LABOUR
BRIEFING
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Reagan's gun-run scandal

FOLLOWING IN NIXON'S FOOTSTEPS



Reagan: guilty? or incompetent?

The ghost of Richard Nixon is again stalking the White House as scandal of Watergate proportions engulfs the Reagan administration. It could yet lead to the impeachment of the President.

Not only has Reagan confessed to selling arms to "terrorist" Iran, but it has since emerged that the cash from the sales was funnelled back via CIA bank accounts to the Nicaraguan Contra terrorists, in defiance of a specific vote of Congress.

By Phil Hearse

Despite a reported 48-hour session at a White House shredding machine prior to his sacking, the junior "fall guy" for the operation, Colonel Oliver North, described by Reagan as "a true patriot", has felt obliged to stonewall the first hearings of a Senate inquiry, and may yet "sing like a canary" about his and other dirty tricks.

But the claim that only one other top Reagan aide — Security Advisor Admiral John Poindexter — knew anything of the intercontinental arms and cash scam is quite incredible.



Even before this scandal broke, Vice President Bush a former director of the CIA, had been implicated in illegal funding of the Contras; it is impossible that whole sections of the CIA, Donald Regan's White House staff, the State Department and Pentagon did not know; it seems almost certain Reagan himself knew of the plot.

Despite Congress haggling over funds to the CIA-run Contras, Reagan had no intention of scaling down or stopping the flow of arms and cash. So the US "loaned" material and equipment to the Contras; they funded them from CIA slush funds; and then they laundered huge sums of money through Israel and the Iranian arms deals and Swiss banks.

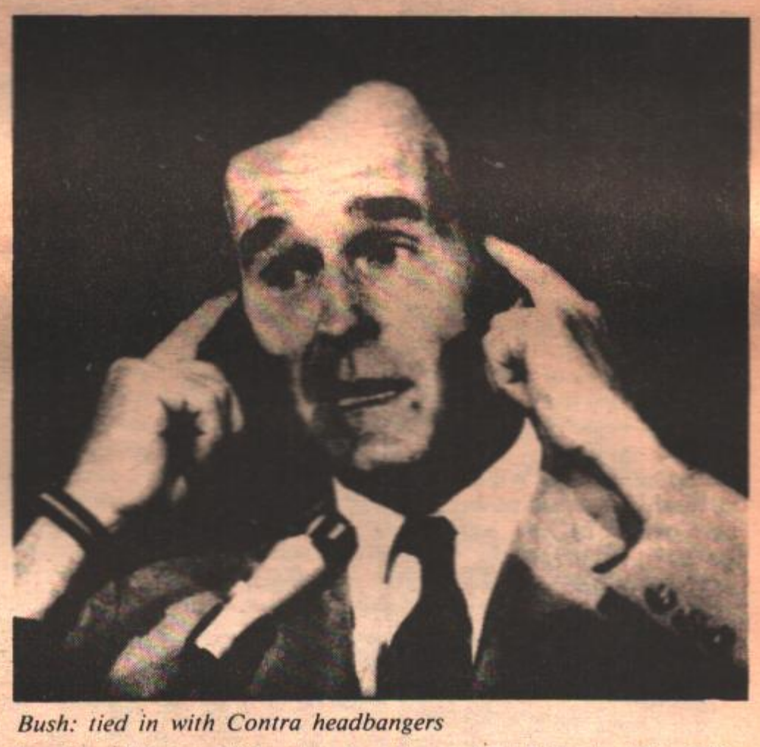
Reagan now claims the arms shipments were part of a plan to make links with "moderates" in the Iranian government. He unconvincingly denies they had anything to do with buying out American hostages taken in Lebanon (so much for Terry Waite!).

But the fundamental reason seems to have been acceptance of Israeli guidance: the Israelis have backed Iran throughout the brutal Gulf War with Iraq, supplying arms and even bombing an Iraqi nuclear power plant to forestall a possible Iraqi nuclear bomb.

Israel's Zionist rulers would prefer a military victory by the further distant, non-Arab Iran, though they have no love of Khomeini's fundamentalism. The USA also appears to have been gambling on the likely outcome of the Gulf War, and seeking to forestall increased Russian involvement with Iran.

Whatever the reasons, Reagan's "anti-terrorist" credentials have been dealt a shattering blow in the USA itself, where the hysteria over the Teheran embassy seige helped get Reagan elected.

As the plot unravels, it remains to be seen who will survive and who will be thrown to the wolves. Reagan's only real defence appears to be to plead ignorance — and therefore total incompetence. The Presidential ambitions of George Bush for 1988 have bitten the dust, while Democratic hopefuls find it hard to believe their luck.



Bush: tied in with Contra headbangers

Almost certain losers are the murderous Nicaraguan Contras. One US Senator has said "It looks like Ollie North has shot the President's Nicaraguan operation in the foot."

If that turns out to be true, then it will be the best possible outcome of the whole affair.



LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Home News

The Wright Affair and the disintegration of the Mandarinate

No, Prime Minister!

The chief of the Civil Service, Sir Robert Armstrong, went to Australia to defend a principle: the need for trust among public officials as the only sound basis for public life within the British state.

He and the Government were claiming that former MI5 official Wright had broken that trust by seeking to publish his memoirs.

In the event, the Australian Court has demonstrated that there is no basis for trusting Armstrong himself: he has perjured himself and has sought to smear and destroy the career of one of his political "masters", Sir Michael Havers. When Havers blew the whistle on the Thatcher-Armstrong clique, Armstrong was revealed as a lying buffoon.

The Wright Affair has thus turned into a farce. But is it also a joke? The way the media has presented the whole episode, only crazy right-wingers hunting Commie spies can take the whole thing seriously.

Armstrong correctly says that the running of the British state is based upon trust; not law. There is no constitution governing what the British state can do and anybody who knows anything about the British judiciary knows that when judges are called upon to rule on serious cases involving the government, they are as thick as thieves with the mandarinate.

As Armstrong argues, the only basis for Labour hoping that its programme of reforms will be carried out, if elected, is trust that the madarinate will co-operate. The Wright affair shows that trust is not enough, since in the 1970s the mandarinate — or a key section of it — sought to destabilise and get rid of Prime Minster Harold Wilson. And they succeeded. We know now that Wilson — of all people! — was pushed out for political reasons, wanted a Royal Commission to investigate the whole affair, and was turned down by the immediate beneficiary of his demise, Callaghan.

Now, we are asked to focus our attention upon the spy mania about Roger Hollis: something both mind-boggling — because it is an allegation that the head of state security was working for the enemy — and trivial, because it focuses on individuals and ignores the really important issue, the degeneration and disintegration of the security and intelligence apparatus, and the inner sanctum of top mandarins who run it.

Why did loyalties and aims fragment in this inner sanctum in the 1970s? The answer offered by *Guardian* feature

By Oliver MacDonald

writers is that a group of intelligence officials got ensnarled in an hysterical and delirious anti-communism, Wright being the chief among these.

But if Wright was so hysterically anti-Communist as to see Wilson as a KGB agent, why has he exposed the plot against Wilson?

First we must appreciate what MI5 and MI6 are mainly involved in: they are bureaucracies for giving **policy advice** and for helping to **implement policy**. Following from this is the obvious peculiarity of the British security apparatus: it is not only right inside the inner sanctum of the Cabinet office, it is also intimately linked with another state machine: Washington.

There is a whole system of incentives for working with — even **for** — the Americans, especially true in MI6. Yet on the other hand, there must be plenty of officials within this apparatus strongly suspicious of the Americans. Such officials could be especially prevalent in MI5, presumably less dependent on Washington for its work.

Here then is the political and institutional basis for the disintegration of trust within the mandarinate, that would be fed by issue after issue over policy orientation.

All those in the anti-Wilson plot were allegedly fervent supporters of Gaitskell. So was McDermott — he even wrote a book on Gaitskell. Wilson's predecessor has always been viewed, rightly, by the Left as an extreme right-winger in the labour movement. But as Williams, his biographer, also reveals, he too was suspicious of the over-close links between Whitehall and Washington.

In short, there is strong evidence that a section of the mandarinate has been what might be called Gaullist — right-wing anti-Communists who also wanted to build a strong state in partial rivalry with Washington.

Heath, the last great hope of this current, failed catastrophically. Any wonder there was an inclination towards desperate schemes against Wilson? Wilson sensibly pleaded with Washington to tell him what was going on in Number 10 Downing Street — where better to find out?

Of course, this penetration of the inner sanctum of the British state by the American state would not have occurred at all, but for the catastrophic decline of British power and the amateurish buffoonery of Armstrong's predecessors in their pathetic (and of course criminal) attempts to stop the rot, for example over Suez.

Armstrong's feeble attempts to tell a pack of lies to an independent judge and a competent lawyer finish him. In any self-respecting political system in a serious state — like for example the USA — he would be summoned home, slaughtered by a select committee, then tried on various charges of abuse of power.

But that leaves the entire mandarinate in place, albeit divided, demoralised, infiltrated by Thatcherites, penetrated by American agencies and no longer even able to do its minimal job of keeping the population and Parliament totally in the dark about what is going on.

The Labour Party should demand:

- **All the documents on the subversion of the Wilson government be placed before parliament and public.**

No issue of security, except the security of the criminally guilty within the mandarinate, is involved in this demand.

- **That a new Labour Government should implement the suggestion from Thatcher's former adviser Sir John Hoskins: sack all adminstrative grade Civil Servants over 40** (he said 50, but 40 gives them a chance to start a new career).

This policy should be started first in the security services.

- **The setting up of committees of civil service trade unionists throughout the Civil Service to monitor loyalty to the democratically elected government on the part of the bureaucracy.**

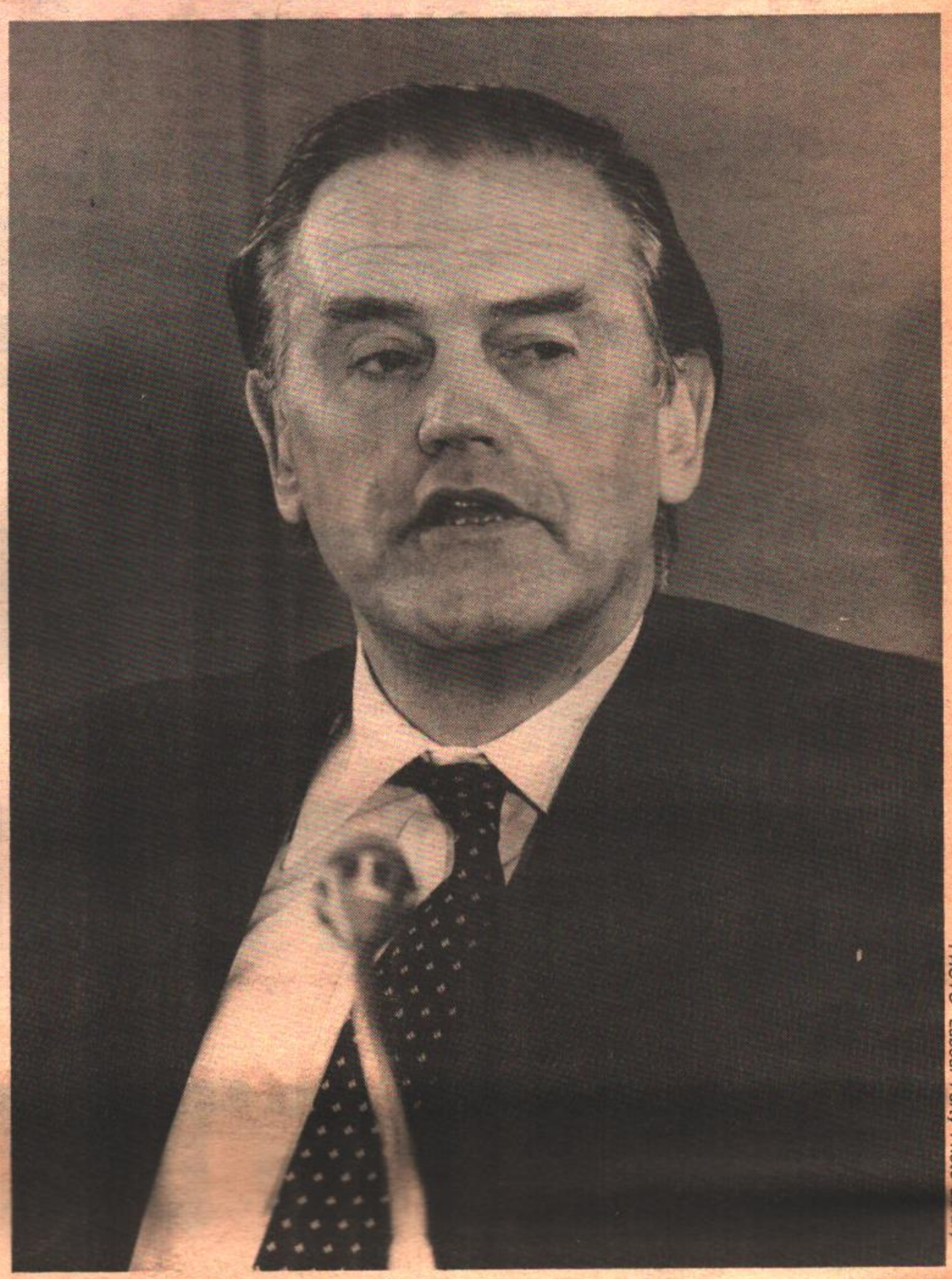


PHOTO Labour Party Photo Library

Robert Armstrong, Secretary to the Cabinet.

BRIEFING Youth

LPYS proposals

Not for the first time in Labour's history, a right-wing NEC is attempting to control or close the Party's youth organisations.

Tom Sawyer's proposals for reorganising Labour's youth wing may be a little more subtle than in the past, but in essence they represent the same old witch-hunting we've seen before.

If young socialists are looking to the YS's *Militant* leadership to organise in defence of the YS they will be sadly disappointed. While the LCC and right wing quietly organise (e.g. the Fabian Tract pamphlet *Labour and Youth* by Woolas and Mann is apparently into its second run, with trade unions taking bulk orders of the first) there has been little or nothing from the YS National or Regional Committees in response.

In the latest *Socialist Youth* (the YS's paper) an article by Andy Bevan, a *Militant* supporter and the Labour Party's National Youth Officer, tries to draw a *positive* balance sheet of the Party conference debate on youth. Bevan argues it is a "misinterpretation" of conference decisions to see them as the green light for an attack on the YS which "the Party rank and file won't stand

By John Tuite
Norwood LPYS

for." Again, "Conference appears to be serious about improving its youth organisation." Meanwhile, it appears, "the bitterest critics of the LPYS" are only "contemplating closing the youth organisation down."

