expected to do a full-time job in part-time hours.

The changes resulting from LMS are the last straw!

By Tracy Doyle
Joint Convenor,
Haringey NALGO
Education Service

For months, Haringey NALGO has been demanding proper negotiations on New Technology, adequate training, increased hours, better pay and conditions, and LEA defence of existing rights and service conditions.

### Failure

The failure of the Council to respond to these demands has led to a "work to rule" as admins refuse to do duties outside existing job descriptions, and impose a boycott on all New Technology.

Their job descriptions are so out of date that this action is hitting the Council very hard.

A recent Education Sub-Committee was lobbied and a deputation of staff met Councillors.

NUPE and MATSA members and non-members are supporting the actions and we have received support from many teachers, heads, parents, and governors. This pressure has finally brought the Council to the negotiating table.

### Nationally

Unfortunately, NALGO nationally has produced little information for branches on LMS.

Instead, resources have been put into producing a £50 "Training pack" through the Education Department, which Councils are encouraged to buy for their schools.

This pack advises managers on issues such as "dealing with subordinates" and how to carry out disciplinary action — is this really the priority for NALGO?

## Local Management of Schools

# Let's make a fight of it!

By KAY TREBACZKY

**Local Management of Schools is now here.**

**The costs of this discriminatory and divisive legislation will now be arriving in schools — at the same time as the Poll Tax hits Education Authorities.**

What governors, teachers and parents do with these derisory budgets will determine the fate not only of our teachers and pupils, but also the overall wellbeing of our education system.

In Bristol South the governors of Knowle Infants School, due to operate on a deficit budget of £20,000, have refused to sanction sackings or consider redundancies.

They have chosen instead to launch an offensive against the Avon Education Authority and against McGregor and the Tory government. Strike action is being proposed in the event of redundancies.

This move has gained the unanimous support of parents and local people. An Action Group has been set up to mobilise support and make wider links with other school communities throughout Avon.

To date two organisations, Bristol Teachers Association and Windmill Hill Labour Party, have passed resolutions of support and have committed themselves to action in defence of teachers jobs and educational standards.

Like the fight against the Poll Tax, the fight to be rid of LMS has to start now. It is too significant an attack on our education system, its workers, and our children to delay until the return of a Labour government.

Now is the time for all schools, governors and trade unionists to look beyond their own schools to make a stand against educational and financial segregation and to join together to form a united front against LMS and the Tories.

*For more information contact:*
*Kay Trebaczky, 70 William Street, Bristol, BS3.*

