LABOUR
BRIEFING
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40p

NO "WHITES ONLY" LABOUR PARTY!

The imminent witch-hunt of Black Sections indicated by the NEC resolution of March 25th is moving rapidly into gear.

April saw a flurry of activity as the right wing have attempted to gather evidence to nail Black activists within the Party. On April 6th, excerpts from a letter from Roy Hattersley, Jeff Rooker and other right wing Birmingham MPs to Linda Bellos and Bernie Grant who had been invited to speak at a public meeting in Birmingham on April 7th, mysteriously found their way into the pages of the scab *Times*.

In their familiar patronising and presumptious tone, Hattersley & Co. declared that they did not want Bellos and Grant's advice and told them not to turn up. A more disgusting display of apartheid within the labour movement would be hard to find.

The involvement of Linda Bellos and Sharon Atkin, PPC for Nottingham East, in particular, in the Birmingham meeting have become the focus of NEC attention with the possibility of expulsion for Bellos and deselection for Atkin being aired in the press. As so often happens with the right wing, it does not declare its intentions openly but whips up a campaign of vilification in the bourgeois press through rumour, quotations torn out of context, and so on.

These actions do nothing but assist the attacks of the enemies of the labour movement and drive down Labour's electoral chances.

The fact of the matter is that the Right have given up hope of an outright Labour victory, probably didn't want one on Labour's current programme anyway, and are moving to remove dissident elements from the Party in the event that a coalition with the Alliance is on the agenda.

The need now is for a united campaign of resistance to these attacks and to prevent the NEC taking any action at its next meeting on April 29th. It is unfortunate that four Black PPCs in London felt the need to publish the statement they did. Keeping heads down so as not to "provoke" further attacks is a recipe for isolation, division and defeat.

In contrast Nottingham East CLP has issued a a public statement defending the right of Black Sections to organise and in full support of our PPC Sharon Atkin.

Sharon was selected from an all-Black shortlist in full knowledge of her record as a Lambeth councillor, as a supporter of Black Sections, and as a socialist. We have no intention of deserting her now.

By Rick Simon
Nottingham East CLP (personal capacity)

Page 9: Nottingham East CLP statement

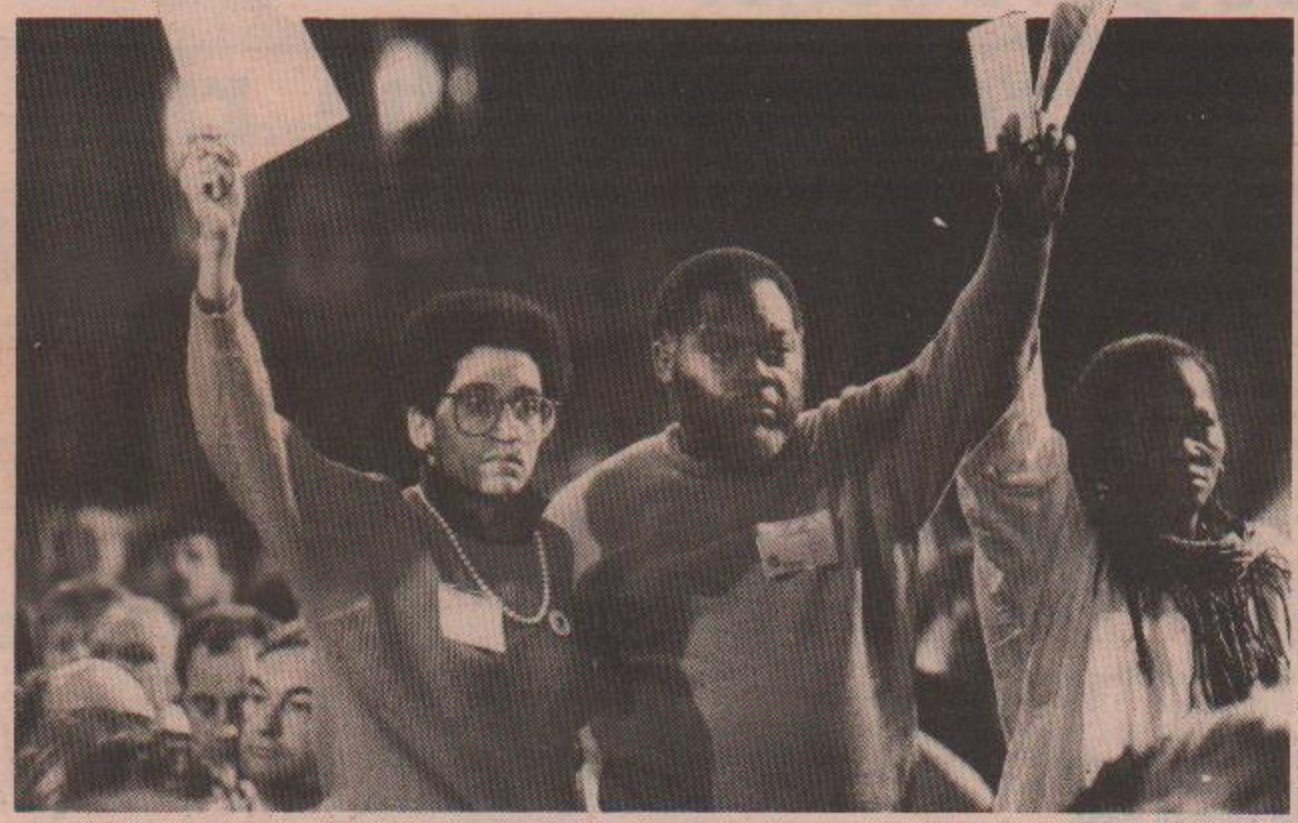


PHOTO: Andrew Wiard (Report)



PHOTO: John Chapman

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Feature: Tory Britain



PHOTO: Chris Davies (Report)

Surrey docks: once a centre of working class employment; under the Tories, rapidly becoming a paradise for the rich.

Urban Development Corporations:

Paradise for the rich

Thatcher's answer to the decline in London's docklands has been to take over the land and local authority powers, and hand them over to an unelected quango. JOHN TURKIE looks at the changes this has brought and future changes in the pipeline — particularly the Canary Wharf development — and draws lessons for the Labour Party and the left.

Watch out: more Urban Development Corporations are planned. Your area could be next for the Tory treatment...

The London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) was set up in 1981 to "regenerate" 8.5 square miles of London's disused docks.

All executive powers for the area were taken away from the three democratically elected local authorities and handed over to an unelected and unaccountable government quango.

This experiment has set the pattern for other Urban Development Corporations now proposed as a remedy for decline and decay up and down the country.

Enormous powers of "vesting" public land and purchasing private land through Compulsory Purchase Orders were granted to the LDDC, and an "Enterprise Zone", owned outright by the LDDC, created on the Isle of Dogs, thus enabling the Corporation to by-pass the planning process which might interfere with the natural flow of the Market. Here the gigantic Canary Wharf development — 12 million square feet of office and commercial space — has attracted more private investment than the whole of the Channel Tunnel.

If this development, the world's largest private investment project, goes ahead, it will have needed no planning permission whatsoever.

The LDDC's pockets are lined with public money from the Department of Environment. The proximity of Docklands to the City of London has made it prime development land: a perfect recipe for private investors! Not surprisingly, the Tories have hailed the LDDC as the saviour of the Inner City.

Regeneration or Alteration?

The net effect of the "regeneration" of this once heavily industrialised area is a radically altered local econmic base, which squeezes out local people and local industry. The "upmarket" approach of the LDDC combines private luxury housing, and offices serving the financial and high-tech worlds. As big money has rolled in, local people have been pushed out.

The Isle of Dogs in Tower Hamlets is almost certainly becoming the "best" example of this process at work. Since 1981, unemployment has more than doubled from 12% to nearly 30%, as traditional Riverside industries employing predominantly local labour have been forced out by property developers.

The pressure of existing commercial and private developments on the Isle of Dogs is such that residential land is now changing hands at nearly £5 million per acre. Canary Wharf will not only compound and accelerate this process, but will stimulate further far-reaching pressure on land values.

The biggest scandal of all is that this exclusively private development, promoted by a highly profitable US/Swiss banking consortium, is to be subsidised by up to £2 billion of public money, made up of enterprise zone rate and tax allowances and supporting transport infrastructure.

Canary Wharf — which is opposed by Labour local authorities and the London Labour Party — will change the face of London and have a devastating impact on the predominantly working class communities of East and South East London. Yet the Minister is refusing a Public Inquiry.

The Choice for Labour

And what, one may wonder, is the Labour leadership's response to this Tory offensive? To date, a Docklands' representation to Cunningham and his colleagues has failed even to move them to demand a Public Inquiry into Canary Wharf, never mind commit a future Labour government to abolish the LDDC.

It is essential that the issues of the LDDC and Canary Wharf are forced on to the national political agenda, and that the Labour leadership throw its weight behind the demands of the grass roots campaigns throughout Docklands, which involve (in a haphazard way) many Labour Party members.

What is desperately needed at this eleventh hour is for the Front Bench *publicly* to demand a Public Inquiry into Canary Wharf and to mount an offensive against the Tories' plans for Docklands and other deindustrialised areas of Britain.

Unfortunately, Labour leaders seem much taken in by the myth that the four new UDCs, proposed for the North and the Midlands, will be able to attract as much private investment as London's Docklands. This is highly unlikely.

Nor will they be given anywhere near as much public money, as Nicholas Ridley has already made clear. Per year, the four *altogether* will receive a quarter of that given to the LDDC. After all, for the Tories, London is the Centre of the Universe.

Part of the leadership's dilemma lies in its confused attitude to the property market and the City, which it consistently refuses to confront, thereby colluding with the Tories and the LDDC. They are neither opposing the creation of more UDCs, nor campaigning for the return of democratic control to Docklands.

In this pre-election period, the question must be asked: *what exactly is Labour's alternative?*

The Docklands communities, for their part, are of course not opposed to regeneration, which surely means regenerating what is already there, i.e. the local economy. What must be opposed, however, is the suupplantation of the existing working class communities with new and totally different ones.

The demographic reshaping of East and South East London that is beginning to take place should be ringing alarm bells even in the Shadow Cabinet, if only because these inner city seats should be "safe" for Labour.

The relative ignorance that exists concerning these issues is a potential political disaster. It is hardly surprising that the areas picked out for more UDCs (all of them Labour) have no idea what is about to hit them. However, it is not yet too late for the whole question of UDCs to become a major political issue inside the Party nationally.

UDCs are vote losers for the Labour Party, in all senses. In the case of a UDC such as the LDDC, the objective is for the area to become a paradise for the rich, resulting, over a number of years, in a decanted working class which has traditionally voted Labour.

Even in the short term, not opposing UDCs is a vote loser for us. It is true that in 1981 local people welcomed the creation of the LDDC due to the failures of the old Right wing Labour councils.

But after six years of Tory "regeneration", the people of Docklands know only too well that the LDDC are only interested in allowing speculators to make vast amounts of profit, principally at their expense. They want the abolition of the LDDC and the return of democratic control to Docklands.

However, Cunningham & Co. seem quite enamoured with the LDDC. It may be an unelected, undemocratic and unaccountable quango, but it possesses quite extraordinary powers, far greater than any local authority. A Labour Secretary of State for the Environment could do quite remarkable things with the "right" people on the Board — or so the argument goes.

If a future Labour Government were not to abolish the LDDC, but were to tinker around with the Board personnel, this could be the death knell for Labour in East and South East London. The Left must make sure the lessons from Docklands are learned.



Ready to blow!

Grangemouth in Scotland is the site of a huge petrochemical complex.

Had it been situated in England recent events might have evoked comparisons with Seveso or Flixborough.

This small area contains a BP refinery, a large BP chemical works, a BXL chemical works, and an ICI chemical and paint factory; as well as docks, a container base, and several large timber stores (including Muirhead's).

A gas pumping station supplies Moss Morran, a petrochemical complex across the Forth in Fife using pipelines through old mine-workings under the river.

Also across the rivers are Kincardine on Forth and Longannet Power station and Inverkeithing and Rosyth naval dockyards, which regularly service nuclear submarines. Large residential built-up areas are interspersed throughout the area.

By David Fowler
Asst. Secretary, COHSE
929, Larbert
personal capacity

It is rumoured that managers of BP at Grangemouth arranged a meeting with the local constabulary to discuss arrangements for a major disaster. When they went into the police station they asked for a map of the area. The police obliged with a street map of Grangemouth.

"No, no," said the managers, "we need a map that includes South Queensferry." (Outside South Queensferry, at Dalmenny, is a "tank farm" of crude oil storage tanks). Anyone who knows this area will understand immediately that the disaster which these people were contemplating is on a colossal scale.

Memorial

On Friday April 10th, at the insistence of the workforce, BP held a memorial service for the three workers killed at the refinery the previous month. On March 13th, James Bruce (40) from Cowdenbeath and Phillip Mellon (35) from Shotts were killed when a pipe carrying hydrocarbon gases exploded. Nine days later, on March 22nd, George Speirs (52) from Airdrie, who worked for a subcontractor, was killed when a hydrocracker exploded.

Fortunately for BP, the hydrocracker, which operates under a pressure of 3,000psi, exploded towards the river, away from the bulk of the other installations and on a Sunday, when only a skeleton staff was present. A day later, and the carnage would have been horrific.

