LABOUR BRIEFING

40p FORTNIGHTLY

No 108 September 24th-October 24th 1990

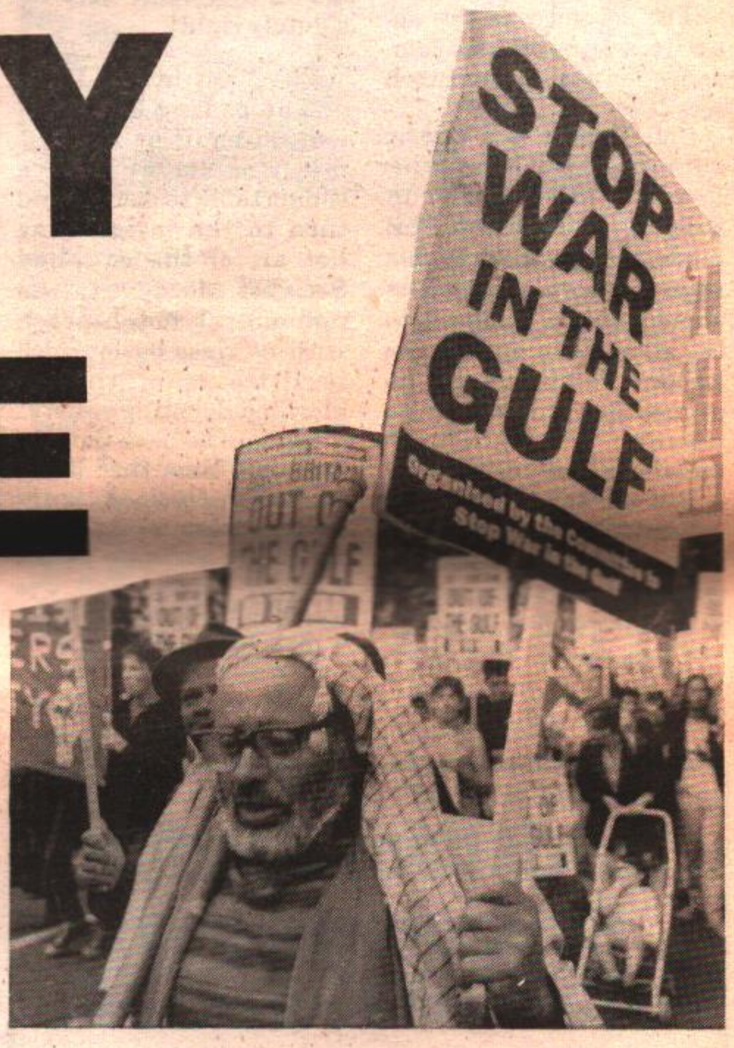
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40p

US-Britain out of the Gulf

LABOUR: BREAK FROM TORY WAR-DRIVE



Slowly but surely the British people are being sucked into what could be a horrific shooting war in the Middle East.

Bush, Thatcher and the service chiefs of the USA and Britain seem more than keen on the prospect.

Such a war would not be a just war on behalf of the people of Iraqi-occupied Kuwait but an imperialist war fought over oil.

Daily, hourly, the military build-up takes place. Air and ground forces, armoured units, artillery regiments are all now involved. As time goes on more and more troops, tanks and equipment will be sent.

We are now informed by Defence Secretary Tom King that some British forces will come under US control. That means that if the US government decides to take unilateral military action Britain will be involved whether the British people want it or not.

The concrete proposals for negotiations put forward by Ted Heath were rejected out of hand by Thatcher.

What is really frightening is that Labour's Front Bench have been totally supine.

In the two-day debate in the Commons, Gerald Kaufman and Martin O'Neill gave more or less unqualified support to Thatcher. On Question Time , Roy Hattersley repudiated Heath's proposals, which were simply an attempt to find a way out of the crisis without war.

It is now clear that whatever the government does, it will be backed by Labour's Front Bench.

It seems as if every time British troops are involved Labour's leaders can only manage a knee-jerk jingoist reaction.

Hugh Gaitskell backed the Tories over Suez until the labour movement pulled him back from the precipice.

Over the Falklands, Michael Foot's chauvinistic speech in the House helped push the government into sending the Task Force.

Now the same serious error is being made once again.

By ERIC HEFFER MP

The government has no need to look over its shoulder to see what the opposition is doing or wonder what the press and media will say.

They may bleat about the need for the UN to agree before further action is taken but in essence they have already assured the government that if a shooting war takes place they will support it.

The one hope left is Labour Party Conference. The delegates must tell the leadership to change course before it is too late. Our leaders must stop snivelling at the government's heels and assert their independence.

This is a critical moment for Labour. If a war starts god only knows where it will end.

Opposition to a war, demands for negotiating a way out and for giving Saddam a face-saving formula to avoid wholesale bloodshed – this does not amount to support for the brutal dictatorship in Iraq.

It was not Labour's left which sold arms to Saddam, organised arms trade fairs in Baghdad, and turned a blind eye to the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds.

Labour as a whole, at Party Conference, urged no sale of arms to either Iraq or Iran during the nine year war. It was the Western capitalist powers who cashed in and made immense profits out of that tragic conflict. It was the USA which kept the genocide of the Kurds off the UN agenda.

The time has come for the labour movement as a whole to reassert its anti-imperialist, anti-war traditions. Labour's Conference can give the lead.

Saddam Hussein is a murderous dictator and should be brought down by the Arab peoples. We as socialists must work for a free, democratic, and peaceful Iraq.

To do that we must oppose without equivocation an imperialist war.

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 is Wednesday, October 17th.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

Eating their words

Dear *Briefing*

The reports in No. 107 of the *Briefing* Readers' Meeting held in July did not bring out two points which most struck me – as an interested observer!

The first was the paucity of the arguments advanced by those who wish to make a priority of the so-called Socialist Movement, as opposed to the Labour Party and *Briefing itself.*

The second was the appetite of some of these comrades for eating their own words.

Phil Hearse is a classic example. Both at the Readers' Meeting and in *Briefing* of June 6th Phil made it clear that in his view the work of socialists should not be reduced to the struggle in and for the Labour Party; indeed, he argued that this was by no means a "militant" socialist's main work.

But on digging into my collection of first editions, I found Phil Hearse and John Lister putting a very different case in *Socialist Outlook* No.1 (May/June, 1987).

There they vehemently argued that to turn to forces outside the Labour Party "at the expense of continuing essential political fight inside the unions and the Labour Party would be a tremendous mistake...The left's voluntary desertion from the fight would be an enormous turnaround in British politics and a blow against the working class, which still shows no willingness to break in any numbers from the Labour Party".

Phil and John were absolutely right!

The fight in the Party and unions is a long, hard and unremitting one. It's much easier and more comfortable to opt out and turn to the invigorating hot air of the so-called Socialist Movement – an ephemeral hotch-potch with no class basis which is little more than a glorified debating society.

Some of us have thought for some time that many *Socialist Outlook* supporters were losing interest in the struggle in the Labour Party. But the speed of the process is just a little breath-taking!

Yours,
Pete Willsman

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

Beyond the fragments

Dear *Briefing*,

Steve Clarke's article "Building a United Campaign" (*Briefing* 107) attacks the SWP and RCP for " going off and organising their own demonstrations".

The implication is that both these groups divided the forces protesting against Bush and Thatcher's war drive.

This was not the case. At the original picket of the US Embassy on the 22nd August, called by the sponsors of what became the Campaign Against War in the Gulf (CAWG), the RCP announced that an Ad Hoc Committee had called a demonstration for September 8th and invited all present to join in the organisation of it. At that point no other demonstration was planned.

Workers Power, along with other groups, joined in the organising and considerable publicity was put out. A week later in full knowledge of the 8th demonstration, the SWP announced its own demonstration on the 1st September.

Then CAWG announced a demonstration on the 15th September, to be followed closely by the Committee Against War in the Gulf which picked the same day but a different time and place for its own demonstration.

The result of all this was three demonstrations on three Saturdays in a row. Undoubtedly a single united demonstration would have drawn larger forces than three separate ones did in total.

While this was in the worst traditions of the sectarianism of the British left, for once the blame cannot be laid at the door of the RCP.

We should learn the lesson of this fiasco and not distort what actually happened as Steve Clarke's article does. The conference called by CAWG on November 3rd can at least unite the forces committed to fighting to get the imperialist troops out and stopping the imperialists' drive to war.

Stuart McKee
London



Marching against War in the Gulf, Sept 15th

Contact Briefing

Please write to *Labour Briefing* at PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY. You can telephone the *Briefing* office on 081 809 3927.

By the time most of our readers see this issue, the *Briefing* team will be busy burrowing for socialism in the bowels of Blackpool. We're putting all our considerable energies, resources and not inconsiderable talents into the Labour Party Socialists daily conference bulletin. To see how see all fared under the basilisk death-stare of the bureaucracy, read the next *Briefing*: published on Wednesday, October 24.

Deadline for articles: Wednesday October 17

Published by Labour Briefing: PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ. (Please do not use this address for correspondence.)

Lewisham Briefing Supporters say:

"Socialists of the World unite!
You have nothing to lose but your Labour Party Membership!"

Labour Briefing AGM

November 11 th1990
Durham Rd Community Centre
Durham Rd , London N4
12 noon – 4.30pm
Resolutions welcome
Vital decisions on Briefing's future will be taken!

Verso

Socialist Publishers

sends greetings to Labour Party Conference

NUPE – Hackney Officers Branch

Greetings to Conference Delegates
Support union rights for solidarity action – stop their backsliding!

Terry Sims
Chair

Keith Veness
Secretary

Labour and the Gulf

We say:

Labour must break with the Tory war drive!

The Labour Party was formed to give the working class an independent political voice.

Tragically, that independence has been forfeited by Labour leaders time and again, especially when it comes to "foreign affairs".

Kinnock's support for the Tory war drive in the Gulf is the latest in a long and shameful line of craven performances from Labour leaders – from the First World War to the Falklands.

However, there is another labour movement tradition – a long and honourable one – of anti-militarism and anti-imperialism, which is far from dead within the Party and the unions.

Indeed, there is now an undeniable undercurrent of discontent within the movement. On this issue, Kinnock, Kaufman and O'Neill do *not* speak for the rank and file.

The steady build-up of troops and military hardware in the Gulf, accompanied by an escalating war of words and diplomatic gestures, could break out into full-scale war at any time. Once it does, it will be hard for anyone to contain it.

The loss of life will be unspeakably horrific. Environmental and economic devastation will follow.

The Price of Thatcher's War

As British Tories bay for Saddam's blood, they would do well to consider the cost of a Gulf War to petrol bills.

An increase to $65 a barrel (likely in the event of war) would put British petrol at £3 per gallon.

This is clear to anyone not blinded by jingoism or political ambition. Hence the widespread revulsion at the prospect of war felt at the base of labour movement.

However, in opposing the drive to war, some on the left are looking to the UN and to "peaceful" sanctions as "safe" substitutes for all-out military conflict.

While the sentiments are understandable, the logic is faulty.

In opposing the US-led intervention, socialists must go back time and again to a basic question: *What are the war aims of the Western powers?*

A quick glance at the track record of these powers shows that these aims do *not* include: the development of democracy in either Kuwait or Iraq, the upholding of international law, or the deterrence of territorial aggression.

Indeed, the immediate aim is simply the restoration of the Emir to power in Kuwait.

Of course, the real aims of the military intervention are much wider: control of the price and flow of oil and the assertion of permanent imperialist dominance (economic and political) in the entire middle east.

The sanctions currently being imposed on Iraq are meant to serve these aims – as well as providing a convenient trip-wire for military action, when the West is ready. Therefore they should be opposed.

Nor are such war aims or any action in pursuit of them rendered any more acceptable by a UN seal of approval.

With the collapse of Stalinist power on the world stage and the apparent readiness of Gorbachev to give US imperialism the green light in the Third World, the Security Council cannot be expected to play even a genuine restraining role on the Western powers.

Labour must mke a clean and unequivocal break from these powers and their war aims. Failure to do so will amount to a historic betrayal of the working class, which has no interest whatsoever in war or any other actions designed to secure US, British and other capitalist interests in the middle east.

The working class and all genuinely democratic forces do have an interest in the removal of Saddam Hussein and the liberation of all the peoples in the middle east from the various tyrranies which oppress them.

But liberation of this kind can never come at the hands of US and British troops, multi-national corporations, NATO or the Security Council.

The left – not just in Britain but around the world – must advance a new agenda for democracy and social change in the middle east.

This agenda must address the long-standing grievances of the Palestinians and Kurds, of the oppressed masses in the towns and the countryside, and of the millions of migrant workers whose labour produces wealth for the corrupt elites which govern the region.

Opposition to war in the Gulf will grow as the real nature of the conflict there becomes more apparent. For the left, it must be a focal point in its battle against the Labour leadership, both at Labour Party conference and after.

There is an urgent need to build a united, democratic campaign against the current war preparations. This will serve as the basis for the truly mass movement which we will need if a shooting war breaks out.

According to recent opinion polls, 19% of the British public oppose the US-British military intervention (26% of Labour voters). More and more people are turning away from the poltical establishments on both sides of the House of Commons, sickened by their war-mongering and hypocrisy.

For socialists, especially those involved in the Socialist Movement and Labour Party Socialists, articulating the views of these people, organising and mobilising them both inside and outside the Labour Party, is the priority of the moment.



PHOTO: Gill Lee

Sick of war-mongereing

Tony Benn says:

"There is no evidence of a popular consensus in Britain in support of US military action against Iraq.

