LABOUR
40p FORTNIGHTLY
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40p

NO WAR IN THE GULF!

US-BRITAIN OUT NOW!

Behind the military build-up in the Gulf and its threat of catastrophic war lies the greed for oil.

The US produces 14% of the planet's oil but consumes 24% of it. It will go to any lengths to ensure its supplies are safe and cheap.

This is the first major conflict since the Berlin Wall came down last year. It may well be a precursor of future conflicts in which the debt-ridden poor nations will be forced into line by the rich nations.

The latter have now made clear their willingness to use military might to ensure their continuing ability to plunder at will the world's natural resources.

The military build-up in the Gulf is justified as an attempt to uphold the "rule of international law" and bedecked in a UN figleaf.

But George Bush, its undisputed Commander in Chief has a record of international lawlessness second to none.

As Reagan's shadow for eight years, he was intimately involved in the war in El Salvador, the destabilisation of Nicaragua (declared illegal by the World Court), the invasion of Grenada, the bombing of Libya, the troop landing in Beirut, and vital support for the illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

In his own right he invaded Panama only last year.

The British record is no better. The Anglo-French attack on Suez in 1956, also justified in the name of the "rule of law", is now seen by everyone as a crude throwback to gunboat colonialism.

The Iraqi state's structures were a creation of the old Colonial Office and the monarchical Kuwaiti constitution was a product of the Macmillan government.

By JEREMY CORBYN MP

Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons to murder Kurdish people caused barely a ripple of protest amongst the self-proclaimed guardians of "world law".

Five thousand people were killed at Halabja in 1988. Up to 20,000 more died in the genocide that followed as Kurdish villages were razed to the ground.

Despite this, over £50 million in trade credit has gone from Britain to Iraq since the end of Iraq's war with Iran. A specific representation I made on this matter to the Foreign Office met with the curt reply that trade came first.

Only a full month after British and US forces were deployed in the Gulf were MPs allowed to speak in the House of Commons.

In the debate, Thatcher claimed she had all the legal authority she needed to launch an attack on Iraq. She made it clear that a vote to adjourn the House of Commons would endorse her government' policy on the Gulf crisis.

The Labour front bench offered no serious opposition, hitched the Party to the Thatcher war machine and led most Labour MPs into the division lobbies with the Tories.

In the 1982, the carte blanche given by the Labour leadership to Thatcher over the Falklands led not only to needless loss of life in the South Atlantic but to a massive Tory victory the following year.

We're still living with the consequences.

Nobody on the left supports the Iraqi regime. We know better than anyone on the right the full horrors of the murdered Kurds and the gaoled and tortured trade unionists.



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

War-monger Thatcher: the fig-leaf of UN authority will be no solace to those in the firing line.

But the determination of the US to impose its will on the Middle East will lead to disaster.

A war against Iraq would be long, brutal and costly. A permanent US military presence in the Gulf would be a recipe for instability.

Neither "international law", democracy and human rights, nor economic progress will be served by the current military build-up.

Contrary to the fantasies of the popular press, there is no national consensus on the deployment of British troops in this conflict.

Jingoism will not bring peace or liberty to the Middle East. And it will not bring victory to the Labour Party in Britain.

The painful reality is that the peoples of the Middle East — in Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait — will only be prevented by the US-British intervention from determining their own future.

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.
The deadline for letters for the first issue after the summer break is Wednesday, September 19th.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

Was NAC right on HFE?

Dear *Briefing*,

Tina Yemm's article (*Briefing* no.108) implies that NAC should have opposed the Embryo Bill as a whole, not just those parts of it attacking abortion rights or the rights of single women.

There would have been a number of difficulties about this, not least the fact that NAC conference did not vote for it. The conference did vote to oppose any time limit on embryo research, but that was all.

To take up a position of opposition to the whole Bill would have put us, in the eyes of the public, in the same camp as the anti-abortionists.

At the end of the day, 65 MPs voted against the final version of the Bill, and these 65 were all hard-line anti-abortionists.

A small group like NAC would have been totally isolated if it had tried to campaign on the basis of total opposition whilst seeking to differentiate itself from these diehards.

Some feminists oppose all reproductive technologies on the grounds that they are controlled by men in their own interests and that embryo research will be used in racist and sexist ways.

These arguments deserve respect, but (apart from a speech made by arch anti-abortionist Dale Campbell Savours) did not find an echo in the Parliamentary debate.

Perhaps this was because these self-same feminists ignore the Parliamentary process, or indeed any campaigning methods other than talking to each other!

The reason we fight for abortion rights is not because of an abstract denial of fetal rights, which are neither here nor there, but because of the effect of a pregnancy on a woman's body and a woman's life.

Women must have the right to reject an unwanted pregnancy and not be forced into parenthood against their will.

Embryo experimentation takes place on embryos outside the body and therefore has no direct effect on any particular woman's life. The fact that scientists have been unable so far to sustain embryonic life beyond around seven or eight days emphasises this.

This dependance on a woman's uterus for further growth shows clearly that fetal development is not a thing in itself, as fundamentalists argue, but is dependent on its environment, i.e., the woman.

That underlines why only women should have the right to make the decision as to whether or not to continue with a pregnancy.

But by opposing the 14-day rule, we fall into the trap of accepting that fetal development could have significance for abortion rights.

At the moment, scientists who want to study the development of the embryo after the period in which it can survive in the laboratory use naturally aborted early embryos and later miscarriages and abortions.

This makes good sense, because if they want to learn about natural development and how it can go wrong, then those embryos and fetuses which have been developing in the "natural" way or are going wrong "naturally" make the best research material.

But what if they were able to mimic completely this "natural" development outside the womb – perhaps all the way to nine months?

Then society as a whole would have to make the decision (probably long before this stage was reached) as to whether it wanted to supplement or even replace the current method of reproduction with this new method.

At that point, abortion would no longer be an issue because each new baby would have been deliberately created and developed, not using women's bodies, and decisions about what happened after birth would be separate from this process.

Society would also have to make the decision about whether these more developed fetuses could be used for experimentation and if so with what aims and up to what point of development.

Such possibilities are of course a long way off and there are many more important tasks for socialists and feminists than spending time discussing what is at present entirely in the realm of science fiction.

What we need to remember is that science now is as much a product of capitalist society as are the social roles assigned to men and women and that scientists and doctors are not all altruistic humanitarians.

Many male doctors do enjoy the power they have over women's lives.

Hi-tech "solutions" to infertility give doctors much more status than helping men and women to prevent infertility in the first place.

IVF treatments have a very low success rate and, even if resources were unlimited, could never be used to treat the extensive demand that their very existence helps to create!

I believe that it is important for the women's movement and the left to discuss these isues both for their theoretical and practical consequences.

But we must not let such discussions obscure the fact that the recent Parliamentary battle resulted in a huge defeat for the anti-abortionists, and was recognised as such by them.

We must use this as a springboard to fight for our positive demands.

Leonora Lloyd,
NAC activist, writing
in a personal capacity

An open door...

Dear *Briefing*,

I'm pleased to see that Steve Kaczynski, (*Briefing* no. 105) thinks that the SWP has its "good points" and sorry to learn that I've put him off joining, for the moment at least.

However, I should point out that my earlier letter (no. 104) was not designed to start a debate about the merits of joining the SWP in general, but rather to draw a particular point from the fortunes of the Labour left in Haringey.

Most of the rest of Steve's letter is knockabout stuff, although it is to be regretted that he appears unable to tell the difference between a genuine revolutionary socialist party, albeit in embryo, and Stalinist distortions of the same.

You don't need to be religious to join the SWP.

What you do need to have is an understanding of the centrality of the working class to changing the world and the role of socialists and a socialist party in bringing about that change, plus a commitment to do something about it – in other words, to make that future now.

This is something that is certainly not being done in Kinnock's Labour Party, in or out of the smoke-filled rooms.

Yours fraternally,
Keith Flett
Haringey, London

"Two camps" Coates

Dear *Briefing*,

I was not able to attend the meeting about *Briefing's* future, but would like to comment.

Being on the Socialist Society Co-ordinating Committee makes me a bit in "two camps".

We debated the question of a Socialist Movement paper. Some people (myself, for example) felt that it would end up like *Campaign Group News*, always seeking to be "correct". This is just the opposite of *Briefing's* style.

A Socialist Movement paper would be dominated by "star" writers, an anxious search for being right and a professional homogeneity of syntax.

Briefing is so much more open than this kind of paper that any move to dilute this aspect would be, in my opinion, a disaster.

Therefore I think you are right to insist on the conditions you do.

Indeed, I am totally sceptical about the whole project. I can't see it inspiring the kind of loyalty that *Briefing* has.

All the best,
Andrew Coates
South London

Authors' Query

Dear Briefing,

We are writing a history of the Labour Party in the 80s from the perspective of rank and file members.

We would be interested in hearing from Party activists from all regions of the country about their experiences in the Party in recent years.

In particular, we would be interested in any details about the effects on the Party's grass-roots of the policies and practices pursued by the Party's national leadership.

Confidentiality will be strictly respected and all correspondence will be answered.

Please write to us at 79 Inderwick Road, London, N8 9LA.

Yours sincerely,
Richard Heffernan
and *Mike Marqusee*
Haringey, London

Conference Greetings

This is your last chance to print Conference Greetings in Labour Briefing. Please send your ads to arrive by Wednesday September 19th.

Rates are:
Quarter page: £50
Eighth page: £25
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Please write to Labour Briefing at PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY. You can telephone the *Briefing* office on 081-809 3927.

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Commons prepares for war:

In their own words...

Tony Benn:

The real issue is this. Everybody knows it and nobody mentions it. The Americans want to protect their oil supplies...

America has benefitted much recently from cheap Middle Eastern oil. It was reported in the *Financial Times* that it has reduced its oil production and increased oil imports from 31% to 52%.

It has become hooked on this cheap fluid that now has to be controlled by the American army...

One cannot have a new order for the Middle East based on the redeployment of white power in the form of a permanent American army in Saudi Arabia...

The Falklands may be too close for comfort. There are not all that many people who, looking back, think that that huge expenditure was justified. I do not think so. I have been in a minority before and I might be in one now, but that does not worry me.

Front Bench Dialogue

William Waldegrave: There have been some dissentient voices.

After listening to my former neighbour, now the Right Hon. Member for Chesterfield (Tony Benn) I asked myself whether I would feel more secure in my arguments if he was agreeing with me, and came to the conclusion that I would not.

Kinnock: Join the club.

Waldegrave: I cannot refrain from repeating the Leader of the Opposition's sotto voce remark – "Welcome to the club."

Eric Heffer:

The last point I want to make concerns the damn hypocrisy of some of those involved.

The Secretary for Defence says that we stand by the law... But what law did America call up when it invaded Grenada or the Panama?

What law did it call up when it undermined the elected president of Chile and helped to get him murdered?

What law did it call up when it assisted the contras in violent means against the Nicaraguan government? What sort of law is that?

That is not law; that is interests. That is imperial interests.

What worries me is whether we are going to Saudi Arabia to fight for the rights of the Kuwaitis and the people of Iraq who have been oppressed for so long -

John Marshall: Still are oppressed.

Heffer: Yes, they still are oppresssed. Where were Conservative Members when the likes of me were working hard to assist those people? Selling weapons!

An American senator has said that if Iraq was only growing carrots, America would not be interested. Of course it would not be.

It is a question of oil and oil interests. It is capitalist oil interests. It is imperialist oil interests. That is what worries me.

I want peace. I want the people to be genuinely free. I do not want us to be rushed into a war because of the oil companies.

David Lambie:

Let us vote against the government's policies. My constituents and I have more to fear from the British Prime Minister than from Saddam Hussein.

NO WAR IN THE GULF!

National Demonstration

US AND BRITISH TROOPS OUT OF THE GULF!

Saturday 15th September
Assemble 1.30pm:
North Wharf Road,
London W2
(Paddington tube)

We say:

Imperialism out of the Gulf!

The build up of US, British and allied military forces in the Gulf has nothing to do with fighting aggression, defending democracy, upholding international law or "building a new world order", as Neil Kinnock would have it.

It has everything to do with maintaining the economic and political domination of the capitalist west over the whole Middle Eastern region.

Briefing readers will be familiar with the long list of repressive regimes supported by Bush and Thatcher, their indifference to international law, the rights of small countries, and the moral niceties of military incursions, from Panama to the West Bank.

Indeed, they armed Saddam Hussein, encouraged him to invade Iran, and were not unduly perturbed by his genocidal war against Iraq's Kurdish population.

The regimes which the US and its allies are defending in the Middle East are themselves brutally reactionary.

The rights of the millions of migrant labourers who produce the oil which keeps the minute Gulf elites awash with cash are never mentioned in the media war chants.

None of this justifies Saddam Hussein's action against Kuwait. This has nothing to do with ensuring self-determination for the people of the region.

It has everything to do with aggrandising his own regime and above all increasing oil revenues to pay for post-Iran-Iraq war reconstruction.

Oil was the immediate source of the crisis and remains at its heart. In one sense, this is nothing but an attempt by the oil buyer to impose a lower price on the oil seller by force of arms.

In a deeper sense it is about the determination of the US and its allies to re-assert – in the wake of the Cold War – their political and military domination over the Middle East.

Nothing good for the people of the Middle East or for the working class worldwide can come of the current military build-up in the Gulf.

The war which may well ensue will be destructive in the extreme. With both chemical and tactical nuclear weapons potentially in play, the consequences are too horrific to contemplate.

Kinnock has made much of the need for a UN fig leaf for this latest bout of old fashioned gunboat diplomacy. Thatcher thinks it's not necessary.

But with or without UN approval, the nature of imperialism's military adventure in the Gulf remains the same.

On the left, illusions in the UN's restraining role are understandable but dangerous. With the collapse of Stalinist power, the Security Council could well become a rubber stamp for the US State Department.

As in Korea, the UN may end up legitimising Washington's war.

Economic sanctions – the aim of which, after all, is the restoration of the Emir to power in Kuwait – will act as an excuse for wider military action.

When the US build-up is complete, a provocation will be easy to engineer. Sanctions are, in effect, war by another means.

There is therefore no time to waste in building a vigorous, broad-based campaign to remove imperialism from the Gulf – and stop the war. The Campaign Against War in the Gulf is a good start in this direction; it deserves support.

From the First World War to the Falklands the Labour leadership has a shameful record of weak-kneed accommodation to the war-mongering, jingoism, and blood-lust of the British ruling class.

In the light of history, the posturing of Neil Kinnock over the Gulf will seem as contemptible as that of his predecessors over similar military adventures.

The Labour and trade union left has a duty to propel the struggle against the war in the Gulf into the heart of the labour movement.

This issue must be debated at Labour Party Conference, wherever Party members and trade unionists gather, and indeed in the workplaces, the schools, and the streets.

Westminster Watch

Commons in war mood

Following agreement between Thatcher and Kinnock (reached, no doubt through the "usual channels"), Parliament was at least allowed to discuss the Gulf crisis on September 6th and 7th.

Despite pleas for a recall of the House by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer (supported by Paddy Ashdown) the Labour and Tory Front Benches preferred to construct their policies in private.

By Lou Finbar Grieb

At times of "national crisis" the House is to be consulted only after all the crucial decisions have been made – and even then it is merely expected to rally behind the government's actions.

Before the Commons assembled, Labour's bi-partisan approach to the Gulf crisis had been made explicit.

Kaufman led the field in calculating belligerence until Kinnock returned from his holiday to announce that Saddam Hussein was "by definition" the type you don't negotiate with.

In the Commons itself, Labour's leaders were solemn in demeanour but fervent in their backing for the Bush-Thatcher military intervention.

In response to what Thatcher called, in her opening speech, "our resolute approach", Kinnock advised the government to seek UN sanction for direct action against Iraq.

He made it clear this was not in any way a restraint on the use of force but a method of conferring on it political legitimacy.

He then tried to outgun Thatcher by sketching out "war aims" more far-reaching – and dangerous – than the government's own:

- a permanent arms embargo on Iraq;
- the destruction of its chemical weaponry;
- the "continual" monitoring of its nuclear plant;
- and Iraqi "reparations, especially to the poor countries [Kuwait?] that have been further impoverished by its aggression."

