LABOUR
BRIEFING
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INSIDE:

- Election results, debate & views
- Interview: Terry French
- Sinn Fein - our reply
- Labour Party Conference resolutions
- Your letters

40p



PHOTO: Labour Party Photo Library



PHOTO: Tim Rigby

Eric Heffer and Liverpool councillors (later to be surcharged) joined forces to lead this march in support of the Council's achievements and in support of the miners.

THIS WAS THE WAY TO WIN!

By ERIC HEFFER, MP

Liverpool saw Labour's best result, with an average swing in our favour of over 10%. In Walton, Eric Heffer scored a sensational triumph, with a swing of 11.5%. His majority increased from 14,000 to 23,000. The 34,000 votes cast for Eric were 15,000 more than the combined votes of his opponents.

Our successful campaign in Liverpool was run without help from the national organisation.

The nationally-appointed Secretary of the Liverpool Party was sent to the outlying marginals and had nothing to do with the election in the city. The rest of us were left on our own.

In the past, we've fought our campaigns on a city-wide basis, with all the constituencies working together. So I asked the Trades Council Secretary (a Party member, disqualified Councillor and ex-dockworker) if he would co-ordinate election activities in the City and he agreed.

Through him we called five or six city-wide press conferences, we organised city-wide car-cades, and a great rally, at which myself and Arthur Scargill were the main speakers.

We filled the Philharmonic Hall to capacity and collected £800 for the 47 surcharged Liverpool councillors.

In my own constituency we had three crowded public meetings and numerous unscheduled street meetings, all of which received a tremendous response from local people. Tony Benn visited myself, Terry Fields, and Lol Duffy, one of the workers jailed for taking part in the sit-in at Cammell Laird, who was attacked by Frank Field for his efforts — yet came within a couple of hundred votes of winning Wallasey from the Tories.

Our result is a vindication of what the Councillors have done and what the Liverpool Party has done over the years. The Liberals harped on about my walking off the Conference platform in 1985. They mentioned it in all their literature. *It had no effect.*

On all of our leaflets we included an appeal to "Support the 47' and I inserted a message of support for the stand of the Council in my election address.

People responded because they could see what Labour had done in Liverpool — the 5,000 new houses, the parks, the sports centres, the nursery schools. We kept down school meal prices and rents.

We fought on a working class, socialist basis. We did not dodge defence — it was one of the main themes of our rally. We're proud of our socialist efforts.

(Continued on page 2)



PHOTO: John Chapman

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

General Election feature

This was the way to win!

Continued from front page

Nationally, the result is a major setback. In London and the South we've failed to secure the full support of the working class.

In these areas, the television razzmattazz was clearly counter-productive, whereas in the North it was simply irrelevant. When Neil Kinnock spoke about unemployment and the health service — the basic class issues — the response was good.

But the build-up of the cult of the individual was negative. Workers in Britain are not keen on Americanised politics. They want to know what we intend to do. The Manifesto was watered down. It attempted to dodge too many issues — the married man's tax allowance, for example. On defence, we should say we will spend the money saved on nuclear arms on the things that matter to people.

Good new people have entered the Parliamentary Labour Party. The Campaign Group has to bring these comrades together and develop much more positively both inside and outside parliament.

The old Tribune Group, for all its faults, was an active force in Parliament. It took the initiative on issue after issue. The Campaign Group has got to do the same.

Now the election's over, no one can say we have anything to lose in coming forward with clear basic socialist ideas and policies. We have to argue for what I call the social issues as part and parcel of a class programme.

We need to spend time thinking. We need to analyse the results. Of course, we go on campaigning, but we link our campaigns to the struggles of working people.

The best recent period for Labour was during the miners' strike, when we won tremendous support and would have won even more if the leadership had given unqualified backing to the miners. The strike also demonstrated how it's possible to integrate the social issues into class issues as a powerful force.

Some will now want to resuscitate the attack on the left through constitutional issues rather than straightforward political arguments. I'm not against one-person-one-vote in principle. But if it's going to apply to the Party membership it's got to apply also to all the unions. That's not going to be possible. Therefore we have to have representative democracy.

A more important change now being mooted is a change in the character of the NEC. What they have in mind, I think, is the formation of some kind of "politbureau" within a wide Executive made up of people from regional committees replacing CLP representatives. Real power will be shifted to the PLP, which in essence means the Leader's office.

They want Party conferences to become giant rallies rather than democratic, decision-making occasions at which elected delegates debate the issues and make policy. I have no hesitation in saying this development has to be opposed, not only in the constituencies, but also in the trade union movement, where it is our job now to rebuild a serious, intelligent left.

If socialist positions on defence, unemployment, public ownership and the social issues are clear, then we don't have to think of crawling to the Liberals. The better elements amongst them will come to us.

It's happened before — after the First World War, George Lansbury being the most famous example. This to is being seen in Liverpool today, where the Tory voters went to the Liberals and Liberal voters went to us.

The real issue of the election is that we have to get across basic class politics.

We have to forge a unity of all the socialists in the movement who share this basic class position around a minimum programme — a basic set of ideas — and then go out and say this is what we believe in, this is the only way forward for the working class. It will be difficult. We have to try to involve the widest possible forces around this. But we have to remember that as long as capitalism exists class struggle will be a reality.

Results in Scotland

Constitutional crisis looms!

"Doomsday scenario haunts Rifkind" stated *The Scotsman* after Labour won 50 of the 72 Scottish Parliamentary seats.

Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Scotland, had seen Tory-held seats cut from 21 to a mere 10 and was perhaps relieved to hold onto as many as that.

His predecessor at the Scottish Office, Defence Secretary George Younger, had just scraped through in Ayr with a majority of 182.

Not only the Tories lost to Labour. Roy Jenkins lost to Labour's George Galloway in Glasgow Hillhead and Gordon Wilson, leader of the Scottish National Party, lost to John McAllison in Dundee.

"Labour Plans Resistance Campaign" was the headline in the *Glasgow Herald*. Campbell Christie, General Secretary of the Scottish TUC, was calling for a co-ordinated anti-Conservative campaign involving Labour MPs, local authorities and trade unions. Scotland's constitutional crisis has now arrived.

In the UK the Conservative Party are back in power with 375 of the 650 seats in Parliament and 42% of the votes cast. In Scotland they held 10 of the 72 seats and 24% of the votes cast.

Denis Canavan, Labour MP for Falkirk West, had raised the possibility of just such a scenario prior to the General Election. He demanded then, that whatever the outcome of the election, Labour MPs in Scotland should proceed with a Bill for a Scottish Assembly. This question now confronts Labour's 50 MPs in Scotland.

The election of George Galloway, a strong supporter of the Scottish Assembly, will strengthen the camp of those MPs ready to take action. Donald Dewar, Labour's Shadow Scottish Secretary, has never been a supporter of disruption. The day the election results were announced he ruled out "simplistic physical disruption of Parliament". Such a position will not be so easy to maintain as it was after the 1983 election.

The Scottish National Party immediately challenged Scottish Labour to decide "whether it is a Unionist Party or a Scottish Party". They charged Labour with doing nothing after the last two elections.

By Rowland Sheret
Scottish Labour Briefing

The defeat of Gordon Wilson in Dundee and the retirement of Donald Stewart, whose former Western Isles seat was also won by the Labour Party, weakens the Scottish National Party right wing leadership. Among the 3 new MPs they had elected was Alex Salmond, Banff and Buchan, who represents a new left now growing in the SNP.

Only 3 women were elected to Parliament in Scotland — there were only 2 in the previous Parliament. All three are newly elected although Margaret Ewing of the SNP was previously there as Margaret Bain before losing her seat in 1983. Maria Fyffe, elected for Labour in Glasgow Maryhill, is a well known local councillor and a member of the Scottish Executive of the Labour Party.

Ray Michie was elected as a Liberal Alliance candidate in a seat gained from the Tories in Argyll & Bute. This seat includes Rothesay — delegates to Labour Women's Conference may be interested to note.

The 1987 Parliamentary Election has brought no solutions for Scotland's unemployed, for the Caterpillar workers nor for the sacked miners. The crisis of the Scottish economy continues. It is time now for the Scottish Labour movement to act.

The community charge, Scotland's poll tax, is the first challenge to be faced from a new Thatcher government. Can the labour movement make it inoperable? Will renewed attacks on the Health Service, education and housing be more effectively opposed this time? Can closures and redundancies be opposed? Can Guinness be forced to keep their pledge to base their headquarters in Scotland? Will a mass campaign for a Scottish Assembly be mounted?

The Scottish CLPs, Labour Party branches, and trade union branches have much to discuss in the coming months. If Scotland's voice is to be heard as a challenge to Thatcherism, then they must act. Hand in hand with this will go the need to continue the fight for democracy and equality in the Labour Party. One woman MP out of fifty is a long way short of the minimum of twenty-five that should have been returned to Parliament to fight Labour's cause.

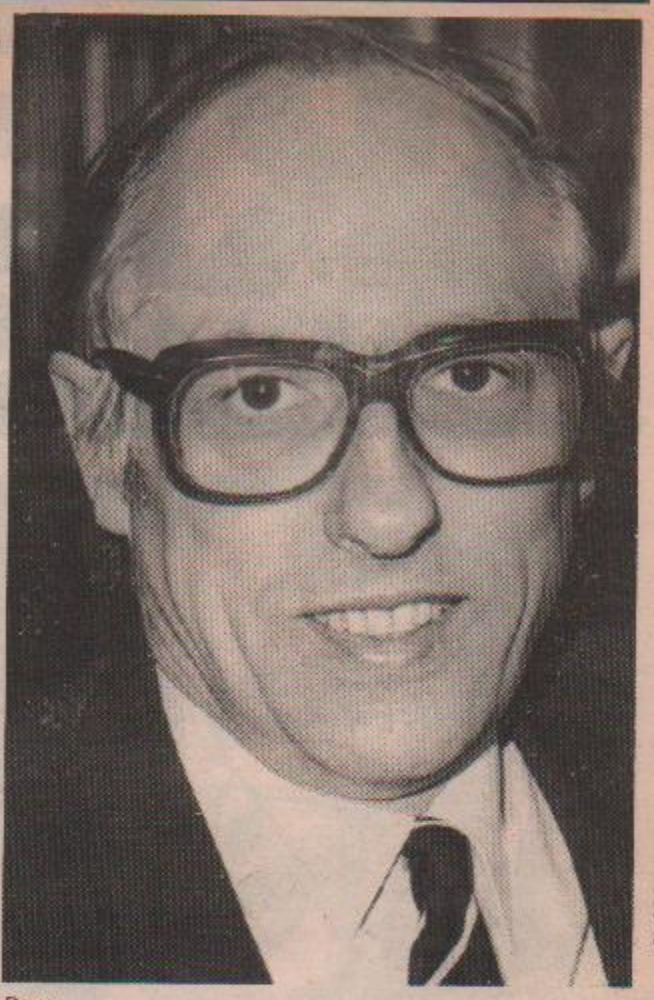


PHOTO: John Chapman

Dewar

Stop press:
The Executive of the Scottish Council of the Labour Party meeting a few days after the election put the creation of a Scottish Assembly and the scrapping of the proposed community charge top of the demands they will raise with Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Scotland. Scottish Labour MPs will also seek a government commitment to drop further privatisation measures in Scotland and to increase funding for health and education.

An Assembly bill will be presented to parliament after the Summer recess. A programme of action both inside and outside parliament is planned. An all-party mass rally will be held at Glasgow Green on August 29th.

Bill Speirs, Chair of the Scottish executive, said that with only 10 MPs the Conservatives would find it impossible to run Scotland:

"The Labour Party is determined that the issues on which we fought and won the election remain before both the Scottish people and the government."

Wales results

Tories trounced in Wales

The Tories were trounced in Wales with swings to Labour of over 10% in many seats. Labour won three key South Wales constituencies — Cardiff West, Newport West and Brigend. In addition, the North Wales seat of Ynys Mon (held prior to his resignation by Tory Keith Best) went to Plaid Cymru.

Polls were high everywhere. Even in the valleys, constituencies where huge Labour majorities are so taken for granted that many people don't bother to vote, over 75% of the electorate voted. The result was majorities of over 20,000 throughout the valleys and over 30,000 in the Rhondda as people came out in force to register their protest against the devastation which Thatcherism has brought to Wales.

Labour also did well in the marginals. In Cardiff Central, singled out by the BBC as the seat Labour had to win to oust the Tories from government, the Tory majority was reduced to 2,000. Labour was in second place — a distinct improvement on 1983 when we came a poor third.

Here the Alliance vote was a major factor. They polled over 12,000 votes, thus depriving Labour of victory and ensuring Cardiff Central returned a Tory MP despite a massive vote against him. Labour's low key, lacklustre campaign in this constituency, in particular its failure to take on the Alliance, contributed to the Tory's success.

In Cardiff West a far more enthusiastic campaign unseated well known local Tory maverick Stephen Terleski. Terleski did not accept defeat gracefully. He enlivened proceedings at the count by throwing a tantrum when the result was announced!

Stevi Jackson, Cardiff

Gerry Adams re-elected

One of the few good results of the election, along with the result in Scotland, Wales and the north, is the re-election of Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams in Belfast West.

Adams increased his share of the vote over the '83 result.

He was re-elected despite the massive amount of resources which the SDLP put into their (very dirty) campaign; despite the fact that the constitutional nationalist vote was not split between two candidates as it was in 1983, when Gerry Fitt stood as an independent and Joe Henderson stood as the SDLP candidate; and despite the call by the so-called Republican Sinn Fein for abstention.

By Jean Reilly



PHOTO: Andrew Moore/Reflex

Gerry Adams

Adams' majority was reduced but this is clearly due to the fact that, with Lord Fitt out of the way, the "moderate" nationalist vote was concentrated on the SDLP candidate, Hendron.

However, while the result in West Belfast is heartening, Sinn Fein's overall position in the 6 Counties is not so favourable. Sinn Fein has suffered a reduction in its vote over the 17 constituencies that make up the 6 Counties. There was also a marked difference in the votes won in the rural areas as opposed to the urban constituencies where Sinn Fein did better. In addition, the SDLP now has 3 MPs, where it had one in the last parliament.

This situation can be blamed partly on tactical voting — as in South Down where nationalists voted tactically against Enoch Powell — and partly, though only marginally, on the call for abstention by "Republican" Sinn Fein, which has greater support in the rural areas.

However, the main reason is precisely the reason which led Sinn Fein to drop abstentionism at the last Ard Feis. That is, the lack of a political programme and strategy which can win working class nationalists to a party which represents their economic, political and national aspirations. In other words, the limited development of class politics within Sinn Fein is the reason for this poor result.

Clearly, there is an awareness of this among the leadership of Sinn Fein and the activists based in Belfast and Derry. No doubt discussions are taking place even now to move the party further in this direction in a continuation of a healthy and necessary development which has been taking place over the past few years.

General Election feature — Editorial

BRIEFING
LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Stand firm — fight back!

Nobody will have worked harder than *Briefing* supporters for a Labour victory: and none will be more dismayed at the catastrophic defeat inflicted yet again by the Tories.

With more hand-outs already in the pipeline for the rich, Thatcher will use her renewed mandate to press home more brutal attacks on the whole working class: the result is a defeat for us all.

Yet to look at the press attitude to Neil Kinnock we might even believe that the Election result had gone the other way. Every leader writer and commentator is full of praise for his personal "success" in the campaign.

With "successes" like that, who needs failures?

The 100-seat General Election defeat is second only to Michael Foot's dismal 1983 fiasco as the worst result since 1931. Labour's share of the vote, despite the razzamatazz and TV hype, was up only 3 per cent.

As dreams of a returned Labour government have been shattered, the prospect of a renewed, even more arrogant Tory onslaught is coupled with the near certainty that Kinnock and his team will now exploit the situation to step up their witch-hunt of the left.

The only small consolation was the election of four black MPs and the Labour gains in Wales, the industrial North (especially Liverpool) and Scotland: in particular we should note the increased majorities for candidates associated with the hard left (Eric Heffer, Jeremy Corbyn) and *Militant* (Dave Nellist, Terry Fields, and Pat Wall's gain in Bradford).

It is no surprise that in four short weeks of campaigning Labour's leaders found it impossible to claw back the Tory lead. Neil Kinnock was reaping the consequences of four wasted years in which he has focussed more fire against his own left than against the Tory enemy.

There is nobody to blame for Labour's failure but Neil Kinnock and his kitchen cabinet team. They have insisted on setting the policies; and they have ruthlessly excluded us on the left at every stage. It was *their* strategy, *their* campaign, *their* failure.

Of course the bland "never mind the politics, feel the width" campaign went down well with Kinnock's admirers (such as the union official defending the repeat of the Personal Political broadcast on behalf of the Kinnock Party on the grounds that "it may be sickening, but it works"). Decades of bitter experience of these personalised campaigns in the USA have shown that they perpetuate the politics of the two capitalist parties, and do *not* "work" for the working class.

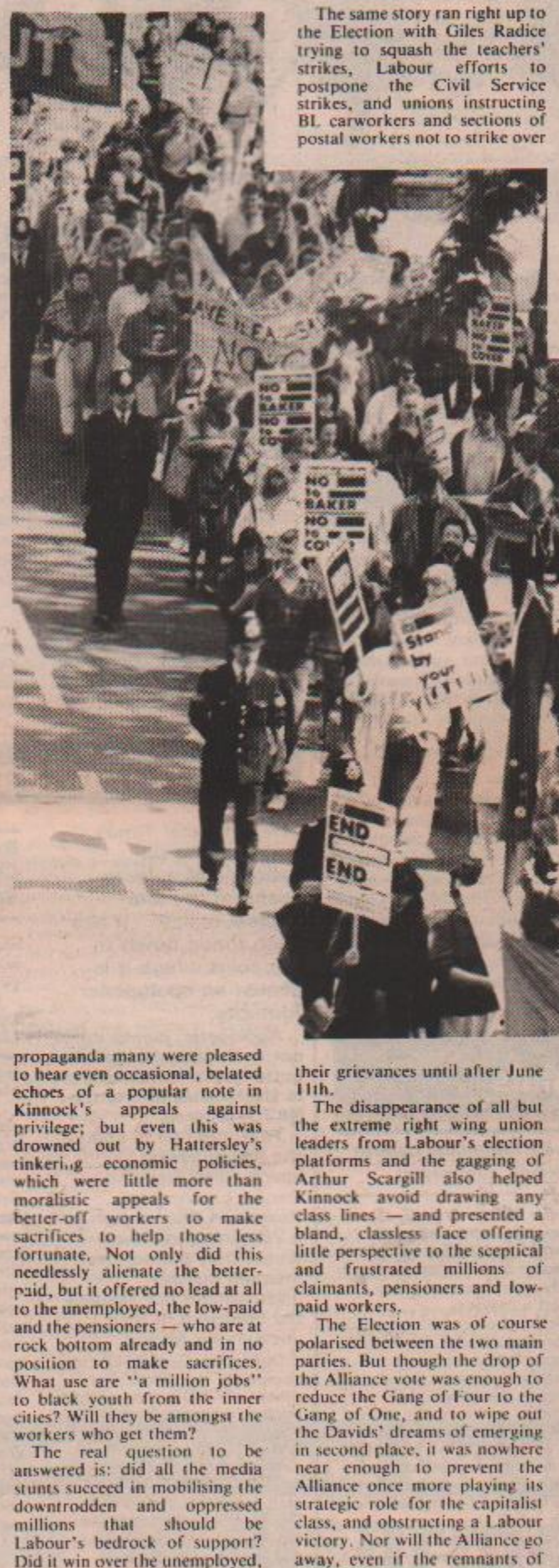
Certainly many were relieved to find the Party was better organised this year than the shambles of 1983 — even though this meant in many cases bureaucratic dictatorship from Walworth Road: but how could the campaign have been worse than 1983?