The truth is far less pleasant. Unfortunately, the "bitter critics" are in the ascendency for the moment and they are doing a lot more than merely "contemplating". They are organising. They are eager to achieve their goals and will not be deterred by ambiguous resolutions or avoidance of the issue.

Militant supporters argue that the best defence is building the YS. True. But the YS at the moment is at best standing still, at worst diminishing. *Militant's* triumphal rhetoric hides a complacency and retreat in facing the witch-hunt which will be the death of the YS.

The YS needs to reach out to those in the Party willing to fight the general witch-hunt, especially those in LAW '86. From the regional conferences a broad-based campaign must be built in the Party, the trade unions and the student movement. At national LPYS Conference defence of the YS must be a central debate, all leading up to a major mobilisation around next year's Party conference.

Model Resolution on Sawyer Proposals

"This regional conference sees the Sawyer proposals on reorganisation of the Labour Party's youth section as an attack on the independence and politics of the LPYS and as part of an overall witch-hunt against the left in the Party. As such this conference commits itself and the regional committee to fight the proposals right down the line.

We note policy passed by national conference to participate in broad-based campaigns against the witch-hunt and therefore will affiliate to, and participate in, Labour Against the Witch-hunt '86, as well as taking initiatives to build and defend the YS ourselves, such as lobbies, petitions, and marches. We will organise regional meetings, and actions in conjunction with LAW '86, involving all other labour movement bodies which oppose the Sawyer proposals."

The Briefing Youth Commission recommends this resolution as a priority for ***Briefing*** *supporters to get sent to the forth-coming Regional Conferences.*

Students beat Chirac: *will NUS fight here?*

At the end of November, students dealt an important blow to the right wing Chirac government in France.

After hundreds of thousands of students mobilised all over France on the streets and on campuses, Education Minister Devaquet withdrew his threats.

The Bill that he proposed is the sort of policy Kenneth Baker would love to implement here. It would have denied students the right to choose their own course, and severely reduced student representation of governing bodies. The left minority of the Socialist Party-led student union, UNEF-ID, played an important role in this extremely successful campaign.

By Patrick Baker
N. London Poly Labour Club; Labour Briefing Youth

Faced with talk of the introduction of "loans" to replace the grant system — a massive step towards pauperisation of students — the question is will NUS fight? While NUS has fairly good policy in a number of areas — such as Ireland and lesbian and gay rights — it has done shamefully little to mobilise students on the streets.

Socialists in NUS and NOLS must fight for NUS to take on the lesson of the Devaquet campaign: the best way to beat back government attacks is to mobilise on the streets.

Marion must stay!

Marion Gaima has lived in Britain for 13 years. Britain is her home. If she is forced to return to Sierra Leone she could face persecution because of her political beliefs.

Our government's racist immigration laws are being used against Marion to deprive her of her basic human rights.

By Kate Adams
Hackney North CLP

Marion is a member of Hackney NALGO, which has pledged its full suport to campaign to stop her deportation.

NALGO has waged two successful national campaigns against deportations. Now we must fight again to gain wider support for Marion to win.

Marion Gaina's judicial review of her appeal for political asylum has been deferred until the New Year. If the appeal is not granted, she faces immediate deportation.

Hackney NALGO and the Hackney Anti-Deportation are therefore organising an active campaign to get support, affiliations and donations from as many organisations as possible.

The Campaign also plans a demonstration for February or March 1987.

Regular planning meetings are to be held each Monday from December 8th at Liberty Hall, Kingsland Road, Dalston.

For further information contact HADC, 01 254 6689 or Hackney NALGO, 01 985 7134.

Please send all petitions and letters of support to Marion Gaima Anti-deportation campaign, c/o Environmental Health Division, 205 Morning Lane, London E9 6LG.

Editorial

BRIEFING
LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Our answer to Tebbit and Ridley

It's not only Thatcherite hit-men like Tebbit and Ridley who are gunning for left-wing Labour councils in their new propaganda war.

Neil Kinnock, John "Chernobyl" Cunningham and Roy Hattersley have been only too eager to hand ammunition to the Tories with smears of their own.

Of course, the Tory attack is cruder and more vicious, with their ludicrous accusations of left councils using intimidation "more like Poland or East Germany" to impose totalitarian rule.

The Tory strategy is cynically to whip up anti-gay and racist hysteria — bolstered through their handling of the AIDS campaigns, the Heathrow visa restrictions, etc. — to crush those councils which show even the slightest signs of leading resistance to Tory cutbacks. And it is over the trampled remnants of that resistance that they hope to march to electoral victory and use a further term of office to crush the labour movement for good.

It is no accident that at the top of Ridley's hate-list have been black-led Brent, Lambeth and Haringey councils. Black activists have only to begin to break through the "whites only" traditions of British electoralist politics to find themselves bearing the full brunt of the Tory government's media onslaught.

It is no accident that the Tories have seized upon the positive campaigns on lesbian and gay rights, and by women's committees. Sexism and heterosexist prejudice provide a fertile soil for "red scare" tactics and taunts about the "loony left".

On the issues of black, lesbian and gay and women's rights, Kinnock and Cunningham have neither defended Party policy nor the Labour Councils on the frontline. They have backed up the Tory case!

And what have they been doing on the economic front? After starting with Liverpool and Lambeth, Kinnock and Cunningham have now *proved* they want to stop all Councils from defending services and defying Tory cash limits. Cunningham may well complain that the Tories have slashed billions from council spending since 1979 (not to mention boosting the inequalities between the shires and inner cities) — but he and Hattersley refuse to contemplate restoring a mere £2 billion to those councils that have borrowed heavily to avoid making painful cuts.

Our so-called "leaders" in the Labour Party are clearly alarmed at the prospect of coming to office amid a major financial crisis for the Councils, and facing a possible borough revolt against Hattersley's first round of cash limits. They seem quite relieved at the sight of the Tories' "softening up" our resistance first.

Under this scale of threat, we need to get our act together fast. Thatcher intends to impose competitive tendering for council services, with the aim of compelling Labour Councils to issue the sack on her behalf to literally thousands of local government workers — and all this in the middle of a national election campaign. Combined with the challenge of cash limits, a huge and growing housing crisis and pressures on social services and education — not to mention mass unemployment, chronic poverty in the big cities, domestic violence and street violence against black communitites — the scenario is menacing.
of taking a principled stand on aspects of anti-racism, yet retreating from local manifesto pledges and moving towards cuts in spending on basic services, will not serve as an adequate model. Just as there can be no working class liberation without liberation of all the oppressed, so there can be no black, women's, lesbian or gay liberation outside the struggle for socialism.

Anti-racism, anti-sexism and the defence of the rights of oppressed groups are absolutely central to our ability to galvanise our support and gain the strength to resist the Tories. But policies relating to those specific oppressed groups become discredited and easily isolated if they are allowed to become divorced from a defence of working class rights, power and organisation on all levels.

Supporters of *Briefing* in local government will not collude with any such divisions. Among the first to spearhead a serious attitude to anti-racism and sexual politics in local Government, we see the attacks on the "loony left" by both the Tories and the Labour leadership as directly targetted on us.

We also spoke out from the start against the "wait for a Labour government" policy. Now any remaining illusions have been dispelled by Cunningham himself. There will be no blank cheque to restore Tory cuts; not even a £2 billion cheque to stand still with. We will have to fight for every penny from a Kinnock government. There will never be extra resources from a Labour government unless we have been organising to fight for it.

That fight must be a united fight: we cannot afford the spectacle of any more Labour councils turning on their workforces one minute, and expecting to fight with them on privatisation or ratecapping the next.

Labour councils should spend all the money they can lay their hands on *now*, there is nothing left to wait for. And from now on, every battle — over ratecapping, over privatisation — is in deadly earnest.

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Next issue out: Wednesday January 14th
Deadline for articles: January 2nd
Next steering committee: Sunday January 18th, 1.30pm, Polytechnic of Central London, Marylebone Road, London NW1 (opposite Baker St tube).

Teachers: what next?

On Saturday November 29th, NUT teachers met at Blackpool, to vote on the deal cobbled together by the NUT leadership and employers.

The right wing leadership intended to deliver their proposals for securing "peace and calm", in the schools: *swallow what we've stitched up for you with the labour employers, or have Baker, he's far worse."*

However, militants speaking from the floor, explained that neither Baker nor the Employers (ACAS) deal is capable of delivering an acceptable package, since both are based on the principle of worsening the conditions of teachers' work in return for more pay.

The extremely narrow vote to support the local pay package, is a signal that a very large number of teachers feel that no existing offer is acceptable. Even the *Guardian* of December 1st 1986 had to admit that:

"The NUT vote should serve as a warning to government that the teachers' sense of grievance is still strong and that an imposed settlement by the Education Secretary would run a strong risk of provoking further industrial action in schools."

The current balance of forces within the NUT, is such that a highly organised campaign for a "No" vote, in the national ballot, could result in the rejection of the deal and show a demonstration of commitment to continue the struggle to defend jobs and conditions, against Tory attacks and right wing ACAs packages.



PHOTO: John Harris (IFL)

Nottingham: lobby of teachers' negotiations

The proposals contained in the ACAS deal amount to:

1. An increase in the hours worked by teachers on the schools site of 10%, i.e. an incrase of 21 working days added to the school year, by adding 5 hours onto the working week in schools, as well as making teachers work another 5 days at the end of the school year (making voluntary meetings compulsory).

2. Worsening class size, by proposing a class size maximum of 33 and more, if new children arrive in the year. (The NUT policy since 1982 has ben 27 as a maximum!)

3. Making covering for absent teachers compulsory/contractual. Cover has been one of the biggest issues that union members have been united on for some time.

The current salary campaign needs to be put in a longer term perspective if its real significance is to be understood. The last decade has seen large sections of the NUT memebrship reject traditional "professionalist" strategies in favour of industrial action as a method of defending their interests. These years have been ones of continued education cuts and attacks on teacher living standards. More recently Tory education strategy has attempted to centralise not only control of the curriculum, but also create a more tightly managed teacher force through notions of assessment and rigid contracts, compulsory meetings after school, etc.

By Veronica Held and Martin Allen Socialist Teachers' Alliance

Yet there remain massive contradictions in the strategies of the NUT. Firstly, the NUT is prevented from building the necesary alliances within the labour movement as a result of its archaic constitution that prevents the Union affiliating to the Labour Party.

The NUT leadership is dominated by what is misappropriately named the "Broad Left", a semi secretive CP-type grouping. The Broad Left has opposed the necesary rule changes as well as unity with the NAS/UWT to form one TUC-affiliated teacher organisation.

Their current tactics are to try to restore a privileged place for the Union under the next Labour government's education policies — a return to the partnership days between the NUT bureaucracy and right wing social democratic politicians. Yet, there is unlikely to be an expansion of education under Labour and the current Education spokesperson Giles Radice is on the far right of the Party.

The strategy of the "Broad Left' will lead to disaster. Their reading of the current situation in the dispute is that the membership have "given up". Despite the fact that the action has been wound down by the Executive in favour of ACAS negotiations, the large vote against the Executive at the Conference is an indication of the determination of the membership.

Whatever the result of the members' ballot, the Socialist Teachers Alliance will continue the fight, the campaign has seen considerable gains by the left in the NUT over a range of issues and union policy. In what could be a difficult time for socialists, these must be defended.

Trade Union Briefing

GCHQ — New penalties follow clampdown

Sixteen trade unionists in GCHQ have had their pay cut by £80-£100 per month for two years. They are being penalised for being "in breach of their conditions of service by being a trade union member."

These latest penalties, imposed by GCHQ management in July, follow the first significant climbdown by the Government when, earlier this year, Sir Geoffrey Howe made it clear they would not dismiss any of the remaining trade unionists at GCHQ, now fifty in number.

Unfortunately, a campaigning opportunity is being missed by the civil service unions at GCHQ. Despite the fact that the sixteen trade unionists are in effect being fined some £2,000 each solely for the "offence" of being trade union members, no effective protest has been mounted.

Waiting for a general election — the strategy apparently adopted by many of the unions involved — is not sufficient. We should use the TUC march and rally called for January 24th — third anniversary of the ban on unions at GCHQ — to call on Labour spokespersons to reiterate their commitment to lifting the ban, and as a springboard for further action.

***Hugh Lanning,* Civil Service Union**

Hangers

Two weeks ago, when 35 Hanger's women and children attended the first women's picket and demanded to see management, Mr Tom Finnegan slammed the door in their faces. A freelance photographer photographed this event and Finnegan exploded. He punched the photographer in the face and threw his camera on the ground. Summons have been served.

On December 3rd, when the women from the Women's Support Group asked again to speak to management about the dispute, they found the woodshop in a dreadful state. All the workbenches had been ripped out during the night and their tools strewn on the floor. Photographs of their children and families were destroyed.

Surprisingly enough no one from mangement or any of the foremen admit to any knowledge of how this happened. Surely poltergeists are not that strong! Or capable of sending the workbenches up to Kelly's, a Hanger's branch in Dundee?

As well as attending the picket line the Hanger's Women's Support Group have been fundraising and speaking at local meetings. They raised £455 at a recent jumble and Xmas bazaar.

Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council are holding a benefit social for the 300 sacked limbmakers and their families on December 10th at the Civic Suite, Wandsworth Town Hall. An appeal from the TC to provide Xmas dinners for the 300 families has gone to all the Wandsworth Labour Parties. There will be a children's Christmas Party on December 20th.

At the union's meeting on December 4th it was announced that the ACAS talks have completely broken down. No further talks have been planned.

Funds are desperately needed. Please send donations to Steve or Sue Blease, 231 Tildesley Road, London SW 15.

Kathy Pick

NCU take action on pay

National Communications Union clerical members are taking action and the union's engineering members are balloting for the second time to follow suit in response to British Telecom's derisory 4.5% plus strings productivity "offer".

The new hardline BT management is unsurprisingly treating the NCU General Secretary John Golding and his right wing engineering executive with contempt. The scourge of the left is said to have opened negotiations with "What are you prepared to offer us?" in return for selling conditions. These have traditionally been negotiated separately. The strings include total job flexibility, abolition of higher grades, open entry, and flexible hours.

The Broad Left dominated Clerical Executive ballotted its members and has initiated a campaign of industrial action including an overtime ban, and a well supported walkout.

The Engineering Executive, however, decided to engage in a futile and unnecessary consultative ballot which rejected the offer 3-1. Now a second ballot has had to be organised to authorise action. The most likely form of action will be an overtime ban, unlikely to start before January — 6 months after the July 1st settlement date and 6 weeks after the clerical members.