## Opting out of the NHS:

# Manchester health workers say "no"!

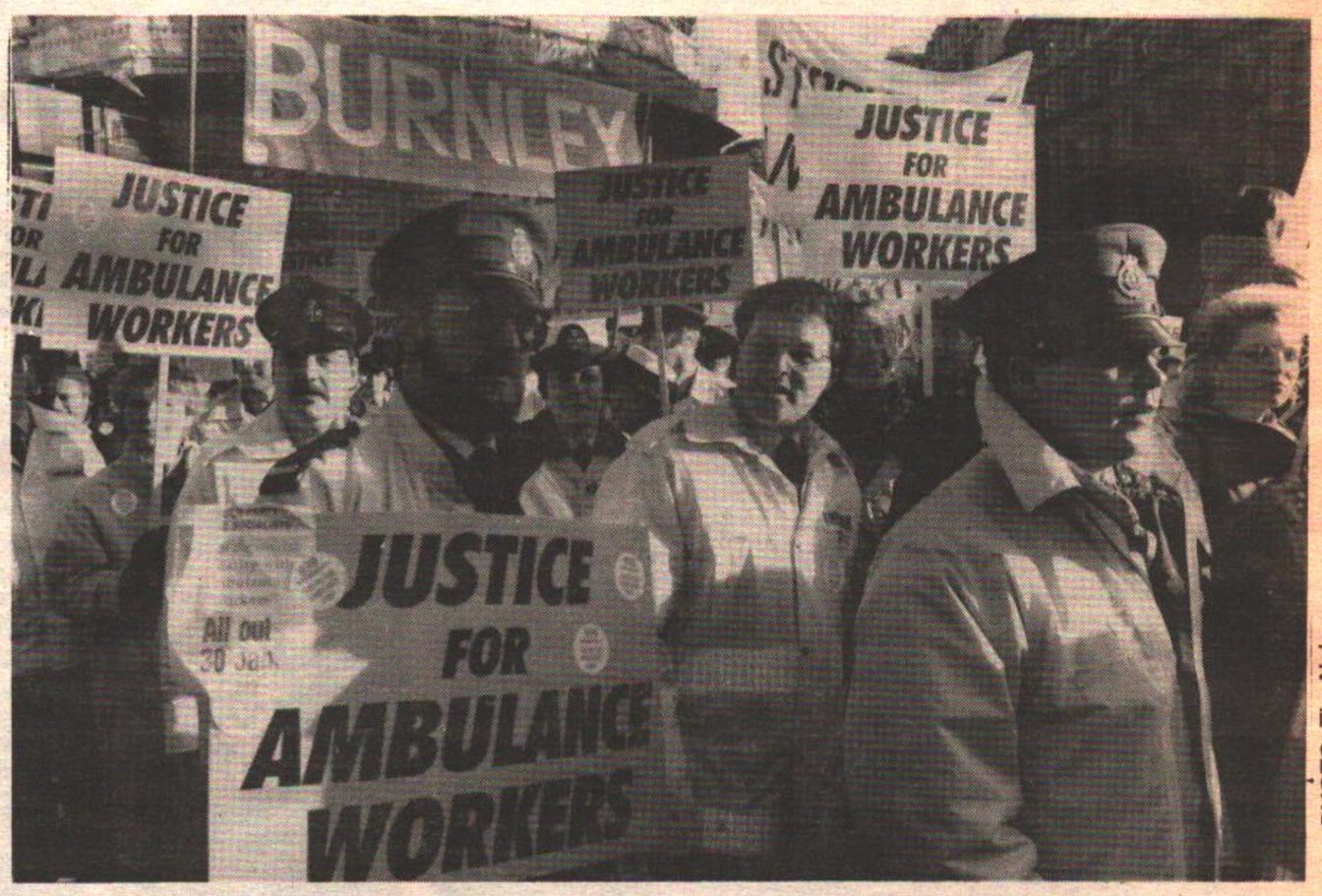



PHOTO: Tim Nolan

*Ambulance workers were the last in dispute: now all health workers can combine to fight opting-out.*

**Kenneth Clarke's attacks on the NHS have received a further setback.**

**Staff in Central Manchester Health Authority have voted against plans to establish a self-governing trust covering the entire health district.**

The massive rejection was the result of the biggest vote of healthworkers to date.

The ballot was organised from April 30th to May 4th by the Joint Staff Side Committee (JSSC), which includes all the major NHS unions and professional organisations involving 13,000 staff (58%).

It rejected any plans to set up a self-governing trust by 2,559 votes to 431, with 10 spoiled papers — a vote against "opting out" of 86%.

Votes against opting out fell just 42 short of an absolute majority of all staff entitled to vote.

**By Geoff Ryan NUPE shop steward and Staff Side EC, Central Manchester Health Authority**

This remarkable result was achieved despite:

•management's refusal to distribute ballot papers with pay slips;

•their refusal to organise a ballot in conjunction with the Electoral Reform Society;

•their refusal to provide the JSSC with a list of all Central Manchester Health Authority employees and their lack of willingness to debate the issues.

In order to avoid any management accusations of "irregularities", the JSSC ensured ballot papers were only available from accredited shop stewards and had to be signed for.

CMHA covers:

•three major hospitals (Manchester Royal Infirmary, the Royal Eye Hospital and St Marys Maternity Hospital);

•two smaller hospitals (the Dental Hospital and Barnes Hospital, which is several miles away in Stockport);

•plus all the various community units, health centres, etc., scattered around the health district.

Health service staff work different hours and shifts — including the stewards who, whilst conducting the ballot, still had to carry out full-time jobs.

The turnout of 3,000 is therefore a massive victory for the JSSC and a testimony to how seriously staff viewed the threat of opting out to the NHS and their jobs.

The results of the ballot were presented to the meeting of the CMHA on May 15th.

The JSSC asked all of its members to attend to in order to listen to how much importance Health Authority members attach to the views of health service staff.

Of particular interest were the opinions of Ken Collis, Chair of the Health Authority and until recently a Labour Councillor.