After four barren, wasted years of empty Labour propaganda many were pleased to hear even occasional, belated echoes of a popular note in Kinnock's appeals against privilege; but even this was drowned out by Hattersley's tinkering economic policies, which were little more than moralistic appeals for the better-off workers to make sacrifices to help those less fortunate. Not only did this needlessly alienate the better-paid, but it offered no lead at all to the unemployed, the low-paid and the pensioners — who are at rock bottom already and in no position to make sacrifices. What use are "a million jobs" to black youth from the inner cities? Will they be amongst the workers who get them?

The real question to be answered is: did all the media stunts succeed in mobilising the downtrodden and oppressed millions that should be Labour's bedrock of support? Did it win over the unemployed, young people, the low-paid, the pensioners, the black communities, women and trade unionists?

The answer is clearly "no": despite the inevitability of a polarised election, Labour's campaign in general deliberately avoided the *class* polarisation that was necessary to enthuse and mobilise these forces: and it lacked the coherent socialist perspective needed to convince the best sections of the middle class.

Consistently since 1983 Kinnock and the union leaders have set their face against any working class challenge to Thatcherism. They betrayed the Miners' Strike; they knifed the defiant councillors in Liverpool and Lambeth in the back; and they ran from commitments to repeal Tory anti-union laws.



The same story ran right up to the Election with Giles Radice trying to squash the teachers' strikes, Labour efforts to postpone the Civil Service strikes, and unions instructing BL carworkers and sections of postal workers not to strike over their grievances until after June 11th.

The disappearance of all but the extreme right wing union leaders from Labour's election platforms and the gagging of Arthur Scargill also helped Kinnock avoid drawing any class lines — and presented a bland, classless face offering little perspective to the sceptical and frustrated millions of claimants, pensioners and low-paid workers.

The Election was of course polarised between the two main parties. But though the drop of the Alliance vote was enough to reduce the Gang of Four to the Gang of One, and to wipe out the Davids' dreams of emerging in second place, it was nowhere near enough to prevent the Alliance once more playing its strategic role for the capitalist class, and obstructing a Labour victory. Nor will the Alliance go away, even if the remnants of the SDP are now scooped up as a revamped right wing of the Liberal Party.

This was the scenario in which Thatcher was able confidently to execute her strategy of "divide and rule", cynically buying skilled, employed sections of the working class with a succession of tax cuts, privatisation hand-outs, council-house sales and a consumer credit boom.

For the more reactionary elements, these sops to material self-interest were spiced up with appeals to racism (immigration laws), nationalism ("defence"), anti-communisim (witch-hunts of the "Loony Left"), and law and order. On none of these issues did Labour have a coherent or convincing reply: instead its leaders echoed and accommodated to the very same positions.

The result: while hundreds of thousands more workers were swayed to vote Labour by their experience of poverty, unemployment, and dereliction of industry and cities in Wales, the North and Scotland, a professional but ultimately ineffective Labour campaign failed to dent the overall Tory share of the vote, even after eight brutal years of cuts in housing, health, schools, social security, pensions, local government, jobs and wages.

It should come as little surprise that despite this disastrous result Kinnock's media campaign has won such rave reviews from the media hacks themselves — most of whom in any case were clearly rooting for a Tory victory. The media are never so keen on Labour leaders as when they are shooting themselves or their members in the foot.

They cheered when Wilson attempted anti-union laws; they raved when Healey introduced wage controls; they exulted when Kinnock declared war on *Militant* supporters: and now they are urging him to ditch still more "unpopular" policies, and trying to goad him into another round of witch-hunting against the Left — especially the local government Left in London.

Yet the fact is that left wing policies *can* win out against fierce media witch-hunts, as candidates showed with effective campaigns that did *not* have access to our TV screeens — in Liverpool, Bradford, Coventry and several London constituencies. Labour's vote in London went *up* overall, though held back above all by the unpopular rate increases (levied by far from left wing councils in Ealing, Hammersmith and Waltham Forest).

These embarrassing facts will not stop a new witch-hunt, as Kinnock and his co-thinkers seek to cover their tracks and exploit the defeat they helped create. No sooner was the Tory victory certain than Kinnock announced that his scheme for shaping up the Labour Party was really a *ten-year* scheme, and that the work would go on: already plans for reversing the democratic reforms of 1980 and 1981 are being dusted down for this year's conference.

For our part, *Briefing* supporters have no reason to revise the views we put forward before the campaign began. "Kamikaze Kinnock" has, as we predicted, crashed to earth having failed to tap the rich reserves of anti-Toryism and class action within the most oppressed layers of the workers' movement.

Labour scored a few pleasing points with well-worked newspaper ads late in the campaigning (only to score a few own goals on private medicine and Brian Gould's two houses): but the campaign did nothing to project a socialist, working class policy that could galvanise the necessary support to win.

Labour Party to such a catastrophic defeat, there would be a chorus of demands for their resignation: instead we see Kinnock entrenched more firmly than before, with the grotesque spectacle of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy cashing in on a major setback to the working class to carry through their own cynical manoeuvres against the left.

The working class will once again shoulder the burden of Kinnock's failure: lacking a leadership with any class commitment they will come under the hammer of a ruthless Tory leadership totally committed to the interests of capital.

Housing — already ravaged by cut after cut in local government spending — is a major target area for a new wave of Tory attacks. Local authority workers face a fresh onslaught, with the revival of plans to impose compulsory tendering and mass privatisation. Education services face an all-round attack, with the creation under Thatcher's plans of a new two-tier system, and return of selection. And a new iceberg of cuts arising from cash limits on the NHS is about to wreck hospital services in whole areas of London and other parts of the country.

There is no reason to believe that workers will take these attacks lying down: certainly the old lie of "wait for the next Labour government" is even less convincing now than ever before. There will be new struggles, and a continuation of many unresolved battles in the unions.



PHOTO: Morning Star

Teachers defy pressure from Labour leaders and march during the general election campaign

Briefing takes its stand with all those willing to fight back against the Tory offensive. We will press ahead with our fight against any witch-hunt against *Militant*, other sections of the hard left, and our campaign to organise a principled socialist alternative within the labour movement to Neil Kinnock and his sponsors in the TUC.

We agree with all those trade unionists, students, the black communities and the oppressed who recognise that when faced with five more years of Thatcherism there can be only one answer: **Stand Firm and Fight Back!**

General Election feature

The Islington North Story:

Success belongs to socialists!

One of the best results for Labour in London was in Islington North, where Left MP Jeremy Corbyn, singled out for repeated attack in the national and local media, doubled his majority to just under 10,000, increased the total Labour vote by over a third, and mobilised a swing of some 5% from the SDP. How did they do it?

By Jeremy Corbyn, MP

Our campaign in Islington North aimed to mobilise all the people who have been most affected by the ravages of Thatcherism. At no time did we apologise in any way for the views of either myself or the North Islington party.

We delivered a special leaflet to the Irish community. Indeed, the SDP and Tory attacks on my support for British withdrawal from Ireland led many local Irish people — not Party members — to join our campaign. Nearly the whole Irish community in the constituency voted Labour.

We also organised a special letter translated into Greek, Turkish, Urdu, Punjabi, Tamil, Gujerati, and Hindi. We organised a number of public meetings. At one I spoke with Tony Benn and at another — jointly organised by the CLP Black and Turkish Sections — I was joined by Bernie Grant and other speakers from Cyprus, Turkey, India and elsewhere.

Leaflets on women, health and transport were complemented by a special letter to pensioners. Throughout the campaign, we received active support from numerous pensioners' groups. Help also came from a number of international groups based in the area, including the Tamil Refugee Action Group, the Chilean Socialist Party and the Union of Turkish Workers. All this went hand in hand with immense hard work by the Party itself.

Throughout the campaign we were subject to media attack. On polling day *The Sun* ran an editorial calling on the voters of North Islington to do anything but vote Labour.

Islington North borders on several marginal constituencies and our members were active in supporting the campaigns there. On polling day we sent some one hundred members to Islington South to help get the Labour vote out — and ensure the return of Chris Smith as MP.

Our success was based on our work over the last four years as a campaigning Party. I have spent over 200 Sundays with Party members calling on people on Council estates and elsewhere, taking up problems and campaigning on political issues such as privatisation, health cuts, pensions, nuclear power, and the transport of nuclear waste through the Borough. The Party must realise that two thirds of the electorate have made up their minds how they're going to vote *before* the election campaign starts. Far too little work is done between one polling day and the next.

In the course of the campaign class issues — particularly around the health service — were raised at last, but for the past few years the national leadership has been far too obsessed with expelling people from the Party rather than recruiting people to it.

Reactions on the doorstep show that the labels hung on people like myself have little effect. Far more decisive are our attitudes towards housing, jobs, race relations, care of the elderly, etc.



Jeremy Corbyn and (a part of!) the Islington North campaign team!

We need to go on the offensive. We now have to mobilise people not only against the Tory government, not only in defence of living standards, local authorities, and so on — *but for socialism*.

How do we do this? First, we must win the Party to withdrawal from NATO. A defence policy which calls for unilateral nuclear disarmament while still acting as if the Cold War is in full swing is untenable.

Secondly, an economic policy which promises growth but fails to offer any clear means of controlling the country's major industries and financial institutions will remain unconvincing. These two key areas of policy should be joined with continuous campaigning on health, social security, housing and poverty.

The next four years will probably see unprecedented class warfare in this country. An ever more arrogant Tory government will seek to destroy trade unions and whole industries. Their candy-floss economy will soon wilt, and economic hardship will descend on many people hitherto protected from it.

Like other people I've been studying the election results and looking for the patterns. The apparent north-south divide is actually a *class* divide. Our politics in the future must be shaped by that understanding.

Many MPs labelled extreme by the popular media had astoundingly good results. Chris Mullin in Sunderland, Pat Wall in Bradford, all the results in Liverpool, show that support is forthcoming for candidates prepared to stand up and campaign on socialist policies. Theirs is the example to follow.

E. Midlands

The results for Labour in the East Midlands were affected by a number of factors not present in other areas of the country.

By Rick Simon Nottingham East CLP

In Nottinghamshire, the UDM extended its strike-breaking role to the electoral plane by calling on its members not to vote Labour only two days before the election.

This provoked a public row within its own ranks. As a result, in Mansfield, former Campaign Group Secretary, Alan Meale, scraped home with a majority of only 56.

Despite attempts to present a new moderate image, Meale was disowned by former MP Don Concannon who said he wouldn't vote for him (what action against him??) and was opposed by "Moderate Labour Party" and UDM member Brian Marshall.

While Marshall polled 1,600 votes it appears that the majority of UDM members in Mansfield stayed at least electorally loyal to their class and voted Labour.

This was not so in Sherwood, the seat with the highest but rapidly decreasing number of pits in the country, where Tory Andy Stewart increased his majority from just over 600 to more than 4,000.

In Nottingham East, the major influence on the outcome was the NEC's removal of Sharon Atkins as PPC. While imposed candidate Mohammad Aslam reduced the Tory majority to just over 400, there is little doubt that had Sharon been PPC she would now be in Westminster.

Aslam's campaign was totally lacklustre and lack-politics. Reports indicate that numbers in the Afro-Caribbean community refused to vote for him and many activists refused to work for him, and joined the neighbouring campaign of "Damnation" Alan Simpson.

This much more high profile and enthusiastic campaign succeeded in reducing a 6,000 Tory majority to just over 2,000.

The almost unremitting gloom was relieved only by the recapture of Nottingham North, Leicester South and Leicester East, where Black Sections supporter, Keith Vaz, was returned with a 2,000 majority.

W. Midlands

The West Midlands has long been an area where all that is rotten about the Labour Party is clearly on view. The urgent need to overturn the right wing's control was shown graphically by the election result.

By Birmingham Labour Briefing supporters

There was a complete failure to match the swing to the Labour Party that occured in the North, Scotland and Wales. A few per cent was all they could manage, in spite of their grovelling pursuit of the "middle ground vote".

The media highlighted the slightly increased majority of Hattersley in Sparkbrook, Birmingham. They failed to point out, however, that this came from a swing to the SDP from the Tories — and showed up poorly with the result from Coventry SE, where Dave Nellist, a *Militant* supporter, managed a 5% swing to Labour from the Tories.

Andrew Faulds, from Warley East, declared that "Any leftie that turns up in the Committee Rooms during the campaign will get booted out of the Party". True, he achieved a 3.8% swing from the SDP to Labour — but this was in a solid working class area.

Compare this to the result in Birmingham Edgbaston, a heartland of the Tories. The Labour PPC, a *Briefing* supporter, achieved a 5% swing from the Tories to Labour. A strong campaign in Ladywood boosted Clare Short's majority.

Pride of place has to go to John (ex-)Spellar, the EETPU Labour Party candidate for Northfield, an area which takes in the Longbridge complex and is hardly known for its middle class affluence. He achieved a 0.3% swing *away* from the Labour Party to the Tories — and so lost this important marginal. Nice one John!

Overall, there was little change in the number of seats, except of course for generously handing back one of the Wolverhampton seats to the Tories.

We could go on. It is true that some moderate candidates gained a little ground at the expense of the Alliance, but it is the law of diminishing returns. If you saw some of the pathetic drivel some of them were dishing out in leaflets to pick up these crumbs you would wonder the point of bothering.

The left has little to lose and everything to gain in this area. We need to go on the offensive and turn the Labour Party outwards and by radical campaigning end this rightist tradition.

The local Labour leadership makes Kinnock look a pinko. They have nothing to offer: it is time for them to go.

Anti-nuclear policy

The *Financial Times* commenting on Labour's Manifesto spoke of the anti-nuclear policy: "It has been toned down to the point where it is almost an apologetic footnote."

By Dave Spencer Coventry Labour Briefing

Apologetic, please note, not to the Russians as the gutter press shrieked, but to US Finance and to the NATO generals.

First, we had to endure the embarrassing spectacle of Neil and Dennis crawling to Reagan in Washington for a 20 minute interview where they did not even mention nuclear disarmament but assured the President of their unswerving loyalty.

During the General Election campaign, the whole moral power of CND's case against nuclear weapons was gutted. Instead we got a muddled technical argument on defence tactics where loyalty to NATO and a massive increase in conventional forces were stressed above any question of the insanity and waste of nuclear escalation.

No slogans were raised to cut defence spending internationally to cure unemployment and to tackle Third World poverty. The whole nuclear issue was insulated from any link with anti-imperialist foreign policy matters or even natural human fear — an amazing performance.

But even this whingeing shadow of a policy did not satisfy the Tory press — it was attacked as though it were the real thing. So we got the worst of all worlds.

The public did not get any clear and convincing arguments for unilateral nuclear disaramament, and there was talk about the defence policy losing Labour the election, the British people not being ready for such radicalism and so on. Strange that in both 1964 and 1974 the Labour Party won the election with a policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament — promptly ignored by Harold Wilson and David Owen of course. Strange too that the Alliance had the policy which our critics seem to approve of — and who voted for them?

It should be clear that the spirit of Conference decisions and of the peace movement was in no way expressed during the election campaign. It should also be clear that the only reason that the right wing so far have not openly opposed the policy is because they feared hordes of CNDers joining the Party to deselect them — at the same time they sabotage any move or campaign to promote the policy.

HARLEM

A poem written by Langston Hughes, Black American poet, who died in 1967.

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore —
and then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over —
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Brighton Labour Briefing

After the election, which way forward for socialists?

DEBATE

John Molyneux (SWP)
Jane Kelly *(Labour Briefing)*

Weds. July 1st, 8pm
Unemployed Centre, Tilbury Place, Carlton Hill, Brighton

Election images of women

Men never seem to learn!

There was a wonderful typographical error in *The Guardian* on Saturday June 13th, which brought a ray of light into the otherwise dismal gloom of the election results.

It showed, under the heading "Women MPs set record", that 141 women MPs had been elected: 121 Tories, 17 Labour, 1 SDP, 1 Liberal and 1 SNP.

Even though the 121 were Tories it would have been a great result for women —

By Mandy Moore
Member, National Labour Women's Committee

but of course it wasn't true. The real total was only 41 — 6.3% of the overall number.

I have the awful feeling given the slow pace of change that these figures demonstrate that I shall be long gone before women see the equal representation we should have in parliament whether it be in the Tory Party or the Labour Party.

One of the worst aspects of it all is that the Labour total is proportionately only slightly better than the Tory. It should be streets ahead. How can we expect to convince women that the Labour Party is the Party for them when most constituencies with safe seats still think that only a minority of the population (men) can be MPs?

The Party was supposedly targetting women during the campaign. Of all the major parties we had the best manifesto commitments and policies for women, indeed the Party's research showed that the Women's Ministry had overwhelming support from women.

Yet what happened? The Women's Ministry was "launched" at a press conference right at the beginning of the campaign, never to be mentioned again.

It was as if the Party had a chore to perform which it wanted to get out of the way as quickly as possible so that it could get on with the real business of the election. As a consequence the Women's Ministry and women's policies generally had little coverage. We never even began to get across to significant numbers of women what our policies could mean for them or how they would transform their lives.

Why was this? There were a number of faults with the campaign, one of which was the over-emphasis on personalities instead of positive policies, and the major problem the Party has when presenting the leadership of the Party (in its widest sense) is that there are no women involved.

There may have been a policy of "at least one woman on every platform" - and it was usually one — but these women were appendages, never the main spokespeople. The only exception was the Women's Ministry Press Conference, when the electorate saw a number of Labour Women — after that it was men, men, men.

In contrast to us, both the Alliance with Shirley Williams and the Tories with Margaret Thatcher had women visibly in the leadership of their respective Parties. Not so Labour. Indeed the image of women coming across most strongly from the Labour Party throughout the campaign was the "dutiful wife and mother" image in the guise of Glenys Kinnock.

This election more than any other was notable for showing all three male Party leaders — but Kinnock more than any — hawking around their wives (presumably to show what macho, hetro men they are).

A lot of nonsense is talked about the "conservatism" of women — usually by men. The evidence actually shows that the proportions of men and women supporting both Labour and the Tories is roughly the same. In fact *more* women voted Labour than men: women 34%, men 31%. Percentages for the Tories were: women 45%, men, 44%; and for the Alliance: women 21%, men 25%. However, we have lost more women's votes than men's since 1979 and we are not regaining them in the same numbers as we are men's.

The Labour Party only made a half-hearted attempt, if that, to target women. It certainly did not produce the number of women candidates in winnable seats that it should have, and it managed to hide so much good policy that could have won us crucial votes. The Labour Party should be the natural home of women. It won't be, however, until the Party's male chauvinist image and ethos is radically changed. Men never seem to learn.

Black MPs raise new expectations

The election of four Black MPs means that for the first time Black people in this country will have people representing their interests politically.

Even if the MPs don't represent specific Black interests it is still important for Black people to know that there are other Black people there, in Parliament.

By Martha Osamor
Deputy Leader, Haringey Council

For us, as socialists, it begins to show that when we talk about equal opportunities, when we talk about minority rights, it's not just words. It means something in practice.