Warming up to his vision of an "effective, workable and enforceable international order," Kinnock declared that military action "to prevent the continuation of the regional threat is also justified."

He then warned the House that none of this would necessarily mean Saddam's personal downfall or the ending of tyranny in Iraq. That, apparently, would be unwarranted interference in a sovereign country's affairs!

For two days, Labour MPs queued up to back the Front Bench (it was impossible to say which one!).

Healey, Winnick, Whitney, Strang, Archer, Ross, Duffy, Shore, Bell, Rees, Radice *ad nauseam* were all so full of their own sententious rhetoric they ought to have exploded.

The honourable exceptions were few, but deserving of note.

This includes Tony Benn, of course, who began his remarks by reminding MPs of the one thing they all had in common: "none of us will be killed if war breaks out."

Expressed

He expressed his opposition to any war against Iraq – whilst supporting sanctions – and questioned the USA's "moral authority", and was also the first speaker in the debate to even mention the cause of it all – *Oil*.

Andrew Faulds & David Lambie unexpectedly spoke against Government policy, as did Denis Canavan and, most memorably of all, Eric Heffer.

Eric lambasted Tory hypocrisy on human rights and democracy, pleaded for negotiations instead of war, and laid the blame for the crisis where it belongs – with the "capitalist oil interests."

Tory Michael Mates, following Eric Heffer, made a telling attack on Labour.

Since Labour supported the Government's deployment of troops in the Middle East, he said, it would now have to recant its earlier calls for more cuts in defence spending. The Labour Front Bench apparently had no reply.

Martin O'Neill, Labour's "Defence Spokesperson", was less pompous but even more "gung-ho" than his opposite number Tom King.

His contribution seemed mainly designed to demonstrate his familiarity with military terminology and hardware.

As David Lambie, Labour MP for Cunninghame South, observed: O'Neill seemed not to be addressing the House at all but the "British military establishment and our so-called friends across the Atlantic."

The nadir came when O'Neil answered an intervention by Labour MP Norman Goodman who asked whether medical facilities in the Gulf would be able to deal with gas attack victims.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Eric Heffer: lambasted Tory hypocrisy

O'Neil declared that, "the respect I feel for the British forces and those who lead them tells me that they would not put people in the field without the necessary support."

Altogether a shameful performance!

Among those who backed the Tories were: Boateng, Caborn, Fyfe, Meale, Richardson, Short, Sillars, Strang, Vaz, Wareing and, of course, the entire Shadow Cabinet. Tony Banks was present but abstained.

The vote on the adjournment (in fact, a vote to approve Tory policy on the Gulf) was carried by 437-35. The 35 who voted agaisnt Thatcher's war drive were:

Abbott, Barnes, Benn, Bidwell, Brown, Callaghan, Campbell, Clay, Cohen, Corbyn, Cryer, Cummings, Dalyell, Douglas, Faulds, Fields, Flannery, Galloway, Godman, Grant, Heffer, Hinchcliffe, Hood, Hughes, Lambie, Lamond, Madden, Mahon, Michie, Mullin, Nellist, Parry, Primarolo, Skinner, Wray, plus Canavan and Livingstone (tellers).

Briefing update

Oil and the world economy

Gulf War: catalyst not cause

With the world economy dodging between inflation and recession, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in an ill-judged effort to finance Iraq's $70-80 billion debt from the war with Iran.

Initially the Gulf crisis sent the oil price soaring from $16 dollar to $30 dollar a barrel.

Gulf diplomacy and the OPEC agreement to make up some of the production lost by the embargo on Iraqi/Kuwaiti oil headed it back to $25 a barrel.

World stock markets first slumped then rallied in response to bulletins from Baghdad and Washington.

The dollar, normally a haven for funds in times of international uncertainty, started to fall. A shooting war could send the oil price to $40 a barrel and wreak havoc in international financial markets.

A sustained rise in oil prices could cause Japanese and German central banks to raise interest rates.

The US, where growth is already down to an annual rate of 1.2%, could easily be tipped into recession if the Federal Reserve was forced to follow suit.

Such a reverse of current Federal policy (which is to cut interest rates gradually) would slash capital values, cut output and create mass unemployment.

By Dave Palmer
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

A hard landing for the US economy would reduce overall demand and drag the rest of the world into recession.

Oil is a strategic commodity. In economic jargon demand for oil is "inelastic" in the short term, since it takes oil consumers time to switch to other fuels or to use oil more efficiently when the price rises.

A rapid rise in oil therefore sends a shock through the world economy, affecting national economies and industrial sectors in proportion to their oil dependency and efficiency of consumption (the US guzzles roughly twice the energy per dollar as Japan, Britain or Germany).

However, recent changes in the structure of the world economy have lessened the impact of the oil price rise.

To produce a dollar of GNP the industrially developed OECD countries use 40% less oil than in 1973. At $30 a barrel oil would cost the OECD countries an extra $90 billion, 0.6% of their combined GNP.

The cost of earlier oil shocks was more than 2% of GNP. This time round the OPEC countries are likely to spend their extra petro dollars more quickly.

The non-oil producing developing countries will be hit harder, notably the most industrialised, South Korea, Brazil and South Africa.

But the biggest losers will be East European economies which have lost subsidised Soviet oil and are extremely inefficient in energy usage.

But are oil prices set to explode? This depends on events in the Gulf and whether OPEC can make up the gap in oil production. The OECD countries have a record 100 day oil stockpile which they will deploy on the outbreak of full hostilities.

The indirect effects of the Gulf crisis may be far more difficult to manage than oil price rises. Its impact on world financial markets has already exacerbated existing strains.

Even before the crisis, government bond process had fallen and the international cost of capital had risen because of third world debt, the slump in junk bonds and in US and Japanese real estate, and the growing cost of financing market reforms in Eastern Europe.

Shaky world stock markets are therefore highly vulnerable to the course of events in the Gulf.

The demand for capital to finance the US $11 trillion debt mountain is bound to increase at the very time the flow of capital from abroad seems certain to decrease.

The goal set by Congress for the US budget defecit in 1991 of $64 billion was a total fantasy.

Even before the cost of the military build up in the Middle East, the latest figures showed that the 1991 budgetary deficit would reach an unprecedented $232 billion.

With a bellicose Bush throwing budgetary caution to the wind, international confidence in the US economy has been further undermined.

The US has responded by trying to force its client states in the Gulf and its major allies, notably the Japanese, to help finance its military intervention.

The main source of capital for US debates – Japan's enormous financial surplus – is now seriously threatened.

The Kuwait crisis has triggered a 25% fall on the Tokyo Stock Market.

For nine years till Autumn 1989 the Bank of Japan never raised its discount rate. It therefore cost little to borrow from banks to speculate in land and equities, which led to inflated property and Stock Market values.

However, since January, in response to the fall in the Yen and inflation fears, the Bank of Japan has raised interest rates five times. The bubble burst and equity and property values declined.

Japan's banks have 30% of their loans in domestic property and construction; these will have to be marked down or written off. If this trend develops into a fullscale Japanese crash, a global one would not be far behind.

Japan

With Japan reducing its export of capital and Germany – the other main capital exporter – faced with financing the growing costs of unification, it will certainly be harder and harder for the US to finance its debts.

The US is therefore likely to be tipped into recession whatever happens to the oil price.

US policy makers will soon be faced with an unresolvable dilemma. Higher interest rates and bond yields will be forced on them to attract capital from abroad and support the dollar.

Given the huge debt burden and falling profitability of US corporations, this would be certain to cause widespread insolvency, bankruptcies and closures. Default on debts would, in turn, place ever greater stress on the financial system.

The alternative would be a rapid collapse of the dollar followed by an uncontrollable inflationary spiral.

Following the 1987 Stock Market crash the G7 central bankers restored stability by a co-ordinated reduction in interest rates at the cost of higher inflation. This ensured that growth in output was insulated from events in the financial sector.

Any desire to bail out the US by restoring liquidity will be subordinated to the control of inflation.

However, inflation is lower and growth higher than before either the 74-75 or 80-81 recessions.

Gulf

This means that a world recession may not be of the same severity. But intensifying stagflation or outright recession of some kind looks a certainty for 1991 following recent events in the Gulf.

Stop the War – but how?

Building a united campaign

As *Briefing* went to press we received reports that Bruce Kent had written to CND National Council members withdrawing CND's support from the September 15th demonstration against war in the Gulf.

If this extraordinary turn of events is true, it will come as a profound disappointment to many in the peace movement and beyond who want CND to take a lead on this issue.

By STEVE CLARKE

We are closer to a real war involving nuclear weapons than for many years.

For CND not to be involved in the campaign to stop it would be a travesty; something which many CND supporters will not accept.

News of Bruce Kent's letter came on September 8th, at the end of a week which had seen a massive battle inside CND about whether it should be active on the Gulf at all.

Some CND full-time staff were apparently particularly insistent that any involvement would only damage CND.

There was great unhappiness about the lobby of parliament by CND supporters on the first day of the special parliamentary debate.

A first CND leaflet for the demonstration, which displayed CND's famous symbol, was seized and pulped by national CND full-timers.

Campaigners against the Gulf war have experienced major difficulties in organising a broad-based national demonstration.

The Campaign Against War in the Gulf (to which *Briefing* is affiliated) organised a demonstration for September 15th, with Tony Benn speaking. The idea was to go past the US Embassy.

Then a similarly named *Committee* Against Gulf War announced another demonstration for the same date, with CND sponsorship.

One week later CND had taken entire responsibility for this event. The Campaign agreed to cancel its own march in order to build a united national demonstration, and to put out is own leaflets in support of this.

Now CND leaders have done a spectacular somersault, withdrawing because of "attempts by left groups to hijack the demonstration" and blaming a leaflet produced by the Campaign Against War in the Gulf – which had emerged out of the first demonstration against the war, called by Women for Socialism.

Matters have been complicated by the SWP and RCP going off and organising their own demonstrations.

All this infighting and backbiting is a side issue from the real one – is CND going to be active against war in the Gulf?

CND activists in localities have been building for the September 15th demonstration only to find that CND is now not participating.

But the story about "attempts by left groups to hijack the demonstration" should be taken with a very hefty pinch of salt.

There should be no doubt where the real pressure for CND to distance itself from anti-Gulf war activities comes from – the Labour leadership, and those New Realists in the labour and peace movements who are in favour of peace until a real war threatens or someone starts waving a Union Jack.

Maximum unity is needed to build a mass movement against the war threat: those who oppose such a movement should say so and not engage in smears and fantasies.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST WAR IN THE GULF

Sponsors include: Women for Socialism, Labour Party Socialists, Labour Briefing, Socialist Organiser, Socialist Outlook, Socialist Society, Socialist Workers' Party, Campaign for Non-Alignment, MPs: Bernie Grant, Alice Mahon, Eric Heffer, Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn.

Contact: 7c Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY.

Gulf Crisis

UN – hope or hype?

The crisis in the Gulf has revealed a wide range of views on the left about the nature of the United Nations.

Is the UN a tool of US imperialism or the best hope of avoiding a major war in the Gulf?

One problem with the role of the UN is that it was devised when the world was firmly divided into two main blocs. The assumption was that the US and the USSR could each use their vetoes to stop the UN acting as a puppet of the other.

But the upheavals in Eastern Europe have meant that the USSR has largely abstained from involvement in the current crisis, leaving the field free for the US to push the UN into adopting its own policy.

Would the situation be any better if the other major powers were not backing the US?

We recognise that individual world leaders are crooks, thugs or worse – but when they get together at the UN they expect us to believe they are a force for good.

That is not to say that the UN cannot on occasion act to control minor conflicts, patrol cease-fire lines and so on. I think the left would look pretty foolish if it denounced such actions.

By Dorothy Macedo
National Co-Chair
Labour Party Socialists.

And some UN agencies, despite plenty of wasteful bureaucracy and even corruption, do useful work.

The bottom line is: can the UN act independently? The Gulf crisis shows that, when it is a question of the interests of the major powers, the UN has no option but to tow their line.

Understandably, many people wish it were otherwise: if only a benign "firefighting" force existed to put out the flames!

But the UN was created by the very powers who started the fires: they fuel it. They will never allow it the power to act independently of their needs.

Offshore workers' dispute

It's a matter of survival

In the current oil-workers's dispute in the North Sea thousands of offshore workers are fighting for trade union recognition and basic health and safety on the rigs.

Offshore workers from all unions are organised in the Offshore Industry Liason Committee (OILC) which is co-ordinating the action.

By Keith Sinclair

At the time of writing five 24-hour stoppages have been held, all of them winning wide support and closing down 160 separate rigs.

In response to sackings workers also occupied some of the rigs, including the Dunlin, which was only cleared when Shell won a court order to stop the sit in.

The North Sea is a notoriously unsafe place to work. More than 600 workers have died there since the start of oil production. The Piper Alpha tragedy is well known but many other deaths have occurred with scant media coverage.

The health and safety issue is therefore at the centre of the dispute. The hypocrisy of the employers was clearly demonstrated by their use of the dispute itself as an excuse to postpone the installation of early shut down valves.

There is now wide understanding amongst offshore workers that union recognition is key to the enforcement of decent working conditions.

Full recognition of shop stewards would be a major step forward, moving away from arbitrary victimisation of anyone willing to act as spokespersons on the rigs.

The OILC has drafted a set of working conditions which it wishes to negotiate. The acceptance of the OILC document, the Continental Shelf Agreement, would pave the way for improvements in pay and conditions for all offshore workers.



The OILC has achieved more in a few months than trades union officials achieved in over a decade. The strengths of the OILC are its mass support, its breaking down of inter-union squabbles, and its unoffical, rank-and-file basis.

The OILC was set up following the Piper Alpha disaster in July 1988 and has grown continuously since then. Hundreds of mass meetings have been held and a newspaper, *Blow Out*, is widely circulated.

Many offshore workers have been sold out by union officials in the past and activists are having to persuade workers now to rejoin unions many of them left in disgust.

Meanwhile, union leaderships are allowing the OILC to fight without full union backing. The unions will gain massively from recognition but they are not putting financial resources behind the current dispute.

Scargill and Heathfield have shown how to get money to people in dispute who need it: leaders of unions with members offshore should follow their example.

The OILC has called a ten day moratorium on strikes in the run up to a meeting between the national union officials and the employers on September 6th during the TUC Congress, which voted to back the offshore workers.

OILC knew that unless satisfactory agreements came out of the meeting, it would be essential to escalate the offshore action immediately.

The aim is to ensure winning not only the original claims but also to make clear to employers that every single one of the 1500 sacked workers be re-instated.

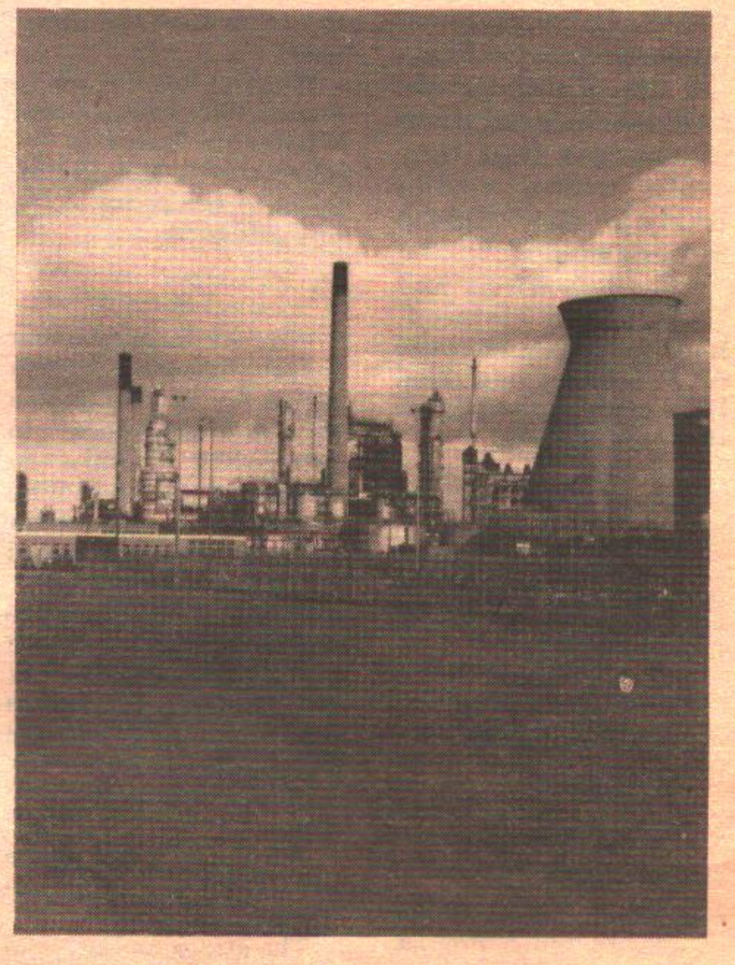
The OILC needs to keep total control of the action. It should demand unequivocal backing from fulltime officials, some of whom are beginning to make ominous noises about acting as "go-betweens" to resolve the dispute.