## CPSA Conference

# Soft left split opens way to regroupment

**The left won some victories at the 1990 CPSA Conference.**

**These included victories on the fight against privatisation, job cuts, and the witch-hunt at the Newcastle Department of Social Security central office.**

But the victories were offset by the return for another year of a right wing controlled National Executive Committee.

**By a *Briefing* supporter in the CPSA**

All too often in the past the right has demonstrated its contempt for Conference by ignoring policy decisions it disagrees with.

The running sore in CPSA — the division on the left — continued in this year's election results with only three Broad Left candidates elected to the NEC.

The rival faction, Broad Left 84, is clearly undergoing a crisis within its ranks with open divisions on Conference floor on key policy questions.

The news that more than 40 of the BL84 group have resigned in favour of working more openly with the right wing gives opportunities for reorganising the CPSA left.

The CPSA Broad Left must explore with the remainder of BL84 the possibilities for joint campaigns and unity against the right wing leadership.

The debate on the proposed expulsion of eight *Militant* supporters at Newcastle DSS central office by the NEC was only the most graphic example of the political differences in BL84.

On the one hand stood the openly anti-Trotskyists around Duggann and Hanson, advocating expulsion for ten years, and on the other Diane Helmsby urging that all charges be dropped.

The BL 84's conference bulletin's coverage of the debate stated that it was a matter of "personal choice".

Meanwhile the activists at branch and regional level face a government determined to undermine civil service jobs and conditions, with willing accomplices at CPSA HQ.

Useful initiatives such as the "Branches Against Agencies" campaign deserve support in the fight against privatisation.

Furthermore, Broad Left supporters in the Department of Employment section should take up the proposal for a united campaign against job cuts made by BL84 supporters.

## NUR: London Underground

# NUR steps back into line

**NUR leaders have now brought the London Underground into line with British Rail by accepting a pay deal of 9.3%.**

**Through a sleight of hand the award is payable one month later than the normal settlement date, which means that its real value for this year is only 8.5%.**

It's a staggering coincidence that 8.5% is the same figure originally offered by management!

**By Oliver New NUR**

Hopes of a struggle on the Underground were raised when the NUR Executive at first unanimously rejected the 9.3% offer — only to be dashed a couple of weeks later when they got cold feet and changed their minds.

Part of the problem was the continuing tension between ASLEF and the NUR.

In recent years ASLEF has drifted rightwards and both on British Rail and London Underground Ltd have increasingly often found ways to fit its new approach, harking back to its old days as a craft union, with management's needs.

It has also started a low key campaign to poach members from the NUR. Unsurprisingly, one effect has been a deteriorating working relationship between the two unions.

Their joint Rail Federation, although still in place, is full of holes.

ASLEF, along with the white collar union TSSA, accepted the pay offer at the same time as the NUR was throwing it out. Sadly, the NUR did not take the lead by campaigning for a proper wage rise and a balloting of the membership.