President Bush must be made aware that he will not be able to count on the whole-hearted consent of the British people if he goes to war on his own, and then drags this country in with him.

We must be urging a negotiated settlement to all the outstanding problems in the area, in which the Arab world must have the decisive voice"

Tony Benn, speaking at a recent Labour Party Socialists meeting in Birmingham.

Labour Briefing
Labour Party Conference Fringe Meeting
Sunday Sept 30th
8pm
New Clifton Hotel
Blackpool
Labour and the Gulf Crisis
with
Tony Benn
Jeremy Corbyn
CARI
Women for Socialism
US-Britain out now!

Hull

A Hull Campaign Against War in the Gulf has been set up following a meeting of 25 people called by the local Trades Council.

Debate

Among those attending were left Labour activists, left groups, and Arabs living in Hull.

The meeting featured lively discussion, with some speches supporting the political leadership of Saddam Hussein and others opposing the demand for a withdrawal of British and US troops.

After a full debate, the meeting agreed, with only one against, to set up a local campaign based on the twin slogans of "No war in the Gulf" and "US-British troops out".

The meeting also heard about another important battle for oil – the dispute in the North Sea between OILC and the oil companies.

Further information from: Hull CAWG, c/o PO Box 102, Hull or Tel: 0482 470158.

Briefing update

Gulf crisis hits the West

Campaigning against Gulf war

The 7000 strong demonstration against war in the Gulf was an important step forward in building a strong, broad anti-war movement.

Briefing supporters should now go all out to build local campaigns against the war-drive, using the next demonstration on November 3rd, and the planned Conference Against the War as focusses.

We need to try to draw broader sections of the labour movement into the campaign - there were far too few CLPs and trade union branches on the march. Comrades should try to get delegates - as well as individuals - to go down for the weekend for both the demo and the conference.

by Patrick Baker, Secretary CAWG

From the start forces around the Socialist Movement, and particularly Women for Socialism, have taken a lead in calling for the left and the peace movement to unite against Bush and Thatcher's sabre-rattling.

WfS called the first picket of the US embassy at the end of August, which drew more than two hundred people, as well as a broad range of sponsors from the left and the peace movement, at a few days notice.

Urgent

Following that initiative, participating groups and individuals agreed to form a Campaign Against War in the Gulf (CAWG). At a packed meeting it was agreed that further action was an urgent necessity.

It was agreed that the CAWG should be based on 2 demands - 'No War in the Gulf!' and 'US and British Troops Out!'; we also agreed that all meetings should be open.

Rapid moves were made to organise a national demonstration. Yet the task of uniting the left behind such a project proved more complex than one might hope. No one was surprised that the RCP immediately moved to call their own demonstration; but a similar response from the SWP was disappointing.

But this was not the end of the manoeuvring - we then heard that forces including Bruce Kent, the Green Party and supporters of Socialist Action had also organised a committee against the war threat.



Marching against Gulf War, Sept 15th PHOTO: Tim Nolan

Our initial hopes that this could be united with CAWG proved unfounded, however. Discussions revealed that this committee was not based on rank and file participation; and was not agreed on the demand for the withdrawal of US and British troops.

CAWG decided that it would affiliate to the Committee and work together with it as closely as possible, while continuing to organise under its own banner. An open letter is soon to be launched with the aim of pushing towards a united, democratic campaign.

Nonetheless, CAWG's initiatives, as well as pressure from the base of CND, clearly pushed sections of CND into taking action - and so should be seen as a success.

CAWG organised a contingent on the September 15th demonstration around the demand "US & British Troops Out of the Gulf!", as well as a public meeting with Jeremy Corbyn MP.

Future initiatives planned include a picket of the US embassy on September 29th, as well as a Conference Against the War, provisionally planned for November 4th.

A number of local campaigns against the war threat have been formed around the country - including Manchester, Birmingham, Oxford and Scotland.

More information, as well as leaflets, posters and sponsorship forms for CAWG are available through the Briefing office. Where groups have not yet been established, Briefing supporters should take the initiative to launch a campaign, and argue for affiliation to both CAWG and the Committee to Stop the War.

Spanish workers made to pay

The Spanish government has called for a new agreement with the unions for changes in economic policies to "soften the consequences of the Persian Gulf Crisis".

Kevin Flack
Lewisham East CLP

The government's plans, which include wage restraints, have been rejected by the two major trade unions, Union General de Trabajadores and Comissiones Obreras.

The UGT has declared its intention to use all possible means to oppose the "Socialist" government's fresh attempt to extract more sacrifices from the workers. The unions are now demanding the implementation of agreements negotiated with the government after the December 1988 General Strike.

Angel Campos of the Comissiones Obreras told El Pais that "the changes proposed by the government will bring about a fall in living standards and an increase in unemployment" and that it "confirms what we have been fearing for a long time, that he (Gonzales) was trying to bring about major economic changes".

According to Campos the Gulf conflict (to which Spain has sent three naval vessels) "is being used as a pretext to justify some harsh measures for 1991".

In Barcelona, a demonstration against the military intervention in the Gulf drew over 7000 people.

Gulf vote: no consensus

The government originally issued a soft two-line whip to their members, but when they heard that left Labour MPs would push for a vote, this was upgraded to three.

The Labour leadership stuck with a one-line whip which simply said that the attendance of members was "expected".

Consult

No attempt was made to consult Labour MP's beforehand by calling a PLP meeting.

The Labour Front Bench merely stated that it was against a vote and would back the Government if one was called.

In the end, only 56% of Labour MP's turned up and voted with the whip to support the Tories. If you discount the Front Bench "payroll" vote, the figure falls to a mere 41% of Labour MPs going through the division lobbies to back Thatcher's war drive.

Although it is impossible to identify how many MPs were simply absent and how many were conciously abstaining, the figures make it clear that Kinnock and Kaufman have yet to win wide backing in the Party for their war posture.

New Yorkers move against Gulf War.

Any naive assumptions that the US public is 100% behind George Bush's war-drive were dashed last week when 7,000 people turned out for a meeting to organise an anti-war demonstration.

The meeting, called by a number of peace organisations, was advertised solely by word of mouth and photo-copied leaflets passed hand-to hand.

The organisers are now planning a major anti-war march in New York on October 20th.

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.*

Stop Press

Thirty Constituency Labour Parties have passed the "End the Ban" Emergency Resolution to Labour Party Conference. Will the leadership allow a full debate?

See next *Briefing* for details.

Campaign Against War in the Gulf

Labour Party Conference Fringe Meeting

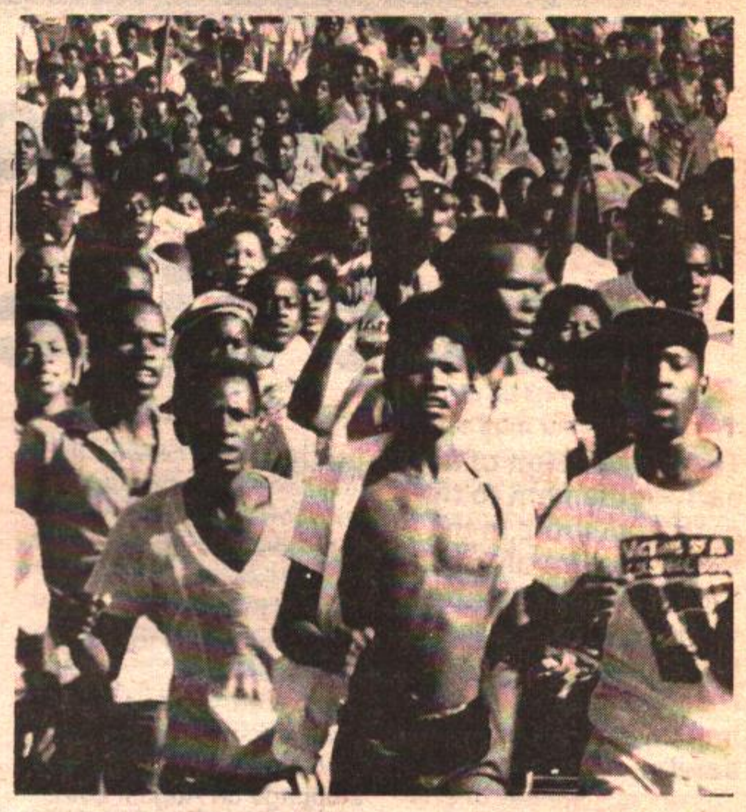
Monday, October 1
6pm-8pm

with :Tony Benn
Dawn Primarolo
Jeremy Corbyn
Harry Barnes
Women for Socialism

Seminar Room Strerton Hotel
Princess Parade
206-214 The Promenade
Blackpool

South Africa

Truth Behind "Township Violence"



Throughout the wave of carnage sweeping parts of South Africa, COSATU members have been amazed at the gulf between what they are experiencing in the townships and hostels and the picture which has been portrayed in the media.

Our efforts to report the reality of what has been going on have been swamped by a tide of prejudice, propaganda and misinformation. It is hard to know where to begin to unravel this web of unreality.

Ask the "average white South African" and you will be told that blacks are engaged in a mindless orgy of violence, tribe against tribe, ANC against Inkatha, with the unfortunate police caught in the middle of the conflict.

The situation may be bewildering for many people, but it is painfully straightforward for our members and for those of us who have desperately been attempting to stave off this carnage since the middle of July.

Many of our members believe that the media have not only failed to explain the conflict, but that they have actually fuelled it.

Overwhelming evidence that the violence has been actively orchestrated by a

COSATU Statement

relatively small group of vigilantes in the hostels, together with elements of the security forces, has been largely ignored.

Vigorous investigative reporting could have revealed: the connections between elements in the police and the vigilantes; the co-ordinated and premeditated nature of the attacks; how they have been planned and orchestrated; who is funding and arming the vigilantes.

A number of myths are being perpetuated about the violence.

Myth No. 1: The violence is the result of a spontaneous eruption of conflict between ANC and Inkatha supporters, and between hostel dwellers and township residents.

The violence has been far from spontaneous. We have extensive evidence to demonstrate that it has been systematic, planned and orchestrated. The violence has not been "organic", or the result of tensions building up in the hostels or the communities.

Since the middle of July our members in the hostels have reported a clear pattern of events. Individuals known to be leading members of Inkatha travelled to hostels and began to whip up a war psychosis, particularly but not exclusively amongst Zulu-speaking inmates. Hostel dwellers were told that they must arm themselves and prepare for war because they were going to be attacked.

At the same time Inkatha held hostel meetings in which attacks were planned on township residents and on other hostels which were perceived to be ANC strongholds.

In July alone attacks were planned and executed against residents in Sebokeng, train commuters in Soweto and Johannesburg, and Soweto residents living near the hostels and residents in Kagiso.

Vigilantes participating in these attacks were heavily armed. The majority of those participating in attacks were bussed in from hostels around the Reef.

All this was accompanied by a vicious programme of forced recruitment in the hostels. Contrary to the impression which has been created, Inkatha has a relatively small core of active supporters in the hostels, with the exception of one or two hostels in Johannesburg and Soweto.

Hostel dwellers, both Zulu and non-Zulu, were forced, sometimes at gunpoint, to attend Inkatha meetings, pay five rand for Inkatha membership, and participate in attacks.

Our members were given deadlines by which they should resign from COSATU and ANC and join Inkatha, failing which they would be killed or have to leave the hostels.

This led to a number of clashes in the hostels, and in some instances, to hostel dwellers leaving the hostels rather than face the reign of terror. In the case of Kagiso and Thokoza, these hostel dwellers were then attacked in the community in which they had sought refuge.

Many hostel inmates have been dragooned into the fighting against their will. The closed nature of the hostels has made them totally vulnerable to the terror tactics of the vigilantes.

Township residents involved in the fighting have been at pains to point out that they are not fighting the vigilantes as members of ANC, COSATU or any other organisation. They have simply been protecting themselves as residents.

The attacks have been totally random. People have not been asked which organisations they support. All those not wearing the vigilantes' red headbands have been targets.

Myth no. 2: The violence is a tribal conflict between Zulus and Xhosas, expressing itself as a conflict between ANC and Inkatha.

"Tribal conflict", the interpretation which white South Africans love to love, ignores the following:

* Residents have been attacked regardless of their tribal origins. Zulu-speaking residents have not been protected from attacks by Zulu-speaking vigilantes.

* The vigilantes have certainly tried to use tribal and clan loyalties to mobilise; however, they have also attempted to press-gang all groups onto their side, regardless of their tribal origin.

* The Star survey showed that Inkatha's support outside Natal consistently hovered around 2%, both amongst Zulu-speaking people and other "ethnic groups"; support for the ANC was equally high amongst all ethnic groups, including Zulu-speaking people.

What cannot be denied is that various forces have been working overtime in an attempt to create a conflict which takes on a tribal form. Fake pamphlets have been issued in which attempts have been consistently made to create tribal animosities.

Some pamphlets have attempted to create the impression that the MDM is calling for attacks on Zulu people. Others have purported to come from traditional Zulu leaders claiming that Zulus are under attack from Xhosas.

This has taken place in the context of a massive campaign in the hostels to make Zulu hostel dwellers believe that they are about to be attacked by outside forces.

When vigilantes have attacked Xhosa-speaking hostel dwellers, or township residents, in the name of "the Zulu nation", and as hysteria has spread among the people under attack, it has been all too easy for the conflict to take on a tribal appearance.

Poland

Market? What market?

One year after the election of the current Polish government and eight months after the introduction of an economic "stabilisation programme" agreed with the IMF, the Polish economy is reaching a critical point.

In the first six months of 1990 industrial output fell by 28.7% compared to the same period in 1989.