The oil companies have started to shift but they will still need a bigger shove before they make any concessions.

Offshore workers have started to receive significant support from workers "on the beach".

Aberdeen ambulance workers donated £1,000 – an identical amount was given by offshore workers to ambulance staff in their dispute.

Four thousand onshore workers took solidarity action on August 9th, including the Davy Offshore Yard in Dundee. Pergamon strikers have sent a message of support and a donation.



BP Oil refinery, Grangemouth

OILC members have spoken at all kinds of meetings in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Hull Trades Council is holding weekly meetings of its disputes committee to build support and a successful public meeting was held at the end of August with OILC speakers.

However, more support is urgently needed, especially as the OILC incurred significant costs in contesting the court action brought by Shell.

Briefing readers should ensure that the issue is raised at Labour Party and Trades Union meetings.

For more information contact OILC on 0482-449822 (Hull) or 0224-210118 (Aberdeen). Hull Trades Council can be contacted on 0482-42309, -902050 or -470158.

Interview: Chair, OILC Humberside

Winning the ballot in the North Sea

ALAN THORNETT spoke to ERIC McTAGGART (Chair of OILC, Humberside) following the meeting of Unions representing oil workers in the North Sea held on September 6th, which decided to ballot the offshore workforce.

***AT*: How do you feel about the decision to ballot the workforce?**

EM: We are pleased but dubious at the same time. We don't know if they are going to ballot everyone – construction staff represented by OILC and regular staff who are better paid.

In some areas there is little support for the official unions; the workforce has been let down so many times in the past. You have to remember that there is no official union recognition and so it is difficult to build up union membership.

We are also worried that the 1,500 who have been sacked will not get a vote because they are not now employed offshore.

***AT*: Can the ballot be won for strike action?**

EM: Yes, if the right questions are on the ballot paper – and we don't yet know what will be on the paper.

If it stresses the main issues in the dispute – safety on the rigs in the light of Piper Alpha, trades union recognition and the reinstatement of sacked workers – we could win it.

Any offshore worker would have to be mad not to vote for improving safety. But we don't know if this is how it will be posed. It would be a disaster if the ballot was lost.

***AT*: How will the ballot be conducted?**

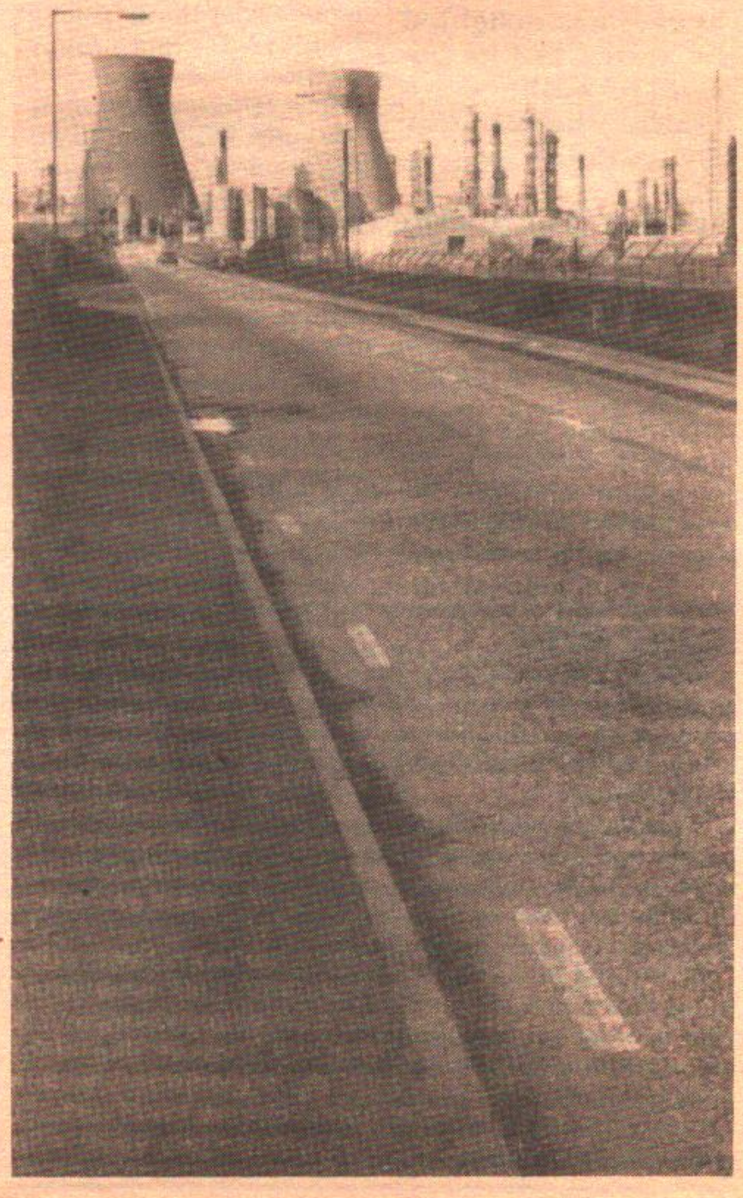
EM: This is the big problem. There are 28,000 workers and they are changing all the time. Only the employers have the records and they have refused to co-operate.

What has been suggested is an 0800 number which workers can ring to be sent a ballot paper, but it's going to take six weeks to sort out.

***AT*: I understand that a women's support group has been set up in Hull?**

EM: Yes – after an initial meeting has taken place and an appeal has gone out.

There is a lot to be done, particularly for the victimised men. When they were sacked they were dumped on the beach with no way of getting home. It cost OILC thousands of pounds to help them.



Maxwell's Malice

How Scargill defended the NUM

The independent inquiry into miners' leaders Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield has cleared them of charges that they stole union funds during the 1984-5 Miners' Strike.

The *Daily Mirror* and Central TV claimed, back in March, that the NUM leaders had used Libyan money to pay off their mortgages.

The Cook Report even claimed Scargill controlled £7 million of Libyan money. The NUM leaders have always denied the union received Libyan money.

By the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign

Despite much prompting from the Tories, even the NUM sequester, accountants Price Waterhouse, could find no evidence of a Libyan connection.

What's more, the accusations weren't made after any long, painstaking investigation – they were bought and paid for by Robert Maxwell.

The two star witnesses, former NUM employees Roger Windsor and Jim Parker were paid £100,000 each for their stories (source: *The Guardian*).

Windsor left his job in August 1989 and moved to a chateau in France. In October 1989 the NUM called in the police to investigate him.

Windsor remains under investigation by British police for fraud but has refused their appeals to return to Britain to answer questions. Why has none of the media coverage even mentioned this fact?

Windsor has admitted to borrowing £29,500 from the Miners Solidarity Fund during the strike which he still has not paid back, for which the Lightman report criticised him.

Why aren't the media directing any criticism towards Windsor?

The attack on the NUM leadership, though proved groundless by the independent inquiry, has done real damage to the union. No sooner were the allegations made than British Coal announced 7,500 new redundancies.

National Power and PowerGen, the new private power generators, estimate a total of 30,000 job losses from their plans to buy South African instead of British coal.

The smear campaign made it that much more difficult for the union to respond to these threats.

They allowed right-wing area leaders from Scotland and Wales to sneer at Scargill's warning that only industrial action could save the industry.

But it wasn't British Coal that launched the smears; it was the paper owned by Labour Party millionaire Robert Maxwell.

Maxwell made no secret of his desire to break Arthur Scargill. He even boasted (*Guardian*, 5/3/90) of his paper's role in breaking the Miners' Strike.

The only "crime" of which Scargill and Heathfield have been found "guilty" is not informing the NUM Executive of bank accounts they set up to protect the union's funds during the strike.

They were in fact given total powers during the strike to do whatever they thought necessary to stop the NUM's money being sequestrated.

It would have been madness to have let the whole Executive know. Throughout the strike, implacable opponents of the NUM's struggle – people who ensured that the miners they represented stayed at work – sat on the Executive.

Roy Ottey, secretary of the union's power group, had, since 1972, been a director of the East Midlands Electricity Board. He owed his job to Tory minister Nicholas Ridley, who devised the government's plan to break the NUM as far back as 1979.

Early in the strike Ottey organised a secret meeting of right-wing NUM Executive members opposed to the strike. He used the Coal Board to pass messages on to his fellow conspirators.

Ken Toon, secretary of the South Derbyshire NUM, had been offered the job of National Coal Board's director of industrial relations but couldn't agree pension terms.

He went on instead to become the first president of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

Jack Jones, president of the Leicestershire NUM, opposed the strike throughout and helped Ottey in his secret meetings and deals. He had agreed to the closure of all five pits in his area before the strike began.

No wonder Scargill and Heathfield kept their preparations secret!

As a result, even when the High Court handed over the union to a receiver in November 1984, the strike continued and the picketing and hardship money were paid.



The receiver was appointed after the union had been found in contempt of court following proceedings brought by 16 scabs backed by Thatcher's adviser David Hart and leading Tory businessmen Sir Hector Laing and Frank Taylor.

The court's chosen custodian was Herbert Brewer, former Conservative Party official and leading light in the Institute of Directors.

Brewer, who declared, "I am the NUM", chased miners' funds across Europe in an effort to strangle the strike, but failed.

The courts kept control of the union's funds long after the strike had ended, aiming to finish the NUM. It is to the credit of Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield that the Tories failed and the NUM survived.

Scargill smear

It's an inside job

The attack on Arthur Scargill has delighted the Tories, but its immediate authors are inside the labour movement itself.

There can be no doubt that Kinnock has welcomed the onslaught and encouraged it. His hatred of Scargill and all he represents is long-standing.

Though he and Robert Maxwell, paymaster for the smear campign, are said to despise each other, they or their proxies are in regular contact with each other. They have a long history of arms-length political collaboration.

The *Mirror*, of course, is the only Labour-supporting national newspaper and its owner is fond of strutting around labour movement stages, despite his union-busting and reactionary politics.

Maxwell has been cooking up his assault on Scargill for some time.

The *Mirror* has paid out large sums to its key "witnesses" and Maxwell's 20% holding in Central Television may well have encouraged Roger Cook to undertake his phony "exposé" of the NUM's finances.

Reporters

Maxwell even brought in special reporters to work on the Scargill story, an unusual step for a national daily newspaper.

By Mike Marqusee Hornsey and Wood Green CLP

Maxwell was also blessed with a pair of friendly rent-a-quote Labour MPs who have helped to legitimise his farrago of misrepresentation and outright fantasy.

Kim Howells, a former unelected full-time NUM official whose hostility to Scargill and the left as a whole is well-known, was happy to chip in.

Even more obnoxious has been the behaviour of Kevin Barron MP. An ex-miner who was arrested on a picket line in the early days of the miners' stike, Barron jumped ship when it became clear that the miners would not win.

He made a well publicised departure from the Campaign Group (sanctified by ritual denunciation of Bennism in *Tribune*) and was immediately appointed PPS to Neil Kinnock himself.

He remains close to Kinnock and now sits on Labour's front bench. He is also the Chair of the NUM group of Labour MPs and a member of the NUM Executive.

As each allegation is disproved he appears on television to insist that there are still unanswered questions. As a link between Kinnock's office and the right wing of the NUM Executive he has played a perfidious but all-too-effective role.

Possessed

Meanwhile, what on earth possessed the usually inert Norman Willis to write and press release his letter to Scargill demanding to know whether the NUM received Libyan money?

The Congress House grapevine has it that a phone call from John Edmonds did the trick.

Denunciations

Remember Jimmy Reid, whose denunciations of Scargill and the miners' strike won him a contract with Rupert Murdoch?

Reid once confessed to the *Glasgow Herald* that he was asked to wage verbal battle against his old comrades by none other than the leader of the Labour Party himself.

Paranoia – or persecution?

Stop Press:

Scargill, Heathfield, and the NUM itself have been charged by the government-appointed certification officer with various offences stemming from their alleged failure to keep proper accounts *during the 1984-85 strike.*

The charges arise out of Labour's 1974 Trade Union and labour Relations Act and carry a maximum fine of £400 each. The information on which the charges are based comes directly from the Lightman report, which was commissioned by the NUM.

At the end of the day it appears that all the NUM's many enemies could come up with is the accusation that in order to protect miners' funds from the sequestrators, its leading officials resorted to subterfuge.

Scargill and Heathfield have always been happy to acknowledge this fact.

We Say: "Stand up for Scargill"

Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield were absolutely right to do everything in their power to protect miners' funds from the clutches of the sequestrators in 1984-85.

All the leader writers who now cry for their heads were *in favour* of the sequestrators seizing *all* the union's assets during the strike. Their crocodile tears will impress no-one who remembers what really happened in 1984 and 1985.

The smear campaign against Scargill and Heathfield is in reality an attack on the legacy of the miners' strike and on the whole tradition of militant trade unionism.

The Tories, the media magnates and the right-wing labour leadership fear this tradition.

They know that it is far from dead. They want to get Scargill *now*, while the going is good, before their not-very-new realism is drowned by a new wave of industrial struggle.

Liverpool

Rent rises and witch-hunts

If you're depending on the mainstream media for news coverage of the Liverpool rent rise fiasco you'll be missing a lot.

Although genuinely committed to the principle of low cost, high quality public housing the left in Liverpool by and large accepted that rents could not be kept down forever.

When Labour came to power in 1983 it confronted a Liberal legacy of some of the highest Council house rents in the country.

These were kept in check until this year, when it was acknowledged by many on the left that a moderate rise to stop the housing revenue account going into deficit was inevitable.

A "rent scam" was developed which would enable the Council to ensure that no individual tenant actually had to pay an increase, but increased revenue would still provide for improvements in the repairs service and help sustain the house building programme.

If this could be demonstrated in consultations with tenants, the plan could no doubt have been won.

But the 23% rent rise now agreed to by the Council is something else entirely. It was proposed solely to avert a so-called financial crisis in the rest of the budget.

Council tenants will be paying more not for housing repairs but in order to meet deficits in other services and to reduce the Council's required capital receipts.

Liverpool does have severe financial problems – caused by a lack of government funding. Its problems are, however, chronic rather than acute.

A legal, balanced budget had been set – a budget which virtually everyone had voted for. Only weeks later we were told we were in crisis.

By Cllr Sarah Norman Liverpool City Council

That isn't a crisis, it is financial mismanagement. Council tenants should not have to foot the bill. If the housing revenue account does go into deficit later in the year a further rent rise will be required.

So why this sudden lurch into crisis?

The Labour administration between May 1987 and May 1990 was the most stable Liverpool had experienced for some time. From Kinnocks' point of view, Liverpool was out of the headlines.

The housebuilding programme continued and Liverpool, unlike other Labour Councils, avoided making overt cuts and redundancies. This culminated in Labour winning 11 more seats from the Liberals in the May elections.

Nonetheless, in May 1990 the NEC suspended 15 Labour Councillors for voting against setting a Poll Tax, producing a rigged majority for the centre right (the so-called "progressives").