Of course, there are also drawbacks. There's going to be a backlash. Racism will be roused in response to seeing Black people in positions of leadership.

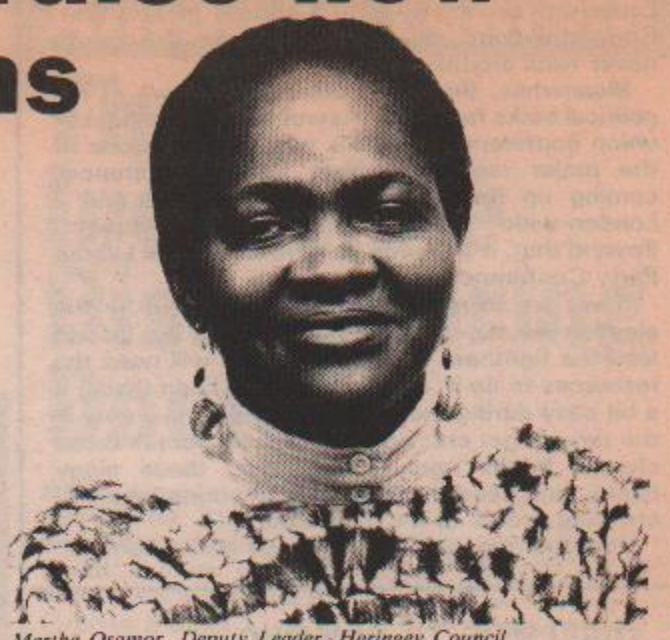
The Black MPs cannot act in isolation. They have to feel the temperature outside and go where the Black community demands they go. Many of these demands will be national, but many others will be international.

South Africa will be on the agenda. The Third World will be on the agenda. AIDS and how it is being used will be on the agenda. Immigration will be on the agenda.

Within the Party the position of Black Sections and the question of equal opportunities will be raised again.

Black MPs will be working doubly hard. They will have to deal with all the issues that other MPs have to deal with *and* all those issues raised by the Black community as well. Black people will have high expectations of them.

The national campaign was conducted in such a way that we had to adapt it to suit the needs and interests of local areas and the demands of Black people in those areas. The campaign was narrowed down so much that it is difficult to say that it actually did address those needs and demands.



Martha Osamor, Deputy Leader, Haringey Council

The planned Civil Rights March from Broadwater Farm in October should be given the full support of the Labour Party. It raises many of the demands we as socialists are concerned about. The Labour Party must play a large role in the movement which will be launched from the March and which we hope will at long last give some kind of unified voice to all those fighting for their civil rights.

Ordinary working people and Black people have had a lot taken away from them in the last ten years — nationally and internationally. Individual rights and collective rights have been attacked. The time has come for us to take stock and say that enough is enough. There is a limit to what you can give up — after that, you have nothing left.

Lesbian & Gay rights

Don't dither: fight heterosexism!

It's not been long in starting.

The morning after the night before the political pundits were flagging up the so-called "London Effect" as a major factor in Labour's election defeat.

By Sarah Roelofs
Hornsey & Wood Green Labour Party

The "London Effect" refers primarily to Black Sections and lesbian and gay rights. Bitter defeats can unfortunately lead to witch-hunts.

However, just before the election, Labour's debate on lesbian and gay rights took a significant step forward. The leadership decided to give explicit support to a civil liberties/anti-discrimination position. There was one drawback: this support was implicitly counterposed to that for "positive images" and "equally valid" campaigns.

Chris Smith (the only out gay MP), writing just before the election, argued that "our commitment to equality has become sadly clouded by all sorts of extraneous rhetoric, gestures, and issues: and these have served to alienate many of those who would probably otherwise have accepted the need to eradicate discrimination." (*New Statesman*, 5.6.87).

Exactly what Chris means by "extraneous rhetoric, gestures, and issues" he never explains. Presumably he is referring to Haringey's commitment to positive images of lesbians and gays in its education service and to Ealing's former commitment to lesbian and gay relationships being equally as valid as heterosexual ones.

Chris acknowledges that "there is profound discrimination against lesbians and gay men", but the nearest we get to *why* this should be so is that lesbian and gay oppression is caused by their sexuality being different.

This is a statement of truth, not an explanation. However, it has the advantage of avoiding any reference to heterosexism and thereby to the discriminatory promotion of heterosexuality in our society.

The problem is thus quite simple — there are some people who happen to have a different sexuality and they obviously shouldn't be discriminated against because of it. Civil liberties for this "different" group is OK, but raising issues that challenge heterosexism is out of order.

Somewhat surprisingly (given the recent stance of its editor John Lloyd as exemplified in his contribution to the infamous London Programme) a recognition of an element of the discrimination appeared in a *New Statesman* editorial the week before Chris's article. It was on "The Family" (read "heterosexual family") and argued that it "has been used, with spectacular success it seems, by the Labour Party for electoral purposes".

This refers to the promotion of Kinnock's nice, clean family image. It pointed out that this promotion appears to accept that "a large reason for electing a party is because its leader is fortunate in his marriage".

It also argued that "there appears to be no empirical evidence for correlating a politician's effectiveness in office and his or her sexual orientation. The public interest is thus not served by revelations which have no bearing on democratic choice."

Or one could also add by promotions of extraneous issues such as whether the candidate has a photofit family or even has a family at all.

Another example from the election campaign was Labour's "boy meets girl" newspaper ad, with said boy using the rather corny line of offering to carry said girl's schoolbooks. The girl sadly says that she has no books due to education cuts — was this the end of a beautiful heterosexual romance?

To return to Chris Smith's article — he advances another criticism of some lesbian and gay rights activists. They go too fast. We should advance step by step. We should take people with us rather than alienating them.

We should not give the impression that we wish to fight on lesbian and gay rights *instead* of the bread and butter issues of unemployment, health and education. None of those who support positive images and equal validity campaigns is exclusively involved in these issues, but the initial point is important.

We obviously need to build support rather than alienate. Moreover, the Positive Images campaign in Haringey has been very critical of all who were initially involved — including themselves — in implementing the issue.

The local Labour Parties, in particular, whose Manifesto policy it was, were totally unprepared for the homophobic and racist backlash. There was no campaigning strategy to explain the whys and wherefores to the whole local community — to community groups, TAs, teachers, parents, etc.

The Council who had adopted the Manifesto dithered defensively for months while trying desperately to backpeddle. The media of course were having a field-day. Out on the streets neo-fascism was worming its way into hearts and minds courtesy of the local Tories who were orchestrating the opposition by playing on people's fears and ignorance. It's a bit mean, in this situation, to blame the policy itself and those attempting to support it.

Of course it matters *how* an issue is raised, but Chris's step by step approach appears to make civil liberties a positive step and positive images a negative one. Step by step seems to be step *versus* step.

As the pressure of a "London Effect" post-mortem builds up, this argument could develop into a nasty case of divide and rule. "Sensible" and "respectable" lesbian and gay rights supporters are set against the "loonies".

There needs to be a united campaign in support of all our lesbian and gay rights policies coupled with a continuing debate and discussion on the issue, the policies and the best way to win support for them.

Labour Briefing could take the lead with a day-school covering all aspects of the debate, but to be effective it would have to be organised by *Briefing* centrally and not left to *Briefing* lesbian and gay supporters.

CND leadership and the election

Silence on disarmament

During the General Election campaign, the CND leadership stayed silent and let Kinnock run the show.

As with the TUC leadership, there must have been an agreement with the Labour Party to do so.

Instead of using the opportunity to campaign for CND policies and recruit new supporters, they allowed Kinnock to talk nonsense about NATO and conventional arms as though it were a real anti-nuclear policy. And the electorate rejected it.

This opportunist tendency by the CND bureaucracy to kowtow to the Labour Party has always weakened the movement. In November 1964, after Labour's victory, *Sanity's* editorial commented:

By Dave Spencer
Coventry Labour Briefing

"Britain has gone with Labour. It has gone moreover with a Labour Party which laughed derisively at the Conservatives' declared intention to continue building an independent British nuclear deterrent which, said Harold Wilson, 'will not be independent, will not be British and will not deter' ".

It then went on to discuss the new Labour government's options and concluded:

"Harold Wilson has appointed a Minister for Disarmament with Cabinet rank, Alun Gwynne-Jones. He has appointed as Britain's spokesperson at the UN Sir Hugh Foot. These are indications that Labour takes disarmament and its place in the world seriously. But no government can ride two horses at once in opposite directions. If NATO is to be the sheet-anchor of Labour's foreign policy as Patrick Gordon Walker says, Gwynne-Jones and Foot will find themselves in phantom jobs, a prestige facade covering the same old crumbling interior. If on the other hand Harold Wilson means business with these appointments, that sheet anchor will have to go."

It concluded by stating that the task for CND and the whole of the Left in the coming months must be to put "the most searching spotlight on the NATO alliance".

Twenty-three years later this task still remains. This is one reason why the Tories won the election. The CND leadership's stance did not help.

Building Briefing

Well, comrades, it just goes to show that it pays to be in at the beginning.

The winner of this issue's 500 Club draw has come out as no. 001 — S. Smith of Brighton. Congratulations, S., and who says the South never wins anything, eh?

Meanwhile, *Briefing* is staring with awe at the political tasks facing us. Aswell as a whole host of union conferences, there's what is for us one of the major regional Labour Party Conferences coming up (London), there's the AGM, and a London-wide meeting on local government. Beyond that, it will soon be time for Annual Labour Party Conference again...

If we are to meet the challenge posed by the election result — not only to be part of but also to *lead* the fightback of the left — we will need the resources to do it. Supporters have been taking it a bit easy during the election campaign — now is the time to get cracking! Specifically, crack those cheque books open, crack open those piggy banks, and send us paper money, donations and standing orders to the 500 Club!

Together we can win — join us in the fight!

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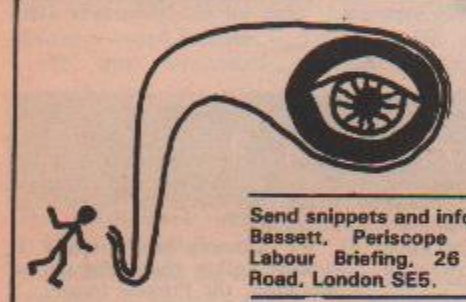
Hanger Dispute Committee, c/o TASS, Wessex House, 520 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 4YQ.

J.E. Hanger Artificial Limb Dispute

We send our fraternal greetings to all who have helped and supported us in our fight against Hanger/BTR over the past 8 months.

P. Christmas
Chair, Hanger Dispute Committee

Periscope



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

Keep on Buchan

It might not have been directly the Walworth Road machine, but Labour's new professionalism certainly reached north of the border to prevent any misunderstandings in the campaign for Norman Buchan's re-election in Paisley South.

After an unfortunate series of incidents (in which a loudspeaker van was thought to be swearing at punters on a local estate who had slightly misheard the slogan "Vote Buchan, Labour") the media marketing men insisted on a clarification.

The slogan, they said, had to be *either* "Vote Labour, Vote Buchan", *or* — in desperate circumstances "You'd Buchan well better vote Labour!"

Do it yourself Party

While Labour's political strategists searched for trendy ways to pick up floating voters, at least one party was giving the "don't knows" a really hard time:

"Do not vote for (Steve) Dowsett if you want a leader to put things right for you, or simply because you can't stand the other candidates. The **Socialist Party wants only socialist votes**, and plenty of them so that we can show those who uphold this rotten system that there is a growing number of workers seeing through it."

Dowsett's campaign in the Labour marginal of Islington South culled a weighty 88 votes: **Periscope** does not have statistics to hand to check whether or not this does represent "a growing number of workers" compared to 1983. National commentators certainly failed to detect a major swing.

A political equivalent of MFI, the Socialist Party pledged that:

"it will do absolutely nothing for you. If you want to change society you can do it yourselves."

Most *Briefing* readers will only have encountered this bizarre sect (whose politics have remained proudly unchanged since 1904) around big demonstrations in Hyde Park, where sellers of their *Socialist Standard* shout the catchy phrase "Don't work for wages".

This year, however, the SPGB's election slogan was "Last time you voted for crumbs: This time vote for the bakery!"

Surely among the bone-headed propaganda campaigns, this small political dinosaur must at least take the cake?

The Red Facade

Prize for the meekest sheep dressed up in "revolutionary" wolf's clothing during the election must go to the tub-thumping Revolutionary Communist Party and their "Red Front".

Their candidates of course picked up a predictably derisory vote in their 17 target constituencies around the country (only in Knowsley North did a Red Front candidate top the 500 mark, with their 2,882 votes averaging a mere one per cent of the **Labour** vote — 0.36% of the electorate — of those constituencies).

But behind the adventurist bravado and flashy artwork, the political content of the Red Front's platform was as feeble as it is possible to get.

With no reference to socialism, to nationalisation or expropriation, no call for workers' control, no defence of public services, no explicit discussion of the overthrow of capitalism or the smashing of the state, and no political line for the trade union movement, the "Platform for working class unity" was almost totally reformist on every issue.

David Steel could probably agree that:

"We are in favour of the widest extension of civil liberties and for (sic) equal rights for all."

And the Alliance could also have paraphrased the "Red Front's" objectives in standing:

"The Red Front cannot influence the immediate outcome of the election, but it could give shape and leadership to people's aspirations for change."

But where next for the RCP? Its platform declared that:

"A credible electoral showing for the Red Front would be a warning to the authorities that if they push us, we're going to hit back."

Having *failed* to obtain a credible electoral showing, does that mean they will now give in?

You'd expect an ultra-left red facade to come up with something completely over the top — this is just completely under the bottom.

Calling them out

Gloomy times ahead for the **Newsline** remnant of Gerry Healy's Workers' Revolutionary Party, whose ten candidates managed to secure an even lower proportion of the vote than the "Red Front". They notched up a top score of 274 in Bow and Poplar, and an average vote of 172.

The WRP ran a bazenly sectarian and reactionary campaign, going out of their way to campaign against Bernie Grant in Tottenham and singling out Haringey council's equal opportunities policies as the target for backward workerist attacks.

How will they analyse the results of this expensive and abortive series of failures?

According to *Newsline* (June 4):

"The the WRP candidates standing in the election are fighting for the mobiliation of the working class in a General Strike to end the menace of dictatorship and create the conditions for the working class to seize power."

Does the WRP's failure at the polls mean that in their view dictatorship is now inevitable? Or will *Newsline* regard its 1,721 votes as an endorsement of these policies, and the basis for an immediate General Strike call?

Does anyone really care?

I Spy a soft left

Briefing was the only serious current of Labour's hard left to spell out an alternative programme counterposed to that of Kinnock and Hattersley.

Though we clearly stamped the back page of our Election Special "Unofficial" and "Not yet endorsed by NEC", it proved sufficient to work some Fleet Street hacks and some soft lefts into a lather.

"Revealed: the Iceberg Manifesto" shrilled the ever-gullible *Daily Mail* in a front page article which offered a passable summary of our alternative programme, with the rather exaggerated claim that:

"behind the acceptable face of Mr Kinock is an ugly and revolutionary 'iceberg' manifesto with plenty of supporters to push it through."

Meanwhile in Brent East, a flustered Ken Livingstone — who had already proclaimed **Kinnock's** manifesto as "the most radical since the war" — denounced the *Briefing* response to a confused *Daily Mail* reporter:

"This is all nonsense. It is clearly aimed at damaging Labour's campaign. I would not be surprised if MI5 was involved in putting it out."

Putney debates

As Peter Hain, leading smoothie of the soft left LCC, wipes the egg from his face after a disastrous election defeat, at least he did not blame the whole failure onto "yuppies".

He has admitted that in Putney (as in Battersea — and many other parts of London) Labour's media campaign had failed to get out the vote from what should be the bedrock areas: the council estates.

But this raises an interesting question: if they weren't canvassing and knocking up the council tenants, just who exactly *did* Mr Hain and his bureaucratic campaign managers focus their attentions upon?

When duty calls

Tearful farewells and unconsolable grief marked the departure from British Leyland's Cowley Body Plant of the Reverend Tony Williamson, Labour councillor and for many years the spiritual leader of the hard-line right wing leadership of JPs, which has controlled the plant's massive TGWU branch since the war.

The tears were not from shop floor workers — hundreds of whom recently had to be physically restrained by militant stewards from attacking Williamson after he overturned a mass meeting majority and called off an overtime ban — but from his right wing cronies, who know how hard it will be to replace his skilled manoeuvring from the chair.

BL management may also soon be reaching for their hankies: it was their surprising inflexibility — refusing Williamson permission to continue in effectively a part-time role after he accepted a post as a local vicar — which forced him to leave.

Among the most regretful will be the industrial relations managers, who were able to leave most of their strike-breaking and trouble-shooting duties to Williamson and the TGWU convenor Alec Morton. Now they could be forced to work for a living.

No Sex Please: We're Tories

Thatcher's victory has brought a resurgence of illusions among the ultra-right. Within days of the election have come demands from a fanatical Tory grouping screaming the odds about AIDS and demanding that "homosexuality" be once more made illegal.

With the Harvey Proctor affair barely out of the press, Thatcher will be far from chuffed to find the "rabid right" so soon on the rampage.

And Cecil Parkinson, freshly restored to cabinet rank, will be more than peeved to find that some Tory voters want to cramp his style by insisting that contraceptives be issued only to married couples!

Which raises the question : with sex "scandals" of all sorts rife among reactionary — even fascist — politicians, and now also among red-necked, Bible-bashing US evangelists, where *is* an old-fashioned, fire-breathing, puritanical bigot to find political leadership these days? Did I hear somebody suggest the *Militant* tendency?

Detailed, damning, dustbin

The May **LCC national mailing** recommends Haringey LCC's "detailed and damning" paper on Haringey's financial crisis *The End of the Road?*

Inaccuracies and apolitical attacks on named individuals forced the local LCC to *withdraw* the paper and reissue a "cleaned-up" version. Unfortunately, even this revised edition was littered with factual errors, illogic, and double-talk.

In all its "detailed and damning" documentation, *not one* specific, positive proposal is advanced. Even on the basic question of rent rises, the LCC does not state whether it is *for* or *against*.

The End of the Road? remains an apt candidate for the dustbin of history — to which most copies of it have already been consigned.

I.A.

Prince Charles plants potato. Significant.

The not-so-bonny Prince Charles recently spent 3 days on a croft in the Hebridian island of Bernaray (population 120) to see "how people live and work and what their problems are."

The future King helped with lambing, planted potatoes, mended fences, carried in peats, and went creel fishing in the Minch. "He went along behind my husband Donald's tractor planting potatoes from a bucket," commented Chrissie MacAskill.

The question now posed is does this represent a left turn for the monarchy? Will Bea Campbell interview the Queen? Will Phillip spend the weekend in a London squat as Di distributes free cardboard boxes to the capital's destitutes?

Does Charles have a subscription to *Marxism Today*? O.H.

'Nuff said

Former UCS shop steward and Communist Party militant **Jimmy Reid** has left Robert Maxwell's Scottish *Daily Record* to join Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* newspaper.

In an interview with the *Glasgow Herald* he claimed that his attacks on Arthur Scargill during the miners' strike were done

"in response to an appeal from the leadership of the Labour Party."

"Was that Kinnock?" asked the interviewer.

"Let people draw their own conclusions," replied Reid. M.K.