Real incomes fell 31%. Unemployment rose to 624,000 or 4% of the workforce. This is expected to double by the end of the year.

The recession has caused a drastic decline in inflation; prices rose by only 3.4% between May and June, as compared with 78.6% between December and January.

It has also led to an unprecedented hard

Andrew Kilmister

currency foreign trade surplus of 2.1 billion in the first half of the year.

The government has managed to implement this austerity programme with only limited opposition, even from the Solidarity Congress in April. There is now considerable public apathy, demonstrated in the low turnout of 42% in May's local government elections.

However, the programme has major weaknesses which may open up opportunities for Polish socialists.

The central problem faced by the Polish government is that despite the rhetoric, its programme is not really one of "marketisation" at all.

It is a straightforward set of austerity measures: incomes policy, cuts in subsidies, a monetary squeeze and so on.

Markets do not exist in a vacuum. They require trading arrangements, legal and contractual structures, accounting frameworks (all of which express real social relations) and trained personnel. None of this exists in Poland today.

Prices have been liberalised and the zloty made convertible but there is no functioning market mechanism, particularly in the crucial investment arena.

The Polish government pins its hopes of introducing such a market on privatisation and foreign investment.

But so far, foreign investment has been disappointing, with few large commitments. It appears that while Western companies want to invest in a market environment, they do not want to be used to create one.

Privatisation is also proceeding slowly. Only one company, a relatively small foreign trade company called Universal, has been privatised to date.

There are plans to privatise some 20 firms by the end of the year. But Poland has over 7000 significant enterprises. The government is considering various schemes for giving shares away to the population as a whole to speed the process up. But these are risky and untried, and may conflict with the self-management lobby who want the companies to be given to the workers employed in them.

The upshot is that in many ways the Polish economy is simply not within the government's control.

Labour productivity has slumped. Heavy industry retains its dominance, fuelling high consumer prices and environmental problems.

Finance minister Leszek Balcerowicz has bemoaned the way in which enterprises have responded to price flexibility and rising costs by raising their prices and cutting output, rather than restructuring production.

Poland also carries the burden of a $40 billion debt and is therefore vulnerable to foreign shocks. Until recently, Poland has been receiving free oil from Iraq as payment for arms sales in the Iran-Iraq war. Sanctions have meant petrol price rises of 30%.

There is also some internal pressure.

Farmers have forced the government to grant them cheaper credits and higher guaranteed prices.

Railworkers struck in May for higher wages and, significantly, for the involvement of workers in any discussions about restructuring the industry.

So far the government has succeeded in imposing austerity policies, and has largely abandoned the old central planning apparatus. But it has not managed to institute a capitalist alternative.

Some observers, such as Thatcher's favourite, Alan Walters, believe that it will fail to do so.

Other Western academics are busy devising ever more complex privatisation schemes, frantically trying to speed up the process through a baroque array of holding companies and mutual funds.

If Polish socialists can combine defence of living standards with a positive alternative to the capitalist market, they may win a growing audience in the months ahead.

North Sea struggle

All-out action to beat oil companies

There is no sign of an early settlement to the current dispute in the North Sea, involving thousands of offshore workers, fighting for trade union recognition and improved health and safety.

by Keith Sinclair

The workers are coming up against the reactionary oil companies and contractors, who are not prepared to enter into serious negotiations. The employers have already sacked over 1500 workers for supporting actions called by the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC), the rank-and-file co-ordinating body.

Offshore workers have now supported six twenty-four stoppages called by the OILC. The most recent was on August 20th, when the OILC called a one day stoppage. The BP Forties field had been crewed-up just prior to the last strike, with 350 workers forced to sign no-strike pledges before they were allowed back to the rigs.

BP's idea was to make the Forties field "OILC-free". They got a nasty shock when *all 350 workers* backed the OILC stoppage on August 20th.

North Sea catering workers, organised in the TGWU, have voted 6-1 in favour of action in support of the Continental Shelf Agreement, which the unions and the OILC want as the basis for negotiations. Unfortunately, there are signs that some of the TGWU catering shop stewards are having second thoughts.

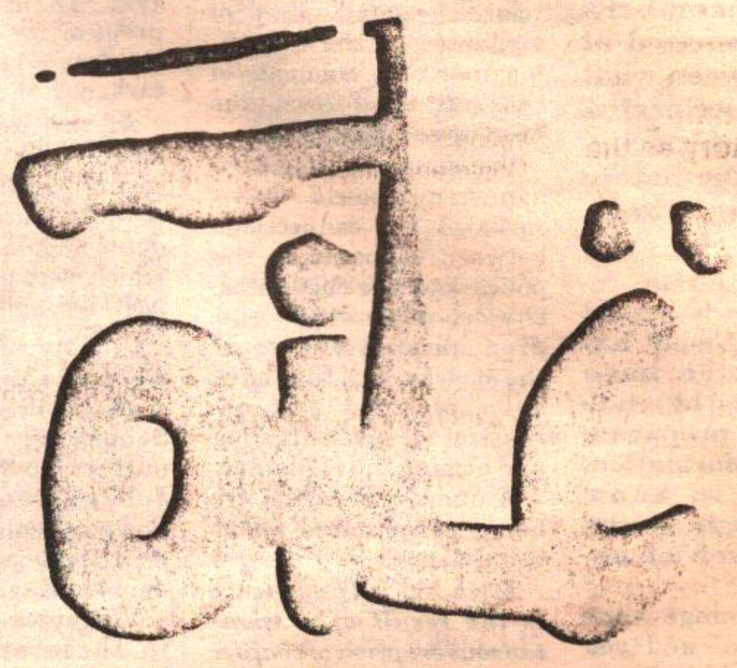
The TGWU leadership should be pressed to support the action. The result of the catering workers' ballot nonetheless shows the possibilities for an excellent result in the major ballot now being organised by the unions. It is still not clear whether all the sacked workers will be entitled to a vote, nor is the exact wording of the ballot question yet available.

Both those issues are crucial to a successful outcome. The ballot must recognise that there can be no peace on the North Sea without *the reinstatement of every sacked worker .*

One outstanding example is Billy Kennedy, a sacked worker, who is maintaining a one-person sit-in on the Tern platform and having some success in turning back people sent by the oil companies to do the jobs of the sacked workers.

The official trade unions are compiling a register of all offshore workers for the ballot. Whilst we must organise to win the ballot, the current lull in the dispute should not be allowed to drag. There have been mounting calls from workers in the Southern sector for an all-out strike.

Reports also indicate than an increasing number of members of the Standing Committee are in favour of such action. However, at the Glasgow mass meeting on August



20th, the OILC Standing Committee proposed that no further action be called for one week to allow the Northern sector to be "crewed up" again.

The oil companies and the contractors are desperate for offshore labour. The hope is that the crewing up process will enable at least some OILC activists to get back offshore to influence further action.

The case for all-out action is strong. The series of one-day strikes have shown the support the OILC enjoys offshore. However, a continuation of twenty-four hour stoppages will not be enough to beat the employers.

An all-out strike with occupations would put maximum pressure on the oil companies and the contractors – some of the latter have severe penalty clauses built into their contracts. The ten-day moratorium on strikes called by the OILC in the run-up to the TUC gave the Offshore Contractors Council the chance to negotiate. Their response was to sack 60 more workers. The contractors and the oil companies will have to be hit hard if the OILC is to win the dispute.

The OILC can be contacted on any of the following numbers: Newcastle 091 222 1557, Aberdeen 0224 2100118/9, Hull 0482 449822, Liverpool 051 709 3995. Donations to OILC, 52 Guild St., Aberdeen.

Spurs scandal

Maxwell's football follies

As millionaire union-busting publisher Robert Maxwell waves cheques at the Tottenham Hotspur Board of directors, real Spurs fans are left out in the cold.

In the few short months since Paul Gascoigne grabbed centre stage during the World Cup the young midfielder has provided the papers with more sensational stories than at any time since Michael Foot last took his mac to the dry cleaners.

He now has a rival for the sports headlines – unfortunately it's for entirely the wrong reasons.

Maxwell has traduced the good name of Tottenham Hotspur in an attempt to further expand his money-making empire.

In the back door dealing between Maxwell and Irving Scholar, Spurs' largest shareholder, the real losers will be the poor sods who pay high admission prices year after year, footing the bill for appalling mismanagement by the rich people who set themselves up as football's guardians.

This season alone there has been a 30% increase in the price of a match programme. Even the Tories would be hard pressed to justify inflation at that level.

Tony Cordell
Secretary Hackney Council Joint Shop Stewards Committee

The football side of Tottenham Hotspur PLC (it was floated on the stock market a few years ago) is a highly profitable business, so much so that it is used to subsidise the PLC's money-losing sidelines.

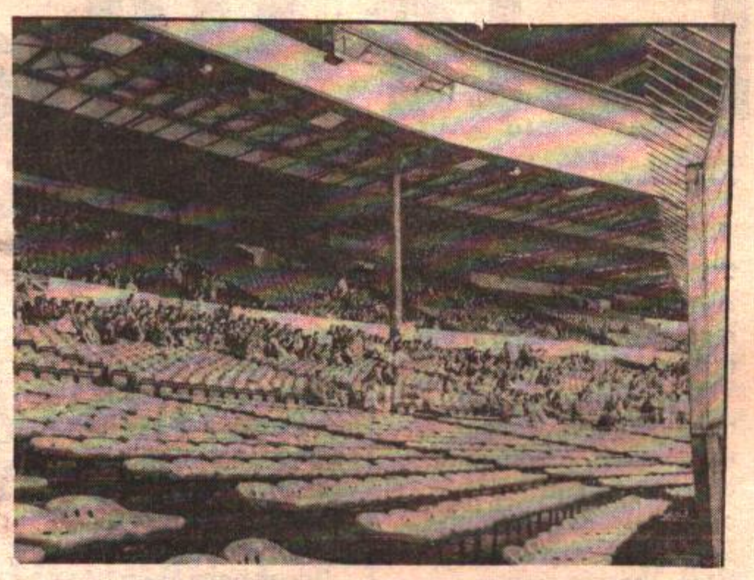
Spurs subsidiary Hummel UK, a sportswear company, has lost an estimated £4,000,000. This, coupled with the high interest charges on the Club's latest bout of Executive Box-building at White Hart Lane, has pushed the Club into financial crisis.

By widening the activities of the company it was believed that additional income could be generated to subsidise the running of the football club, to pay better wages, attract bigger stars and generally gear the club up to be able to compete with the best in England and Europe.

But as so often in the past, Scholar promised but failed to deliver.

Maxwell has now destroyed the business-like image of the club. If there is any truth in the story that Maxwell staved off Gary Lineker's transfer, then Spurs fans can only say thank you. But that does not give him the right to look upon one of the world's premiere football clubs as mere "profit-fodder" for his already oversized empire.

The Football League have intimated that Maxwell could be charged with bringing the game into disrepute after his TV-AM interview, but surely the handling of the would-be takeover leaves several prominent people vulnerable to such a charge.



Irving Scholar has not only contributed to the general dismay among football supporters, he is also surely very close to breaching Stock Exchange regulations.

In any case, the charge of bringing football into disrepute is laughable as no-one is more guilty of this than the Football League Management Committee itself. This is maybe the one point where virtually every football fan would actually agree with Robert Maxwell.

Maxwell's real crime is to treat our game as if it were just another pawn to be played with, another tentacle in his media-based octopus of an empire.

A football club should be more than just a birthday present for a rich person's son. Maxwell has no understanding whatsoever about the loyalty supporters feel for their club. Over the years he has dabbled at Oxford United , Derby County, Reading, Manchester United and Watford.

It comes as a great relief that Spurs' financial advisers have resigned because of the vote of no confidence in Spurs Chair Paul Bobroff. Maybe now the club will concentrate on the primary objectives of a football club, aiming for the championship while still providing the excellent entertainment that has been the hallmark of Tottenham Hotspur for many years.

The long term solution to Spurs financial problems is simple: pull out of the loss making, non-football activities which contribute nothing to the club and say a heartfelt goodbye to Robert Maxwell. His money is not needed and most certainly his attitude and objectives are not needed.

Worst of all, Maxwell is, by his own admission, an *Arsenal* fan.

Tony Cordell writes in his personal capacity as a life-long fanatical Spurs supporter.

Kinnock's conference?

Farewell Party democracy?

By Dorothy Macedo, Co-Chair Labour Party Socialists

This year's Party Conference may go down in history as the one where the leadership made the Party safe from interference by the membership.

If the NEC proposals go through we will have an Annual Conference which is simply a showpiece. Unwelcome resolutions will be sifted out by Policy Commissions and the amendments stage will be abolished.

In addition, there are future plans to re-organise the NEC to prevent CLPs voting for left MPs. Conference itself will be rearranged to give extra representation to MPs, MEPs, and Councillors.

This is the hidden agenda behind the smokescreen of "One Member One Vote" (OMOV) and the attacks on the unions' block vote.

Nearly 30 resolutions and amendments are on the agenda that oppose these moves (though some of the amendments have been ruled out of order). Demands to keep the amendments procedure for resolutions and to introduce it for NEC documents are also well supported.

These are such basic tools of democratic debate that it is weird to think that in today's Labour Party they are considered controversial.

It is sad that so many party members have fallen for the claim that OMOV is more democratic than our current delegate system. Many forget that all members *already* have a vote. Of course they must attend a meeting to do so – but this is also true in Parliament – no postal votes there!

Most of us would have no objection to postal votes for those with genuine reasons for absence, but there should be some minimum record of attendance.

