LABOUR
BRIEFING
No 35 JAN 15-28 1987

INSIDE

- Black women in the unions
- Peace and Defence
- AIDS
- WAC AGM

40p

FRENCH FIGHTBACK — LESSONS FOR US ALL



PHOTO: John Harris (IFL)

Nottingham: lobby of teachers' negotiations



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

Hangers' workers on the march



PHOTO: Andrew Wiard (Report)

December 1986: the printers won't stop fighting

The French railworkers have shown the working class in Britain how to deal with right wing governments who impose austerity measures in the economic crisis.

Following hard on the heels of the successful students' demonstrations, workers on the SNCR (equivalent to BR) have been striking since December 18th against the introduction of a greater degree of merit-based promotion, having had no pay increase for 18 months, and threats of redundancy.

Less unionised than in Britain, the railway workers have set up rank and file "co-ordinations" to organise the strike at a local level. The CGT (Communist-led Trade Union federation) has been gaining members, as workers recognise the need to organise against the attack on their living standards.

There have also been public sector strikes in support of the railway workers among Paris Metro and bus workers together with electricity, postal workers and dockers. There have been large marches in Paris.

The situation in France is different from Britain. The uneasy cohabitation between the Socialist President Mitterrand and the right wing Chirac government is holding the government back from carrying out their full Thatcher-like programme of privatisation and attacks on working class living standards. And the success of the students undoubtedly gave the railworkers confidence that they could win. Nevertheless the French fightback is a lesson for us in Britain.

Kinnock and the Labour leadership would have us believe that waiting for a Labour government is the only answer. Briefing doesn't agree. The best way to ensure a Labour victory is to fight the Tories now. Although the Miners' defeat left us dejected and lost for solutions, more recently there have been examples of a fightback. Teachers have been organising for over a year both against attacks on their conditions of service and pay as well as against the right wing backlash in education; workers like those at Silentnight and Hangers, and printers in the Wapping dispute, have been fighting anti-union bosses and redundancies; and most recently the Tube workers in London have voted with a 5 to 1 majority to take strike action against the effects of privatisation on the London Underground.

Fighting the Tories now is not only the best way to win the next election. Like the previous, "Socialist"-led government in France whose austerity policies helped ensure a right wing victory for Chirac, so in Britain, Labour's policies are in no way adequate to deal with the economic crisis in the interests of the working class.

Militancy here is the best means to ensure a Labour victory. But confidence and a fight-back now are also good preparations for the fight that will be necessary under a Labour government — a fight to change its policies so that it governs in the interests of the working class rather than in the interests of capital.

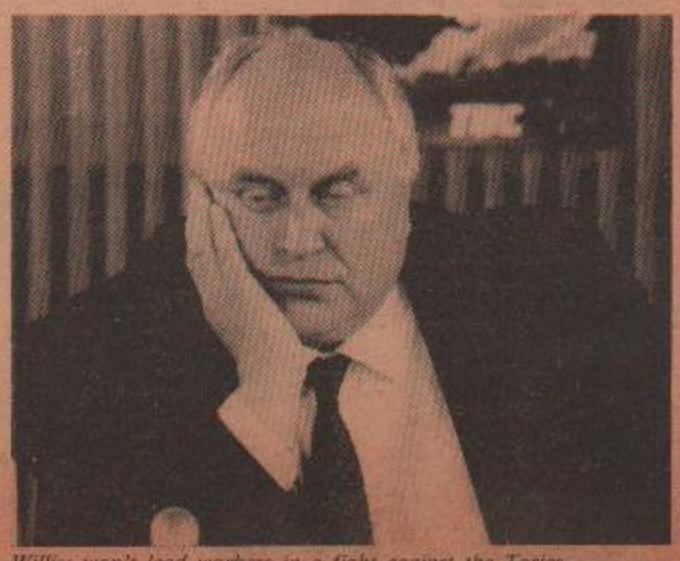


PHOTO: John Chapman

Willis: won't lead workers in a fight against the Tories



PHOTO: John Chapman

Kinnock: "wait for a Labour government"



PHOTO: John Chapman

Thatcher: getting an easy ride into the next election from labour movement leaders, while workers take her on now.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Home News

Labour leaders silent on AIDS

By Jane Stockton
Oxford East CLP

Not surprisingly, James Anderton, Manchester's police chief's, comments that AIDS victims were "swirling around in a cesspit of their own creation" were taken up by the right wing press with relish.

The *Daily Mail* followed up their initial splash on the topic with a double page spread claiming an avalanche of letters supporting Mr Anderton — without a single one against. The right were quick to make political capital out of the anti-gay bandwagon, and the moral bigots seized yet another opportunity to peddle their pro-nuclear family, anti-sexuality views.

In contrast, the Labour Party's response was one of almost total silence. There was hardly a murmur of criticism of Anderton for abusing his professional position, let alone condemnation of the content of his comments.

Anderton made appallingly derogatory comments about sections of the community whose rights it is his job to uphold, and were quite clearly of a political nature.

Far from defending our policy on lesbian and gay rights, statements made by some of our leading politicians in recent months (for example, Neil Kinnock — "I'm old-fashioned when it comes to marriage, the family and such issues") could lead one to think that the Labour Party was right behind Anderton's "moral crusade".

It is about time then that the Labour Party had a clear and openly campaigned for policy on AIDS and AIDS-related issues — a policy aimed at both preventing the further spread of the AIDS virus, and at sympathetically helping the hundreds of existing AIDS sufferers and the thousands of carriers of the AIDS virus.

There is a desperate need for a massive campaign to put over the facts about AIDS and to counter the myths, misinformation and fear. This is not an easy task given that even the medical profession can't seem to agree on the extent of some of the risks — most recently on who should or should not donate blood.


Police chief in AIDS fury
Blame this human
cesspit - Anderton

Nevertheless, many facts are clearly established. We know the method of transmission of the virus, and we know that all these methods of transmission could be virtually completely eliminated by taking simple safety precautions such as safer sexual practice, using clean hypodermic needles for injection, screening blood and blood products and wearing gloves for their handling.

The major myths that it is promiscuity and gay sexuality that cause AIDS can be countered. Just as there's more chance of getting knocked down by a car the more times you cross the road, the chances of contracting AIDS are increased the more sexual partners you have.

If you're careless though you can get knocked down — or contract AIDS — the very first time. The only real way to ensure safety is to take the appropriate precautions every time — i.e. practise safe sex.

As for AIDS and gay sexuality, it is true that until now in the West there have been far more gay than heterosexual AIDS victims (in Africa the reverse is true, for reasons that are as yet not clearly understood). To extend that to the conclusion that gay sex is therefore wrong and should be outlawed is quite illogical — and downright sexist.

The bigots who use AIDS to denounce gay sexuality ignore the fact that AIDS has spread in the gay *male* community — not the lesbian community. AIDS is *not* a "punishment" for loving someone of the same sex, but as a sexually transmitted disease it by definition will spread first within the sexual community where it started.

Labour Party Conference policy should be leading it towards demanding a campaign for, e.g., more lesbians to become blood donors — as lesbians are the least affected by the AIDS virus. With no reported lesbian AIDS carriers, with AIDS transmitted in the West from man to man or from man to woman, the Labour Party leadership could even counter anti-gay prejudice by arguing AIDS is yet another infection men give women. Imagine the Labour Party promoting lesbianism as the only way over half the population could stay AIDS-free!

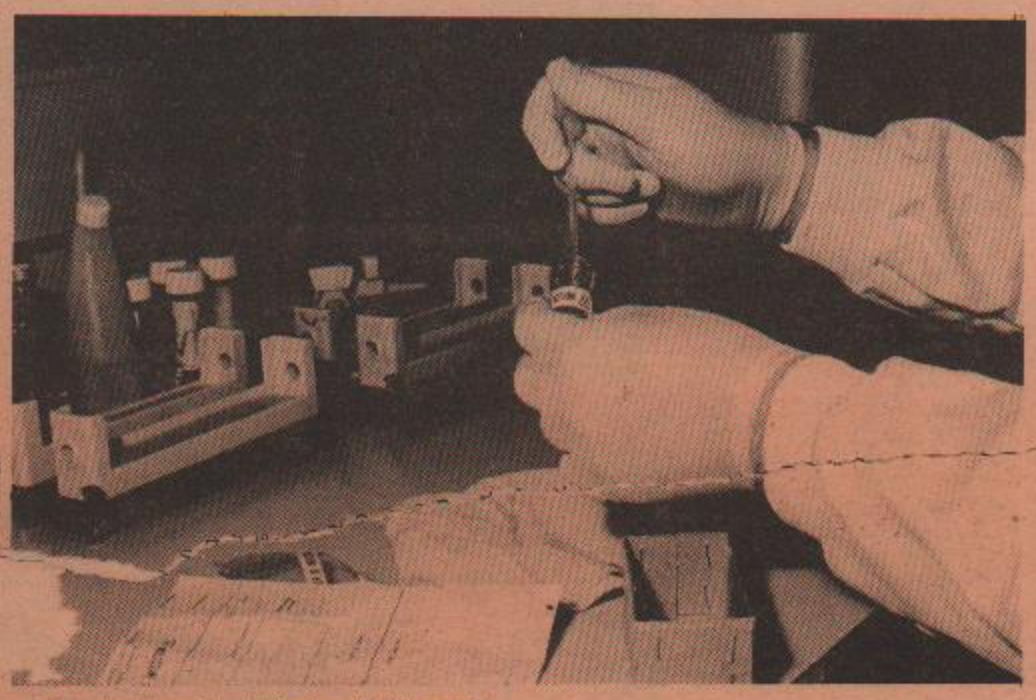
The plight of hundreds of sufferers and thousands of AIDS virus carriers in this country, is at present being paid scant attention. Yet much could be done to help them.

The chances of a virus carrier contracting AIDS have been variously estimated at between 10 and 90%. In other words — we don't know. More research is required into the factors involved in activation of the AIDS virus, as well as into ways of treating AIDS sufferers. More resources need to be put into those agencies counselling and supporting AIDS sufferers and carriers.

Policies to prevent discrimination against AIDS carriers or high risk groups in areas such as employment and housing need to be implemented urgently. A male colleague of mine who is in the process of buying a house with a male friend was recently forced to pay a higher premium for his mortgage protection policy on the grounds that he could contract AIDS. At no time was he asked whether he was an AIDS carrier or even whether he was a member of one of the high risk groups (he is neither as it happens): it was purely discrimination against single men.

All of this requires money, and much more than the £20m being spent by the government on its present campaign (a good deal less than they spent telling Sid!)

It is possible that there will be a candidate standing in the Greenwich bye-election solely to highlight the AIDS issue. This should not be necessary. That political role ought to be being played by the Labour Party — and now!


J Hoffman

Lab technician with AIDS virus (HIV) sample

Viraj Mendis in sanctuary

The fight goes on

By Kate Adams
Hackney North CLP

Home Office Immigration Minister David Waddington refused Viraj Mendis the right to remain in Britain on December 18th — the worst Christmas message possible.

If deported to Sri Lanka, as a communist and active opponent of the Jayewardene regime, Viraj is threatened with death. He has chosen to stay and fight: "I will not voluntarily return to my death in Sri Lanka."

On December 20th he went into sanctuary in the Church of the Ascension, Hulme, Manchester. His lawyers are starting judicial review proceedings.

Viraj Mendis's two and a half year struggle against deportaion clearly shows the massive resistance to racism that can be tapped in this country. The Defence Campaign has received over 32,000 signatures and support from MPs, Councillors, trade unions, churches and temples al over Britain.

Five hundred people responded to the call for an emergency demonstration in Manchester on December 20th, and the regular weekly picket and all night vigil outside the Home Office have been well attended.

Viraj's case also reveals this government's frightening commitment to squash all opposition to the racism of the immigration laws which divide, oppress and criminalise black people and which the Tories will continue to use to their advantge to whip up racial hatred and detract from the real issues in the coming General Election.

Viraj Mendis, as a revolutionary communist who has successfully opposed many deportations, is a threat to this insidious form of racism.

The Home Office ruled recently that 10 years residence in Britain without official documents must be favourably considered. Viraj Mendis is only 17 months short of that; but to avoid the ruling David Waddington discounted his first 3 years (they were legal) and his last two and a half years (spent in campaigning).

Waddington has stated Viraj has "no roots in the community", ignoring the overwhelming support nationally and from Manchester City Council. He alleges that "no compelling compassionate factors" justify Viraj's right to stay, and has deliberately ignored the Amnesty International report documenting the death, disappearance and torture in Sri Lanka of those who have opposed the government's war on the Tamil people.

Given Britain's military investments and diplomatic interest in Sri Lanka this is no coincidence. David Waddington is prepared to see Viraj Mendis die rather than concede on this issue.

Only a massive public opposition can force the Home Office to retreat. The defence of Viraj Mendis concerns the right to organise against and fight racism in Britain. The Labour Party must openly support Viraj's right to stay and oppose all immigration controls and deportations.

Show your support by:

- **sending messages of solidarity to Viraj Mendis at the Anglican Parish Church of the Ascension, Royce Road, Hulme, Manchester.**
- **write letters of protest to the Home Office.**
- **attend the weekly VMDC London Support Group meetings — Thursdays, County Hall, 7.30.**
- **send donations to the Church or the London Support Group, BCM Box 5909, London . WC1N 3XX, 837 1688.**

Kinnock and our Councils

Restore our grants!

By Cllr Ian Harrison
Hammersmith & Fulham

Before last year's Council elections right wingers argued against refusing to set a rate on the grounds that cuts could be avoided by the use of "creative accounting".

We have now come full circle as left wing Councils which have used creative accounting to defend jobs and services are castigated by the right wing leadership of the Party.

Cunningham's warning that there will be no "pork barrel for local government" under Labour and Hattersley's insistance that there will be no bailing out of Councils facing financial catastrophe are not only insulting to local government but reveal an ignorance of, or indifference to, the cause and nature of their financial problems.

Government grant represents 46% of English local authority current spending compared with 61% in 1979/89, despite a fall in expenditure of 2%. Massive rate increases, and creative accounting by Councils under the threat of rate-capping, are almost entirely the result of this massive cut.

Labour commitments to reverse Tory cuts in vital public services would require almost £5 billion — more than 5 times the reported £900m gap between Council spending and official returns.

These gaps arise because Councils have found ways of maintaining or increasing revenue spending through long-term borrowing which falls outside the government's system of capital controls. A principal method is deferred puchase: releasing expenditure now against future years' capital allocations. It thus eats into future years' allocations: if these remain at present levels, Councils will end up unable to incur any capital expenditure at all.

Extra capital spending also means rising debt charges in years to come. This will not bankrupt Councils, but could require massive rate increases or more creative accounting unless the next government restores grant levels.