History, man?

During the election, *The Guardian* ran a page of articles by famous writers declaiming their loyalties in the upcoming poll.

The Guardain apologised for being unable to find anyone to speak up for the Tories, but failed to explain the absence of *any* women writers from the page!

Malcolm Bradbury, in the course of his pledge of allegiance to the SDP, decried the dominance of British politics by what he called "outworn nineteenth century ideologies" and demanded, instead, a rebirth of "liberalism".

They call this man an intellectual!

I.A.

General Election feature



PHOTO: John Chapman

"Their time has gone"... graffiti on the Bricklayers Arms roundabout, Old Kent Road, by the Independent Campaign to Offset Liberal/SDP Lies in the Mass Media. Councillor Piers Corbyn was apprehended and cautioned by the police for alleged involvement.

Alliance tumble

The Incredible Disappearing Doctor

Bryan Gould has jibed that David Owen will now have to go off and found another country, and I think we can all be forgiven a smirk.

In electoral terms, the Alliance has been wiped out. The SDP not only failed to win seats, it lost many of its previous gains. In scenes of past triumph like Bermondsey and Greenwich, their majorities were dramatically cut.

The Liberals enjoyed more success than their partners, but still failed to consolidate their local government gains, notably in Tower Hamlets, where the electorate now realise that the Liberals are to the right of the Tories.

By Christine Shawcroft
Leader, Tower Hamlets Labour Group
(personal capacity)

As Owen mourns behind drawn curtains in E14, his estwhile colleagues queue up to stab him in the back. There now seems little chance that he can stave off a merger.

He is being blamed for insisting on the "separate but equal" policy which cost the Alliance electoral credibility, and the mind-blowingly boring campaign pitched at the "thoughtful" voter.

With his slim rump of MPs, there is no chance that he can slime his way in as Leader of the merged party. He is in too weak a position even to get the words "Social Democratic" into the title somewhere. He has a great future behind him. My money is on him joining the Tories within two years.

But before we all start dancing in the streets, we should remember there is one way in, which the SDP has been a great success, fulfilling the hopes of its Ruling Class supporters. The SDP was its insurance policy in case of a Thatcher defeat. But it has outlived its usefulness, first because she has retained a massive majority and secondly, because the Labour Party has been transfomed beyond recognition in the last couple of years.

Like many people, I felt that the departure of the Gang of Four could only do the Labour Party good in the long run. It seemed that, at last, the barristers, the public schoolboys, the Fellow Travellers who wanted a parliamentary career and decided on the Labour Party on the toss of a coin at some Oxbridge tea party, were all on the way out. The Party could now develop into a mass socialist Party of the working class.

I am now bound to say I was wrong. Under the onslaught of the Tories, the Alliance, the Tory press and other organs of the Ruling Class, the Party has shuddered and buckled and given way.

Commitment after commitment has been dumped as a "vote loser" — although funnily enough we don't seem to be winning many votes back.

After the anti-*Militant* witch-hunt, we now have the anti-*Briefing* witch-hunt, to be followed, even, by an anti-LCC witch-hunt. The talk now is of making the Labour Party the vehicle of "social democracy".

How ironic for Owen, left cursing his luck in Limehouse, when he might now be Leader of the Labour Party had he stayed. The Party he dumped because it was "too Left Wing" has moved steadily to the Right. And the Ruling Class sleep easy in their feather beds.

DON'T PANIC!

A hitch-hiker's guide to the Tories' legislative galaxy...

Thatcher will have three linked objectives for her third term:

- **Restraining inflation and maintaining tight financial control, backed by an increasingly liberal tax regime affecting both higher and basic rate of income tax.**
- **Reducing the size of the public sector — and hence Labour's natural constituency — by continuing the privatisation programme.**
- **Enlarging that section of the working class with a stake in "popular capitalism", through new policies on housing and local government.**

Most of the obstacles to this programme have been destroyed: the unions are in legislative shackles, with a timid leadership, a relatively docile and declining membership and limited resources. The left-wing local authorities have been isolated by a combination of press vilification and restrictive legislation. There are no discernible clouds on the international financial scene. The opposition parties are busy licking their wounds.

However, there is one major fly in the Tory ointment. The fiscal numbers just do not add up. In order to pay for the commitment to reduced income tax and the maintenance of some public services (necessitated by their perceived vulnerability on "caring" issues) Lawson and Thatcher will not only have to sell the family silver by privatising water and electricity, they will be faced by hard choices on the expenditure side which may land them in considerable political difficulty.

The main candidates for cost-cutting and tax raising are as follows:

- increasing use of VAT as a tax on expenditure;
- reductions in defence commitment and spending;
- reduced income support to the poor and unemployed;
- further cuts in central government support to local authorities;
- more one-off sales of publicly-owned assets.

Many things could still go wrong for the Tories: a substantial increase in commodity prices; a collapse in the dollar, and currency chaos forcing deflationary policies.

But if the last eight years teach anything, it is that the economy can be run on an equilibrium basis at substantially less than full employment, and with minimal political cost to the governing party.

By Reg Race
Tottenham CLP

Labour's task, in this difficult context, is to *discredit* the legislative programme and economic policies, linking such arguments *always* to the destruction of the hegemonic ideas which have been used to win major sections of the working class to the cause of Conservatism.

The big policy initiatives will come in local government, the inner cities, education, industry, and welfare benefits.

Local Authorities

- The Tories will legislate to *outlaw contract compliance* procedures that go beyond so-called "legitimate" concerns. Obligations under the Race Relations Act 1976, the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Sex Discrimination Act may well be excluded or administratively hampered. Also of concern is a grey area — on which the Tories have not committed themselves — of enforcement in local authority contracts of good employment practices, such as minimum rates of pay, conditions of services, and trade union membership.
- The Tories are committed to limit further the freedom of local authorities to *publicise their policies and achievements*, and to criticise government policy. Specifically, they will seek to reverse the amendments made to the 1986 Local Government Act by the House of Lords and may seek to make the Code of Local Authority Publicity mandatory.

Some projected weekly increases in Council rents
Camden, £31
Lewisham, Tower Hamlets, £18
Islington, £17
Haringey, £16
Oxford, £6.63

- Thatcher will reintroduce proposals to make a wide range of *housing powers subject to Ministerial consent procedures* and implement major changes to *Housing Revenue Accounts*. They will be "ring-fenced" to prevent subsidy being given to housing revenue accounts from the General Rate Fund — leading to steep rises in Council rents in many Labour-controlled authorities (see table).

The Tories also plan to give existing council tenants a statutory right to opt out of Council ownership and become tenants of housing associations or approved private landlords. Minorities, i.e. tenants who *do not wish* to be transferred, will be compelled by law to accept new landlords.

- Domestic rates will be abolished, and a national, uniform *business rate* introduced. A so-called *Community Charge* (Poll Tax) payable by all individuals aged over 18 will be introduced to replace domestic rates. Even pensioners and those on social security benefits will have to pay at least 20% of their poll tax bill.

A uniform national increase in benefits will compensate only *in part* for the tax liability. It will not *provide 100% compensation*.

The poor and pensioners in areas where poll tax will be high will face greatly increased expenses. Camden pensioners, for example, will probably have to pay £50 a year out of their benefit in poll tax.

Some poll tax levels will be truly staggering. The table shows average rate bills in some London Boroughs, and the Government's own projections for poll tax.

Not everyone will lose out. The *richest* fraction of the population, living in the largest and highest rated houses, will obtain the *maximum* benefit. Thus, Margaret Thatcher and millionaire husband Dennis will save *£37 a week* on their mock-Georgian retirement home in Dulwich. Secretary of State for Scotland Malcolm Rifkind would save *£577 a year* on his plush home at 8 Old Church Street, Edinburgh.

Borough	Existing (average)	Poll Tax 2 person household	Poll Tax 3 person household
Camden	£440	£1538	£2307
Greenwich	£324	£1344	£2016
Hackney	£372	£1296	£1944
Lambeth	£381	£1280	£1920
Tower Hamlets	£322	£1348	£2022

- Also planned are new, as yet undefined, controls on local authority capital expenditure.
- Local authoritites will be *compelled to privatise*. Compulsory tendering will be introduced for refuse collection and street cleaning, cleaning of buildings, catering services, ground maintenance, and vehicle maintenance. Ministers will also be empowered by statutory instrument to extend the tendering system to other services.

Inner Cities

The Conservatives will by-pass elected local authorities, by establishing new *Urban Development Corporations* under a remit to "regenerate" inner city areas. They will follow the model of the London Docklands Development Corporation which is now leasing land to international bankers at £400,000 an acre when the market value is at least £3 million an acre.

This yuppification masked as "regeneration" relies on closed door policy-making at the dictates of Whitehall, and ignores all the real industrial and social needs of the area.

Education

A strong middle class lobby in support of state education poses problems for Thatcher. Her proposals to initiate a national core curriculum for regular testing of children, for the right of individual schools to opt-out from local authority control, and for changes in the UGC system (including the end of academic tenure), are certain to provoke determined resistance.

Industry

Water, electricity supply and generation, British Airports, and the remaining tranche of BP shares, will be sold off. Here, the major problems for the Tories lie in the difficulties over safety and quality in the water industry and siting of capacity, and control over nuclear power stations and fission products.

Benefits

Major changes brought in by the 1986 Social Security Act will take effect in April 1988. Single payments to claimants will be replaced by loans. "Workfare" is to be introduced for the young unemployed, forcing them to submit their services to the state. The new rule of thumb will be "no work, no dole".

This is a formidable legislative and financial programme. Their aim is to pursue yet further the creation of a sectionalised working class, dependent on capitalism for marginal benefits not granted to all. The Imperialist Tories of the 19th Century live again.

General Election debate

Flawed method that did not work

By Reg Race
Tottenham CLP

It would be very easy to discuss Labour's failure in the General Election campaign in terms of gloss, glitz and roses. This would be a fundamental mistake.

The image that the new model Kinnock Party put across is important in two respects: it did not work; and it was symbolic of an approach to politics by the leadership which is deeply flawed.

It would be wrong to go beyond this position and argue that Labour should *not* use opinion polls, that it should *not* present itself in a compelling manner to the electorate, and that it should produce boring leaflets and political broadcasts.

At least Kinnock has done one important thing: he has allowed flair, imagination and professional skills to be used on publicity to replace the clapped-out old bureaucrats and hacketes who have "run" every failed Labour campaign since 1955.

Labour's share of the popular vote was its second lowest since 1918. The Party won fewer seats than that required for a "credible" result, from the leadership's point of view. Post election surveys demonstrate quite plainly *that it is in the working class and on its margins that Labour is weak*.

Skilled workers, junior clerical workers, and supervisors (the C2s) have been imbued with the tenets of Thatcherism more succesfully than any other section of the population. In contrast, the intelligentsia and public sector white collar workers have moved to Labour over the past 20 years.

To listen to some comrades talk, one might believe that the North-South divide was absolute and that it was a new phenomenon. This is nonsense. Labour has been losing support in rural and "small town" seats in the South of England for thirty years; who now remembers that Labour used to hold Colchester, Sudbury, Chelmsford, Faversham, Dover, Frome, Taunton, Falmouth and Camborne, Wycombe, Northampton and Norfolk South-West?

In the General Election of February 1979, the Liberals replaced Labour as the principal second-placed opposition party to the Conservatives in large chunks of Southern England.

It is quite ludicrous to regard the results in the South as something new, based upon a so-called "London effect". The facts are that Labour has been doing better than average in big city Britain for many years, and worse in rural and small town Britain.

The "Southern Effect" is linked to long-term changes in the perceptions of individuals' class positions; to the growth of service and financial employment at high wages or in non-unionised environments; and — specifically in the last decade — to specific support for toughness in government and a set of ruling ideas which emphasise balancing the books, giving incentives and punishing those who are seen to be less worthy because they are poor or helpless.

The creation of this new ideology has been a deliberate ruling class policy: an attempt to split the unity of working class interests in a similar fashion to that of Tory Imperialism.

These factors can explain a large percentage of the dreadful results in Bristol, Swindon, Slough, Harlow, Basildon, Thurrock, and elsewhere. But it is also clear that Labour's results in London were generally very poor. Given the positive performance of Labour in the inner cities and the level of genuine deprivation in London, Labour should have walked many constituencies in the capital where there were Tory gains or very poor results. Not all of these can be put down to yuppie invasions, racism, or press vilification of Labour councils' policies.

Labour will *never* win a majority in London unless it improves radically the presentation by Councils of their progressive policies; and it cannot win if it writes off sections of the white working class and does not deal effectively with their concerns — principally over jobs and the state of much Council-owned housing.

The Labour campaign was slick, glossy and had low content, a conclusion encapsulated by the decision to scrap the planned party eletion broadcast on unemployment and replace it with a re-run of Hugh Hudson's clever portrayal of Kinnock as leader. There was a consistent refusal to address class issues; and Kinnock totally distanced himself from London and its large crop of marginal seats.

Kinnock himself is in a strengthened position. There is now little chance of a right wing PLP putsch against him, and he will be able to continue governing on the basis of the tripod of support he has built: the fawning ineffectiveness of the trade union bureaucracies; the loyal support of the centre-right of the PLP, who see Kinnock as the best man to ditch left wing policies and procedures; and the credulity of the centre-left grouping in the PLP who want jobs and are happy to see patronage coming their way.

I predict that there will be a concerted move to isolate and vilify the left by further socialist-bashing, more expulsions through the NCC, and the introduction of one person one vote in Parliamentary selections. This policy in particular will be designed to end the prospect of left gains in the PLP and give a greater role in the selection of candidates to Mr Kinnock and journalists from the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail*.

There will also be attempts to shed policies that are thought to be "vote-costly". Economic policy is already in ruins; the next casualty will be unilateral nuclear disarmament, which will be ditched as rapidly as possible.

The election campaign, and Labour's anodyne manifesto, show plainly that conference decisions count for nothing and that the only real power that exists is concentrated in the Leader's office and the Shadow Cabinet.

The position of both Labour and the left is perilous. Even a Kinnockite Labour Party will require the destruction of Thatcherism's key ideas if it is to prosper: the erosion of the idea that the books have to be balanced; that "housewifely economics" is the only true path; and that people have to look after themselves and sod the rest.

Bluntly, we will not be able to secure the election of even a minority Labour government until we have re-convinced large sections of the electorate of the validity of socialist ideas.

Only the left in the Party can lead the way. It must assist the Campaign Group to work actively in the country for the propagation of socialist ideas. We must *relaunch* socialism as an active political force.

We need to rebuild our base in the constituencies and trade unions, now heavily eroded by Thatcher and Kinnock; and we must rigorously use the selection process to select committed socialists, and not posers, as parliamentary candidates.

Finally, we should be quite determined to make the costs of a right wing attack on the left so huge that it becomes impossible to pay it.

It will take time, perhaps a great deal of it, to rebuild the Left's voter appeal and the left itself. The political weather will change. The future is in our hands. But it would be tragic if the judgement of history on the 1987 election turned out to be that it was the election which saw the re-creation of an unelectable Labourism.



Kinnock mobbed by the media at the pre-election rally held in Islington (see right)

Win back Tory voters!

Thatcher's most notable achievement did not appear in the Conservative manifesto: it was her remarkable feat of political engineering.

She has created swathes of new working class Conservatives. They showed up in their thousands on election night in the swings to the Conservatives in parts of London in the South East, in the hinterlands of industrial Yorkshire and Lancashire.

By Hilary Wainwright
(Socialist Society)

They are not the deferential, cap duffing kind. They are the thrusting, greedy type: earning a good wage and expecting better; owning their home and expecting to sell it at a profit; living in areas where the labour movement culture has been pulversied by the bulldozers of industrial and social change.

Labour's campaign, aimed at reviving the traditions of the past, might have warmed the cockles of the traditional Labour voter — unemployed, a council tenant and/or part of the collective culture of labour — but it left these new Conservatives completely cold.

Nostalgia for the values of the welfare state was not enough to convince them that Labour could both improve the standards of the education and health systems *and* provide the economic prosperity that this select section of the working class are enjoying. Yet unless Labour wins the support of these voters we could face Conservative governments for years to come.

One response to this is to say the campaign was fine, the problem was the spectre of the left which though physically banished, under house arrest in Chesterfield, Bradford and elsewhere, could never be completely exorcised.

This is the predominant analysis coming from the leadership's office and it lies behind the next stage in the leadership's plans to "clean up" the party.

Another response is to ignore the problem and assume there is sufficient support still untapped in Labour's class heartlands. Although there is evidence of a low turnout in council estates and among the unemployed, it is wishful thinking to assume their votes wuld produce a Labour victory. On the whole they would simply produce higher majorities in Labour-held seats.

Anyway, the problem of convincing them that it is worth turning out to vote Labour still remains and from a different angle is similar to the problem of winning the support of the more satisfied sections of the working class. It is on this issue.

This brings me to a third response, the one for which I would argue. This is to identify a programme which connects with the material circumstances of these new Conservative voters — which, in the long term, are not as wonderful as they think. Labour's election campaign failed to provide such a programme.

The problem was not the techniques of the campaign, we should not scoff at the skills of the "shadow advertising" group, but the content, or rather the lack it. Here the most dramatic failure was the absence of a credible economic strategy.

At Walworth Rd the party's pollsters were saying that the majority of voters did not understand Labour's economic policy, and those that did were not convinced — not surprising since Labour's main spokespeople did not appear very convinced either.

They muttered, soto voce, about the National Economic Assessment and the British Enterprise Board knowing that the next question would be "Isn't that rather reminiscent of the failed Social Contract and the National Enterprise Board?" — "Well, um... the trade unions have given us their commitment... the enterprise board would not take on lame ducks."

The left needs to make good this hopelessness on economic policy. It has the components: the alternative principles for intervening in production (including technology) developed by several left local councils and trade unions: the proposals for financial controls put forward by Andrew Glyn; the beginnings of co-operation on an international scale across Europe and with the Third which are an essential basis for any convincing socialist economics.

The need to pull these strands together into a coherent programme is urgent. A major international slump is round the corner. The government's response will be nationalistic, and anti-Japanese. There will be strong pressures for a bi-partisan approach. The Labour leadership, bound as it is to Great Britain patriotism, will fail to come up with an alternative.

● Hilary Wainwright's book on the Labour Party, *Labour: A Tale of Two Parties* (Chatto & Windus, £5.95) will be out in September.

● The Socialist Society, with the Campaign Group, the Conference of Socialist Economists, *Labour Briefing*, END and others are organising a conference in the autumn on major policy issues. For details contact the Socialist Society, 9 Poland Street, London W1.

PHOTO: Pandora Anderton, The Next Step



PHOTO: Morning Star

Right-wing razzamatazz

Labour has fought a brilliant campaign! Everybody says so. The only problem is that we lost!

A couple of *Briefing* supporters on special assignment infiltrated a Kinnock Rally at the Business Design Centre, Islington, to see what the Labour Party's new image was all about.

On the way in, our intrepid reporters were searched for *Militant* newspapers and any other nasty left propaganda. The stewards cast their eyes over *Labour Briefing*, consulted with their superiors, and pushed us through into Kinnock's political arena.

We were bowled over by the glossy packaging, the show business personalities, balloons on the ceiling, streamers on the balcony tables, with messages telling us when to throw them.