As a result the Group agreed a rent rise which the majority of Labour Councillors opposed. Many felt that the Labour Whip no longer had any meaning. A further 14 were suspended for voting against the rent rise in Council.

For a new Councillor like myself such events have been a tough way to start.

Torn between my abhorrence for the rent rise and a commitment to the Whip (despite the meddling of the NEC) I abstained. It was my first proper Council meeting and at that point we didn't realise that more suspensions would follow.

To my mind Liverpool has been sacrificed in an attempt to improve Labours national image. *Militant*-bashing, Kinnock believes, is good for Labour's electoral appeal.

The absurdity is that martyrdom fuels *Militant* and excluding the left from running the council allows unrealistic posturing to take over.

The non-*Militant* left, the only grouping which can draw support away from *Militant* in Liverpool, is being destroyed.

We are a democratic Party; we talk about rights and freedoms in our policy review, yet our leadership does not believe in the power of debate and will not conduct battles within the Party in a democratic way.

Liberals

The upshot is best summed up by the appalling result in a recent by-election where we came third only two months after winning the ward from the Liberals.

Defend Socialist Organiser!

End the Ban!

On July 25th the Labour Party's National Executive declared Socialist Organiser "ineligible for affiliation to the Party".

Effectively this banned the newspaper and its supporters.

The next step will be individual expulsions.

The ban is both an attempt to silence a disinctive strand of socialist opinion, and a precendent for further such attempts against other socialist newspapers and groups.

It is especially worrying because of the maner in which it was done, which violated widely-held norms of natural justice and due process.

Socialist Organiser was launched in 1978 by the Socialist Campaign for Labour Victory, a broad left-wing alliance which came together to ensure a left-wing voice in Labour's 1979 General Election campaign.

Over the years since then *Socialist Organiser* has carried a wide range of views and contributors.

By Bill Hamilton, Eric Heffer MP, and Martin Thomas End the Ban campaign

There have been vigourous debates on the Labour Party reform movement, on Palestine, Zionism and anti Zionism, on Ireland, on Labour and Europe, on the Falklands war, and on the nature of the Eastern Bloc.

There has been a wide range of contributors, including members of the National Executive itself.

Yet *Socialist Organiser* received no charges, no notice of evidence, no hearing, indeed no official communication at all until the decision was taken.

With such procedure, any left-wing group or paper in the Labour Party can be banned without even being informed that there are charges against it.

All it needs is someone to write a "confidential", unsigned, hyped-up scandal sheet disguised as a "report" to the NEC.

A major motive for the ban seems to have been to placate deselected Labour MP Frank Field, who threatened to resign, force a sudden by-election, and stand against Labour.

The NEC responded with an "investigation" into Birkenhead CLP, other Labour Parties in the Wirral, and *Socialist Organiser*.

Loyal socialists get witch-hunted; and Field, who threatens to stand against Labour, gets the Birkenhead selection re-run. This is no way to run a democratic labour movement.

A broad committee against the witch-hunt has been set up, under the title "End the Ban!".

It asks all CLPs and affiliated trade unions to submit emergency motions and to support reference back of the relevant secitorn of the NEC Report at the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool in October.



Rally platform, L to R: John O'Mahony (SO), Jeremy Corbyn MP, Dorothy Macedo.

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION

Conference notes that at its February 1990 meeting the NEC decided to investigate *Socialist Organiser*.

No attempt was made to contact any officer of *Socialist Organiser* and to seek their co-operation in the proposed investigation.

This was despite repeated attempts by *Socialist Organiser* to contact the Labour Party Director of Organisation regarding the nature of the allegations and charges against them.

Socialist Organiser also wrote to the NEC offering to make adjustments in their organisation, the Socialist Organiser Alliance, in line with the conditions for the registration of non affiliated organisations of Labour Party members.

Conference further notes that at its meeting of July 25th 1990, without giving *Socialist Organiser* a hearing, the NEC endorsed a report on *Socialist Organiser* prepared by the Director of Organisation.

This declared *Socialist Organiser* to be "an organised group of members of the Party which has its own programme, principles and policy for distinctive and separate propaganda and possesses branches within the Party for this purpose" and as such is "ineligible for affiliation to the Party and inconsistent with the constitutional rules".

Conference finally notes that on August 18th 1990 the *Socialist Organiser* National Editorial Board recommended the Socialist Organiser Alliance to disband so as to enable its members to retain Labour Party membership since "the mere holding or expression of beliefs and opinions" (Clause III(4)) by Labour Party members does not constitute grounds for disciplinary action.

The National Editorial Board called on the editiors to continue the paper as an independent Labour publication with an advisory board which would include a wider range of socialist opinion.

Conference therefore resolves that no disciplinary action be taken against former members of Socialist Organiser Alliance or the members of the reformed *Socialist Organiser* Editorial Advisory Board.

WE SAY: "End the Ban!"

The NEC's ban on Socialist Organiser is a flagrant attack on the rights of freedom of speech and association in the Labour Party.

Labour Briefing has opposed, and will continue to oppose, *all* witch-hunts. For any socialist with a serious commitment to the Labour Party there is no alternative.

The methods used by Walworth Road in their attack on *Sociaist Organiser* — confidential MI5-style dossiers, hear-say evidence, and violation of every norm of natural justice and due process — should set off the alarm bells in every civil libertarian's head.

These methods must be exposed and expunged from the Party.

Without the freedom to write for, sell, and read any newspaper of their choice, Labour Party members will be hopelessly hamstrung in the fight against the Tories.

Kinnock and the careerists in Walworth Rd fear open socialist debate. They loath the challenge of radical ideas.

Let's not make it easy for them. All of us must stand up and be counted for *Socialist Organiser*.

Iran, Israel reap rewards

Saddam's blunder

Saddam Hussain is well known for expansionist miscalculations, but his invasion of Kuwait may yet prove his costliest folly.

For many years the world had pretended not to notice the atrocities committed by Saddam's "western-friendly" regime.

But they could not tolerate his designs on the oil-rich Sheikhdom of Kuwait, an even friendlier state in the eyes of the West.

Thus, the West's biggest military mobilisation since Vietnam has been launched to punish a prodigal son only recently disowned by the brotherhood of west-oriented dicatorships.

Saddam's declared reason for invading Kuwait (apart from the border line dispute) was the latter's role in depressing world oil prices.

Kuwait, a member of OPEC, has recently been a thorn in the side of the oil producing cartel, repeatedly exceeding its production quotas and undermining OPEC's price fixing mechanism.

Unlike Kuwait, which gets more income from international investments than oil revenues, Iraq depends entirely on oil exports.

Response

With a war-devastated economy, $70 billion of international debt, and a population of around 17 million, Iraq cannot afford to see its currency earnings dwindle.

In invading Kuwait, Saddam Hussein saw, not only an easy victory which would secure his position as the strong man of the Arab world, but also an immediate solution to almost all his economic problems.

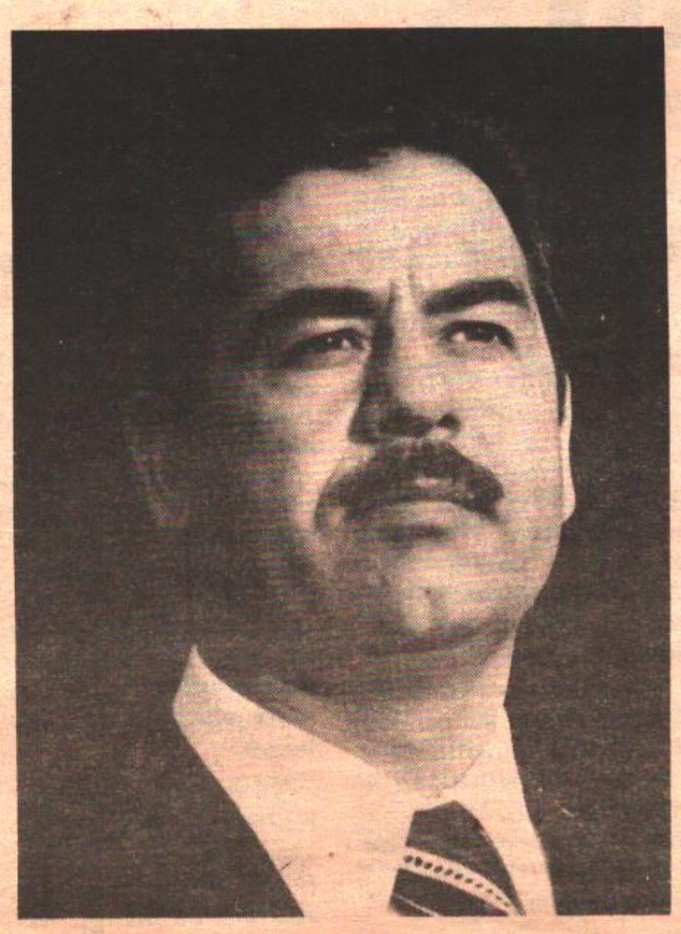
His miscalculation was not to foresee the degree of international hostility to such action.

After all his invasion of Iran, a decade earlier, had pass off almost without protest. Annexation of Kuwait, whose rulers had always gone out of their way to safeguard the energy interests of the West was an entirely different matter from attacking hostage-taking fundamentalist mullahs.

He also underestimated the persuasive powers of United States in pushing the world, including the Arab world and the United Nations, into an aggressive stance against Saddam's misbehaviour.

The US response deserves closer scrutiny.

Following the Iranian revolution in 1979, the Reagan administration



Saddam Hussein, in his younger days.

helped to form the Gulf Co-operation Council, a security union between the Gulf States.

The main objectives of this move were to protect the ruling Sheikhs from the vibrations of Iran's revolution and to secure western interests in the area.

The United States guaranteed assistance in the event of military threat to any of the member states.

By MILANI
Campaign Against Repression in Iran

Although the measures were designed to keep Iran at bay, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait provided the first test of America's commitment.

Kuwait was the only country to put its entire shipping fleet under US protection during the tanker war; its ships flew the US flag while crossing the Gulf.

The US had little choice but tospringinto action to soothe its allies' nerves. Besides, the U.S. administration had been under pressure for many months before the Iraqi invasion to check Saddam' Hussein's increasing military power.

Israel has long been alarmed by Iraq's quest for nuclear capability, its arsenal of chemical wapons and long-range artillary power.

Many observers attribute the revelations about the Iraqi "supergun" project to Israel's secret service. The Israel lobby in the US has for some time been pressing the Bush administration to take action against Iraq.

Had Saddam decided to invade Syria instead of Kuwait, the event would probably have passed unnoticed.

Western pretences about upholding the rule of international law, as US invasions of Grenada and Panama and its atrocities against Nicaragua have graphically demonstrated in recent times, apply only to areas of Western interest.

In the past, Iraq itself had defied international law on numerous occasions without ever being reprimanded.

Crisis

Its chemical attacks against Iran and its own Kurdish population, its practice of assassinating exiled opponents, its ruthless dealings with the opposition at home and its total disregard for human rights, though all illegal, had been tolerated for years by its western patrons.

The determining issue in the present crisis is not the violation of international law but the security of western interests, above all, its supply of oil.

Saddam now threatens to destabilise this supply and with it the present political status quo, which is why the west has decided he is dispensable.

Ironically, the western response has already become counter-productive.

Saddam's lone stance against the west has made him a crusading hero among the Arab masses, who regard the US and its European allies as protectors of Israel and enemies of the Palestinians.

By responding positively to US calls for an international task force, many "western-friendly" Arab leaders have jeopardised their own shaky domestic positions.

King Hussein of Jordan has been driven into such a tight corner that he is likely to be a loser, whatever the outcome of the crisis.

Only two states have benefitted from the conflict, Iran and Israel.

Desperate

The Islamic regimme in Iran has not only reaped rewards from higher oil prices, but has also regained its territories previously under Iraqi occupation, secured the release of prisoners of war and, above all, got Iraq to agree to all its terms for peace.

Despite their calls on Iraq to pull out of Kuwait and for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the region, Iranian authorities could hardly believe their luck when Saddam, in a desperate bid to find friends, decided to finalise the peace agreement with Iran.

Whether Saddam survives this crisis or not he will be finished as a strong enemy of the mullahs' regime. Rafsanjani, Iran's president, has already declared the intention of his government to replace Saddam as the region's "strong man".

Meanwhile, Israel is savouring Saddam's discomfort. For the first time in three years, the world's attention has shifted from Israeli supression of the Palestinaian uprising.

The PLO's refusal to condemn the Iraqi action has had a negative effect on world public opinion.

Taking advantage of Palestinian identification with the Iraqi cause, Shamir's government has resorted to the severest measures to smash the *Intifada*.

Israel

The ideal outcome to the crisis from the Israeli's point of view is not only the removal of Saddam Hussein but also the total destruction of the Iraqi war machine.

The Israel lobby in the US will therefore not be enthusiastic about any peaceful solution to the crisis

Massing US and other troops in the region is a highly costly operation. At present US involvement alone is costing $43 million per day, which will increase as more troops arrive.

Meanwhile, the claim that Iraq is about to invade Saudi Arabia becomes more incredible day by day.

With global recession a real prospect the capitalist world may prefer a rapid end to the crisis, which increasingly implies an all-out war against Iraq.

In the US the revitalised military lobby is fanning the flames of war.

In this country, Thatcher sees the prospect of another Falklands factor to rescue her otherwise bankrupt government from certain defeat in the coming General Election.

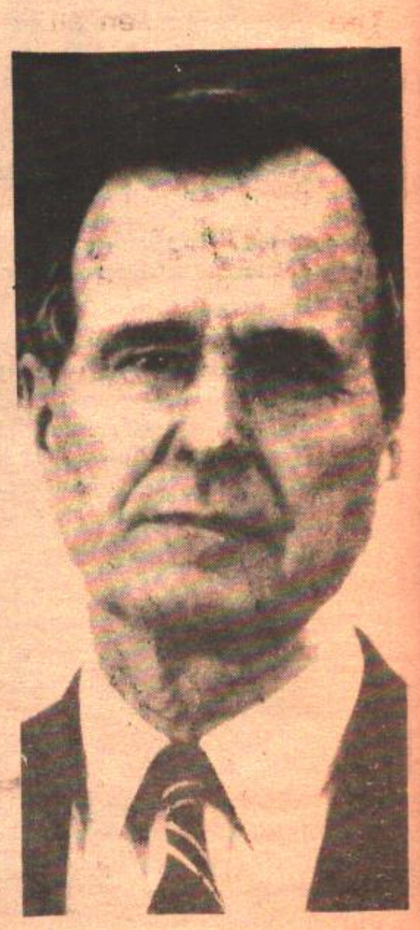
Kinnock has abandoned all socialist principles in order not to miss the gravy train of Tory jingoism.

The truth is that if the military option is finally adopted, the western working class not only has to foot the bill but will also provide the cannon fodder and then live with the effects of economic recession.

For the people of the Middle East, the consequences of war wil be horrific.

A desperate Saddam will resort to desperate measures; including chemical attacks against population centres in neighbouring countries and strikes against the region's oil fields.

If Saddam's regime does survive this crisis of its own making (by pulling out of Kuwait and releasing all foreign hostages) the people of Iraq will still face his brutal rule and the region as a whole will remain under constant



Bush: peering at a distant Iraq.

threat of further invasions.

One measure which is intentionallv left out of all western programmes is support for Iraq' long-standing internal opposition forces.

Supporting the progressive aspirations of these opposition forces and helping them remove Saddam Hussein by means of popular will is the only viable means by which a more positive future for the region can be secured.

Contact CARI: BMCARI WC1N 3XX

Labour Party Socialists

Labour: Speak out on the Gulf!

Labour Party Socialists are calling on all CLPs and affiliated unions to send the following emergency resolution to Labour Party annual conference:

"Conference is alarmed at the current drift to war in the Gulf, encouraged by the build-up of US, British and other military forces in the region.

In this context, it notes with distress the support given by the Party leadership and the Shadow Cabinet to the government's actions and statements in regard to the Gulf crisis.

In particular, we are disturbed at the Party Leader's rejection of negotiations in regard to British and other foreign nationals being detained in Iraq.