The leadership's plans would leave no incentive ever to leave your armchair. GCs would have no real power, as all important decisions will require ratification by postal ballot.

The leadership sees Party activists as a nuisance and is keen to disempower them. With all key decisions made in effect by the leadership and only ratified by postal ballot, Conference will be turned into a cosy rally.

The tragedy is that even on the left many people can't see the urgency of fighting to keep Conference as the sovereign party body. The fact that it has been so tame recently is no reason to hand over without a fight what little power the rank and file has left.

We all know Conference is far from perfect and needs reform. But we don't need the sort of reform the leadership has planned!

Constitutional matters may seem boring compared to more glamorous issues. But until we get them right, there is little point in passing policy resolutions only to see them binned at Walworth Road.

Demon seed of Policy Review

Forward into the 1890s!



Keith Veness Hackney NUPE Officers

A new NEC document on Party democracy looks set to provoke a divisive debate at every level of the Party – with a general election in the offing.

Why, after years of wrangling, should they now wish to re-open wounds that were finally beginning to heal?

The answer lies in a strange, deathly fear that pervades Walworth Road.

It seems that our master strategists fear that we might actually win the next election and assume office surfing on a tidal-wide of expectations.

"Kinnockio" has already told the TUC that we as trades unionists can "expect no favours" – one election pledge we can all believe he will keep. Therefore the ground must be prepared now to weaken the grip of the unions on Party policy making.

When ambulance crews, miners, dockers, media workers, nurses, council staff and dozens of others queue up at 10 Downing Street after a Labour election victory, repeating what their New Realist union leaders had told them for so many years about "waiting for a Labour government to put things right", what response are they likely to get?

If you are not even prepared to fight the IMF, the Stock Exchange and the Murdoch gutter press in opposition, what chance is there of any resistance when you actually make it to office?

The outcry will be swift and brutal. Those union leaders still prepared to apologise for Kinnock/Hattersley/Willis, etc. will get short shrift from their members. Cabinet members will see their NEC votes plummet. Conference will be shaken by the anger of the rank and file.

But Labour's leaders have learned some lessons from the past. They are taking action now to protect themselves from the consequences of future sell-outs.

The action comes in the form of a document to be presented to this year's conference under the quaint title of "Democracy and Policy Making for the 1990s". It proposes :

* A Labour Party National Policy Forum which would "oversee" the policy-making process. The choice of verb, with its suggestions of master-slave relationships, is instructive.
* A rolling programme which could only be changed by amendment.
* Standing commissions (un-elected) to draft policy.
* A two-year policy-making cycle , i.e. cutting out one Party conference in two.
* Consideration of resolutions to be vested in the Commissions allowing un-elected "experts" to interpret (and veto) resolutions and amendments from Party members.

This sort of format will ensure that democratic decision making and campaigning is effectively stymied by the self-appointed experts and sycophants approved by the Party leadership.

Even worse, the make-up of the NEC (which is already far from perfect) is to be balkanised by turning the CLPs' representation over to Regional organisations.

Luckily, the authors of the document cannot come up with a formula to do this without grossly increasing the NEC's size. It has therefore been left on the back-burner but is likely to reappear in the future.

The thorny question of quotas for women is also shelved on the grounds that it too would greatly increase the size of the NEC.

One issue that is a source of some debate within the left (and indeed within *Briefing* itself) is the proposal to reduce the size of the trade-union vote viz-a-viz the CLPs.

A suggestion for a 70/30 split instead of the current 90/10 seems on the face of it reasonable, as is the idea that CLPs should vote on actual paid up membership rather than a notional amount.

However, the sting in the tail is the idea that the PLP should eventually have full voting rights at Conference.

To equate the specific issue of electing the Parliamentary leader with general Party policy-making is a nonsense. This attempt to enhance the already overblown powers of MPs should be strongly opposed.

Overall, the document is a curate's egg. Though good in parts, it contains a number of suggestions that will fatally weaken the trades-union tie, reduce CLPs to subs-collecting bodies and boost the already swollen Parliamentary egos.

If this document is agreed without severe pruning, the NEC and Kinnock will interpret it as carte-blanche to dismantle what's left of party democracy.

The "battle for Labour's soul" is being fought yet again. We need to ensure that the leadership is blocked until the tide changes, as it will, following the next election.

Ashton vs. LCC

London Labour Party – scoreless at half-time

by Morris Herbert

The plot by "Idle Jack" Cunningham and Margaret Hodge (Baroness Hodge of Barnsbury in next year's honours list?) to sack Greater London Labour Party General Secretary Terry Ashton has hit a snag – in the unlikely shape of the GMB.

A ballot of Labour Party staff (members of NULO, which has recently become part of the GMB) resulted in a 90% vote for industrial action and a threat to disrupt Party Conference in Blackpool.

Faced with such unexpected militancy the right-wing split down the middle. Hattersley and the trade union "barons" wanted a tactical retreat. Kinnock and the yuppie wing of the LCC declared that *management must manage*.

A compromise was reached. Ashton was left in post and the anger of London CLPs and Party staff assuaged.

The whole issue has been sent to a special NEC Sub Committee which will consider imposing a Walworth Road-based managerial team on top of the existing structure!

A major rumpus has been averted but hostilities will no doubt break out when Conference is safely over.

Haringey Labour Briefing

Axe the Poll Tax – Not Jobs and services

Feature: Labour and the Unions

Repeal anti-union laws

Interview: Jim

Ten years of betrayal

"Labour need the unions"

The biggest single success of Thatcherism has been the introduction of anti-union laws.

Carefully drafted and cleverly timed, they have been at the root of the defeats suffered by the unions in the past ten years.

In Thatcher's first term, incipient New Realism, based on a conviction that strikes were an electoral liability for Labour and that the Tories were too strong to beat led to the betrayal of a series of major strikes in steel, rail, cars and newspapers.

These defeats sapped the strength of the working class and gave the Tories the space to mount a new legal challenge to the unions.

The TUC, in public at least, set its face against the new laws. A fund was set up to finance resistance. If necessary unions would be supported by strike action, even illegal strike action if necessary. Everyone waited for the first confrontation.

It came at Warrington when the NGA was fined and ordered to end its dispute with Eddie Shah. The TUC ordered the strike to be called off. It was a major turning point. The TUC then stood back when the NUM's funds were sequestrated during the great strike of 1984/5.

Miners

After the miners' defeat the laws were further strengthened and enforced more rigorously. At Wapping Murdoch moved the location of his plant at the same time as sacking his printers. Their strike was then declared to be illegal secondary action. The print union tried to keep within the law and refused to call out Fleet Street. This led to isolation and another defeat.

The seafarers' strike started with a secret ballot, as required by law. Of the 2,300 seafarers only ONE voted against strike action. Before long, however, P&O announced the sacking of all the strikers, the employment of scab crews to replace them, the ending of all collective agreements, and the derecognition of the NUS.

The NUS rank and file responded immediately and the strike spread to the membership as a whole. Within 24 hours of Sam McCluskie's call that no British Ferries should sail from any British Port, action had spread to 19 other ports.

Solidarity action brought Sealink's entire fleet to a standstill. The employers then obtained a High Court injunction requiring a return to work on all their ships. It was an outright confrontation between the NUS and the courts.

McCluskie surprised everyone when he publicly stated that the union should defy the law and extend the action beyond the ferries. The NUS Executive called an all-out strike of the whole of their membership including those on deep-sea ships.

Alan Thornett

It was a momentous decision. Virtually every ship came out. Ferry crews struck at all ports and supply ships to North Sea oil rigs were hit. In several ports ships were occupied when crews were sacked for taking action.

The High Court fined the NUS £150,000 and ordered the sequestration of all its assets, including its £2,800,000 funds, the closure of all its offices (national and local), the freezing of staff wages, the suspension of its pension fund, the impounding of union cars and the cutting-off of union phones.

McCluskie vowed to "run the union from a tent on Clapham Common". A right-winger appeared to be leading the most important challenge to the anti-union laws since the end of the miners' strike.

Behind the scenes, however, was the dead hand of the TUC. Willis told McCluskie that the TUC could give no support whilst the strike was illegal. A few days later McCluskie caved in and ordered the end of the strike.

Last year the dockers faced the courts. The government abolished the National Dock Labour Scheme. A big majority vote by the dockers for an all-out strike to defend the scheme meant nothing once Ron Todd announced that the TGWU intended to keep within the law.

It took seven weeks in the courts to establish whether a strike of the Scheme ports for a new national agreement would be legal. After that was won the law still had a strangle-hold on the strike since any support from unregistered ports – crucial to the strike's effectiveness – would be unlawful secondary action.

When the strike eventually began, months after the original vote, the confidence of the dockers was sapped and the employers were tooled up to beat the union.

The courts were also used last summer against the NUR after London Underground workers voted for an all-out strike in pursuit of their wage claim. The ballot paper was declared to be confusing, the result was dis-allowed, and no further ballot for all-out action was ever taken.

The additional laws now being pushed through Parliament by the Tories are designed to deal with the type of unofficial action which followed on the Underground. The new laws will make it lawful for employers to sack those on unofficial strike and unlawful for other workers to take any action in their defence.

In Britain today a strike without a legal challenge is the exception rather than the rule.

This makes the decision of the TUC and the Labour leadership to keep the Tory laws under a Labour government absolutely scandalous. Clearly Neil Kinnock is preparing to use these laws against the unions in the same way they have been used under Thatcher.

Labour's leaders are uncomfortable with the Party's long-standing links with the trades unions. The media, of course, have been hostile to the unions since they were first formed. *Briefing* visited Jim Mortimer, ex-General Secretary of the Labour Party and former Chair of ACAS, to see what he had to say on the subject.

Briefing : What do you make of the Labour leadership's new proposals on trade union legislation?

JM : I strongly disagree with the policy in "Looking to the Future".

There are fundamental rights which must belong to trades unions in any democracy. These include the right to withdraw your labour; the strike weapon is workers' ultimate weapon and cannot be denied to them.

They also include the right to seek and give solidarity in disputes, a basic right which has now been surrendered by Labour. It represents the highest ideals of the labour movement and of human endeavour. It says: "I am my brother's and sister's keeper. I do not pass by when someone else is attacked."

Solidarity has written some of the finest pages in human history. It is awful that Labour is backtracking on this.

Briefing : What about ballots and union elections?

JM : It is the right of trade union members to determine the rules of their own organisations, not the state.

Of course the struggle for democracy is never-ending and some trades unions are not as democratic as we would wish. But that is a matter for their members.

We should remember that the trades unions are a damn sight more democratic than other mass membership institutions in our society, like the Automobile Associaiton, Building Societies, or indeed the Tory Party itself.

In fact, the trades unions are more democratic than any other



Briefing : What do you make of the argument that the unions are a liability to Labour?

JM : The Labour Party exists to further the interests of people who work, of employees, and their interests are most directly represented by the trades unions.

The media whips up prejudice against the trades unions but it is Labour's job to fight that prejudice. To the extent to which you accomodate to it, you strengthen it.

In the long run this is self-defeating.

The task of Labour is to show that trades unions help raise and defend the living standards of millions of people in this country.

They have also defended and advanced democracy itself, which is not just a matter of voting but a question of the power to regulate the conditions of your own employment.

Briefing : What about industrial disputes, which are said to "damage" the Party?

JM : Industrial disputes do not necessarily harm Labour; it depends on how the Labour leadership reacts to them. If the leadership keeps quiet and gives free rein to a hostile press, they only help build the climate of opposition to the dispute.

But if the Labour Party makes clear why workers are in dispute and what they're trying to achieve, the situation becomes entirely different.

There is no need to identify yourself in detail with every dispute but a political party of labour should not leave the electorate in any doubt about where its sympathies lie.

Hackney Trades Union Council

Greetings to delegates

Defend free trade unions!

Repeal the Tory laws!

Erik Rechnitz
President

Tony Cordell
Secretary

Lea Bridge branch (Hackney North CLP) sends greetings to Conference

Western Imperialism Out of the Gulf!

Labour Party Socialists

sends greetings to Socialists at party Conference

Read the Daily Bulletin

offices all week at the Boardroom, 7 South King Street

Mortimer

ls

organisations of comparable size. Unfortunately, the Labour Party never makes these points.

For example, the argument that trades unions want to place themselves "above the law" is easily exposed. The fact is that under the common law, all trades unionism is illegal because all trades unionism implies at least potentially some form of "restraint of trade"

Hence the need for what are called trade union "immunities" if there is to be any trades unionism at all. Labour should be saying this clearly and in public.

Briefing : What about Labour's new commitment to "individual rights at work"?

JM : Positive individual rights at work cannot be counterposed to collective rights. If you want to sustain individual rights at work you need collective strength. Otherwise employers use intimidation to prevent individuals pursuing their lawful individual rights.

Briefing : It's been said that the Labour leadership want to keep the Tory anti-union laws because they intend to use them under the next Labour government.

JM : I have no sympathy whatsoever for any argument that under a Labour government anti-union laws should be used against trades unionists.

It is hypocrisy for supporters of Solidarity in Poland even to contemplate such a thing. After all, the workers there held strikes without ballots, occupations of factories and extensive solidarity action, all of which would be illegal under current British law.

Differences between a Labour government and the unions should be resolved through negotiatons, through economic policy.

Briefing : What about trade union influence on Party policy?

JM : Historically, especially at moments of crisis, the trades unions have brought Labour back to the reality of the interests of working people.

The best example is 1931. The unions were certainly not under any left leadership at the time but they refused to go along when the Labour government wanted to cut unemployment pay.

Trades union should have a strong influence on Party policy not because they are infallible but because ultimately they are accountable to the demands of working people.