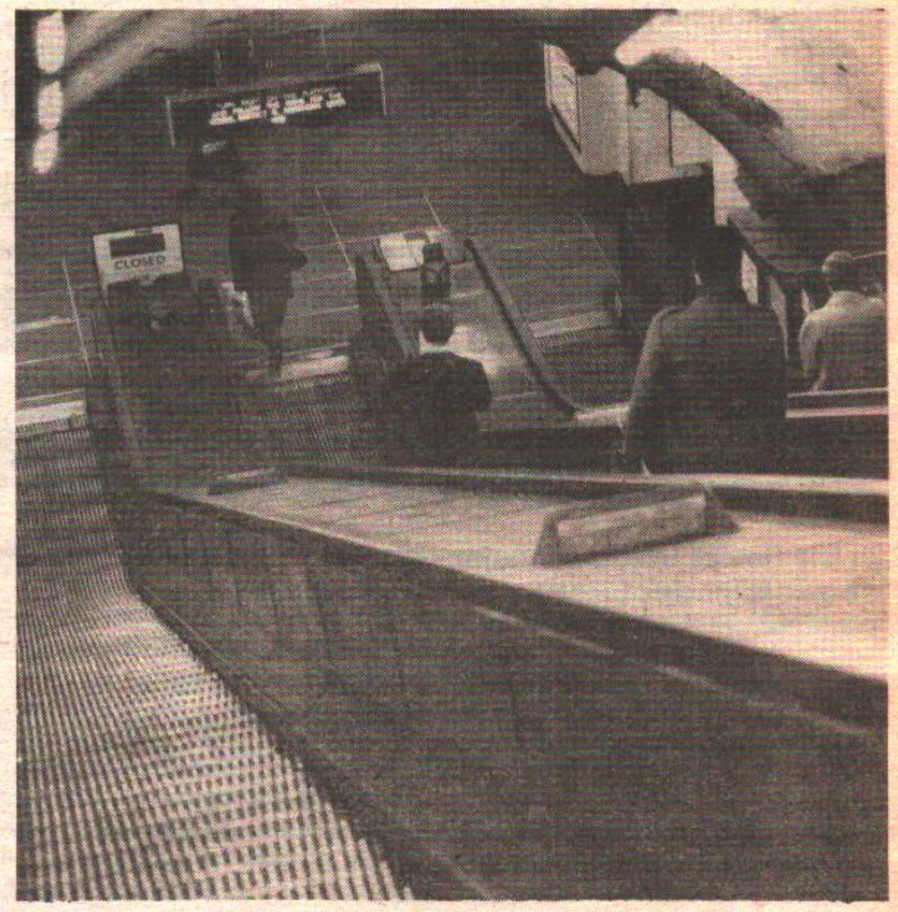



PHOTO: Martine Stead

*London Underground: a bleak future for workers and passengers.*

The best way of preventing the Rail Federation from collapsing altogether would be to organise unity at grass roots level.

Instead, feeling isolated, the majority of the NUR Executive did an about-face. They swallowed the deal and thus followed ASLEF.

9.3% was the average settlement in the private sector for the second half of 1989.

Nevertheless, the fact that the deal was no higher in the wake of last year's strikes highlights the fact that management is still very much on the offensive in the railway industry.

Nor do the rail union leaders seem any more willing to put faith in their members. Most of them prefer to study the opinion polls and hope for better days.

## South Korea

# Strike wave shows labour's grassroots strength

**JOE FREEMAN, a trade union reseacher specialising in international issues, reports on recent events in South Korea.**

**The recent strikes and political unrest in South Korea reflect the continued strength of the non-parliamentary democratic movement, in particular workers' organisations.**

**This strength has been maintained despite months of harsh government crackdowns.**

The strikes were also the first major test of South Korea's new national organisation of democratic trade unions — a test the movement seems largely to have passed.

Ulsan, an industrial city port in south-east Korea was the flashpoint. It is the company town of Hyundai, one of Korea's large "chaebol" (conglomerate) companies.

Around 100,000 workers are employed in numerous Hyundai subsidiaries. On April 25th workers in Hyundai Heavy Engineering went into occupation to protest at the arrest of union leaders.

Riot police stormed the plant three days later using tear gas and bulldozers to break barricades. The action triggered clashes between police and workers.

One hundred workers climbed a giant crane, where they stayed for nearly two weeks.

As news of the violent ending of the occupation spread, other workers in Ulsan and elsewhere mounted solidarity strikes.

The upsurge in industrial and political protest that followed reflects the underlying strength of the democratic movement in Korea.

It also shows the failure of the right-wing regime of President Roh Tae Woo to marginalise the movement through repression and securing a right-wing bloc in parliament.

The solidarity strikes were co-ordinated by "Chunnohyup" (also known as the Korea Trade Union Congress — KTUC), a national alliance of 1000 democratic trade unions, established in January this year.

The KTUC's formation is the latest outcome of the 1987 wave of strikes and democracy protests, when most of the workplace-based democratic trade unions were set up.

The 1987 unrest also ended military rule in South Korea, and replaced it — on paper at least — by a system of presidential democracy.

The KTUC unions distance themselves from the more moderate Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU), which had close links with successive military regimes (and with which the British TUC has formal ties).

The KTUC's aims include a 44-hour working week, improved pay and conditions, ending sex discrimination, independent trade unionism and the "defeat (of) the capitalist and state powers responsible for labour movement repression".

The KTUC's grassroots and regional structures facilitated solidarity strikes across the country. Twenty-six thousand Ulsan Hyundai car workers — from the biggest workplace in Korea — struck for several days.