We call for an end to this bi-partisan approach to a major international crisis which threatens peace and stability throughout the Middle East and beyond.

Instead of echoing the Tories, Labour spokespersons should make every effort to explain the present conflict, and in particular the role which the West's greed for cheap oil has played in fostering it.

The Gulf crisis has demonstrated yet again the urgent need for an end to the international arms trade and for unqualified support for democracy and human rights in all countries.

Labour must call for the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and must oppose the repressive nature of the Iraqi regime.

Labour must also call for the immediate withdrawal of all US, British and other outside forces from the entire region.

Labour must call for and support peaceful, non-military initiatives to resolve the present conflict."

If your CLP/TU passes this resolution or anything similar, let LPS know: LPS, Box 118, Chesterfield.

Looking back at Gulf history

"Lines drawn on a map..."

The Gulf has been an arena of instability since the fall of the US's trusted ally, the Shah of Iran, in 1978.

Just two years later Saddam Hussein undertook his first invasion – against Iran.

Then, the US view was that Iran posed the greater danger. US firepower was used to give support to Iraq during the "tanker war" and in the conflict over Iranian mining of Gulf waters.

But Saddam Hussein could not be trusted to play the role of imperialism's key ally in the region. Unlike Iran, Iraq is an Arab power, just hours away from the Jordanian border with Israel.

Israeli alarm at the dangers involved in the emergence of Iraq as a strong Arab power was shown in 1981 when Israeli planes bombed Iraq's nuclear reactor (a raid carried out with US logistical support).

Since the early 1980s the US has been building a massive force for emergency intervention in the Middle East: first the "Rapid Deployment Force" and then the 300,000 strong "Central Command", which is undertaking the current operation.

Iraq was in hock to Kuwait for its loans during the Iran-Iraq war: these debts have now been spectacularly cancelled.

Kuwait and the other Gulf statelets were preventing Iraq pushing through oil-price rises.

These were the immediate spur to the invasion of Kuwait, but the longterm ambition of the ruling group in Baghdad is to make itself the dominant Arab power, to control a larger share of the world's oil, and to seek the financial tribute that the Arab states always give to the country seen to be "confronting Zionism".

To understand the origins of the present conflict, it is necessary to go back to 1899, when Britain carved out the territory of Kuwait from the old Ottoman (Turkish) empire when a local emir appealed for help.

Mespotomia (Iraq) remained part of the Ottoman empire until 1918.

Turkey sided with Germany during the First World War and its empire was dismembered by the victorious powers. Britain was given Iraq as a League of Nations "mandate" territory; when the mandate ran out in 1932, Britain installed a monarchy in the now supposedly independent country.

The king was under the domination of the British, given instructions directly by the British ambassador.

In 1958 the king was overthrown in a massive popular revolution, led by army officers but strongly influenced by the Iraqi Communist Party.

The revolution's leader, Colonel Qassim (Kassem), acquiesced in many progressive social reforms, including land reform, free education and a massive housing programme.

At this point the Ba'ath party, which had been founded in Syria in 1946, was comparatively small.

By Phil Hearse
Islington North CLP

Qassim threatened to annex Kuwait in 1961, but the rapid despatch of British troops blocked him.

A political crisis developed in Iraq over Qassim's opposition to Arab unity. The Iraqi Communist Party uncritically backed Qassim.

He was overthrown in an army coup, in which the Ba'ath party was complicit. Communists were massacred.

But after only a few months the Ba'ath itself was ejected from government.

A "coup within a coup" brought the Ba'ath back to power in 1968. Saddam occupied the No. 2 position, but increasingly acted as the real boss.

The Ba'ath Party had sided with the army against the Communists to bring itself to power. But it paid the price.

What had been a real Arab nationalist mass movement became totally subordinate to the military dictatorship.

Iraq is now controlled by a super-rich "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" which owes its power to its role in the state apparatus.

Oil is controlled by the state and in the end it is state patronage which gives wealth and power.

The three key prongs of power are the army, the security apparatuses and the Ba'ath party which acts with the secret police as the regime's eyes and ears.

Conflicts in the Ba'ath hierarchy are usually settled by assassinations.

Saddam Hussein has been careful to build a pyramid of power in which the key players directly depend on his personal patronage. All opposition is crushed by torture and mass murder.



Iraqi masses – a history of demonstrating. Above: taking to the streets in 1954.

The worst suffering has been borne by Iraq's two and a half million Kurds against whom a genocidal war has been waged since 1972.

Saddam's claim that Kuwait is "really" part of Iraq is a tall story.

Both Iraq and Kuwait are inventions of imperialism; their borders are lines on a map drawn by imperialist powers after World War 1.

Kuwait itself is a semi-feudal relic, ruled by a dynastic caste, with no democracy. The majority of the population are immigrant workers.

But while socialists shed no tears for the Kuwaiti state, the people of that country should have the democratic right to decide whether or not to be integrated into Iraq.

The tens of thousands of Iraqi exiles in Kuwait, who are probably already being shipped back for execution, would certainly not have made that choice.

Saddam's imperialist bedfellows

He was their man

The bellows of outrage by George Bush, Margaret Thatcher and other leaders against Iraq's seizure of Kuwait should not be allowed to obscure the less virtuous realities of the situation.

The regional political culture in which the dictator has flourished is in considerable part the consequence of Western actions.

Saddam has long been the recipient of American, British, West German and French credits and military supplies.

On December 20th, as US soldiers invaded Panama, the White House announced it would lift the ban on loans to Iraq.

A month later the State Department explained that the "goal of increasing US exports puts us in a better position to deal with Iraq regarding its human rights record."

Today Iraq is the world's largest recipient of US subsidised grain sales; two months ago Bush refused to endorse sanctions against Baghdad.

On August 2nd the Washington correspondent of the *Financial Times* remarked that,

"despite evidence that (agricultural) credits were being used by Iraq to finance military equipment, the Administration bowed to farming interests and allowed the funding to continue until last month."

US strategists spent the end of the 70s and most of the 80s seeing Iran as the rogue power in the area.

Of course Washington was as indifferent to the Persian mullahs hanging the left opposition as to Saddam's shoting Communists or gassing Kurds.

Iraq was an oil-rich customer, and a useful counterweight to Iran's fervid rhetoric against Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

As so often in the past, these strategists were fighting every war except the one that finally took place.

Alexander Cockburn, *The Nation*, USA.

SAID SPEAKS

By Edward Said, Palestinian-American writer

It goes without saying that Saddam is a monster, but we should add that he is a creature of recent Middle Eastern politics, presided over by the US.

After all, the US gave Israel a green light to invade Lebanon in 1982 and has condoned the occupation by Israel of lands of four Arab countries since 1967.

At the UN the US has supported Israel more or less unconditionally whereas it has treated its so-called "moderate" Arab friends essentially as oil suppliers and stooges.

To Americans an Arab can either be a stooge or a terrorist, nothing else

Where are the rewards for "moderation"; for Saudi Arabia, for Kuwait, for Egypt, for Arafat?

In the case of the first two, they are forced but the US to oversupply oil at relatively cheap prices and, along with Egypt, humiliated when they come to buy arms at extortionary prices. They are rewarded with no changes in the US position on Israel.

Panama

America's last invasion

As US troops line up in the Gulf to "save Saudi Arabia" and "liberate Kuwait", we might recall the effects of the last invasion ordered by President Bush — in Panama.

Noriega

Supposedly, America invaded Panama to topple the brutal regime of General Noriega.

Noriega has now been kidnapped to face drugs charges in the US, but the occupying army remains — and is expected to stay at least another year.

By Mike Phipps
Woolwich CLP

The activity of the military shows that the Bush administration had a far bigger agenda than simply ousting Noriega. They have rounded up union militants and closed schools and clinics.

Aid

Unemployment has almost doubled to one in three of the active population since the invasion. The American aid promised to help Panama repair the devastation created by the invasion has simply not materialised.

Most of the $420m agreed by Congress will go to servicing the growing foreign debt. Less than one-third will reach Panama in the form of aid.

Canal

Many on the left in Panama see the real aim of the US occupation as an attempt to redraw the Panama Canal treaties signed by the then Presidents, Carter and Torrijos.

The treaties provide for a phased withdrawal of all US military personnel by the end of the century. Then Panama itself would take over the job of running the canal.

Indefinite

But today Panama's constitution is being amended to make it legally possible for US forces to stay on. It is clear that the US is planning an indefinite stay in Panama in violation of the Treaty.

The experience of Panama helps show why the positioning of US combat troops in Saudi Arabia is against the interests of the Saudi people. It will not be so easy to get rid of them!

(Additional information, c/o The American *Militant*.)

Birmingham Six

On the run

The last few weeks have been an enormous filip for the Birmingham 6.

The collapse of the case against them is imminent.

There is now a real possibility of final victory with the decision to refer the case back again to the Appeal Court.

It has been a hard time for the Campaign and an almost impossible one for the prisoners. No one wants to raise hopes that might be dashed yet again by a cruel and myopic judicial system.

Recent revelations are nonetheless devastating:

•The West Midlands police force, already under serious scrutiny for corruption, may be shown to have "interfered" with the "confession" of Richard McIlkenny.

•New and courageous efforts by the *Scotsman* newspaper are clearly demonstrating, by a method allied to calligraphy, that some of the forced confessions could not have been made by the defendants.

•The already threadbare forensic evidence has now been even further eroded by new details coming to light.

•The recent, and continuing, enquiry into the disbanded serious crime squad of the West Midlands Police is unearthing a whole range of crooked practices over many years.

The decision to refer the case to the Court of Appeal is a new chance to pile on the pressure. Every MP should be deluged with letters demanding the release of the Six.

Despite all the nonsense about the "independence" of the British judiciary, it is the massive political pressure on the establishment that has embarassed the powers-that-be into referring the case yet again to the Court of Appeal.

Write to the prisoners and wish them luck.

John Walker, Gerry Hunter and Hugh Callaghan are in HM Prison Long Lartin, Evesham, Worcestershire; Paddy-Joe Hill, Billy Power and Richard McIlkenny are in HM Prison Gartree, Leicester Rd, Market Harborough, Leics.

Cash in the form of crossed postal orders is very welcome!

By Valerie Vaness
Islington North CLP's delegate to Birmingham 6 Campaign



To the credit of all those who have campaigned for the Six over many years, other serious frame-ups and miscarriages of justice are also now being looked at afresh.

The Broadwater Farm 3, the defendants in the Carl Bridgewater case, and many others need the support of every Labour and trade union activist.

The day the Birmingham Six walk free with their names cleared will be a historic one. We all have a duty to challenge the system that sent them down in the first place.

Labour Party Socialists

LPS gets cracking

Since May the LPS National Steering Committee has been hard at work estalishing LPS as a real and thriving organisation in the Party.

The strength of LPS is the way in which it has begun the difficult task of building its own organisation.

The North-West Campaign Group, which already considered itself part of LPS, has now been joined by the Summerfield Group in Birmingham, which has decided to become a sponsor of LPS.

Briefing has played a leading role in creating LPS groups.

In Brighton links have been formed with Labour Councillors disciplined for opposition to the Poll Tax.

A successful launch meeting with a Poll Tax rebel Councillor and LPS national co-chair Dorothy Macedo was followed up with an LPS newsletter to every local Party member putting the witch-hunted Councillors' case.

In Islington LPS got off to a successful start with ever-present local MP Jeremy Corbyn speaking and the Mayor — bedecked in chain — chairing the meeting!

By Bryn Griffiths
Tottenham CLP

On a national level, LPS is playing an important role in drawing together Labour Councillors opposed to the Poll Tax.

LPS is also forging links with trades unionists. Along with the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, LPS is organising a "Labour: Unshackle the Unions" campaign.

A statement calling for a Labour government to repeal all anti-union laws is gathering support from a number of trade union bodies, including some Trades Councils, and prominent trades unionists and MPs.

The statement is for all activists to sign — not just leading figures — and will be circulated to all delegates at the Conference.

On the Monday of Conference SMTUC and LPS are organising a big lobby on this theme and will follow it up with a fringe meeting (with Skinner, Ken Cameron, Betty Heathfield) in the evening.

Labour

This initiative will be crucial if we are to win our fight to ensure that the next Labour government does not go the same way as Callaghan and find itself in opposition to the trade union movement.

The "Labour: Unshackle the Unions" initiative will lay important groundwork for a socialist campaign for a Labour victory.

It is also a practical example of how the twin-track approach can be used to bring the struggles outside the Party into its centre.

At conference LPS will produce a daily bulletin for conference delegates.

In a small step for left unity both *Labour Briefing* and *Socialist Organiser* have agreed to pool their resources and support the united left bulletin of LPS.

LPS is also organising a major fringe meeting on the Wednesday of Conference on "Policies for the 90s" and a Conference review on Thursday evening.

There'll be loads of work to do at Party Conference; if you're interested in helping out call up the *Briefing* office.

Gulf

On the Gulf War LPS has established its opposition to US and imperialist involvement in the area.

After a long discussion we drew up a detailed emergency resolution for Party Conference

The LPS National Committee also decided to support any campaigns opposing the US-British involvement in the Gulf. We are fully supporting the demonstration on September 15th.

At its launch Conference LPS gave a great deal of priority to opposing the witch-hunt and a left member of the National Constitution Committee introduced an excellent document on the workings of Labour's expulsion machine.

Since the Conference LPS has thrown its full weight behind the *End the Ban* campaign launched to defend *Socialist Organiser*.

On a more strategic level the National Committee is drawing up a draft charter of Party members' rights as a basis for a fightback for Party democracy.

The LPS AGM will be on October 27th. This meeting will determine LPS policy and campaigning priorities for the coming year.

LPS

If we are to keep LPS's momentum going the AGM must be a success.

All *Briefing* readers should be planning to attend and to get as many local Party members as possible to join them. Local activists should be encouraged to go on the National Committee as regional representatives.

Labour: Unshackle the Unions!

"We call on this year's Labour Party Conference to commit the next Labour government to:

*** Repeal all Tory anti-union laws**

*** Enact legislation which guarantees all trades unions the rights they need to represent their members effectively.**

Without such measures, our unions will remain at a major disadvantage in relation to the employers.

The next Labour government must therefore introduce legislation to enshrine the priniples of the Campaign for Free Trade Unions:

1. The right to belong to a trade union, to recruit fellow workers into unions and to have your union recognised by the employer for collective bargaining;

2. The right to be active in your union and to take industrial action without fear of the sack;

3. The right to strike, to picket effectively, and to take industrial action in support of other groups of workers, without fear of losing your job or legal attacks on your union;

4. The right of union members to determine their own rules, in line with the ILO Convention on Freedom of Association."

Note: The Campaign for Free Trade Unions issued a statement earlier this year consisting of the four principles listed above. It was backed by 33 national trade union leaders.

Labour Party Socialists and the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee will be organising a trade union lobby of Labour Party Conference delegates at lunchtime on the first day of Conference (Monday, Oct. 1, Blackpool) and a major fringe meeting that evening. The theme of both the lobby and the fringe meeting will be *Labour: Unshackle the Unions!* Participation from all sections of the labour movement is welcome.

We will produce a leaflet for all Conference delegates listing all those individuals and organisations which have supported the statement above. We also hope to pay for an advertisement with the same message and names in *Tribune*. All of this will help boost the campaign to commit Labour to liberate the unions from the Tory shackles – as part and parcel of our common aim of a Labour victory in the next general election.

For more information please contact LPS, Box 118, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S44 5UD or the SMTUC c/o 53a Geere Road, London, E15

Statement produced by Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee and Labour Party Socialists.

JOIN LABOUR PARTY SOCIALISTS!

Name.....

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CLP.....

Waged £8; Unwaged/Student £4;
CLPs and other organisations £16.
LPS membership will also make you an affiliate of the Socialist Movement.
If you wish to opt out of affiliation to the Socialist Movement please tick here: .....
Send this form to: LPS, PO Box 118, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S44 5UD.

Labour Party Socialists AGM
October 27/28th;
Sheffield

Who's afraid of militant trade unionism?