On a practical level, trades unions do relate more closely to what workers are saying, for example on wages, hours of work, industrial injuries, safety.

Any attempt to cut Labour off from this trade union input would be foolish.

Unions

Briefing : What about the block vote?

JM : At present the block vote is too predominant at conference. It's worth remembering that it was the TGWU, and Alex Kitson in particular, who argued in favour of shifting the balance towards the CLPs for many years.

Before the War, individual and affiliated subscriptions were the same. Now individual members pay much more. Therefore we should reduce the proportion of the block vote.

However, unions do have the right to determine their own policies by their own democratic means. Union members have the right to influence their union's policy through democratic, representative conferences which come to collective decisions.

If unions wants to split their block votes at conference, that should be up to them.

Of course, there's no system without problems.

Demcracy requires the presentation and discussion of all the various options, not just a single vote cast in isolation.

Smears

Briefing : What's your view of the recent attacks on Arthur Scargill?

JM : During the strike the NUM leaders had no choice but to protect the miners' money from sequestrators.

The most important thing for everyone to remember is that Arthur Scargill fought vigorously and combatively for the miners. I was pleased and proud to identify myself with the miners and the NUM throughout the strike and to maintain that identification today.

Labour – link to the working class

Keep the block vote

Hostility to Labour's trade union link and its expression through the block vote is a perennial issue for the media.

The media wants British politics to be Americanised with the Labour and Tory parties playing Democrats and Republicans.

Their problem is that Labour remains a class party based on working class organisations. No wonder they were so enthusiastic over the creation of the SDP.

Hostility to the block vote found its expression at last year's conference when John Edmonds of the GMB said:-

"This Conference must sound the death knell of the block vote. Let us say it clearly. The block vote must go.

Bryn Griffiths
Tottenham CLP

The trade unions should retain influence but we must surrender control."

For Edmonds, removing the block vote will make the Labour party more acceptable to the City, the banks, big business and the media.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee feels the same way. In its bulletin last year it said that the block vote

"is simply not an appropriate democratic instrument in a political party aspiring to power in the late 20th century.

It opens the party up to ridicule and alienates individual members".

The real reason why the block vote causes so much controversy is its potential to act as a channel through which working class hostility to a future Labour government could be expressed in the heart of the Party itself.

For the rich and powerful this threat means that however "safe" labour's leadership and policies, the party itself can never be fully trusted.

The Labour Party's trade union link and its expression through the block vote also makes Labour qualitatively different from the Social Democratic parties on the continent.

This difference also makes Labour Party membership a major strategic question for socialists, rather than merely a short term tactical option.

Whilst the block vote contains a potential threat to the power of Labour and trade union officialdom the reality of its use today is quite different. Mainly, it functions as a means of disciplining the Party's rank and file.

Many a conference debate has been stitched up behind closed doors by a cabal of Labour and trade union leaders.

The bureaucratic manipulation of the block vote leads some to reject it in principle.

In a paper to the Labour Party Socialist's first conference Reg Race proposed that we:-

"deal with the block vote by abolishing it".

Link

Reg proposes that we replace national trade union affiliation by creating national "industrial" organisations, made up of party members in particular industries, eg coal, power, insurance, agriculture.

These would have representation at conference and an entitlement to submit resolutions, but no substantial block vote.

The Race proposals might be interesting as part of a blue-print for a new socialist party. But we do not start with a clean sheet.

We have a Labour Party which has come to be what it is through eighty plus years of existence.

Today's political reality is that the block vote is under attack from Labour's right-wing,aided as usual by the Tory media.

To oppose the block vote in principle simply gives succour to those who want to weaken any democratic link between the Party and the unions.

Accountability

Nor would abolition of the block vote strengthen the hand of the CLPs.

Trade union leaders would be left to wield their influence through their chequebooks and in private meetings away from the public forum of Party Conference.

The abolition of the block vote would actually bureaucratise further the trade union-Labour Party link and rid it of any vestiges of accountability.

The potential of the block vote was amply illustrated by the case of the NUR's Sid Weighell at the 1982 Labour Party Conference.

Weighell was a key trade union right-winger seeking to undermine the then relatively left-wing NEC.

To achieve this he wheeled and dealed behind the scenes, finally deciding to shift the NUR's vote in the Trade Union division of the NEC from Eric Clarke, an NUM candidate, to Tom Breakell of the EEPTU.

Unfortunately for Weighell his machinations were discovered.

Weighell's manoeuvre was in direct contravention to the NUR Conference mandate.

He felt compelled to resign; the NUR Executive Committee accepted his resignation and the NUR Conference rejected resolutions calling on him to reconsider.

In other issues of *Labour Briefing* I have put the case for democratising the block vote and giving a greater share to the Constituency Labour Parties.

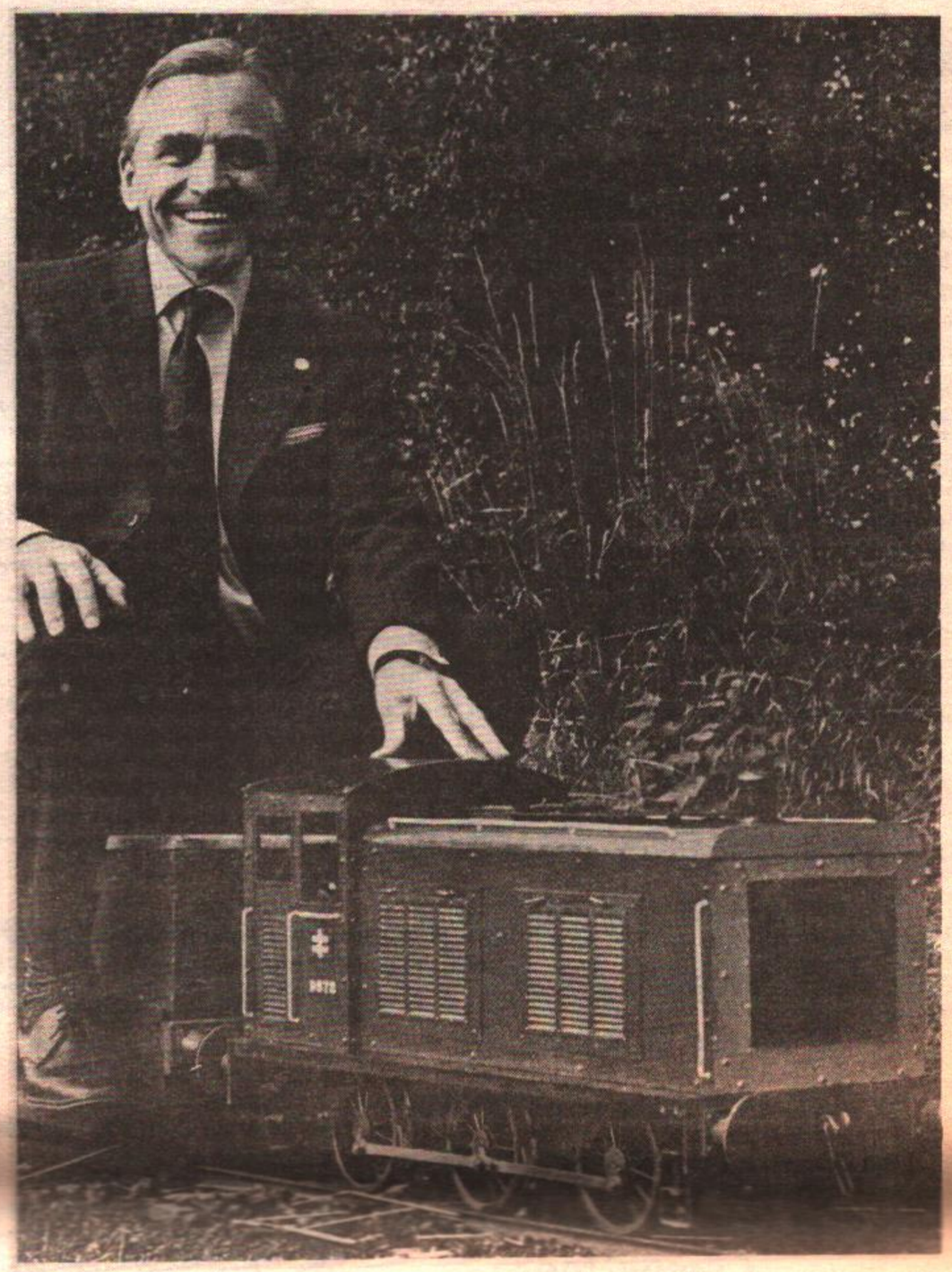
In this issue I have focused on the need to defend the block vote itself.

It is important that we constantly review how the Labour-trade union link can be democratised and thus strengthened, but this debate must take place in the context of defending its existence.

Preserve

After ten years of Thatcherism we still have a unitary trade union movement and a Labour Party with mass trade union affiliation.

The Tories and the media hate this – which is one good reason to preserve it.



Sid Weighell's train brought down to size

Labour Party Socialists AGM

"Twin-tracking" to victory

The LPS AGM in Sheffield on October 27th will be LPS's first opportunity to assess the effectiveness of its input into this year's Party Conference.

The meeting will also debate and decide on LPS's campaigning priorities and political policies in the run up to the general election.

LPS has taken some important steps towards building a national grass-roots organisation of the Labour left. Its campaigning initiatives on the Gulf War, the Poll Tax and trade union laws have marked it out from the more inward looking traditions of the Labour left.

Labour Party Socialists has taken what has come to be known as a "twin-track" approach.

It has linked up with the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy in the internal party battle against Kinnock's latest orgy of rule-changing and has issued a leaflet about this year's NEC elections. It is committed to defending mandatory reselection and has initiated a major debate on Party democracy.

Bryn Griffiths LPS National Steering Committee

The LPS joint campaign with the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee to get Labour to repeal the Tory trade union laws illustrates what the "twin-track" approach means in practice. LPS and the SMTUC have:

–organised to get a number of model resolutions on the conference agenda;

–organised a major fringe meeting and a lobby by trades unionists of delegates to conference;

–circulated a statement (Labour: Unshackle the Unions) to trades unionists and party members;

–approached trades unionists on the receiving end of the anti-union laws to ask them to support our campaign.

This "twin-track" approach is not new. In fact, *Labour Briefing* has tried to pursue it over a number of years.

In the *Briefing* pamphlet *Labour – Take the Power* (1985) we called it "organising at the crossroads". By this we meant organising at the crossroads of the movement's industrial and political wings, of the labour movement and the women's movement, the struggles inside and outside the Party.

Labour Briefing 's most successful attempt at "organising at the crossroads" was the Mineworkers' Defence Committee.

This was initiated at the 1984 Labour Party Conference by *Labour Briefing* and won support from groups in and out of the Labour Party, including Broad Lefts, Greenham Women for a Miners' Victory, national unions, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, Socialist Worker, Militant and the Campaign Group of MPs.

In December 1984 it held a national conference with over 2,000 miners' supporters attending.

Crucial to the success of the MDC was the way in which *Labour Briefing* and the Committee itself were determined to thrust the miners' battle to the forefront of Labour Party and trade union concerns. The political authority of the miners' strike allowed the Labour left to halt temporarily Kinnock's attempts to shift the Party rightwards.

Any attempt to weaken the link between the struggle for power within the Party and the struggle against the Tories and employers outside it only undermines both of them.

By no means does this approach represent any downgrading of Labour Party work. On the contrary, its purpose is to strengthen our forces and revitalise the left in the Party.

Our aim is not to abandon the Party's structures but to transform them into campaigning bodies.

Briefing Readers:Action Checklist for LPS AGM.

*** Draw up a list of local activists who should be asked to attend the AGM and write to them all individually with details of LPS.**

*** Organise a recruitment drive; only paid up supporters will be able to vote although any Party member paying the registration fee can attend.**

*** Get a speaker from the LPS National Committee for your local LPS/left group/branch/CLP.**

*** Urge comrades from your area to stand for the regional places on the National Steering Committee.**

*** Book transport North London LPS supporters are organising a coach**

LPS activists are rooted in their local Labour Party branches and see no contradiction between that and their work building Poll Tax campaigns, trade union solidarity, fights around a woman's right to choose, and popular opposition to the Gulf War.

For LPS, the general election will be a crucial test. Of course, LPS will be calling and working for a Labour vote in every constituency. On this question, we must make public our independence from the Socialist Movement which may feel unable to be as boldly committed to Labour because of the diverse political makeup of the Socialist Movement Organising Committee.

LPS must not only back Labour in the canvassing rooms and on the doorsteps; it must also build some kind of a "socialist campaign for a Labour victory".

LPS should argue publicly that socialists should join the Labour Party and work to transform it. The precise details of such a campaign need to be debated at the AGM. But LPS will have to take some steps in this direction if it is to preserve its cutting edge during the difficult general election period.



