LABOUR
BRIEFING
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40p

Tories say 'work for your dole'

YOUTH: LEAD OUR RESISTANCE!



PHOTO: John Chapman

Youth have been targetted by the Tories in their drive towards a "work for your dole" benefits system in Britain.

Norman Fowler — the new Minister for (UN)Employment — is busy devising ways to abolish the miserly £18.75 that unemployed under-18s now get, if they refuse to go onto a Youth Training Scheme or leave "without good cause" before 2 years are up.

The new "super" YTS pays £28.50 in the first year, and £35 in the second. The only training that a lot of schemes offer is how to do the same job as your workmates — but for a lot less money and without legal protection from health and safety risks.

Dependence on your family and a permanent cycle of phony training schemes, dole and low paid jobs is the future that now faces hundreds of thousands of young people. Needless to say Black youths get put on the worst schemes and have even less chance of a job at the end.

Young women are largely confined to "women's jobs". On the other hand a steady flow of underpaid conscripts with very few rights must be a boost to the profit margins of more than a few employers!

YTS conscription fits in very well with the Tory strategy of making the young and the unemployed pay for the economic crisis.

They have abolished Wages Councils, they have given 18-25 year olds the "opportunity" to work for the same money they got on the dole on a Job Training Scheme and they have set up Restart to force the unemployed onto "training schemes" and low-paid jobs.

Their new attempt at breaking up the comprehensive school system is also a sign of things to come: rubbish training schemes and chronically underfunded schools may be the only chance of "education" that millions of young working class men and women have.

By Alistair Chisholm
Brighton LPYS

It is not the first time that compulsory YTS schemes have been tried. The Tories got their fingers burnt in 1985 when a flood of protests and a strike by thousands of school students forced them to withdraw similar proposals. And that was achieved despite leaders of the labour movement joining the Tories and their press, condemning as "daft" the idea that young people should fight such a serious attack on our rights.

As long as trade unionists help the government and employers run these schemes on the Manpower Services Commission boards, they are not only a millstone round the necks of young people who want to fight back, they are also helping to dig their own graves.

YTS trainees are being used as a battering ram to attack trade union rights and the living standards of the whole working class. For example, as part of its attempt to repay the increasingly militant civil servants in dole offices the government is replacing lower grade jobs with YTS places. With their limited rights, temporary contracts and low wages YTS workers can be used not only to undermine job security, pay and conditions in a workplace but are also less likely to join a union.

The TUC is making moves towards setting up a "youth forum". It must be an open and democratic body which responds to the needs and demands of young workers, and can link up with school students who are fighting back. Similarly the Labour leadership must stop attacking its own youth in the LPYS and instead mobilise the labour movement to confront the Tories' YTS conscription.

The school students forced the Tories to postpone their plans in 1985. If it is prepared to fight, the labour movement can get them scrapped again in 1987.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Home News

Urban Development Corporations

Public money: private profit!

"Incompetent or downright loony councils," said Environment Minister David Trippier after the Queen's Speech, "are obstacles to development and will be swept away to give inner city residents the opportunity to enjoy the prosperity which is being created."

The Tories' urban grant programme encompasses many different elements: Urban Regeneration Grant, Task Forces, City Action Teams, City Technical Colleges, Housing Action Trusts, and Urban Development Corporations.

By John Turkie
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

All are designed to use public money from various government departments as a pump-primer to attract private investment. All are designed to strip local authorities of planning, development, housing and education powers — in effect to act as public subsidies to the private sector.

The government's main thrust is through UDCs, powerful quangos, whose Board members are handpicked from the financial world by the Secretary of State for the Environment. They are accountable to no one but the Environment Secretary.

They have exceptional powers of land acquisition, being able to "vest" (take) publicly owned land and compulsorily purchase privately owned land. They also have planning and development powers for all the land in their area, not just that which they "own". Ridley has recently indicated that he wants to see the UDCs take over "responsibility" for council housing.

The London Docklands Development Corporation and the Merseyside Development Corporation were set up in 1981 to "regenerate" the deindustrialised docklands. According to the government's *own* figures, two thirds of London docklands' 8,000 "new" jobs are in fact direct transfers from the City. And according to the LDDC, over 7,000 (mainly industrial) jobs have been lost. This leaves a net loss of well over 4,000 jobs, at least, at a cost of £350 million to the public purse.

The bid to sell docklands cheaply to the private sector has sent land prices soaring. Land is now changing hands at between £3 to £5 million per acre, and the traditional industries have been replaced by luxury riverside dwellings and office developments surviving the financial and high-tech worlds.

The Act that created UDCs also established Enterprise Zones. In EZs, developers enjoy a 10 year rate-free holiday along with tax relief on capital investment in building. Some EZs are established within UDCs, most are set up just outside the inner cities.