In Seoul, tram drivers refused to collect tickets; journalists walked out; and workers already on strike at a national radio station were joined by trade unionists from other stations.

The mass arrests of union leaders and activists which sparked the strikes started in late December, when an arrest warrant for the KTUC's Chair-elect was issued.

He was arrested in Seoul on February 28th, one of over 200 trade unionists arrested since January.

Roh had hoped to use these arrests — along with even greater limits on labour rights and strengthened police powers — to break the KTUC.

He has blamed Korea's current economic problems — including high inflation and relatively low economic growth rates — on workers high wage increases and has pressurised unions to moderate their wage demands.

Before late April, the 1990 strike rate had fallen dramatically compared with recent years. But Roh's plans have been only partly successful, as the recent strikes show.

The willingness of trade unionists to mount political actions has not diminished. Moreover, large sections of workers are refusing to take the blame for economic problems.

While the FKTU has cut its 1990 wage demand to 17% KTUC unions have put in higher claims. Union leaders at Hyundai Motor Company recently called an indefinite strike over an 18% wage claim.

The industrial action has also spilled over into wider political protests.

On May 9th around 100,000 students and workers in Seoul and elsewhere took to the streets in solidarity with strikers, and to voice anger at the inaugural convention of the new Democratic Liberal Party (DLP) led by President Roh.

Many of the demonstrations, which were bigger than at any time since 1987, ended in running battles with riot police using tear gas.

The scale of these protests reflect the democratic movement's level of concern over the foundation of the DLP.

Modelled on the right-wing Liberal Democratic Party in Japan — which has been almost constantly in power since the late 1940s — the DLP is a coalition of Roh's party with two others from the liberal-conservative opposition.

The new party aims to gain invincible parliamentary majorities, and so exclude any genuine opposition there.

Moreover, the economic policies of the new cabinet drawn from the DLP will mark a break with the current policies, which aim in part to moderate the income gap between rich and poor.

The new policies will see a return to a low wage, export-led economy, and hence worse conditions for workers.

There is little doubt that Roh's political and economic changes are only the latest moves against the democratic movement. However, the strikes and other recent events show that the President has a fight on his hands.



*Police fight a losing battle against demonstrators on the streets of Kwangju, South Korea.*

**Solidarity support:**
**KTUC 142-77 Kuro 6-dong, Kuro-ku, Seoul, 152-056, South Korea.**
**Korean Forum, c/o Catholic Institute for International Relations, 22 Coleman Fields, London N1.**

## USSR

# Gorbachev's Crisis

**In the Soviet Union all major economic decisions are political.**

**In the Soviet Union, the absence of clear leadership therefore leads to economic breakdown; in contrast, capitalism has automatic mechanisms for the resolution of crises.**

The Soviet economy now seems to be unquestionably in crisis, but one of a different character to those suffered by capitalism.

It has been a cumulative crisis, resulting from steadily declining productivity and the enormous volume of resources poured into building up Soviet military capability in the 70s.

It has been a crisis characterised by chronic underproduction, particularly of basic consumer goods, rather than the overproduction typical of capitalism.

**By Rick Simon**
**Labour Focus on Eastern Europe**

According to CIA estimates, only 50 out of 1,200 basic consumer goods are readily available in the shops, despite an increase of 6.4 per cent in consumer goods production in the first quarter of 1990.

Overall production in the same period registered a fall of 1.2 per cent.

The Soviet budget deficit has increased from 18 billion roubles to 92 billion in 1989. There has also been some defaulting on debt repayments for the first time ever.

The crisis has now been exacerbated by the collapse of Comecon, which threatens to force the Soviet economy more abruptly onto the world market.

This is not going to happen overnight: 50 per cent of Soviet trade is still with Comecon and there are many problems associated with the transition from a nationalised economy to one dominated by private capital in Eastern Europe.

However, the crisis has brought key problems such as prices and the convertability of the rouble to the fore.

Other factors of crucial importance are:

•the accompanying crisis in the Communist Party (CPSU) itself;

•the crisis of the USSR as a unitary state brought about by the rise of nationalist aspirations in the constituent republics;

•the breakdown of the bureaucracy's monopoly of political power as a result of the reforms introduced by Gorbachev himself.