Labour Party Socialists Annual General Meeting

*** Policy for the 90's**

*** Party Democracy**

*** Fighting the Witch-hunt**

*** Campaigning Priorities**

*** Election of new National Committee**

Sheffield university
October 27th
9.30 – 6.00pm

Registration £4/£2 in advance
(£4.50/£2.50 on the day)

Write to: PO Box 118 Chesterfield Derbyshire, S44 5UD. (Please state creche requirements).
ONLY PAID UP SUPPORTERS CAN VOTE

Islington Labour Party Socialists Public meeting

Tony Benn MP
Dawn Primarolo MP
Jeremy Corbyn MP
Plus local speakers
Chair: Councillor Maureen Leigh (Mayor of Islington)

Stop the Tories War
Drive Fight the Poll Tax and Cuts

Monday 15th October 1990
7.45 pm
Red Rose Centre
129 Seven Sisters Rd, N7
(nr Finsbury Park tube)

Socialist Movement diary

*** Monday 1st October, Labour Party Conference Blackpool – Labour: Unshackle The Unions. Joint Labour Party Socialists / Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee meeting with Dennis Skinner MP, Ronnie Macdonald, Betty Heathfield, Carolyn Sikorski and Pergamon striker.**

*** Wednesday 3rd October, Labour Party Conference Blackpool – Labour Party Socialists: Policies for the 1990's with Tony Benn MP.**

*** Thursday 4th October, Labour Party Conference Blackpool – Labour Party Socialist Conference round-up.**

*** Monday 15th October, London, London School of Economics – Convention for Democracy meeting: Animal Rights. (contact 071-703-6838).**

*** Saturday 27th October, Chesterfield – Labour Party Socialists AGM.**

*** November 17/18th, Manchester – The Fourth Socialist Conference: Socialism, Democracy and Freedom – The international Debate.**

*** January 13/14th 1991, London – Convention for Democracy.**

*** January 19/20th 1991, London – Women for Socialism Conference: anti-racist and anti-imperialist struggles.**

Defend Scargill, Defend the NUM

No to media smears!

The following is to be the basis of a statement to be run as a full page advert in the national press in the Autumn. Please consider adding your signature, in a personal capacity if preferred, and/or that of your organisation. Minimum donation £5 per organisation needed to cover the cost.

"We the undersigned believe that all trade unionists should defend the National Union of Mineworkers' leaders, Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield, against the renewed attempts to smear them in the press.

The recent Lightman inquiry has proved conclusively that all allegations of personal financial misconduct by Scargill and Heathfield are false.

We further believe that the renewed attacks in the press led by the Daily Mirror are part of a crude attempt to break the tradition of fighting trade unionism represented by the NUM and its leadership.

This is why the Mirror's smear campaign has been enthusiastically supported by the enemies of the trade union movement. Regretfully, this attack has been joined by the leading figures in both the TUC and the Labour Party.

We call on all trade unionists to pass resolutions of support and send them to both their own national union leaders and to NUM headquarters in Sheffield."



I/We would like to support the above statement appearing in the national press. Please add our/my name to the list of supporters. Please state "in personal capacity" if preferred.

Name/Organisation.....
Position.....
Address.....
.....
Donation.....(minimum £5 for organisations).

Make cheques payable 'Defend Scargill Defend the NUM' and send to: Willie Lee, c/o NUPE Manual Office, 219 Mare St. London E8.

"We can't afford to stand by and let people both inside and outside the movement destroy the belief that action can make gains. This is what the attack on Scargill is all about and that's why it must be stopped."

Tony Kearns, UCW Executive

"Arthur Scargill gave brilliant leadership to the men and their families when the full apparatus of the state was used against them. The trade union and Labour Party leadership and every trade unionist and Labour Party member should be rallying around him at a time when the British establishment is trying to destroy him."
Tony Benn MP

Camden Trades Council

The first Claudia Jones Memorial Lecture

given by
ARTHUR SCARGILL
New Realism: The politics of Collaboration

Wednesday October 17th, 7.30pm

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square.

London

Lambeth Council

Cuts make mockery of equal ops

Lambeth Council's Equal Opportunities Policy (EOP) has been much publicised but little implemented.

Now its rather doubtful reputation is suffering further damage as a result of cuts arising from Poll Tax and Poll Tax capping.

Over the summer the Council leadership caved in to Kinnock's "dented shield" strategy. This entails making "kinder" cuts than the Tories would, doing so only at the last minute, and then only with much wringing of hands.

The reality is that Lambeth is now making severe cuts in services, although their effects will be felt unevenly. Owing to the high level of vacancies across the Council, most of these cuts can be made without deleting filled posts (ie. without threatening existing staff with redeployment).

Workers in the Environmental Health Directorate staged a one-day strike on August 29th. Normally moderate NALGO members in the Town Planning Directorate have also been taking industrial action.

by Roger Trendell
Lambeth NALGO

In both cases management have targetted job cuts exclusively at black workers, who will also bear the brunt of job losses at the Brixton Recreation Centre.

Anger at these attacks has been intensified by allegations that Council leader Joan Twelves asked Environmental Health Directorate strikers whether they would prefer her to "cut the jobs of white workers".

Racist

NALGO Black Workers Group has condemned the Council's redeployment scheme as racist and sexist. Unfortunately, NALGO and the other unions are co-operating with the scheme, although some shop stewards committees are continuing the fight to get jobs reinstated.

However, the NALGO Executive has agreed to follow the lead of the Black Workers Group in withdrawing co-operation from the Council's EOP in protest at the hypocrisy of cuts targeted at black and women workers.

The cuts are also hitting the conditions of service of Council staff.

In response to a clampdown on workers with childcare responsibilities, NALGO members in the Housing Directorate have called a demonstration for Council workers and their children outside the Town Hall in Brixton at noon on October 3rd.

This action is also likely to win backing from the NALGO Women'S Group, which is investigating a Council-wide attack on maternity and paternity rights.

COHSE and NUPE fighting for our health service

Defend real community care
Save Hayes Cottage Hospital

Join the resistance – occupy and win!

Islington North CLP's representatives call on all at conference to vote to make black representation a reality this year!

Jeremy Corbyn MP

Keith Veness
Agent

Eddie Niles
Conference Delegate

Sylvia Gilbert
Conference Delegate

New Tory Council

Hillingdon puts the boot in

Hillingdon's new one-seat majority Tory Council has set about out-doing Westminster and the Pickles experiment in Bradford.

by Michael Walker

In recent weeks they have announced: the closure of four schools; the scrapping of school meals in secondary schools; the sacking of 172 school meals staff; the sacking of 50 home helpers/carers; the closure of two old peoples homes

The vast majority of these cuts and closures are targetted on the strong working class areas in the South of the Borough.

Major cuts are also being made in care for the elderly by the local District Health Authority who favour "opting out" by all three major local hospitals.

Hayes Cottage, a small hospital for the elderly, is threatened with privatisation. The staff have mounted a very good political campaign, including a one-day occupation in June.

The fightback has been slow to start but is gaining momentum. The various anti-cuts campaigns are growing. Hopefully these will link up to threaten not only Council policy but the increasingly vulnerable position of the racist local MP, Terry Dicks.

Time off for women

Count women's work *now*

In 1985 the Wages for Housework Campaign won a UN decision that governments should count women's unwaged work in the home, on the land and in the community, in every country's GNP.

Every year since then the week of 24th October has been used to co-ordinate the Time Off for Women campaign – international actions by grassroots women, pressing governments to implement the UN decision.

The theme of TIME OFF 90 (TO90) is "Count Women's Work – Legislation Now!".

TO90 will highlight the effect on women's waged work when housework skills, from caring to cooking, are not valued or are taken for granted or invisible in job descriptions and wage evaluations.

'Counting women's contribution to every economy establishes women's entitlement to benefits and services and to equal pay.

TO90 opens with a fringe meeting at Labour Party Conference 2nd Oct, 6pm, at St. John's Assembly Rooms, Church Street, Blackpool.

Everyone is welcome at the Women's Speakout in the Grand Committee Room, House of Commons, 7 pm Wednesday 24th October. Contact Wages for Housework Campaign, King's Cross Women's Centre, 71 Tonbridge St, London WC1H 9DZ; tel 071-837-7509



Construction Safety Campaign

Building site safety slammed

The Construction Safety Campaign (CSC) picketted an employers' conference on September 20th to highlight the 150 preventable deaths on building sites each year.

According to the Health & Safety Executive, the construction industry **has been responsible for the death of 1,248 workers since 1980.**

An Official HSE report pointed out that 517 of 739 deaths during 1981-5 could have been prevented. In 70% of cases, positive management action could have saved these lives.

The CSC is campaigning for an automatic police investigation for manslaughter against senior directors whenever there is serious negligence involved in a site death.

The average fine for breaking health and safety laws in 1988-9 was a pathetic £608. For Bovis, McAlpine, Taylor Woodrow and the rest, this sort of fine is mere loose change – and far easier on the pocket than the investment required to prevent accidents and save lives.

Contact the CSC: Tony O'Brien 071-732-3711.

Dealing with the Euro-Nazis

French anti-fascists visit Britain

A delegation from FASTI, the main immigrant organisation in France, and CNAF, the main French anti-fascist group, recently visited Britain for a highly successful speaking tour.

The tour was organised by the Campaign Against Fascism in France, a British group which supports the struggle against Jean Marie Le Pen and the French National Front (FN).

STOPPA RASISMENI

The first meeting was in the House of Commons. MPs heard first hand accounts of the horrendous catalogue of racist violence in France where there have been hundred racist murders in the last six years.

The cases of Serge Lopez (leader of the FN in Beziers who carried out a bomb attack on the home of an immigrant family), Alain Barthes (FN correspondent in Perpignan who shot Amar ben Mohamed) and the blowing up of the Annecy Cafe by Jean Pierre Chatelaine (FN security officer in Savoy) were amongst the many examples cited.

The FN strategy is to pose as a populist anti-immigration and "law and order" party, keeping their Nazi character well hidden. This strategy has brought them spectacular success in the polls. They took over 60% of the vote in the Dreux by-election.

Le Pen's true views were revealed on a record he produced of songs of the Waffen SS: "Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist Party came to power through legal elections. They owed their ascent to a mass movement which was popular and democratic".

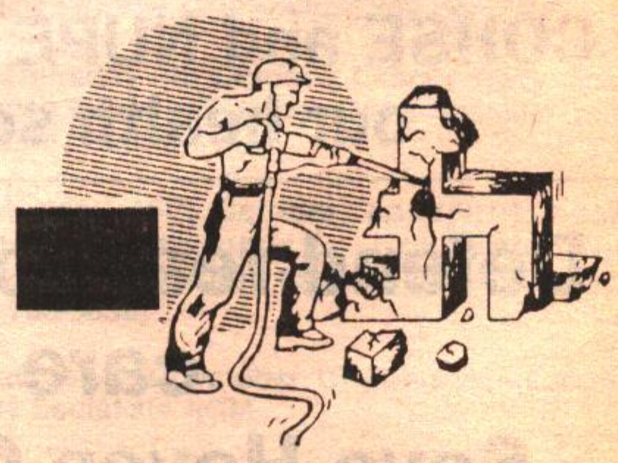
During the Second World War some of Le Pen's closest associates volunteered to fight for Nazi Germany and joined the XXXIII SS Division Charlemagne. They were not just collaborators but men who fully agreed with and actively supported Hitler.

Senior FN leader and MEP Bernard Antony has written: "The modern world is once again facing the Jewish problem. Jews are at the centre of contemporary debate. Marx and Rothschild can be said to represent two sides of the same coin".

The FN has roots in the Nazi terrorist group *Ordre Nouveau* one of whose former leaders was Francois Duprat, a man who openly declared his sympathy for Hitler.

During their visit the FASTI-CNAF delegation met with the Newham Monitoring Project, the National Union of Students, Refugee Forum, the *Caribbean Times*, and addressed meetings and rallies in London, Birmingham and Leicester.

The Campaign Against Fascism in France can be contacted at PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7. Tel: 071 486 5353.



British and US Imperialism out of the Gulf!

High Cross Branch

Tottenham CLP

Women for Socialism

sends sisterly greetings to conference delegates

No to War in The Gulf!

Families launch new campaign

Free the Tottenham Three



The Tottenham Three Families Campaign for Justice has recently been formed by the families and supporters of Mark Braithwaite, Engin Raghip and Winston Silcott.

Its aim is to secure the release of the three innocent men who were framed for the 1985 killing of PC Keith Blakelock in the Broadwater Farm uprisings.

Families

The families intend to work closely with the community-based Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign to build a national network to maintain public pressure for the men to be freed.

The release of the Guildford Four and the recent breakthrough in the case of the Birmingham Six together with mounting demands from more than 50 MPs, two retired Appeal Court Judges and three independent inquiries have all helped intensify pressure on the government to reopen the case.

Contact

Contact: The Tottenham Three Families Campaign, 247a West Green Road, London, N15 5ED

It's magic!

Demo Against Immigration Laws

Manchester Against Immigration Controls (MAGIC) has been formed by a number of anti-deportation campaigns to organise a national fightback against Britain's racist immigration laws.

Attacks

The government has stepped up its attacks on refugees. Airlines flying passengers without correct documentation are being fined and Vietnamese boat people are being forcibly repatriated.

By not allowing 6 million people in Hong Kong to settle in Britain, the government appears to be preparing for 1992 when common immigration laws will create a "Fortress Europe", excluding people from Asia and Africa and denying 15 million black non-EC citizens currently living in Europe the right to free movement.

MAGIC has called a national demonstration for Saturday November 3rd at 1.00pm,in Alexandra Park, Manchester, followed by a rally at 4.00pm in Albert Square.



Socialist Movement

Sends greetings to Party Conference delegates

No to War in the Gulf
Stop the Witch-hunt
Fight the Anti-union laws

Come to the Socialist Movement International Conference
17/18 November, Manchester

Obituary: Nobby Clarke

Father of Brighton Socialism

Lifelong socialist Nobby Clarke, often called the father of Brighton Labour Party, has died aged 82.

He was taken ill at a GC meeting on September 17th and died shortly afterwards.

Nobby was a councillor for over 40 years. He held numerous party posts throughout his life and was Brighton Labour Party's Honorary President and Vice-Chair at the time of his death.

by Jean Calder, Brighton councillor

A railway worker, he had been a long-serving official of the NUR.