The Broad Left is campaigning for a special conference, and the militant London branches are pushing for all-out strike action as the only way to beat a determined BT management. A measure of their intentions is their proposal to cut pay rates at BT's South Wales Cwmcarn factory from £129 pw to £80 *with the support of the responsible right wing NEC member*.

***Pete Cooper*, NCU London West**

Chinese workers strike in Brighton

About 4 Chinese kitchen staff at the well known restaurant firm Wheelers, in Brighton, have been on strike since November 10.

They had attempted to negotiate a pay rise (5% is traditionally given every April, and was given to all other Wheeler workers). In an effort to provoke them, management asked the chef to introduce a new dish. He refused unless the pay deal was negotiated first. He was summarily dismissed and the other staff joined him.

With assistance from the Chinese Information Office, the TGWU's Ron Todd, the entire Brighton Council on the picket line and two 6 minute TV programmes, the action has become a big thing in Brighton.

The workers at Wheelers joined the T&G, but management refused to recognise it. Wheelers is a typical union busting firm, and wants to stop any unionisation of Wheelers 2 or so restaurants. They have even attempted to get a court injunction, costing about £20,000, when that would have paid the pay increase the kitchen staff has been asking for for three years.

In Chinatown the strike has made a big impact, because it symbolised the situation of Chinese workers generally, and most workers have responded positively to a levy of £1 a week to assist the strikers.

The kitchen staff work a 47 hour week, with gross pay about £180 a week, but compared to white staff on similar work they are badly exploited. Most Chinese workers in London, many of whom can hardly speak English, are condemned to this kind of work, and pay and conditions.

A solidarity committee has been formed in Brighton, and is campaigning that no goods be delivered to Wheelers. Supporters and pickets alike have suffered top-heavy treatment from the police.

Send messages of support and donations, payable to "TGWU Wheelers Dispute", c/o TGWU Office, 20 Church Road, Hove, Sussex. For further information please contact T&G office, Brighton, or phone the Chinese Information Advice Centre in London (01-836 8291 or 379 5098).

***Bennie Bunsee*, Black Sections**



PHOTO Andrew Wiard (Report)

The strength of UCATT affects all building workers.

Defend UCATT democracy!



By The Building Worker Group

It is a very significant time to be writing about the state of democracy within UCATT.

As UCATT has by far the largest membership in construction, private and public sector, then the state of this union is of particular relevance to us all and directly affects the wages, safety and conditions of many building workers besides their own membership.

UCATT in fact is in a dreadful state of decline in terms of the democratic rights of the membership being ignored and in many instances actually being trampled into the ground by the full-time leadership.

The most telling example of the dreadful bureaucratic degeneration in UCATT is seen in the officially inspired ballot rigging which took place in the Republic of Ireland.

It was proven by the diligence of a few principled officials, concise investigative journalism and the Irish High Court, that ballot rigging had taken place on a widespread basis.

For example:

"In Limerick where 204 people were supposed to have voted, the room for the meeting measured only 12 feet by 12 feet."

Irish Press, October 1985

We are led to believe that in 8 UCATT branches with a record of low attendances (which is the norm for UCATT branches) 1,504 people voted for B. Veal (the Executive favoured candidate) and only 1, yes 1, voted for D. Miles.

The election was for a vacant post on the UCATT Executive Council.

Since the proven ballot rigging the Executive Council and General Secretary have steadfastly refused to take any action against the ballot-riggers. Why? The only action taken is against Dominic Helier who resigned his position as a London Regional Organiser in order to expose and condemn the ballot-rigging. He was suspended from holding any UCATT office for 10 years. Why?

Over here, the UCATT General Secretary Albert Williams, in secret negotiations with John Laing and the Building Employers Federation, sold out the UCATT Laings Lock Out Committee who were engaged in a major struggle for implementation of UCATT Conference policies of opposition to the Blacklist and the Tory anti-union laws, to the extent of being in contempt of the High Court for two months.

In collaboration with site management at the Balfour Beatty/Fairclough construction site at Sellafield in Cumbria, Albert Williams arranged a meeting *on site* of the new UD500 UCATT branch. The meeting was paid for by management. It just happened to be a voting meeting on union elections and coincidentally over 400 building workers were advised to and voted for an executive favoured candidate. This was and is contrary to all known and accepted practice. It in fact cancelled out all the other branch votes in the N.W. Region of UCATT!

For reasons of space we can only give these few examples. But there are many, many more examples of offically inspired ballot rigging and gross interference with the democratic rights of the UCATT membership in other parts of the UK.

An important political point is that the UCATT Executive, all but one, the General Secretary, were elected on a Broad Left ticket!

Realising that there is an obvious political dimension and degeneration in the present state of UCATT democracy and that any campaign to restore and advance it will have to be political, as well as industrial, a few

We would like to thank *Labour Briefing* for inviting us to write a *Building Worker* column in their paper. But before going on to the writing of any article we state categorically that as a rank and file organisation we are independent of any political organisation and are in fact a united front of workers of differing politics who campaign and organise around a specific set of militant policies for our unions and industry. We of course support all principled campaigns and democratic struggles within the class struggle where and when possible.

UCATT members accompanied by *Labour Briefing* people, went to visit Eric Heffer, UCATT sponsored MP, at the House of Comons. He provided the following excellent statement:

"Some rank and file members of UCATT have been to see me, and have indicated their concern at certain developments in the union from the democratic point of view. I am in favour of the fullest democratic control of the union by rank and file members.

If there is any ballot rigging at any time in the union, not only should it be deplored but action should be taken against any members involved.

I would like to see us have the sort of democratic elections, on an annual basis, as we used to have in Merseyside in the ASW (Associatetd Society of Woodworkers) in the 1940s. The full time officials, the management committee and District Secretary were elected every year."

A very positive statement and approach.

But we will only ever be able to restore and advance democracy to and in UCATT when we can form a Political and Industrial united front of all those forces prepared to fight around a programme of action which will lead to the ending of corruption and the besmirching of the good name of trade unionism associated with it and restore democratic control to the rank and file membership of the union.

Gavin Laird delights CBI

His master's voice

By Jack Doberman

As engineering industry employers press ahead with sweeping, fundamental attacks on the working conditions of millions of workers under the guise of "flexible working", AEU General Secretary Gavin Laird has been talking not to his members about a fightback, but to CBI leaders about increased collaboration.

As star speaker at an otherwise tedious CBI conference which lined up even more unequivocally than usual behind the policies of the Thatcher government, Laird delighted the bosses with a memorable display of bootlicking.

"The fact that the CBI saw fit to invite me to address their annual conference and my ready acceptance of that invitation speaks eloquently of the real relationship between unions and employers in our country."

Rather it speaks volumes about the employers' cynical exploitation of the extreme right wing "business unionism" embraced by the Laird leadership of the AEU and their co-thinkers of the scab EETPU and the yellow UDM.

"That relationship is a working relationship between organisations striving to solve problems. This is profoundly different from that which is projected by the media, being one of conflict between warring factions."

In fact both the CBI, the Engineering bosses and the AEU are united in waging war on the AEU membership at shop floor level in the fight to increase exploitation and thereby increase profits.

Under the impact of years of sold-out struggles on pay and jobs, and the demolition of much of the shop stewards' movement that formed the backbone of the engineering unions, the AEU has been able to hold down strike action — to the extent that Laird boasted to grateful bosses that:

"Our strike record is around the order of one and a half hours lost per year per employee."

He complained however that "high unit costs" — inadequate management resources devoted to speed-up on the shop floor — rather than high wages were the main obstacles to a competitive British industry.

AEU members' aspirations are not so far removed from those of CBI members, he claimed.

They, too, would like huge salaries, company cars, business lunches, big houses, tax fiddles, days on the golf course, etc!

"We are all too often entrenched in our own redoubt, blaming the other side for our own failings (!) whilst our foreign competitors walk away with the prize — namely market share."

Laird's unconditional offer of assistance to "British" employers against "foreign" competitors was specifically separated from any question of whether Labour or the Tories were in office: it was clear statement of the level of class collaboration that has now become the most coherent leading force in the TUC.



PHOTO/ Andrew Wiard (Report)

Printworkers still at the sharp end

***Briefing* spoke to Liz Short, Deputy Mother of Chapel, *Times* Clerical SOGAT, and Mark Sullivan, Chair, WH Smiths Hammersmith Chapel, SOGAT.**

***Briefing:* How would you compare women's involvement in this print strike with the miners' strike?**

Liz: The main difference is that there are women strikers. They are from the clerical branch and the RIRMA branch — the lady cleaners.

There has been a move by the printers' wives to get themselves together, and they've formed a group called Women Against Murdoch (WAM). The problem is that unlike Women Against Pit Closures it's quite difficult for them to organise. In the pit strike most of the women were in small communities. Here, everybody's fighting this problem of isolation.

Mark: As in the miners' strike, the women didn't just want to be in the soup kitchens, but also to be on the picket lines, and speaking at meetings.

***Briefing:* Have the unions counteracted the idea that this strike is about white, male, highly-paid workers defending their privileges?**

Mark: Maybe we are tarnished with that image. People forget about the cleaners, the telephonists, and the canteen workers.

Liz: The image of printers as overpaid is very persistent. It's a very curious attitude, of envy and resentment towards a well-paid group of workers. Because of that, the right to organise, the issue we're fighting for, gets lost. But are we really only going to support nurses and health workers, and say they are deserving because they're absolutely impoverished? Are we not going to support other workers who are under attack simply because they earn decent salaries?

As secretaries go, I was decently paid. I had a nine day fortnight, six weeks holiday, and decent maternity leave. But the reason we had that was because we fought for it, and people went through an eleven month lockout. Before that they were on absolutely lousy wages and dreadful conditions.

When I was in work, I was a trade unionist on the committee but not particularly active. It's only being in a dispute like this that makes you realise what you're up against. I went to a meeting of Hanger's wives formed to support their husbands. I said to one of them "When I was at work, I didn't really know what was going on for other people."

She looked at me and said, "Yes, you don't care, do you?"

I never knew Silentnight existed before this dispute. We're at the sharp end of everything the capitalist system can throw at people, and we have to be supported.

Briefing: **What is your assessment of the tactics pursued by the print unions during the Wapping dispute?**

Liz: The leadership's main aim has been to avoid sequestration of its assets at all costs. Brenda Dean said it would mean the end of the union. It's obviously not anything that anybody wants, but you can't win an industrial dispute at the moment without taking on the law.

Mark: Only the London Wholesale workers have stood firm. If SOGAT Wholesale branches outside London have to close because of sequestration they might start backing up London and their own union. We can still win this dispute.

Liz: Right now there's a minority of voices crying in the wilderness. The way to tackle this dispute is to get our fellow workers, particularly in Fleet Street, to stop handling News International titles in London. Our difficulties are being used as a weapon against employees of other titles. "Look what's happened to them," they say, and, "There's no way they can win." People have been persuaded through anxiety about their livelihood to take redundancy.

***Briefing:* How does this affect the dispute now?**

Mark: I welcome the levy, but it's eight months too late. Under the SOGAT rule book you could have made it 50p per week, which would have brought in £100,000 per week, without a ballot.

Liz: Of all the deals that have been done, the *Telegraph* is the most appalling, because they've gone for a no-strike deal. At the *Mirror*, Maxwell has two floors closed off for his new London evening newspaper. He's got non-union staff working in there. The people in the *Mirror* think he's going to do a Wapping on them come January, with possibly four regional centres to print his titles.

The only way of putting pressure on the leadership is through the rank and file having a strike committee and mass meetings; but when there were mass meetings the London leadership just ignored them.

Because SOGAT was organised in fairly small units, people knew their fellow chapel members. Unfortunately, in this dispute it has led to a lot of sectarianism and a lot of division. As a result there hasn't been sufficient unity amongst the strikers to push for the kind of policies that could take the strike forward.

Mark: We should have a strike committee elected by a mass meeting, and if, after a month or so, we don't like them, we should replace them.

***Briefing:* What role has the Fleet Street Support Unit played?**

Liz: The FSSU has never pretended to be anything other than a pressure group; we're not an alternative leadership. We want to remind people that there is an alternative to boycotts and futile marches. It has been particularly opposed by the Communist Party, who don't believe in rank and file groups.

***Briefing:* What do you think of the Labour Party's role in the fight with Murdoch?**

*Liz:*I didn't expect much of Kinnock or the Labour Party leadership during this dispute because of their attitude during the miners' strike. I think that the Labour leadership see supporting a group of people in struggle as very damaging to their electoral chances, a view which I think is misguided.

I think that most printworkers used to fall in with the view of Tony Benn that's peddled in the tabloid press, that he's some kind of "loony" who should be shut away somewhere. But nobody will ever think like that after what he did for us on May 3rd. There he was in the thick of it, giving a running commentary, supporting us to the hilt, and then standing up in Parliament, saying exactly what had gone on down there.

Mark: Another group which has been very supportive are the gays and lesbians. We can't isolate people, which is what the *Sun* tries to do.

Hammond escapes

By Harry Sloan

Eric Hammond must have laughed all the way to Wapping.

Despite barely bothering to deny new evidence confirming EETPU collaboration with Rupert Murdoch's union-busting moves against the NGA and SOGAT; despite the vote at this year's TUC Congress for disciplinary action if that collusion continued; despite the surprising support given to the print unions by right wing delegates from the ISTC and GMBU, Hammond still escaped scot-free from November's General Council meeting by a 23-21 margin.

In a classical display of the New Cynicism, TUC General Secretary Norman Willis had argued that though the EETPU were clearly guilty, they had already been "tried" and sentenced, and that "natural justice" demanded they could not be tried again.

Tell that to the High Court judges who have brutally fined unions and individual militants for persisting in a course of action which judges deem contempt of court!

If anything is contemptuous it is the attitude of an arrogant EETPU to a spineless TUC leadership which has now publicly abandoned even the pretence of implementing Congress policies.

Yet this same TUC leadership which refused to take action against EETPU scabs is persisting in a hare-brained disciplinary action against ASTMS over the representation of thousands of insurance workers at Sun Alliance. ASTMS, having merged with the staff association, has a clear majority of union members there: the right wing banking union BIFU (supporters of Willis over Wapping) a small minority. Yet the TUC has consistently intervened in support of BIFU and threatened to suspend ASTMS for insisting on its right to represent its own members!

This two-faced attitude by the TUC bureaucracy will continue as long as Hammond, Laird, and the hard right are allowed to make the political running.

What printworkers will be looking for is Tony Dubbins and Brenda Dean turning some of their indignation at the TUC decision into practical moves to step up the Wapping fight and invoke the support of those unions which backed them in the General Council vote.

Printworkers are advised not to hold their breath waiting for this development.