An office block near the 'cracker looked as though it had been peppered with shrapnel. A piece of metal weighing 5 tons was in the air for 30 seconds!

Huge pieces of piping were stuck like javelins into the banks of the Forth. Crews of workers are still digging them out.

So what went wrong? In 1986 nobody died, though a release of gas required Grangemouth residents to stay indoors for an hour or two, and on one occasion hundreds of employees' cars were damaged by localised acid rain.

Complacency

Employees say that BP Grangemouth's previous record had encouraged complacency amongst the staff. Voluntary redundancy has decreased the number of older experienced workers and replaced them either with young workers or sub-contractors. Flexibility agreements have meant that electricians and welders have been expected to fill in for each other as required.

All this was achieved with the full collaboration of the local TGWU bureaucracy, which has now combined late in the day with local MP Harry Ewing to call for a public enquiry.

Amongst other things, an enquiry would have to deal with the contingency plans made for dealing with accidents. For example, it seems that naval fire tenders dispatched from Rosyth and Inverkeithing did not have attachments that matched BP's.

Appliances

BP's own fire-fighting appliances can load up with foam as they are pumping, whereas ICI's, which were called for assistance, have to return repeatedly to their original factory to load up, thus losing valuable time.

Also unaccounted for are radioactive isotopes used for testing pipelines.

BP are conducting an internal enquiry, but they will not make any public statements until the Health and Safety Executive have announced their findings.

Workers involved should oppose this secrecy. Workers in the NHS and Fire Brigades unions and local residents should also demand to know exactly what chemicals are involved and what contingency plans have been made.

Yet local reactions to the events at BP have been muted, perhaps because it is such a large local employer.

Nonetheless, if it can spend millions to take over an oil company (SOHIO) which in turn spent millions building an artificial island off Alaska which produced nothing but salt water, BP can surely afford something to secure the safety of local residents and its employees.

Editorial

BRIEFING
LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Stand up for Black Sections!

The attack on Labour Party Black Sections activists reported in the last issue of *Briefing* has been followed up with threats of deselection against Sharon Atkin, PPC for Nottingham East, and threats of expulsion from the Party against Linda Bellos, Leader of Lambeth Council and Phil Murphy, a councillor in Birmingham.

Unfortunately the unity necessary to fight this witch-hunt has been broken by four prominent Black PPCs in London: Diane Abbott (Hackney North), Paul Boateng (Brent South), Bernie Grant (Tottenham) and Russell Profitt (Lewisham East) — all previously active supporters of the Black Sections.

Their statement, issued in the face of the leadership's witch-hunt after the Black Sections Conference and the Birmingham Black Sections meeting, represents a capitulation to the pressure of Kinnockism — that all politics must be dropped in order to win the election.

It is to be regretted that rather than support the Black activists under attack, the four are now using the familiar rhetoric of Kinnock — "our overriding interest is in getting Labour into government" — and have effectively deserted others who are prepared to fight against racism and for socialist policies.

The left must step up support for those Black activists under attack and the leadership of Black Sections coming under fire because they are fighting the right wing course of the Labour leadership.

Briefing supports the Black Sections on two counts. First, because we support the rights of the oppressed as a principle; secondly, beause we know, like them, that the ditching of all left-wing or radical policies by the leadership is an electoral disaster, not a vote-winner.

But the Labour leadership seem prepared to lose seats rather than support Black and left-wing candidates, or "unpopular" policies. The issue of Black liberation, like lesbian and gay liberation before it, is now a "vote loser", despite the support which the overwhelming majority of Black people give to Labour at election time.

It is ironic indeed that on the very day that the four Black PPCs got cold feet, the race relations institute the Runnymede Trust published a report accusing *all* the major political parties of ignoring Black concerns in an effort to appease white racism. As the author points out, the Labour leadership's public attack on Black Sections, after the Greenwich defeat, is an attempt to stem the loss of white electoral support. Once again, the racism of the Labour Party is exposed.

Against this, we should positively promote the right of Black MPs to meet and discuss how to raise Black issues in the Parliamentary Labour Party and in Parliament, just as the Tribune Group, the Campaign Group, and Solidarity have the right to meet and discuss what they think fit. We should argue that Sharon Atkin, if elected, does have the right to speak on behalf of Black people. And what's wrong with that? White men have for too long believed that they can speak for women and Black people in Parliament. Out of 210 seats held at present by Labour, only 13 are women and none are Black. Such under-representation is a scandal and part of the Black Section's success has been in challenging it.

The left must therefore:

- defend the Black Section's right of representation in the Labour Party;
- defend the Black Section's leadership;
- defend Sharon Atkin, Linda Bellos, and Phil Murphy from the witch-hunt;
- support the Black Section's Conference decision to fight for anti-racist and socialist policies;
- support the Black Section's defence of Black communities and especially the Black youth under constant attack from racist policing.

Tory share scandal

Tory MPs line their pockets!

The privatisation of BT was supposed to help realise the Conservative Party's dream of a property and share owning "democracy".

Great inducements were offered to potential investors: a give-away price of 130 pence per share; an instalment plan for payments; and the possibility of free telephone bill vouchers or additional free shares.

By Reg Race
Tottenham CLP

Applications for shares were at record levels, and, to increase the number of small investors, personal holdings were restricted to a maximum of 800 shares. *Yet profit-taking reduced the number of individual shareholders from 2.3m just after sell-off to less than 1.5m by November 1986.*

But the publication of the LRD's analysis of the BT shares issue showed the public that the greed of Tory MPs is boundless. Having voted the privatisation of BT through the House of Commons themselves, it was clearly the done thing to get one's snout in the trough.

A staggering total of 91 Conservative MPs bought shares; and a further 34 MPs' spouses purchased them.

The list of MPs who bought into BT includes *five government ministers*, including one member of the cabinet (the Secretary of State for Wales) and the wife of the Attorney General, Sir Michael Havers — who would have given advice to the Cabinet over the drafting of the legislation.

Scandalously, it also includes the names of three Labour MPs — **Betty Boothroyd** (West Bromwich West); **Ted Leadbitter** (Hartlepool), who was sacked by NUPE from its parliamentary Panel; and **George Foulkes** (Carick, Cumnock and Doon Valley), who is a front bench spokesperson on foreign affairs.

On the first day of trading on the Stock Exchange, BT's shares realised a premium of 45 pence. As with other share issues relating to public companies — such as Amersham International and British Gas — the price was fixed so low as to guarantee massive cash killings for investors on day one.

As reported in the national press, two Conservative MPs made multiple applications for shares. Accountants Peat, Marwick Mitchell were brought in to weed out multiple aplications at the time of issue. When signing the application form, applications agreed to be bound by the condition that "no other application has been made on your behalf."

It is beyond belief that a lawyer such as Mr Keith Best, MP for Ynys Mon (Anglesey), can argue that he did not know of this ban on multiple applications and of the possibility of being prosecuted under Section 15 of the Theft Act 1968, which deals with obtaining property by deception.

However he made six applications for shares using different parts of his name and using different addresses in London, Brighton, Holyhead, and Sussex. Accordingly, he was allocated 4,800 shares in respect of the applications.

It has also been reported that Mr Best has mutiple shareholdings in the recently privatised Jaguar Motors.

Mr Best is a jurisprudence graduate from Oxford, a former lecturer in Law, and author of popular legal guides such as "Write your own will". He is a barrister and a member of Lloyds — which means that he has the odd £100,000 spare in liquid assets which could cover any losses on the underwriting syndicates in which he is a "name".

Tory MP Eric Cockeram (Ludlow) received two allocations of shares. He is also a member of Lloyds, a Director of three companies, and a Trustee of the Trustee Savings Bank.

There are even three members of the Royal Family who must be short of a bob or two: Princess Diana, Prince Edward and Prince Andrew all have individual shareholdings.

How is it, then, that MPs such as Best and Cockeram can get away with purchasing shares in companies *that they have voted to privatise?*

Unfortunately, quite easily. The *Register of Members Interests*, set up in June 1975, does not do the job for which it was intended, namely: "to provide information of any pecuniary interest or other material benefit which a Member may receive which might be thought to affect his conduct as a member or influence his actions, speeches or vote in Parliament."

The problem arises in implementation. No one checks the returns made by MPs; there is no requirement to disclose the amount of any payment or benefit; nor to declare the interests of spouses or children; nor to declare shareholdings of a nominal value less than one-hundredth of the issued share capital of a company.

These loopholes, coupled with the reality of our antiquated and elitest inheritance laws and the fact that it is no one's job to police the financial and business returns made by MPs, means that the Register is almost useless.

We should demand:

- the immediate expulsion of Best and Cockeram from Parliament and their prosecution under the Theft Act;
- a toughening up of the Register so that all MPs' tax returns are made public, together with details of *all* shareholdings and financial interests;
- the introduction of a Standing Order of the House of Commons prohibiting MPs and their spouses from owning shares in a company which they have voted to privatise.

It should also be illegal for any Minister of the Crown to own shares in a private company whilst in office.

And how about Labour Party leaflets in each constituency, exposing these facts and the contrast with the Thatcher government's scandalous treatment of the poor?

Name (Conservative unless stated otherwise)	Constituency	Number of shares (S = sold)
Jonathan Aitken	Thanet South	800
Sir Humphrey Atkins	Spelthorne	800
Anthony Beaumont-Dark	Birmingham, Selly Oak	800
Henry Bellingham	Norfolk North West	800
Keith Best	Ynys Mon	600[1]
David Bevan	Birmingham, Yardley	800
Dr John Blackburn	Dudley West	4,800[2]
Betty Boothroyd (Lab)	West Bromwich	600
Robert Boscawen	Somerton & Frome	400
Andrew Bowden	Brighton Kemptown	800
Graham Bright	Luton South	800
Kenneth Carlisle	Lincoln	500
John Cartwright (SDP)	Woolwich	400
Sydney Chapman	Chipping Barnet	800
Christopher Chope	Southampton, Itchen	500
Sir William Clarke	Croydon South	500
Eric Cockeram	Ludlow	500
Simon Coombs	Swindon	800
Nicholas Edwards	Pembroke	1,600[3]
Sir Peter Emery	Honiton	800
Sir Geoffrey Finsberg	Hampstead & Highgate	800
Janet Fookes	Plymouth Drake	800[4]
Nigel Forman	Carshalton & Wallington	800
Michael Forsyth	Stirling	500
Eric Forth	Mid Worcestershire	800
George Foulkes (Lab)	Carrick, Cumnock & Doon Valley	500
Cecil Franks	Barrow & Furness	400
Roger Freeman	Kettering	800
Peter Fry	Wellingborough	800
George Gardiner	Reigate	800
Dr Alan Glyn	Windsor & Maidenhead	500
Sir Raymond Gower	Vale of Glamorgan	500
Sir Anthony Grant	Cambridgeshire South West	500
Harry Greenaway	Ealing North	500[5]
Conal Gregory	York	400
Sir Eldon Griffiths	Bury St Edmunds	800
Patrick Ground	Feltham & Heston	200
Michael Grylls	Surrey North West	100
Joseph Hargreaves	Hyndburn	500
David Harris	St Ives	800
Alan Haselhurst	Saffron Walden	500
Sir Paul Hawkins	Norfolk South West	800
Edward Heath	Old Bexley & Sidcup	200
Douglas Hogg	Grantham	800
Gerald Howarth	Cannock & Burntwood	800
Peter Hubbard-Miles	Bridgend	800[6]
David Hunt	Wirral West	400
John Hunt	Ravensbourne	800
Robert Jones	Hertfordshire West	800[7]
James Kilfedder (UPUP)	Down North	600
Ted Leadbitter (Lab)	Hartlepool	600
Sir Kenneth Lewis		
David Lighbown		

Tables reproduced courtesy Labour Research Department

Trade Union Briefing

Civil Service Pay

All-out action to win!

For the first time since 1981 there is a fight on pay in the Civil Service!

The three unions involved, CPSA, SCPS and NIPSA (Northern Ireland Public Sector Alliance), representing nearly half the total number of civil servants, are pursuing a strategy of selective regional strike action in support of their claim for £20 a week or 15%.

The mood for industrial action is the culmination of eight years in which the Tories have forced down wages and worsened conditions for their own employees. The result is that civil service clerical workers are now among the lowest paid in the country.

By Alastair Wallace
CPSA Broad Left

The strategy of action currently being pursued involves each region of the country taking a week's strike in rotation. For the first three days of each week key deaprtments such as the DHSS and Department of Employment are being brought out, while for the remaining two days there is a general strike of all civil servants in the area.

Obviously the strategy is not ideal: however, in contrast to previous years, it has meant that the campaign has taken off.

Furthermore, the support from the regions has been good. Even management's figures put the response rate at 85% with some militant areas being even more solid. Also, there have been several reports of previously non-unionised workers joining their union rather than scab. All of this points to a real mood of militancy which could be developed.

One problem with the strategy is that it is divisive. By parcelling the unions up into regions the effect has been to isolate members in action.

For example, despite the near total response in Liverpool and Manchester in the first week of the strike virtually nothing was reported in the London-centred national press. A further problem is that as each region takes its turn, those involved at the beginning have to go back to work and await further involvement.

The danger is that any momentum which has been generated will simply dissipate.

The biggest question however is where do we go next?

The need for all-out action to achieve the claim is one which is accepted by activists across the unions. However, translating this acceptance into a membership vote will be an uphill task.