The strategies pursued by Haringey, Islington, Brent or Lambeth are not "extreme". They are only implementing Party policy of using all legal means to avoid cuts in jobs and services. The only alternative to creative accounting is massive cuts and betrayal of commitments.

If cuts are to be avoided in the future a public campaign needs to start now. Secret caucuses of Labour Council leaders will not have any impact, and their very secretiveness reveals a basic unwillingness to lead a real fight against Hattersley and Cunningham in the run-up to a General Election.

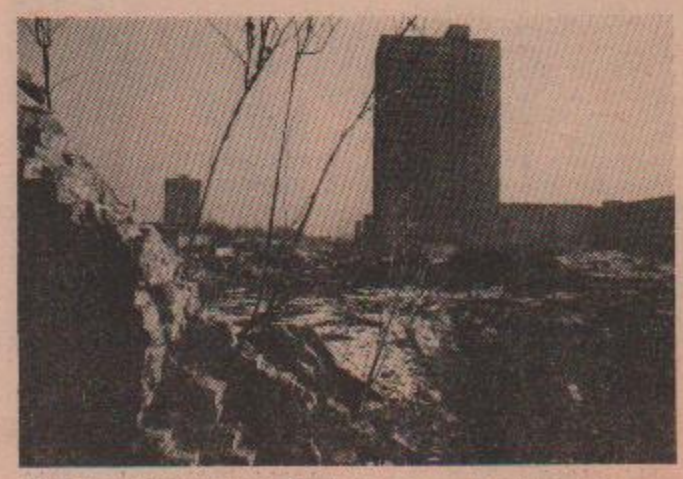
Labour kept or won control of dozens of Councils on the basis of defending and improving services. Already some "left" Labour Councils have refused to contemplate creative accounting for fear of financial problems in future years — and their capital investment has been held back as a result.

Other Councils secured deferred purchase agreements up to *6 months ago*; have not spent a penny yet, and may not if Labour's leaders get their way. The result will be postponement of new housing schemes, a squeeze on revenue spending, especially in Councils newly-won by Labour.

But if Labour is to win the next General Election we have to show a real determination to *fulfill* election pledges as soon as possible — not defer them indefinitely. In some places, especially inner London, where homelessness is rife, this has become not only politically essential, but a matter of life and death. How many deaths from hypothermia can Labour Councils stand before the public outcry turns on *them*?

Throughout the country the Party should be screaming at the Labour front bench for their appalling attitude towards local government. We should demand the restoration not only of local democracy but of all the Tory cuts and for an end to all restrictions, particularly on capital investment.

Motions to CLPs and union branches should demand that a Labour government will at least end all restrictions on capital investment by local authorities and restore central government grant to local authorities and restore central government grant to local authorities to 1979 levels. Only if these demands are met can we start to hope that cuts will be avoided by Labour Councils under a Labour government.



With record homelessness, Tory cuts mean a record low of house-building.

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Why we fight for a Labour victory

With Labour bouncing up and down in the opinion polls and the Tories on the attack, it looks like we can expect a General Election sooner rather than later.

Labour supporters must wonder how it is that the Tories — having suffered a series of national and international scandals — seem so buoyant and are still seen as a more serious party of government than Labour. They must also wonder how it is that Thatcher — doggedly persisting with her unpopular support for Reagan — scores consistently higher than the allegedly likeable Kinnock in the polls.

Last year saw the Westland and British Rover fiascoes, the use of US bases in Britain to bomb Libya (without so much as a by-your-leave to the British Cabinet), and a series of spectacular scandals erupting in the City: most recently, the allegations of insider dealing and the Morgan Grenfell/Guiness affair, with its direct links to Tory Trade and Industry Minister Paul Channon (whose family own a major interest in Guiness).

Yet Labour still lags behind the Tories.

Opinion polls show that unemployment and defence are the two main issues. Undoubtedly, these will be the two key political issues in the coming election. How do we solve Britain's economic problems and "get Britain back to work"? What is Britain's role in the world and what do we do about our position as a nuclear power?

There are apparent majorities for getting rid of US bases (as well as nuclear power) and a sizeable minority in favour of unilateral disarmament. There are also majorities for increased spending on the Welfare State, social services, and education, and in favour of investment to reduce unemployment.

On these issues, Labour would appear to be in tune with the electorate. Yet it fails to command decisive support. Thatcher remains the most popular leader and the Tories the most popular party.

In the United States, there are also popular majorities *against* nearly all of Reagan's policies — cuts in welfare, increases in armaments, including Star Wars, support for the Contras, and intervention in Central America in general. Yet the Reagan presidency retains popular support.

Of course, there is no equivalent to the Labour Party in the States. The Democrats are a second bourgeois party, akin to the Liberal/SDP Alliance in Britain. But there are parallels.

The basis for the apparent contradiction between the opinion polls on key issues and the results in elections is the huge rate of voter abstentions. In 1984, barely 50% of the electorate voted. Reagan was thus elected by 30% of the electorate (itself not a true reflection of a highly-mobile, under-registered population).

There are now signs of a similar development here — which Labour and the Trade Union movement would do well to heed. In some inner city areas only around 30-35% of those eligible actually bother to vote. A large proportion of the abstainers come from the most disadvantaged groups — Black youth, the unemployed, and women.

Labour Party members are all too familiar with the doorstep refrain: "They're all the same." When you think about it, Kinnock's promised one million jobs in two years still offer nothing to the millions who will remain unemployed or underemployed. So why vote Labour rather than Tory? Why vote at all?

The economic policy proposed by the Kinnock leadership and adopted by Party Conference — with its pathetic attempts to lure finance capital into investing in Britain (through a National Investment Bank with lower interest rates than elsewhere) and its refusal to contemplate any controls over the banking and finance houses — isn't credible. People don't want to vote for Thatcher, but Kinnock remains an unconvincing alternative.

It's the same with Labour's defence policy. What was once a radical, unilateralist policy has been given the Walworth Road treatment — and now pleases no one. Getting rid of our nuclear arsenal only to spend the money on conventional weapons begs all the questions. Who really is "our enemy"?

If we need to spend so much on tanks and guns, the enemy must be pretty dangerous, and if that's the case, is it really wise to junk our nuclear warheads?

Labour's current policy pleases neither the peace campaigners — who want to see the money saved on armaments spent on education, services, and jobs — nor those committed to a strong military defence of Britain, which they still believe depends on nuclear weapons.

Kinnock's attempt to appeal to the middle ground is a disaster for Labour. It excites none of the major constituencies whose support Labour needs and will lead to dismal electoral failure.

Yet Labour could win the next General Election if it offered a genuine alternative to Thatcher. By looking at just one small area of employment policy, we can see how a truly radical policy can start to change the political balance of forces — and work in the interests of the oppressed rather than the oppressor.

Today in Britain there are 4.5 million part-time workers, of whom at least 85% are women. They are without employment protection, without benefits, low-paid and unorganised.

If Kinnock and his team were really "for women" (as they claim) they would address this problem. Nursery provision for all who want it to free women of child care restrictions; abortion and contraception facilities to enable women to choose whether and when to have children; a shorter working week for all with no loss of pay to undermine the material basis for the exploitation of part-time workers — a programme of this kind would be of immediate benefit to millions of women workers and others.

But, of course, it would also cut profits. And that is the crunch. Nothing can be done for the unemployed, for the low-paid, for the part-time workers without attacking the profits of capital. A confrontation would be inevitable — but it is this confrontation which Kinnock refuses to face and will do everything in his power to avoid.

So the prospects for 1987 look gloomy. What should the Left be doing? Despite everything, we must campaign vigorously for a Labour victory. Only a Labour victory can open the door to any of the political initiatives to which the Left is committed. A third Tory government would be a huge defeat for us — and for the cause of all the oppressed. It would make our struggle in the Labour Party even more difficult.

But as we fight for the election of a Labour government, we must say clearly that we have no faith in the capacity of the present programme — or leadership — to solve any of the severe problems facing the working class.

We call for a Labour Party and a Labour government which will fight for the working class with the same determination as Thatcher fights for her class. This is the answer to Labour's crisis, and not capitulation to a mythic middle ground.

Looking at the last Labour government:

The price of betrayal

A concerted attempt is now being made to rehabilitate the political record of the last Labour government in the eyes of the Party.

Most important is Henry Neuberger's considered piece in the *Guardian*.

The common theme is that the achievements of the '74-'79 Labour government have been unfairly traduced by loony Bennites and Trots intent on the destruction of civilised values. But the real purpose of the press offensive is to persuade labour movement activists not to be too critical of a future Labour government.

It is important to answer these arguments, as many Party members may not recall the full facts of the Labour government's performance — or may not have been active in the Party at that time.

Henry Neuberger is economic adviser to the Leader of the Opposition, and he's held this position under both Foot and Kinnock.

Neuberger's revisionist arguments are:

- "As with most Labour governments, it takes some time for their achievements to be recognised";
- that the government's economic performance was well above the international norm on growth and job creation, and that Denis Healey as Chancellor resisted deflationary pressures;
- that the government introduced specific measures which were progressive or increased equality;
- that if the real value of North Sea oil had been known, that the government's attitude to deflation would have been different.

By Reg Race
Tottenham CLP

To answer these arguments it is necessary to place the government of 1974-79 in historical perspective. The Wilson government in 1964-70 had been a disastrous failure; it had squandered a huge Parliamentary majority on support for the American bombing of Vietnam, savage deflation of the economy, and attempts to place legal shackles on the trade unions.

During this period the collapsing of the manufacturing base accelerated dramatically. After the 1970 General Election defeat the Party reassessed its economic strategy and adopted a radical socialist economic programme. The basis for this was that enormous structural faults made the economy uncontrollable without major extensions of state intervention including public ownership, planning agreements, and import controls. These measures were essential if Labour was to secure, in the words of the party programme, "a fundamental and irreversible shift in wealth and power in favour of working people and their families."

This was the policy context in February '74 in which Labour was propelled into office by the miners' industrial action, with the British establishment paralysed with fear at the price they would have to pay for the three day week.

After a promising start, the Labour government rapidly reneged on its policy commitments. The Industry Bill was destroyed by making the planning agreements voluntary and by limiting the remit of the National Enterprise Board and starving it of cash.

Large numbers of Social Contract commitments were abandoned. The commitment to control prices, especially of essentials, was jettisoned and food subsidies worth £409m in 1976/77 were phased out. Pensions, increased at the beginning of the Labour government's terms of office, were massively eroded by reducing the number of upratings of benefits — "saving" the government £500m in 1976 alone.

Prescription charges, which were to be abolished, remained. Charges on specs, false teeth and dental treatment were increased. New tax benefits for the rich gave huge sums to those earning over £25,000 a year.

The commitments in the programme on housing finance were met by the repeal of the Housing Finance Acts, but rents were forced up by over 40% in three years by cuts in public spending. The housing construction programme was slashed after initial increases and many thousands of construction workers put on the dole.

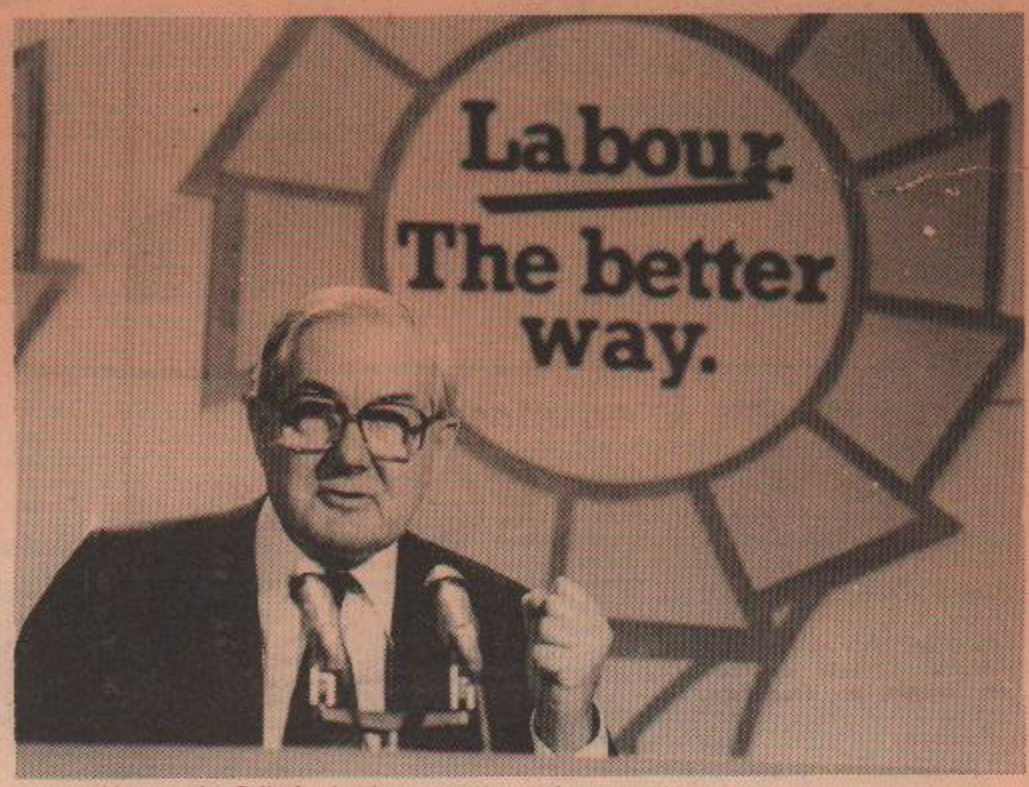


PHOTO: Andrew Ward (Report)

For working people, Callaghan's "better way" turned sour quickly.

Worst of all were the huge cuts in public expenditure made in 1975 and on three occasions in 1976, which amounted in real terms to around £8,000 million at 1976 prices. Virtually every public service was affected and some, such as the hospital building programme, were viciously attacked.

Labour ministers also made great efforts to divide the trade unions by arguing that it was in the interests of trade unions in the manufacturing sector to cut public expenditure. Foolishly, many trade unionists believed them, and it was not until 1977-78 that the support of the trade union movement for the deflationary and reactionary policies of the government was broken.

On wages, the government behaved disgracefully. At the end of its term of office, Labour Ministers — in particular Chancellor Healey and Prime Minister Callaghan — ignored the decisions of both the Party Conference and the TUC to oppose the 5% pay policy. The government then offered the lowest paid workers in Britain a wage rise of 60p per week before tax. The outcome of this crass stupidity was the "winter of discontent" involving major strikes in many public services.

This dismal record proves the arguments of the revisionists are hollow. The truth is that the Labour government of 1974-79 abandoned the full employment policy pursued by successive governments since 1944; attacked the low paid; decimated public expenditure; agreed to wildly deflationary terms from the IMF which ruled out an alternative economic strategy; and introduced monetarism to Britain.