TUC backs Tory laws

The TUC Congress has backed Neil Kinnock and accepted all the Tory anti-unions laws imposed on the working class over the past ten years.

Only on the use of sequestration is there any difference with the Tories. The TUC want it used less than it has been.

There will be no restoration of immunities. Solidarity action will remain illegal. Balloting procedures will remain in the hands of the courts and there will be no reintroduction of the closed shop.

TUC policy on anti-union laws has now turned a full circle. In 1982/3 the TUC had a policy of "total opposition" to the Tory law and floated a fighting fund to oppose them.

A year later at Warrington they broke their own policy and refused to support the NGA against Eddie Shah's injunction.

After the Miners' Strike they adopted the policy that although the laws are a bad thing they should be complied with. Now they are positively in favour of a Labour government retaining the laws rather than repealing them.

Kinnock's speech to the TUC the following day confirmed that he does not want to keep the anti-union laws because of he believes it would be unpopular to get rid of them, but because he intends, if he ever becomes Prime Minister, to use them.

He declared that the trade unions can expect no "favours" from a future Labour government and spelled out his determination to keep wages under control.

By ALAN THORNETT

That can only be done by use of the anti-union laws. After a Labour election victory, workers' expectations will simply be too high to be tamed by any other means.

On the face of it, voting at Congress was close. The composite supporting the Kinnock line won 4.4m votes against 3.5m for a NALGO-backed composite which would have legalised secondary action.

But this has to be qualified by the fact that three unions – the left-led TGWU, SOGAT and NUCPS – voted for both composites, i.e., for and against the retention of the anti-union laws.

Amendments from the NGA defending the closed shop and solidarity action and restoring control of ballots to the unions were heavily defeated on a card vote.

The collapse of the TGWU left-led Executive shows the scale of the problem.

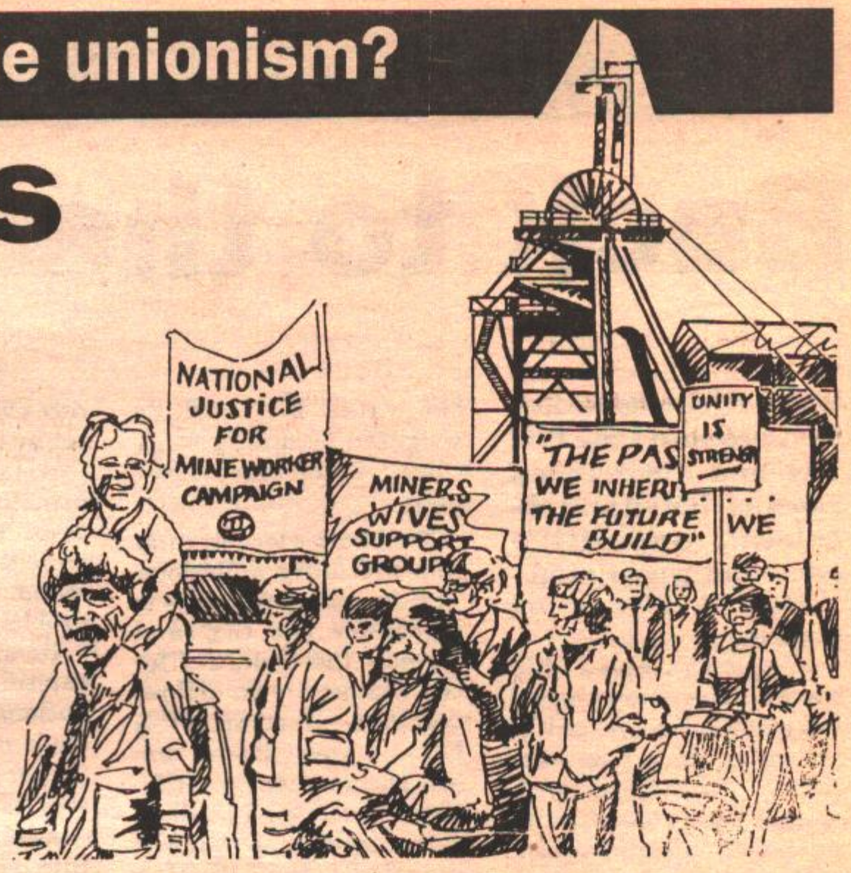
Last year the TGWU was a problem for Kinnock on this issue. Now, even after a swing to the left in the union elections last December, they have caved in completely.

The argument that militant trade unionism is a vote-loser has won out, despite previous experience which shows that in periods of militant trade union action the vote for Labour increases – unless of course, Labour puts itself on the wrong side of the picket line, as it did in 1978-79.

Militant class action will certainly be needed if the defeats of this year's TUC are to be reversed.

Such action could arise at any time; all-out action may soon be starting in the North Sea.

The Tories know that industrial militancy can raise its head at any time. That is why they are pushing more laws through Parliament and are so keen to destroy Arthur Scargill.



Miners, victims of Thatcher's anti-union laws. Now Kinnock flexes his muscles by promising to use the very same laws.

Conference

COHSE

The left has made steady ground within the union over the last year.

This is despite the demise of what had become a *Militant* dominated broad left in COHSE, known as Group 81.

The left has secured the election of a number of Left National Executive Committee members and there is now a real possibility that next year's NEC will have a Left majority – the first in COHSE's 80 year history.

By Michael Walker COHSE Hillingdon and District Branch Secretary

The present elections in London for two NEC positiond have thrown up six candidates: two right wing, one unknown, two Labour left, and one SWP.

The two Labour left candidates will probably win, but the full postal ballot and COHSE's "non campaigning" rule make the result hard to predict.

One of the Labour left candidates, George Nazer, was previously the candidate for Vice-President against the incumbent right winger, Jim Callaghan JP.

Nazer failed by just 800 votes in the contest in which a rogue former left candidate took 2,000 votes and split the left.

In recent months the NEC has passed a number of important resolutions, including one criticising the NEC leadership, with just one vote against.

It has also passed resolutions supporting self-organisation for black people, women, lesbians and gay men, and people with a disability (a major step forward).

Unfortunately, the only black NEC member, the first in COHSE's history, voted against self-organisation, arguing the "I've never been discriminated against" line.

Following the lead of Ealing COHSE branch, a black section in COHSE seems distinctly possible.

The NEC failed by one vote to affiliate to the Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

COHSE delegate conference remains a jamboree for "bucket and spade" delegates who see the whole thing as a holiday. They follow NEC advice on almost everything, so nothing unexpected happened at this year's Bridlington conference.

Nonetheless resolutions calling for strike action over the clerical grading saga, support for the Birmingham Six, and a woman's right to choose were carried.

An overwhelming majority voted to continue talks with NUPE/NALGO.

Discussions with NALGO seem to be faltering because of the political levy issue and the apparent desire of NALGO officers to create a bigger NALGO instead of a genuinely new union.

Resolution

A resolution on proportional representation was remitted. It now seems that COHSE nationally will follow London COHSE in supporting PR.

With the demise of Group 81 the only visible left input into this year's conference was from the SWP, who have yet to recapture their broad left approach of the 70s.

We have to do better. What COHSE needs is a new, truly "broad" left which can mobilise union members for left initiatives at all levels.

Greenwich housing workers

Strike heats up

Greenwich Council has recruited scabs to carry out the Poll Tax collection duties at the core of the housing workers' dispute.

This is its most provocative move since the Housing strike began four months ago.

One hundred and forty workers in Greenwich's Housing Estate Management team are demanding more money and better conditions for the eight housing assistants who have the difficult task of collecting the Poll Tax.

Nine strikers have also been served disciplinary notices for alleged "intimidation" on the picket line. Seventeen other strikers have been threatened with similar action.

By Ai Meun Lim Greenwich NALGO

A serious charge of gross misconduct, carrying the penalty of immediate dismissal, was discussed in a hearing at the beginning of September, the results of which are still unknown.

NALGO

Greenwich NALGO views this attempted victimisation as a move by the Council to raise the stakes.

After months of negotiations, with a resolution to the dispute at last in sight, the Council's latest move must reflect desperation over the Poll Tax and budget cuts.

The high non-payment figure (over 50%) is not getting any better and the Council is even considering not bothering with the expense of chasing up payment from those who are entitled to a rebate.

They are therefore determined that all Poll Tax collection should be done at the cheapest possible rate.

Demands

Pandering to the wage demands now could open the door to claims from other workers faced with additional workloads, deteriorating working conditions and increased harassment as result of the Poll Tax.

On top of that Poll Tax Capping and reducing government grants mean Greenwich Council will have to make hefty cuts this year, and more next year, with large numbers of workers made redundant and services reduced.

From the Council's point of view the attempt to smash the union must be made while it still has the chance.

By taking on Greenwich NALGO, the Council hopes to signal to other restless workers in NUPE and the NUT that industrial action will not pay.

The almost regular police presence at Committee meetings and the refusal of the Labour Group to condemn Labour Councillor John Fahy's violence against demonstrators is sure to be a feature of this hard fought anti-union campaign.

The sounds of whip-cracking could also be heard when a social worker was charged with "insubordination" for daring to suggest in an internal case report that financial restraints had resulted in an inappropriate placement of a client.

The last few NALGO branch meetings have voted in large numbers to meet force with force.

The Council's increased intransigence has incensed even the National Executive who some weeks ago were pushing for a compromise, but have now given support for a ballot of an additional 5% of the branch on indefinite strike action on full pay.

TGWU

No carve up!

By TONY ROBINSON

At national level in the TGWU a "behind the scenes" understanding has developed over the mandatory elections for national officers.

Bill Morris, supported by the "Broad left" for the post of National Organiser, was not opposed by any prominent right winger.

Consequently, in the current election for Assistant General Secretary the "Broad Left" leadership is not opposing sitting right winger Eddie Haigh.

This has led to a division in the "Broad Left".

Haigh's role on the Labour NEC is notorious. Apart from backing witch-hunts, expulsions, and suspensions, Haigh voted for Kinnock's proposals to retain the Tory anti-union laws.

In view of this a section of the "Broad Left" successfully campaigned for a large number of comrades to nominate John Farrell, Merseyside District Secretary, to stand against Haigh.

We must oppose the attempt to carve up national posts between the right wing and the Stalinists. Support Farrell for Assistant General Secretary.

Local Taxation

Back to the future?

When Nicholas Ridley first proposed the Poll Tax and condemned rates as "hated and obsolete", opposition comment was muted.

After all, rates are not popular.

Kinnock and his thinkers have now turned full circle and come back to the rates. In a pamphlet called *Fair Rates*, Walworth Road has finally published its alternative to the Poll Tax.

What is most difficult to understand about the *Fair Rates* proposals is why they took so long; there is nothing new here.

But then, neither was the Poll Tax. And a property-based tax has a lot in its favour: it's easy to collect, difficult to evade, and is progressive, in the sense that it does in some way relate to individual assets.

The proposals contained within the document are consequently simple and fairly obvious.

We are offered a return to the rates, with new rateable valuations based on property values rather than notional rents, and with revaluations carried out on a rolling basis every year.

Information technology has allowed the "fair" element to be introduced, so the rates bill will be weighted according to income, using income tax data.

Timescales for introduction are fairly ambitious. The document proposes to introduce the tax (and abolish the PollTax) for the financial year following the election of a Labour government, unless the year starts within three months, in which case introduction would be delayed for twelve months.

By Peter Chowney
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

The document also undertakes to abolish the principle of 20% minimum payments, allowing for a return to full rebates (or zero taxation) for poorer people.

Property valuations would also take place within a year, although initially the system would be based on rebates rather than adjusted rate bills, until the technology for weighting rate bills could be introduced.

The Uniform Business Rate would also be scrapped, and business rates would once again be set by local Councils.

So far so good. The basic principles here are good ones, and the ideas are simple and easy to understand. But there are still problems.

Basing a property tax on capital values rather than notional rents may seem obvious, but in many areas (especially London and the larger cities) this would lead to enormous fluctuations in rates bills from property to property.

The capital value of a three-bedroom house in a "nice" part of a London Borough could be four or five times that of a three bedroom flat in a tower block in the same Borough.

This could mean families who may be moved from Council accommodation in tower blocks to street properties would receive a rates bill four or five times as high for their trouble.

There is a fundamental flaw in basing rates on capital values: it only makes sense where the occupiers actually own their property. In rented accommodation, especially in the public sector, the ability of individuals to pay will have nothing to do with the value of the property in which they live.

Labour is supposedly committed to expanding the public rented sector; the two proposals sit together rather uncomfortably.

The answer, although not addressed in the policy document, is presumably to redress this through rebates and weightings. But this could make the whole system extremely complicated; it would be impossible to know exactly how your rates bill has been worked out.

And would rebates be proportional, covering a percentage of the rates bill, or absolute, placing a ceiling on what a household would have to pay?

The former would still lead to the wild fluctuations described above, while the latter would make the whole notion of relating taxation to property meaningless.

The main problems come not with the idea of a return to rates, but with proposals for the reform of the grant system.

Here, the document definitely does not propose a return to the pre-Thatcher days when local spending was locally determined, and government Rate Support Grants were, in turn, automatically linked by the level of rates set locally.



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

Kinnock gets ready for a starring role.

The pamphlet gives an undertaking to end the system whereby all increases in local spending are thrust disproportionately on local taxation, but still talks ominously about "cut-off points".

In other words, there would still be central government ceilings on Local Authority grant and consequently on local authority spending.

We need a firm commitment from the Labour front bench that Local Authority grants will be related to local taxation and not determined centrally.

Without this, the inequities of the Thatcher years, starving the most needy areas of resources, will remain.

Without genuine local control over expenditure, the notion of local democracy is a sham – *Fair Rates* or not.

Brighton

Councillors disciplined for following Party policy

By Brighton Labour Party Socialists

On Sunday June 17th a meeting of Brighton Labour Group and the Executive Committee of Brighton Labour Party voted to withdraw the whip from six Councillors: Jean Calder, Sheila Hall, Kate Packham, Richard Stanton, Mark Thompson, and Andy Winter.

The six were guilty only of supporting the policy of Brighton Labour Party not to use courts or bailiffs to collect the Poll Tax.

The policy calls on the Labour Group "not to give authority of the Council for any action taken by Council officers with a view to pursuing or prosecuting residents who refuse to pay the tax or to register for it".

National policy calls on Councillors to "campaign within the law". The law says that Councils have "powers" to use the courts and bailiffs, but not a "duty".

The local Party and the six Councillors were merely asking the Labour Administration to carry out a socialist policy which breaks neither the law nor national Labour Party policy.

The Labour Group is victimising the Brighton six for doing what they were elected to do – represent the Brighton Labour Party.

Birmingham

The price of corruption

The five Birmingham Labour Councillors who have publicly stated that they are not paying the Poll Tax have been told they will have the money deducted from their attendance allowances.

The position of Sir (!) Dick Knowles, Labour Council Leader, is that although this action is probably illegal, he has "right" on his side and so, it appears, some laws clearly can be broken.

Knowles also said some time back that he would withhold Birmingham's contribution to the government safety net (£69 out of every Poll Tax bill) until the Authority had collected sufficient revenue to operate.

He claimed Birmingham could not afford to hand over the money to central government – a case of "Can't Pay, Won't Pay"?

In this latest move against the Councillors, Knowles is unlikely to be successful. The Councillors are considering withholding any claims for attendance allowance for the time being.

The average attendance allowance for this group of Councillors is £1,000 per year as opposed to Knowles' own claim last year of £10,000.

For many Councillors the attendance allowance is one of the main if not the only source of income. Many see this money as belonging to their Labour Party Branch and Constituency.

By Cllr GUY DALY



It is claimed that these Councillors are being irresponsible in not paying the Poll Tax and so should not be allowed to have anything to do with Council expenditure.

However, the Poll Tax is only 25% of Council funds. The rest comes from charges, government grant (raised from taxation) and the uniform business rate.

Through these mechanisms, most people do contribute to Local Authority funds.

When the Labour right from Birmingham and elsewhere, along with the Tories, claim that the Poll Tax will have to be higher next year because of the non-payers, then the people of Birmingham should recall a few items of expenditure.