The right wing of the CPSA have locked the union into a mechanistic process where balloting on all out action will begin on May 18th: but they have done nothing to prepare for that ballot.

This makes the job of the Broad Lefts a tricky one. On the one hand we must recognise that only all-out action will win. We must be prepared to campaign and argue for this position. On the other hand we must recognise that simply to go straight from the regional action to a ballot on all-out action with no campaign will almost certainly mean defeat.

While it is up to the left to maintain the momentum which already exists by encouraging unofficial action, upholding the overtime ban and withdrawing good will, there is a need for some centrally organised national action to bring some cohesion to the dispute. To this end it may be worth considering the suggestion mooted in some areas of a series of national one day strikes prior to the ballot on all out action.

Whether or not this is possible remains to be seen. However, with or without it, the campaign must now be saying that all out action is the only way to win!



Jim Gee

London DHSS workers taking industrial action



Black women in the unions:

But hollow gestures...

"One is a black person, two is a conspiracy, and three is a riot," said Linda Bellos in her opening speech at the SERTUC Women's Rights Committee Open Day on Fighting Racism on April 11th.

Linda outlined the need for black people to organise within the labour movement, and went on to describe how much of a threat this was to the white domination of the trade unions and the Labour Party.

The recent attacks on Black Sections within the Labour Party by the NEC, and particularly on two prominent black women (Linda Bellos and Sharon Atkin), were of considerable concern to the women present.

However, when black women in one of the workshops talked about the need for self-organisation as a precondition for combatting racism in the Unions, the extent of resistance soon became clear!

Age-old objections were thrown up by white women: black sections would be separatist and divisive — black women should join with white women in their struggle against the male dominated bureaucracy, rather than undermining it, etc.....

By Anita Patel
T&G/ACTSS 1/208

The black women present took up these arguments forcefully. They explained that black people have to organise just as women do, to formulate demands on the labour movement effectively. As the discussion showed, black women cannot rely on the achievements of white women within the unions to push forward their own demands.

Black women at the Conference went on to relate their own experiences of organising as black women within the Trade Unions. They talked of the strength that had given them, and of how they rely and constantly fall back on such black support and solidarity.

There was a strong and clear demand from the black women trade unionists at the Conference for self-organisation of black people at all levels within the trade union movement.

Out of the Conference it became clear that the rise of Black Sections within the Labour Party has had a major impact on black women in the trade unions. It has grabbed the hearts and minds of black trade union activists. This is an important reason why Labour Party Black Sections have been the subject of such vitriolic attacks from the NEC. *It also makes the defence of Labour Party Black Sections one of the most urgent tasks facing black people in the labour movement.*

At the conclusion of the conference, black women made their message to SERTUC Women's Rights Committee crystal clear: *well-meaning anti-racist policies are but hollow gestures until the Unions recognise black people's right to self-organisation.*

MSC: *Working for Thatcher*

Build trade union opposition!

The "Action for Jobs" campaign, as seen on TV, has focussed attention on government plans to use the MSC (Manpower Services Commission) as the vehicle for the main thrust of its policy on unemployment.

There is now an ever-expanding "menu of options" for the long term unemployed, ranging from the Community Programme and Voluntary Projects programme to Jobs Clubs and the Job Training Scheme, recruited through the compulsory Restart interview.

Unemployed youth are asked to take a place on the two year YTS or face loss of benefit.

The TUC's position on MSC schemes is historically rooted in its role in setting up the MSC. The Heath government of 1974 conceded to pressure from the TUC and established the MSC under the Employment and Training Act as a tripartite organisation to co-ordinate training and job creation, particularly in the context of new technology.

When the Tories returned to power in 1979 they were initially hostile to the MSC, regarding it as a "high spending quango".

By Maggie Arkwright
Secretary, Joint Trade Unions Group opposing the MSC

However they soon recognised the potential in using the MSC, as an organisation supported largely by all parties and the TUC, in responding to the growing crisis of unemployment.

Under the Tories, the MSC has been primarily concerned with dealing with the symptoms of high unemployment and not at all with job creation. Not only has the MSC been directed to "Fiddle the figures" by altering the methods of calculation 19 times, but it has also been involved in a massive propaganda exercise designed to redefine the "needs" of the unemployed, to establish the notion of "self help" reflecting the Tory belief that unemployed people are responsible for their own plight, and to restructure the labour market around low wages, short-term contracts, non-unionisation and "flexibility".

So far the TUC has merely issued "guidelines" on how branches should monitor each scheme on its "merits" (!). But a campaign is now growing within the unions to take a much firmer position on the MSC and demand TUC withdrawal.

It is apparent that the TUC policy of monitoring has produced not one single improvement in the national conditions for workers on schemes; in fact the schemes have got worse and worse.

Some would argue that the TUC's weak response to the MSC has been directly responsible for the latest offspring of the MSC Special Measures Department: Restart and the Job Training Scheme.

Restart embodies the element of compulsion, with the threat of benefit sanctions for those who do not attend interviews at jobs centres, and the Job Training Scheme is literally earning state benefits. These ideas have been imported from the notorious "Workfare" scheme in America, regarded by the Tories for a long time as the high point of development in policing dole scroungers.

The MSC must be considered in the context of government strategies for a non-unionised, privatised, low wage economy — and the role the MSC is playing must not be underestimated.

While local government is being devastated by rate-capping, millions of pounds are being ploughed into the voluntary sector to provide much needed services through the Community programme.

MSC schemes cannot be justified as "better than nothing". In order to reverse the damage they are doing, the unions must demand training linked to job creation as part of a national planned programme — and that does not mean a simple endorsement of the Labour Party's plans to create a million jobs in two years!

The conference on May 2nd is aimed at sharpening trades unionists' understanding of this issue and promoting the policy of TUC withdrawal from the MSC. It is being organised by a joint unions steering group, which developed from a dispute 2 years ago, in which Community Programme workers opted to return to the dole prematurely by forcing the closure of their project when basic demands were not met.

The workers set up an unemployed section of their union branch (NALGO) and as well as this conference are planning to run fringe meetings at the national trades union conferences this year and are currently making a video.

Speakers are available for meetings!

MSC: WORKING FOR THATCHER

Conference
Saturday May 2nd
Hampden Community Centre,
150 Ossulston Street, London NW1
Registration: £2

Affiliations and donations to the steering group are very welcome. Details: Maggie Arkwright, 30 Pembroke Road, London E17. 01-521-4130.

Trade Union Briefing

Little life in Blackpool

The National Executive was censured, and the right wing lost a little of its cocksure arrogance: but still there was little life in this year's Annual Delegate meeting of the NUJ.

Held in the cavernous, seedy expanse of Blackpool's Winter Gardens (where, it was later revealed, staff are subjected to horrendous working conditions with the tacit collaboration of BETA union leaders) ADM 1987 was a contrast, but also a result of the more vigorous event last year, which was held in the midst of the Wapping dispute.

After a tooth and nail fight, a slim majority had battled through and won against NEC opposition a call on the Executive to take disciplinary action against the four NUJ chapels scabbing on the printworkers' dispute and defying NUJ instructions.

The NEC promptly reneged on its commitment to respect the ADM policy, and prevaricated for months, before eventually instituting half-cock proceedings — which resulted in literally hundreds of known scabs escaping scot-free.

While delegates could correctly argue that the NEC line had failed abysmally in its claimed objective of persuading the scab chapels to take action against Murdoch, the sting was taken out of the fight by the fact that the dispute is now over — and the best that could be hoped for was a stable door locking exercise.

In the event a well-intentioned but largely toothless resolution on the conduct of the dispute was carried, while a more strongly-worded resolution condemned the NEC for ignoring the wishes of 1986 ADM and called upon the incoming NEC to "take immediate steps to carry out disciplinary procedures against all those members who went into Wapping, regardless of any settlement of the dispute."

This motion was carried despite a carefully orchestrated preparation for the debate, in which Conroy wheeled in both NGA leader Tony Dubbins and SOGAT chief Brenda Dean to make lengthy, empty, ludicrously complacent speeches, each of which contained almost identical passages — praising Harry Conry's role in the Wapping dispute!

While the NUJ had undoubtedly held the key to the Wapping dispute, subsequent moves by management to force in new technology, especially in the provincial newspapers sector have been able to exploit a substantial collapse in the role of NGA members in particular, who have in many cases opted for redundancy rather than join with the NUJ in the fight for jobs.

It was with some trepidation that ADM recognised that on top of this challenge to working conditions the collapse of the national pay agreement which has for years covered NUJ members in the provincial newspapers sector means that next year every chapel — large or small — will be effectively left to fight alone against their own employers.

This was far from the only ominous note at the conference: the dark shadow of the present and the threatened anti-union laws, new local government legislation, and attacks on press freedom ranging from the Zircon affair to Tebbit's onslaught on the BBC all helped to create a sombre climate, though NUJ jobs have largely remained intact during the year.

So, too, did the grim news of the extent to which the union's branch structure is in severe crisis, with 31 out of 177 branches barred from ADM for not complying with the financial requirements, and another 30 not sending delegates to the ADM.

One reflection of this is the financial plight of the Union, with an accumulated deficit of over £400,000, worsened by escalating legal costs and the impact of the Wapping dispute.

However, there were some positive developments, one of which has been the increased international involvement of the NUJ, not least with the crucial if unfashionable issue of fighting Zionist repression in occupied Palestine.

The platform boasted speakers from Palestine, South Africa and Hong Kong, and ADM passed an excellent composite resolution on South Africa which among other things:

- condemned the state of emergency, and the failure of the British press to send black reporters to cover South Africa;
- supported the call for workers' sanctions, and "any action taken by trade unionists to boycott South African goods";



PHOTO: John Chapman

Left to right: Eric Hammond (EETPU), Terry Duffy (AEU) and Robert Maxwell: chatting over the future of the newspaper industry?

- urged NUJ members to increase coverage of the liberation struggle in Namibia, which has been largely suppressed by censorship;
- called for all media unions to unite on a strategy in opposition to apartheid and censorship;
- requested chapels whose companies trade with South Africa to consider ways of breaking these links.

By Harry Sloan

Other resolutions covered Poland, the Philippines, Chile and "Third World" reportage.

ADM also strengthened the NUJ's stance against racist immigration laws and racist reporting, supporting the defence campaign of NUJ member Som Raj and condemning press coverage of the death in Wolverhampton of Clinton McCurbin.

And there was renewed opposition to sexist publications, with specific condemnation of *Sunday Sport*.

While taking a strong line in defence of press freedom, and reporting the 5,000-strong BBC stoppage over the suppression of the BBC's Zircon film, ADM went further and endorsed a composite resolution calling on the NEC to report to next year's conference with: "concrete proposals for the abolition of the present unrepresentative quango bodies which control established radio and TV channels, and for their replacement by elected and accountable controlling bodies, to include representation from media workers at all levels."

With the SWP/*Militant*-dominated Broad Left virtually dead on its feet, and with less overtly political discussion than for many years, the Blackpool ADM was a fair reflection of the present state of much of the trade union movement.

The battles yet to come in each sector of the union could radically change this by the time the next ADM comes around. Meanwhile chapels and branches have a lot of basic spadework to do just to keep the basic structure intact.

Hanger's management under pressure

April has seen Hanger's management make their third and fourth "final" offers to settle the seven month-long dispute.

The third final offer — £4,650 for those with 20 years or more service and £1,200 for others — was rejected. The fourth offer merely brings the £1,200 amount up to £1,700, and is being voted on as *Briefing* goes to press.

Management are refusing to negotiate over jobs, although it is common knowledge that they plan to have a workforce of 30 to 40 at Roehampton. They are also insisting that any union member who agrees to a payoff must sign a form agreeing not to pursue unfair dismissal claims.

The industrial tribunals of the 4 originally sacked workers whose dismissal caused the stoppage and subsequent lock-out have been postponed from mid-March to May 29-30th at management's request; and there are fears that they will seek to postpone the tribunals for a second time.

Pressure must be mounting upon the management to make a settlement soon. Some of the McColl Report recommendations have been effected, and a Special Health Authority has been set up to oversee the artificial limb industry — to which Hanger's management is now answerable.

Other recommendations include the prompt delivery of limbs. Delays experienced before last September (when the dispute started) have been exacerbated and are now infinitely worse.

With respect to fitting limbs, the prosthetists are not knowledgeable. In the past there was no collaboration between the surgeon, prosthetist and general aftercare before any amputation. Such collaboration has been recommended by McColl and should ensure better limbfitting.

Finding the craftsmen to do the skilled work is a problem for BTR since the Hanger's sacked workers have the monopoly in both quality of work and in skills.

The Scottish Area Health Authority, with supposedly less stringent standards than those in England, are accepting work which Hanger's would consider sub-standard, according to Graham Croucher of the disputes committee.

Pressure on management to reach a settlement will mount further. Many disabled patients will be using their spare limbs, and will be gravely concerned about how they will replace the spare. Additionally, work has not been completed during the slack winter period; and soon workers in Kelly's and Vesta will be taking their holidays.

The Women's Support Group have planned a social on May 29th. Their jumble sale on March 28th raised £238!

Please send messages of support and donations to TASS, c/o Steve Blease, 520 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 4VQ.