The army has recently taken an increasingly aggressive stance in defence of its interests and sabre-rattling may increasingly be extended to major industrial disputes.

Already, increasing economic hardships and talk of the need to do away with constitutionally guaranteed employment have forced the Soviet working class into increasing activity.

### Industrial

In 1989, seven million days were lost as the result of industrial action and inter-ethnic conflict.

There are are many indications of the growing consciousness of the Soviet working class:

•the emergence of the *Sotsprof* independent socialist trade union association;

•the newly formed Confederation of Labour;

•the potential formation of an independent miners' union;

•the increasing formation of political organisations.

Any independent workers' organisations must, however, ensure that, in taking action and elaborating a programme to combat the crisis, they do not become isolated from the mass of other workers, who remain members of the official unions.

There is much disagreement, even in the Presidential Council, on a way out of these crises.

The degree of hesitancy over the introduction of radical economic reforms reveals the extent of likely popular opposition; to attempts to remove subsidies, raise prices and increase unemployment.

It is difficult to foresee an attempted solution in the medium-term that does not involve a massive social explosion.

# BRAZIL



Brazilian sugar worker.

## Interview: LUIS GUSKIKEN, National President of the Brazilian Workers' Party.

# "The worst recession for 35 years"

**During a recent trip to London, LUIS GUSKIKEN, National President of the Brazilian Workers' Party, spoke to MIKE PHIPPS for *Labour Briefing* about the Presidential elections in Brazil and events since.**

**In the Presidential election, Collor got 35 million votes and Lula, the PT candidate, 31 million.**

**The campaign obliged us to clarify our strategy on alliances and face up to the problems of government.**

The campaign had a significance for the whole of Latin America. It offered a new road for the left, different to previous ones.

The contest sharpened the divisions between socialism and new-liberalism — that is privatisation, economic internationalisation and austerity against inflation.

It made the PT more socialist and more influential. Now we are going to see some big class battles in Brazil.

Collor's austerity plan attempts to control inflation by reducing monetary circulation. This has led to bankruptcies and unemployment and 62% of industrial production has been stopped.

### Industries

Most industries have laid off their workers. The number of ministries has been reduced, civil servants made redundant, many dependant functions closed, and state enterprises privatised.

Collor has also requisitioned private cars and is waging a demogogic campaign against "privilege".

Most economists are pleased with the medicine, but think it is too strong and may kill the patient.

GDP is down 10% and Brazil is in the worst recession for 35 years. The bankers are generally happy because for them defeating inflation is what matters.

It's possible that there will be a social explosion before next October's elections for the national assembly and state governments. But concessions can be made using the money taken out of circulation.

Collor is playing the role of Bonaparte, by appearing to attack speculation.

### Effective

He is also very effective with the mass media, appealing to the masses over the heads of the employers. He is trying to create a new image for the state, by slimming down its apparatus.

The PT demands job stability. We call for the books of companies making redundancies to be opened. Factories producing for popular consumption should have their funds unblocked.

The October elections will centre on the economy. If Collor makes concessions, or if large sectors are demoralised by unemployment he can win.

The liberation theology wing of the Church is very active amongst the poor. It calls for an agrarian reform which Collor will not deliver.

The right-wing of the Church — especially the fundamentalist Protestant sects — are also growing in the backward sectors.

# South Africa

# A cosy get-together

**The meeting of an ANC delegation headed by Nelson Mandela with President de Klerk and members of his government on May 5th seems to have been a cosy affair.**

**All was smiles and good cheer when the delegates met the media afterwards.**

This was not the first meeting between the ANC leadership and representatives of the government.

It is now admitted that preliminary talks did take place in Geneva in March to clear the way for the May "talks about talks".

**By CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN**

It is a delusion to believe that all is now well and the end of apartheid is in sight. This is only the beginning of the beginning.

The two sides were sizing each other up and both still have to deal with their own constituencies.

The National Party has always depended on the Afrikaner vote for its majority in white only elections.

The growth of the right-wing Conservative Party and its extremist fringes, the AWB and the Boerestaat, has made de Klerk painfully aware that even with the support of the majority of English-speaking voters (and this is by no means certain) he could lose another whites only election.

For de Klerk it is essential that he reaches some type of accommodation with the ANC. However, he is not prepared to junk centuries of white privilege and domination at the drop of a hat.