It is a fallacy to argue that Labour Ministers would have acted differently if they had known the scale of real cash benefits from North Sea Oil. They did know. They even published a White Paper on the subject (Cmnd. 7143) in 1978, in which they specifically rejected the creation of an oil fund to finance social and economic projects. This was proposed in Cabinet by Tony Benn and defeated. Instead, cash from oil revenues was to be channelled by government into private industry to raise profits, whilst wages and the social wage were held down.

For a government that came to power on a socialistic programme like 1973 this was a dismal performance. Labour's policies often appeared to voters as cold porridge stirred through a wet blanket. We must not have such a government again; what is needed are clear strategies, a determined attack on the powers of capital to set the economic agenda, and solid commitments to the oppressed which will be honoured. There is no inspiration for the future in trying to exhume a corpse.

Trade Union Briefing

Union News in Brief

Wheelers

The Wheelers Restaurant strike by four Chinese workers in Brighton, now into its eleventh week, has still received no more than "reluctant" support from T&GWU regional office. Little attempt has been made to enlist the support of other branches and donations towards the Wheelers Four Hardship Fund have gone towards administrative costs rather than directly to the strikers and their families. In addition, the Union still refuses to pay interpreters' fees and travelling expenses.

Despite a voluntary undertaking by the Union to limit the number of picketers to six, Wheelers' custom has been cut by half. The initial heavy-handed policing of picketers has continued.

The decision to dispense with Chinese members of staff is not an isolated one. Since the Kennedy Brooke company took over ownership of the Wheelers chain, at least two other Chinese kitchen staff have been dismissed from separate branches in London. This historic strike — the first ever by Chinese workers in Britain — will have considerable impact on the struggles of other black migrant workers, who comprise some of the most vulnerable sections of the country's workforce.

Picketting of Wheelers' restaurants in London and a public meeting are being organised in order to raise the profile of the strike in the capital. Trade Union branches and Labour Party wards should discuss the issues arising from the strike and ways in which members can give support. These four workers are up against not only the racism of their employers, but also the racism of the trade unions. It is important that black organisations, particularly those within the labour movement, show solidarity with them.

For further information, contact the Wheelers Four London Support group, c/o CIAC, 152-156 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8HL. Tel.: 836 8291.

Ai Meun Lim, London Support Group

Guiness Directors Won't Go

Behind the fast-breaking, headline-catching saga of Distillers and Guiness and Morgan Grenfell and Ivan Boesky lies the crucial reality of ownership and control of one of Scotland's major industries and one of Britain's major exporters.

Manipulated share prices before and after the Guiness/Distillers takeover meant windfall profits for a range of insiders on both sides of the Atlantic — now being investigated but the Department of Trade and Industry. But for the workers employed by the multi-national giants the merger mania means rationalisation, redundancies, closures, and asset-stripping.

For details and analysis, read the next issue of *Briefing* — in a fortnight's time.

NCU

National Communications Union

Telecom workers go into action

National Communications Union members in British Telecom are starting a work to rule and overtime ban from January 12th. This follows a 4 to 1 ballot rejection of BT's 4.5% plus strings pay offer. The strings include abolition of higher grade, greater management control over promotion, and the extention of the normal working day to 7pm.

John Golding, the right wing union General Secretary initiated this conditions-for-pay bargaining to which the membership is now fiercely opposed.

BT senior management has clearly decided on a showdown with the union and has dismissed the NEC's right to desperate last minute pleas for a little bit extra to sell the deal to the membership. Privatisation and competition have entailed major changes in working conditions without additional rewards, and BT's staff are in militant mood.

Union activists believe that management may respond by suspensions. This will escalate the situation, as branches have been instructed to respond by calling one day protest strikes. But these may prove inadequate to achieve reinstatement, and the question of all-out action may well be posed. The militant London branches have been campaigning for such a policy, but the national leadership has so far turned a deaf ear.

The management and supervisors' union, the STE, is calling its own work to rule at the same time. Providing they aren't bought off, this can only strengthen the union's hand.

Pete Cooper, NCU London West

CPSA re-run
Defeat and After

Christmas turkey took on a new meaning this year with the announcement that John Ellis had won the re-run election for CPSA General Secretary.

Ellis was the candidate of the union's controlling right wing which had previously overturned the election of Broad Left candidate John Macreadie. Despite Macreadie increasing his vote by more than 10,000, right-winger Ellis doubled his support and won by a clear margin.

This defeat was partly due to a vicious red-baiting campaign against Macreadie in the national press. More important, perhaps, were the changes in CPSA's balloting system introduced by the right wing for the re-run. These changes allowed the right to collect votes from normally inactive members concentrated in areas such as the Ministry of Defence.

By Alastair Wallace
CPSA Broad Left

The candidature of Geoff Lewtas, a supporter of the Kinnockite Broad Left '84, was crucial. Lewtas came a distant third in the original elections, but insisted on running again, and thereby decisively split the left vote.

It is clear that Broad Left '84 stood their candidate primarily to *stop Macreadie being re-elected*. Indeed, some of their most prominent members argued that the group should support Ellis in the re-run.

As an indication of what might have been, it is worth looking at the result of CPSA's General Treasurer election, which was run in tandem with that for General Secretary. In this case, the Broad Left candidate stood down in order to preserve the original victory of BL '84 supporter Christine Kirk. Kirk won the re-run by some 3,000 votes.

The Broad Left must nonetheless face up to the reality that the election result is a defeat. The ability of the right wing to overturn the original result and their dangerous attacks on the Union's democracy clearly shows the *weakness of the left*.

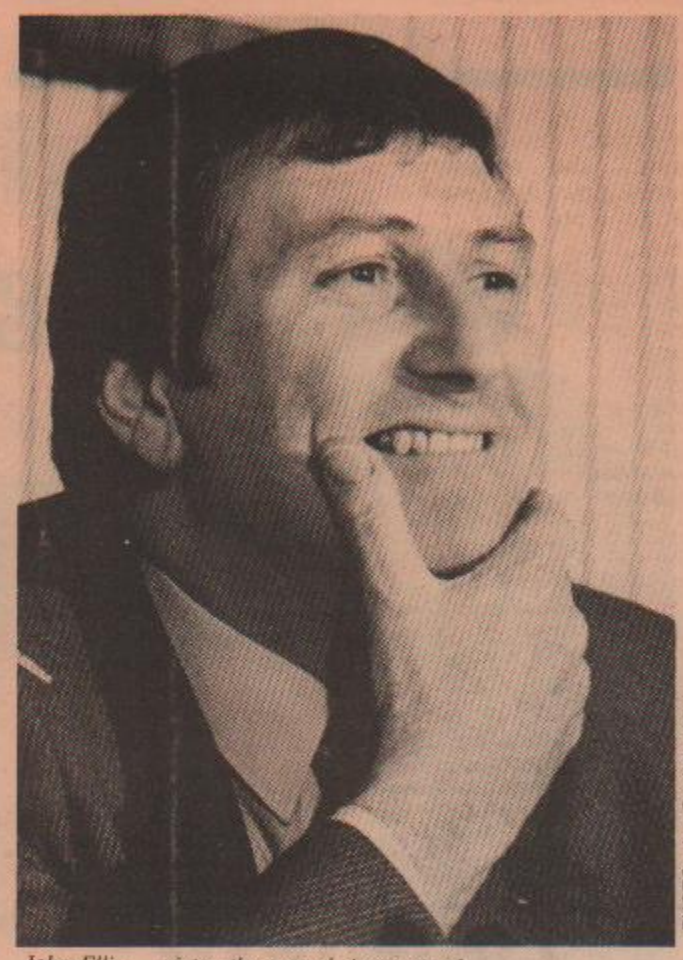


PHOTO: Jez Coulson (IFL)

John Ellis — victor the second time around

The election of the CPSA NEC takes place in April and if the events of the past year have taught us anything it is that we must control that committee. The reassertion of CPSA's democracy must be the key policy battle in the forthcoming year as the right wing drives hard towards postal balloting.

The Kinnockites will continue to split the left for purely sectarian purposes. The Broad Left must be wary of indulging in similar tactics. We must continue to concentrate our energies on wresting control from the right wing and the Union bureaucracy, and placing it in the hands of the rank and file.

Bleak future for teachers

NUT members have voted to accept the ACAS "agreement" on teachers' pay and conditions of service recommended by the Executive as the alternative to a deal being imposed by the Secretary of State Kenneth Baker.

Yet the extent of the vote against (a 42% "no" vote from a poll supported by just over half the membership) has clearly shaken the Union's leaders.

By Martin Allen
Socialist Teachers' Alliance

The vote illustrates the divisions remaining in the NUT and the opposition from the grass roots to any attempts to sell off teachers' conditions of service. Put alongside the rejection of the ACAS deal by the other TUC affiliated trade union, the NAS/UWT, it shows there is no mandate whatsoever for the imposition of the deal on classroom teachers.

The NUT leadership have needed the backing of the scab headteachers associations to get the deal through the Burham Committee, the teachers' negotiating machinery.

Baker is still maintaining that the ACAS agreement, reached after lengthy negotiations with the Labour dominated employers, does not go far enough; and that he would like to see wider differentials amongst teachers. His Bill currently going through parliament also contains legislation that will abolish Burnham in favour of an "Advisory Committee" giving direct power to the Secretary of State.

Rather than launch a campaign of action against what is another potential "GCHQ" attack on trade union rights, the NUT leadership, armed with its own sell-out deal, is likely to adopt a softly, softly approach hoping for a compromise with Baker. A bleak future faces teachers.

Defend ILTA!

At a meeting on Thursday January 8th, representatives from London schools voted overwhelmingly to suport a one day strike to protest agaisnt the Baker Bill on teachers' pay and conditions.

The strike, called by the Inner London Teachers' Association (ILTA, the London section of the NUT), is due to take place on January 13th.

This followed hard on the suspension of all the ILTA council delegates — numbering over eighty — who voted for the strike, by the National Executive of the NUT, who declared it unofficial. The NUT executive has taken this drastic action because they are determined to get rid of the main source of political opposition to both the Nottingham Agreement and the Baker deal from within the union. If the suspensions are upheld it will not only remove the whole political leadership of the ILTA but will also remove wholesale the union's organisation in London.

By Ann Potter

The Executive are worried that the strategy proposed by ILTA's leadership may encourage other parts of the union to take effective action against Baker's Bill.

The National Executive "strategy" to improve teachers' pay and conditions is to cuddle up to the Labour local authorities in the hope that a period of industrial peace will precede the election of a Labour government, which will supposedly solve teachers' problems automatically.

ILTA and some other teachers' associations have rejected this strategy in favour of a determined fight against the Baker Bill whose central feature removes the fundamental right of teaching unions to negotiate independently their own pay and conditions. The implication of this Bill for other public sector unions cannot be underestimated.

Other NUT Associations should follow the lead of ILTA by calling industrial action against the Bill — this is also the best way to force the NUT to drop its disciplinary action against ILTA council.

Management mole comes clean!

Hanger's management should receive the 1986 award for hypocrisy, deception, subterfuge and cruelty.

It turns out that Stan East, the personnel director, has been conspiring with Peter Bausch (sacked maintenance fitter, not limbmaker) for some time. Peter Kendall, at a mass meeting on January 9th 1987, revealed that he had been initially tricked into a conspiracy by an invitation for coffee because he lives near Bausch. When he arrived he found Stan East in the living room. He asked Mr East if he didn't believe it was immoral to sack the 300 Hanger's workers. East replied that if he hadn't done it, someone else would have.

It is also alleged that Graham Woods, a key witness in the unfair dismissal tribunals, was bought off. Mr Woods was sacked, but then reinstated because he had already arranged to go to work in the Cardiff plant, before the dispute started. He was then sacked again because Stan East did not realise the implications of reinstatement, for the other sacked workers. He allegedly said that he was prepared to lie at the industrial tribunal hearing if Woods told the truth.

Bausch and Kendall helped identify the men on strike and the activists. Management has prepared a hitlist of the activists, including those who belong to the Labour Party!

Kendall also revealed that workers are being coerced to

By Kathy Pick
Tooting Councillor, Putney CLP

cross the picket line next week, for at least one day and then recommended to take sick leave afterwards.

The Hanger's management are desperate to have a workforce in place so that they can receive the DHSS contract which hasn't been reissued as of date.

In their letter of January 7th to the sacked workforce they announce they "have made strenuous efforts to find a solution to the Roehampton problem". They write that a number of ACAS meetings culminated with an agreement on December 22nd 1986 between FTAT and TASS and the company. They announce that part of the agreement was that the unions would recommend acceptance. Graham Croucher, of the disputes committee, said, "this is an outright lie."

Management believe that offering 80 permanent posts and 60 temporary posts (till the end of March) is acceptable. At the last mass meeting it was unanimously rejected by the sacked workforce. Management now say in the January 7th letter that they will now only offer 80 permanent posts.

Workers at Pilkington's, the glass company threatened with a takeover by BTR, are fighting back. There will be a Delegates Action meeting on January 14th, with a lobby of MPs later that afternoon.

A Pilkington march is planned in St Helen's on Saturday January 10th. However, the Hanger's workers will not be allowed to march with them. The police are vigorously enforcing the Public Order Bill and refusing to allow people from other disputes at the march!

Links with shop stewards of BTR and Hanger's are being forged, throughout the country. An inaugural meeting of a Joint Shop Stewards Committee will be held on January 24th in London.

Graham Croucher said that a majority of the artificial limb work being done elsewhere, especially at Kelly's in Dundee, has been substandard and rejected by the Inspectors, due to the lack of equivalent experience and expertise which exists at Roehampton. Pressure should be put on the Labour Party to incorporate the artifical limb industry into the NHS. It is cruel to the patients who desperately need the artificial limbs that such a company is allowed to put profits before the needs of patients throughout the country.

After four months of strike pay of £22 a week the sacked workers and their families are in dire straits. Excellent efforts were made by Wandsworth Labour Parties and local trades councils to ensure the families had a decent Christmas but donations are now urgently needed. Please send messages of support and/or financial assistance to Steve Blease, c/o TASS, 520 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 4YQ.

Don't forget the miners

A year ago, 10,000 miners and supporters marched through London on the anniversary of the strike.

MPs and leaders of the NUM and other unions spoke at the rally, along with representatives of Broadwater Farm and other major campaigns.

The evening concert sold out the Albert Hall and raised a huge sum for the Miners' Solidarity Fund. Most important, the victimised miners reaffirmed their strength and determination in public, and the bourgeois press noted this.

Why not again this year? Not because the miners are not active or organised — they are. Not because the NJMC was incapable — it is stronger, better known, and more organised in the regions than a year ago. At its last but one meeting, the NJMC voted unanimously to organise a national anniversary demonstration and concert this March. Brent Council agreed to book Wembley Conference

By Ed Fredenburgh

Centre and give us nearly £5,000 of advance funding.