Factory bosses cut & run in the Midlands

On November 12th, over 200 West Midlands trade unionists joined with the sacked workers from Borderway Factory in Aston, Birmingham, to assert their right to join a trade union of their choice.

Banners from Tass, Metal Mechanics, Firemen's Union, NUPE, and Birmingham Trades Council hung outside the factory wall. Former Longbridge Convenor Derek Robinson, speaking at the rally, said the workers were sacked for joining the Manufacturing Union Tass. The company has since replaced them with scab labour. Robinson told the rally "*What we need to do here is go out to the factories which deal with Borderways and ask workers not to handle its products.*"

Jerry Bartlett, for NUPE, called for more cash to be collected for the sacked workers, and the local vicar, Rev. Richard Bashford, also spoke in support of the sacked workers, saying it was time the church got off the fence and joined people such as the sacked Borderway workers. "*If I don't speak out on this matter I'm not doing my job,*" he said.

Within hours of the close of the rally, Borderway's management called in the Liquidator. Mr Terry Pye, Midland District Organiser for the Metal Mechanics sector of Tass, said "*I find it deeply disturbing that the company solution to solving the problem is not to sit down and discuss the matter but to cut and run.*"

The sacked workers and their union are now seeking legal advice.
***John Robinson*, Tass NSMM Craft Section**

Support local jobs and services

Pressure is mounting on Labour's Front Bench to come clean on their plans for local government finance.

By Stephen Marks

Labour councils throughout the country hae been forced into "creative accounting" techniques in order to implement Party policy of defending jobs and services.

Waiting

They are waiting for a pledge from the leadership that a Labour Government would reverse Tory policies sufficiently to make it possible to pay for these loans.

Ideally, a Labour Government ought to take these debts over itself, as they are only necessary because of Tory cuts in central government assistance.

Repeated

But even if Tory laws on local government funding were all repealed councils would at least know that they could meet the cost of servicing these loans when they fall due, without cuts in services and jobs, or massive rate increases.

However, the only pledge that Cunningham and Straw have given is that Ratecapping and direct capital controls will go.

Rate increases

But without a pledge to scrap the Tory system of "clawback" which has robbed some authoritites of all the Rate Support Grant, this could mean rate increases of up to £7 a week or more.

Hattersley is urging Labour Councils to draw up investment and spending plans to help create the "one million jobs in two years" that Labour promises. Are Labour councils meant to sack staff now, and tell them to comeback in two years when we can create "new" jobs for them to count towards Roy's million?

Divide and rule

Chief Environment Spokesperson Jack Cunningham obviously takes the Party's policy of opposition to cuts in jobs and services as seriously as the commitment to phase out nuclear power. He has played the Tory game of divide and rule by using this issue to play off MPs and Councils in the North against those in the South and South-East — so far without much success in either case.



PHOTO: John Chapman

Roy Hattersley

South East

In any case, without Labour gains in the South East there won't be another Labour government. And Labour councils carrying out Tory cuts — the only immediate alternative to creative accounting — won't win votes.

Bombard NEC

But that is to put the issue too much in Cunningham's own terms. "Creative accounting" has been used by Labour authorities all over the country. Party members all over the country must bombard the NEC with demands for a clear commitment to back up those who are bearing the brunt of the Tory offensive on local government jobs and services.

Kinnock sides with racism

By Alf Filer
Brent East CLP

One has to expect populist attacks from the racist media, whose interest is served in defending and maintaining racism, but what purpose is served when Neil Kinnock, Giles Radice and John Cunningham call on Brent Council not to pursue its right to the truth through holding an inquiry into the McGoldrick case.

According to Kinnock and the shadow cabinet, an investigation into alleged acts of racism is an obvious vote loser. At one fell swoop, Labour's promise of fighting racism if elected is reduced to empty rhetoric. Rather than attempting to show any understanding of the Black commuity in Brent, the needs of Black people regarding education, and how to challenge institutional racism, the Labour leadership has sided with racism and once again put a false concept of electoralism before principles.

Committed

Pushing ahead with an inquiry is neither a vote loser locally or nationally. On the contrary, it shows that Labour is committed to policies that meet the needs of the Community, both Black and White, and this is what we expect our leadership to be explaining. Kinnock's advisers should remind him that Black people also vote — mainly Labour.

When the leadership's action is seen alongside their support for the police, immigration controls, opposition to Black sections and autonomous rights of the oppressed, then party members should start asking what type of anti-racist policies will emerge from the next Labour government.

NUT leadership

The NUT leadership stopped at nothing in their rush to get support for their reactionary position in Brent — not even stopping long enough to consult their rank and file members. We have heard little from them or Kinnock in defending the attempts by Brent Council to improve equal opportunities.

The issue is not McGoldrick as such, but the need to look into serious complaints regarding racism, which must be treated as cases of gross misconduct. Are Kinnock, Fred Jarvis, and the Brent Teachers Association now saying that acts of racism should be reduced to minor offences?

Long way

Yes, of course Brent has a long way to go in achieving changes, and must be willing to take its campaigns out onto the streets and to the public. Policies must not finish at the Council chamber. Whatever valid criticism one may make about the implementation of policies, criticisms by Kinnock & Co. are destructive and only serve the racists in society.

For this reasons, Brent East GC has passed a resolution welcoming the Council decision to have an inquiry and condemn the intervention by Kinnock.



PHOTO Labour Party Photo Library

John Cunningham

FRONTLIN LABOUR C

By Greg Tucker (Chair, Lambeth Labour Group) and Joan Twelves (Chief Whip, Lambeth Council) in their personal capacities

Major attacks on Labour local authorities, particularly those inner-city authorities led by the left, have been launched by Nicholas Ridley and Norman Tebbit.

The serious press quickly identified these attacks as part of a Tory pre-election strategy. Senior Tory Party officers have recently toured Conservative Associations in Lambeth to tell the faithful to dig up dirt on the Council, Labour councillors,and local Labour Parties.

Meanwhile, the Queen's speech unveiled plans for the forced privatisation of many major local government services. With ratecapping still in force, this represents a further tightening of the screw on local democracy. If local councils complain loudly, then new laws on "propaganda on the rates" are to be introduced to silence them.

DHSS crisis

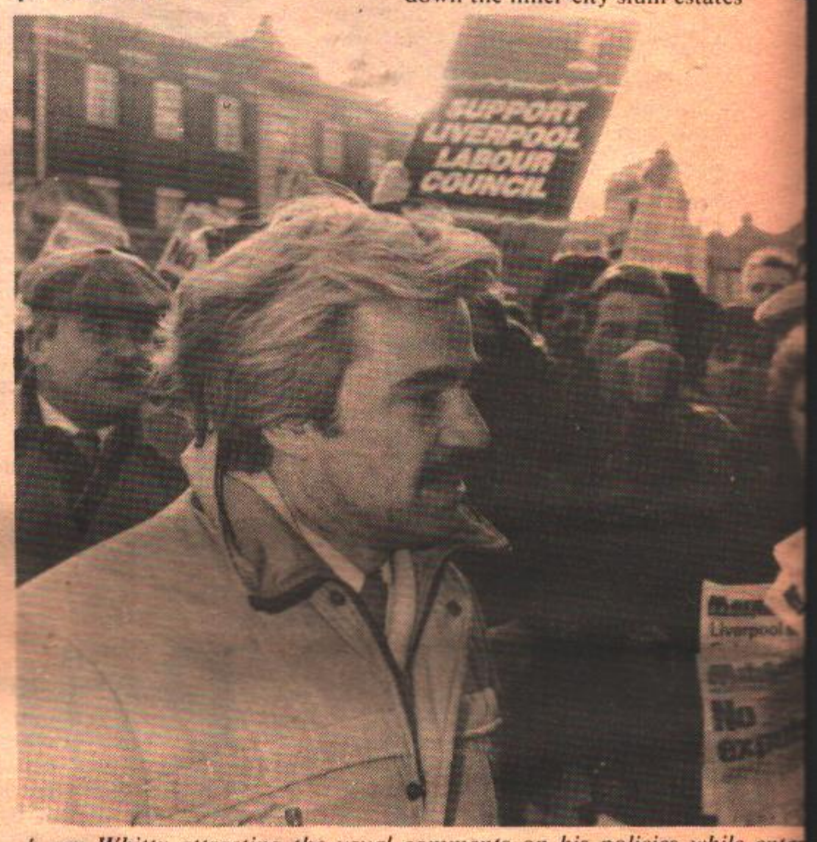
The inner city is in a state of collapse. One example is the current crisis in the DHSS. An increasing number of inner London social security offices are being closed and/or workers are going on strike, because they are not being given the resources to meet the demand caused by the ever-increasing number of claimants. Instead of doing anything about the problem, the government's response is to blame local authorities for informing claimants of their rights. Thousands of claimants and their children are being left penniless.

Trap

Instead of rising to the defence of local democracy and the people of the inner city, Neil Kinock has fallen into the trap laid for him by Tebbit — supporting "the 99.90% of Labour Councillors who do not attract the headlines", but then selling out the rest, whom he accuses of "zealotry". Trying to blame the left for the failure of his rightward-moving policies, he attacks "a few councils who obscure the efforts of so many." Larry Whitty has written to every Labour Group telling them to shut up and toe the line, or else.

Ritual phrases

Front bench spokespeople like Cunningham and Straw, while mouthing ritual phrases against privatisation and ratecapping, have in practice stood with those "good" Labour councils who have tried to implement Party policy. The witch-hunt is "justified" on the grounds that it is Conference policy. It is also Conference policy to fight ratecapping and privatisation. **When is Larry Whitty going to launch investigations into those Labour-controlled councils which have privatised services? When is he going to write to Labour Groups (as instructed by Conference) urging them to resist and campaign against privatisation?**



Larry Whitty attracting the usual comments on his policies while enter

The Front Bench is busy promoting "Jobs Programmes". The aim is to show the lead role local councils will play in implementing Labour's pledge of "a million jobs in two years". Councils are being encouraged to draw up plans, such as Southwark Council's "A Working Community", which show how jobs can be created quickly through a mixture of capital schemes (e.g. building new homes) and revenue expansion (e.g. taking on more home helps).

Aside from the 3 million left on the dole by this exercise, many other questions remain unanswered. Are these low paid, low status jobs the sort we want to create? How do we deal with the lack of training opportunities which have left many unskilled or deskilled and unable to take up meaningful work? What priority should be given to equal opportunities? And, most importantly, how do we **pay** for this expansion?

£2 Billion

To start with, there is the problem of the **£2 billion** which would have to be found just to get local councils out of the tangle caused by the creative accounting measures they have been forced to adopt over the last few years.

As a draft report being prepared for the Shadow Cabinet points out: "**... without action to tackle their financial problems, it is very unlikely that a programme for job creation involving local authorities could get off the ground.**" That £2 billion is needed just to stand still.

Many local authorities in the inner city are already unable to fulfil their statutory obligations in social services and property repairs. It has been estimated that it will cost £40 billion to bring the country's housing stock into a reasonable state of repair. Beyond that, how much will it cost to build enough houses to house the homeless? How much will it cost to knock down the inner-city slum estates and rehouse the tenants in houses with gardens?

With Hattersley reluctant to put any money on the table, or even to promise to loosen central government controls on local authority capital expenditure, the success of any job creation programme will depend on ability to raise money in the City. So, how will local authorities pay the interest charges? And what happens when we have an investment strike as happened with the last Labour Government?

Battleground

It is clear that, alongside Labour's non-nuclear defence policy, local government will be one of the main battlegrounds in the run up to the General Election. How should the Left respond?

First, we must have a clear alternative to the half-promises, which raise more questions than they answer, and the lack of commitment from the Front Bench. We must demand, not what may be possible if the City lets us do it, but what is absolutely **essential** to meet the needs of working class people in the inner cities: jobs, training and apprenticeship schemes, resources put into education, decent affordable homes, nurseries for the under-fives, etc. Conferences on improving service-delivery are mere cosmetic exercises without a commitment to providing necessary resources.

Guarantee

We want an unequivocal guarantee that elected regional authorities will be restored to

Our answer to Tebbit and Ridley: Fight privatisation! — No

E COUNCILS

ondon and the metropolitan unties — the problems of the ner cities are not the problems individual boroughs. They ed to be dealt with at a ategic level, not least to sure redistribution of sources.

Conference

Conference has more than nce supported the demand that te support grant should be



PHOTO: Labour Party Photo Library

ng Labour Party HQ.

stored to 1979 levels. We need so to demand the return of the llions stolen from local uncils since 1979, for ample, the £300 million in ant and housing investment thheld or withdrawn from mbeth.

But this brings us face to face with the central issue — **if an incoming Labour government is to do anything for the plight of the inner cities then it will have no choice but to take control of the financial institutions so that we can raise the capital to meet our needs.**

Prince Charles has recently announced his Inner City Trust to "revitalise the Inner city". If Lambeth Council were to take over the land in the Borough owned by his Duchy of Cornwall we could finance our housing needs — and still have money left over.

Major questions

Labour local authorities face immediate problems, and local parties in the inner city have to confront major questions over the next few months. Whether it is the threat of privatisation or the effects of ratecapping on next year's budget, there will be those who will argue, along with Larry Whitty, for tactical retreats in the run-up to the general election.

"Niceness" does not win votes — we have to make people confident that they can believe what we say. **And that means standing by manifesto promises. It means refusing to make cuts— whatever effect that might have on budgets.**

Major swing

The major swing to Labour in the May elections in Lambeth after the surcharge and disqualification of 31 councillors showed that people respect those who keep their promises. However, it has to be recognised that the disqualification of those prepared to fight was a defeat. The Rates Act has not been destroyed, and it would be foolish not to admit that we have been forced onto the defensive. However, there is a world of difference between being on the defensive and giving in. We must oppose "tactical retreats" which end up as redundancies and cuts in services.

Rebuild unity

Faced with the latest Tory onslaught, Labour councillors have to rebuild unity with their trade unions. After the climb-downs and defeats during the ratecapping struggle, most trade unionists rightly refuse to place any great faith in council leaderships. Alliances have to be built which involve sharing information in order to develop collective strategies to defend services and protect jobs.

Over the next few months, council workers have to be closely involved in drawing up next year's budgets. And if we are to resist privatisation — when all the arguments of the ratecapping struggle about non-compliance and illegality will come to the fore again — there has to be a firm campaigning partnership between councillors, workers, and users of services.

National Campaign

If there are to be any local authorities' services left by the time we get a Labour government, there needs to be a major national campaign exposing the problems of the inner city and supporting those councillors — all of them — who are attempting to solve those problems. If the Tories' election strategy is to be challenged and defeated, there has to be a united fight. It would be all to the good if the Labour leadership were part of that fight for a change — but "unity" and "fighting" seem to have been written out of Kinnock's lexicon.