The whole event was a forum for Kinnock's personality, not for politics. The rally carefully ignored everything that the election campaign had also been silent on; crucial issues such as Labour's defence policy, the economy, racism and sexuality. Safe not socialist politics was the flavour of the month in a campaign aimed at the white heterosexual nuclear family.

By Kate Adams and Ian Millichap
Hackney North CLP

The atmosphere was an odd mixture of exaggerated euphoria and unease, caused by the intimidating presence of stewards and police. The audience was mainly white, and the whole afternoon took on the air of a moral crusade for freedom with the emphasis on Christian ethics. You know the sort of thing: we (the Labour Party) are good and kind, and they (the Tories) are nasty and uncaring.

The crunch came when this was challenged by anti-deportation campaigners demanding to know whether Labour would close down the Harwich immigrant Prison Ship and lift the deportation order on Viraj Mendis.

As the protestors attempted to make themselves heard over the booming public address system they were bundled out by Labour Party stewards. One woman was roughed up to the extent that she ended up on her knees coughing and choking outside the hall.

A *Briefing* supporter was also ejected for refusing to hand over his newspapers on the grounds that he might sell them inside the hall. He was marched to the exit surrounded by stewards.

These events were foreshadowed by a series of similar incidents a week before at the Kaufmann rally, when five people were arrested after raising questions regarding thr repeal of the Public Order and Immigration Acts.

At the close of the Islington rally Kinnock delivered a short speech, carefully timed for the 6.00pm news bulletin, and the audience delivered their rapturous applause and cheers. It was a speech full of rhetoric but devoid of any politics.

True to form Kinnock had determinedly told the left to "shut up" during the General Election Campaign. Any attempt to challenge or criticise was quashed, for example Sharon Atkin's deselection for speaking out against racism and supporting Black Sections. This kind of censorship under the guise of a moral and humane leadership is frightening. It is just a taste of things to come.

Desperate to save face after Labour's glorious defeat Kinnock is determined to give the left another bashing. The first move is outlined in plans to introduce the One-Person-One-Vote system in the reselection process for parliamentary candidates — a neat way of eliminating political debate.

If we want socialism, not Kinnockism, the left must stand firm and refuse to be silent.



Atkins, speaking at the Briefing Socialist Policies ence earlier this year

The hard sell that missed soft centre

By Sharon Atkin

The general election result was disappointing — although predictable — given the fact that a campaign geared to appease the middle ground rather than putting forward bold socialist policies was bound to fail.

The approach of using advertising firms who were more used to selling cornflakes and soap suds rather than a political message proves that the policies — as far as we were able to ascertain what they were — were bankrupt.

This is a longstanding, deep-rooted problem, which has dogged the Labour Party since the 1985 conference in Bournemouth.

Kinnock's speech laid the basis for a move against the left, and against the kind of policies which would inevitably bring a real, radical change to society.

The discarding of our red flag for the rose was symptomatic of a leadership which was trying to recapture the middle ground who would more naturally support the SDP/Tories.

Yet the SDP vote collapsed in this election, showing that the majority of people in this country are looking for strong leadership, with policies they feel will benefit the electorate as a whole.

The failure of the Labour Party to win the support of working class people — Black and white — proves we on the left have to go on the offensive in order that the next 4 years sees a real development of radical socialist policies. Only then can we as a Party hold out any real hope of change for the mass of people, i.e. those who are unemployed, homeless, sick and who need education, and recapture the Party to the benefit of the masses.

The problems that have dogged the left over the years are not so much to do with ideology but priorities and timing. While I am opposed to realignment, I believe it is necessary for groups on the left to organise around the central issues that are affecting us all.

It is apparent that in the wake of the election defeat there will be expulsions and attacks on people who were silent and marginalised during the run up to the election campaign. We must demand now that socialism returns to the Labour Party and insist that no one is expelled and that there is an end to witch hunts so that those people who have fought on the issues can take up their rightful position in steering the Labour Party into the 1990s with correct, bold policices.

Many people have likened Kinnock's approach to that of Gaitskell. For a number of us on the left his policies and actions are reminiscent of that former leader of the Party!

However, Gaitskell never became prime minister and therefore history has taught us a valuable lesson. To ditch policies like unilateralism, to marginalise campaigns for black rights and self-determination, and downplay women will mean whole chunks of society are dispossessed and disenfranchised.

We must question Kinnock. He can't hide behind a veil of trade unionists, claiming that he really won the campaign — he just lost the war! When are we going to get a leadership which wants to fight for socialism and develop the policies on home and international issues which can bring freedom to the working class? That's the question we must ask him.



Terry French interview

The miners will be back!

Two years after the Great Miners' Strike ended, 300 miners remain sacked. Many of the victimised miners have now become impatient with the official, low-profile, "don't-rock-the-boat-till-after-the-election" strategy of the NUM.

A rolling campaign of flying pickets of sacked miners has been working its way through the coalfields area by area in an attempt to push the issue to the fore. The goal is a *one day national strike* in the autumn.

The campaign is led by TERRY FRENCH, a sacked Kent Miner, who has spent the last two years since the strike in prison. *Briefing* interviewed him after he spoke at a packed meeting organised by the Yorkshire Miners' Campaign Group, a vigorous rank and file organisation of NUM militants.



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

Terry French

***Briefing:* What do you remember most about your time in prison?**
Terry: That's a difficult one! It's a completely different life. You fight hard to maintain the links with your family and your friends and contacts outside. But it's impossible. It splits you in two. So I decided to devote my time to fighting within the prison.

***Briefing:* How did the other prisoners react to that?**
Terry: If it was an issue that affected everyone, then the response was 100% solid. But if it was one lad being victimised, then the rest of them didn't want to know. I had to be devious and pick the issues.

When I first came out and addressed meetings I would get so emotional I would cry. I don't do that now.

The Doncaster action put new heart into me and made me want to carry on. I'm a class fighter and proud of it. The authorities regarded me as disruptive in prison and they wanted me out.

***Briefing:* Why has the picketing been organised in such secrecy?**
Terry: We were open about it in April, but then it was put about that if any industrial action came about because of the involvement of the sacked men then they would be the ones that wouldn't get their jobs back on the final review! Some of the men say that it was coming from Sammy Thompson (newly elected Vice President of the NUM).

I checked this. It was a total lie. The Coal Board had said nothing of the sort. Every time we try to go public, Area officials scotch it. Rumours are being spread and I want to avoid the situation of branch against branch or the whole thing will collapse.

That's the only reason for the secrecy. But we have done the groundwork and in June or July we will be able to write to the Area panels and say "we are coming".

***Briefing:* Why was it necessary to embark on this campaign?**
Terry: If we can't fight for our own futures with the help of the men at the pits then it's a sorry day. I've said at meetings up and down the country that there are only two groups of people who are going to get our jobs back — that's us, the sacked lads, and the lads at the pit-point.

The sacked lads have been used by the Area officials as a lever saying "don't rock the boat, lads, or we won't get these men their jobs back." And what's happened? The miners have been kicked from arseholes to breakfast time.

***Briefing:* How do you judge the feelings of the miners? There's been lots of sporadic action, at Selby, Durham, and Doncaster, and a lot of resentment at the Coal Board's actions.**

Terry: The feeling is the same all over the country. I think it would be easier to call a national strike now than it was in '84. That's how I see it. But I want concerted action, disciplined, organised — not a couple of days here and there. This has to be built.

We'll have to do what we did in '72, '74 and '84 — and that's take the bureaucrats along with us. Because it was us that fought those strikes and it's only because we lost in '85 that the bureaucrats have got the heel on us.

***Briefing:* It's been said in the Yorkshire coalfield that you are anti-union and anti-Scargill.**
Terry: When I was allowed out of prison on home leave I spent Friday and Saturday on the Wapping picket line and on the Sunday I addressed a fringe meeting at the TUC conference in Brighton for the Campaign Group of MPs.

Sat on my left was Arthur Scargill. I said, "Arthur, I'll follow you till the end of the world" — and I meant it.

He has done us no wrong. There is a barrier between Arthur Scargill and the rank and file and that is the Area barons who are stifling things. They don't want any trouble.

***Briefing:* What have you done to take the fight into the branches?**
Terry: When I attend meetings I push that miners should get to their branches and get resolutions for action going. I want to go through the framework of the Union. I don't want to go as a maverick. None of us wants that.

But the union is just not doing it. They've got to be kicked.

***Briefing:* You have spoken about getting the NUM back for the rank and file. What do you feel about a national organisation of the rank and file?**
Terry: It could well come out of this action. If the NUM hasn't called a national conference of the sacked miners by the time of the Annual NUM Conference, then we'll have our own conference of sacked miners right next door.

***Briefing:* Do you see a role for yourself in bringing together a broad left?**
Terry: There is far too much sectarian back-biting going on between the various left groups, too much emphasis on promoting their own narrow interests. The way that the strike politicised the lads into different groupings has made the organising of a broad left harder now than it was before the strike.

If I can get left-wing lads who are mainly interested in the miners, then I'll go along with it. But all the RCP and *Militant* seem to be interested in is gaining control of the NUM.

***Briefing:* How do you see the fight for the sacked miners developing from here?**
Terry: It's been a softly, softly approach. Different areas are doing their own thing. It must be widened out to a national campaign.

The only thing the Coal Board is able to understand is being booted. The only time they have ever negotiated is when the miners come from a position of strength.

The campaign we have now, rolling from area to area, will give us that fight. At the same it's letting the ordinary rank and file miners feel their muscle, feel their strength, feel their unity again. And it's working.

Unfortunately we are being blocked by the trepidation of the Area officials. If we can overcome that, and they begin to see the strength of the rank and file behind them, then we'll succeed.

***Briefing:* What do you think the *Justice for Mineworkers Campaign* has achieved?**
Terry: In financial terms quite a bit. I might be wrong, but I don't see that it's got any jobs back.

***Briefing:* Did you feel the Labour Party offered the sacked miners anything in the General Election campaign?**
Terry: Kinnock has said that following a Labour victory the cases of the sacked men would be reviewed. But I have heard from a prominent Labour politician that all the lads will get their jobs back. Kinnock is still riding on the fence. Trying not to upset anyone.

***Briefing:* What would you like other trade unionists to do to give you support?**
Terry: It's been mooted that there will come a time when we ought to broaden out to include Hanger's, Silentnight, Wapping, etc., and I've no doubt that will happen. But at the moment we are having a struggle keeping our own campaign on the road — especially financially. It's putting a strain on or families, travelling all over. But we're doing it!

***Briefing:* How do you see the role of groups like this — the Yorkshire Miners Campaign Group?**
Terry: Very important. One of the first things I wrote about from prison was the role of the support groups. Looking back, the only concrete victory we had from the strike was the support groups. The worst thing possible was to allow them to disintegrate, break up and fold.

We had an organisation second to none. They were so important and should have been kept together if for nothing else but for when the miners come again — and they will, they will.



Liz French, speaking at the launch meeting of the South East Region Justice for Mineworkers Campaign

COHSE Conference

Will COHSE mount a fight?

Delegates to this year's COHSE conference have a choice: to bend the knee before the Tory government or start the real defence of workers' living conditions and end the steady retreat that has occurred over the past eight years.

The conference meets at a time when despite the Tory pre-election handout to the nurses, over 200,000 NHS ancillary staff — and hundreds of thousands of technical and clerical grades — have been offered only a derisory 4% increase.

Yet so far the manual unions have focussed attention on timid pleas for a nurses-style pay review body to offer a bigger rise!

For COHSE to throw in the towel on pay would be seen by the Tories as a green light to hammer home a new wave of attacks on the jobs and conditions of the lowest-paid health workers.

Similarly, the threat of further privatisations — with portering and other services next in line for wage cuts and the attentions of multinational contract firms — must be combatted.

The impact of Tory anti-union laws must also be challenged by this year's Conference. The COHSE practice of electing NEC members from Regional Councils is under

By Dave Fowler

legal challenge — with a threat to impose ballots.

Of course this Tory concern for "democracy" extends only to the unions: *nobody* — least of all health workers — gets to elect the health authorities who nod through privatisation, cuts and closures.

New rules to comply with Tory legislation could make it impossible to adopt positive discrimination proposals to rectify the appalling male domination of COHSE's leadership bodies in a union where over 75% of the membership is female.

Meanwhile attempts to entrench the nursing profession as an elite within the NHS through more stringent training schemes and entrance qualifications are being linked to the introduction of menial "helper" grades on rock bottom pay, and lots of YTS schemes to enlist jobless youth.

The whole YTS structure has depended on union connivance: COHSE should be taking the lead in warning of the consequences for health services if the Tory plans continue unchallenged. The Scottish TUC has already opposed these new schemes.

As a union whose main powerbase is in the big psychiatric hospitals, COHSE also has most to lose by Tory moves to force through cheap-skate "community care" schemes which have already left tens of thousands of patients without support. A serious campaign for real and continuing care to replace the large Victorian asylums is essential for both the union and for the patients.

COHSE's deliberations come against a background of looming crisis in many areas of the NHS, as health authorities run up against rigid cash limits — and after four years in which health workers have been among the more militant sections of the working class.

The need to link up with other health unions, with non-health unions, and local campaigns and make efforts to persuade Labour Parties to take an interest in health struggles has never been stronger.

Hangers' dispute ends

Union leaders sacrifice Hangers workers

At their meeting on May 18th, a written offer was presented to the Hangers' sacked workers, whose numbers had falled during the dispute from the original 300 to 126 men.

This time, as had been expected, the men accepted the paltry offer mainly because they believed that they would be dropped by the union hierarchy if they didn't.

Thus eight months of a peaceful dispute, mainly ignored by the national press, ended — with all receiving about £4,000, whether they had been apprentices or in service 15 years. Those who had been in long term service received £5,000 — not much for 40 years redundancy pay.

Although the final offer was only financial and no jobs offered, the general feeling was that about 30-40 jobs would be made available after the dispute

By Kathy Pick
Wandsworth councillor, Putney CLP

finished. So far no jobs have been offered, but the firm is taking names of those who would like to return!

Management have been advertising some of the jobs, at least in the *London Standard*, but at much lower rates than paid previously. Jobs which paid £204 were being advertised for £120.

When asked if the General Election had been a factor in ending the dispute, Graham Croucher of the disputes committee discounted any possible pressure from Kinnock. Graham said the support they had received had been from the Labour Party across its entire spectrum.

He did believe, however, that they were let down by the union hierarchy. TASS has a policy that if any dispute is not settled within three months, it probably won't be settled.

After 4 months the General Secretary of FTAT, Colin Christopher, and John Jones, a high official of TASS, colluded and definitely started pressurising the disputes committee.

However, when the sacked limbmakers rejected the third final offer, union officials including Jones and Christopher met company officials and excluded the disputes committee from these secret negotiations. The union officials then persuaded the union executive to recommend acceptance of a deal. When the 2 full time union officers complained they were carpeted. The hidden agenda was that if the workforce didn't accept the final offer, the Hangers' strike would be dropped in a similar way to that at Silentnight.

Definitely one major problem for the Hangers' disputes committeee has been the union bureaucracy.

Hangers' management showed their caring attitude a fortnight ago when they sacked an apprentice who is also an amputee. He had injured himself at work. When he returned after 8 weeks of sick leave, Hangers sacked him on the grounds that the college assessed that he "might not be able to pass his exams". When union office Les Harrison raised the case, he was treated in a very offhand manner. As Graham Croucher says, "it shows the utter contempt and lack of any commitment Hangers' management has to the disabled."

The May 29th social which had been originally plannd by the Women's Support Group to raise morale turned out to be the final event of this splendid group of workers and their families.

Peter Hain was presented with a £100 cheque for Putney Labour Party, and similar cheques went to the four other local Labour Parties. They presented their Women's Support Group with £100 and also sent £25 to *Labour Briefing* to say thank you in its pages to all who had supported with time and money.

I personally was overwhelmed when presented with a £25 Marks and Sparks voucher thanking me for all my support during the dispute. Special badges have been made to commemorate the dispute and I shall wear mine with honour.



PHOTO: Andrea Campbell

NALGO CONFERENCE REPORT

Can left provide a strategy?

NALGO conference in Blackpool demonstrated that a minority that is prepared to fight on still exists, despite the defeats of abolition, rate-capping, privatisation, and the re-election of a Tory government.

This minority has to confront the demoralisation of the membership and the lack of lead from the NEC.

However, it was able to win delegates on a number of important issues against the recommendations of the NEC, thereby showing that it is still possible to organise a fightback.

The most important decision of conference was to ballot the membership for the establishment of a political fund. A recent Court injunction had restrained NALGO from pursuing its "Make People Matter" campaign during the election period.

Delegates and the NEC agreed that a political fund was necessary in order to continue campaigning against the government. But delegates threw out an amendment from the NEC and decided instead

By Fred Leplat
ILEA NALGO

that the ballot should occur as soon as possible.

This decision marks a step towards the politicisation of the union. A vigorous campaign for a "yes" vote will have to be carried out to overcome the demoralisation and conservatism of large sections of the membership.

The "militant" minority showed its strength on the local government pay claim when it was able to muster a third of the delegates to reject the employers' pay offer. If members on the left of the National Local Government Committee had opposed the offer, conference might have rejected it. Unfortunately, NALGO has now abandoned its low pay campaign, and the opportunity to relaunch, will not present itself again in the near future.

The support of conference delegates was won on other issues which the NEC opposed, such as the launch of an investigation into allegations by *Searchlight* that a fascist organiser is currently employed by NALGO and for his dismissal if the case is proven; compensation from NALGO funds to a shop steward who was sacked after an official strike; and ending NALGO's ambiguous position on the Middle East by disaffiliating from Trade Union Friends of Israel while still maintaining links with Palestinian organisations.

Ireland was also debated and delegates adopted a resolution in favour of a united Ireland, although an amendment from the NEC stating that this should be done by peaceful means was also carried. The resolution included a list of anti-repression and anti-discrimination demands. This means that NALGO has the most progressive policy on Ireland of any union. An amendment for British military and political withdrawal managed to obtain the support of a quarter of conference.

Conference also condemned the NEC for delaying publication of the Positive Action Working Party Report and for its narrow circulation. Decisions on this report were thus deferred again, despite clear support from the Conference for its recommendations.

Labour Briefing supporters were actively campaigning on the issues mentioned above. We are also helping with the difficult task of re-establishing a Broad Left. A four-page bulletin was distributed to delegates at the beginning of the week, and a 400-strong fringe meeting was organised with the *Morning Star* on the theme "NALGO for Labour".

This meeting marks an important step in launching an effective campaign for the political fund, and for starting to raise affiliation of NALGO to the Labour Party.

Despite the success of the Left on some issues at Conference, it faces an uphill struggle to provide a lead against Tory attacks on local government. These attacks will include privatisation, the sale of council estates, the break-up of the ILEA, the undermining of national negotiations, and a further turn of the rate-capping screw.

The left needs to be more systematically organised in the districts of the union and at a national level in order to present a national strategy for fighting the attacks on council workers. The NEC presented no such strategy to the conference, and will by default leave it up to individual branches to defend themselves.

Civil Service Unions

Right wing shirk commitments

After 12 weeks of selective action, the Civil Service Pay Campaign has reached a critical stage.

The programme of rolling 2 day regional strikes has left the government unmoved and both the main unions involved must face up to the bald fact: *only all-out action can win*.

The Broad Left in CPSA has been saying this virtually since the beginning of the campaign. While it was recognised that some preliminary selective action was necessary, there was always a danger that it would become an end in itself.