Nobby Clarke was agent in 1964 and 1966 when Labour won Kemp Town constituency, the only times Labour has ever won a parliamentary seat in Sussex.

Nobby was as fierce in his opposition to currruption and careerism in Party representatives as he was loyal to the Party.

In recent years Nobby became critical of the Party's rightward drift.

When six Labour councillors were expelled earlier this year from Brighton's Labour Group, due to their opposition to the Poll Tax, Nobby led their defence. One of his last acts was to send an open letter to all Brighton Labour Party members, calling on the Labour Group to readmit the six.

Loss

Nobby's death is a sad loss – to the left, and to the Party as a whole. He was and will remain an inspiration to all socialists.

The funeral will be held at St Joseph's Church, Elm Grove, Brighton at 12.15pm on October 10th.

Interview: Ruth Winstone

Behind the Benn diaries

Ruth Winstone is the editor of the Benn diaries, the latest volume of which has just been published by Century Hutchinson. *Briefing* interviewed Ruth about her work on the diaries in Tony Benn's office in Holland Park, London. Tony was working in the office at the time and couldn't resist chipping in.

***Briefing*: How did your work on the diaries start?**

RW: Chris Mullin originally referred me to Tony in 1985, when Tony first needed help typing up his tapes, before he had decided to publish anything. Century Hutchinson expressed an interest in publishing and after some thought Tony decided to proceed. It soon became apparent that the typing pouldn't be done by one person part-time and from April 1986 I took charge of the whole project, employing part-time typists and putting everything on to disc for editing. I'm employed by Tony and paid entirely out of the advance provided by the publisher, though we also had some short-term assistance from the Rowntree Trust.

***Briefing*: How are the diaries produced?**

RW: Tony has dictated daily into his recorder since 1968. We've been typing up the tapes and putting them on disc word for word over the last five years and have now nearly caught up to the present. We run the discs off onto typed copy and bind it, so there is one completely unedited version of the diary if anyone needs to examine it.

The first volume contained half of the unedited diary; the second volume contained a third; the third volume contained a fifth, and the most recent one contains only an eighth.

I'm puzzled sometimes why there's so much more as we've gone on. Partly, I suppose ministerial seniority gave Tony a wider view of things. Partly it must be just increasing confidence in dictating onto tape.

***Briefing*: How do you decide which years should be covered in each volume?**

RW: We look for a period which makes some historical sense. Castle and Crossman both took the 64-70 period of Labour government as a single unit because their focus was entirely on their experiences in Cabinet. We felt it was important to combine a period of office with a period of opposition. We wanted to show the continuity of the debates within the Labour Party, not just decisions made in and by governments.

***Briefing*: What guidelines do you use in editing?**

RW: I try to eliminate repetition. If an issue comes up for discussion, say, at several Cabinet or NEC meetings I try to find the main meeting at which a decision was made and take out the other references. I look for the essence of the argument and try to present it as clearly as possible.

***Briefing*: How do you choose which particular themes to highlight in each volume?**

RW: It's a combination of intuition, hindsight, and Tony's guidance. If the Falklands war hadn't broken out in 1982, earlier references to the Falklands, particularly Cabinet discussions, would not have been of as much interest. Kinnock's utterances are obviously of greater interest now because he's become the party leader. My own political interests and my discussions with Tony also help shape the books.

Both Tony and I believe that what's politically important *now* should be a guide for us.

The book isn't just about cabinet government. It's a diary of someone who is many things: a Constituency MP, a minister, a member of the NEC, etc.

Embarassing

Very little is left out because it's embarassing or incriminating. In fact the main reason for leaving things out is that they're boring. Someone recently came in to read the complete diaries for a period in the 60s because of research he was doing on European space developments. He was fascinated by a highly technical 16-page discussion which we had left out of the published diaries.

***Briefing*: What are the main themes of the new volume (1977-1980)?**

RW: The way in which Callaghan conducted his Cabinet and Tony's own relationship with Callaghan, which is I think both touching and amusing. The emergence of Neil Kinnock. Nuclear power and nuclear weapons, both issues which took on greater importance retrospectively. The rift with the trade union movement. Labour's complete aimlessness in office, apparently drifting from one crisis to another. To some extent it's a portrait of a government which had lost its way.

There's also, on the other side of the coin, the growth of the movement for Labour Party democracy, which really becomes evident after the election defeat in 79.

***Briefing*: What about the style of the book?**

RW: Dialogue is important. I try to make it read naturally. It's quite a tribute to Tony that no one has ever read the diaries and come back and said, "I didn't say that" or accuse us of misquoting. Roy Jenkins said they were the best and most accurate diaries he'd ever read.

I double check all the facts, dates and names against the records, newspapers, NEC papers, etc. and make corrections. But very few are necessary.

Continuity is important. Given that I am removing so much from the original transcriptions, a fair amount of work is involved preserving the feeling of a day-to-day diary. Where possible, I try to keep references to daily life and family news in.

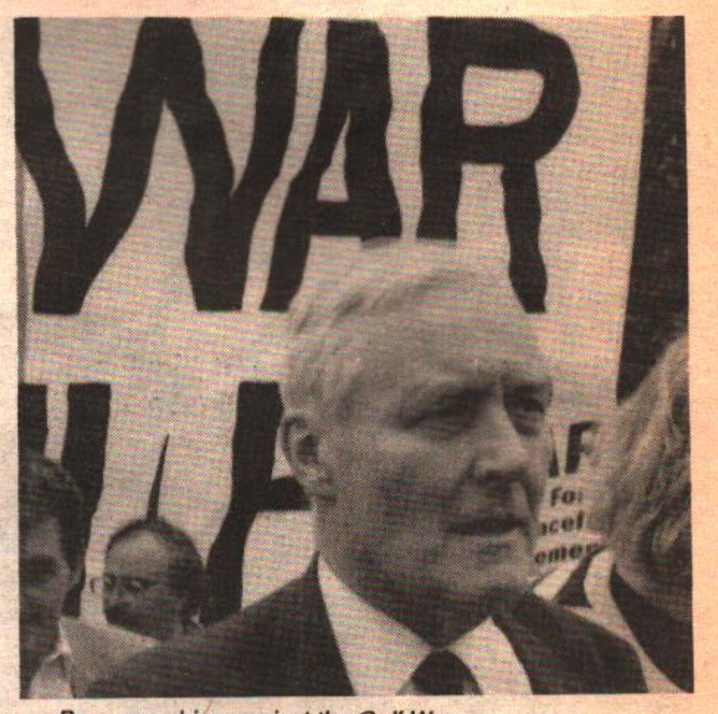


PHOTO: Tim Nolan

Benn marching against the Gulf War

***Briefing*: What about libel?**

RW: The publishers' lawyers read the manuscript and give us advice. Often what the lawyers think is libelous is something that's struck us as quite trivial and inoffensive.

There is some self-censorship, mainly in order not to hurt other people's feelings.

Tony Benn: You're bound to let off steam in a diary, but there's too much malice in the press already. I don't want to add to it.

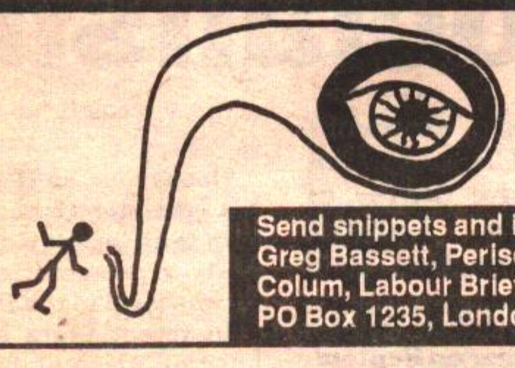
***Brieifng*: What about future volumes?**

RW: The next volume will take us up to the Chesterfield by-election in 1984 and will chronicle the resignation of Callaghan, the leadership of Michael Foot, the SDP split, the Deputy Leadership campaign, the Falklands, Bishops Stortford, the swing to the right in the Party, the 1983 manifesto and the general election, Michael Cocks and the boundary changes in Bristol, and the election of Neil Kinnock as leader of the Party.

Tony Benn: I originally kept the tapes and the archives for my own use, not for publication. But on my 60th birthday I decided that if people could see my experiences they would understand why and how I had formed my opinions and this might have some influence on their own view of the world. Other diaries tend to be a farewell to politics; mine are a direct intervention in the present day.

I used to sit in cabinet and think that if the movement knew what was being said there it would repudiate us at once. It still makes me angry today.

PERISCOPE



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

Briefing tops league table

Excerpt from testimony by the Economic League Director to the House Employment Committee hearings on recruitment practices, June 1990:

"As far as general information is concerned, I get the sort of question, 'What's happening in so-and-so?', 'How is the 35-hour campaign of the confed going?', 'What are the Militant Tendency saying about this?', 'Why are *Labour Briefing* saying that Mr Kinnock has declared war on them in his latest policy statement? What does this mean? Who are these people behind this organisation? What elements are there in Labour Briefing? ', 'What was the truth about the Trafalgar Square riot in terms of influence?' It is that sort of thing, where we give an honest opinion based on the facts that we have, and people then use that in their own organisation, their own newspaper, and so on."

P.S. The League told the House Committee that if people write in it will be happy to provide them with any details about them which it holds in its files. *Briefing* readers should drop the League a line

Budding Maxwells target Scargill

Scargill baiting is profitable business.

PR Week reports that an anonymous PR Agency has been retained specifically to continue the media blitz against the NUM leader.

PR Week doesn't state if the agency inquestion is one of the many which employ LCC hacks (such as Vice-Chair Mike Craven) but does admit that "taking out a contract to kill someone by adverse PR is more elegant than a gun ... a whole new PR specialisation opens up before us".

You have been warned.

The Terminator II

Attentive Guardian readers may have spotted that paper's flippant attempt to mark the 50th anniversary of Trotsky's murder by seeking quotes from various left groups on the significance of the occasion.

When the Guardian finally got round to ringing the Labour Party, it had the misfortune to find Junior Press Officer Jo Moore on the end of the line.

Moore was delighted to tell the Guardian that the Labour Party had no intention of marking the occasion in any way.

Her well-aired prejudices against Trotsky and all his followers appeared in the next day's newspaper as the views of "a Labour Party Spokeswoman".

Well, Party members can think what they like about Trotsky, his theories, his struggles and his various acolytes.

But surely they are all agreed that his violent death at the hands of a Stalinist agent was a bad thing. After all, we in the Labour Party believe in democratic debate not murdering opponents.Or do we?

Jo Moore, self-styled " hammer of the Trots in Haringey" has been known to display with pride her "ice-pick" necklace on more than one occassion.

Is criminality hereditary?

A certain Dominic Kilroy-Silk (yes, *his* son) has pleaded guilty to a £350,000 property fraud. An estate agent already on $27k a year, Kilroy Silk Junior carried out a mortgage swindle involving three building societies.

A new twist to the Abbey Habit? (You're a sharper investor when your Dad's a class traitor?)

Joke

Q: What is the difference between a Lada and a Jehovah's witness?

A; You can shut the door on a Jehovah's witness

Best laid plans of Panorama

A team from BBC's Panorama programme has been snooping around Liverpool.

Rumour has it Auntie intends to screen an item about continuing rows in the local Labour Party on the evening of Monday, October 1.

Kinnock will make his annual address to conference the following day.

Not a few Labour activists on Merseyside expect our Leader to use the Panorama programme as an excuse for another "vote-winning" attack on Liverpool.

Book review

Education and the state

Challenging the State? The Socialist and Feminist Educational Experience 1900-1930, by Hilda Kean, published by Falmer Press, £9.95pb.

"My starting point" says Hilda Kean "is the state itself...not any oppositional group."

Her argument, admirably supported by a phenomenal quantity of footnotes, is that while socialists, trade unionists, and feminists have opposed state education policies in various ways they have not been strategically "anti-statist".

On the contrary, these groupings either sought the expansion of state education or equal provision of that education or, while having an anti-statist analysis, failed to build support for it within the working class movement.

The feminists had a radical critique of state education's sexism in relation to both women teachers and students, but their most militant campaigning was directed against the main education union, the NUT, for it's refusal to support feminist demands.

Trade unionists in the education sector were organised for better wages and conditions from a state "the majority of teachers identified with", not for the creation of "an alternative structure to the state system under workers' control".

Sarah Roelofs
Islington North CLP

While socialists entertained no illusions concerning the class nature of state education and its function for capitalism, they isolated themselves by their propagandism and sectarianism.

This is the conundrum that bedevils socialist – and feminist – politics now, then, but (one hopes) not always. Kean stresses "the need to learn of the past political failures of the socialist movement...in order to challenge the state in education".

Strategy

The virtue of Kean's analysis is her definition of "challenging the state", an understanding that "through educational legislation and social welfare reforms passed by Parliament, the state was able to represent the unequal position of classes in society as equal within the state...strengthening the ideology of a neutral state....for the maintenance of the capitalist state".

Such an understanding is crucial, but Kean also argues that a strategy is needed to popularise this analysis and win broader support for it in the labour movement.

Thus Kean writes of the Workers' Socialist Federation, formed by Sylvia Pankhurst from the East London Suffrage Federation that it encouraged debate on educational matters, but was essentially a propaganda organisation, "isolated from the working class movement".

Sectarian

Of those organisations not isolated from the working class, the Communist Party when it adopted "an explicitly anti-statist position also adopted a sectarian approach to the main party in the labour movement (which) ensured it's ideas (remained) isolated from the main debates within the movement".