But at the last NJMC meeting, in Durham, we were presented with a fait accompli. Rather than act on or even argue against a democratic decision, the officers of the NJMC (including the secretary, a supporter of *Socialist Action*) explained that "regional events" would replace a single national focus. The London event was demoted to a regional concert and counterposed to another in Sheffield.

Clearly the approach of the general election has concentrated the minds of those who pull the strings of the NJMC at its bureaucratic level. This is no way to defend the NUM as its leaders face trial for their actions as trustees of the union's funds; and no way to mobilise for a Labour government, or to commit it to act in the basic interests of the working class.

The South East Region of the NJMC is now working hard with Kent NUM and with the victimised workers from Hangers, Silentnight, and Wapping to organise and build the benefit at Wembley Conference Centre. This will almost certainly be on Sunday March 1st at 7.30pm. As soon as arrangements are finalised, *Briefing* supporters will be asked to help us in making the event a success.

We have also organised on Friday January 30th a joint discussion meeting, hosted by the NJMC, with Hangers, Silentnight and printworkers on the platform. Peter Heathfield will present his overview of the common attacks faced by thse groups, and the need to organise together in defence of a realistic policy for the trade union movement. There will be discussion from the floor, and this meeting will also be a valuable step towards mobilising for March 1st.

Bring your support and your contacts to both events!

National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign
(South East Region)
Joint public meeting with
NUM, Hangers, Printworkers, Silentnight
Speakers:
Peter Heathfield, Irene Scott (Silentnight), Alan Barnes (Hangers), Liz Short (printworkers).
7.30pm
Friday 30th January
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

Obituary

Jack Collins is dead. We have all lost a comrade and a socialist fighter; and the Kent miners have lost a leader who for many years symbolised the militancy, class solidarity and internationalism of the Kent mining community.

Jack went down the pit as a teenager, during World War II, at Chislet colliery near Canterbury. There he first developed his political education and at 15 joined the Communist Party (at a time when the 3rd International represented the vanguard and the victor of international war on fascism).

He remained a staunch but increasingly critical party member until he broke away some three years ago.

The closure of Chislet in 1968 was a traumatic blow and hardened Jack's views on the threat posed by pit closures. He transferred to Snowdown Colliery, and 2 years later was elected as Kent's national delegate to the NEC — the only lay member. In 1980 he was elected General Secretary of the Kent Area, replacing Jack Dunn. He was a key figure — and one of the last — on the NUM's national Broad Left, and a close friend of Joe Whelan, the CP leader from Notts Area. Jack gave evidence to the Wilberforce committee on the erosion of pay through wage differentials.

Jack was notable for his strong support of international issues: Nicaragua, Bolivia, and notably Chile. He was outraged by the Chilean coup and the failure to arm the Chilean working class, and he became an active supporter of the Chile Solidarity Campaign.

We saw him many times with the miners on the Grunwick picket line, and out in support of the nurses' strike.

He was of course a great fighter in the miners' strikes of '72, '74 and 84/5, and is remembered by the Kent women's support groups for his consistent encouragement of their work. "He gave us a lot of support," says Kay Sutcliffe. "He was highly respected and will be sadly missed by all of us."

To the Kent miners, working, victimised and gaoled, to the women of the coalfield communities, and particularly to his wife and two mining sons, we offer deeply felt condolences for a comrade and a man whose loss is a measure of the value of his life.

The funeral of Jack Collins will take place on Thursday morning, January 15th. Assemble at 10.30 at his village of Hersden, near Canterbury, or at 11.30am at Barham.

National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign
(South East Region)
MINERS BENEFIT
with
Hangers, Silentnight, Printworkers
at Wembley Conference Centre
7.30 Sunday 1st March
(date and artistes to be confirmed)



PHOTO: Andrew Ward (Report)

Rosemary Hicks, wife of jailed SOGAT NEC member Mike Hicks, leads the 2,500-strong march on "Fortress Wapping".

Sacked Printworkers Benefit
"The Ministry of Power" present documentary footage of the struggle; the inimitable *Test Department*; veteran campaigners *Peggy Seeger* and *Ewan McColl*; *Sarah Jane Morris* of Communards/Happy End; and many others.
8.00pm, **Friday 23rd January**, Hackney Empire Theatre, 291 Mare St, London E8.

WAPPING

National March & Rally
Sunday 24th January

Strike Anniversary — a year of struggle
Assemble: Arundel St, Temple Tube, 4pm
Rally: Wellclose St, E1, 6.30pm
● National Speakers ● Music
● Special guests ● Stalls
Called by SOGAT, NGA, AEU, NUJ

On the anniversary of the print strike, *Briefing* calls on all its supporters and readers to join the strikers' demonstration at Wapping.

Public sector strikes hit France



PHOTO: Labour Party Photo Library

Socialist Party leaders: it seems "red rose" politics were already popular in France in 1985...

***Briefing* spoke to Claude de Bon, Secretary, CFDT, Paris St Lazare Station, about the French rail strike. The strike started on December 18th at Paris Nord mainline station.**

It was initiated by a group of unionised and non-unionised drivers. They worked out a set of demands which they asked the three unions, the CFDT, CGT and the independent drivers union to support.

The CFDT gave warning of strike action, but the other two didn't follow immediately. The strike spread very rapidly to national level. Subsequently the station staffs came out.

Massively attended meetings of strikers appeared very quickly. There is a very strong determination amongst the strikers to control the conduct of the strike, the demands and the unions. In a number of instances, strike committees have been elected.

The railworkers have been subjected to:

- the government's austerity policies
- no wage increase for 18 months
- loss of 10,000 jobs by natural wastage over the last year.

On top of this Douffragues, the Minister of Transport, announced changes in conditions of employment such as promotion by "merit" without regard to seniority and in the retirement age.

The strikers are calling for

- the withdrawal of the new wage scales and promotion by "merit"
- the restoration and improvement of wage levels and of working conditions.

The government at first misunderstood the scope of the movement, which it took to be an ordinary strike. It calculated on and hoped for a crumbling of the strike. But the strike has gone on for a long time now.

The student movement against the Devaquet Higher Education Bill has influenced the railworkers.

The workforce of the SNCF (French national railways) has got a lot younger over the last 10 years. The workers taken on after the Liberation in 1945 have retired over the last decade and have been replaced by youth of the same age as the students.

The student movement provoked a lot of discussion amongst them. The student strike committees had some influence on the organisation of our strike but there were already experiences of strike committees on the rail at a local but not national level.

Young workers in France are not normally unionised. They believe that the unions don't look after their interests. It's a less politicised generation than the veterans of '68.

Chirac is very firm against the strikers for 2 reasons:

- The desire for revenge after their humiliation at the hands of the students
- he is aware that a victory for the railworkers could set off a strike wave for wage increases. This has alrady started to happen in the gas and electricity industries and in the Paris Metro.

These strikes, however, have been called partly because the CGT seeing that it cannot control the railworkers, is attempting to "surround" them in a wider movement. There is no rank and file control in these other strikes.

The Communist Party is supporting the strike. The Socialist Party also, but much more discretely because it is compromised by its recent record in government. The SP left is giving more support and both SP and CP councils are giving material aid to the strikers. There is no strike pay. Mitterrand, for example, by receiving a delegation of railworkers, is trying to demonstrate his desire for a dialogue with the workers and to distance himself from the Chirac government's hard line.

The danger facing the movement is that in reality there are two strikes on the railways. The Drivers are primarily concerned with working conditions whereas the less well paid staff are concerned with wage levels. This poses the question of a public sector general strike against low pay.

Defence and Disarmament

Looking at CND:

Contradictions in a Trojan Horse

Since its inception in the late 1950s CND has grown, shrunk and grown again.

The current state of CND is possibly the least understood part of the campaign's history. As we move towards a general election in which "defence" is one of the main issues we must analyse the current positions of CND and its relationship with the Labour Party. In order to defend and extend unilateral policy we have to organise in both CND and the Labour Party.

In the late '50s and early '60s CND popularised unilateral nuclear disarmament; it was the only peace movement in the West. The ability to mobilise mass demonstrations and to win the Labour Party to unilateralism, albeit for a very short time, made Britain the only country outside Japan where disarmament remained on the political agenda of the labour movement.

The demise of CND in the early '60s came partly from the failure to hold the Labour Party to unilateralism. This was hastily followed by accommodation to the Cold War diversion of test ban negotiations within a multilateralist framework. The rapid growth of the campaign in opposition to the Vietnam War drew in the energies of many on the left, who saw little point in working within and alongside the Labour Party where there appeared to be no left opposition.

This points to the need to link political demands to one another. That the link between the Vietnam War and nuclear disarmament was not made, and that the campaign against the war was waged while the Labour Party was retreating into the camp of American imperialism meant that the question of unilateral nuclear disarmament was submerged for twenty years.

The escalation of Cold War

By Lawrence Ashelford Peckham CND/Peckham CLP

rhetoric and military preparedness by the US from the late 1970s, led to the re-emergence of the mass peace movement in Britain, but this time with parallels in other Western European countries and in the US itself.

The decision to site Cruise missiles at Greenham and elsewhere gave impetus to the movement. The recommitment of the Labour Party to unilateralism was the result of the pressure from CND but was also linked to the emergence of a strong left wing, led by Benn, fighting on accountability and on policy issues like disarmament.

As a result both the peace movement and the labour movement mobilised in opposition to Cruise. At the local government level, councils adopted the "Nuclear Free Zones" policy; at the national level large demonstrations took place, including the massive demonstration against Reagan in 1984. In addition, women set up camp at Greenham, becoming an inspiration for peace campaigners all over the world and developing new forms of direct action.

The anti-Reagan demonstration took place during the Miners' strike and direct links were made between the two struggles through the "Mines Not Missiles" initiatives. Many of the women's groups supporting the miners also went to Greenham, supporting the women there. These links were made visible on the demo itself, where many NUM banners were to be seen.

But this major demo was not the easy product of the political moment. CND's leadership had to be forced into calling it by the concerted efforts of campaigners in a number of local groups who recognised the importance of visible opposition to US imperialism and its links with other political struggles. The activities of such groups with clear links to the labour movement prompted and built the largest demonstration against nuclear weapons ever seen in Britain.

Since then, and particularly since the defeat of the miners' strike, there have been no major anti-nuclear demonstrations. A few thousand people sauntered around Barrow shipyards in '85, and likewise at Coulport in '86. CND's leadership would have us believe that these were national mobilisations. Yet few attended and few even heard that they had taken place. Why has this happened and what can be done about it?

For a number of years CND has been dominated by debate between different sections of the movement, some aligned within CND itself (LCND, Liberal CND), some with links to other political groupings. The most politically influential but least overt of these groupings has been the Communist Party.

A campaign as wide as CND is fertile ground for the politics of the popular front. This means making alliances with anyone who is vaguely sympathetic and of necessity watering down your demands, appealing to the middle ground, in order to maintain the alliance. In CND this middle ground includes multilateralists, and unilateralists who think that Britain can ditch nuclear weapons and bases but remain in NATO. Outside CND it means appealing to the SDP, Tory wets and the church.

The attempt to impose this strategy on CND — its proponents call it a tactic by the way — has included a move to replace unilaterialism with a freeze on nuclear weapons; the disappearance of national demonstrations in favour of small local actions; and a repeated failure to campaign on withdrawal from NATO, though this has been CND policy for 20 years.

However, unilateralism remains CND policy and the freeze movement has died a death. There will be a national demonstration in April '87 and YCND has staged a successful campaign against NATO, but without the support and resources of the national leadership. Popular front politics have still not entirely taken over in CND and the campaign still has some influence in the Labour Party.

This year's CND Conference saw a shift from a political attack on progressive aspects of policy to an organisational attack designed to promote the same coalitionist objectives. Only five motions were debated, the bulk of conference being devoted to workshops. This removes policy making from ordinary members to the national Council, which is heavily influenced by the ideas of the Communist Party. It also dissipates the energy of conference into hundreds of small workshops, plus a few major ones addressed in the main by representatives of the middle ground and other popular front ideologues.

Another move over the years to make CND more "popular" has focused on alternative defence strategies in an attempt to respond to the criticism that unilateral disarmament will leave Britain defenceless. Peter Tatchell has been a prominent advocate of this position and has even produced detailed options of different military possibilities.

It is not the job of CND or the left in the Labour Party to prepare the state's arguments and policy for it — it is over-equipped both technically and politically to do that for itself. Unfortunately CND Conference was seduced by the idea of a military rather than a political answer to the "defenceless Britain" argument. So CND will be campaigning for a "non-nuclear, peaceful, autonomous foreign policy."

To challenge these ideas in CND and the Labour Party we must always ask whether any policy, campaign or action is designed to mobilise people around unilateralism and withdrawal from NATO, or whether it is another attempt to appease or placate forces opposed to CND and Labour Party policy.

Secondly, we must try to win back waverers in the Party and the Trade Unions. Labour CND



PHOTO: Andrew Ward (Report)

Direct action against Libyan b



PHOTO: John Chapman

Newbury women link arms around Greenham Common

The Russians aren't coming!

Neil Kinnock's defence policy is reminiscent of the old joke about the man sprinkling "elephant repellent" over the Severn Bridge. "But there are no elephants around here!", protests an onlooker: "Shows how well the powder works, don't it?", replies the advocate of conventional deterrence.

Many British socialists are horrified that the US public seems to swallow Reagan, Rambo, "Red Dawn", Star Wars, and the bizarre State Department notion of the USSR edging it way into the USA through Nicaragua, 1,500 miles away.

But let's not forget that Neil "I'd die for my country" Kinnock and much of Labour's rank and file still believe in equally crass devils and hobgoblins — in the form of the cold war mythology of a "threat" from the East.

Kinnock is not alone in believing that imperialist Britain, with its monarchy, its military, its capitalist system at home and its economic exploitation of the third world, still has to be "defended" — and that only continued defence spending (elephant dust) can keep the Kremlin tanks and landing craft at bay.

So what are the facts? Does Moscow really covet Manchester? Do the Kremlin leaders even hanker after the much closer goal of the other half of Germany?

No! Experience shows that in the immediate post-war period, with the imperialist powers in disarray and armed Communist-led resistance forces within reach of power in France, Italy and Greece, Stalin ordered them to disarm themselves, and directed the Communist Parties into coalition capitalist governments.

Struggle

Since then the Kremlin leadership and the Communist Parties have, if anything, shown themselves even more hostile than Kinnock to working class struggle and more committed to the capitalist status quo in Western Europe.