For example, last Bank Holiday weekend saw Birmingham's Super Prix – estimated to be losing £500,000 per year.

Over recent weeks the local press has been filled with reports of both Tory and Labour Councillors' trips to exotic places (Hong Kong, Australia, India) all in the name of education and putting Birmingham "on the map".

Stories are surfacing of Birmingham Housing Department renting out luxury flats in Edgbaston to high-ranking Council officers and members of the Sadler's Wells Ballet – who were paid £4 million to base themselves in Birmingham.

It's ironic that the Labour Right who said that non-payment would never work are now saying that they are going to have to put up Poll Tax because of it. They can't have it both ways.

"In, of, for, and through the Labour Party"

The following is an edited version of the introductory speech given by MIKE MARQUSEE on behalf of the *Briefing* Editorial Board at the Sellers, Readers, and Writers meeting held on July 15th in London.

It's no secret that *Briefing* is beset with problems.

A chronic shortage of workers, problems with distribution, and lack of finance must all be dealt with – and the only people who can do that are the people who use and rely on *Briefing* up and down the country.

The general appearance of the paper needs improvement; editorial mistakes have become too frequent.

But we do have assets, not least our polemical posture which, though exasperating to some, is a delight and solace to others. As is our name-nameing, no-punches-pulled combativeness.

Our irreverance derives from the fact that *Briefing* is for the most part written by and for the grass-roots of the labour movement. We have a higher proportion of activist contributors than that of any other left paper.

However, far too many articles now originate amongst a small group of hacks wandering in and out of the *Briefing* office in London. I confess to being chief culprit.

There is also a gross geographical bias towards London and an utterly unacceptable preponderance of male writers.

The range of *Briefing's* coverage – the number and variety of topics covered – is staggering for a paper of its resources. Just compare the ever-thinning but relatively well-financed *Tribune*.

Our Labour Party coverage and its no-holds-barred approach towards the Labour leadership and the "soft left" is a strength, but even this coverage needs to be more systematic.

Our trade union coverage is far too patchy. Though we print serious analyses and first-class reports from the front-lines of major disputes, huge areas of union activity remain untouched.

Our coverage of Eastern Europe has been amongst the best on the left; we've asked the difficult questions, encouraged uninhibited debate, and allowed activists from Eastern Europe to speak for themselves.

On the other hand, our coverage of Western Europe is poor.

Our grass-roots election reportage – local and national – is unique and widely appreciated.

Our Poll Tax coverage has been informative, hard-hitting, and non-sectarian. And we've made a bridgehead into the neglected field of the politics of sport.

> **"We can not only reach the parts of the labour movement that others papers can't reach – we can name them!"**

Alas, on far too many other social issues we say little or nothing.

Of course, *Briefing* is above all a political vehicle. The defeats of the left have been defeats for *Briefing* and have profoundly affected our supporters.

In particular our association with the struggle in local government – on the losing side – does not make us seem, for many potential readers, an attractive proposition.

What we do about this I don't know.

But I do know that our hard line on local government was part and parcel of *Briefing's* basic political strength: its combination of class struggle politics, commitment to the Labour Party, and relentless opposition to its leadership

Assets

Briefing's greatest asset is illustrated by this meeting itself. No other paper on the left would even consider conducting such a strategic discussion in such an open and democratic way.

Our structures may be ramshackle but they remain non-sectarian, pluralist, and responsive to the needs and views of our readers.

A desire to maintain *Briefing* should not be seen a hostility to the Socialist Movement paper. Indeed, it's hard to see that a Socialist Movement paper could or should perform the functions of *Briefing*.

Of course, if another paper can do what we do better, then that is reason to celebrate. But *Briefing* does have distinctive aims and a distinctive voice.

I do not believe that a Socialist Movement paper could or should share all those aims or speak with that voice.

Above all, we have a specific task in the Labour Party: informing and organising a non-sectarian but unequivocal left current.

Briefing was founded on the understanding that information is power and that organising the Labour left could not be done by propaganda alone. It has also, throughout its ten year history, made a point of calling our leaders to account.

Won

This hasn't won us friends in all quarters but it has been and remains an index of the invigorating freedom of *Briefing*. We can not only reach the parts of the labour movement that others papers can't reach – we can name them!

Briefing is a creature of, for, in, and through the Labour Party. That does not mean and has not meant that it cannot breathe freely in other atmospheres.

Survive

Indeed it must do so if it is to survive and thrive inside the Labour Party. But it cannot and should not get away from its bedrock identity.

Some have charged us with "routinism, with being "mesmerised" by Labour Party cycles.

Let's be clear: *Briefing* is *against* routinism and *for* consistency and creativity in the Labour Party. This is because the question of the Labour Party and its leadership remains central and unavoidable in British politics.

There is no short-cut here. Difficult conditions within the Labour Party make *Briefing's* basic tasks that much more essential.

Irritant, Gadfly, Socialist Conscience

"Indispensable" Briefing

That old *Briefing* magic was there again, when readers from all over the country gathered for a special meeting in London in July to discuss the future of the paper.

Rumours had spread that some people involved in *Briefing* were suggesting we should fold up to make space for a Socialist Movement paper.

The majority of readers made it clear that while welcoming the Socialist Movement paper they saw no reason why *Briefing* should not continue. It holds a special place in Labour left politics.

By Pauline Purnell Birmingham Briefing

Steve Reicher from Exeter described the newspaper as a tool for organising within the labour movement, something which no other paper comes close to doing at the moment and which no newspaper based outside the Labour Party could possibly do.

Briefing was described as a focus for socialists active in Labour Party wards, working as Councillors, in trade unions and campaigning on the streets.

Newly-elected Birmingham Councillor Guy Daly spoke of the essential support and comradeship offered by *Briefing*, especially over the Poll Tax.

Briefing has humour, a factor lacking in its rivals and in some of the people who spoke in favour of closing it down.

Ex-Haringey Council Leader Steve King described *Briefing* as a socialist conscience and praised its role in calling Councillors and MPs to account.

The meeting was marked by passion and a committment to long-term work in the Labour Party.

Briefing's distinctive politics must be heard loud and clear within the Party. The right-wing must be brought to account and direction and support given to people working on the left in far-flung constituencies.

If *Briefing* is to continue — stronger and more controversial than ever — we must all contribute with articles, information and money. People who are committed to *Briefing's* style and politics must get moving and sell the paper.

Briefing is an irritant, a gadfly, a socialist conscience hated by the right and feared by the sell-outs.

Briefing

A few comrades' outlook was bleak. They came to bury *Briefing*, not to praise it. They went away realising - whether they like it or not — that stories of *Briefing's* death were much exaggerated.

Like the LCC Walworth Roadies and other Kinnock puppets, our comrades were disappointed that *Briefing's* demise is not imminent.

Power

We are not going to make Kinnock's day. *Briefing* will go on and we will make sure that Labour does "take the power".

Socialist Movement Paper:

Where Briefing belongs

Attendance at the *Briefing* Readers', Writers and Sellers meeting reflected our traditional strength as organisers of the Labour left.

Many comrades passionately alluded to *Briefing's* proud tradition of maintaining a line of defence of the working class while all around are capitulating to Tory policies, for example on local government.

Disagreement at the meeting was not on the strength of this tradition nor on the importance of the struggle to build a hard left current in the Labour Party.

By GILL LEE

Rather, disagreement came over the relationship of that fight to the alliances being built around the Socialist Movment with broader forces in the trade unions, the campaigns, the women's movement, and even the Greens, Plaid Cymru, and the SNP.

While the meeting overwhelmingly agreed on a resolution welcoming the proposed Socialist Movment paper it was clear that there was substantial disagreement about what this means for the future of *Briefing*.

Some comrades were sceptical about whether the Socialist Movement paper can be the kind of labour movement orientated, agitational, democratic newspaper we are all agreed is necessary to build a class struggle current.

Other comrades felt that even if such a paper could be produced, *Briefing* had its own independent role to play in organising a hard left current in the Party.

A few comrades expresed hostility to the whole project of a paper which would involve wider forces than those currently organised through *Briefing*.

To the sceptics I would say:

- on September 15th the Socialist Movement Organising Committee is to take a discussion on whether the SM paper should call for a vote for Labour in the General Election;
- there is concensus within the SM on the need for its paper to organise forces in action;
- proposals are going to the SM Organising Committee that the editorial board should be elected from and accountable to the SM Organising Committee.

I believe that a non-sectarian approach loyal to *Briefing's* proud tradition would take us into such a paper. The SM paper and the alliances it seeks to build can only be weakened by our absence.

Already many comrades involved in *Briefing* are playing a leading role in the bodies and initiatives of the SM: in LPS, in the trade union committee, in WfS, in the Red Green Network, around the Poll Tax.

We should be playing a leading role in the SM paper as well.

We need to build a left which can reach out to those in struggle and unite left activists in the struggle against Thatcherism and new realism in the trade unions, the Labour Party and the campaigns.

If we agree with building this kind of left through the Socialist Movement then clearly we must be in favour of discussion, debate and organisation of this left being promoted through the SM paper.

I believe *Briefing's* logical place is within that process, not standing outside it as a competitor or critic.

Those who reject the Socialist Movement paper are really rejecting the twin track strategy.

Some comrades made this explicit at the meeting by arguing for a newspaper by Labour Party activists, for Labour Party activists.

I thought we had moved beyond that, into an understanding that the Labour Party left cannot be transformed from within, simply by more hard work.

It can only be transformed by big events in the class struggle which would bring new comrades into the Party and in practice overcome the arguments of the New Realist right.

This debate should be continued, as it no doubt will, at the *Briefing* AGM in December.

Obituaries

Louis Sinclair

1909-1990

We learn with regret that our old comrade, Louis Sinclair, has died after a long illness.

He won for himself a unique position in the history of the struggle for socialism against the destructive influences of Social Democracy and Stalinism on the international working class.

By P.J. BARCLAY

He enabled later scholars to bring back to light the truth about the life and aims of Leon Trotsky.

For these reasons he deserves to be remembered by comrades who may be learning here for the first time of his existence.

He was born in a Jewish workers' family in Glasgow, and earned his living all his life as a schoolteacher, specialising at one time in teaching children with impaired hearing.

In the 30s he broke all intellectual links with religion or Zionism, and in 1938 was a member of the Glasgow group of the Revolutionary Socialist League, the British Section of the Fourth International, to which he was introduced by Tom Mercer, the son-in-law of John MacLean.

In uniform during the war, he won from pacifism to Trotskyism an important cadre of the ILP, the subsequent death of which was a blow to those who were fighting to defend the independence of the working-class.

Later, while on military service in Italy, he worked with Charlie van Gelderen and Bill Quinn to deepen our contact with revolutionary militants in that country.

After the war he was for a time a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party, but after that organisation collapsed in 1949 he did not subsequently join any Trotskyist organisation.

He is almost unique, however, in having found the means to serve the entire workers' movement by devoting decades of his life to meticulous work on his huge bibliography of Trotsky's writings.

He had particularly in mind that this must be the first step towards combatting the vicious effect of the falsification of the historical record by Stalinism and by those "democratic" politicians and academics who drew upon it.

He persisted, working at first largely in isolation.

But every later scholar, such as the American, George Breitman, or the French Pierre Broue, who have so greatly widened the available sources of information by their systematic editions of Trotsky's writings and all the historical work which the opening of his archives has made possible, has acknowledged the huge debt which they owe him.

He valued this appreciation.

His old university in Glasgow now has charge of his unrivalled library.

August 31, 1990

Tamara Deutscher 1913-1990

Tamara Deutscher, who died this August, was born in 1913 at Lodz in Poland.

She grew up under the shadow of fascism abroad and nationalism, anti-semitism and militarism at home – an experience that was to mark her political outlook indelibly.

By QUINTIN HOARE

Like her compatriot Rosa Luxemburg, she was an internationalist above all else.

In 1940 she came as an exile to Britain, where she met the young Isaac Deutscher and chose him as her companion for life.

In the course of a marriage and intellectual collaboration cut tragically short in 1967 by Isaac's sudden and early death, Tamara played an indispensable part – as researcher and first critic – in the production of a series of seminal works.

The crowning achievement of this labour was the three-volume biography of Trotsky which is such an indispensable book for socialists in every part of the world.

After the terrible shock of Isaac's death, Tamara threw herself into new intellectual and political projects.

She worked with E. H. Carr on the later volumes of his *History of Soviet Russia*. She edited collections of Isaac's writings.

She wrote perceptively in *New Left Review*, *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* and elsewhere on new cultural and political developments in the Soviet Union.

She established the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize (now to be renamed the Deutscher Memorial Prize) to encourage new Marxist writing.

After Soviet tanks entered Prague in 1968, she helped set up and played an active role in the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists.

Tamara's home in Hampstead, where she lived with her only and much loved son Martin, became a welcoming haven for socialists and political exiles from many countries.

They were drawn there not just by her prestige on the international left, but above all by her warmth of personality, her integrity and her unfailing interest in political conditions throughout the world.

One of Tamara's greatest qualities was her freedom from pat views. She was always painfully aware of the contradictions and dilemmas of world politics (for instance, in the course of Polish events over the past decade).

Although she had been in poor health for several years, she was invigorated, though also frequently anguished, by the evolution of Soviet politics under Gorbachev.

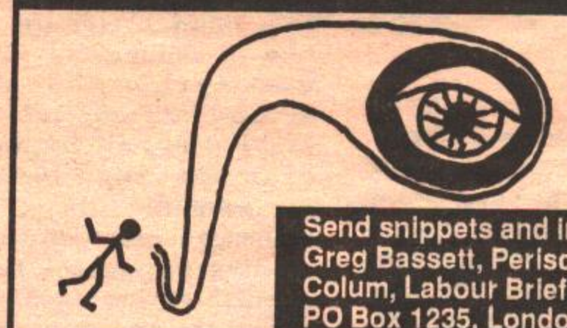
She was particularly delighted by the recent publication in a Moscow journal of the final chapter of the Trotsky trilogy, and by the award of the 1988/9 Deutscher Prize to a young Soviet Marxist, Boris Kagarlitsky.

Only a few days before her death, her face lit up when she held in her hands the first volume of Trotsky to be published in the Soviet Union since the 20s.

To the last, Tamara retained her keen mind, her vitality and her warmth, along with her commitment to the socialist project, as anyone can testify who saw her dazzling contribution to a recent episode of Channel Four's *Rear Window*, filmed in her home just weeks before her death.

Her many comrades and friends will miss her sorely.

PERISCOPE



Send snippets and info to:
Greg Bassett, Periscope
Colum, Labour Briefing,
PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY.

Walworth road petrol price piss-take

Labour's media managers were obviously at a loss when the Gulf crisis first broke.

With Kinnock away on holiday, they persuaded Frank Dobson to appear on television to publicise Labour's efforts to monitor petrol price rises on behalf of the nation's super-oppressed motorists.

Dobson was filmed by a BBC crew inside Walworth Road, with loyal Labour employees depicted ringing up petrol stations and entering price date into a computer.

Delighted car-owners should beware. The whole thing was faked. No information was actually entered on to computer and if petrol prices are being monitored, it's certainly not at Walworth Road.

Facts and figures

Tory Defence Secretary Tom King told the House that the cost of deployment of British troops in the Gulf was already £75 million and that operating costs for "our forces" now amount to £1 million per day.

5,000 British troops are now "committed to the undertaking" – a drop in the Gulf compared to the 100,000 sent by the USA under the command of General "we're here to kick butt" Schwarzkopf.

Arms bizarre

Denis Healey, in a meandering peroration to the House of Commons, revealed that,

"at the Baghdad arms fair which followed (the 1988 massacre of Kurds) in April 1989 – just over a year ago – there were 17 British companies, 35 French companies and three Italian companies attending."

When Tory MP Jonathan Sayeed reminded Healey of his role as Defence Secretary "stuffing arms down Iran's throat... which ended up in the hands of Khomeini," Healey replied:

"It was a great mistake and I have the sense to admit it. I did it because I was assured by the Foreign Office that the Shah would be there forever."