Dave Stewart

ambeth and Liverpool councillors outside the High Court, January 1986.



PHOTO: John Chapman

Trade unionists picket Hackney Town Hall, February 1982, as part of fighting ratecapping.

No to tenders: A call to action!

The policy of the national Party and unions to leave privatisation as a local issue (as outlined by Dave Benlow in last month's *Briefing*) has meant activists are campaigning in a vacuum.

The post-ratecapping scepticism coupled with the national silence has reinforced the message that tendering might just go away without any effort from us. Certainly our local Councillors don't seem too bothered, so why should ordinary trade unionists get excited?

Counter apathy

It was to counter this apathy and to evolve a practical approach to resisting contractors that London Bridge organised its most successful conference for over a year.

Over 80 delegates from 10 London Authorities attended the conference on November 21st — and the whole day was approached with seriousness and a sense of urgency.

What should local union activists be demanding from Councillors and fighting for with the membership? We know that a "no compliance" stand was unlikely to protect us for long from the multi-nationals, so the final draft resolution (see below) which is to be circulated to branches for discussion, while making demands on Councilors, does so without high expectations.

By Joanna Fawkes
Co-Chair, London Bridge
Chair, Camden NALGO

Priorities

It is necessary for us we agreed, to have our own priorities, tactics and "bottom lines" in order to proceed. After all, managers are right now reviewing service and job specifications in the most threatened areas with a view to making them more competitive.

There was considerable debate on this issue at the conference, with some delegates warning that agreeing any changes would be colluding in our own downfall; others felt that — with safeguards — workers could use the opportunity to *improve* some aspects of their jobs, while protecting their existing hours, pay and conditions. This latter view was shared by a large majority.

Alerting

However, for these opportunities to be realised, it is clear that much work must be done in the immediate future — not least in alerting the Labour Party left to what is going on. We can't very well complain about the Cunninghams and Straws when local Left Councillors are doing so little to take up these issues.

Brighton ratecapped

This year we have our first ever Labour Council in Brighton. Ridley has responded to this by rate-capping Brighton on the basis of last year's Tory budget. It is hoped that the Council will be able to continue to implement the Labour manifesto with the aid of creative accounting. In the meantime Party activists are running a campaign of leafletting and petitioning to raise public awareness of the £2½m or 20% cut the council has had to face. The most important aspect of our work has been the development of a relationship between the Party and the Local Government unions. At the November Council meeting the Party and the unions held a joint lobby of 200 people to support jobs and services and against rate-capping.

——Draft resolution——

London Bridge seeks the expansion and improvement of local government services, and will oppose any attempt to sell these services under the terms of the Local Government Act (expected Jan 1987).

London Bridge resolves to resist any attempt by local authorities to use compulsory tendering as a method of cutting jobs, hours, pay and conditions, and will oppose the redrafting of job descriptions and work specifications if this is used to adopt a more competitive position at the expense of pay, custom and practice and the quality of the service.

London Bridge resolves to campaign to bring all local government services into the direct employment of Councils.

We call on Councils:

1. To declare their commitment to defend jobs and services from compulsory tendering legislation under the new local government act by:
a) ensuring that no change in any job description or work specification will involve any loss of pay, hours and conditions;
b) refusing to submit tenders that would entail such losses — even if this meant defying the law;
c) refusing to work with contractors who win tenders against the Council's workforce, even though this could be illegal.

2. London Bridge is committed to:
a) Ensuring that Councils fully consult with the trade unions on the expected new local government act, and that managers do not develop privatisation strategies outside Council/union agreements.
b) Working with managers and councillors to develop new specifications based on the improvement of the service and no loss of pay, hours, and conditions of service. Establishing the rights of the workforce in contract documents will deter contractors.
c) Refusing to submit in-house tenders and actively frustrate the submission of in-house or other tenders by industrial action.
d) Taking industrial action appropriate to protect existing Council jobs when a tender is awarded to an outside contractor.
e) Campaigning among the users of the service so that the implications of privatisation can be explained, and to work for improvements to services.
f) Involving the membership at all levels and ensuring that workplace meetings have the opportunity to consider the above policy.

Building Briefing

Fortnightly Briefing on the way!

Now that our Supporters Prize Draw Club has over 200 paid shares, the fortnightly Briefing is on target for January 1987.

We have drawn our first prize winners for December (see below) — watch this space for future prize draw winners.

Of course, if you're not in the supporters' club, you stand no chance of winning! Fill in the standing orders form (see right), send it in, and keep reading!

We still need all the support we can get to maintain the fortnightly Briefing. In the lead up to the Election there is all the more need for a left paper which unites workers, Labour Party activists, councillors, and militants fighting against special oppression and imperialism.

Support Labour Briefing! Together we can turn the tide!

Prize Draw winners.

Haringey, where Briefing supporters have organised an active Briefing group, has swept the board in our Supporters Club prize draw!

The winners are Linda Clarke, paper sales organiser, and long-standing Briefing supporter Narendra Makanji.

Congatulations to these comrades.

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At (address) .....

.....

From: ..... (your name)

(your address) .....

.....

My account number is: .....

Please debit from my account each month the sum of £4, in favour of Labour Briefing No 2 account, Co-operative Bank, Stratford E15, Code 08-90-76, Account No. 50349957.

Starting on .....(date)

Thereafter on .....(date) of each month

Signature .....

Dated .....

Lesbian & Gay Briefing group

By Theresa Conway and Alan Holder

Up until now the lesbian and gay input into *Briefing* has not been organised to the same extent as other aspects of the paper. Articles on lesbian and gay issues have until now been written by only a few people. We feel that this arrangement is undemocratic and inefficient.

We would therefore like to see lesbian and gay *Briefing* supporters set up a commission on the same lines as other *Briefing* commissions. The main aim would be to plan and organise the writing of articles so as to provide a regular coverage of lesbian and gay issues.

Could comrades who are interested in participating in this work please write to "Lesbian and Gay *Briefing* Group", c/o *Briefing*. Please tell us what lesbian and gay issues you are particularly interested in, and if you are involved in any lesbian and gay groups.

Letter

Dear Comrades,

In the two articles on the "McGoldrick affair" Colin Adams and the Brent NALGO member write in support of the stance taken by Brent Council. While Colin Adams points to some of the problems that have arisen in the implementation of anti-racist policies, the comrade from NALGO simply berates everyone who might have doubts about the policy.

The Council **was** correct to suspend a headteacher who was alleged to have said she wanted no more black teachers in the school, **was** correct to challenge the ruling that it could not hold an enquiry after the school governors had absolved her, and **is** right to open an enquiry now. But that is only the bare bones of a policy. A correct policy is far more than the right decisions by a small group of Councillors.

For socialists good policies are not simply imposed from on high. While not tailoring our policies to what we can get support for, that doesn't mean we don't want support for them! Indeed, there is no point in having good policies if we don't attempt to convince the working class community they are right.

I am not talking of press coverage. Of course we cannot hope to get anything but hostility from the Tory press when we are serious about anti-racism. Nor is it a matter of electoralism. Those who are only concerned with winning votes back off from policies that go beyond fine (or not so fine) speeches, which is why Brent Council, together with other Labour Councils, is under attack from Kinnock, Cunningham and Radice.

The comrade from Brent NALGO mentions the sacking of a manual worker by Brent for racism. A few years ago a town-hall caretaker was summarily sacked — for racially abusing a Labour councillor — without any reference to disciplinary procedures. This produced the ludicrous situation where the left in Brent NALGO had to reluctantly support a ballot on industrial action in defence of the disciplinary procedure even though they did not want to defend a racist.

The attitude of Councillors has been similar in the McGoldrick case. Take a decision, impose it and stand back while the flak flies. Throughout this case there has been **no** attempt by the Councillors involved to inform Party activists of what is going on, let alone the people of Brent. In the face of attack from the media there **should** have been a sustained campaign throughout the borough in defence of this policy. Nothing. Is it any surprise that people whose **only** source of information is the media are at best confused about what is going on?

Even the Labour Group of Councillors have been kept totally in the dark. McGoldrick was suspended in late July, yet despite court cases and the media barrage the first time the affair went before Labour Group was in October when a majority (including, mistakenly, the hard left) voted only to take a report with no discussion. How are activists meant to defend a policy when they are not told what is going on?

Even on their own terms, the councillors' handling of the case has been abysmal. The disciplinary procedure allows for a case to be heard first **either** by the school governors (with later reference to a disciplinary sub-committee) or a disciplinary sub-committee. Councillors **chose** to refer the case to the governors even though rumours were already circulating about their antagonism towards black teachers, thus making the later fuss a certainty.

The reactionary role of the Stalinist/Liberal leadership of Brent NUT was rightly slammed by the two writers. Of course socialists oppose and try to break a strike in defence of an alleged racist. But why the silence about the record of Brent's chair of education, Ron Anderson? Until a few years ago he was himself part of the BTA clique. Fine, you might say, but people change. Yes, but only **last year** Anderson was censured by Brent LGC for putting out a leaflet in a Council by-election (without mentioning it was from the Labour Party) which strongly implied that planning permission for a mosque went through **against** the wishes of the Labour Councillors when in fact Labour supported it. Needless to say, the by-election was in one of the leafy suburbs of Brent North where the white residents opposed the mosque.

The role of leading councillors has been as bureaucratic, heavy-handed (and often opportunist) as that of the NUT leadership. They have acted throughout as employers deciding on policies and implementing them. The problem for serious socialists is that this limited role is not only inadequate but counter-productive when it comes to issues (such as rate-capping) where they have **no choice** but to turn to the community for support.

Colin Adams points to the problem of Councillors sitting in Town Halls deciding on and imposing policies. I agree, but it is not simply a matter of how they spend their time, but whether they see themselves as part of the labour movement fighting to win mass support for policies. Their whole concept of socialism is of imposition from above by well-meaning people.

While supporting the policy in the McGoldrick case we have to reject a version of socialism which has so much in common with Stalinism.

Pete Firmin
Brent East CLP

Periscope



Send snippets and info to Greg Bassett, Periscope Column, Labour Briefing, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5.

Call me El Al

Whatever happend to those American tourists scared off by fears of Libyan terrorism? While Britain's stately homes and chilly museums enjoyed an unexpectedly relaxed summer season, where had the checked-trousered, luggage-toting hordes vanished to?

Periscope can reveal that thousands were whisked away on a special "Admiral Poindexter Mystery Tour", which included:

- A 2-week kidnapping in a Beirut basement
- A photo-call with Terry Waite
- A brief stopover in Teheran
- An El Al flight to a "contra" camp in Honduras, for a week's sunbathing, murder and bestiality.

Last seen in Miami, sporting bags of "Contra"-brand cocaine and souvenir severed appendages, the globe-trotting punters were reported well pleased with their unique holiday opportunity.

Laid out

The recent reports of a supposed corpse found to be still living in a hospital morgue will ring a bell for frustrated Labour activists. Whilst many labour movement bodies appear more dead than alive, others continue to offer stiff opposition to the left, though they remain more cadavers than cadres. But as optimist "*Briefing* Activist of the Year" Ivor Slogan told *Periscope*: "This is a grave matter — we must undertake the fightback."

Tell Sid

Those who can't afford shares in the industries the government are selling off (or who can't understand why we are being given the chance to buy something that we owned in the first place) may be interested in the figure 22,644,000.

That's how many pounds of your taxes the government has spent just on advertising the sale of these industries. And that's without the millions spent on British Gas. If you see Sid, tell him.

One Vote For All

While Kinnock and the right wing embrace the Tory call for postal ballots in unions, fresh doubts over the level of "democracy" involved arise with every vote taken under the system.

Outside the glare of national press publicity, routine postal ballot elections are drawing ever-declining participation from those "ordinary" union members who were supposedly clamouring for a vote.

A recent ballot in the Union of Communications Workers drew a return of only 135 votes out of an electorate of over 2,000.

If this trend continues, the chances of standing an unknown chimpanzee and having him/her elected get better every day. They like to call it "one person, one vote" — we didn't realise it meant only one person would vote at a time.

Putting Themselves Out

Tory plans for competitive tendering of local government services have alarmed the big contract firms, who believe the odds are not sufficiently stacked in their favour. But other questions remain unanswered (and unasked)

- Can contract labour empty the dustbin of history — or is it all a load of rubbish?
- Will your services become somebody else's business?
- Will private caterers cook the books — or drive the gravy train? Or both?
- Will slower councils be left with a tender behind?

Yes, Minister?

Briefing has been bashed by a few "Broad Church" socialists over its lack of coverage of religious affairs. *Periscope* has risen to the challenge.

To dispel ignorance and prepare the ground for more regular coverage including a forthcoming "Red Pulpit" column from Michael Meacher and the LCC (Left Curate's Caucus) we begin this issue by explaining a few basic terms.

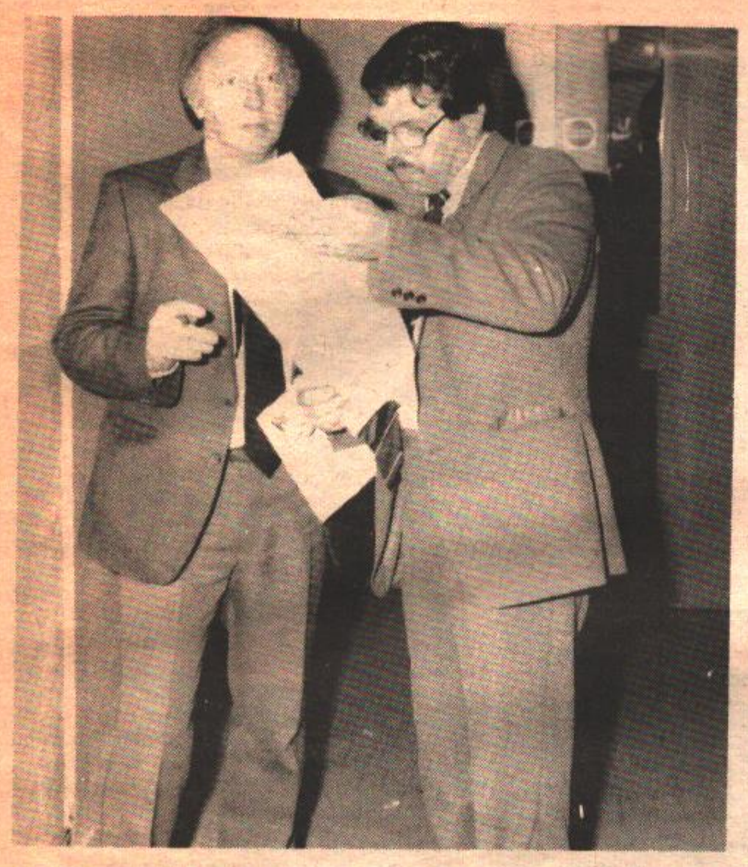
- **Holy**: prickly leaves used for Christmas decorations.
- **Altar**: new, high-risk brand of cigarette.
- **Cross**: mark on postal ballot.
- **Abbey habit**: wanking.
- **Monastic**: solvent glue "giving a better high than Pritt Stick, and easier to get up your nose."
- **Resurrection**: (not to be confused with reselection) method by which the old (e.g. Harold Wilson's *In Place of Strife*) reappears as the new (e.g. Neil Kinnock's *Rights and Responsibilities*)
- **Clerical reaction**: *Briefing* office staff after receipt of latest 2,000-word hand-wrtten polemic to be edited and typeset by following morning.