Nor do the consequences of the extension of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe encourage any further military expansion. Moscow bureaucrats have had enough economic, political and

By Jack Doberman

military problems dealing with national leaderships and working class resistance in East Germany, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia without trying forcibly to invade and contain new territories thousands of miles distant. The prolonged agony of the 80,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan — from which Gorbachev now seems to be looking for a dignified exit — sums up the nonsense of invading a hostile Western Europe.

Indeed a more relevant question is the extent to which the USSR would give any support to revolutionary struggles which jeopardise the existing political status quo outside its defined "spheres of influence".

Though Khruschev was, under certain conditions, prepared to extend military and economic help to Cuba, his successors have counted the cost of massive subsidies paid to Castro, and no doubt this is one reason why so little Soviet support has been forthcoming for the Sandinistas.

If they will not support a popular revolution, it is hardly likely that the conservative bureaucrats in the Kremlin will, without any provocation, nod through at a Central Committee meeting a resolution for immediate invasion of Western Europe!

By arguing for a generous sprinkling of "conventional" elephant dust Kinnock also diverts from an important threat which would undoubtedly face a Britain which embarked on a programme of socialist reconstruction.

A real workers' government in Britain which set out to smash the existing state machinery, withdrew British troops from overseas, and which gave assistance to liberation struggles would face the same US hostility as did Allende's Chile and Maurice Bishop's Grenada.

Such a workers' government would need defending — and would be worth defending — not against the hypothetical aggression of Gorbachev's Red Army, but against the proven "dirty tricks" and military threats of the USA and Denis Healey's mates in NATO.

National CND Demonstration April 25 1987

Details to be announced

Peace

S
Kingsway

In July 1986 a number way the US raid on L vulnerability of Britain to

Following the meeting at for a campaign to redirect resources from military to their struggle for peace an movements, support the U

This conference is being 10.30am to 6pm. Kingswa

Invitations are being ser Trade Unions and Solidarit

There has never been a t ment and the influence of needed.

In October Verso publish *from NATO*, by Ben Lowe, campaign.

The Conference will be o ANC of South Africa, the from the Peace Movement

Workshops will be organ and Indian Oceans, Ireland Europe.

To register, send your n waged) to Campaign for n Seven Sisters Road, Londo through Non Alignment pa

Britain out of NATO!

US base



mbings

must make withdrawal from NATO a prominent theme in the April demonstration, and we should all mobilise as many people in the labour movement as possible for the demo. This may be the last major anti-nuclear event before the general election and will provide a good opportunity to show how strong CND is, to promote the good aspects of Labour policy and strengthen them in the Party.

If you are still in any doubt about why to oppose the ideas of the popular front, consider two things. First, such coalitions promote the sort of contradictions represented in this year's conference voting for the peace movement promoting a defence strategy; secondly they promote alliances with elements of the establishment whose interests cannot extend to Britain leaving NATO — a prerequisite for nuclear disarmament.

The left must build and win the political argument and not be fooled by Trojan Horses — however alluring they appear at first sight.

through non-alignment

Conference
aturday January 24th
Princeton College, London WC1

of organisations met to record their abhorrence of the Libya had threatened peace and demonstrated the US foreign policy.

the House of Commons a statement was issued which called British policy towards the active promotion of peace, divert peaceful purposes, co-operate with non aligned countries in d disarmament, maintain support for popular independence nited Nations and work to disengage Britain from NATO.

held to give further impetus to the Campaign. It will be from y Princeton is near Kings Cross and St Pancras Stations.

t to all Peace Organisations, Constituency Labour Parties, Organisations.

me when the need for a serious discussion about non align- NATO over British foreign policy has been more relevant or

ed *Peace Through Non Alignment, the case for withdrawal* which has proved to be a valuable source of reference for the

pened by Tony Benn MP and will have participation from the Greens of Germany, Nicaragua. There will also be speakers and the Non-aligned movement.

ised on: Middle East, Central America, South Africa, Pacific , US bases in Britain, The case for leaving NATO, Eastern

ame, address, organisation and £2.50 (waged), £1.50 (un- on-alignment, c/o Jeremy Corbyn, Red Rose Centre, 129 N7 7QG. (Lunch may be ordered for £2; a copy of the Peace mphlet for £1.50.

"A Modern Britain in a Modern World"

Labour waves the Red, White and Blue

The Labour Party leaders rolled out all the advertising gimmicks in the book to promote their new campaign document "Modern Britain in a Modern World".

The glossy folder has bold visual images designed to give the impression of a party ready for government with a strong, credible defence policy set in a powerful patriotic mode.

The front cover has a picture of the world in soft focus with swirling lines of intense light. Open up the brochure and the world, still in soft pastel colours, has a bold Union Jack bursting upon it in the shape of the British Isles. A cheeky little tip of Northern Ireland in red, white and blue completes the picture. Great Britain leads the world — Hip, Hip, Hooray!

More follows as you dip inside. Strong NATO symbols circle round most of the world, protecting the Western Hemisphere and the South Atlantic in particular. The symbols dip coyly away towards the Arctic and Siberian land mass but they are still there — out in space or under the ice cap.

By Joy Hurcombe
Chair, Labour CND
(personal capacity)

Meanwhile the British flag zooms over the whole of the African continent. Black and white hands surround the whole world in one section and in another bright gold coins appear round the Southern Hemisphere. The chains of repression throughout the world are broken in the final image.

So what is the message? Do not expect the pack to mention unilateral nuclear disarmament in clear simple language. Instead we have lots of words about the role of Modern Britain.

Basically Britain should give up nuclear pretence in favour of strong defence. Labour is the party of real patriotism. The Tories have run down the defences of the country with expensive nuclear policies. Labour will cancel Trident and



PHOTO: Gina Glover, Photo Co-op

Alf Dubs MP and CND members surround Wandsworth Council to protest at Tories support for Civil Nuclear Defence.

spend £10 billion on conventional defence instead. And since 95% of that defence budget is spent on our commitment to NATO ("a partnership of democracies") let no one doubt Labour's total support for the great alliance.

As always, Labour will argue for no first use of nuclear weapons, but in the meantime we shelter under the US nuclear unbrella and adhere to the NATO nuclear strategy. As Healey said at the press conference, "NATO strategy is indivisible."

The campaign pack includes a booklet setting out the policies in greater detail. NATO must continue as long as there is a potential military threat to Western Europe from the Soviet Union ("our sworn enemy" according to Thatcher).

However, NATO should give up nuclear weapons and, like Britain, enhance its conventional strength. Then, if there is a Soviet Attack on Western Europe, NATO could reply with conventional weapons and the USA wouldn't need to precipitate nuclear suicide for the sake of London or Hamburg.

With our European Fighter Aircraft and the British Army of the Rhine and RAF Germany, with Precision Guided Munitions and computerised barriers all along the Central Front and of course the back-up of the long-range bomber edition of Tornado (dearer than Trident, but who cares?). *We can confine the next war to Europe — just like the last time!*

Somewhere in the accompanying leaflets there is an oblique mention of the US bases in Britain. It doesn't actually state that US nuclear bases must go. However, as the US bases in Britain will be made available to conventional forces (with a British veto over their use) and as we are committed to sending back Cruise and other US nuclear weapons, we can safely assume that *some* US nuclear bases will go. Probably only 4 out of 135 and certainly not the NATO nuclear surveillance facilities. But everything will take a very, very long time and only after negotiations with our allies.

What are we to make of it all? The response from Labour Party members has been a horrified silence. The Tories are delighted to have source material for Labour's many contradictions. How can we be a non-nuclear member of a nuclear alliance? How can we name the Soviet Union as a potential aggressor and then give up nuclear weapons?

What can anyone make of the schizophrenic attitude to the USA and their nuclear weapons? ("...our policies are not aimed at harming American interests, we are not asking them to dismantle their strategic nuclear weapons... Mrs Thatcher's polices have ensured that Britain is regarded by many as a transatlantic outpost of the United States.")

How can the Labour Party share their wealth with the developing world when they will be selling conventional arms to them to support research and development programmes, just like the Tories?

And who really believes the Tories have cut conventional defence spending? Welfare, education, benefits, hospitals, housing, yes — but under the Tories Britain's defence budget is now twice that of most other European countries.

It is the reversal of the basic assumptions of Conference policy that make this defence document hard to swallow. Nuclear disarmament was always thought to be *the start of a process of reduction in confrontation between the superpower blocs*. Independent, unilateral action was the bold break-through to a reduction in world tension. The next step would be to reduce conventional arms spending. Never has the Labour Party stood fora conventional arms race. Never has the peace movement been so let down by the Party that promised so much.

What now of the plans for producing socially desirable products as alternatives to the high defence spending which consmes such a large share of our economic resources?



PHOTO: Andrew Wiard (Report)

Demonstration at Labour Party Conference

es out! **Jobs not Bombs!**

Building Briefing

The fortnightly is here!

At last, we bring you the first fortnightly *Briefing*!

It's taken months of campaigning to build up a launch fund, and a regular income into our 500 Club to sustain this development. Fill in the standing order form; take *Briefing* to sell; and talk to every other reader you know about taking out a share in the 500 Club.

If you're reading *Briefing* for the first time, why not take out a subscription — and make sure of your copy every second Thursday morning.

500 Club winner —
this week's winner is number 69 — Danni Ahrens from Watford. Congratulations!

Labour — take the power!
New pamphlet out now!
Price 30p, plus 30p p&p from Labour Briefing, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5.
Bulk order rates available on request.
Briefing supporters — bring cash to the Steering Committee to pick up your orders.

Briefing is a very easy paper to sell — why not take a few for your workplace, Labour Party or campaign meetings?

Bulk orders of Briefing are available on sale or return (minimum order 5 copies).

I would like to be sent ..... copies of Briefing on sale/return.

Name .....

Address .....

Send to 26 Crofton Road, London, SE5

TURN BACK THE GREY TIDE!

Bankers Order form for Labour Briefing 500 Club

Please complete every section of this form, and then return it to: **Labour Briefing, c/o Jane Kelly, 26 Crofton Rd, London SE5.**

Bankers Order

To: .....

..... (bank name, sort code)

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 .....

SUBSCRIBE TO BRIEFING

Make sure of your copy of the fortnightly Labour Briefing. For an annual subscription send £12 to Labour Briefing, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5 (cheques, etc., payable to Labour Briefing).

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Letters

As *Labour Briefing* moves into fortnightly production, we shall be featuring more room for your letters. We offer readers the right to reply or to start debate on the issues that concern you.

Write to Letters Editor, 26 Wattisfield Road, London E5.

Dear *Briefing*,

The December *Briefing* Periscope's caustic sideswipe at the ASTMS-TASS merger talks, whilst humcrous enough, illustrates the lack of serious coverage of the issue of union mergers in the left press.

Comrades are of course right *generally* to view union bureaucracies as equally appalling. Their common self-interest and lack of support for workers in struggle needs little explanation in the pages of *Briefing*. But as trade union militants we should not remain neutral about the current choices for mergers and amalgamations.

It seems likely that ASTMS and TASS will indeed merge in 1987. A single union for engineering staff throughout much of industry will be, in many respects, a major step forward — both for their combined membership and for the many non-unionised "high-tech" workers the new union has the opportunity to win.

The options open to my own union, APEX, also show the need for militants to have a perspective and act on it. Effectively APEX, down from 150,000 to 90,000 (mainly clerical) members in 6 years, has 3 choices open to it:

- to go in with the AUEW (and EETPU?) in a major right wing amalgamation, bent on developing the new "corporate realism" well known to workers in Japan;
- merge with the GMBATU, taking over their clerical section MATSA. This would help the current APEX Executive Council cling on to their positions, but it would do little to build a strong clerical union in engineering outside North East England (where GMBATU does have a base in this sector).
- join ASTMS and TASS in a 3-way merger. This would create a single *staff* union in dozens of major factories throughout the country. Given the present divisions, I, and every other APEX member I know, is positively enthusiastic about that prospect.

Although ASTMS and TASS are deep in talks, they have extended a joint invitation to APEX to join in too. Unfortunately, because of the APEX leadership's political leanings, this third option still looks the least likely. All the more reason why we need to campaign actively for it now.

Richard Paine
Coventry

□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Dear *Briefing*,

Following another appeal court hearing, and the direct intervention of Kenneth Baker, Brent Council has been prevented from holding any inquiry into allegations of racism.

The Tory press, NUT leaders, and the leadership of the Labour Party are all responsible for enabling a Tory minister to disrupt directly the running of a Labour Council.

Whether or not McGoldrick should have been suspended in the first place, or whether there should have been a clearer political direction from the Brent Labour Group, nonetheless, important lessons must be learnt for the future. Unfortunately, some on the Left have drawn up a political balance sheet that sets back the anti-racist struggle.

The SWP are now arguing that critical support should have been given to the NUT leadership, and that if there had been a need for further strike action to end McGoldrick's suspension, this should have been supported by the Left (December *Socialist Teacher*, Shaun Doherty). Would they then have been prepared to be in open alliance with a leadership defending institutionalised racism and carrying out disciplinary actions against NUT members who aligned themselves with the Black community?

The SWP have failed to understand how to build a rank and file movement within the NUT that can politically oppose the bureaucracy of that union, fight for a clear anti-racist line, and learn to distinguish between a Tory and Labour Council. Calls for Black and White unity within the union are all very well, but this requires defending the autonomous rights of Black teachers in their fight against racism.

The LCC, as expected, took the Kinnock approach, elevating their criticisms of the Council's handling of the issue above the need to defend the Council's anti-racist initiatives. In all the resolutions they pushed, which were only successful in Brent North, they condemned the Council without offering one line of defence of Brent's right to hold an inquiry in the first place.

For socialists to look back on the McGoldrick affair simply as another case of bureaucratic bungling by a Labour Council is inadequate. The Black community has waited long enough for Labour Councils to deal with institutionalised racism. That is what is at the heart of the Brent dispute. If comrades on the Left fail to recognise that, then they need to reconsider their own anti-racist perspectives.

Alf Filer, Brent East

□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Dear Briefing,

I am afraid an error crept into the London Bridge resolution published with my article in the last edition.

London Bridge is not opposed to all in-house tendering except where such tenders reduce workers' pay, hours or conditions. Clause 2c of our resolution should read:

(London Bridge is committed to) refusing to submit tenders as trade unionists and preventing the submission of any management in-house tenders which would mean loss of pay, hours or conditions, by taking appropriate industrial action.

Apologies for any confusion caused.

Yours sincerely,
Johanna Fawkes

□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Dear Briefing,

I refer to Oliver MacDonald's article in the December-January issue entitled "No, Prime Minister!".

Of course, we're all worried about the lack of accountability in the civil service and in particular the security services but he proposes drastic remedies.

"The setting up of committees ... to monitor loyalty" may sound fine in principle but I would suggest that in practice it would lead to more secrecy and uncertainty.

However, it is his second proposal that really amazes me. Have I missed something, or is he really proposing to "sack all administrative grade Civil Servants over 40"?