Kathy Pick, Wandsworth councillor, Putney CLP

DEMONSTRATE

Saturday, May 2nd. Assemble Telegraph Road, Putney Heath, London SW15, 11am.
Supporters and sacked limbmakers and their families will march to Bishop's Park, Fulham for a rally from 12.30 to 2.30.
Invited speakers include Arthur Scargill, Ken Livingstone, Alf Dubs, Peter Hain, Cathy Wilson.
Sponsors include local Trades Councils and local Labour Parties.



Support public ownership of Hangers

The lockout at J.E. Hanger's, Roehampton Lane, has entered a new and vicious phase in its seventh month.

Below is a resolution for public ownership. Move it at your ward meeting this month! Help pressure MPs to get the front bench to make a positive pronouncement of support and action.

This ward/GC:

- *reaffirms its commitment to the 300 sacked limbmakers at J.E. Hangers in their continued struggle in the dispute since September 16th 1986;*
- *realises that the lock-out by mangement has not only caused severe hardship to the sacked workers and their families, but also has caused considerable distress to the disabled patients awaiting limbs;*
- *recognises that BTR is callous in its treatment of employees here and abroad and puts profits before patients;*
- *calls upon the NEC to make a public commitment to the public ownership of the artificial limb industry, to ensure that patients and workers are treated decently in the future.*

The commitment should be included in the Labour Charter for Health.

NUT Conference

Fighting against Baker

NUT Executive at its Conference in Eastbourne over the Easter weekend managed to convince its members not to rock the boat too much in the schools coming up to the General Election.

Locked in the framework set by Giles Radice, Labour's Shadow Education Spokesperson, who called for a moratorium on strikes in schools when he addressed a fringe meeting on Saturday, the Broad Left-dominated leadership won the vote for a token protest only against the Baker Act, which deprives teacher trade unionists of negotiating rights.

Despite sharp attacks from the platform the left in the union led by the STA provided a clear alternative and on the key vote on Baker won 41% of the vote for stepping up the action.

By Valerie Coultas
Vauxhall CLP

As we go to press it is unclear whether the resolution reaffirming a commitment to no-cover will win a majority.

The Executive came to Conference having worked hard to stem the tide of militancy of teachers that has developed over the last 2 years. The officers decided to steal the banner of unity with the NAS/UWT, originally introduced by the left as a smokescreen for winding down the campaign on salaries and against the Baker Act.

Even before the Conference began, on the joint campaign committee with the NAS/UWT they had agreed to "guidelines" on the operation of the Baker Act. The document clearly stated, despite protestations to the contrary, that teachers should comply with the Baker Act. On page 4 the document states:

"Cover for absent colleagues should be provided according to the imposed conditions of employment except where there is an extant agreement which is better than the imposed conditions."

The left in the union was able to record several victories in the face of this retreat, however. On several curriculum issues — the introduction of testing, the protection of the education of children with special needs, and on the need to have an overall framework to resist the Tory onslaught — the left won the Conference vote. Even on Baker, an amendment moved by a delegate from Coventry, calling on Labour Local Authorities to refuse to implement the provisions of the Baker Act, was passed.

The leadership had come to Conference having tried to stem the tide of militancy by taking action against the leadership of the Inner London Teachers' Association. There is no doubt, however, that the stronger Associations throughout the country will continue to fight Baker, and the campaign will go on.

The NUT leadership have no political answers to the battles ahead. They face a strong, organised left, which will be arguing for a strong campaign

This amendment, from Coventry and Thameside, on Labour Councils and the Baker Act was passed at NUT Conference. Use it as a model resolution!
Conference welcomes the declared opposition to the Secretary of State's proposals on pay and conditions from Labour Party spokespersons at both national and local level.

We call on all local authorities, particularly Labour authorities, to refuse to implement the provisions of the Act, and to refuse to take any punitive or disciplinary action against teachers arising from the Act.

Marc Wadsworth, speaking at the STA fringe meeting, expressed Black Section's solidarity with the ILTA 8 and associated the struggle of the Black Section 3 with them.

No matter who wins the election:



Photo: Paul D. Viola *Scottish Assembly Rooms*

For a Scottish Assembly!

Despite Labour's commitment to devolution and the central role of a Scottish assembly in creating jobs and expanding the Scottish economy the Party is still not *campaigning* on the Assembly, nor explaining what Labour will *do* in the Assembly.

Small wonder that Labour has fallen 8% in opinion polls in Scotland over the last month, with 4% gains by both SNP and the Alliance.

By Gordon Morgan
Glasgow Central CLP

However, Labour still has the support of 39% of those polled with the Tories only on 18%. The Tories are increasingly likely to be reduced to a handful of Scottish seats, whilst commanding a majority at Westminster.

Scottish *Labour Briefing* held a Dayschool on April 4th to discuss how to prepare for such an eventuality whilst still fighting for a Labour victory.

The attendance at the School was disappointing, which may reflect the Labour establishment's unwillingness to discuss the possibility of defeat. However, the discussions were instructive and many practical initiatives were proposed.

The lead speaker was Denis Canavan who outlined a strategy for setting up an unofficial Assembly whilst Labour MPs disrupted Westminster. Denis also indicated that though the present proposals represented an improvement over those of 1979, they still offer inadequate control over industry and the economy to deal effectively with multinationals such as Caterpillar.

Marion Davies from Labour CND noted that with more than 50 American bases, Scotland was virtually an occupied territory. As the proposed Assembly would have no powers over defence it would be impossible to remove these bases by legislation without a further strengthening of Assembly powers. It was, however, felt that the Assembly could force a change of energy policy away from nuclear towards coal and hydro power.

The afternoon sessions concentrated on the more genral attitude of socialists to Scottish Nationalism. Gunter Minnerup took the view that the resurgent nationalism in the peripheral regions within the advanced industrial states of Europe (e.g. Ireland, Basque Country, Wales, Scotland) was almost always progressive and contained a socialist dynamic.

George Kerevan pointed out that the accretion of power to Westminster under Thatcher was no accident. Mercantile capital had benefited at the expense of industrial capital, and further centralisation of power would accompany another Thatcher victory. Strong national movements in Scotland and Ireland are threats to the entire capitalist state.

The following proposals were made:

- pass resolutions demanding a vigorous Labour Party campaign on the Assembly;
- integrate the Assembly campaign with other campaigns and say what the Assembly will do;
- pressure local MPs to support setting up an Assembly even if Labour lose and to make their views known to the Scottish Executive;
- demand the NEC give the Scottish Executive control of the Scottish secretariat and apparatus;
- participate in the campaign for a Scottish Assembly;
- resurrect the Labour campaign for an Assembly.

It is hoped to produce a pamphlet based on the debate along with other contributions and to hold further schools throughout Scotland.

Fight th

As Labour Party members throughout the country swing into action for the local elections on May 7th, the Labour Party leadership seem determin d to persist in their efforts to shoot the campaign in the foot.

This is not an easy task, but they must be congratulated on the gusto with which they've approached the task.

The Tories have devastated local government since they came to office in 1979. Ratecapping and privatisation have reduced services in many areas to an all-time low. It's difficult to see how Labour could fail to make substantial gains in these elections, but the right wing are doing their best to make sure that we lose.

Instead of concentrating on fighting the Tories, they have chosen to start a witch-hunt against black comrades in the Party, attacking Sharon Atkin in Nottingham East and Cllr Phillip Murphy in Birmingham for supporting Black Sections. Further action against Black Sections activists in the Party has been promised.

The right wing, including the Party leadership, are clearly prepared to throw away all chances of victory in the local elections and in the general election in order to persue their vendetta against the left.

The scenario runs like this: Party leadership, aided by the media, scream "loony lefties", no effective election campaign, Labour loses the local elections and the general election. The right immediately places all blame for the election defeat on the left, and opens the way for a witch-hunt of massive dimensions.

No way does the present Labour leadership want to enter office, and be forced to confront capital. They are

Leeds Cou

Low key path

Since 1980 George Mudie, the Labour leader of Leeds District Council, has pursued a low-profile policy of steady expansion based on rate increases and borrowing.

By Cllr Garth Frankland
Leeds

At each election George Mudie has been able to point to new libraries established, new nurseries, new sports centres, and increased provision for the elderly. This has been combined with steady progress on equal opportunities both in local authority employment and in the schools.

A low-key election campaign is being conducted with both Labour and the Tories ignoring the Alliance who are the only Party likely to make gains. Labour will still be the majority party after May 7th, yet Leeds District Labour Party is in crisis and George Mudie is hitting out at any display of political independence.

The Group Leader organised a coup to prevent the left keeping control of the District Party. His faction took the

Democracy and Birmingham DLP

Labour Party Head Office, in the form of Director of Organisation Joyce Gould, has closed down Birmingham District Labour Party (BDLP).

The functions of the BDLP have been put in the hands of the West Midlands Regional Organiser. In a letter to constituencies in Birmingham Gould said that the decision had been taken because of the "unconstitutional position" of the BDLP, which she said was no longer "representative" of the whole Party in Birmingham.

An Annual General Meeting is to be convened in April by the West Midlands regional organiser if, as the letter states, "administratively and constitutionally possible". A policy conference for the May 7th elections is supposed to follow soon after the AGM (presumably on May 6th!).

The "unconstitutional position" of the BDLP arises from the decision by four constituencies (Northfield, Small Heath, Sparkbrook and Yardley) to withdraw their delegations and from the non-participation of the Birmingham Labour Group.

By John Wilton
PPC, Birmingham East
(personal capacity)

The reason given for this move was the presence of Bob Whitehead as a BDLP Management Committee delegate from Selly Oak CLP. However, Bob Whitehead's delegation was withdrawn in February.

Edgbaston CLP has twice written to Joyce Gould concerning the problems in BDLP. The last occasion was in February, following the withdrawal of Bob Whitehead's delegation, when a resolution was sent calling for the NEC to ensure that the BDLP received necessary support and that Northfield, Small Heath, Sparkbrook and Yardley CLPs play their full and proper part in it.

Edgbaston also requested that the NEC supported BDLP holding a Policy Conference and that, following consultation between the BDLP and the Labour Group, a statement of Election Policy be published in line with Policy Conference decisions.

Edgbaston CLP has received no reply to either of its letters. As far as we are aware neither the letters nor the resolution has gone before the NEC or any NEC sub-committee, as was requested.

At its April General Committee meeting, Edgbaston CLP passed unanimously a resolution requesting clarification from the NEC of the constitutional grounds upon which the letter suspending the BDLP is based.

Constitutionally the BDLP Annual General Meeting is supposed to be held in May. Head Office know that, and so do the Labour Group. It is argued that the NEC can override that.

However, I fail to understand how even the NEC can take such a decision if the matter of the BDLP has never come before it. It is interesting that Joyce Gould's letter never once refers to the NEC, let alone any decision it may have taken.

What all this fixing is about is getting a newly formed BDLP with delegations packed by the right wing. Then a policy conference will be held and a statement of Election Policy for the Birmingham City Council elections on May 7th published, in line with the politics of the right wing in the Labour Group.

Last year the Labour Group walked out on the BDLP and published its own policy as the Party's manifesto for the local elections. Even Labour Party Head Office wasn't happy with that course of action!

This year different means have been adopted to achieve the same ends.

Action outside the constitution of the Party is what this is all about: not by the "left", as is being claimed, but by the "right". Perhaps we should ask for these actions to be referred to the National Constitutional Committee?

It appears that even the NEC has been by-passed by the "right" on this occasion. Secret groupings making telephone calls around Birmingham, and to London, have managed to persuade some people at Labour Party Head Office to ignore completely the Party constitution. Even the closing down of Liverpool, and the subsequent enquiry there, was at least instigated after a vote on the NEC.

There were absolutely no grounds for the four Birmingham constituencies to continue to with-hold their delegations from the BDLP. There were absolutely no gounds for the continuing non-attendance of the majority of the Labour Group.

There can be only one reason behind the actions of Head Office in suspending BDLP and that is to ensure that the control of the Party's local election manifesto rests with the Labour Group. Authoritarian unconstitutional manoeuvering has been used to ensure that the majority of the District Party is ignored once again.

In order to keep their own little power bases some people within the Labour Group are prepared to over-ride the Party's constitution, with the assistance of Labour Party Head Office. And they call *us* undemocratic!

Closing down BDLP at this time is an act of gross stupidity. We are in the middle of local election campaigns and in the run-up to a General Election. It has to be asked if right wingers really want to win a General Election, or are they merely interested in maintaining their own positions?

Those of us who are out knocking on doors every day of the week can tell them it is vital we win. We can also tell them that people are not concerned about Convention Centres, road races, Olympic bids, and the other gimmicks so loved by the majority of the Birmingham Labour Group.

People are concerned about decent houses, housing repairs, decent schools, education for their children, day nurseries and so on.

Finally, just in case it is of any interest to Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley, people on the doorstep are not impressed by Roy Hattersley talking to 250 bankers at a lunch at the Mansion House in London recently and reassuring them that we are going to be economically "prudent". People on the doorstep are not impressed either by roses and Labour Party spokesmen (and they are overwhelmingly men) resembling Tory bankers in press launches in London.

They want a decent NHS, decent schools for their children, decent homes to live in, and jobs to go to. And if that means stuffing the rich Tory bankers and the like, they are quite prepared to see us do that!

The witch-hunt and campaigning in local government elections

...e Tories!

only confident to take office if they will be allowed to tinker cosmetically with capital — as their predecessors have done. For that, they need to crush the left, the force in the Party that continually pushes for a Labour government to act in the interests of working people.