The *Briefing* slate and model resolutions for the next Synod, with an analysis of Runcie's "centrist" campaign against Jenkins and Leonard will appear in the New Year.

Sid's Cock-up?

Sid does not appear to have been trampled in a rush for shares in London Rubber, despite the unprecedented free government sales promotion for condoms — second only to the British Gas flotation.

Though LRC seems well placed to collect windfall profits from the AIDS scare, management apparently show little but contempt for last-minute cabinet converts to their product — described by one executive as "Johnny-come-latelys".



Defend Alan Meale: Kick out the UDM!

Alan Meale, formerly secretary of the Campaign Group of MPs and newly-selected PPC for Mansfield, is under attack from the Union of Democratic Mineworkers which has the core of its ever-dwindling membership in the Notts coalfield.

The UDM Area Council, fresh from its total capitulation to British Coal in allowing four Notts pits to close without a murmur, has decided to stand a candidate against Meale at the General Election.

Meale's selection was a tribute to the hard work of the left in the Mansfield Constituency which has endured over 20 years of Don Concannon — famed for his stance over Bobby Sands and a supporter of both Notts scabs and the UDM. Concannon has publicly stated that he would not vote for Meale and there are no prizes for guessing where his little cross is going come the Election.

Alan Meale must be defended against the attacks of the UDM which could pose a real threat to a Labour victory. Unfortunately, Meale has not helped his cause by increasingly accommodating to the UDM, claiming he is not left-wing, the Miners' Strike should be long forgotten and his only interest is in getting Neil into Number Ten.

This will do no favours to the left in Mansfield Labour Party, which has been strengthened since the Strike by an influx of militants from the NUM and Women Against Pit Closures, helping to inflict further setbacks for the UDM — three district councillors have recently been deselected.

By Rick Simon
Secretary, Nottingham East CLP
(personal capacity)

Meanwhile, the NEC has expelled those in Liverpool trying to fight the Tory government, yet allows members of the blatantly anti-working class UDM, which has been in cahoots with British Coal and the Tory Government, to remain in the Party despite their clear breaking of the Constitution.

UDM members should be given a clear choice — rejoin the NUM or be expelled from the Party. Hucknall Labour Party have shown the way by expelling members of the UDM and, speaking to miners in Clipstone and Ollerton, NUM President Arthur Scargill has called for the expulsion of Concannon and Frank Haynes, another UDM supporting MP. He has also called on Stan Orme, Labour's energy spokesperson, not to make a proposed visit to the UDM.

Briefing supporters throughout the country should be rallying:

- in defence of Alan Meale against UDM attacks
- for no representatives of the Party to have any dealings with the UDM (including opposition to Orme's visit)
- for UDM members to be expelled from the Party.

The continuing isolation of the UDM is a prerequisite for building a strong, campaigning Labour Party in Notts and for the rebuilding of the NUM.

Representing Labour women

By Jane Prust
Labour Briefing Women

BRIEFING Women

The Labour Women's Action Committee AGM on December 13th will probably be the most important WAC has ever held.

Women will be debating and voting on proposals to form the basis of WAC's campaign around the reorganisation of the Labour Women's structures. It must produce proposals which women will be able to unite on and take back to their women's sections to organise around.

The main discussion will centre around restructuring National Labour Women's Conference and, within this, the proposed weighted vote for trade union delegates.

The principle of trade union women having more say is generally agreed,and women's conference will gain from being more representative of all women in the labour movement. The question is how the vote should be structured.

There are several different ideas being put forward. One proposal is to split conference votes 50-50 between trade union and women's section delegates, thereby giving "parity" between the two wings of the movement. The advantages of this system are giving trade union women a bigger share of the vote, without greatly disadvantaging CLP women. However, there are some points which require further debate and clarification.

First there is the question of the affiliated organisations, which should have a proportion of the votes, for example the Co-op, or the Socialist Education Association. Figures of between 5% and 10% have been mentioned, with 5% seeming to be the most popular. This 5% would come out of the CLP section, reducing their share of the vote to 45%.

There is an opportunity here for Labour Women to campaign for the rights of autonomous socialist women's organisations to affiliate. It would be a victory for working class women in Women Against Pit Closures, for example, won representation at National Women's Conference.

Secondly, and of vital importance, is the queston of the election of the Women's Section of the NEC.

It has been suggested that the number of women's seats should be increased from 5 to 6, with the trade union women and the women's sections electing 3 each, maintaining "parity". But given the usual reluctance of the NEC to increase women's representation, they are unlikely to agree to this.

But again this ignores the affiliated organisations. Would they elect their own NEC women's representative (as they do at Annual Conference)? In addition to the 6 seats, or included in them?

Another proposal is to elect all the women's seats by an electoral college of 50% trade union women, 45% CLP, 5% socialist societies. Still maintaining the idea of parity, this would allow left women in the women's sections and unions to elect all the women's seats — and may be preferable.

This leads into considering how the block vote will operate at women's conference. If the votes given to unions reflect the proportion of their women's membership then there will certainly be major differences from the way in which the union votes divide at National Conference.

The traditionally right wing unions, such as the EETPU and the AUEW, have comparatively few women embers, and this will be reflected in their voting strength. But NUPE and COHSE, with their large women's membership, will have a greatly increased share of the vote.

The left will be in a better position with regard to the block vote at women's conference than at National Conference; but some women's conference policies will still come under threat. None of the unions are likely to vote in support of withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, for example.

The major — and crucial — issue behind all these discussions is whether the NEC and trade union bureaucrats decide how women will organise, or women themselves.

The weighted vote could encourage trade unions to send their full quota of delegates to women's conference, and to discuss policies with *women* members before the debates. Obviously this implies women in the unions taking more direct control than they have at the moment, but it would mean that the Women's Conference would have more accountability to women in the labour movement as a whole.

The debate has started, socialist women must now set the terms.

Left slate for NCC

CLP
Mandy Moore
Ken Slater
George Linfield

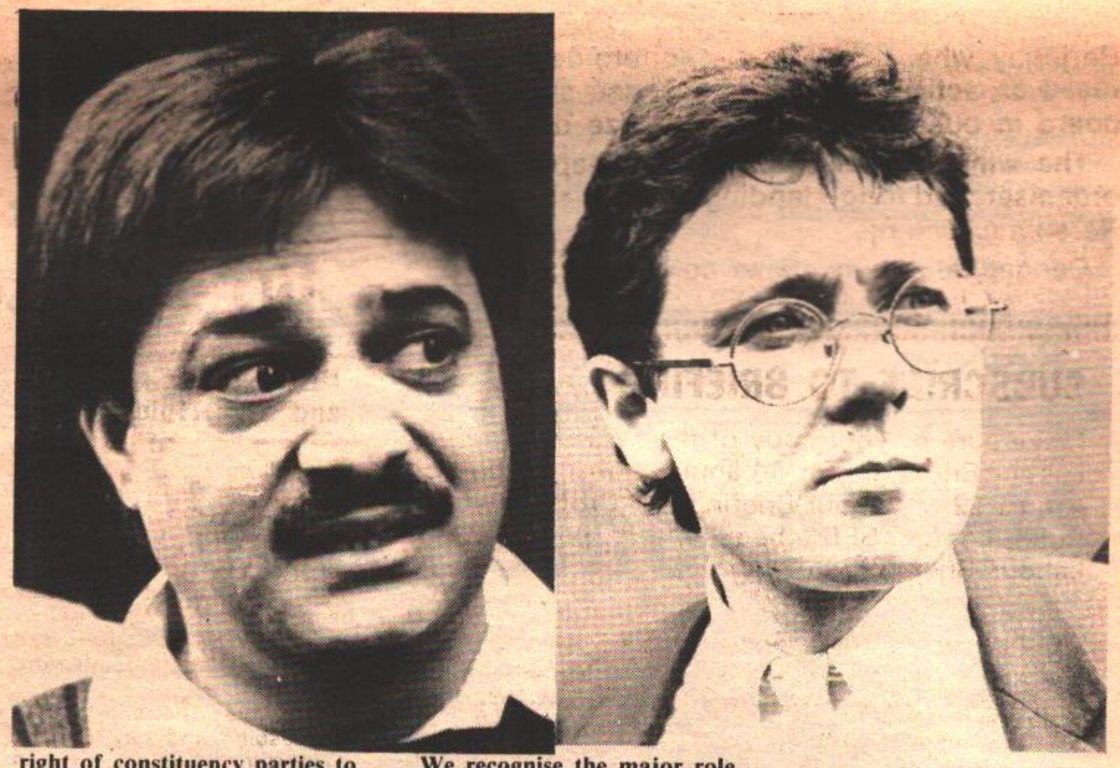
Women
Vera Derer
Margaret Vallins

Trade Union
Owen Briscoe
Johnny Jones
Alan Quin

Victory for Khan and Scally

One year to the day after expelling us from Sparkbrook, the CLP officers have backed down and reinstated us in the face of a legal challenge.

By Amir Khan and Kevin Scally
MEMBERS of Sparkbrook CLP



PHOTO(Andrew Wiard (Report)

Amir Khan (left)
Kevin Scally (right)

They have decided not to begin the expulsion process again because of the massive political hostility it has provoked inside the Labour Party. The decision is regarded by both of us as a vindication for the left in the Party nationally.

The decision to recommend our reinstatement was taken at the Sparkbrook CLP meeting on November 25th. The previous weekend Roy Hattersley had been told by Larry Whitty that the NEC had been served with a writ demanding that Amir Khan be immediately reinstated.

Whitty told Hattersley that the Labour Party hadn't a leg to stand on. He was given the option of persuading Sparkbrook to overturn the expulsions or having the NEC impose it on them. He decided that the former alternative was less humiliating and came to Sparkbrook to tell his stunned and angry supporters to reverse their previous decision. They unanimously U-turned, and the right wing majority did the same the next day at the NEC.

The expulsions had deeply divided the local Party, and demoralised many hard-working Party members. Of course, this is the intention of all the attacks on Party democracy, which since our expulsions, have spread to Knowsley and now threaten the right of constituency parties to select their own candidates.

We hope that the success of our campaign will give the right wing caucus on the NEC pause for thought, and dissuade other hard right CLPs from embarking on their own witch-hunts. We hope that our success will give heart to the many socialists who may feel that they are battling against the tide at the present time.

Although it was the prospect of legal action that finally made the leadership back down, it was the political campaign that made them decide not to start the process of expulsion all over again. It had won support from all sections of the left, which enabled us to mobilise for annual conference, where we managed to win 2.7 million votes in favour of our immediate reinstatement.

The political lessons for the left are therefore clear. This is only one of many issues on which the left can and should unite. The various groups that comprise the left need to stand back from the sectarianism and splits of the last few years and consider who benefits from them. Certainly not the left!

We recognise the major role played in this Campaign by *Briefing* and *Briefing* supporters, without whom we would not have won.

Trade Unionists for Democracy in Knowsley North

We are a group of rank and file trade unionists fighting to raise funds (£14,000 to-date) to pay the legal costs incurred in the struggle for democracy.

An Appeal to the Labour Movement!

Knowsley North has never been allowed to select its own candidate. In 1983, Robert Kilroy-Silk was imposed upon us by the NEC. In 1986, as well as excluding L. Huckfield, 4 other people who had received nomination were excluded from selection.
Your own CLP could be next!

What you can do to help us

We need money urgently... Please do all you can to ensure that your CLP or trade union branch makes a donation. Copies of our appeal leaflet are available from the Secretary, 7 Hall Dr., Kirkby, Liverpool. Speakers will be provided on request.

Resolutions... Get your Labour Party and trade union branches to send resolutions to the NEC condemning the attack made on democracy in Knowsley North.

Please send donations to: Mrs I Rowe, Treasurer, Trade Unionists for Democracy in Knowsley North, 12 Linsdale Crescent, Northwood Kirkby, Liverpool. Please make cheques payable to Trade Unionists for Demcracy in Knowsley North. A receipt will be sent to all contributors.

Defend Democracy!
Support Knowsley North!

Exeter's Orange Labour Party

Not content with its pact with the Liberals, the minority Labour City Council in Exeter is linking up with the "William and Mary Tercentenary Trust" to celebrate the heritage of William of Orange.

According to the right wing Labour Councillors, the planned festival for 1988 will lead to the creation of jobs and to a new understanding of democratic rights. It is hard to believe that such statements are made seriously.

An LPYS motion to the last GC pointed out that Orangeism is the cornerstone of British imperialism in the North of Ireland. The links between the Orange Order and the National Front were brought to the attention of the meeting. The motion was carried against the advice of the councillors.

Yet we now understand that the council has no intention of changing its mind and the right aim to overturn the LPYS motion at the next GC. Whether the right is successful or not, Devon Labour Briefing will campaign vigorously against the council's new means of creating jobs and leisure in Exeter.

Peter Bowing, Exeter CLP

International Briefing

Bolivia: a struggle without parallel



"The current struggle of the Bolivian masses (...) deserves our attention, applause and active support."

There are very few countries that have suffered the impact of the crisis of international capitalism as severely as Bolivia.

By James Dunkerley

As a result of a chronic indebtedness built up in the halcyon days of carefree borrowing by military regimes encouraged by the banks in the 1970s together with the subsequent collapse of mineral and oil prices the country is now as bankrupt as it is possible for a sovereign state to be.

Between 1980 and 1985 exports fell by a third, mineral production by nearly a half, disposable income by 40 per cent, and imports by a massive 60 per cent while inflation established a hemispheric record by reaching 9,500 per cent at the end of 1985.

The situation deteriorated most spectacularly following the collapse of the London-based International Tin Council in October 1985 which effectively withdrew regulation of the price of Bolivia's strategic export commodity. Today the average wage of the country's traditionally militant mineworkers is a paltry $40 a month whilst a doctor in the state sector receives less than $75.