For its part, the main party in the labour movement, the Labour Party, adopted "a benign attitude to the state...Labour politicians argued that the state had a responsibility to ameliorate the condition of the nation".

Interesting

One frustration is that while Kean's language is clear and accessible, her style has a tendency not to be. It is an academic book, developed from a PhD thesis, and does not pretend to be otherwise, but its appeal is unfortunately narrowed by Kean's critiques, in every chapter, of others who have written on the issues.

It remains an interesting and pertinent book. For socialist-feminists the chapter on "Feminist Teachers' Views of the State" is especially interesting.

For example, Kean notes that many National Federation of Women Teachers members "had taken a conscious decision to remain single and had difficulty in understanding why individual women should wish to give up this right" while discussing the feminists' campaign against the sacking of married women teachers from permanent posts.

This chapter also contains my favourite footnote – Chapter 5's 219th. It is a tasty trailer for Kean's next book. The sentence "in particular the relationships (the feminists teachers) formed with each other formed a valuable source of strength in maintaining their political commitments" is footnoted to "See Kean, *Deeds not Words*, (1990), especially Chapters 7 and 8, for an account of feminists' close friendships." I can't wait.

Islington North Black Section

Make sure we win the fight for black representation in the party this year

Felix Hyacinth Chair
Eddie Niles Secretary

Book review

A left Europe?

1992 and Beyond , by John Palmer (HMSO£5.50)

This book is an informative though somewhat technical guide to current developments in the European Community (EC) leading up to 1992 and the Single European Market.

It clearly sets out the hopes, problems, benefits and dangers of the EC's growing economic and political integration.

Palmer warns that by the mid-1990's more than 80% of all the legislation which affects our lives will be decided by the European Community rather than the House of Commons. In effect there will be an embryonic European government.

This means that the democratisation of EC decision making is an urgent priority.

Peter Tatchell

Socialists ought to be campaigning for the transfer of power from the unelected and secretive Council of Ministers to the open and accountable European Parliament.

Palmer also suggests that the European Commissioners should be elected by the European Parliament and not, as at present, appointed by the national governments.

He recommends the establishment of a European Senate which would be made up of representatives from the EC's regions and minority communities.

Interestingly, Palmer thinks that the trend towards European unification will go hand in hand with greater regional devolution. He predicts that the national governments of the EC states, faced with the twin pressures of Europeanisation and regionalism, are likely to lose power.

Palmer looks favourably at the possibility of the EC becoming a truly pan-European organisation by opening up its membership to the EFTA and East European countries.

If this were to happen, he suggests, an enlarged EC of 20-30 nations would have sufficient economic power to pursue its own freely-chosen economic policies without fear of blackmail or subversion by multi-national corporations and international financial institutions.

Palmer would also welcome the admission to the EC of the East European and neutral countries, such as Austria, on the grounds that it would be likely to encourage a non-nuclear rethink of defence policies by the other EC nations.

Disparaties

While he believes that the creation of the Single European Market has it's down-side, Palmer is also convinced that the trend towards EC harmonisation will show up the enormous disparities in wealth between the various countries and regions.

He suggests that the Left ought to take up the banner of "harmonisation" to argue for EC-wide action to ensure a radical redistribution of wealth and the introduction of common social welfare policies based on the highest standards prevailing in the member states.

Imaginative

Palmer raises the possibility of the creation of pan-EC Left parties which would push for trans-European forms of economic planning and public ownership.

These are imaginative, constructive, exciting and radical ideas which deserve serious consideration by every socialist concerned about the future of Europe.

Alf Lomas MEP

Sends Socialist Greetings to *Briefing* readers

Take the cake Poetry and prose for socialism

From the makers of the *Green Socialist Video* and *Ken Livingstone Speaks*, this 25 minute video will give inspiration to socialists everywhere and serves as an excellent focus for group discussion. Made to a highly professional standard and featuring poetry and prose excerpts from Shelley, Adrian Mitchell, Orwell, Beatrice and Sydney Webb, Brecht and Tom Mann, the programme is a song to socialism. It is an entertaining video for socialists of all ages and parties.

Take the Cake: Poetry and Prose for Socialism.
25 mins, colour, VHS, £15 inc p&p from:
Take the Cake Productions, 26 Washington St, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 2SR. Tel: 0273 672030.

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Poll Tax in Leeds

Trickett treat

Leeds Labour Councillors seem resigned to their assigned roles as the "humane" collectors of the hated Tory Poll Tax.

Their particular brand of compassion consists of hiring more finance counsellors to help people pay the Tax and a committee to "fight poverty".

At a recent meeting they fudged demands from the Leeds Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions not to use bailiffs or at least to introduce a code of conduct.

Council leader Jon Trickett said the Council was already using bailiffs 7,000 times a year without too much trouble.

However, less macho voices urged caution, including former leader George Mudie. In his usual convoluted way Mudie argued for the code of practice despite the fact it was supported by the "posturing left".

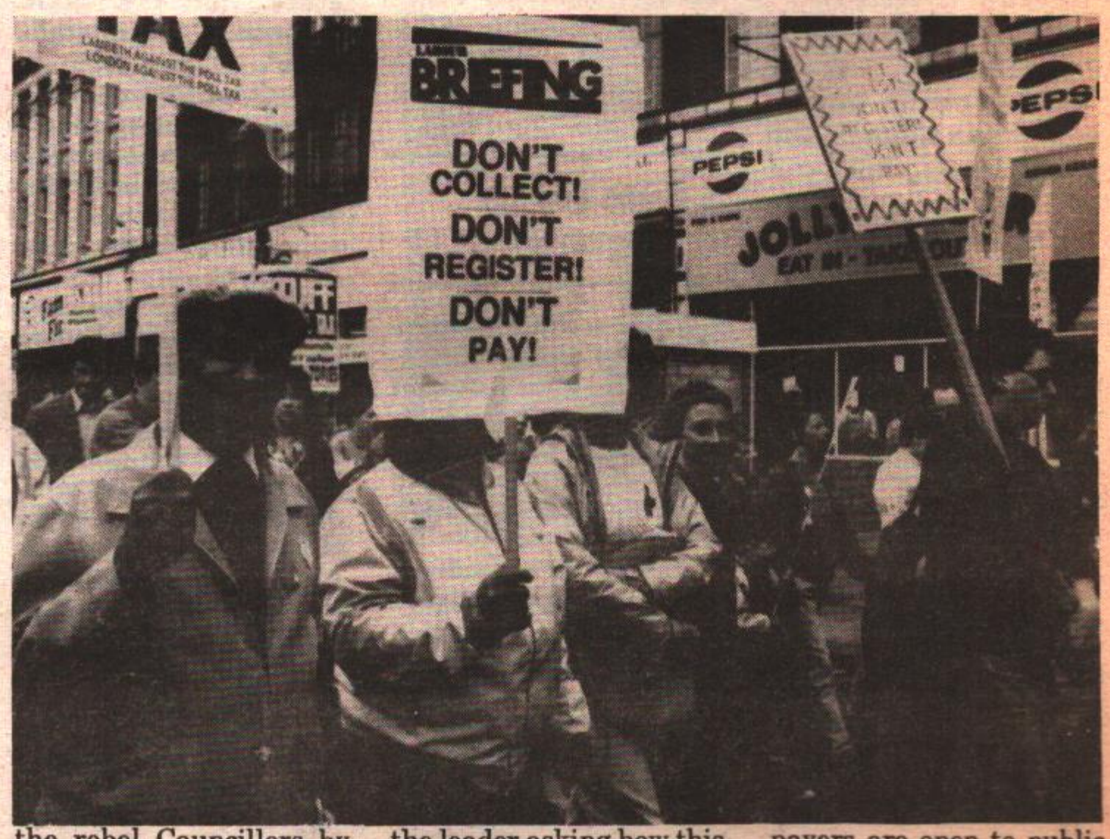
by Leeds Labour Briefing

The main reason for his statement was that, unlike most of the Councillors in the Labour Group, Mudie had actually tried to put the case for payment at an anti-Poll Tax meeting in his own ward. Only one person supported him. The rest argued for non-payment.

According to Council figures, 55,000 people in Leeds have still not paid any Poll Tax at all. This does not include partial payers and those people who have avoided registration, which in some areas of the city runs at over 25%.

Meanwhile, people in Leeds are wondering how the Trickett leadership obtained the Poll Tax payment records for 14 Labour Councillors who had not paid or only partially paid their bills.

Trickett used this information to try to intimidate the rebel Councillors by writing them individual letters warning of the dire consequences of not paying.

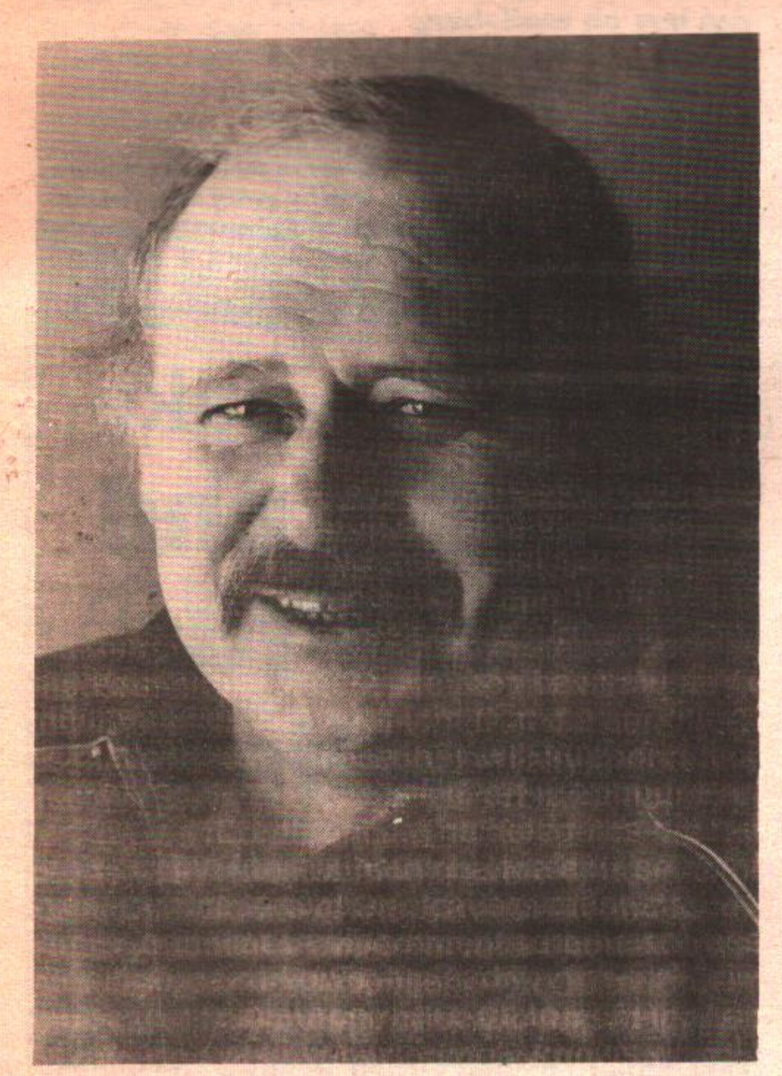


Councillors Keith Nathan and Garth Frankland have written to the leader asking how this private information was obtained. So far he has fudged his reply.

Serious questions of confidentiality have been raised by this affair. If the financial affairs of Poll Tax payers are open to public scrutiny the possibility of blackmail and other pressures arises. The legality of the Leeds Labour leader's actions will be challenged unless he can explain himself.

Labour Councillors declare:

We're not paying the Poll Tax



"I will never pay any tax which means an ordinary worker pays the same as a millionaire. I'm proud to be one of the eight million people fighting the Poll Tax."

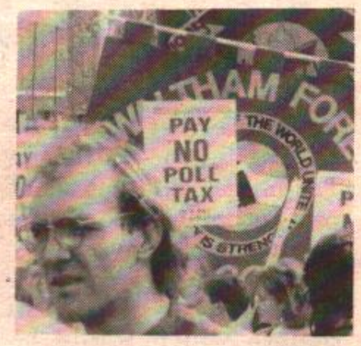
Cllr Pat Waylett, Lewisham.

"We're opposing the Poll Tax because it's unjust. We cannot be separated from the people who are fighting the Poll Tax and who cannot or will not pay it."

Cllrs Garth Frankland and Keith Nathan, Leeds.

"I haven't registered and won't pay. The Poll Tax is a vicious attack on the working class people I was elected to represent. I have a duty to stand in solidarity with them, even if its means I am not readmitted to the Labour Group and therefore cannot stand again in May."

Cllr Jean Calder, indefinitely suspended by Brighton Labour Group for opposing the Poll Tax.



"I have four main reasons for not paying the Poll Tax.

First, elderly people in my area living off benefits find the etra £2 or £3 a week makes a hell of a difference. These people have low incomes and their savings are being eroded as a result of the Poll Tax.

Second, elderly people do not believe that everything will be alright in the end – as we are constantly being told. Young people can fight but the elderly, many of whom have worked all their lives and have never been on benefit before, are worried sick.

Third, Labour is failing to grasp the real extent of poverty. The leadership don't seem to realise what the Poll Tax means for a family of three or more adults.

Finally, we must defeat the Poll Tax *now*, not just wait for a change of government."

Cllr George Durack, Islington.

"As a Labour councillor elected to defend local working people I cannot and will not collude with the Poll Tax. Labour councils which implement the Poll Tax and penalise non-payers are committing political suicide."

Cllr Guy Daly, Birmingham.

Labour Briefing goes on and on!

Conference greetings from Birmingham Labour Briefing Supporters