In the interests of an open and efficient civil service there may be arguments in favour of this, but do they really justify sacking trade unionists?

Andy Gibbons
Wales

Periscope



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

Briefing New Years Honours

You've yawned over the New Year's honours, and snored through BAFTA awards, Oscars, Emmies and Golden Eggs. Why should *we* let you off easily?

By popular demand, Persicope present the 1987 Briefing TURDS (Totally Unpleasant, Redundant Diplomas), as decided by our distinguished panel of judges including Periscope's Greg Bassett, Briefing Newshound Jack Dobermann and Activists of the Year Ivor Slogan and Ava Leaflet.

- The **Houdini** prize for escape from an apparently impossible situation was hotly contested this year, with **Johr. de Lorean** back in the running, and **Alan Sapper** performing a miraculous escape from the ACTT drinks cabinet. But the prize goes to SOGAT leader **Brenda Dean** who emerged strengthened by a unanimous vote of the SOGAT conference, despite having just suffered a heavy ballot defeat in her attempt to sell out the News International dispute. She is expected to share the prize with the *Morning Star*.
- Our **PW Botha** award for blows against opponents of apartheid goes for a second year to top TASS tankie (and honorary President of "Club 19-56) **Ken Gill** for his role in the continued victimisation of David Kitson after his release from 20 years in a South African jail.
- The **Jimmy Hoffa** medal for contributions to union democracy is shared this year between the **CPSA Executive** (for their refusal to accept a left-wing ballot victory) and by those merry, macho LCC boot-boys, who assaulted and intimidated left wingers at the 1986 NUPE Conference.
- NUPE's General Secretary **Rodney Bickerstaffe** is runner-up in our **Orville "Dummy of the Year"** prize, for playing second fiddle to Tom Sawyer. But when dummies and fall guys are concerned, there could be no other winner than Thatcher's all-purpose front man **Sir Robert Armstrong**. Better luck next year, Rod!
- It has been another year of tough competition for the **Alastair Burnett** award of kneepads and fruit-flavoured bootpolish which goes to the **Crawler of the Year**. But the clear winner is AEU President **Bill Jordan** for his knockout display of grovelling at the CBI Conference.
- After a year in which an Australian tried to shoot the Pope "because he is paid too much", **Alastair Graham** took over at the Industrial Society, and the wacko US Colonel **Oliver North** grabbed the headlines, the panel were divided until the last moment on who should win the **Freud Egg** for the **Birdbrain of 1986**. But a late, storming, ranting entry from **Manchester Chief Constable James Anderton**, claiming to speak "directly from God", and to have found "inner calm" by hystericaly blaming gay people for AIDS, made him the unanimous choice.
- No such dilemmas over the **Hoover "Windbag"** medal for careerist climbers, which goes to **Ken Livingstone** for a dazzling variety of interviews and appearances in 1986 geared to a wide spectrum of voters.

The Panel was particularly impressed by the report in the *London Standard* of Ken's penchant for doing housework in the nude. Later we heard from Brent that Ken had brushed aside allegations that he once assured a female reporter he was "like a broomstick in the morning". We make no sweeping accusations!

New degree of bankruptcy

Many revealing facts are included in *Marxism Today*'s new publicity blurb.

In what is presumbaly an accurate reflection of the current "armchair left", 61% of MT's readers have *at least* one degree and 22% are full-time students. 34% of readers are members of a "professional body". 25% of readers earn over £15,000 a year!

If any of *Briefing's* readers earn over £15,000 a year, please let us know on a postcard, including details of bank account, credit cards and American Express, so we can relieve you of your unwanted cash.

One minor fact missing from *MT's* leaflet — nowhere does it mention the fact that it is the magazine of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Are they ashamed that 99% of their members are politically bankrupt?

Obituary Miriam James

Miriam died on Sunday December 14th after a life packed with political activity and struggle, at the age of 69.

Many who had worked with her were amazed by her tenacity and energy despite bouts of ill health. When she was taken ill at the end of September she was about to travel to Labour Party Conference with the Labour Committee on Ireland to expose the inadequacies of the Anglo-Irish Accord.

The year before she had seconded one of the motions on Ireland at Conference and many will still remember her moving speeches at public meetings around London. For she brought not only fine political understanding to debates on the need for a United Ireland, she also was able to speak as an Irish woman, who knew only too well the hardships of struggle that lie behind the easy phrases of solidarity.

She joined Cumann na mBan when she was 14 and later helped to found Cumann na gCailini. In 1934, she joined the newly formed Republican Congress. During the Second World War she was interned for nearly 3 years. She then moved to London, worked for the BBC and retired in 1980.

However, the GLC's support for the Irish Community in London brought her out of retirement and she went to work at the Battersea and Wandsworth Irish Project and then became a valued member of the Irish Team within the GLC's Ethnic Minorities Unit. And up until her death she continued to work with a wide range of Irish groups from the Race equality group of the London Strategic Policy Unit.

As well as all of this, she found time to be an active member of Kensington Labour Party, the North Kensington Amenity Trust and the Labour Committee on Ireland. She was the London Secretary for the LCI and also its delegate to a range of campaigning groups. She is being sorely missed.

It will be difficult to find anyone who will be able to have her grasp of Irish history and culture and her commitment to bring about Irish self-determination. Like Connolly, she understood that the cause of Ireland and the cause of the working class were inseparable. She once said that "I felt that the Republican Movement had to begin with the poorest people... Whether they were living in a republic, an empire or a 'Free State' didn't mean anything to those people unless they had somewhere decent to live and enough money to live on."

In memory,
Nadine Finch, Chair, LCI.

Labour Women's Action Committee AGM

Blowing in the wind

By Barbara Green Islington South & Finsbury Women's Section

Travelling up the motorway towards Leeds on December 13th for the Labour Women's Action Committee (WAC) AGM, I was filled with a sense of anticipation.

Questions whizzed around my head — what resolutions would be discussed? Who has been nominated for the Exec? What will the officers reports contain?

You see, even though I'm a fully paid up member of WAC I was one of the unfortunates who did not receive the AGM mailing. Oh well, this is the festive season, so what if my democratic rights have been trampled on? It's not the first time.

Stranded

I consoled myself with the prospect on arrival of reading a bundle of papers as the meeting would inevitably start late. But alas no! All the AGM material was stranded somewhere between London and Leeds in the back of an Exec member's car.

Sixty or so of us had turned up to what should have been a major women's event in the grand setting of Leeds Council Chamber.The first resolution, from West Midlands, was to cancel the AGM due to the appalling lack of organisation by the Exec.

"Problems"

Not the best way to start an AGM, but rest assured, "the women in charge" (the WAC Exec) moved into action: Anni Marjoram (secretary), Jude Woodward (assistant secretary) and Judy Sadler (Chair). There had been "problems" with the organisation of the AGM and they were very sorry. This seemed to satisfy the representatives from West Midlands who promptly dropped their resolution. And so the AGM "proper" began.

The secretary read out the list of nominations for the exec (the printed ones were still on the M1).

300 members

And then we went onto the reports from officers — or at least some of them. Now was the time to get some facts. The membership secretary reported that WAC had "around" 300 members. She couldn't be more accurate because all the papers relating to WAC's membership had been "blown away in a gust of wind" the previous evening.

But the estimate is not so funny — WAC is tiny. While members raised this as a big problem, one got the impression that the Exec members did not mind whether WAC was 30, 300 or 3,000 strong.

Inadequate

Perhaps the most distressing aspect of the day was the inadequate time for political discussion. WAC supported the call at Labour Party conference for a "review" of the women's organisation. Basically the AGM decided to concentrate WAC's campaign on the election of women's places on the NEC. They propose to increase the number from 5 to 6; the election to be held at women's conference; and the vote to be divided 50% for the unions and 50% for the CLP women.

Complicated

The discussion on the division of votes within the women's organisation is complicated and fraught with tactical problems, but the principle that women must have the right to decide their own structures and policy is clear. The resolution that WAC supported at Labour Party conference gave that power to the NEC. All in WAC agree you can't trust the NEC — the debate is how to ensure your campaign brings the necessary pressure to force them to listen to women's demands.

The WAC Exec elected at the AGM is very similar to the last one. The prospect of "more of the same" fills me with sadness — deals with leading trade unionists, "talks" with Labour leaders, with little action to back this up.

Message

The message from the WAC Exec was loud and clear: that they are not prepared to tolerate women with different views and opinions. They consistently voted down uncontentious resolutions, such as holding a conference with trade union women, simply because they did not like the women who were moving it.

WAC's prestige and support amongst radical women within the party is at an all time low. It will be on trial over the period of the "review" of the women's organisation. If WAC takes the wrong position, if it compromises its principles, women throughout the labour movement will not forgive and forget...

Briefing's pages are open to the WAC Exec; and they agreed last year to take up our offer of writing a column of their own regularly in the paper. We hope they will reply to this article in a future issue.

Foxhunter turned witch-hunter

By Dave Carter Middlesborough

Following the Knowsley North bye-election, further curtailments of the right of a CLP to choose its parliamentary candidate is evident in the fracas at Blyth CLP.

John Ryman MP recently announced his retirement from Parliament, despite his recent reselection. One of his main challengers, Ronnie Campbell, was selected in the second selection contest. Ryman then announced that Campbell was not an acceptable successor because of his politics; and has publicly campaigned to overturn the constituency's selection.

Ryman's behaviour is outrageous in itself, but even more incredible is the NEC's decision to "investigate" the constituency as a result of his outbursts. The selection will almost certainly have to be re-run, as Campbell's majority was only one and the NEC should be able to come up with at least one delegate to query.

Campbell has been accused of being a *Militant* supporter; or even, according to Ryman, a *Militant* "puppet". He is in fact an experienced local councillor and was a leader of the NUM at Bates colliery before it closed last year. He has a fine record of opposition to the Tory government during the miners' strike and service to the local community.

This is more than can be said of the foxhunting MP John Ryman, who is rarely seen in the town. Ironically, Ryman only gained the solid Labour seat by the narrowest margin in October 1974 from the late Eddie Milne. Milne had been thrown out of the Party after his stand against corruption in the labour movement in the North East, and had held the seat on an anti-corruption platform in February 1974.

Blyth GC delegates, whatever their previous choice, should now vote to select Campbell in any re-run as an indication to the NEC that they will not tolerate blackmail in selecting a Parliamentary candidate. If Ryman insists on carrying through his threat to force a bye-election unless Campbell is dropped — which many people doubt — then Labour must unite around Ronnie Campbell.

Streatham selection

By Michael Calvert Streatham CLP EC (personal capacity)

Streatham's parliamentary selection went ahead in December, with the full participation of the Black Section.

As *Briefing* readers will know, this places Streatham outside the Labour Party constitution, even though just two GC delegates out of 75 were from the Black Section.

Despite the adverse press speculation there was a good turnout of around 50% of the delegates, including some from every ward. Anna Tapsell, a Lambeth employee and NALGO rep, was eventually selected by 27 votes to Paul Sharma's 4. This gave Anna a clear mandate as Party candidate.

At the selection 3 candidates withdrew: Rudy Daley (local councillor), Debbie Sander, and the LCC's choice Kathryn Riley.

There is little doubt Anna has the Party's backing, although it's difficult to say how the NEC will react. They have these options:

- **disband the CLP and impose a candidate (i.e. Anna Tapsell);**
- **reach a "Lewisham compromise" type deal where the selection is run "constitutionally" with a shortlist of Anna Tapsell;**
- **impose a different candidate.**

In the present climate it is difficult to speculate. The NEC meeting is on January 12th (as we go to press) — hot on the heels of the result of the National Constitutional Committee results. It's interesting (and alarming) to note that as the General Election gets nearer the Committee will begin to "adjudicate" these type of disputes more and more.

Streatham GC continues to support Black Sections and Anna Tapsell as our democratically selected candidate.

LOWTRY LTD (TU)

We can print your leaflets, newsletters.

Example: 1,000 A4 for £25.00

Quotations also available for Web offset printing, tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, according to size and run.

Tel: 01-274 8459

Lowtry Ltd., 21-25 Beehive Place, Brixton, London SW9

Knowsley North update

By Mike Maguire (Secretary, Knowsley North CLP)

The new year sees Knowsley North CLP facing likely disbandment and individual members facing disciplinary measures over their principled opposition to an imposed candidate in last year's bye-election.

An Inquiry Team set up by the NEC is due to report its findings and recommendations to the January NEC meeting. This follows a postponement forced by the CLP officers, who demanded to know what charges would be brought against them.

When the CLP officers met national officer Joyce Gould for the first time they protested about the lack of detail given in advance about the matters under investigation and the nature of any complaints. Instead they were presented with a series of unsubstantiated accusations which amounted to little more than gossip.

Allegations

One of the more serious allegations made was that it was hard for people to join the Labour Party in Knowsley North. As we had never heard of any such difficulty before we asked Joyce Gould to give a specific example, but she could not give one as it was "just something she had heard." The left in the CLP has always encouraged recruitment of new members indeed our strength lies in the influx of new activists in recent years, which has totally changed the political outlook of the CLP from its old right wing shell.

Charade

The Inquiry is a charade designed to give the NEC an excuse for punishing Knowsley North for daring to oppose the present leadership, whose actions managed to reduce a 17,000 majority to 7,000 in the bye-election.



George Howarth, Knowsley North's imposed MP

New MP

Our new MP George Howarth, has since attended a GMC meeting to give a report on his activities, which he did very thoroughly, no doubt to avoid the criticisms levelled at absentee MP Kilroy-Silk. However, George Howarth, as an imposed candidate, remains politically unaccountable to the GMC. His personal views are at variance with the left majority of GMC delegates.

The reselection reforms were designed to achieve greater democracy and accountability within the Party, and it is this which has suffered most in events surrounding Knowsley North.

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 Democracy in Knowsley North. A receipt will be sent to all contributors.

Defend Democracy!
Support Knowsley North!

Debate

Sex, class and race:
Don't split our fight!