This is effectively what has happened. The nature of the selective action has resulted in a *loss* of momentum and has divided the unions into isolated geographical and sectional units. The task of reversing this trend will be a big one, but it must be tackled now.

It also has to be recognised that the job will be that much harder now than it would have been when the option of all-out strike was posed during CPSA Conference, just 6 weeks ago. At that time the Board Left (backed by the then right-wing NEC(I)) were defeated by soft left pressure, both within the Union — in the

By Alastair Wallace
CPSA Broad Left

form of the Kinnockite BL '84 Group — and outside it —from the SCPS leadership. They argued that the "Time was not right" for all-out action, and put foward the alternative of continued selective regional strikes.

It is this strategy which has been instrumental in allowing the mood of militancy to slip away. It is also, ironically, this strategy that the new Broad Left-controlled Executive has inherited. Furthermore, the intervening period has seen the re-election of the Tories who are obviously hell-bent on extracting total capitulation.

The question is therefore posed very starkly for both CPSA and SCPS: either we take them on or we abandon the campaign. The CPSA leadership has opted to fight. At a meeting last week the NEC committed the union to an all-out strike ballot.

The main question is the attitude of the SCPS leadership, who have shown no support for the all-out strategy and have talked about continuing teachers-style guerilla action.

This is not only tactically wrong — it is unachievable. Approaches will be made this week to try to get SCPS to fall into line. But with or without their support CPSA must now go for an all-out strike.

Teaching unions

Crunch time for dispute

Education will now be a top priority for the Tories.

Their attack on the present system will occur on four fronts:

● **Finalising** a scheme to abolish or restrict the negotiating rights of teachers — while the power of school management is strengthened;

● **dismantling** Labour control in the inner cities, and preventing the formation of alternative centres of education policy;

● **applying** the lessons of "privatisation" to the school system. Selling off

By Ken Jones
Socialist Teachers Alliance

publicly-owned property has allowed the Tories to create "client groups", with a vested interest in privatisation.

These groups — which extend beyond "bourgeois" sections of society — look to Thatcherism to guard their new interests.

By allowing parents to vote for a school to opt out of the system of local authority control (and eventually, to become selective) the Tories hope to create parental groupings which will battle at local level to defend their privileges.

The policy is one of creating a "Toryism in depth", so that government policies will be buttressed by new kinds of social organisation.

● **Taking the dominant role** in influencing what is (and isn't) taught in schools. Baker now intends to establish a national curriculum, backed by national testing.

So over the next five years several basic principles will be at stake, from the rights of trade unions to the future of free, non-selective state education. Is there any prospect for stopping the Tories?

The answer mst be a qualified "yes". In their schemes of industrial privatisation, the Tories have been able to deliver benefits to certain groups, without immediately, *visibly* acting to the detriment of those who don't benefit.

But the opting out scheme and the selectivity to which it will lead, are something else. They will blatantly create a privileged minority, alongside an LEA system whose schools will be underfunded and lowered in status.

Many parents and students will be only too aware of this disparity, so with a modicum of imagination it should be possible to build an effective campaign against the proposals that operates at every level

Nothing can be served by removing action on these issues, except to encourage Baker to further attacks.

NCU

The National Communications Union National Executive Council elections and annual conference were dominated by the aftermath of the 3 week long strike earlier this year.

● On the pretext of overcoming temporary shortages, staff are being recruited on short term/fixed term contracts. Subcontractors are also being widely introduced.

● Union organisation is under attack, including withdrawal of facilities and the refusal to negotiate meaningfully.

● Most seriously of all, management is systematically victimising union activists, especially in the strategic City District. Elected branch officials, reps and activists have been arbitrarily moved from their headquarters.

By Pete Cooper
NCU

Clearly a major defence campaign is required, both to defend these members and to prevent further sackings.

The incoming Broad Left executive is therefore faced with a mounting attack by BT. They will, of course, be aided and abettted by Golding, who wants to sell jobs regardless of Conference decisions

It has to be seen whether the predominantly soft left Broad Left majority is capable of withstanding these combined forces; but the omens are not good. The membership which showed such magnificent unity and solidarity during the strike is not defeated. But the Broad Left needs to map out a strategy to meet the challenge of an aggressive management for profits and jobs.

Labour Party

One member, one vote

Who are the real democrats?

Predictably, the Labour leadership has already started trying to pin the blame for our election defeat on the left and new moves to attack the power of the left within the Party are underway.

At this year's Conference another attempt will be made to amend the Constitution to introduce some form of the so-called "one member, one vote" system for selecting and reselecting parliamentary candidates.

By Jane Stockton
Oxford East CLP

It's all in the name of increasing Party democracy, of course, but pushed hardest by the very people who fought against the introduction of mandatory reselection in the first place.

Don't be taken in by their arguments about democracy. Whilst the aim of this move is to attack the Left, its result would be to undermine the participatory, representative system of democracy within the Labour and trade union movement.

At present not only can all members have a say in the democratic election of their representatives, but the system forces those representatives to remain democractically accountable to the members who elected them. The change to a "one member, one vote" system (particularly if based on postal voting) would be an attack on activism in the Party, and far from increasing democracy, would concentrate power even more into the hands of an unaccountable, self-sustaining leadership.

The argument that some members, for example those with childcare responsibilities, find it difficult to attend meetings and are thereby disenfranchised by the present system, needs to be turned on its head. The Party needs to *change to enable* such members to participate. We must take childcare seriously by accepting its financial and organisational burden.

Taking power away from meetings will only make them irrelevant and *discourage* participation in Party activities and decisions.

We must resist this proposal vigorously. It would not only strip General Committees of the power and responsibility to select parliamentary candidates, but would also undoubtedly undermine their vital role as policy making bodies — thereby leaving the field free to the Parliamentary Labour Party and the unelected officials at Walworth Road.

In defending representative democracy, we do not for a moment defend the current inadequacy of the Party's structures. GC delegates, and indeed delegates at all levels, should be mandated and votes should be recorded whenever required, including at selection conference (the current constitution does not permit this).

Votes and proceedings on the NEC should be published. Regional officials should be chosen by elected bodies, and be accountable to them.

The Parliamentary Labour Party itself, one of the most powerful yet least democratic of all Party organs, should be overhauled and held to account; with open ballots for the Shadow Cabinet, real power for the back benches, and a new, democratic relationship to the whole Par v.

The advocates of "one member, one vote" will, for the most part, not be heard raising demands of this sort. Their interests in democracy is purely rhetorical. Many of them have been in the forefront of resistance to the real movements for extending democracy in the Party, including the movements to enfranchise women, Black people and youth.

Constitutional Committee

The politics of the purge

If the politics of the National Constitutional Committee were not in evidence before, they certainly reared their head at the last meeting of the Committee on May 11th.

The membership of one of the NCC's "panels" was blatantly gerrymandered to ensure a right wing majority and therefore the "right" result to the case before it.

By Mandy Moore
Member, National Constitutional Committee

There are a large number of cases waiting to be heard by the NCC. These include: Stevenage CLP against 10 of its members; Knowsley South against 1 member; the NEC against 2 members of the Wales Regional EC; Birmingham Perry Barr CLP against 8 members; Ogmore CLP against 1 member; The NEC against 1 member of Blythe CLP; Bexleyheath CLP against 2 members; and numerous local government cases. At each meeting of the Committee the list gets longer and the backlog grows.

To cope with this situation the Committee is divided into panels. It was agreed early on in the life of the NCC that panels would contain 3 members (the minimum required constitutionally) and each of these panels has to have one member from the constituency section and one from the trade union section under the Party rules.

The right/left split on the NCC is 7 right, 4 left, with the left being made up of the 3 constituency members and 1 trade union member and the right made up of the remaining 4 trade union members, the Socialist Society member and the 2 Women's Section members. It is obvious from this that on occasion the left could have a majority on a panel — and this is exactly what happened with one panel set up on April 2nd.

At the following meeting this "error" by the right was ruthlessly corrected. It was pointed out that the panel concerned did not have a woman member (the hypocrisy of the right knows no bounds!).

It was suggested to them that I should take the place of the male constituency member on the panel to rectify this if they really felt it was a problem. This was not, surprise, surprise, acceptable to them and they proceeded to increase the panel size to 5 — not, of course, with any more constituency section members. When this was challenged they denied it was a political decision!

We are always being told by the Chair of the Committee that we have to be "as pure as Caesar's wife" (sic) and be above reproach. This certainly doesn't extend to the deeds of the right.

The NCC has produced a guide for "members attending meetings" dealing with cases. The first point on this read: "members appearing before the Committee should be at ease in the knowledge that they are amongst comrades who will treat them as such." What a joke!

Devon Discipline

£2,946 — what a waste!

The Labour Party has recently paid the legal costs of three Briefing supporters from Exeter who were witch-hunted by the local Labour Party last year.

Legal action was sought by the three when the investigating committee broke the rules of natural justice. It is not clear yet whether the local or the national party have footed the bill — previously both have denied responsibility.

Devon Labour Briefing

The deadline for resolutions to 1987 Labour Party Conference is July 24th. Below we print various model resolutions being promoted by CLPD (10, Park Drive, London NW11 7SH); Labour CND (29 Stodmarsh House, Cowley Estate, London SW9 6HH); the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (PO Box 306, London N5); and the Labour Party Black Section (47 Queen's Road, London SW18 8NP).

If your constituency sends a resolution on the issues covered below, please send a copy to the relevant campaign (addresses given above). Please note that the LCLGR has decided to put resolutions within the general framework of health and education to give them a greater chance of success, and also, following successes of the last 2 years, to avoid merely reaffirming the existing policy.

If you are using these models, please don't forget to alter the wording slightly, so that your resolution counts as a separate resolution.

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

THIS CONFERENCE regrets the NEC's decision to circulate all CLPs and affiliated organisations with a "consultation" paper offering no fewer than ten options for changing the present procedure for reselection of Labour MPs.

The NEC's action is in defiance of Composite Resolution 39 which was carried by a substantial majority at the 1986 Conference and which stated that:

"Conference recognises that the issue of reselection is both complex and divisive and that to reopen the argument over new proposals at this time would seriously damage Party unity and divert the Party's energies form the over-riding priority of working for a Labour victory."

Composite 39 also stated that:

"It is essential to maintain accountability of Members of Parliament at, at least, the level provided by the present system"

and that

"the only way this can be done is if reselections are carried out by the same body to which the Member of Parliament reports month by month on the work of the Parliamentary Labour Party..."

No fewer than 8 out of the 10 options proposing changes in the present procedure contain proposals which would free the MPs from any regular system of accountability. Conference would welcome larger numbers taking part in the final selection provided the above principle of accountability is strictly upheld.

In addition, many of the options also undermine the role of trade unions in the reselection process. This is once again directly contrary to the demand of Composite Resolution 39 that:

"the rights of trade unions, co-operative societies and parties, and all affiliated organisations, must not be marginalised but maintained in a form which reflects their importance in the movement and in the Party as a whole."

None of the suggested changes put forward in the NEC's options adequately meets the requirements stipulated in Composite 39.

Conference therefore reaffirms that the NEC should not promote any changes in the present procedure which undermine accountability or reduce the trade union input, and resolves that there should be no change in the present procedure.

THIS CONFERENCE deplores the decision of the Birmingham District Council Labour Group to suspend Cllr Phil Murphy from the Group because he left a council meeting without the permission of the Chair. It instructs the NEC to instruct the Group to reinstate Cllr Murphy and drop any action against him.

THIS CONFERENCE regrets the action taken against Sharon Atkin at the April NEC meeting which she was unable to attend, and believes that the NEC acted in breach of the principles of natural justice as it:

1. based its decisions on one-sided reports of remarks made at a meeting, and disregarded the context in which these remarks were;
2. ignored her undertaking to abide by the requirements for prospective parliamentary candidates, and took its decision without waiting for the clarification which it requested and which could have been obtained by her representative before the end of the meeting;
3. did not formulate detailed charges which would have allowed her to prepare a defence;
4. failed to act against other candidates making damaging attacks on the party such as Frank Field, despite his clear breach of Clause IV (5) of the Rules for Constituency Parties by calling for support for candidates standing against Labour Party candidates at elections;
5. violated the democratic right of Nottingham East CLP to choose its own candidate and gave the CLP no opportunity to be heard.

These actions have damaged the Party in the run-up to the election and Conference instructs the NEC to reverse its decision.

Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights

For the Education Debate:
CONFERENCE WELCOMES the initiatives taken by a number of Labour councils (such as Haringey and Ealing) to implement the policy of the Labour Party by promoting positive images of lesbians and gay men within their services especially within education.

We recognise the importance of presenting a positive image of lesbians and gay men through the school system if prejudice against lesbians and gay men is to be challenged successfully in society.

Conference instructs the National Executive Committee in carrying out existing conference policy, to ensure that all Labour authorities are advised to adopt similar policies.

Conference calls upon the next Labour government to ensure that all bias against lesbians and gay men built into the education system through the curriculum, teacher training, etc., is eradicated as part of that government's programme of legislation for lesbian and gay equality.

For the Health Debate:
CONFERENCE CALLS for the negotiation with the trade unions of an acceptable statement on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) which would include within a comprehensive policy:

1. the health and safety of employees as covered by the Health & Safety at Work Act of 1974 and also the safety of members of the public;
2. the provision of training for those workers who will come into direct contact with sufferers in the course of their employment;
3. the protection from discrimination of employees who have either the viruses causing AIDS or related diseases; and those who are considered to belong to a high risk group whether sufferers or not, especially gay men;
4. the education of employees to break down prejudice and misunderstanding about the transmission of the viruses.

Labour CND

Unconditional nuclear disarmament — an asset in the arms talks:
THIS CONFERENCE welcomes the Soviet proposals for the reduction and eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons throughout Europe. We believe that getting rid of nuclear weapons from Europe is an important step towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons world-wide. Conference notes that the resistance to these policies comes from the NATO allies, in particular from the British Tory government which is still fighting to maintain nuclear arsenals in West Europe at all costs.

Conference believes that Labour's policy of returning Cruise, cancelling the Trident programme and unconditionally removing all existing nuclear weapons and nuclear bases, including Polaris, from British soil and waters in the lifetime of the next Labour government is an asset and not a handicap in the situation where real possibilities exist to denuclearise Europe. Conference therefore reaffirms that a strong emphasis should be given to Labour's nuclear disarmament policies and rejects any shift away from them.

Removal of all US bases and withdrawal from NATO:
CONFERENCE notes that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation remains fundamentally committed to the use of nuclear weapons. Conference further notes that membership of NATO not only creates difficulties for a Labour government in promoting its nuclear disarmament policies, but also conflicts with the pursuit of a socialist foreign policy.

Conference further notes that Labour's existing policy of removing all nuclear bases from this country does not necessarily prevent the USA launching a conventional attack from bases in Britain, nor does it prevent the Pentagon from pursuing its nuclear policies through the use of facilities in this country. Conference therefore resolves that the next Labour government will remove all US bases, including nuclear, conventional and communications bases, from British soil and British waters, and will take Britain out of NATO.

Black Sections

THIS CONFERENCE recognises that black people are under-represented at all levels of the Labour Party. It also recognises that the Labour Party must make a serious attempt to eradicate the institutionalised racism which is inherent in British society.

To ensure better representation and involvement of black people in the Labour Party and to strengthen the party's ability to challenge racism, conference resolves to support the establishment of black sections at all levels of the party where black people wish to establish them with the right to send delegates to general committees, district parties, local government committees, regional parties and the National Executive Committee as apropriate.

Letters

Write to: PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ

Setting the record straight on Sinn Fein

Dear Editor,

An article entitled *The true face of Sinn Fein?* in *Labour Briefing* no. 43 proves once again that in war, truth is the first casualty. Its author, Mairtin O'Brudair, deserves praise for having crammed more slander into one short article than I've seen in the left press for some time. I'd say there's a place waiting for him on the "Newsdesk" of the *Sun*.

Like life itself, *Labour Briefing* isn't long enough to reply to all of Mairtin's lies, but I'll select a few gross ones to set the record straight:

- Sinn Fein isn't in favour of a "capitalist united Ireland"; our only goal is a free, secular socialist republic. Read our newspaper *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, which sells 40,000 copies every week, if you want to see what we really stand for.
- Positive discrimination in favour of women *is* practised by Sinn Fein at all levels. There are 8 places on our highest leadership body which are reserved for women.
- Far from being "rabid reactionaries" during the 26-County divorce referendum, our entire leadership, including Sligo-Leitrim candidate John Joe McGirl, vociferously supported divorce.
- We also support the rights of lesbians and gay men. Far from being "homophobic" our members have helped organise and support such campaigns as Gay Health Action.
- Unlike the Irish Labour Party, Sinn Fein hasn't got a Jekyll/Hyde split in its personality. We have the same policies in Dublin as in Derry, in Kerry as in Belfast. But while Labour's reactionary leadership collaborated in government with Fine Gael (descendants of the Irish fascist party), its left wing presented the party as a "radical alternative". How Jekyll and Hyde can you get?

Mairtin now suggests that since Labour has broken with Fine Gael it has become more radical, but its leadership hasn't changed its spots. In the recent referendum on the pro-NATO Single European Act it joined Fine Gael and Fianna Fail in calling for a "yes" vote. I don't understand how any socialist can remain in such a party.

The Irish Labour Party's blinkered attitude to the national question — an attitude shared by left and right wing in that Party — is partly responsible for its pathetic level of electoral support. Any socialist party which accepts the British-imposed partition of this country and parrots Thatcher's lies about the IRA is bound to suffer isolation. As long as socialists such as Mairtin fail to understand that the national question is the key *class* question in Ireland, they'll remain as irrelevant as his article obviously is.

Yours in struggle,
Ronan Brady
Dublin.

A reply was needed

Dear *Briefing*,

I was shocked to see that the last issue of *LB* handed two-thirds of a page over to *Militant's* position on Sinn Fein — in the shape of Mairtin O'Brudair Runai's article. Whilst it might appear sectarian, I am completely against *Briefing* **uncritically** printing major articles in this way.

I am totally in favour of debate, and if it's to be with *Militant*, then **particularly** on Ireland. *Militant* have a ridiculous and untenable position, a mixture of (what they see as) socialism and imperialism. The problem with the last issue was that there was **no** debate.

Militant's article raised some extremely important points which **needed** answering. Not answering them was a political error. The fact of the matter is that Ireland is one of **the** most complicated issues, with much confusion surrounding it, even on the Left.

One of two courses should have been taken: *Militant* should either have been asked to write a letter or their article should have been answered by a corresponding article.

Oh, by the way, if anyone who supports *Militant* reads this letter, good luck with the Irish Labour Party and the "Northern Ireland Labour Party". You'll certainly need it!

Comradely,
John Turkie,
Hackney, London

Thanks to *Briefing*!

Dear *Briefing*,

(...) Whilst writing, I'd like to add that had it not been for *Briefing*, particularly the Election Special, I think I would have lost heart.

Yours sincerely,
Zelda Robinson,
London W14

Sign to release Mordechai Vanunu!

Dear Editor,

If anyone would like to collect signatures on a petition to be sent to the Prime Minister of Israel calling for the release of Mordechai Vanunu please contact Anne Adams at Dunns Buildings, West Kyo, Stanley, Co. Durham.

The petition is being circulated world-wide.

Yours faithfully,
Anne Adams,
Secretary, Stanley CND

Why vote Labour?