They have decided that losing a few elections is the price they have to pay in order to achieve the eradication of the left and the re-moulding of the Labour Party in their own bankrupt image, and they're prepared to pay it.

There is no doubt that the Labour Party leadership is actively looking towards a coalition with the Alliance as a road to office. To prepare the ground, they have to get rid of the left, and all the "left" conference policies. Once you've done that, the Labour Party you're left with is remarkably close to the Alliance's own image!

The effect of these tactics upon grassroots Party members, the people who will face the hard slog of canvassing and leafletting, has been one of massive demoralisation. Up and down the country local parties are finding it harder and harder to instil enthusiasm and get people onto the streets for the election. Members are asking themselves what point there is in working for Labour when the Party leadership persists in stabbing them in the back.

Briefing has looked at local election campaigns in several different areas. Everywhere, the picture is the same — District Parties and CLPs in disarray and confusion, forced to divert effort from elections campaigning in order to defend themselves.

We must make sure that the blame for this is placed firmly where it belongs — on the shoulders of the right wing.

On these pages, *Briefing* prints a selection of articles from around the country.



PHOTO: John Chapman

Which people is Neil "putting first"? He doesn't seem to sure...

ncil elections to disaster

Chair in the largest ever AGM by 120 votes to 80, then raised the quorum from 25 to 50 delegates.

Mudie was then able to prevent the endorsement of the local government manifesto which was the product of 12 months work by Councillors and District Party delegates. This means the election will be fought with politics kept to a minimum, leaving Labour open to Alliance attack.

Behind these manoeuvres lies the right's real dilemma: how to deal with the left after Kinnock loses a general election against the most unpopular government since World War II.

The large scale loans, the constant reorganisation of local government workers, the failure to confront the Tories in solidarity with Liverpool and the London boroughs — all will come home to roost along with the massive rate increases needed to cover loans from international bankers.

The left, organised in an independent Campaign Group (of which *Labour Briefing* is an active component), is fighting back. We will ensure that a proper socialist alternative is built in Leeds.

Briefing threatened for attacking all-white selections

***Briefing* supporters in Coventry have been threatened with legal action by the Chair of Coventry Labour Party.**

Coventry Council is Labour-controlled, but in a city with a large Black community there are *no* Black Labour councillors and *no* Black Labour candidates standing in the Council elections in May.

Coventry *Labour Briefing* printed an article about the Municipal Panel, from which Labour's local election candidates are drawn, stating that "not one of the Black comrades interviewed was judged an acceptable candidate for the local elections".

The letter sent by solicitors acting on behalf of Bill Lapworth, Chair of Coventry Labour Party, alleges that Coventry *Briefing* has knowingly lied.

Certainly a number of Black comrades were amongst those nominated by affiliated Party organisations for the Municipal Panel. Nominees were then interviewed by the District Party Executive which produced its recommendations for ratification by the District Party.

No Black comrades were put on the Panel as of right. *None* was considered — as District Party officers put it — to have enough "knowledge and experience" to be ready for selection by a Ward party.

Two Black members, both of considerable political experience, were excluded from the Panel entirely. Five more Black members were among fourteen people "included" on the Panel only on the condition that they attended a "Local Government Course" from which they would apparently gain the necessary "knowledge and experience".

By a Coventry *Briefing* supporter

Many Party members believe that the organisation of this course made it very difficult to achieve the necessary acceptance for the Panel from the District Party.

The lack of Black councillors and potential candidates is a symptom of a much deeper malaise in Coventry and in the Labour Party nationally. Coventry Council has failed to pay serious attention to discrimination and racial attacks in the City. Nationally, the Party leadership is launching a witch-hunt against Black Sections and their supporters.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that Black people are not putting themselves forward as potential councillors. This situation will not change while Black candidates are subjected to the kind of hurdles set up by Coventry District Party.

We should be fighting against racism and in favour of autonomous organisation for Black people in the Party — not saying that Black people don't have the "necessary experience" to represent Labour.

Brighton Council elections

The "Liverpool of the South East"?

Brighton Labour Party expects to maintain control of Brighton Council on May 7th.

For the last year we have had to rely on the Chair's casting vote. We hope to establish a proper Council majority by winning back seats lost to the SDP and the Tories in the aftermath of the Malvinas War.

The Tories are trying to shore up their vote by labelling Brighton as the "Liverpool of the South-east".

Christopher Chope MP, Under Secretary for the Department of the Environment, refused to meet our Finance Chair Richard Stanton because of his support for Irish freedom.

To its credit, the Labour Group stood firm and refused to meet Chope without Richard present, forcing even the Liberals to criticise Chope's decision.

Unfortunately, the witch-hunting atmosphere in the Labour Party and Hewitt's use of the offensive term "loony left" only assists such Tory attacks.

Ratecapped

Brighton Council was ratecapped for the first time in 1986 and the council bought time through creative accounting. *Labour Briefing* supporters will argue that the Council should stick to the Party's policy of "No cuts, no rent rises, no massive rate rises and no privatisation."

By Bryn Griffiths Brighton Labour Party

We will be promoting candidates for the Labour Group leadership who are committed to following Party policy and will be calling for a recorded ballot at the Group AGM to facilitate greater accountability.

Those interested in Brighton Council should write off for *Brighton Labour Briefing's* "Local Government Special" Send 30p and a stamped addressed envelope to 35 Quebec Street, Brighton.


BRIGHTON LABOUR BRIEFING
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WHY BRIGHTON LABOUR BRIEFING?
BRIGHTON LABOUR BRIEFING
LAUNCH MEETING

The first Brighton Labour Briefing

South Wales

Lessons of "moderation"

The attack on the "loony left" in London diverts attention from the damage being done by the right wing of the movement: Callaghan's regular pr-election speech on defence, the failure of "moderate" right wing local authorities to fight the cuts.

Labour-controlled South Glamorgan County Council is not only implementing Tory cuts, but is unapologetically justifying them. They have decided to close one of the best and most popular comprehensive schools in Cardiff, situated in the most marginal constituency in Cardiff, top of the Alliance list of target seats.

The Alliance were very active in the campaign against closure of the school. They are able to present themselves as defenders of local services. We know this is losing votes.

This is the moderate, "sensible" face of the Labour Party. This "moderation" threatens to lose us the election.

Building Briefing

500 Club Winner

We stay in London for the 500 Club Lucky Draw prize winner this issue. Congratulations to the holder of lucky number 250: Councillor Tim Barnett — Lewisham's first winner!

Like many *Briefing* supporters, Tim's been entering the 500 Club almost since the start. But it's not too late to join! Simply fill in the standing order form below, send it off, and sit back! Of course, you'll have to keep reading *Briefing* each fortnight to see if you've won... But what better way of supporting the paper you read so often!

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Briefing Women and **International Briefing** can be contacted c/o 26 Crofton Road, London SE5.
Briefing Steering Committee: Sunday May 3rd.
Deadline for articles for issue no. 43: notify EB by Friday, May 1st, articles in by Wednesday May 6th

EVENTS

SAT APR 25
★**Benefit** for LWI/SWSC School (see June). Disco at Lambeth Social club (downstairs in Brixton Town Hall, entrance Acre Lane) 8 till late, with bar extension, raffle & light refreshments. £3/£1.50 (unwaged). Disabled access.

SAT APR 25
★**CND/Friends of the Earth**, March for a Nuclear Free Britain! 11am, Victoria Embankment, WC2; rally 2pm, Hyde Park.

SAT MAY 2
★**Bike Ride**, Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign. London to Oxford, finishing at Oxford Poly, gig in the evening.

★**Hangers march**, support the locked-out limbfitters, Roehampton-to Putney (though we hope it won't be necessary!). Assemble Roehampton Lane, W15, 10.30am, march to Bishop's Park, for rally 1pm. Details: Steve Blease 01 646 0260.

★National **Demonstration for Lesbian and Gay Rights**, Haringey. Sponsored by Positive Images, c/o Reading Matters, Lymington Ave, London N22.

SUN MAY 3
★*Briefing* **Teachers' Group**. Contact Anne Potter, 01-274 3551.

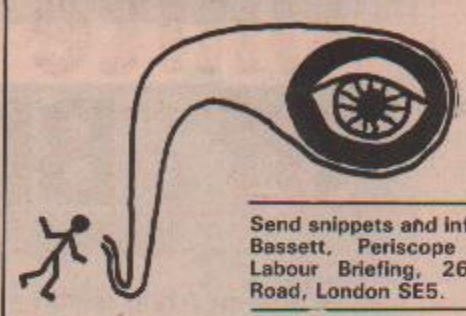
WED MAY 6
★Meeting for *Briefing* supporters in **NALGO**. 6.30pm, County Hall.

SUN MAY 24
★Lesbians & Gays ***Laying Down the Law*** Conference. Details: LCLGR, 01 226 1097.

SAT JUN 27
★**Lesbian & Gay Pride Week** carnival.

SAT/SUN JUN 20/21
★**Sisterhood & Solidarity**: towards an anti-imperialist & anti-racist women's labour movement. LWI/SWSC weekend school, Camden Town Hall.

Periscope



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

At the feet of Clay?

Bemused and angry health union members could be forgiven for believing that it was a public relations blunder by **NUPE** and **COHSE** that allowed the **Royal College of Nursing** to grab the limelight and pose as pacesetters on nurses' pay.

Nobody has done more to hold down nurses' pay than the RCN, with its anti-union stance and the inbuilt no-strike clause in its constitution which so delights NHS management.

But compared to the stony silence from COHSE and NUPE leaders, RCN chief **Trevor Clay** sounded like a red revolutionary when he called for a £1,000 a year minimum increase for nurses.

Why? In **COHSE's** case, the cock-up theory seems well-founded. But **NUPE** chief **Tom Sawyer** took a conscious decision to stay silent. Offered the chance of a parliamentary debate around which NUPE could air its views on nurses' pay, Sawyer replied that now was "not the right time" to raise the temperature on public sector pay!

As one NUPE activist put it: "NUPE under Sawyer has gone from low profile to no profile."

Comrade Charles?

Talking of "broad popular alliances", what could be broader or more popular than a link-up between the Stalinist-led white collar union TASS (General Secretary **Ken "Jaruzelski" Gill**) and the British monarchy?

This mind-blowing coalition — one in the eye for Ron Todd, who only recruited the Queen Mother, but has not involved her in any campaigns — has apparently got together — on the political programme of the monarchy.

The March edition of the TASS *News and Journal* proclaims in a banner headline:

"TASS and Prince Charles say BACK NEW AIRBUS."

A breathlessly excited lead article hammered home the point:

"Prince Charles says Europe's Airbus is a winner, TASS knows Airbus is a winner, the aircraft's US rivals know Airbus is a winner."

Who can resist this combination! Apparently only Margaret Thatcher:

"The British government won't invest in our share of the new Airbus generation."

Why should TASS worry? If Prince Charles really supports the TASS line, perhaps there is an easier answer than trying to persuade Thatcher to change her mind.

Why not get him to tap his mum — the world's richest individual — for a few hundred million quid to sponsor "our share" and get the project off the ground?

Comrade Thatcher?

While Charles and Diana graced the pages of the British TASS journal, the Russian Tass newsagency was wetting its knickers in excitement over the gracious visit of **Margaret Thatcher** to the USSR.

Even the Tory leader's most slavish British press entourage only presented selected highlights from the tedious exchanges between her and Gorbachev.

For real Thatcher fans, the only source of the full text of her outpourings was the hard-line Stalinist publication *Soviet Weekly*.

A whole tedious page was turned over to the unabridged, riveting speech she gave at the Kremlin dinner on March 30th. Periscope has learned that copies of the April 4th edition of *SW* are still available.

Perhaps *Soviet Weekly* will now follow up with regular reprints of Tory Central Office press releases: and with Gorbachev plainly rooting for a Tory victory in the next election, perhaps the Kremlin's turgid organ will go on to serialise the collected works of Norman Tebbit?

Standard mistakes

How could they have got so much so wrong?

That was the question knowledgeable leftists were asking about the recent vicious witch-hunting feature on Hillingdon *Briefing* supporters in the London *Standard*.

Standard staff witch-hunter **Richard Littlejohn** had plainly done little work on the finished article, which appeared to be assembled form a job-lot ragbag of prejudices and hearsay from a none-too-well informed source.

Better informed circles are now pointing the finger of suspicion at GMBATU official **Paul Kenny** as the most likely origin of this story. Recently Kenny was witnessed nosing around among NUPE and other union officials covering the West London area, asking questions as far afield as Hammersmith & Fulham while he compiled a dossier on left wing activists.

Maybe as a true amateur, Kenny did all this for the love of it: but if any money changed hands in return for the hand-me-down fabrications published in the *Standard*, Littlejohn would be justified in demanding a refund!

Flying doctors

A new "rotary club" for high-flying consultants has been suggested — in the form of a £1m helicopter landing-pad on the top of the London Hospital, Whitechapel.

The "pilot" scheme is the brainchild of consultant surgeon Alistair Wilson, who points out that:

"Ambulances are unsuitable in serious accidents because roads are often blocked with traffic."

Very true: but the cuts in London's ambulance service have already meant patients waiting up to 6 hours for a one and a half mile ambulance transfer from Whitechapel to Mile End. How long would you wait for a helicopter?

The cost would be sky-high, and the scheme seems designed for rich yuppies dropping in for private treatment, or for consultants thinking of hopping from Whitechapel to private practice elsewhere.