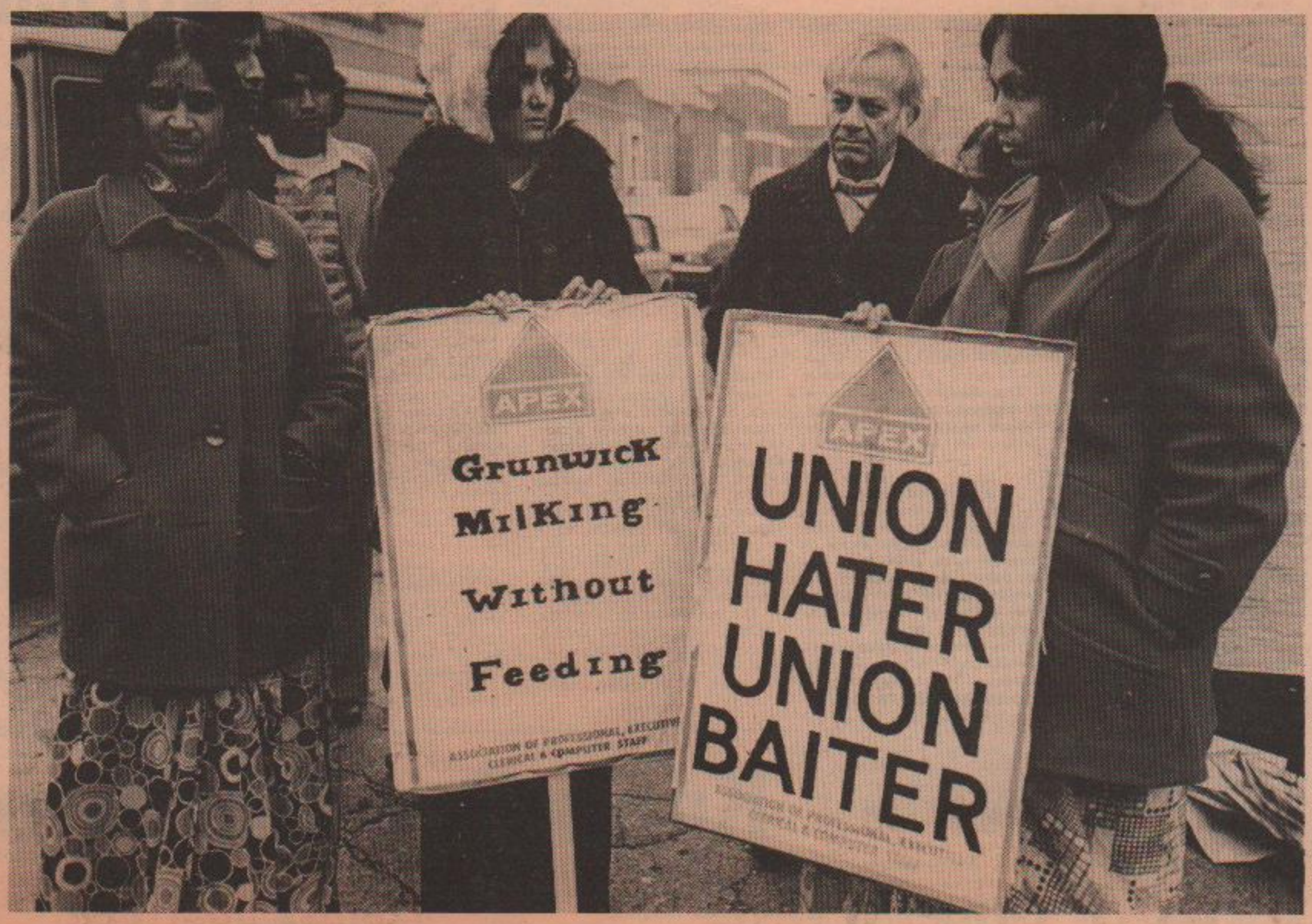


PHOTO: John Sturrock (Report)

10 years after black women led the Grunwick fight: has the trade union movement learnt anything from that struggle?

We are writing this article to relate some of our experiences as black women activists within the black community and within our trade union branch.

We believe that these experiences are a microcosm of developments within the black socialist and labour movements in this country. We hope this article will act as a catalyst for debate within these movements in order that clearer demands can be made of white socialists, especially those who subscribe to the ever-growing race industry in this country.

Although the incidents which we will be describing may not have been identically reflected elsewhere, we know that similar struggles are presently taking place and have taken place.

These struggles will become more clearly defined as our political analysis grows with increasing debate and discussion. We feel certain that our cumulative experiences have raised key questions which must be addressed if black self-organisation is not to be diverted in its aims to promote the class struggle of black people.

We begin with our own trade union branch. The combination of an increased involvement by black activists plus the confidence afforded them by the growing strength of Labour Party Black Sections resulted in black members starting to make demands of the Branch, particularly in relation to black self-representation and self-organisation.

After the defeat of the miners' strike, the left within the Branch were so demoralised and the left generally so weakened, that many key officers (who had up till then been exclusively white) resigned from their posts. The Branch was left immobilised for several months. However, because it was felt important that the fight for black self-organisation should not lose its momentum, black members had no choice but to take up vacant officer positions.

Thus for the first time in the history of the branch (and probably in any trade union branch), 3 black women stood for election to prominent posts. They did so with the understanding that their activity within the branch would draw its support and direction from an active and powerful Black Section. This understanding was crucial not only because of our commitment to black self-organisation, but also because a black socialist, black feminist leadership was coming to prominence in the virtual absence of a left-wing base within the branch, and in an increasingly right wing political climate within the trade union movement and elsewhere.

Our occupation of these officer posts prompted in a very short space of time a noticeable increase in membership by black women workers, and in the number of black women workers bringing forward problems affecting them in the workplace.

By Anita Patel and Ai Meun Lim T&G ACTSS 1/208

The fight to secure the interests of black women workers necessitated operation within a radical framework if it was to succeed rather than merely pacify. And in the early days, this radical framework and the collective strength of black members brought us significant success. The right's challenge to our leftist, anti-racist policies remained stifled because, in light of the considerable gains made by the black movement in the branch, they were both unable and unwilling to be seen in opposition.

However, our leadership soon came under right wing attack from two black men, opposed to our radical, campaigning approach, who couched their opposition in anti-racist rhetoric. The flood gates were then opened.

Whilst the white right were provided with a cover for their attacks, and were able to reinforce those launched by the two front-men, the white left pleaded confusion. They were reluctant to come in behind us, despite the overt sexism of these attacks and their clear denial of socialist principles.

In the absence of strong black organisations within the labour movement, anti-racist rhetoric is increasingly being used as an arbitrary and convenient tool by right wing blacks, and more significantly by right wing whites, to exploit the left's weakness on the issue of race. This rhetoric in no way reflects a genuine concern to take the Black struggle forward. It wasn't until black women members mobilised behind us that we were able to effect a successful fight-back.

These experiences are neither exclusive to us nor the trade union movement. They have implications for black struggle and for socialist movements generally.

On the one hand, black self-organisation appears to be on the increase in the form of local authority and government funded black community groups, and black issues seem to be getting a higher priority through the setting up of Council Race Equality Units and equal opportunity policies. On the other hand, class politics is increasingly being shelved in these white-controlled "black" institutions.

We feel that this is no accident. The race industry has responded to the fierce demand for black self-organisation by setting up parallel institutions and structures which *materially contradict the struggle* by black people to organise autonomously, and which promote instead a race movement devoid of any class dimension.

We are not critical of the race industry in its entirety. We are concerned, however, that black struggles acknowledge more widely the fundamental way in which this booming industry can and does undermine black self-organisation at the direct expense of the black working class.

In general, the white left has, up till now, failed adequately to resolve the questions of race and class, and failed to align itself in any significant way with the struggle of black socialists in this country.

This has left a gaping hole in their commitment to and strategies for class politics, and they can do little more than moan about their very vulnerable position whenever black, left wing activists or they themselves come under attack from the black right.

Black self-organisation has itself been exploited by black people who pay lip service to it but who, in using these structures for their own purposes, do so at the expense of a relevant, class-conscious black struggle. The existence of right wing elements is of course, common to all movements. However, it is becoming even more important, in the face of both increasingly uncompromising anti-racist demands and increasing moves to subvert these demands, that black activists undertake the task of exposing these right wing elements and developing a more well-defind class analysis of the nature and execution of our struggle.

How Green is our Party?

Red and Green

Amidst all the controversy about nuclear power at the 1986 Labour Party conference, a very thorough and radical policy on the environment slipped through almost unnoticed.

If the policy, backed by everyone from Kinnock to the Left, is implemented in full it will stand as a significant milestone in the history of environmental campaigning in the UK.

In brief, Labour's policy would create a new Ministry of Environmental Protection whose role would be:

- **to monitor the environmental implications of the policies and actions of other government departments.**
- **to see that economic planning takes environmental factors into account.**
- **to ensure that environmental groups are represented on the boards of national economic planning bodies.**

The policy also commits a Labour government to:

- **change the system of agricultural subsidies to favour conservation and ecologically-sound farming.**
- **alter the approach to overseas aid, supporting only programmes that take full account of environmental impact.**
- **employ radical measures to tackle water pollution, acid rain, lead in petrol, pesticides, food additives, and so on.**

In short, it is the most radical and comprehensive statement on the environment ever made by a British political party with any chance of getting elected.

By Andy Porter SERA

Unfortunately, the Labour Party leadership remains committed to the old mixed economy package of profit-led growth stimulated by government spending. This has been tried and has failed in the past. Whatever its specifically economic consequences, it is clear that the environment will suffer. Once again Labour has been prepared to adopt radical policies in all but the most important area — how to organise the economy.

How this conflict is resolved in practice will depend on who the next Labour government is most scared of — the Left and the environmental movement or the multinationals and the British ruling class.

The adoption of the Environment Statement at Conference is just the beginning of a long struggle. Its implementation by the next Labour government remains at best doubtful. But the Statement does at least give us a foothold in Party policy from which to launch future campaigns.

Where is Gorbachev going?

As the first anniversary of the 27th CPSU Congress approaches, a number of puzzles have been resolved.

Above all, it seems possible to say that the Soviet leadership has embarked upon a new course.

From the early days of his leadership, Gorbachev sought to identify himself as the champion of reform. In his speeches to the Congress he underlined this commitment and stressed the urgency of radical new measures. But neither at the Congress, nor at subsequent Central Committee plenums has he spelt out a definite programme. The new Party Programme ratified at the Congress seems designed to emphasise continuity with the past.

At the June plenum Gorbachev indicated dissatisfaction with the 5 year plan and directed remarks against those within the party resisting the new "approach", but beyond some rather minor changes in the system of economic management it is hard to see what this new approach really meant. In the political field it seemed to mean little more than a change in psychological attitudes amongst party members.

Since the Congress, the leadership has identified itself with a slogan first heard in the Chernenko period: forward to NEP — Lenin's new course from 1921 is the ideological justification of the new approach needed by the CPSU today.

Last autumn, the significance of this became clearer with the sanctioning of private, non-capitalist forms of service enterprises and co-operatives, and with the loosening up of the collective farms. The centralised control of foreign trade, the efforts to enter GATT, the new approach towards the EEC and pledges to close down non-profitable state enterprises all herald this new appraoch.

By Oliver MacDonald

None of these amount to a basic change in the Soviet economy, but their significance lies above all in their ideological impact within the CPSU. For 50 years the centralised economic system was held to be sacrosanct and earlier attempts to decentralise had been crushed.

There has also been a new and much more liberal cultural policy, as well as the much greater openness about problems, disasters and official failures — from the Chernobyl catastrophe to abortion facilities and practices. Gorbachev has closely associated himself with some of these changes, continually demanding that the policy of "glasnost" (openness) be pursued consistently in the press.

The Western press has made much of the release of Sakharov, suggesting that this marks a basic shift of policy. It was certainly of more than diplomatic significance, since the move will be poular in wide sections of the Soviet intelligentsia. Yet in domestic politics, Sakharov's return means no more than that Gorbachev wishes to be seen within the intelligentsia as more liberal.

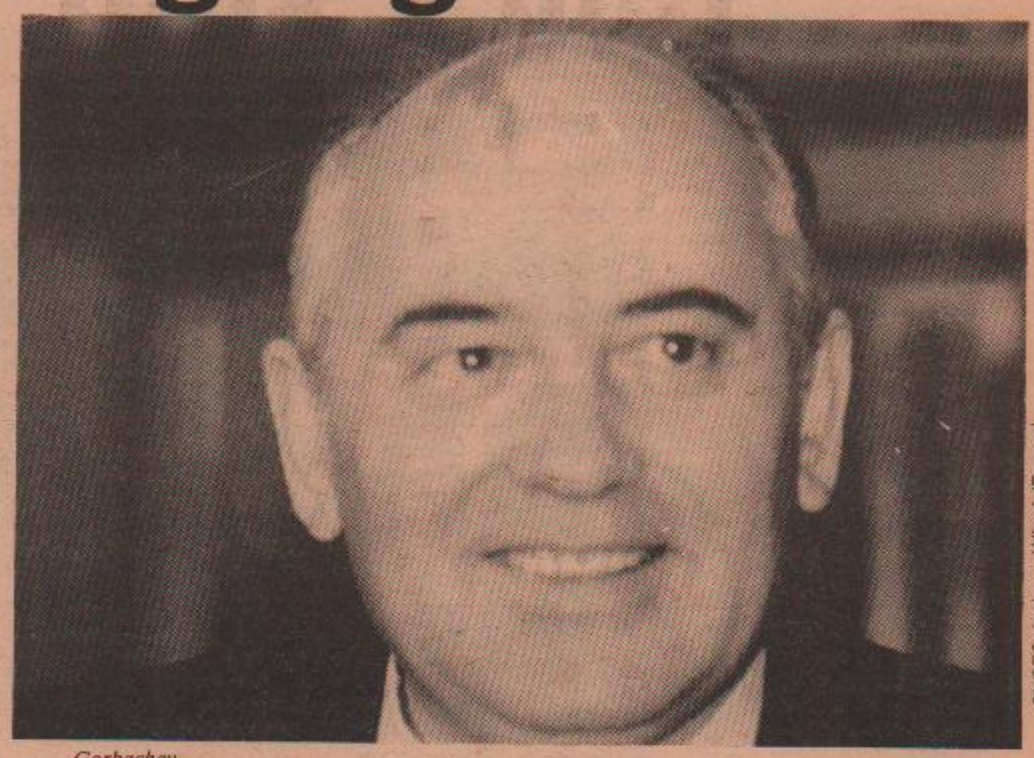
Of greater domestic political significance was the upheaval in Alma Ata following the replacement of the aged Brezhnevite First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party, Kunaev, by a young Russian.

Much remains obscure about what happened, but if large numbers of students and youth took to the streets it is likely that many more people, not least many local Communists, must have been very disturbed by the carpet-bagging form of appointment.

It is still too early to say that Gorbachev rules out any far-reaching democratic change in the Soviet political system. As yet there has not been a move from words to deeds; no move, despite rumours, to change the electoral system; not even a hint of allowing tendencies to compete for office within the CPSU; no signs of change in the nomenklatura system.

But does Gorbachev's political reformism extend no further than tactical liberalisation plus some new, more flexible methods of social control? The intelligentsia seem to think so.

Yet there is another possibility. The CPSU is deeply divided: with a Brezhnevite current relying on working class opposition to the social inequalities that would accompany the economic reforms; and a radical, democratising current.