The reality of Tory urban "regeneration" is: for out-of-town EZs read out-of-town mega or regional shopping centres (39 are in the pipeline like the Metro Centre outside Gateshead); and for inner city UDCs read office development, high-priced "executive" housing and leisure-orientated development.

Five new UDCs have already been established, in Manchester's Trafford Park, Teeside, Tyneside, Tyne and Wear, Cardiff Bay and the West Midlands. These were all set up with the co-operation of the soon-to-be disenfranchised local councils. Ridley has just announced the intention to establish mini-UDCs: "more than one and less than ten... for our larger towns and cities."

The silence from the leadership of the Labour Party is deafening. This silence is unforgivable, as the Tory attack on the inner cities is an attack on Labour itself — and we have seen the fruits of the "success" so far in London. The leadership had been warned by those of us fighting the LDDC that it represented the Tory blueprint for the inner cities — but they chose not to listen. It doesn't bode well for the future.

Black youth fight back in Chapeltown

Too much pressure!

On Monday morning, June 22nd, police and community leaders were trying to find out why bricks and bottles were hurled at the police in the Chapeltown area of Leeds starting about 11.30 on the Sunday night.

Trouble began when police were called to a house in Chapeltown where about 3 o'clock in the afternoon there was a domestic disturbance.

While the police were in the house a small group of youth gathered around the police car.

The police went out to the youth, who allegedly stoned the officers, and allegedly damaged their car. The trouble was provoked by the way in which the police arrested the youth they claimed had kneed the car.

He was seen to be assaulted by the police, being hit with a truncheon on his hand, punched in the face and grabbed by the groin. He was then taken to Chapeltown Police station to be charged, while at the station he claimed he was assaulted again. His solicitor has made an official complaint.

By Dave Walker
Leeds North East CLP

Youth in the area claimed a number of similar assaults took place that weekend. The local police superintendent, John Ellis, denied these charges and said that the police had to protect themselves with riot shields from stones and bottles.

"Order" was brought to the streets after five hours of skirmishes. Similar incidents took place on the Monday night. The main target on Monday was a "sex shop" which has been illegally situated in the district for two years. This shop was petrol-bombed. A social club had a petrol bomb also put through its letter-box. Members of the local community put this fire out.

Mitch Lewis, a local community leader, said "It is impossible to say what the future can hold for this kind of situation. The young people are angry for various reasons. Some feel that the police have ill-treated them, and their friends, while others feel that they are wasting their own time because they have nothing to do in life and no jobs."

On the Tuesday night there was a meeting at the West Indian centre in Chapeltown attended by about 150 youth. The meeting was chaired by Cllr Cedrick Clarke, the only Afro-Caribbean councillor in Leeds, and superintendent J. Ellis.

The youth made it very clear what they thought of the police and of the provocative attacks the police had made on Black youth. Notice was served on the police to lay off and to keep off

Subsequent to this meeting with J. Ellis, some 30 youth — almost all of them Black — have been taken in for questioning, and almost all of them have been charged. The local police stations overflowed, and there has even been a special sitting of the magistrates court to deal with these youth.

The way the police are acting is totally in line with the actions of Thatcher's inner city task force. Thatcher said she would take on the inner cities next —

By Garth Frankland
Leeds Councillor

and we can see preparations already underway in Leeds.

Just after the election, a police car was reported to be touring Chapeltown announcing "Thatcher's won the election — we're going to get you now! We're going to put you in order!"

We have been warned.

Chapeltown. Also, the police were told we don't need all the police in Chapeltown, so move them out or we'll move them out ourselves. Tempers were very high and the meeting was very angry.

The police said that they have only six Vice Squad officers in Chapeltown and two police vans and the officers on the beat. Ellis said police were not spying on the youths, but only policing on a normal basis. But he would look at cutting down policing in Chapeltown.

He also said that if the youths had any complaints about police officers, his door is always open.

Broadwater Farm

A movement for civil rights and justice

Plans for the October 3rd March for Civil Rights and Justice are now well in hand.

Representatives of the Broadwater Farm Community will shortly be visiting the United States to secure support from prominent Black activists.

Meanwhile, a special one-day conference is being held at Broadwater Farm on Sunday July 19th. Topics under discussion will include immigration, policing, housing, social services, and many more.

There will be a report back from the US, the release of US Judge Margaret Burnham's scathing indictment of the Old Bailey frame-up trials, and the launch of the Defence Campaign's own pamphlet about the trials.

By Haringey Labour Briefing

In the afternoon there will be an open debate, followed by a social in the evening. Call 01 808 1667 for more information.

Petitions calling for an amnesty for all the victims of the frame-up are available from the Defence Campaign (01 885 3752), or from Reading Matters, Lymington Avenue, London N22 (01 881 3157).

Get hold of these and circulate them as widely as possible!