When de Klerk talks of majority rule he does not mean the universal franchise in a unitary state which the ANC demands. He hedges his bets with talk of "minority rights" — by which he means the whites.

The ANC also has to face up to the realities of the situation. It is the organisation with the largest support among the black people. But the years of repression and exile of its leadership have take their toll.

While the ANC — and the Communist Party — can organise big rallies, espeically with the legendary Nelson Mandela on the platform, it faces a mammoth task of organising at grass root level.

It simply has not got the machinery to take over power tomorrow — even if that was what de Klerk offered.



Nelson Mandela

The ANC also has to confront the fact that there are other forces in the liberation movement contending for leadership, principally the PAC and associated black consciousness organisations.

There is also the fractious question of Buthelezi who, resentful of the fact that Mandela has replaced hin as the black hope of the regime, is stepping up the slaughter in Natal.

There is not only the question of political power. The huge economic gap between blacks and whites must be narrowed before there can be any realistic solution to the situation.

Where white income is measured as 100, the incomes of Asians, "coloureds" and blacks are respectively 26, 20 and 9.

Even in this year's budget, which gives unprecedented handouts to the blacks, social spending continues to be five times greater for the whites.

The ANC's Freedom Charter includes the demand for the nationalisation of the mines and major industrial and financial institutions.

This is a means of redistributing the country's wealth and laying the base for the emergence of a black middle class in much the same way as the National Party introduced nationalisation to prop up the emerging Afrikaner bourgeoisie.

But the government is adamant that, whatever the eventual political set-up it will be based on free enterprise. It has already started the process of privatising the existing publicly-owned enterprises.

The PAC, Azapo and the National Council of Trade Unions have all denounced the ANC for going ahead with the talks, urging that the liberation organisations should first come together to "plan the final strategy for the regime's total defeat".

The newly formed *Workers for Socialist Action* also rejected the talks:

"Not addressing the land question or the redistribution of wealth will not overcome centuries of dispossession and exploitation. The free enterprise system will simply entrench inequality."

# Iran

# Student unrest

**During the last week of November and first week of December a number of reports appeared in the Iranian press on the confrontations between the students and the authorities.**

**In one such incident the students at Amir Kabir university occupied the offices of the "foundation for the disinherited" (Bonyad Mostazafin) in protest against the acute shortage of student accommodation.**

Some students complained that they were forced to share small rooms with more than 12 fellow students. Others had to sleep in a converted car park with a ceiling less than six foot high.

According to Mr Karroubi, the new Speaker of the Iranian parliament:

"the government had no alternative but to send in the troops, especially as these offices held large amounts of weapons and cash."

By all accounts, in the ensuing battles many students were killed and scores were injured.

According to the official daily *Kayhan*:

"universities are facing severe difficulties. Shortage of lecturing staff, lack of accommodation, the exorbitant price of books are some of the difficulties faced by the students…

"If those responsible do not take the necessary steps, suspicious elements who have infiltrated student ranks, hoping to cause trouble, will benefit from the dissatisfaction of students."

There are currently more than 300,000 university students in Iran.

While 70% of university places are reserved for those who have served at the fronts, families of war martyrs and other loyal elements, the rest of university entry candidates have to pass rigorous religious tests in order to qualify for a place.

Yet the universities are not equipped to deal with such large numbers.

***Reprinted from the Spring edition of the News Bulletin of CARI — the Campaign Against Repression in Iran. Other articles include analysis of the economic crisis and its effects on the poor; strike in Melli Shoe Factory; Islamic fundamentalism in practice; and Ceausescu's fall leaves ally in controversy.**

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## Labour's new "policies"

# TONY BENN SPEAKS OUT!

**The most important characteristic of Labour's new policy statement is that it gives clear commitments to three centres of power: Washing-ton, Brussels, and the City of London.**

It promises that the next Labour government will do nothing whatsoever to disturb their power over British society.

This is not — as has been argued — a pragmatic move to capture the centre ground. It is a profoundly ideological statement which attacks the basic ideas which brought the Labour Party into being and which have inspired socialists from the beginning.

None of this will be a surprise to those who have followed recent Labour Party history. But it does open up a huge vacuum to which the left must respond.