Gorbachev

PHOTO: Wiard Raepsaet

The politburo majority represents a "centre" tendency seeking political change while avoiding open rupture or social upheaval. Since an open rupture *has* been avoided, the leadership is prepared to press on with reform more boldly, openly criticising Brezhnev.

This seems to be the Reagan administration's view. Washington is terrified that reform involving real elements of democratisation could happen — with catastrophic consequences for the Right in Western Europe — and Gorbachev himself has shown awareness of this.

It is too early to say which of these interpretations is correct. Nobody, including Gorbachev himself, may know the answer: the USSR is very far from being a country where one leader or one politburo can dictate policy and plan the future.

French students in revolt

NUS take heed!

The impact of the mass student mobilisations of last November and December is still being felt in French politics.

As well as the withdrawal of the reactionary Devaquet Education Law, other measures proposed by the Chirac goverment have been postponed; incuding a racist immigration law, privatisations of prisons, and others.

Inspired by the successes of the movement, tens of thousands of Spanish students demonstrated soon after, and French rail and metro workes are taking strike action.

Chirac's position in the "cohabitation" with Mitterrand has been weakened, and he has been under attack from his right wing coalition partners.

The student movement itself had many positive and inspiring aspects: the election of democratic local and national strike committees, the occupation of many colleges, and the continual mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of youth and students on the streets.

This latter aspect was the key to the movement's success, though Chirac's lack of preparation was also a significant factor — especially when compared with Thatcher's preparations for the miners' strike.

Given the moment's undoubted political impact, and its tactics, how was it that so many of the students involved referred to it as "apolitical"? The use of this term reflected a real feeling among the students and youth — a lack of identification with any "political" group or party, including those on the left.

This is where comparisons with May '68 collapse. The widespread identification with the far left in Paris '68 was nowhere to be seen in '86. This is not to say that the far left were not involved, or that there won't be opportunities for the left to gain support, but their experiences: but given the movement's scale and impact, the left made remarkably few gains from it.

By Patrick Baker
Labour Briefing Youth

A slight exception to this may be the "Convergence Socialiste" group, a group of ex-OCI (one of a number of Trotskyist groups in France) members now in the Socialist Party, who control the largest French student union, UNEF-ID. They played a very important role in organising the strike and may make some gains from it.

One of the resasons for this lack of identification among the youth with the far left is the continuing secatarianism of these forces. Though this may be something of a generalisation, they tend to project themselves as the only answer to all the social/economic problems of the working class, much as the majority of the far left do in Britain.

Though they have historically been stronger in France than in Britain, such an attitude is not really credible from organisations that are tiny compared with the mass organisations of the working class, the Socialist and Communist Parties, and trade unions.

Some organisations did have a positive input into the campaign, but it is unlikely that the French far left will make much headway, even in the context of mass movements like the one we have just witnessed, until they adopt a more serious orientation to the mass organisations of the working class. This is particularly pressing given the political role of organisations such as the PCF.

One of the unforunate facts about the movement is that most of those involved were not organised in unions or political groups — so that with Chirac's retreat the movement itself has been wound up.

Nonetheless, there are many positive lessons for the student movement in Britain. Given the massive attacks on higher education over the last years, and now the discussion of introducing a loan system to replace grants, the French student movement highlights the scandalous lack of action on the part of the "Democratic Left" leadership of NUS.

In theory the NUS should be in a much better position to organise a fightback than the French students. The student unions in France are tiny compared to NUS, since they have no automatic enrolement system.

But, of course, it is the will rather than the ability that is lacking. Vicky Philips, like Phil Woolas before her, is keen to keep everything quiet so as not to rock Neil's boat. At least the election of SSIN and SWP representatives at the last conference was some indicator of discontent. Socialist students should use the example of the French student movement to build on that discontent and mobilise it into action.

BRIEFING Youth

Briefing Student Tour
Jan 19-23
Meetings in: Oxford, Sussex Uni, Leeds Uni, Coventry Poly, and others.

French student militants speak on the anti-racist movement.

Workers' action against apartheid

A new campaign



PHOTO: Paul Mattson/Frame

Dunnes Stores Strikers from Dublin picket South Africa House.

On December 13th over 80 people met in Birmingham at the Conference for Trade Union Sanctions Against South Africa.

Kathy O'Reilly, one of the Dunnes Stores strikers from Dublin, addressed the conference on their two-and-a-half year strike against the handling of South African goods. She explained the harassment they have met from the police and the lack of support from many, including church leaders, who verbally oppose apartheid. From January 1st this year the Irish Republic will no longer import South African agricultural products, but fails to control exports of Irish goods and services.

The Conference also heard of action taken by trades unionists in Britain such as the boycott of South African goods in Leicester hospitals and the demand by Lucas stewards that Lucas disinvest from South Africa. The value of direct links with workers in struggle was also stressed, with the particular example of links built between Plessey workers in Britain and South Africa.

Delegates stressed that the campaign for direct trade union action is not counterposed to the activities of the anti-Apartheid Movement. The problem is that the AAM has never been willing to work for direct links. Conference reaffirmed that it will work with the AAM wherever possible, and is encouraging support for relevant resolutions at the coming AAM Annual General Meeting.

By Pete Firmin
Willesden No. 1 NUR

The conference elected a steering committee to co-ordinate the campaign, including the production of a newsletter, and adopted an extensive list of proposals designed to develop solidarity.

Get your trade union branch/labour movement body to affiliate to this important campaign — it can be contacted through Bronwen Handyside, Lambeth NALGO, 17 Parker Road, London SE1.

Wright still secret on 6 counties

Labour Committee on Ireland

Not many people linked the "Peter Wright" court case in Australia with Northern Ireland.

Wright himself has written about MI5's attempts to destabilise the Wilson government in the '70s, but is said to have remained silent about Britain's war in the 6 counties. Precisely what he has been prepared to reveal we shall only discover when his book is published.

One thing is clear, however. MI5 were deeply involved in the Six Counties in the period about which Wright has written and their activities were not always in support of elected British governments.

Some of the most astonishing claims concerning their activities have come from Colin Wallace, former Senior Information Officer in Information Policy (the psychological operations unit of the British Army in Northern Ireland). This unit could be more accurately described as "The British Army Dirty Tricks Department". Wallace was at its head when Roy Mason, Labour Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, publicly denied its existence.

Among Wallace's allegations are:

- MI5 was plotting to bring down the Wilson government at the time of the Ulster Workers Council strike in 1974;
- MI5 and MI6 disagreed over policy in Northern Ireland, and MI5 at crucial periods sabotaged the search for a political settlement;
- the ascendancy of MI5 over MI6 in Northern Ireland coincided with the time that Roy Mason became Secretary of State and more emphasis was placed on a military solution by the British Army;
- MI5 were responsible for leaking documents to Loyalists when they thought British governments were too soft on Republicanism;
- many of the people in MI5 who acted beyond their legitimate powers in the past are in prominent positions in MI5 today.

Wallace states that one of his unit's main tasks was to "Undertake operations which would discredit organisations and individuals who, by their activities, were hindering the work of the security forces."

By Cllr Richard Chessum
Press Officer, Labour Committee on Ireland

MI5 included in their list of targets organisations and parties duly elected to power in Britain as well as organisations in the Six Counties.

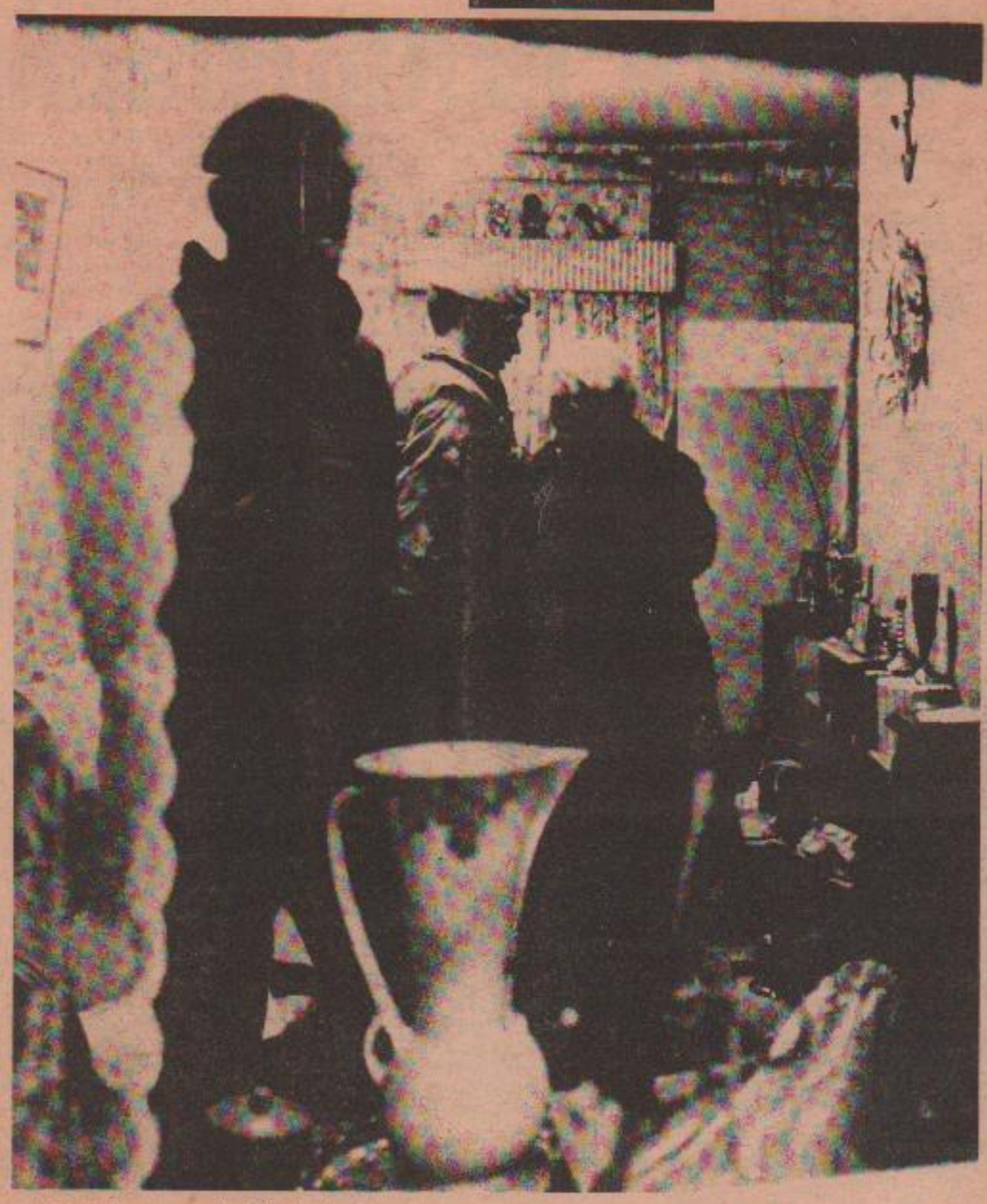
Wallace still supports Britain in Northern Ireland, although he objects to many of the methods used as a threat to democracy. Not surprisingly, however, he was removed from service in N. Ireland. He has since been jailed for 6 years for manslaughter, a charge which he always denied, but is now out on parole, and recently held a press conference.

The recent edition of "Labour and Ireland", the magazine of the Labour Commmittee on Ireland, contains an article by Robin Ramsay detailing some of Wallace's story. All Briefing readers should obtain it and absorb its contents. A secret state unfettered by political accountability and raging out of control of even some significant sections of the political establishment represents a very grave threat to all our liberties. Demanding a full scale enquiry into the work of the intelligence services, and MI5 in particular, should be very high on our list of priorities in 1987.

Anyone inclined to doubt this should ask themselves whether they find the following scenarios credible:

- During a Loyalist strike British intelligence had information linking some Loyalist para-militaries with sexual assaults at a boys' home. It thought of using it to undermine the strike but thought better of it because it thought it was more important to allow the strike to succeed in order to help bring down a democratically elected Labour government in Britain;
- A Tory Prime Minister sent an intelligence chief to Northern Ireland who was opposed to a policy of assassinations by the army. One section of British intelligence ran a campaign against him, claiming that he was gay, and prevented his return to the Six Counties.
- MI5 ousted MI6 from control of intelligence in N. Ireland and sought to make a quick name for themselves by pursuing hard line policies which would get quick results. The outcome — the shoot to kill policy investigated by John Stalker until mysterious allegations ruined his career as a senior police officer.

Credible or not, it has been asserted that all of these things have taken place. Could we be approaching a situation more critical for the British State than Watergate or the Iran arms scandal in the US? If so, it is likely that the key to the unfolding of that scandal will be the long-running war being fought out across the Irish Sea, conspicuous though it may be by its absence in the reports emanating from the South Pacific in the Peter Wright case.



A scene from everyday life in the Six Counties: troops conduct a house search.

Published by Labour Briefing, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5
Printed by MPS (TU), 159 Acre Lane, London SW2.

LABOUR BRIEFING
No 35 JAN 15-28 1987

Local Government Finance Bill:

The Staggering truth

The Local Government Finance Bill, due to receive a second reading in the Commons on January 12th, is an extraordinary piece of legislation.

It is "necessary" because civil servants have discovered that the Minister for the environment has been acting illegally since 1981-2 in determining the level of Rate Support grant to local authorities.

The Bill is designed to put that right, as far as the Government is concerned. But, in addition, sweeping new powers are proposed for the Secretary of State to intervene in local affairs and to outlaw accounting methods which local councils have used in past years to close "budget gaps" and thus prevent cuts in services and jobs.

The specific powers which Ridley is taking are:

- abolishing the right of ratecapped councils to appeal to the Secretary of State against their rate limit this year;
- the right to specify (without any proceedings in parliament whatever) income to the Council from *special funds* or from *receipts from leaseback provisions*, for example, as income to be credited to the rate fund revenue account and which can therefore be taken into account by the Minister in establishing Rate Limits and Block Grant for a particular Council.

(So, any extra income generated by the use of some creative accounting devices can be made useless by the Secretary of State, who may simply then take this cash into account in setting the amount of money to be granted to a Council by the government.)

By Reg Race
Tottenham CLP

- to be able to override the decision of any court which called into question the Secretary of State's decisionson Block Grant since 1981. The particular clause is quite staggering: "This sections shall have effect notwithstanding any decision of a court (whether before or after the passing of this Act) purporting to have a contrary effect." So much for the Tories' respect for the Courts, and the supposed separation of powers between Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary.

The Bill also treats Councils which are to be ratecapped for the first time in 1987-88 more generously in terms of expenditure limit and block grant than Councils ratecapped this year.

Major opposition to the Bill will take place. It is yet another device to attack local councils which the Tories disapprove of, and yet more evidence that the Government could not give a fig for the problems of the inner city, where most ratecapped Councils are.



Reg Race