But don't get too wound up about it: according to a health authority member the plan is still "up in the air".

WRP's Flying Circus?

A Brixton telephone box has been provisionally booked as the venue for an "international conference" to be convened later this year by the Workers' Revolutionary Party (Workers' Press).

After belatedly booting out their rapist General Secreatry **Gerry Healy** 18 months ago, arrogant survivors from the old Healy leadership have regarded themselves as the key to the "reorganisation" of the Trotskyist Fourth International.

In January they issued a call for an international conference, appealing to "all Trotskyist organisations" to participate, and for "all organisations which agree with this call" to join a committee to organise the conference.

It was clear from the start that the main object of the exercise was to link up the WRP with one other current — the Argentina-based International Workers League, whose unsavoury representative in Britain **Leon Perez** quickly became a key figure in the WRP head office.

But when a number of organisations from Britain and from as far afield as Italy and the USA took the WRP at their word and arrived for the first planning meeting on April 11th they found the doors closed — and a range of flimsy pretexts used to exclude them.

Still all was not well inside the inner sanctum, where chief WRP hack **Cliff Slaughter** promptly fell out with Perez, who demanded a *majority* of votes on the new committee if he were to take part!

The meeting broke up with the deadlock unresolved, and the "conference" projecting a shambles.

Disgruntled sectarians marched off in different directions, each with their own schemes for hunting the unicorn of a definitive "world conference" that would prove *their* current correct, and refute all opponents.

Slaughter was left to fume in frustration — knowing that if Healy were still around he would have stage-managed the crazy affair a lot better!

Don't call us...

Does your Party need help paying its phone bill?

You could try approaching one of the Labour MPs who have bought shares in British Telecom. Three are named by the Labour Research Department.

Betty Boothroyd, MP for West Bromwich, denies buying the shares. **George Foulkes**, MP for Carrick, says "the information is not exactly accurate. It doesn't refer to me personally; it's a matter for the family."

Ted Leadbitter, MP for Hartlepool, is your best bet for a sub. He described it as a "good investment". *D.C.*

Health care under the hammer

Health campaigners who argued that privatisation of hospital ancillary services meant handing over patient care to "Arthur Daley"-type contract employers have been proved more correct than expected.

The biggest firm holding NHS contracts, the giant Hawley Group which owns Crothalls and Mediclean, has just conformed to the Daley stereotype by buying up British Car Auctions, the major car auction network, for £196m.

It seems likely they will put considerably more effort into polishing up their range of jalopies than Hawley's low-paid employees are able to put into cleaning our hospitals.

Let's hope the health authorities don't wind up buying second-hand ambulances from this outfit!

Letters

Write to 26, Crofton Road, London SE5.

Other issues involved

Dear *Briefing*,

I'm not at all knowledgeable about mental handicap, but it seems to me that Sue Arnall (letters, last *Briefing*) overlooks some important issues.

Those who currently look after "Jeanette" feel sterilisation is best because Jeanette cannot use other forms of contraception reliably. They make many points about how "inadequate" a mother she would be. Sue makes better points about how someone who cannot take meaningful decisions on contraception cannot take any more meaningful a decision about the abortion possibility that Jane Kelly leaves her with.

However, how can someone in these positions take a meaningful decision about having sex at all? Jeanette, we are told (for this is the reason for the sterilisation), has a mental age of around 5. What other five year old do we know who could take a meaningful decision about having sex?

The point is we are here talking about *heterosexual* sex, since this is the only form that leads to needing contraception! I am not convinced any five year old female mind can take — in the form of society we have at the moment — meaningful decisions about heterosexual sex.

Sue says Jeanette may well have a right to "free enjoyable sexuality without fear of pregnancy": sexuality, yes — but the kind of sexual activity that might lead to pregnancy is what we're talking about here. Heterosexual sex with a possibility of conceiving for a five year "old" female would mean sex with a much older man. Can a five year old judge the motives of such an older man? Cope with the emotional demands the average man makes? The oppressive qualities of even a right-on "socialist" man? It's difficult enough at 25!

They tell us at the moment not to go round having "free, enjoyable" sex anyway, but to have free, enjoyable *safe* sex. If Jeanette cannot chose her own contraception and use it, are we to chose sterilisation for her and give her no help with chosing how "safe" she wishes her sex life to be?

(This may be topical, but I think it holds in general — other things were around before AIDS.)

The telling point for me is that Jeanette was in institutional care, neared eighteen, was due to leave it, and was showing signs of "sexuality". In the current climate of "community care", no one could guarantee what kind of resources would be available to look after Jeanette, and at least they'd better sterilise her quickly while she was still a minor.

The really worrying point about that is less the sex side, but if Jeanette might wander into a sexual encounter because of lack of care, what else might she wander into? Any five year "old" who could wander into a "free, enjoyable sexual encounter" could, I would think, wander into anything from the road to any one of many more unsavoury encounters.

If, instead of being left to Thatcher-style community care, Jeanette lived in a real home — her "natural" one or not, nuclear-family based or not — where those who loved her could give her the kind of protection and care any such mentally handicapped person deserves, perhaps there would be people around who could work with her to facilitate a free enjoyable sexuality in every sense.

It's not an exceptional request. There are many women around who have relied on the support of others — parents, relatives, friends, professionals — in all aspects of establishing sexual relationships. If this is the kind of support Jeanette needs, why can't she have it? I don't think I'm insisting on "caretakers watching Jeanette's social life, supervising her contraception and forcing her to have an abortion when they fail", but for different kind of attitude to the people behind the mental handicap.

What do comrades think?

In sisterhood,

Jenny Fisher,

Tower Hamlets, London

Who's leaving what meeting?

Black Sections are once again under attack from the right wing in Birmingham Labour Party.

Councillor Phillip Murphy has been suspended, and will probably be expelled by the Labour Group on Birmingham Council. His crime? Leaving a Labour Group meeting without permission.

By Richard Hatcher
Sandwell Branch, Birmingham Ladywood CLP

The real reason behind the suspension is not that Cllr Murphy left the meeting (many councillors leave meetings without permission!), but that he left it in order to attend a public meeting called by Black Sections, at which Linda Bellos and Sharon Atkin were speaking.

Phillip Murphy is an active campaigner in support of Black Sections in Birmingham, and this is why he is being victimised.

The left must mobilise in support of the Black Sections activists. Cllr Murphy's ward party, Sandwell, have already passed a resolution fully supporting him and calling on the Labour Group to withdraw disciplinary proceedings.

Together with the officers of Ladywood CLP they are circulating a petition and have organised a lobby of the Labour Group. They have also requested a meeting with Dick Knowles, leader of the Labour Group, in order to put the Black Sections case.

In taking this action just before the local elections, the right wing on Birmingham Labour Group have demonstrated their contempt for Black Labour voters.

Statement

Black Sections

The following statement was issued by the Labour Party Black Section after their meeting on Sunday, April 19th.

The Labour Party Black Section National Committee declare our opposition to any disciplinary action being taken against Black Sections supporters or any other socialist in the Party. We will fight any such action vigorously by launching a national campaign involving the Black community and supporters in the labour movement to defend anyone removed as a Parliamentary candidate suspended or expelled.

We are appalled at press reports that the NEC intends to remove Sharon Atkin as PPC for Nottingham East, and expel councillors Phil Murphy and Linda Bellos.

We declare our full backing for these comrades and reaffirm our support for the right of Black people to hold meetings, organise together, and speak anywhere in the country where they are invited.

We are committed to a Labour victory at the next election and will continue to make demands on the Party — and have as much a right to do so as all other members — to ensure that anti-racist, socialist policies in tune with our community's needs and aspirations are reflected in the manifesto.

Statement

The following statement has been issued by Nottingham East CLP.

Nottingham East CLP reaffirms its commitment to the right of Black people to organise in Black Sections within the Labour Party.

This is not a form of apartheid, but a means of drawing Black people into the Party and giving them a voice in the same way as Women's Sections and the LPYS act to draw in women and youth into the Party.

Nottingham East CLP is appalled at the resolution passed by the Labour Party NEC on March 25th attacking Black Sections and threatening to mount a witch-hunt against Black people struggling to establish a political voice.

Furthermore, we are disgusted by the letter which appeared in the *Times* from Roy Hattersley, Jeff Rooker and others, which declared Birmingham a no-go area for Black activists.

We consider that the highly-publicised attacks on Black activists cause serious damage to the electoral prospects of the Labour Party and in particular of our candidate Sharon Atkin.

Media coverage indicates that the NEC is now preparing to take action against Sharon Atkin for exercising her right to speak on issues affecting black people to an audience of black and white people in Birmingham on April 7th.

Nottingham East CLP democratically selected Sharon Atkin as PPC because of her vigorous support for socialist policies — campaigning for Black people, the low-paid, lesbians and gays, sacked miners, pensioners and all those who are victims of Tory policies. The CLP reaffirms its support for our PPC and rejects any attempts at interference in the democratic processes of our Party.

Unite in defence of Black Sections!

By Anita Patel

● Sharon Atkin is threatened with deselection, although there is not one jot of evidence that her selection is unconstitutional.

● Linda Bellos and Phil Murphy are threatened with disciplinary action, possibly expulsion from the Party, for speaking at a meeting which Hattersley decided he didn't want to take place in "his" consituency.

It appears that the Labour leadership, both Kinnock and Hattersley, would rather *lose* seats where there are Black candidates, than accept the rights of Black people to work out how best to fight the racism in the Party and society at large.

This is despite the fact that there are at present *no* Black MPs. The left cannot sit back and allow this to happen.

The defence of Black Sections, its leadership and activists is of the utmost importance. It is not simply an attack against individuals who have spoken out and organised against the racism of the Party, but an attack on the whole of the left: *and the whole of the left must respond.*

All those who voted for Black Sections, all the constituency activists, all the trade unions and MPs must now rally in their defence.

A national initiative to co-ordinate the defence of Black Sections against the threatened disciplinary action is needed — a Campaign in Defence of Black Sections. It should be sponsored by the CLPs whose members are under attack — Nottingham East, Birmingham, Ladywell and Norwood (Lambeth) — and also by the Campaign Group of MPs, Trade Unions who voted for Black Sections such as the NUM, NUPE, ACTTS , other Black PPCs and other CLPs with Black Sections.

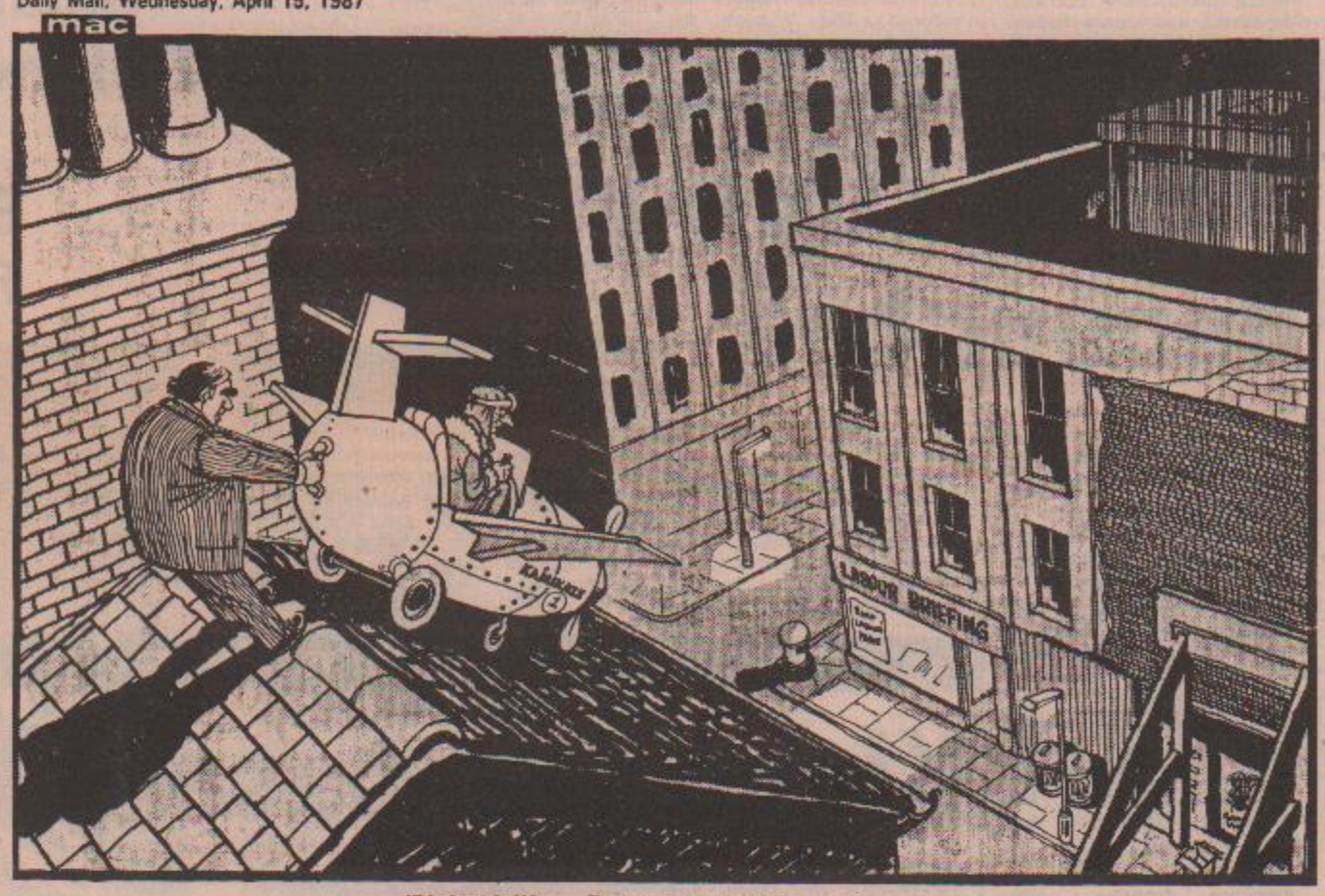
There should be public meetings in Nottingham and Birmingham and a London rally with speakers from the Black Section leadership, including those under attack, from the Campaign Group, and from Black campaigns in the community such as Broadwater Farm, Trevor Monnerville Campaign, etc.