The Defence Campaign is also asking for Labour MPs, Councillors, and trade union and Party



officials to *sponsor* the march and movement. No one who claims to be a civil libertarian — not to mention a socialist — has any excuse to withhold his or her support!

The Black communities are not waiting for the next general election — let's join their fightback *now*.

A sorry mess all round

The innards of *News on Sunday* will be under the microscope for a while to come.

How could a newspaper with such resourcing be so unappetising? How could it go to the brink of closure in barely half a dozen weeks of publication?

By far the most ambitious newspaper project to have come from radical quarters since the pre-First World War launch of the *Daily Herald*, *News on Sunday* is now in the hands of the receivers. They have licensed publication to a property multi-millionaire, Owen Oyston, the board member who put it into receivership.

If this sounds like familiar City business, that has been part of the problem. Can the left take on a multi-million pound project — £6.5m was raised and lost by *NoS* — without being marginalised by financiers.

The paper retains a readership of just under 250,000, predominantly in London and the North-West, and to some extent in Scotland. *NoS* might yet stay the course — it is to be relaunched in September — and it might be on the radical side.

Two years ago a leading market research company tested a dummy issue of *NoS* — half-funded by the Greater London Enterprise Board. The tabloid dummy was broadly in line with the idea for a radical *Mail on Sunday* with which the project had begun. The market research evidence was that there were potentially 1.5 million mainly working class people who would buy it.

By Geoff Sheridan

1.5 million copies of the first issue were duly printed and nearly a million copies were returned. Within a fortnight sales fell by a half.

The market research findings ought to have caused disbelief. We are not in uplifting times. The *Herald* was launched at the time of greatest mass upheaval in Britain in this century. Before that came the early 19th century heyday of the radical press, leading up to the Chartist movement of the 1840s.

Meanwhile the idea of a radical *Guardian* on Sunday which GLEB had said should be part of the original feasibility study and which the *Guardian* itself thought there was room for, had been quickly shelved. The idea of a mass popular paper had taken wing and those involved were carried away with a flight of fancy that they projected onto those who could provide the funds.

Nick Horsley, who had inherited a food business, was taken on board. It was to him that trade union leaders and others were prepared to talk about investing. *NoS* could not be launched without commercial respectability. Yet when Horsley stepped in as the newspaper's third chief executive, shortly before the launch, he proved to be no manager.

Gerry Taylor, former managing director of the *Guardian* and Horsley's predecessor as chief executive, was another "respectable" figure. Given control over the advertising and marketing of the paper, he approved the notorious "No tits but a lot of balls" campaign.

It took a one-day strike by NUJ members, supported by SOGAT and NGA chapels, to kill the campaign. Taylor had set up non-union advertising department at *NoS*, the only one on a national newspaper. "The only way I could get the best people," he said, "was non-union." During one

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editorial appointment interview, Taylor said in reference to a Founder's question, "Why the hell does that bloke keep going on about politics?"

While Horsley and Taylor played clasic boardroom games, there was a dearth of effective management in virtually every department, from financial control to personnel. Even now there is no house agreement. Clearly, the left has to gain its own managerial skills.

Some radical publications have succeeded with a co-operative form of editorial management. Their example was never considered for *NoS*. All it had was a Founders' Trust — disbanded when the paper went into receivership — to protect its editorial charter and ensure that it was not taken over by capitalist interests.

What was lacking was a figure who combined a clear-minded political stance with journalistic flair, and who would be able to establish support and the authority to carry the project through — a good editor, in other words. Examples of radical papers which have been successful without such a figure are rare.

The closest *NoS* came to it was John Pilger, who refused to be editor but accepted the position of editorial director. He favoured Keith Sutton's appointment as editor and then was outraged when Sutton came up with the formulation of a "left-wing *Sun*" with a dummy to suit.

Sutton saw himself carrying out the brief derived from the market research. Pilger saw a perversion of left-wing values. In the clash that ensued, the Founders attempted to resolve the conflict, but Pilger walked out.

Politics was not Sutton's strong point. In the run-up to the election, Sutton appeared to support tactical voting. So did Brian Whittacker, the deputy editor, and the political correspondent, Malcolm Boughen. It took the combined pressure of the Founders and the staff for *NoS* to call for a straight Labour vote.

Nor did Sutton have the skills needed to make a tabloid come to life.

Both the *Daily Mirror* and the *Sunday Mirror* covered the election campaign much more imaginatively than *News on Sunday*. Does that mean there is no need for *NoS*? Not exactly. Immediately after polling day it was show business as usual in the *Sunday Mirror*, with politics back to its slot on page two.

Labour focussed its campaign on televison, and relegated the Fleet Street hacks to the back of the photo opportunities. That is one way to try to dispose of the garbage that comes off the presses. But Labour has to break the back of the monster, and at the very least that means a state fund to allow a voice to those who aren't multi-millionaires.