Small wonder that infant mortality has risen to unprecedented levels, malnutrition is as widespread as in many African countries, and tens of thousands of dispossessed workers and their families are seeking survival in petty peddling or involvement in Bolivia's only buoyant industry — the cultivation of the coca leaf for processing into cocaine. Haiti is still the poorest country in the Americas but the pauperisation of Bolivia is much faster.

US domination

The historic struggles of the Bolivian labour movement are not unknown to British trade unionists, although they have traditionally been brought to our attention through campaigns against military dictatorship and requests for trade embargoes to bring them down. Unable to resist worker mobilisation against both autocracy and reactionary economic policies, the army left power in October 1982, but it has not disappeared from the scene and currently oversees the second state of siege declared in the space of a year by the Conservative regime of Victor Paz Estenssoro.

The latest suspension of constitutional guarantees took place in September and was a direct response to the miners' refusal to accept an unqualified neo-liberal programme for continued wage freezes, unrestrained prices and, most important of all, the dissolution of the state mining corporation and firing of at least 8,000 of its 20,000 workforce without guarantees of compensation or hope of alternative employment, which stands at over 25 per cent.

Mass march

By staging a mass march "for life and peace" from the mines to La Paz, the workers generated considerable support from the peasantry and middle class barely less hard hit by the government's Harvard-drafted programme for deflation, denationalisation and "economic discipline". In view of this and his longstanding desire to destroy the miners' union, Paz happily dispatched the tanks and jailed over 150 union and political oppositionists.
oppositionists.

However, even this trenchantly reactionary regime dedicated to an economic programme well in excess of what Thatcher has managed to date failed to halt opposition by suspending the very constitution under which it claimed a mandate.

Resorting first to the traditional means of clandestine struggle and then, once the freedom of political prisoners was secured, to renewed negotiations based upon directives from a series of workpace assemblies and an emergency congress, the union has continued to resist any liquidation of the state mining sector.

Suport for this is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that many workers are no longer being paid at all. Most pits have been declared "closed" and depived of working capital and technical support, and supplies of basic necessities to the isolated Andean communities were cut off long ago.

It is no rhetorical exaggeration to describe this struggle as one for immediate physical survival. As such, and in a country lacking any vestige of a social security system, it is distinct from even the most severe experiences of the British working class under the Tories. Yet there are remarkable similarities in the centrality of the defence of jobs and the popular economy against government "rationalisation" through privatisation.

Historic struggle

Moreover, Paz is scarcely less ardent than Thatcher and Howe in his unctious acceptance of US domination. In the case of Bolivia this has gone well beyond a dutiful compliance in foreign policy (the harassment of Nicaraguan diplomatic staff; threats to scrap vital Cuban assistance for the children's hospital).

In August US troops took charge of a noisy and extensive, but unsuccessful, anti-cocaine operation in which the Bolivian consitution was freely ignored and residual persecution of peasants who legally cultivate the coca leaf markedly increased.

Opposition to this shameless intervention was not based on any defence of cocaine trading, the leaders of which were never threatened and are encouraged to recycle their dollars through the Central Bank under the new economic policies that have also driven thousands of redundant workers into the cocaine sector which, of course, provides handsome profits to the big US banks to boot.

Rather, denunciation of the operation was centred on a repudiation of the typically imperialist decision that a domestic US problem should be resolved abroad and through oppression of desperately impoverished peasants instead of through confonting the US mafia, yuppie consumers and the necessary costs of subsidising cultivation of alternative crops.

This campaign has stressed the threat of greater escalation of the US military presence, similar to that in Central America, and its close relation to Washington's arduous support for Paz's neo-liberal destruction of the popular economy, similar to that essayed by Pinochet in Chile.

The current struggle of the Bolivian masses is not as well known as the anti-imperialist mobilisation in Central America or the anti-dictatorial campaign in Chile, but it combines elements of both with a fierce resistance to an economic offensive without parallel in the Americas. It deserves our attention, applause and active support.

Review

No "goodies and baddies"

BOB PENNINGTON reviews *War and the International. A History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain 1937-48*, by Bornstein and Richardson, published by Socialist Platform, available from Houseman's, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1.

Like its predecessor*, this is a work to be welcomed. At the moment, it is the only serious attempt to write a history of the revolutionary movement in Britain following the degeneration of the British Communist Party.

It is a history with more than its share of dog days. Defeats suffered by the labour movement in Germany, Austria, and Spain confirmed the analysis of the Trotskyists, but militants did not flock to their banner. The betrayals of the Stalinist and reformist bureaucracies, weakened the workers' organisations, and many militants were demoralised and driven out of politics. Others became "realists", and, joining with either Stalinists or reformists, gave up the class struggle and hoped that an alliance between western capitalism and the Soviet Union would roll back the fascist threat. Such difficult circumstances inevitably led to disputes, factional struggles, splits.

But despite all these difficulties — and with hindsight they appear almost insurmountable — the Trotskyists were not found wanting. When the biggest crunch of all came — war! — they stood their ground.

The Labour Party shut up shop, hoisted the Union Jack, and entered a coalition with the Tory Government. After Hitler invaded Russia in 1941, the Communist Party danced the tune of jingoism, berated workers who did not work hard enough for the "patriotic war", and demanded full support for Churchill and his Cabinet. When the Trotskyists supported young apprentices on strike, the CP's *Daily Worker* demanded that "...the government deal with these saboteurs..."

In the war years the Trotskyists kept alive the traditions of Marxism and insisted that working people must never subordinate their interests to those of the ruling class. As a result, they grew in numbers, their paper *Socialist Appeal* increased its circulation, and they got some valuable recruits from the labour movement.

However, they were unprepared for the great post-war wave of reformist radicalisation. At this crucial moment, they failed to take their cadres into the Labour Party where they could have exerted maximum influence on that radicalisation. The leaders of the movement insisted that the only way ahead was to continue to build the independent Revolutionary Communist Party.

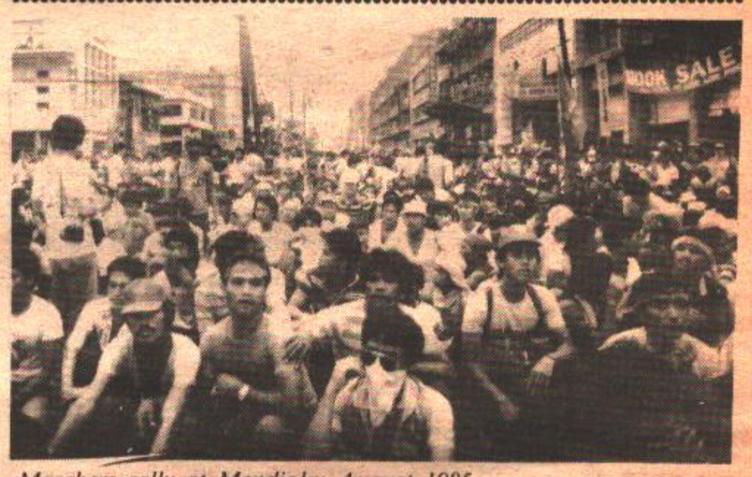
A minority, led by Gerry Healy, argued that a gigantic slump was on the way, that Labour would founder on its inability to solve the economic crisis, and that Trotskyists must therefore go into the Labour Party and win its left to revolutionary politics. Although the majority had more sane economic perspectives, they were wrong to insist on trying to build an open party.

In the following years, their members dropped out, their paper's sales declined, and most of their leaders left revolutionary politics. Healy took over the mantle of British Trotskyism and his barmy catastrophic perspectives were to dominate his organisation until the crisis that blew it apart in 1985.

Here I must add a note of caution. The Trotskyist movement made lots of erors in those days — just as it does today. Unfortunately, the authors have an axe to grind, and are too prone to blame these errors on one faction or another within the Fourth International.

That's a mistake. The history of British Trotskyism is not simply about goodies and baddies. It can only be understood by recognising that small movements, under disadvantageous circumstances, short of working class leaders and lacking trained intellectuals, will make more than their share of errors.

* *Against the Stream. A History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain 1924-38*, available from the same adress.



Marchers rally at Mendiola: August 1985.

Philippines Ceasefire

The government of President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines seems to have thwarted the attempts of the former defence minister Juan Ponce Enrile to stage a coup. With the signature of an agreement for a 60-day ceasefire with the Communist National Democratic Front as a preparation for more inclusive peace talks to halt the 17-year-old civil war, the prospects for a stable bourgeois democracy look brighter than for some time.

Of course, the defeat of Enrile and his cronies has to be welcomed and any return of the Marcos regime would represent a tremendous setback for the Filipino people. That should not disguise the esentially pro-American nature of the present regime. Few now believe that Aquino will carry out her promise to remove US bases by 1991 and the generals clearly regard any ceasefire with the New People's Army as a temporary breathing space.

The situation is very fluid. Watch this space!

By Chris Bertram

Strip search rally defies NEC

By Alison Clarke
Labour Women for Ireland

A rally to protest strip-searching in Maghaberry prison (formerly Armagh) was finally called by the National Labour Women's Committee (NLWC) and held in London on November 15th.

It is Labour Party policy to oppose strip-searching, and though a decision to organise a demonstration was taken at this year's National Conference of Labour Women, it took months before *any* support materialised and the rally itself was finally endorsed by the NEC only a matter of weeks before it was scheduled to be held.

The organisation of the rally was beset by a catalogue of difficulties too convoluted to explain here, but some of which were reflected in the statement (below) issued to the NLWC by Labour Women for Ireland (LWI). This was prompted by NLWC's refusal to accept speakers from the Irish in Britain Representation Group (IBRG) and from SWAPO Women's Council on the platform at the rally.

Despite the obstacles, the rally took place as planned. The speakers included Margaret Holmes (Kent Women Against Pit Closures), Pauline Deery (ex-Armagh prisoner), Liz Woodcroft (National Council for Civil Liberties) and Maire O'Shea (pyschiatrist and president of the IBRG) It was ably chaired by Mandy Moore of the National Labour Women's Committee.

Discussion from the floor covered a wide range of issues, not surprisingly, but overall a feeling of frustration was expressed with regard to the Labour Party's attitude to the rally. A number of speakers made the point that the Party should have given its *full* support to a demonstration (which was the original intention, not a rally) against strip-searching, with no prevarication. Such an event can still be organised in the future.

There is a large body of opposition to strip-searching which needs to be tapped. Indeed, in the light of increasing use of strip-searching in Britain (as one member of City Anti-Apartheid pointed out), our efforts to end its use *must increase*.

It was heartening to see that a large number of comrades from outside London attended the rally. Out of about 200, there were coachloads from Leicester, Sheffield, Watford, Birmingham and Nottingham present.

Appropriately, the rally finished with a musical contribution from a five-piece women's ceilidh band, the Five Sheelahs. They entertained and moved us with their jigs, reels and haunting solos. Some comrades were even inspired enough to participate in Irish dancing, led and directed by a member of the band.

Finally, our thanks to those who sent in the many solidarity messages and who brought their stalls.

'In sisterhood and solidarity'
LABOUR WOMEN FOR IRELAND
LWI statement

Labour Women for Ireland wish to make clear that, although we will continue to support, publicise and build for the rally against strip-searching, we must condemn the decision of the NLWC to deny a speaker from the IBRG and SWAPO Women's Council on the platform.

Our distress is all the more acute given that the reasons advanced for not inviting the IBRG showed ignorance of the identity of this group. It is outrageous that the NLWC are sufficiently arrogant to consider their own ignorance just cause for exclusion. This attitude smacks of the condescension to which we, as women in the Party, are normally subject by the male hierarchy.

For the record, the IBRG is one of the largest community organisations representing the Irish in Britain. It is non-sectarian and non-party political. Its major concerns are to do with the preservation of the Irish way of life; Irish youth and the elderly; anti-Irish racism; travel and links with Ireland; media representation; the Prevention of Terrorism Act; housing, employment and social services. In particular, it has waged a sustained campaign against the strip-searching of Irish women prisoners and as the voice of the Irish in Britain, should warrant an automatic place on the platform.

Moreover, a significant number of IBRG members are in turn members of the Labour Party, which has traditionally relied on the Irish vote. The NLWC's decision will do nothing to encourage Irish people to join and, indeed, will only serve to highlight the futility of membership.

Nor does the decision to exclude SWAPO from the platform lie easily with the image of the Labour Party as a socialist, internationalist organisation. Strip-seraching is a form of sexual harassment used around the world to humiliate, degrade and undermine women's resistance. If we are to highlight the implications of its growing use in Britain and Ireland we must link up with the experiences of our sisters elsewhere.

The timetabling for these decisions gives us further cause for concern. There was no discussion of the rally at the NLWC meeting in September, which took the Mobilising Group (set up in August to organise it) somewhat by surprise. There was no indication of dissent from the NLWC at Labour Party Conference to a leaflet produced by LWI which indicated the proposed platform of speakers and specifically identified the IBRG and SWAPO. LWI then requested to attend the October NLWC meeting, but was refused. Our secretary was, however, in the building at the time of the meeting and could have answered any queries. NLWC merely communicated their decisions to her and made no attempt to discuss them.

The outcome has placed LWI, as a group campaigning on Ireland, in an invidious position. It has severely strained our relations with the IBRG and has caused embarassment with our sisters in SWAPO. We have no option, therefore, but to publicise this statement which will be copied to the NEC, Front Bench spokespersons, women's spokespersons, the Irish media, Irish women's organisations and Labour women. We are sending written apologies to SWAPO and the IBRG, along with this statement.

We will continue to support the rally and attempt to ensure its success. The issue of the continued strip-searching of Irish women prisoners is much too important for us to do otherwise. We strongly urge everyone to give their full support to it, called in protest at four years of this degrading practice.