The Terminator I

Bold, brassy, bellicose Neil Kinnock's big, bad targets in his TUC speech were Saddam "Hitler" Hussein and Arthur "Daley" Scargill.

Having donned war paint and field glasses for his rhetorical blast at the Iraqi dictator, Kinnock was in no mood to spare the NUM President, clearly, in Neil's view, a menace of equal proportions.

Asked after his speech by a BBC reporter why he had chosen this moment to launch into Scargill, Kinnock replied, "If people run across my field of fire, I pull the trigger."

Without Comment

The *Sunday Mirror* has at last expressed concern about the sufferings of people it considers unjustly imprisoned:

"The Guinness three have been convicted, found guilty and punished by law. The trial and the jury's verdict was reported fully and in detail by the printed and electronic media.

"But it is time that the families of the convicted men were left alone. They have endured enough. It is only fair that they should now be allowed to live normal lives without being harassed or embarassed."

GLLP: Ashton out, Phillips in?

In a surprise move, Labour has booted out Greater London Labour Party General Secretary Terry Ashton.

Ashton was no great friend of the left (he was utterly hopeless on racism, sexism, and lesbian and gay rights) but he did make efforts to ensure Parliamentary selections were carried out under the rules and that victimisations were kept to a minimum.

It now appears he has been set up as a scapegoat for London Labour's mediocre performance in the May elections.

Rather unfair, as it was the national Party HQ across the road from Herbert Morrison House, London HQ, which called all the shots in that less-than-glorious campaign.

Ashotn's replacement is rumoured to be Vicky Phillips, ex-NUS president and currently the Party's national Women's Officer.

Phillips is a hard-line LCC hack, very much "one of the gang" of NOLS-Clause 4 apparatchiks who have become a "state within the state" at Walworth Road.

In her Hornsey and Wood Green constituency in north London she is known for never, ever debating a political issue on its merits and most recently for her enthusiastic support for Kinnock's war-mongering over the Gulf.

Watch out, London, there's a witch-hunter about.

West takes hostages

Amidst all the media hand-wringing over the fate of Brits "trapped" in Kuwait and Iraq, France's moves to prevent Iraqi citizens leaving the country have gone unnoticed.

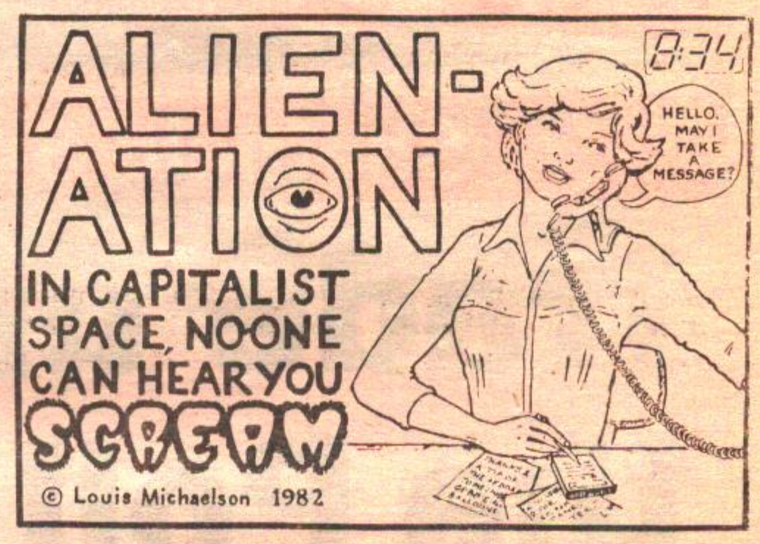
Are they being detained for use as a "human shield" around Mitterand's pet nuclear power plants?

Some Tory MPs want to go even further. Proposals to "intern" all Iraqis in Britain must have alarmed those thousands of anti-Saddam exiles who thouhgt they had come to this country for political asylum.

Interview: Bad Attitudes

Workers' view of a processed world

Processed World (_PW_) is a San Francisco based magazine devoted to workplace politics. It places special emphasis on the service sector, particularly those who work in information technology. _PW_ advocates time theft, sabotage, information technology terrorism, and organising at a grass-roots level. It has a particularly American blend of humour and politics in a tradition that goes back to the Industrial Workers of the World. _Briefing_ supporter WOODY HAUT interviewed two of PW's editors, CHRIS CAARLSON and MARK LEDGER, during their visit to London for the publication of their _PW_ antholgoy, _Bad Attitudes_ (_Verso_).



***WH:* Can you explain what a *bad attitude* is and why it's important to cultivate one?**

A: Bad attitude is a fundamentally normal human reaction to the absurdity of modern work. It's a defensive way of coping with a situation where you feel isolated on the job with no feeling of contact with your co-workers.

A *bad attitude* is important in all jobs. There's not much skill involved in the modern work world.

Your willingness to be cheerful, no matter how miserable your situation at work, is more important than your ability to carry out the job. Often you're hired on that basis more than anything else.

It's also a stance that can be adopted so you're not so easily dumped on by those around you. It helps in gaining some psychological space from the attitudinal requirements of modern white collar work.

These jobs place great emphasis on your active participation in your own miserable situation.

A bad attitude should expand beyond that to identify other people on the job who share a basic outlook. In that way common ground can be found for doing things in whatever seems appropriate in a given work situation.

***WH:* What is the position of *PW* regarding trade unions, especially in the service sector?**

A: I think the trade union is essentially an institution dedicated to the sale of human labour.

In the US trade unions can't deliver what they offer: job stability, benefits and decent wages. I'm interested in the abolition of most office work. Much of that work is basically useless.

This poses a problem for *PW*. How do you advocate people getting organised on the job and hanging together collectively if you are in favour of abolishing that job?

It's an odd contradiction. You can't imagine trade unions being in favour of that.

The history of strikes in the US over the last ten years shows that when workers try to defend themselves, trade unions discipline workers back into the position they're supposed to be in.

If you're looking for a more fundamental change in the way we live and how work gets organised then trade unions have nothing to offer.

***WH:* I think around 7% of service sector workers in the US are unionised.**

ML: In the early 80s the unions tried to recruit from this sector when mini and micro computers were introduced into offices.

CC: So far this sector has been difficult to unionise particularly in the private sector.

When PW started the Blue Shield office workers were on strike. It was the largest private sector office strike in Californian history. Of 1,500 jobs at the start of the strike only 150 were left at the end. Most had been moved to low-wage, non-union sectors.

***WH:* But you're clearly not against action taken by workers whether in unions or not?**

CC: No, we're gigantically in favour of workers getting organised and doing things. But there's the question of legality.

An official organisation with a legal status is bound by labour laws. With an informal arrangement the laws don't really apply. By refusing to bargain collectively you don't have to give up anything.

***WH:* From what you say *PW* isn't so much against technology as it is against waged labour and capitalism. Do you consider that technology is basically a means of social control?**

ML: Absolutely. There is no such thing as a value-free technology.

One thing we've been critical of is *new age* computer culture. This is where in this supposedly new age of human communications, computers become extensions of the human brain.

CC: Also we've tried to expose what goes on around the production of these technologies.

Silicon Valley is one of the dirtiest toxic dumps in the US now. The ground water is completely contaminated. The IBM plant in San José produces the world's highest level of CFC atmsopheric pollutants.



***WH:* What about the deskilling that goes on with the new technology?**

ML: In the late 70s a lot of people were saying that every technological advance meant a relative deskilling. I don't know if that's necessarily true.

In most offices I've been in people have been happy to learn word processing. The old argument was that people became worse typists as though typing fast is a skill but learning to manipulate symbols isn't.

There's a whole hacker culture that's grown. It's all about getting in and finding out how these things work and subverting them. Great creative pleasure is taken in doing this.

CC: Workers who deal with the circulation of capital and information potentially have a tremendous amount of power over both the integrity of that information and its ability to continue moving.

As they have little individual power they have to get together collectively. A barrier to this is the office structure which isolates and divides people. It takes great effort to overcome this.

The trade unions haven't been much help because they've encouraged these divisions.

***WH:* Did you find any evidence of *bad attitudes* on your recent trip to Eastern Europe?**

There are *bad attitudes* but they're different to those we discuss in *PW* which stand at the most advanced point of capitalist production.

PW went with a tongue-in-cheek line of "we're from the future, we're here to warn you."

We called for the abolition of the economy and got a pretty good response, particularly from young anarchists. Quite often though the response was "we don't have an economy. We need one."

They were mystified about what the market means and how it's going to change their lives.

We discussed the problems of self management and collectives as options. These are good survival strategies but with similar drawbacks when it comes to wage labour.

***WH:* Do you have any time for the Rainbow Coalition?**

CC: I have a high level of disdain for organised electoral politics especially in the realm of parties.

In my opinion Jesse Jackson is a demagogue. I don't trust him and would feel very nervous if he had any real power. He's shown that he is willing to make compromises under any circumstances to promote his political aspirations.

I think he's probably had some o.k. people around him from time to time. He's tended to get Democratic Socialists of America types around him.

Some of these people are sincere; though deluded if they think they can reform the system in this humanist direction.

***WH:* And what about the traditional left and their organisations?**

CC: Ten years ago there were a lot more people interested in what they had to say. Happily much of it has now collapsed.

I think anyone with a basic Leninist position today is in a state of severe confusion about what's going on in the world. The whole notion of vanguardist politics seems to be obselete to me.

ML: Issues of daily life and personal identity are the most vital movements that are happening in the US at the moment: the black and hispanic, women's, and lesbian and gay movements; environmentalist groups; groups advocating direct democracy like ACT UP.

Groups I participate in are those concerned with taking immediate control of your life like squatting and the community garden movement. It's essentially about fighting over space.

***WH:* Could you imagine a society in which there were no *bad attitudes*?**

CC: There are always going to be conflicts around the organisation of how you do things in the world. But I could see a world in which you wouldn't be stuck in situations.

Having a bad attitude reflects being stuck and having no choice about it. I'd like to live in a world where you were free to get up and go if you didn't like what you were doing.

It's not hard to imagine. We have to get past organising our activity under the rubric of the economy. It's an artificial construction that demands we play by its rules.

If we could abolish that form of organisation we could all work a lot less. We could do things we like to do that are immediately useful. In the process we would live a lot better and have a lot more material abundance.

I'm all in favour of the two hour working week.

ML: A lot of people find individual ways to reduce their working week. I work part-time on purpose.

There are many people involved in the wonderful world of time theft. This is definitely part of having a *bad attitude*, finding niches of your own in the work day.

But I think it's interesting that people seize on this idea of *bad attitudes* as though it were a sociological concept they need to develop or get a rigorous definition for.

The left is really hung up on that style of thinking. For me it's just a place to take off from. It's like a poetical device to release the imagination.

***Bad Attitude: The Processed World Anthology*, Edited by Chris Carlsson with Mark Ledge, *Verso*.**

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Sheffield Socialist Movement Conference

Trade unionists fight the Poll Tax

A useful conference in Sheffield on September 8th brought together over 300 trade unionists fighting the Poll Tax.

The attendance was not – for once – overwhelmingly "London and the Home Counties" and had a strong Trades Council input from places such as Stirling, Durham, Tyne and Wear, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Swindon, Reading, Nottingham, and several London Boroughs.

A short plenary session opened the day, including a guest speaker from the North Sea oil workers fighting to establish trade unions in the teeth of opposition from the bosses and equivocation from the TUC, and an excellent speech from Andy Dixon, member of the National Union of Teachers EC.

However, it was in the practical workshops that the real value of the day lay for most people.

I attended the one dealing with trade unionists' experience of court cases. The amazing campaigning of anti-Poll Tax groups in Nottingham and Lincolnshire shows the support that can be mobilised.

By Keith Veness
Islington North CLP

(For *Briefing* readers who've never heard of "MacKenzie's friend", it's worth finding out now about her/him).

The three essentials are: people *must* attend court if summonsed; they *must* be organised beforehand; and large vocal demos outside court hearings are vital.

The next session, in which various autonomous and interest groups met, was less organised, but the final session of workshops showed the strengths of the Socialist Movement.

I attended the "Trades Council workshop" at which 21 different TCs were represented – where the perfidious role of the TUC bureaucracy in trying to stamp out any broad based non-payment campaign soon emerged.

Delegates from Spennymoor, Wolverhampton, Camden, and other areas told of attempts to shut down meetings and the usual chicanery used to block any rank and file action for fear of embarrassing Willis and Kinnock.

On a negative note, a lot of delegates told of the sectarian behaviour of *Militant* supporters and the leadership of the All-Britain Federation which has damaged the non-payment campaign.

The fact is that a great many trade unionists dislike the idea of being told there is no choice: *either* they support *Militant or* Kinnock.

This shows the value of the Socialist Movement as a loose forum that allows Labour Party members to meet and work with SWP and CPB members.

All *Briefing* trade unionists should ensure that their branch/Trades Council, etc., affiliates to the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, c/o 53a Geere Road, London E15.

Islington

Hodge attacks Poll Tax Refusniks

Islington Council are taking their role as Poll Tax enforcers very seriously.

A big propaganda campaign has been launched against non-payers.

In July, the Labour Group passed a motion (by one vote) urging non-paying Councillors not to collect their attendance allowances. This heavy-handed approach sickened many Councillors who normally support the Group leadership.

Refusing

Though only five Councillors are refusing to pay, 19 voted against the motion.

The leadership then argued in the local press that "those who don't pay, don't get", thus suggesting that only people who pay for local services should benefit from them.

Despite the motion, all the non-paying Councillors are now insisting on claiming their attendance allowance.

Islington Council has now announced plans to summons local "celebrities" for non-payment as soon as possible.

By Cllr Liz Davies
Islington North CLP

These "celebrities" include the non-paying Councillors, prominent local activists who had refused to register, and the MP Jeremy Corbyn.

The Labour Council was elected in May on a manifesto which included a commitment not to use bailiffs to enforce the Tax. Nonetheless the Council has advertised for full-time bailiffs for Poll Tax collection and is unlikely not to use them.

The groundwork appears to be laid for a witch-hunt on non-paying Party members, starting with the Councillors.

Though Islington's Mayor, Maureen Leigh, refused to pay the Tax, the local papers revealed that "a prominent member of the local Labour Party" had paid her Tax for her.

Planning

This suggests that the leadership are planning to use non-payment as an excuse to expel the left Councillors from Labour Group. It would be far too embarrassing to expel the Mayor as well so they have to neutralise her defiance in advance.

Leadership

Having lost its fight in the courts the Council leadership has now avidly adopted the role of Poll Tax collector.

Neither Islington North nor Islington South CLPs supports the actions of the leadership. Both passed motions supporting individuals' right not to pay the Poll Tax.

Legitimate

The Party and the left on the Council have been arguing that non-payment is a legitimate protest against an unfair tax.

We argue that the Council was elected on a clear commitment of opposition to the Poll Tax. The Council is now reneging on that commitment.

Standing up to the government, refusing to set a Poll Tax rate, refusing to collect the Poll Tax, and supporting anyone who decides not to pay would be vastly popular with the electorate.

It is also clear that implementing the Poll Tax means making cuts. We hear, time and time again, that each round of cuts will be the last, and that each round of cuts is the worst on record.

Yet each year, by making more cuts, they accept responsibility for Tory government policy and renege on their duty to the people who will be most affected by the cuts – the poor and vulnerable of Islington, the people who elected them.

Electoral Registration

Tax reduces voter numbers: official

The Poll Tax is undermining the franchise, as predicted.

The government's office of Population, Censuses and Surveys Summer 1990 Report shows that in Scotland registration dropped from over 99% of the eligible population in 1987 to just over 97% in 1990.

In England and Wales it dropped from 97.5% to 96%.

In Scotland, nearly 81,000 adults have declined to be on the electoral register and in England and Wales over 600,000 are now off the register.

Although the Report puts forward a number of possible reasons for the decline, such as people moving to another area, no General Eelction expected this year, etc., there is only one real explanation for the biggest sustained drop since the mid-70s: the Poll Tax.

In fact registration was rising steadily throughout the 70s and 80s.