Dear Comrades,

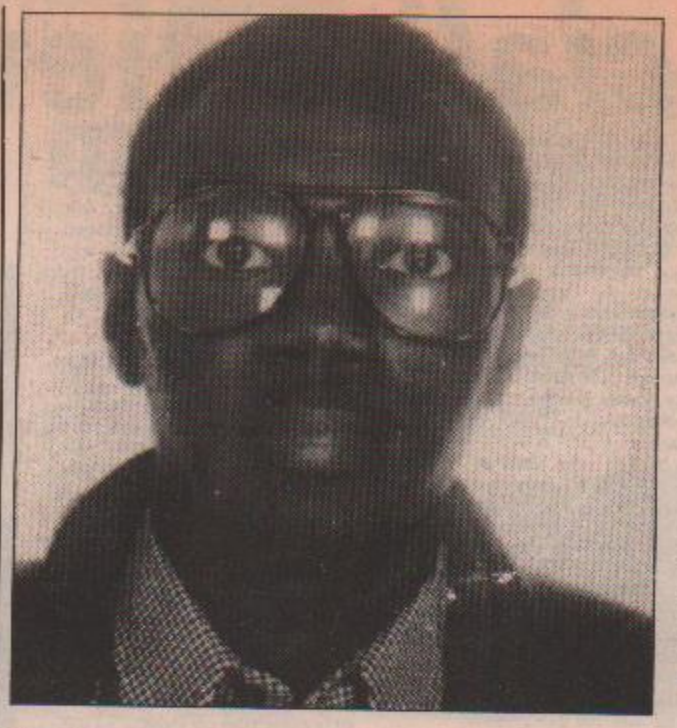
What should the left have argued during the election campaign?

Everybody knows that Kinnock has been utterly useless in countering the policies of the Alliance and the Conservatives. The left, maintaining a high profile during the campaign, should have said this quite openly.

The reason why people should vote Labour for a Labour government, is that in reality the only people who can get rid of nuclear weapons and nuclear power are those working in the nuclear industry, the only people who can raise the standard of education are teachers and pupils, the only people who can ensure the smooth running of the economy are those who work in industry and services, health, housing, etc.

These are also the only people who can guarantee sexual freedom, women's freedom and black freedom. Historically these are the people who helped set up the Labour Party. A vote for Labour, for a Labour government, is therefore defensive, in the end to make way for the people who are *really* going to change the political situation.

Comradely greetings,
John Mullings
Stratford-upon-Avon



Steve Jomoa

LPYS Conference: putting the record straight

Dear *Briefing*,

I refer to Patrick Baker's article in *Briefing* no. 43, May 6th-19th. Patrick rightly says that the number of voting delegates at this year's Conference had fallen by 20% since the previous year. But he failed to connect this to what he called the "rather disappointing result of 17 votes" that the Black Section candidate achieved in the election for the YS representative on the NEC. The fact is that there are very significant factors which led to me polling the votes which I did.

Independents

First, there were far fewer Independent YSs — in other words fewer floating voters who were prepared to use their vote intelligently and not be led like sheep to vote *Militant* but rather vote for the important issues that I stood on, i.e. support for Black self-organisation and a Black perspective on Labour Prty policy, support for women in the Labour Party to elect their own candidates at Conference, support for Black youth in struggle, support for gay men and lesbian rights, support for the freedom fighters in Azania (South Africa), in Ireland and in Central America.

Abstentions

Secondly, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee delegates abstained from voting for the Black Sections candidate. Kingsley Abrams last year secured a large amount of votes from the LCC as they have said that they support the right of Black people to organise in the Labour Party — yet LCC delegates this year did not even bother to register a vote!

Thirdly, *Socialist Organiser*, in running a separate candidate, split the vote in what would have been a united Labour Left Liaison campaign. They also ran a dirty, petty and wholly sectarian campaign with vicious personal attacks.

Lastly, *Briefing*, who gave invaluable support to the campaign, were unable to transfer this support to actual votes as there were no *Briefing* delegates at this year's conference.

These then are the real reasons for the decline in the vote for the Black Section candidate. Nonetheless, we ran an excellent campaign and coming Second to the *Militant* candidate (if Linda Douglas were to resign the Black Section would have for the first time a representative on the NEC) is a a real and significant achievement and is an improvement upon last year.

Yours comradely,
Steve Jomoa,
National Youth Organiser,
Labour Party Black Sections

Challenge the establishment's definitions!

Dear *Briefing*,

A central term in the debate in your letters pages (see Jenny Fisher, no. 42) about "Jeanette" must be challenged — that she "has a mental age of five".

This is a definition of the medical, education and social services estasblishment. It is totally false and is a way the state classifies and controls people with a mental handicap who are in its institutions or who receive its services.

Jeanette is a 17 years old woman, with her own experience of 17 years of life.

The ruling class has a long history of regarding Black people, women, disabled people and the working class as children. Let us not accept this as a term of our debate.

Jeanette is a 17 year old woman. I know nothing else about her, only about how others are controlling her life.

S. Lynn,
Hackney, London

Just a warning

Dear comrades,

I enclose some stamps, although I'm not at all sure it's worth it.

Working on the assumption that each stamp is worth one tenth of a penny (which I expect is roughly right) and that there are 20 *Briefing* supporters each sending in 10 stamps a week (which I suspect is an overestimate), then it would take about 5 years to accumulate £50 worth of stamps.

By this time you won't be able to move in the office and £50 probably won't be worth much anyway.

If my calculations or estimates are wrong, that's OK, but I just thought you might like to be warned.

Yours comradely,
Dani Ahrens,
Watford, Herts.

Broadwater Farm still fighting

Civil Rights March

An informal steering group has been set up by the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign to build a national march and movement for civil rights.

With dozens of youth in prison, including the three unjustly convicted for the Blakelock murder, and dozens more still awaiting trial, the Defence Campaign is continuing its vital work for local people.

But only a *national* campaign, involving community groups, trades unions, and others can mobilise the kind of support necessary to defend working class and Black communities from police attack.

The Civil Rights march will be held in October, on the second anniversary of the uprisings at Broadwater Farm, and will proceed from Tottenham to Downing Street.

By Haringey Labour Briefing



Leaders of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association will be visiting the US in coming weeks to gather international support for the march.

Representatives of various left groups and community campaigns in Brixton, Hackney, Wolverhampton and Manchester are all participating in drawing up plans for the march.

Trade Union and Labour Party support is *essential*. In the past, the labour movement has too often let Britain's Black communities stand alone. Make sure your CLP or trade union branch or other organisation gets involved *now*. Contact the Civil Rights Campaign, c/o Broadwater Farm Youth Association, Tangmere, Broadwater Farm Estate, London N17.

Viraj Mendis - here to stay!

Labour Group freezes post

On May 18th the Labour Group in Manchester City Council decided not to let Viraj Mendis start his job as Immigration and Nationality officer until the Home Office gives him permission to stay in Britain.

By Finn Jensen

Viraj Mendis has now been in sanctuary in a church for more than five months. He cannot leave the church without being arrested and deported to Sri Lanka, where he faces persecution, imprisonment and possible death.

A judicial review of the case has been granted, but Viraj Mendis is still not able to leave the church.

This is the official excuse for the Labour Group not giving Viraj Mendis his job straight away. They claim that he can only do the job if he is able to travel around the country.

But Viraj was appointed to the job a couple of months ago and there is nothing in his job description which specifies that he has to be able to travel. His office in the church has been accepted as a workplace by the health and safety authorities.

The real reason for not giving him the job is therefore different. The City Council has been under tremendous pressure from the Home Office, from the right wing media, in particular the *Manchester Evening News*, and from racists in general.

Instead of standing firm against this racist pressure and defending its equal opportunity policies, the Labour group backed down. Only a few Labour councillors abstained in the voting, and none voted *against* the proposed new condition to his appointment.

When you please your enemies, you lose your friends. Before the Labour Group took its decision, the City Labour Party had already voted in support of Viraj Mendis starting his job immediately. NUPE in the Town Hall supports the appointment. NALGO has written a letter to the leader of the City Council, Graham Stringer, asking why Viraj Mendis is not allowed to start his work.

At a press conference on May 21st, Graham Stringer could not say why he had not asked Viraj Mendis whether he would be interested in jobshare as a temporary solution. Stringer would not answer whether Viraj would have lost the job if he had started it before he went into sancturay. But he had the courage to state he still supports Viraj Mendis.

International Briefing

A *socialist* view of Sinn Fein

By Francis Devine

Apart from its stylistic inelegance, Mairtain O'Brudair's contribution to the debate on Sinn Fein (*Briefing* no. 43) was full of inaccurate and unsupported generalisations.

It made no attempt to present a socialist analysis of a living and dynamic mass movement. Objectively, it puts him in the same camp as the Tory and right-wing Labour imperialists for whom he feels such passionate and genuine scorn.

That he is Irish and uses Irish phrases in his article does not prove the correctness of his arguments, but rather the corrupting effect of British imperialism on socialism in Britain. It is also one more proof of the sad fact that imperialism always wins the support of sections of the population in those countries which it oppresses.

Socialists all agree that imperialism is "a bad thing". However, the British Labour Party and its sister organisations throughout the world have, both in and out of government, willingly colluded with the imperialist policies of their own ruling classes.

The degree of resistance to its "own" imperialism is always a useful indicator of the political health of any social democratic party.

Most British socialists do not see clearly how British imperialism hinders their work, how it contributes to the weakness of working class organisations, and how it strengthens the ruling class. Kinnock's floundering on the nuclear weapons issue during the election was a reflection of his general capitulation to imperialism.

The racism and chauvinism which so divides and disarms the British working class are partially the result of Britain's imperial past.

Britain is now only a second-rate imperialist state and the forms of imperialism have changed since the Victorian era. Nevertheless, socialist internationalism must mean absolute, though not uncritical, support for those groups fighting imperialism in the oppressed nations.

Within the British labour movement it has been extremely difficult to raise the question of Ireland in a principled fashion, when unwillingness to condemn the IRA was (and is) construed as support for random bombing of civilian targets. This is due in large measure to the disastrous anti-political strategy adopted by the Republican Movement in Britain throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s.

In such a climate, some socialists find it easier to ignore Ireland or to construct ludicrous positions based on an abstract working class bearing no relation to the Protestant working class which benefits by the sectarianism of the Orange State, or to the Catholic working class at whose expense the Protestants receive their privileges.

One of the most stupid examples of this kind of idealism is Irish Militant's call for workers' defence militias to protect workers from sectarian attacks. Where will the workers for the militia come from? Short Brothers? Harland and Woolf? The UDR?

Apparently "socialists in the Irish Labour Party who have managed to break the party from coalition offer the most radical alternative for Catholic and Protestant workers in Ireland." But the Irish Labour Party is a pro-imperialist, anti-working class party.

Dick Spring was a willing participant in the Anglo-Irish Deal, and the party was forced to leave the coalition, not because of pressure from its left, but rather because the continued coalition with Fine Gael was destroying its electoral base. Its share of the vote in the last election slipped from 9.4% to 6.4%.

It is an indisputable fact that some members of the Republican Movement are anti-gay. I don't doubt that there are those in its ranks who are racist to some degree, and obviously Sinn Fein's position on a woman's right to choose is opportunist.

But exactly the same criticisms can be made of the Labour Party and the British working class. Should socialists therefore refuse to support the Party or the working class?

With my own eyes I have seen British and Irish lesbians and gays marching up Belfast's Falls Road in support of Republican POWs. I have also seen striking miners, native Americans, Palestinians, Nicaraguans, and Black South Africans warmly applauded at meetings and demonstrations in Republican Belfast. In London I have heard Gery Adams speak on the common oppression and common interests of Irish and Black people in Britain.

Finally, where do British socialist delegations — including Black people, lesbians and gays — sleep and eat when they are in Belfast and Derry? According to Mr O'Brudair, in the homes of Irish bigots!

The Irish working class, and in particular, the vanguard which supports the Republican Movement, is sophisticated enough to distinguish between its friends and enemies in Britain. But let us concede that some Republicans sometimes fail to make the right distinctions.

The old wall slogan "Ireland for the Irish — England for the pigs" is an obvious example.



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

1987 Bloody Sunday demo, Sheffield: fighting British imperialism in Britain

The English people with whom the painter of this slogan would have had most contact were young English working class men in British army uniforms. The painters' political consciousness may not have been very well developed, but at least he or she understood reality better than Mr O'Brudair.

Sinn Fein is distinguished from most political organisations by the fact that in the past five or six years it has recruited large numbers of working class people, and in particular, working class youth.

Obviously there will be differences in political development, not least between urban and rural areas, since the party is in the midst of a long-term evolution. But even now in its rural cumainn divorce and abortion are being discussed and men are being told what sexism means in society and inside an organisation.

Inevitably, these discussions are at a higher level in urban areas, but how many farm labourers can Irish Miltiant claim as supporters? These issues are only part of a process of politicisation and radicalisation of the Republican Movement's membership, a process which is handicapped by the Movement's history and the almost complete lack of political analysis before the 1980s.

Yet despite what Mr O'Brudair says, even in its worst periods, Sinn Fein never suggested that the Protestants be "driven into the sea". It has now realised that military struggle alone is not adequate to achieve a united Ireland. What it has not yet acquired is a political strategy to achieve Irish freedom and the debate on that strategy is the one in which Irish socialists should be participating.

The struggle for Irish freedom can only be won by the working class. A struggle against imperialism is now being fought by a section of that class. Within this struggle a large component of the future leadership of the Irish socialist revolution is being made. This revolution is coming — and it is coming from the struggle against British imperialism.

Canada

Support grows for NDP

For the first time since its founding in 1961, Canada's New Democratic Party (NDP) has become a serious contender for political power.

The party is the political arm of the Canadian labour movement, which played the major role in its formation.

The NDP currently holds 30 of the 282 seats in the Canadian parliament. But its standing in public opinion polls has skyrocketed since the last federal election in 1984 which swept the Conservatives into power.

The Party's convention in Montreal earlier this year was dominated by discussion of Quebec's national rights, including secession from the Canadian confederation.

The party's policy, while falling short of the Quebec section's demands in some important areas like language rights, formally recognises Quebec's "unique character" and "right to freely determine its own future" and would confer special rights on the province within the existing constitutional framework.

There was less debate than usual on other key elements of the party programme. In the euphoria surrounding the party's rise in the polls, the NDP left is weaker than it has been in some time. The party leadership, scenting power, sought to avoid the appearance of division and refrained from its customary attempts to roll back some of the stronger party planks it considers electoral liabilities — in particular, the NDP's formal

By Marv Gandall, Ottawa and District Labour Council's delegate to the NDP convention in Montreal, taken from Labor Notes.

opposition to Canada's membership of NATO.

Most of the convention therefore was a reaffirmation of existing policy. The policies, taken as a whole, would see an NDP government, like other labour and social-democratic governments world-wide, working not to replace capitalism but to manage it better and curb its excesses.

This hasn't affected the NDP's labour support, which remains solid. The NDP commands the allegiance of most local union officers and stewards and politically-active workers because it serves the immediate interests of the labour movement in a way that the parties promoted and sponsored by the corporations cannot.

About 315 of the 1,400 delegates were trade unionists sent by their affiliated unions or labour councils. The largest contingents came from auto and steel, the traditional bastions of NDP support.

Labour's concerns — increased public spending and public ownership to create jobs, tax reform, equal pay for work of equal value, opposition to free trade with the United States, privatisation of public services, and the corporate rip-off of pension surpluses — were all carried and generally received near-unanimous support.

A more contentious resolution designed to strengthen the party's call for a shorter work week was assigned a low priority and never reached the floor.

In addition to opposing Canadian membership in NATO, the party takes a strong stand on other foreign policy issues. The convention reaffirmed a variety of nuclear disarmament policies. It called for the creation of a nuclear weapons-free zone in the arctic, which is rapidly becoming militarised.

It called for comprehensive mandatory sanctions against South African and Candian government support for the African National Congress and South African trade unions. It opposed "United States interventionist policies in Central America" and called for "significantly increased" assistance to Nicaragua, including the establishment of a Candian embassy in Managua.

Already, there are signs that the media's infatuation with the party and the relative inattention paid to it by the two Big Business parties are ending.

Supporting the Sandinistas

In the labour movement as a whole support for the Sandinistas can be shown in a simple and very practical way. After last year's Labour Party Conference the NEC agreed to send a container of goods to Nicaragua as a sign of our solidarity with them in their efforts to build a new society.

The Container Appeal was launched at the end of March this year, and will run for about six months. The Central America Labour Group is encouraging all sections of the labour movement to collect money to help fill the container with goods requested by the Sandinista government, as part of the "Nicaragua Must Survive" campaign.

All money should be sent to the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 23 Bevenden Street, London N1 6BH, with cheques payable to "Nicaragua Support Fund (Labour Party Container)". Further information about the container is available from Tim Young at the NSC (01 608 0414).

Support the Sandinistas! Oppose Reagan's terrorists! Support the Labour Party container for Nicaragua!

Central America Labour Group

Sri Lankan crisis

Jayawardene in trouble

By Lalith Perera

The Sri Lankan government suffered yet another serious setback recently when they were forced to call off their military offensive in the Jaffna peninsula, after the Indian government indicated in no uncertain terms that they could not stand idly by while the Sri Lankan Air Force and Army indiscriminately bombarded Tamil areas.

In order to back up their threat, Indian Air Force planes escorted the Antonovs carrying relief supplies to Jaffna; deliberately violating Sri Lankan Air space.

The Sri Lankan ruling class has always ignored the repercussions of their actions on the South Asian region and hoped that either the United States or China or some other power would come to their aid in the event of direct military action by the Indian government. They have been taught a sharp lesson.

This incident has also disarmed the right wing opposition force, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party of Mrs Bandaranaike, which has been campaigning for stronger military measures against the Tamil guerilla fighters in the north and east.

Despite the efforts of the government and other right wing forces — the SLFP and JVP — to whip up anti-Tamil and anti-Indian hysteria, vast masses of Sinhala people have *not* rallied to the chauvinist banner. A demonstration against the Indian government by the rightist forces attracted a measly 2,000 people.

Meanwhile the opposition to repressive policies is growing not only in the Tamil areas but also in predominantly Sinhala areas in the South. The prohibition of traditional demonstrations and rallies on May Day resulted in clashes with the police which left two people dead.

Workers who were brutally suppressed through mass sacking and repression have begun to flex their muscles again. A section of the right wing opposition led by the JVP have begun to organise their own armed groups and have attacked some Army and Air Force barracks to collect arms.

A process of political disintegration is taking place with more and more people in the country beginning to doubt the ability of the Jayawardene government to rule the country. In the coming months their weakness will become even more apparent, when the guerillas who left the areas invaded by the Sri Lankan Army return to harrass them.

It is impossible for the Sri Lankan army to gain full control of the North even with the assistance of ex-SAS advisers and the Israeli Mossad who have been working with the Sri Lankan Army for the last three years.

Meanwhile the country's economic situation is worsening. The government's ability to obtain foreign loans and grants from abroad is becoming more difficult. The Finance Minister, who has the thankless task of going begging for funds from foreign governments and institutions, has warned that the present rate of defence expenditure cannot go on without serious repercussions to the economy.

It is estimated that 35% of the budget now goes on the "war" against the Tamil guerillas. The army and the police are stretched to the limit. They will not be able to halt the disintegration of the political structure.