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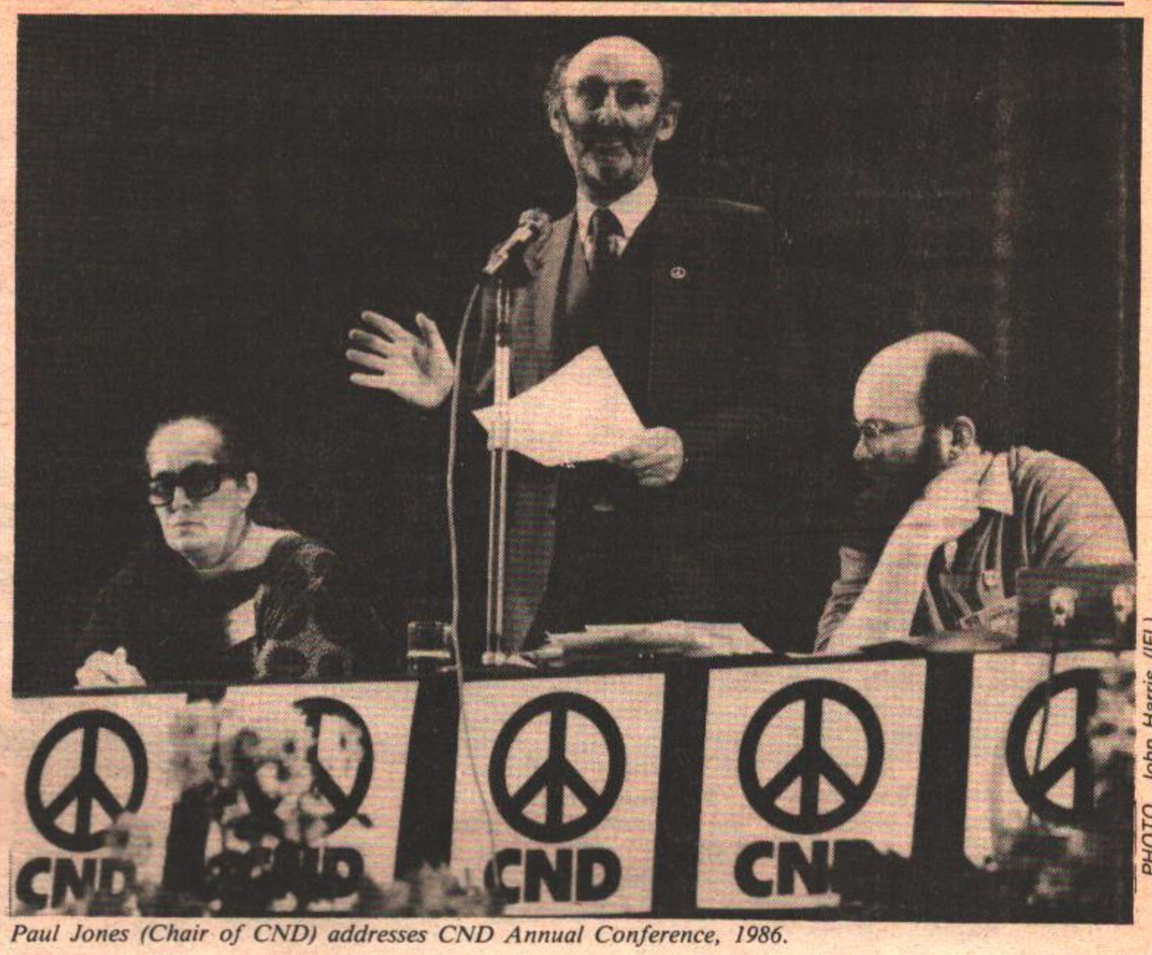


PHOTO John Harris (IFL)

Paul Jones (Chair of CND) addresses CND Annual Conference, 1986.

CND conference
National movement in the doldrums

By Lawrence Ashelford
Peckham CND

This year's CND conference was an anaemic affair. Only five motions were debated and most of the weekend was given over to workshops.

The membership of CND has now been largely excluded from crucial decision making.

This is the latest step in a process which, over recent years, has dissipated the strength of the campaign and sidestepped "contentious" issues like Britain's membership of NATO.

Behind this development lie the ideas (and members) of the Communist Party. The CP seeks to keep CND as an incoherent "broadly-based" organisation rather than to radicalise its members.

Voting at conference illustrated the confusion sown by this strategy. CND will now work with anyone opposing nuclear power — including reactionary, obscurantist, or isolationist groups. It will campaign for a "non-nuclear, autonomous foreign policy" — in other words a non-nuclear defence policy, possibly involving huge expenditure on conventional arms.

And it will "balance" its demands on the US by calling upon the Soviet Union to take unilateral steps to move away from nuclear weapons — despite the fact that Britain is in NATO and not the Warsaw Pact.

So the peace movement is developing a "defence policy", trailing behind anyone vaguely opposed to nuclear power, and calling for Soviet unilateralism while demonstrating outside US bases! Trying to please everyone eventually pleases no one and leads to paralysis.

Nonetheless, unilateralism remains CND policy and the "freeze" movement seems to have died. We must use this as a basis to secure the Labour Party's policy on nuclear weapons and attack its acceptance of NATO.

There is likely to be a national CND demonstration in April 1987 against US bases. We must build support for this in the Labour Party and Trade Unions and then build upon its success to make the Labour Party adhere to its unilateral commitments.

*In the next edition of **Briefing** there will be a more detailed look at the state of CND in this pre-election period.*

Campaign for non-alignment
STEPPING OUT AGAINST NATO

By Dani Ahrens
Youth Briefing

The launch conference of the *Campaign for Non-Alignment* will be an important event for the peace movement and for the left in the Labour Party in the run-up to the next general election.

The conference is scheduled for *January 24th, 11am to 6pm, at Kingsway Princeton College, Sidmouth Street, London*. The Campaign for Non-Alignment has been set up by the Campaign Group of MPs, as part of its opposition to NATO and work toward a future non-aligned Britain.

There is no escaping the fact that defence will be one of the main issues in the coming general election. The Labour Party's commitment to nuclear disarmament is one of the few left policies remaining after this year's conference. It is the task of the left, not only to defend that policy and force the leadership to campaign positively on it, but also to fight for a truly non-nuclear, non-aggressive, and internationalist foreign policy for the Labour Party.

The Campaign Group's initiative in organising the Campaign for Non-Alignment and publishing the new pamphlet by Ben Lowe, *Peace Through Non-Alignment*, must be followed up in the constituencies and trade union branches. Without constant pressure from labour and peace movement activists, the leadership will sacrifice the Party's commitment to unilateralism on the altar of their allegiance to NATO.

The pressure that is already beginning to be applied from the USA will increase tenfold if the US administration is faced with a Labour government determined to get rid of nuclear weapons. At the moment, Reagan has a trump card — how can a non-nuclear Britain be loyal to NATO if NATO strategy demands nuclear installations in Britain? Removal of that contradiction from Labour's defence policy would mean a real challenge to US interests, and the interests of our other NATO "allies", and indeed the whole capitalist world.

To be able to make such a challenge demands more than the passing of a law. It demands the real support of the mass of the population, and it demands a government and a leadership that will not back down in the face of economic or even military pressure.

To win such support, we need to start working now. January 24th will be the first step in building the kind of campaign we need. *Briefing* supporters should make it a priority to attend the conference and initiate discussion and action on this issue whenever possible.



PHOTO: John Chapman

Farnborough Air Show, 1986.

The politics of AIDS

A socialist view

With 565 known cases already in Britain and the prospect of millions by the year 2,000, AIDS is becoming a threat on the same scale as a nuclear holocaust. For this reason it is everybody's problem, not just one for politicians, medics and minority groups.

For socialists it is important to understand the facts about AIDS — then the myths used to manipulate people can be dealt with.

By Judy Atkinson

Myth 1: *AIDS can be caught by any form of social contact.*

AIDS is caused by a virus which is only found in blood and sexual secretions. The *only* way of infecting someone is through a sexual act or exchange of blood.

Myth 2: *AIDS is a "gay" disease.*

In the west, AIDS first surfaced within the gay community, but in Central Africa, where it seems to have originated, there are several million cases. AIDS is thus primarily a heterosexual disease.

Myth 3 *AIDS is a new sexually transmitted plague, the like of which we have never seen before — we are paying for promiscuity and liberal morals.*

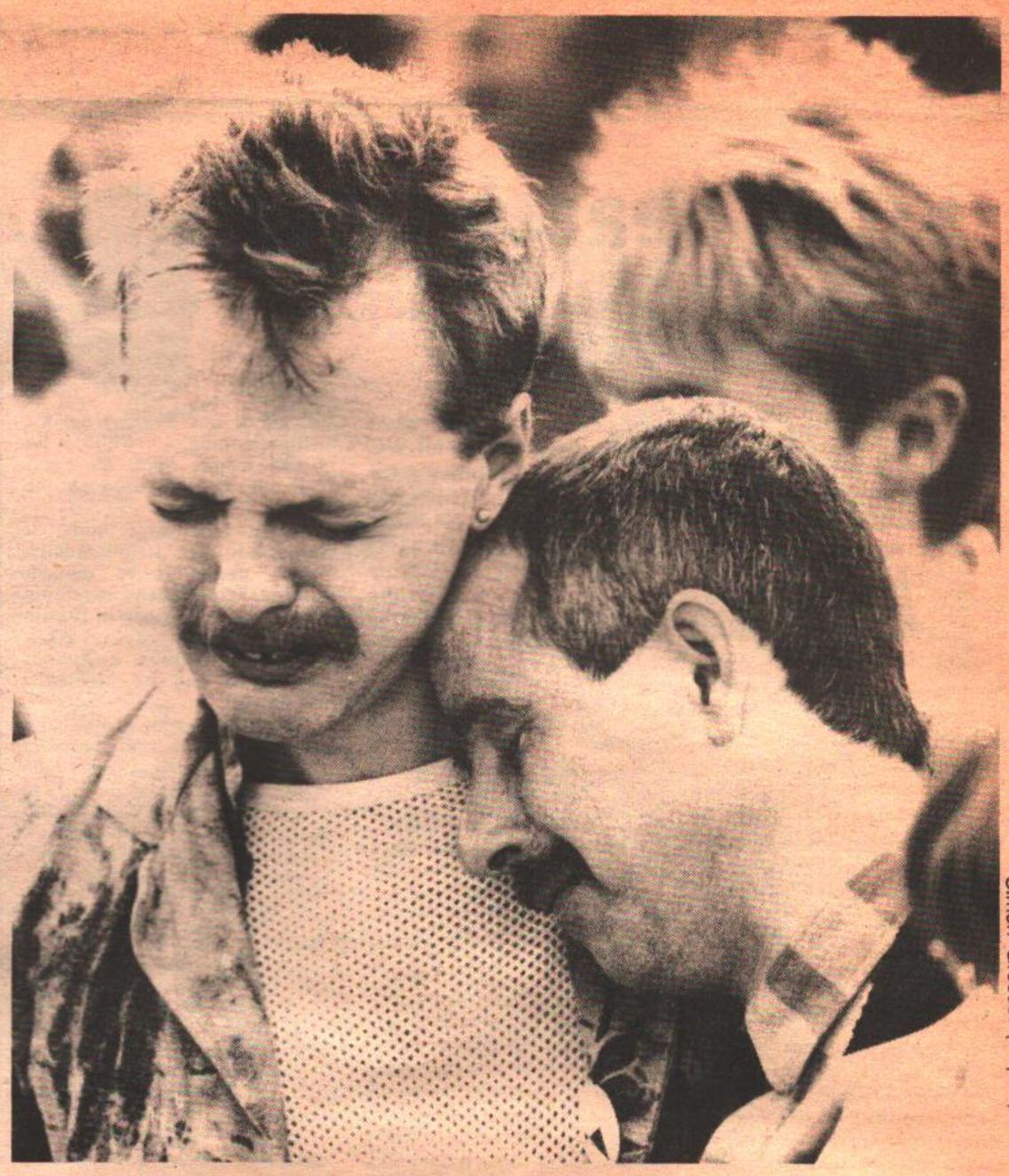
But syphilis was a world-wide epidemic in the 19th Century (a result of Victorian values!) which led to death and madness for millions. It was eventually controlled by preventative measures and cured by the development of antibiotics.

The solution to AIDS is not a return to "Victorian Values". The right, of course, intend to capitalise on the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Bourgeois moral attitudes will be re-enforced, and sexuality of all kinds will come under attack. Already there are serious suggestions that the preferred option is "no sex at all", and that AIDS victims should be isolated in special camps or centres. There will be attempts to role back the limited legalisation of homosexuality achieved in 1967.

In contrast to moral exhortations — "promiscuity kills" — and attacks on sexuality, little is being done of practical value. Fowler's £20 million campaign is of no use when he refuses to give extra funding to the Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) clinics to which people will turn for advice and treatment. An estimated extra £100m is needed for treatment, prevention and cure.

"A2T" (the only known cure) cannot be produced in sufficient quantities by the British drug company that discovered it, due to lack of funding. Large-scale screening has been rejected because of the cost, even though it would identify those who are HTLV III positive and enable them to take the precautions to prevent the development of the full disease. Effective chemicals which kill the virus in sexual secretions are not being used as preventative treatment, despite medical opinion that it would give us a valuable breathing space.

It is vital that socialists do not allow AIDS to become the property of the right wing moral backlash. We must be seen to be campaigning for the provision of far more money and resources to establish a national screening programme, and for treatment, research into vaccines and new drugs, and counselling programmes to help those suffering from the disease.



Simon Grosset (Report)

All Briefing supporters are invited to a public meeting organised by the West London Socialist Health Association at Hammersmith Town Hall on January 14th at 7.30pm. The speakers will include Brian Kennedy of City Limits magazine, Judy Atkinson, and Terry Cotton, Hammersmith & Fulham Council's AIDS officer.

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John Chapman

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Confronting City power

In a series of Big Bangs between now and the end of the century financial power in this country and indeed throughout the world will become so concentrated that the independence and authority of national governments will be put at risk.

Mega-mergers between a variety of financial institutions will begin the process. Bankruptcies of institutions hitherto thought to be impregnable will accelerate it. Capitalist as well as socialist governments will find fiscal as well as monetary policies being determined more and more by the oligopolistic power of international finance.

In the world at large the eight major foreign exchange centres (London is the biggest) will continue to provide the greatest casino that the world has ever known — with $150 billion crossing them ever day. The

By Brian Sedgemore, MP

majority of the transactions are concerned not with financing international trade but with speculation by individuals, financial institutions and companies.

In Britain the principal role of the Stock Exchange will continue to be that of a casino rather than that of a provider of capital for industry. Companies will more and more be bought and sold like commodities by those involved in take-over bids who seek to make profits out of rationalisation, breaking up sound commercial and manufacturing companies and asset stripping. Rich individuals and companies have invested £85 bilion abroad since exchange controls were abolished in 1979.

This outflow of capital has already led to a loss of one million jobs. Financial fraud of which insider dealing is but one form will continue to increase and will go largely unheeded.

Labour's front bench economic team has shown few signs of wanting to deal with these problems though I understand that new comer Bryan Gould MP is prepared to see the decline of London as an international capital centre if that means a more buoyant economy through lower interest rates and greater government control of finance. The need for the rest of us in the Labour Party to bring questions of the ownership, control and operation of financial institutions into the centre of the political debate is now critical.

As we stand on the verge of taking office without power the City is laughing at us. It's time we wiped the smile off their face.

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!