A lobby of the April 29th NEC should be organised. It should be built in the CLPs, Black Sections and trade unions, but particularly amongst Black activists in the labour movement and in community campaigns.

Finally, there should be a campaign of resolutions to the NEC in support of the activists and the rights of Black Sections, and with copies sent to Black Sections (address of National Secretary: 47 Queens Road, London SW19 8NP).

● Defend Black Sections!
● Defend the right of Self-organisation!

Daily Mail, Wednesday, April 15, 1987



'Right Neil? — For the sake of the party . . .'

We don't usually "quote" cartoons from the gutter press, but this one is so accurate as to be almost funny. When is Kinnock going to turn his silly machine round and aim at the Tories?

"Kamikaze" headlines hit the roof!

Wandering into King's Cross station bookshop early on Tuesday morning after the last issue of *Briefing*, I was confronted by a row of papers, emblazoned with the headline "Kamikaze Kinnock".

I blinked a few times.

Had our distributors persuaded W.H. Smiths to stock *Briefing*? (It was very early in the morning).

No: the *Daily Mail* had pinched our headline!

By Jane Prust
Deptford CLP

Fuming at this breach of copyright, I investigated further. Holding the *Mail* at arm's length (unfortunately I was forced to purchase a copy), I could see that we had, in fact, been credited. Underneath the headline were the words "courtesy of *Labour Briefing*".

Further reasearch revealed that our headline had been taken up in almost all of the daily papers, with articles in *Today*, the *Guardian*, The *Independent*, the *Telegraph*, the *"Scum"*, and even (respectability at last!) — the *Financial Times*!

The accompanying articles made for hilarious reading, with their total disregard for the truth — and total lack of grammar.

According to the *Sun* "the paper used to be edited by former GLC leader Ken Livingstone": not true — Ken Livingstone has never occupied that position in *Briefing*.

The *Daily Mail* described our article as "the most treacherous attack Neil Kinnock has ever endured from his own Party", and declares that "the hunt is on for the source."

Even funnier was the Labour Party's response to the attacks. A Labour Party spokesperson was quoted in *Today* as saying "This is an entirely unimportant publication produced by a handful of people who represent nobody."

Strange, immediately previous to this the article states that "*Labour Briefing* is distributed ... up and down Britain." We sell an awful lot of copies for a paper which represents nobody...

Of course, Walworth Road couldn't respond in any other way, because they have no answers to the questions we are asking.

Their only answer is to launch a witch-hunt against the left. They are unable to reply otherwise, because they fear a debate in which the bankruptcy of their politics and the logic of their current activities would be revealed.

Briefing reflects a growing feeling in the rank and file of the Labour Party, who are no longer content to sit back and watch the Party leadership jettison Party policy as it suits them, and a feeling among Labour voters in the electorate, who are desperate for an alternative to Thatcherism.

We, want a Labour victory in the general election. We will do all in our power to fight for it. Unfortunately, it appears that Kinnock & Co. are prepared to sacrifice our chances; and are more interested in attacking us, our supporters and most of the labour movement rank and file.

Lesbian and Gay Rights campaigns

Lesbian and gay rights in Haringey:

Be there on May 2nd!

The furore over Haringey Council's Positive Images policy rages on.

The homophobic Parents' Rights Group, having repeatedly split and reformed, continue to mobilise against Labour's lesbian and gay rights commitments.

The Tories have started a new petitioning campaign on the streets.

Nationally, a backlash against lesbians and gay men is underway. Bill Brownhill and James Anderton feel safe to make provocative comments about "gassing the gays". Attacks on lesbian and gay communities are on the increase.

The Labour leadership, instead of taking a principled stand, appear to be backtracking on Conference commitments with the leaked Hewitt letter blaming "the lesbian and gay issue" for losing votes in the Greenwich by-election.

Far right groupings, like the Moonie-linked New Patriotic Movement, and known fascists

By Mandy Mudd
Tottenham CLP
Haringey Labour Briefing

have been involved in the mobilisations in Haringey. Youth wearing swastikas are regularly present in the public gallery at the Council Chamber. Positive Imges supporters have been subjected to verbal and physical harassment.

Despite threats and intimidation, Positive Images has continued to organise. We are mobilising for a national demonstration in Haringey on May 2nd. This is being organised jointly with Haringey Black Action, a group of local Black people committed to raising the issue of Lesbian and Gay liberation in the Black community and to exposing the racist forces behind those organising against lesbians and gay men.

Through our joint work the brief of Positive Iamges has widened. The "Smash the Backlash" May 2nd demonstration, with its slogans "lesbians and gays fight back", "black lesbians and gays fight back", and "fight bigotry, fight racism" goes far beyond basic support for Positive images of lesbians and gay men.

We want a *show of strength* on the streets of Hairngey — a clear indication that we will stand and fight for lesbian and gay liberation as an integral part four struggle for socialism.

We will demonstrate that we stand against the racists and bigots and oppose their reactionary ideas.

We're calling for a *national* mobilisation because what's happening in Haringey is part of a *national* backlash against lesbians and gay men.

Make sure that your CLP, trade union, ward or section is there on May 2nd. Bring your banners and assemble on Ducketts Common, Turnpike Lane underground, London, at 1pm. This march should be a celebration of our strength and by being there yourself you are making it easier for other people to be there as well.

Haringey Labour Briefing
urges all socialists to attend

National demonstration for Lesbian and Gay Rights Haringey, May 2nd, 1pm

Called and organised by
HARINGEY BLACK ACTION
and
POSITIVE IMAGES

Assemble Ducketts Common, outside Turnpike tube (Picadilly line)

Smash the Backlash!
Defend Lesbian and Gay Rights!
Fight bigotry!
Fight racism!

★ Mobile creche ★ ★ Disabled facilities ★

We urge all CLPs, wards, trade union branches and campaigns to make every effort to sponsor this demonstration and make every effort to attend. Bring a banner!

Positive Images statement

Media stich-up denounced

On Friday night, April 10th, London Weekend Television's The London Programme broadcast a feature on the controversy surrounding Haringey Council's commitment to introduce positive images of lesbians and gay men into the borough's education service.

The dishonesty of the programme angered local supporters of Council policy and of lesbian and gay rights in general. The following statement was issued shortly after the broadcast by members of Positive Images, Haringey's Community campaign for lesbian and gay rights.

We are appalled and horrified by the duplicity of John Taylor and the London Programme team and express our sympathy for other supporters of lesbian and gay rights who contributed to the programme.

We have nothing but contempt for the methods used by the programme makers: we were lied to about the intention of the programme and co-opted into playing a tokenistic role, thus lending credence to what was a piece of gutter journalism.

The programme purported to investigate the political impact of policies designed to combat heterosexism and defend gay rights but was nothing more than a piece of anti lesbian and gay propaganda; and a badly made piece of propaganda at that. We counted approximately twenty serious factual errors and unsubstantiated accusations — an average of one per one-and-a-half minutes.

In addition to the numerous unchallenged homophobic assertions which can only contribute to the general hysteria about lesbians and gay men, the programme was also set in the usual racist framework.

We were shown self-appointed community spokesmen who claimed to represent entire ethnic groups; the idea of debate within these communities being inconceivable to white racists. As such we consider that the London Programme was at best slipshod and irresponsible, and at worst a calculated attempt to misinform viewers and incite further hatred and violence.

We are presently preparing a statement of complaint to go to the IBA.

Legislation for lesbian and gay rights campaign

Kinnock's case of the "blues"

In Russia the slang for gay men is "blues", because homosexuality is popularly seen as a "vice" limited to the well-off would-be aristocracy of Moscow.

The Hewittt letter and the Labour leadership's acquiescence in it have played the same reactionary tune: lesbians and gays are not only an unimportant group, they are confined to a metropolitan elite!

After all, it's only the London, "loony", left that takes this issue seriously.

Joe Ashton was quick to appear on TV to say that of course you don't get that kind of thing in the proletarian North...

By Jamie Gough

The association of homosexuality with the rich is powerful because that's how it appears, not only in Russia but in Britain. It *is* easier to live an *open* lesbian or gay life if you have money.

Better-off women are less likely to be financially dependent on men. Middle class women and men have more chance to chose a job and housing which avoids harassment, and can afford to spend more time on the "scene". And many lesbians and gay men do come to London, both for the anonimity and for the scene.

But in Britain working class people are actually as likely to be lesbian or gay as middle class people. Precisely because they are more oppressed, their presence is less obvious.



When the Labour leadership, following its Soviet opposite numbers, plays on the theme of the "normal proletarian family", it scabs on the most oppressed group of lesbian and gay people.

Just as Michael Foot's attack on Peter Tatchell gave the green light to the anti-gay campaign of Fleet Street and the fascists, the Hewitt letter gives the same forces the opportunity to again put the boot into lesbians and gay men — just what we need right now. When you give an inch, the right always take a mile.

Who would know from all the post-Greenwich hooha that the Labour Party has a strong lesbian and gay rights policy passed by 78% at Conference? You wouldn't know it from the Labour leadership since they have utterly failed to campaign on this policy over the eighteen months since it was adopted.

They have refused to set up the working group on lesbian and gay rights called for by Conference. They have refused to support the Labour councils who are *implementing the Party programme* by introducing lesbian and gay rights policies in their services.

The leadership has not undertaken the education of the Party called for by Conference. It has not even spoken against Nazi views inside the Party, such as those of the Labour leader in South Staffordshire who agreed with his Tory counterpart that "90% of homosexuals should be gassed."

Hewitt says that the Party has been putting forward its lesbian and gay policy "out of context". The truth is it has hardly begun to put it forward at all.

The best way of forcing the Labour leadership to act is to build two major events which are coming up. The first is the demonstration in Haringey on May 2nd in support of the Council's positive images and anti-racist policy. The second is the Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Conference on May 23rd-24th.

Let's go on the offensive!

Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Campaign
Room 221, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP.
01-833 3860

Haringey Black Action
BM 4390, London WC1N 3XX

CONFERENCE
Laying Down the Law!
May 23rd-24th
Details:
LCLGR: 01-226-1097

US politics:

A change in the weather?

A recent *Time* magazine cover story, headlined "Change in the Weather — America's Agenda After Reagan", pondered the dying days of the age of Reagan.

Not long ago *Time* was an uncritical celebrant of "Morning in America" and the hogfeast of the American rich. Now the voice of mainstream Republicanism has detected a swing of the pendulum toward "a new spirit of engagement ... beyond the era of self-congratulation and beer-commercial patriotism."

It cites historian Arthur Schlesinger's "cyclical" theory of American history, in which eras of "private interest" alternate rhythmically with eras of "public purpose." Thus, the New Deal of the thirties and forties gives way to the Silent Generation of the fifties; the activism of the sixties gives way to the Me Decade, yuppies, and the Moral majority, which in turn gives way to... what?

Leaving aside the side-splitting sociology of this "theory", the admission that the Reagan revolution is not permanent is significant.

Tower Commission

The Tower Commission Report criticised the Commander-in-Chief's management style and the ineptitude of his advisors. In a country where political controversy is constantly side-tracked into questions of managerial expertise, this is a serious charge.

But by thus delimiting the debate around the tangled Contragate affair the report has served US imperialism well.

The arms and dollars trail linking Israel, Iran, and the Contras starkly revealed the reactionary and duplicitous nature of US Cold War rhetoric. In contrast to the partisan shenanigans of the Watergate crisis, the terrain uncovered by Contragate is the sacrosant common ground of bipartisan foreign policy — including, crucially, Israel's role in it.

Neither Democrats nor Republicans have any interest in promoting a real challenge to the logic of imperialism. Congressional criticism of the Administration will remain within the bounds defined by the report.

By Mike Marqusee Hornsey and Wood Green CLP

Nonetheless, the recent close vote (52-48) in the Senate on Contra aid probably reflected the current limits to US intervention in Central America. Outright invasion of Nicaragua, long advocated by the more adventurist sections of the military and their allies in the bourgeoisie, is unlikely. Unable to command necessary support among the US electorate, it would polarise US politics, and thereby threaten that precious asset of America's ruling class, the so-called two-party system.

Rambo

Rambo is not the only legacy of the Vietnam War in the US. Today a prolonged and unpredictable foreign war would prove far less acceptable than it was when US troops were first sent to Vietnam.

US imperialism's defeat in South East Asia was not a flash in the pan, and the mass movement against the war at home, rapidly dissipated as it was, left a residue of anti-imperialist organisation and consciousness which would put a new anti-war movement on a radically improved footing.