The government is seeking to put off the elections yet again on the pretext of the "war situation". The Left, including comrades of the Revolutionary Marxist Party, have called for a United Front of all working class organisations to throw out the bankrupt Jayawardene regime.

Sanctions against Apartheid

Labour movement must take the lead

On June 27th, the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) is holding a "National Convention for Sanctions".

Its purpose is to get different organisations supporting sanctions against South Africa to put their point of view on Apartheid across, and to adopt a declaration and programme of action on sanctions.

This is the first opportunity for AAM activists to discuss the failure of the AAM national leadership's campaign for "the formation of a parliamentary majority committed to a manifesto for sanctions", and the inability of the movement to make southern Africa an issue in the general election.



By Philip Ward
Walkley Labour Party, Sheffield
(personal capacity)

The Campaign for the Manifesto for Sanctions was launched at the AAM AGM in January. Delegates were presented witha six page document on the morning of the discussion.

After six minutes "discussion" (3 speeches for, none against), the meeting adopted — without a vote — a policy for the election which allowed the Labour Party leadership to get away with no mention of South Africa throughout the whole of the election campaign. Instead the policy was directed at exposing those (mainly Tories) who had not given verbal support to the sanctions manifesto.

With the election of the Tories, a campaign of pressure on the government to put pressure on the UN for mandatory comprehensive sanctions is a dead end. Although the collaboration of the Tories and British capitalism with Apartheid South Africa should be exposed, much more emphasis needs to be placed on mobilising the unions against Apartheid, including calling for workers' sanctions.

A serious campaign by the whole of the AAM on this (instead of the current ghettoising of trade union work) necessarily means de-emphasising the Consumer Boycott Campaigns. While trade union action against trade with apartheid is more difficult to organise than consumer boycotts (especially with the current state of the labour movement) it is only the organised working class that is in a position to *force* the government to break all links with the Apartheid state.

In some areas — for example with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in respect of coal, and in local government and the health service in relation to the use of Shell oil and South African food — the unions have started to organise for workers' sanctions. But it is clear that most unions are not ready to take action against employers who persist in supporting South Africa.

It is necessary to build up to this, and at the same time give some real support to the struggle of the South African and Namibian workers, by the AAM launching a national campaign of solidarity with COSATU, its affiliates and supporters and Namibia Support Committee's campaign in solidarity with the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) and its affiliated unions. This action should include:

- fundraising for the unions (which Rail Against Apartheid is doing in order to help fund a full-timer for the SARHWU);
- a much more rapid response to disputes in South Africa and Namibia — for example, solidarity with the BTR strikers, where very little has been done in the 18 months of their dispute;
- a campaign for the release of Moses Mayekiso and his MAWU comrades threatened with death for alleged "treason";
- links between union branches in Britain and South Africa could be built;
- all of these actions could be promoted if the AAM was able and willing to organise a national tour of COSATU members and if COSATU was able to open an office in Britain.

Of course, some of these proposals may at the moment be difficult to organise for "security reasons". This is an argument that the AM leadership uses when opposing a more militant campaign against Apartheid.

It appears to be used as a smokescreen to hide the AAM leadership's unwillingness to do anything that may disturb the leadership of the TUC. The situation in South Africa and Namibia and the needs of the unions there demands a break with the campaigning patterns of the past.

National Convention for Sanctions
(AAM)
Saturday June 27, 10am
Central Hall
Westminster, London
Delegates only
(£5 registration)

National Sanctions Demo
London
24th October

AAM AGM
November 28/29
Sheffield
Delegates from national affiliates only



British workers in solidarity with South African workers

Boycott South African coal now!

The European Community refused to place a ban on imports of South African coal on the agenda of the Council of Ministers' meeting held in Brussels on April 27th.

The European Community's attitude, and also that of Japan, is at variance with the action taken by the United States, Canada, Denmark, France and Australia who have unilaterally imposed embargoes on South African coal.

By importing this coal the EEC, Japan and other countries are supporting exploitation in South Africa's mines, and indeed the whole repressive system of apartheid.

The export of coal provided South Africa with 1.3 billion dollars of foreign exchange in 1985.

Black coalminers' wages in South Africa average 286 Rank (approx US $143 at the commercial rate) per month and their working conditions are unsafe and oppressive.

Taken from a joint statement by the Miners' International Federation, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the European Trade Confederation.

Escaping apartheid

***Kaffir Boy — Growing out of Apartheid*, Mark Mathabane, Pan Books, £3.50.**

By Charlie van Gelderen
Brent South CLP

"Kaffir" is a term of contempt used by white South Africans when talking to or about Blacks; "Boy" is any male Black, no matter what his age or the age of the white person addressing him.

***Kaffir Boy* is the story of one Black growing up in the ghetto township Alexandra. But is it also the story of the tens of thousands of Alexandra, Soweto, Guguletu, Crossroads, Langa and all the other townships where Black people live in almost unbelievable conditions of urban squalor and poverty.**

The author paints a vivid picture of life in these townships, a life where sometimes a crust of dry bread was a luxury.

He writes of the desperate struggle to keep a roof over their heads, even if it was a roof which lets the rain in and covered a house which lacked the most elementary needs such as heating, running water or lavatories; of a father driven to drink and brutality by the savage conditions of his existence; of a mother whose strength kept the family together and thanks to whose determination he was able to get the education which eventually enabled him to "grow out of apartheid".

The townships are the concentration camps of apartheid South Africa. Like the Germans who lived in Hitler's Third Reich, the majority of white South Africans would claim ignorance of the real conditions in these townships. It is not a subject which the "baas" or "madam" is likely to discuss with the "houseboy" or the "girl".



Apartheid laws prevent free entry by whites into "Black" areas. If this book gets past the censors in South Africa, no one will be able to go on pleading their innocence...

From the tender age of three or four, Mark Mathabane was a witness of the terror regime which apartheid imposes on the Black people. Alexandra is one of the oldest urban Black settlements in the Rand area. In the past few years white houses had moved ever closer.

A deliberate policy of harassment was set in motion to try and drive the Blacks out of their homes. There are grim descriptions of daily police raids accompanied by acts of savage brutality. Sex or age made no difference. They were all just "Kaffirs".

By the time he was seven years old, the author had become so conditioned to expecting pre-dawn raids that each time his mother awakened him in the middle of the night he would spring up in alarm and ask "Are they here? I didn't hear any noises," thinking that the police had invaded the neighbourhood. And on many occasions it turned out that they had.

Through the author's own experiences, we get a picture of the sordidness and grimness of life in a black township. We begin to understand why Moses Mayekiso and other Black leaders set about forming street committees to enable the people to take their destinies into their own hands — and why they are now on trial for their lives in the apartheid courts...

We live, with the author, through the school and student revolt in Soweto in 1976, which marked a new beginning of the fight against the racist tyrrany of apartheid, a fight which has gone on unceasingly ever since — the heady days when the dusty streets of the townships reverberated with the cry: *Amandla! Awethu! (Power is ours!)*

Mark Mathabane toyed with the idea of joining Umkhonto We Sizwe and training to be a guerilla. But, in the end, he escaped from apartheid through winning a tennis scholarship to Princeton University in the United States. He had previously been banned by the Black Tennis Association because he took part in white-organised tennis tournaments.

This escape route, of course, is closed to all but a handful of Blacks. The potholed playing fields and near-starvation diets of the townships give little opportunity for sportspersons to develop their talents. Those, like Mark Mathabane, who managed to break through the race barrier and are "taken up" by whites, become token blacks, the Uncle Toms of South African sports.

APPEAL

***Briefing* has had a request for our paper to be sent to the following anti-Apartheid organisations: COSATU (Confederation of South African Trade Unions), Metal Worker, Educational Department, CCWASY, SALB (South African Labour Bulletin), MAAWU (Metal and Allied Workers Union).**

We are appealing for donations from individual *Briefing* readers and supporters' groups to finance these subscriptions. Each sub costs us £17 for one year, but if you can't afford a whole £17, please send what you can, so we can start sending the subscription off.

***Labour Briefng* regularly covers events in South Africa, and building direct links with labour movement bodies is very important.**

Please don't assume that somebody else will be responding to this appeal and just turn the page over! Get your chequebook out, and send in a contribution as quickly as possible. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to *Labour Briefing*, marked South Africa appeal on the back, and sent to PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ. We will thank contributors in the next issue of *Briefing* — please state if you wish to remain anonymous.



Lesbian & Gay Legislation Conference

Determined to fight on!

Five hundred people attended the Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Conference on May 23rd-24th.

It was the largest gathering of its kind in Britain since the early seventies, and the most representative ever held, with different sections of the lesbian and gay community and many organisations in attendance.

The turn-out shows the anger and determination to fight current attacks on lesbian and gay rights.

At least one third of those at the conference were women. There was also a significant number of black and minority ethnic lesbian and gay people. Black lesbians and gays, drawing on the strength and confidence gained from their recently developing self-organisation, made their demands known for the first time to a wide section of the movement.

The voices of many other sections of the lesbian and gay movement too often silenced in the past, such as lesbians and gays with disabilities, and older lesbians and gays, were also heard at the conference.

The call for the conference came from the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, and the NCCL.

National trade union sponsorship came from the CPSA, GMBATU, NUM, NUPE, the Probation Officers, ACTT, TASS, FBU, BIFU, the Scottish Council of NALGO and the Scottish Council of the TUC.

In the opening session, lesbian and gay people who have suffered discrimination gave moving accounts of their experiences. Ken

By Theresa Conway and Jamie Gough

Livingstone read a message of support from Jo Richardson, and pledged that the Parliamentary Labour Party would bring the legislative proposals of the lesbian and gay movement into Parliament.

David Steel sent a long letter of support (though David Owen shortly after the conference said he did not agree with legal equality for gay people!).

A large number of workshops took place — covering 20 different areas of the law in which discrimination exists and taking on board the different experiences of specially oppressed groups of lesbian and gay people. Many of these workshops were very productive in clarifying the often complex political and technical issues at stake.

It had been hoped that the conference would be able to agree a basic charter of demands around which to campaign. In the event, many people — especially those from specially oppressed groups — felt that there had been insufficient discussion to produce such an agreement.

However, the conference overwhelmingly agreed to continue the discussions with the aim of producing a charter for lesbian and gay rights, while continuing to fight specific cases of legal injustice. It was agreed that greater efforts needed to be made to make the discussion accessible to all.

After a sharp debate, the right of the caucuses of the specially oppressed to veto any proposal was agreed.

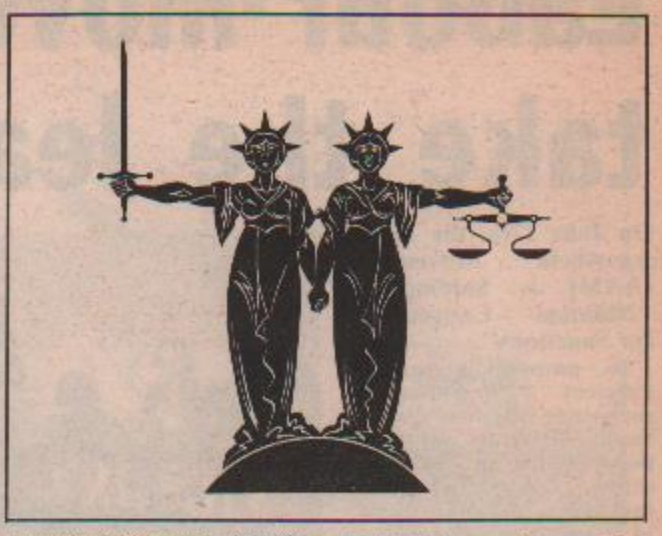
The failure to agree a charter at this conference had a number of causes. The conference had been organised from scratch in six months by a newly-formed campaign — a very short time in which to discuss the many issues involved.

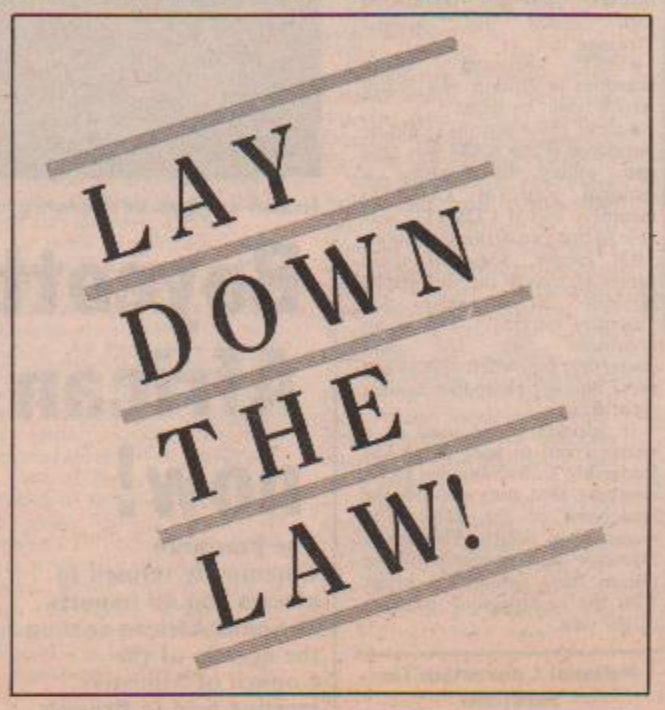
The conference discussions were made more difficult by dogmatism and sectarianism on various sides, by the issuing of ultimatums, attempts to silence opponents, some red-baiting and hostility to the presence of non-lesbian and gay people.

Underlying these problems, and the debate on the veto of specially-oppressed groups, were different ideas of alliances and how those alliances can be achieved.

However, the very fact that these debates emerged is testament to the Conference's unprecedented size and breadth. Lying behind the big turnout is a will to fight that can be built into a powerful campaign, taking on board the demands of the specially-oppressed and gaining increasing support in the labour movement.

There is no reason to keep our heads down!

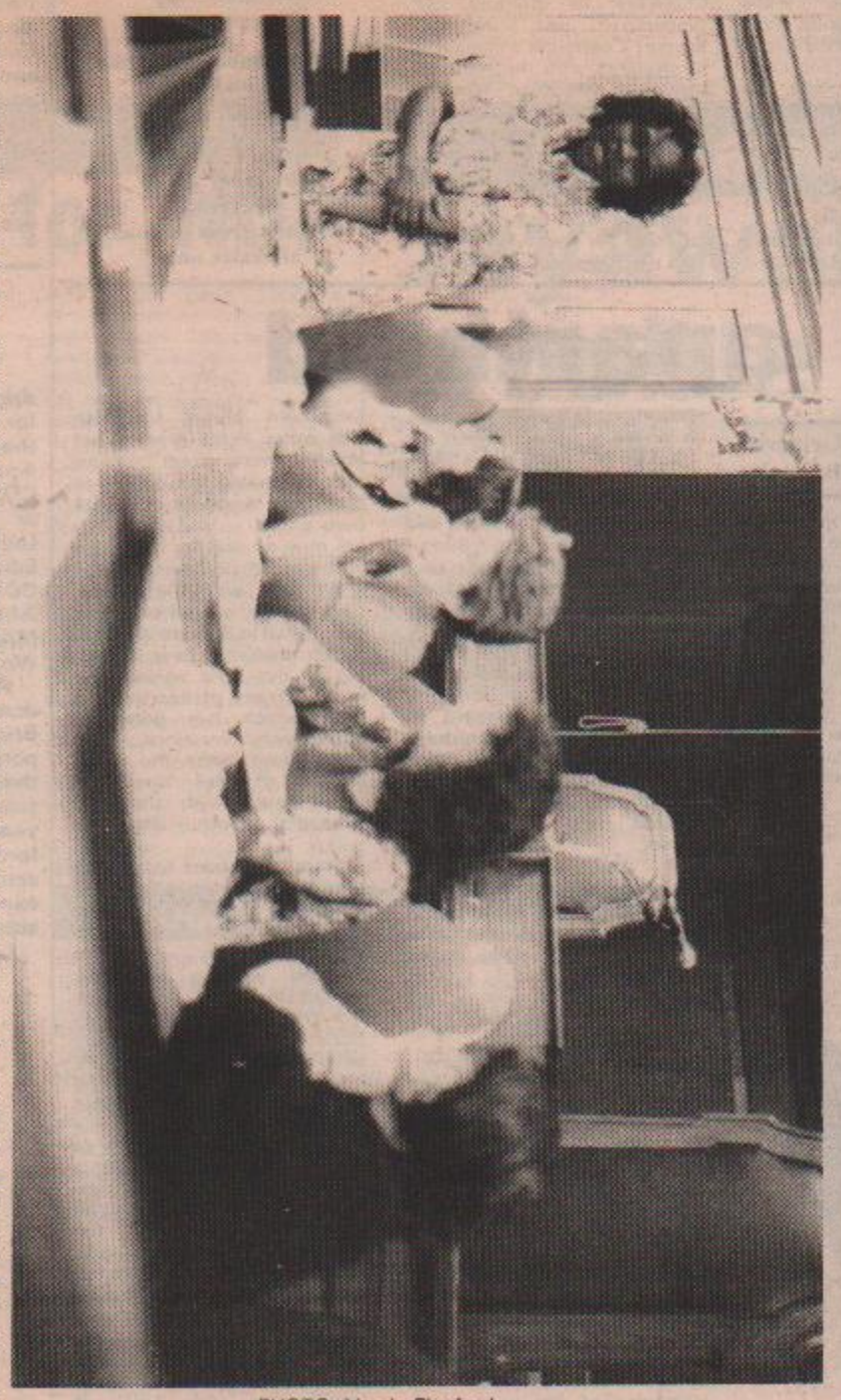




Next planning meeting:
July 18th
For details
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01 833 3860

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LABOUR BRIEFING



Martha Osamor (Deputy Leader, Haringey Council), Joan Twelves (Greater London Labour Party Exec.), Alison Clark (LWL), Gita Sahgal (Southall Black Sisters), Kum Kum Bhavani (political activist, writer) discuss different perspectives on working in the Labour Party as part of building an anti-racist, feminist labour movement at the Conference.

PHOTO: Vanda Playford

One hundred women, from all parts of Britain and Ireland, and many different campaigns attended the *Sisterhood and Solidarity* conference in London on the weekend of June 21st/22nd.

It was organised by Labour Women for Ireland and SWAPO Women's Solidarity Committee.

The subtitle — *towards an anti-imperialist and anti-racist women's labour movement* — stressed both the international and socialist content of the

By Jane Kelly
Peckham CLP

meeting in the attempt to link up women's struggles.

The common oppression experienced by all women is cut across for some by the experience of racism, resulting from colonialism and England's imperialist past and present.

The success of the weekend was to bring together women from different campaigns and struggle — from solidarity with southern Africa and Central and South America, with Palestine and Ireland, and to link them with the struggles against sexism and racism here.

Many of the debates centred on whether to work inside or outside the Labour Party. Some women argued that the racism and nationalism of the Labour Party made it impossible to work in. Others, including women from Black Sections and councillors like Martha Osamor from Haringey, argued that while not wishing to defend the Labour Party, and at the same time not wishing to condemn women working outside it, the machinery of the Labour Party can be used to make gains.

They also argued that the struggle going on in the Labour Party, for the rights of Black people to organise autonomously, for example, were worthwhile and should not be ignored.

The meeting agreed to plan another conference next year. Anyone interested should contact *Sisterhood and Solidarity*, PO Box 16, London NW5 2LW.