This is a time of hope for socialists. The Cold War is over. The public mood is more anti-Tory than for ten years. The prospects for a Labour government are strong. The influence of the Labour left is therefore of increasing importance.

We must be clear that market forces cause unemployment, homelessness,



and poverty. Unless we're prepared to use the trade union movement and the ballot box to countervail the power of the market we will solve nothing.

It's no good being managers-in-waiting with a nice prospectus for taking over Great Britain plc.

In place of shallow answers we need deep analysis.

In place of bland statements we need clear policies designed to deal with the crisis we shall inherit.

Above all, we need a vision of how we see British society developing in the new Europe and internationally.

## POLL TAX

# Haringey staff boycott Poll Tax work

**One hundred and twenty housing benefit staff in Haringey have recently decided to boycott Poll Tax related work. They have begun a campaign of industrial action in protest at attempts to impose new duties without adequate increases in grade.**
***Briefing* spoke to ROM WILLIAMS NALGO shop steward at the North Tottenham Area Housing Office and a member of the branch's Anti-Poll Tax group. Rom has also been involved in Haringey Anti-Poll Tax Union.**

***Briefing:* Did the Council make efforts to agree new job descriptions before the Poll Tax was actually introduced?**

*RW:* They must have thought we were completely stupid! Everything is in chaos — the Council wasn't prepared for the Poll Tax at all.

They only responded on the question of changes to benefit workers after NALGO took it up. Negotiations only started after April because staff were refusing to take on the new work.

***Briefing:* What offer has now been made?**

*RW:* Nothing! The offer from management is basically two increments — not even a proper increase in grade — and this is in exchange for generic working, increased workloads and so on.

To add insult to injury, the deal is supposed to be met from existing budgets, by increasing the vacancy factor to 10% — *and staff are supposed to agree to cover the extra work resulting from that!*

***Briefing:* This hasn't satisfied the staff?**

*RW:* We had a meeting of the staff affected. More than 75% were there and the offer was thrown out unanimously.

Staff are boycotting all Poll Tax related work until a decent offer is made. 24th May is the first Council meeting and we will be out on strike that day and lobbying the meeting.

***Briefing:* What links are being made with the general struggle against the Poll Tax?**

*RW:* Most of the workers are against the Poll Tax itself. This is the first real industral action in the Haringey against the Poll Tax. We're hoping to raise the issues with other workers by asking them not to cross our picket lines.

We're also producing a leaflet for other housing workers, and another for the public to explain what we're doing.

The irony is that Labour Party policy is supposed to be for a "caring Poll Tax", i.e. to provide a comprehensive benefit and advice service to cushion people from its effects.

This dispute proves beyond all doubt that Haringey Council has not intention of adopting that strategy.

They've failed completely to set up an adequate benefit service. Members of the public who need advice on the Poll Tax are referred by the Poll Tax section to the Housing Department and by Housing back to Finance.

The whole thing's a nonsense.

**Hackney's not paying!**
**Burn, bin or shred your Poll Tax bill**
**Saturday 26th May, 12.30pm**
Assemble Hackney Town Hall followed by march to Clissold park — speakers, entertainment

## JOIN LABOUR PARTY SOCIALISTS!

Socialists in the Party know that the world is changing. The momentous events in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union,and Southern Africa are creating a new international climate in which it will be easier to argue for peace, internationalism and economic co-operation.
At the same time the leadership of the Party has insisted on policies that looked dated before these changes and now appear positively archaic. Each day the Party looks more elitist, authoritarian and out of touch with grass roots opinion.
Labour Party Socialists was formed to begin the fight back against the Kinnock leadership of the Labour Party. We aim to campaign on all major issues that face working people and to develop a principled socialist policy programme for the 1990s.
Our founding conference attracted over 300 Party members from all over the country.
Join us in the fight for socialism in the Labour Party.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

CLP.....

Waged £8; Unwaged/Student £4; CLPs and other organisations £16.
LPS membership aill also make you an affiliate of the Socialist Movement.
If you wish to opt out of affiliation to the Socialist Movement please tick here: .....

## Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign

**Drop all the charges!**

**All meetings open to defendants and their supporters.**

**Meeting Wednesdays, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1, 7.30pm.**

**Contact the TSDC at Haldane Society Lawyers, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1. Telephone: 071-833 8958.**