The weekend of April 25th will see the largest demonstration against US foreign policy in years. Under the slogans "For Justice and Peace in Central America and Southern Africa", "Stop Aid to the Contras", "Stop US Government and Corporate Support for Apartheid", "End Racist Violence at Home and Abroad", a call for a national march on Washington has been jointly issued by virtually all progressive political and religious organisations, and labour unions.

Unions

The unions are by far the most significant recruits to what remains a highly decentralised, pluralistic movement. The march has been endorsed by leaders of the auto workers, communications workers, farm workers, both major electrical workers unions, teachers, public employees, health workers, journalists, clothing and textile workers, machinists, and others. These are major unions, many not previously noted for criticism of US foreign policy.

Of course, the national trade union federation — the AFL-CIO — is most certainly not endorsing the march, and the long battle to wean US labour unions from chauvinist loyalties is far from over.

One left activist, while admitting that union leaders would make little effort to mobilise their memberships for the march, felt strongly that the endorsements represented an important opening for the left. He predicted a substantial union presence on the march.

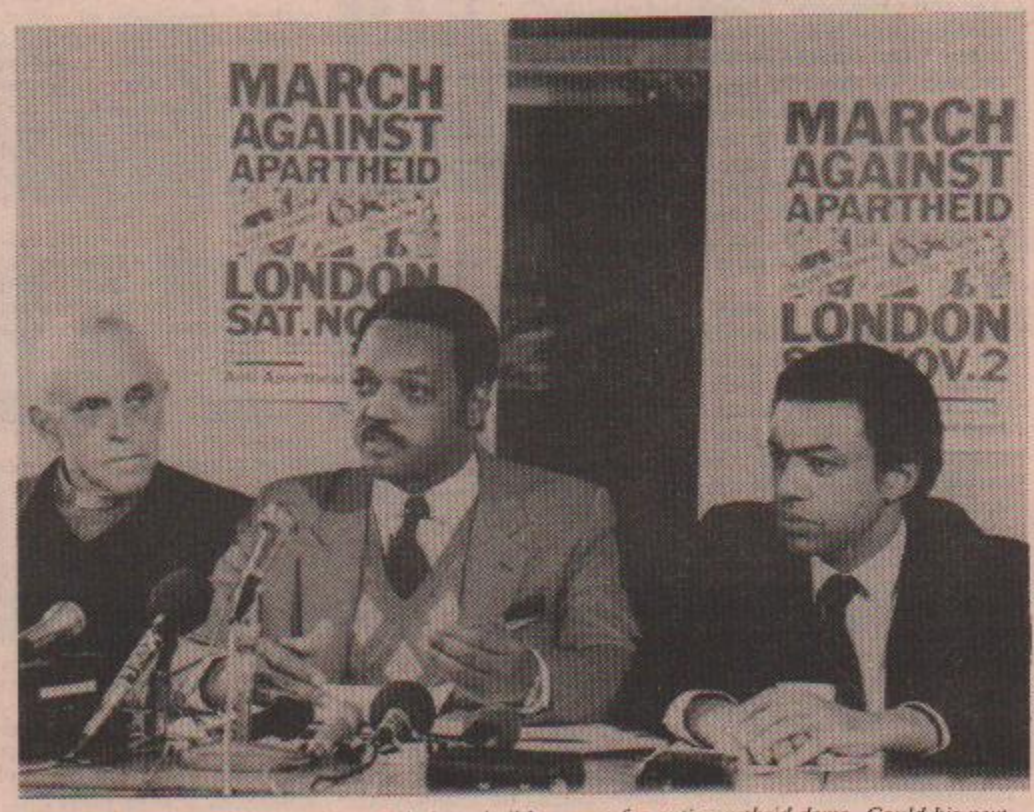


PHOTO: John Chapman

Jesse Jackson, pictured on a visit to Britain to build support for anti-apartheid demo. Could his next visit be as President....?

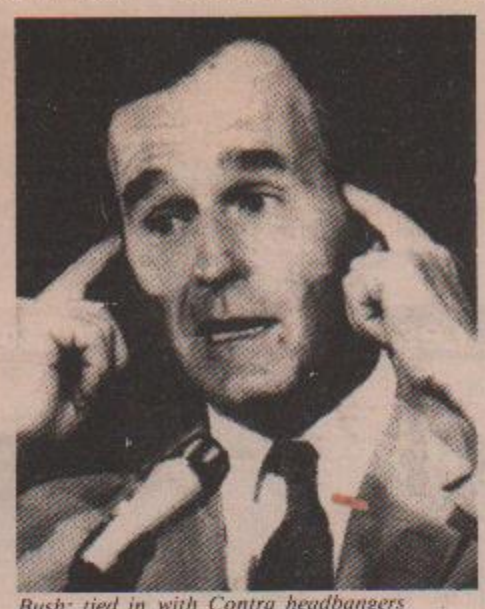
The absence from the official march slogans of any reference to US involvement in the Middle East has been noticed by few. The ultra-respectability of Zionism in US politics, despite the embarrassment of the Pollard spy affair, has pushed the Palestinian question to the margins.

Of course, both overt and covert support for the Contras and implacable opposition to the Sandinista regime will continue. None of the early runners in the Democratic presidential primary marathon — with the exception of Jesse Jackson, whose campaign is of a different nature — have shown any readiness to make US intervention in Central America (or any other aspect of US foreign policy) a major campaign issue.

Nor will any of them amount to a real challenge to market-governed economics or the priorities of the multinationals. Amidst the waffle about "new ideas", repeated avowals of patriotic *amour-propre*, and the manifold bullshit in which the US media revels, no real improvements for the working class will be on offer.



Reagan: guilty? or incompetent?



Bush: tied in with Contra headbangers

Racial Deadlock

America's brutal racial deadlock hovers in the background. A recent spate of racist violence — a death in Howard beach in New York, a riot at a basketball game in Illinois, incidents at institutions as eminent as Columbia and the University of Massachusetts — is only the most visible token of the day-to-day oppression felt by millions of Black and Spanish-speaking Americans. A no-go area for aspirant Democratic nominees, for sure.

Jackson

Will Jackson repeat his remarkable performance of 1984? Can another quixotic tilt at the Democratic nomination strike the same deep chord among the Black masses that it did three years ago? Will it raise the prospect of a real break from two-party rule? Or will its inevitable defeat demoralise supporters and yield nothing better than the usual "lesser evil" option come the showdown with the Republicans in November 1988?

Plenty of Americans will tell you that a third party is a dim and distant prospect — and deride its advocates as downright daft. But as the 1988 Presidential campaign unfolds, the sterile timidity of US liberalism may become more apparent. Time's pendulum swings repeatedly across the same ground. But in reality, even in America, the ground is always changing. The Democratic Party will not forever straitjacket the American oppressed.

Austerity in Spain

No political opposition from the left

The relationships within the so-called socialist family — the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), the Socialist Trade Union (UGT) and the government elected in June 1986, are going through a crisis chiefly because of the economic policy put forward by the Finance Ministry.

The past experience of achieving a general agreement between the employers' organisations and the socialist trade union federation on collective bargining has not been possible this year.

By X.G. Barcelona

The Communist trade union (CCOO) had not participated in the last two annual general agreements.

The leadership of the UGT is aiming at a wage increase of between 7-8%. They argue that the agreements which they have in the past been party to have in reality brought about a decrease in the buying power of working class wages.

These concessions have enabled some rebuilding of the economy of the country. And — the UGT adds — after the big benefits to the banks and employers registered last year, it is time to rebuild the workers' own buying power.

Therefore, the talks preparing the general agreement have failed and Carlos Solchaga, Minister of the Economy, has not lost a minute in recommending that the bosses do not accept wage increases of over 5%, in order to maintain the levels of economic growth and inflation dictated by the IMF.

Because of this, the confrontation between the trades unionists of the so-called socialist family and the government Economic Minster became a popular issue.

Many other social conflicts have contributed to the atmosphere of general crisis:

- strikes in the public transport companies — rail and air;
- huge demonstrations of peasants and dairy farmers in opposition to regulations emanating from the EEC;
- the most important strikes in the secondary schools since the Franco dictatorship;
- strikes in the health services;

and, lastly but probably socially the most serious,

- constant riots in working class areas in response to layoffs resulting from the industrial restructuring.

"Restructuring" had brought closures and "promises of new employment", which in reality led to massive layoffs of workers. These add to the already 21.4% unemployment figures; that means nearly 3 million people out of work, of whom more than 60% are without unemployment benefit.

This situation made the UGT turn a bit to the left, under the pressure of the social protest. The Executive Committee of the PSOE sent, recently, an internal circular to its regional committees defending the economic policy of the government — further antagonising those who were opposed to the austerity policy.

The current called "socialist left" in PSOE has preferred not to intervene openly in the discussion. The crisis, however, goes on.

Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez declared recently that the only danger for his economic orientation would come from a split in the socialist family. In order to prevent such a split, we will quite soon see a cabinet reshuffle.

This June there will be three different sets of elections: municipal, regional and for the European parliament. Newspapers and magazines are already flooded with leaks and rumours about a new Cabinet after the elections.

Felipe Gonzalez would fire those responsible for the Economic Department and substitute for them other Ministers with the same monetarist policies but less "burnt" in their relationships with the socialist trades unionists.

There is no serious political opposition to the left of the government at present. The Communist Party is split into three factions and is not a serious contender for government.

Political expectations have been aroused by the re-emergence of the former Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez who is expecting a sizeable increase in the votes for his "centrist" political organisation (CDS). But there is no doubt that the PSOE will win again.

Socialist Society Column

The politics of experience

The anti-psychiatrist Ronnie Laing wrote a brilliant book called "The Politics of Experience" in the '60s which epitomised that '68 movement's new politics of subjectivity against the crude economism of traditional Left politics — Stalinists and Trots alike with their crude base and superstructure model.

This new humanistic Marxism was however still *Marxism*, firmly wedded to historical materialism as the rational basis of understanding other levels of consciousness and practice; its overriding commitment was to a rational *critique*.

Later, theoretical interventions however, like those of Althusser and Poulantzas, paved the way for ditching this rational core, as politics ideology and the subjective took off finally into orbit, released by dubious concepts like "relative autonomy" which simply define away the problem.

Gradually a new anti-rationalism emerged, crystallising especially in feminist practice. This emotional stuff was initially a healthy corrective to a hack politics which had reduced all subjective experience to immediately obvious material interest, and we duly discovered and aired our injured sensitivities.

Feminism gave courage and confidence to countless women by insisting on the *validity* and *authenticity* of their everyday lives, fears and feelings, in a dismissive and contemptuous world which usually sneered them (and blacks and gays) into insignificance.

Particularly vicious seemed this contempt among white heterosexist male "comrades". In this truly liberating impulse *everybody* could suddenly feel worthy of respect, no matter how small, fearful and tearful.

Black anger equalled women's at their centuries of

By Anne McManus

oppression. All voices were to be heard and respected. Nobody would be "incorrect" or useless to the Cause any more.

Indeed the people *became* the Cause and *socialism* was squeezed out. In the breast-beating and the soul-saving we lost our crucial anchorage in a *socialist* vision of reasoned principles.

Today much political practice on the Left has rushed to the opposite extreme to economism, and is swamped by the *politics of experience* as a substitute for any genuine *socialist* practice at all.

Desperately supporting the *valid* and *authentic* experience of oppressed minorities and even sometimes the oppressed majority of white working class, such politics suspend all critical faculties and ignore the highly suspect nature of this "oppressed" experience in the first place.

Instead of drowning in a sea of subjectivity, it's worth questioning the notion that anything produced by oppression is likely to be liberatory anyway.

Crucial to this politics is the belief that some sector or oppressed group is the ultimate repository of radical truth — a truth necessarily contained in their "experience".

This nonsense ignores inconveniences about its chosen saviours, like the fact that many women are blatantly conservative (Thatcher); many Irish and Africans are racist about West Indians; many white workers are thugs and bigots; many Black women are simply *reactionary* in their opposition to abortion and their defence of the family ; and religious fanaticism is repellent and anti-socialist whatever ethnic group preaches it.

The experience of oppression and poverty is just as likely to breed corruption, slime and violence as it is to purge and purify — rather more likely in fact.

Blind bland support of "oppressed minorities" is grotesquely patronising. It has little to do with socialism and a lot to do with the guilt of the former oppressors — often white, male, het and middle class, and their terror of racist sexist taints to harm the Socialist Cred as trendy freedom fighters defending the wretched of the earth.



Experience is what counts: but are all experiences of oppression politically equal? Above: striking miners during the 1984/5 Strike.

The Labour leadership's response to Right attacks is to heartily agree with them, and ditch offending policies like support of minority groups as fast as possible.

But the Left's response to Kinnock and Patricia Hewitt's disgusting conservative attack on politics of sexual liberation cannot be simply a dogmatic defence of any whim of oppressed minorities whose grievances become sacred cows — inviolable and immune from criticism. What's common to both strategies is a lack of *socialist* principles and reason of any kind.

The *politics of experience* amounts today to a callow endorsement of *anything* the privileged constituencies prefer and is no politics at all.

The only basis for socialist politics are rational socialist principles as the vital criteria against which *any* experience must be measured. Only this will *change* the present as opposed to pandering to the often (dare one recall it?) *false* consciousness of its most victimised sectors.

Change not confirmation is what socialism is all about — remember?

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PHOTO: Bob Naylor