Editorial

BRIEFING
LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Self-defence against Thatcher

In Judo, the art of self-defence involves using your opponent's weight to your advantage. The labour movement could well look to this approach in repelling the waves of Tory attacks unveiled in the Queen's Speech.

The Tories could yet over-reach themselves. Having focussed attention and resources so narrowly on cultivating a tame electoral clientel among the well-to-do middle classes and some employed workers, Thatcher now appears convinced that nobody else matters a damn. She really seems to believe that the millions of low-paid, the unemployed, and the inner-city communities will never mount any sustained fightback.

In part this view is the arrogance of wealth, power and an effortless 100-seat election victory: partly it comes from a cynical recognition of the miserable, treacherous role played by most trade union and Labour leaders since 1979. Indeed some of these leaders share Thatcher's view that a fightback against the odds is ruled out, and that therefore the only answer is to lie low for another five years.

However, we should draw strength from the splendid example of defiance from the students and workers on the streets of South Korea, challenging and winning concessions from a brutal military dictatorship: and from the struggles of French students and workers against the right wing Chirac government.

In each case these militant struggles were able to expose and exploit latent differences within the ruling class. There are already signs of divergence among the Tories over the poll tax, education, and new cuts in public spending.

Onslaught

The *worst* response to Thatcher's gang as they whet their knives for a new onslaught is the line of total capitulation in advance of any fight.The recent statement from Islington council leader Margaret Hodge, insisting that Labour authorities must make cut after cut in jobs and services in order to cling onto office for a few more years, must be music to Tory ears.

In the unions, too, AEU leaders Laird and Jordan have headed a new chorus of right wing bureaucrats running up the white flag without a shot fired. They see surrender to the bosses' demands as the only way to keep union subscriptions flowing in: the Tories and the CBI could not have put it better.

Defeatism

But this abject official line of defeatism is only one side of the story. It does not come from those at the receiving end of the attacks.

Who speaks for the union members, facing speed-up, longer shifts, ever more redundancies and attacks on union strength?

Who speaks for the council workers and council tenants, who stand to lose jobs and essential services, and face spiralling rent and rates demands as bankrupt Labour councils try to solve financial problems at their expense?

Who will reflect the anger of the homeless, the unemployed, the youth, whose hopes of housing, jobs and a decent education are being trampled by the Tories and ignored by the "new realists"?

Who will speak out for the working class women who will lose more jobs in health and local government, bear the brunt of the housing crisis, and carry the burden of caring for sick and elderly relatives cast aside by cuts in the NHS and social services?

Who will echo the anger and resentment of the black communities facing more racist immigration laws, more deportations and divided families, more discrimination in jobs and housing, more racist violence on the streets, and more police harassment — triggering the bitter resistance seen in Chapeltown and Broadwater Farm?

Answer

The answer to each of these questions must be that the labour movement takes these issues on board and mobilises mass resistance to Thatcher's juggernaut of anti-working class legislation. Another five years of total surrender would make it almost impossible for the Labour Party — or the unions — to stand as any kind of plausible defenders of the oppressed.

We have just seen how useless was a 3-week election campaign dressed up in anti-Tory rhetoric after Kinnock and his pals had spent four years sabotaging and attacking every real fight against Thatcher.

There is no reason to believe that the Kinnocks, Hodges and Jordans will have things all their own way. The sheer scale of the Tory attack on such wide layers of the working class makes a new level of fightback possible — spanning the unions, the Labour Parties, community and campaigning organisations, and countless thousands of people not yet organised or involved in political activity.

As Thatcher aims her bulldozers at the inner cities, with a special determination to uproot, disperse and destroy the communities which voted solidly Labour on June 11th, the chance of a new round of resistance is increased.

Tory plan

The Tory plan, barely disguised in the Queen's Speech, is to follow Wandsworth's Tory council in driving working class families off whole council estates, and convert the inner-city wastelands into a profitable paradise of property sharks, penthouses and Porsches.

To do this, elected local government must be stripped of its powers, existing housing stock flogged off, run down or otherwise levered from council control, and whole areas turned into a Free Fire Zone for sweatshops and office blocks. The objective is social engineering: to make it impossible for Labour ever again to win a General Election.

The main attacks — and focal points for the fightback — are already clear from the Queen's Speech.

● **Elected local authorities** will be stripped of powers over education, housing and planning; instructed by law to put services out to private tender; robbed of revenue and rate-capped by the vicious poll tax; hog-tied and bankrupted by massive financial crises; and legally gagged by repressive laws on "political" publicity. The choice for councillors is whether to side in struggle with council workers, tenants and the working class, or line up as docile hod-carriers for the Tory cuts machine.

● **Council tenants** face a doubling of rents, sales of their estates and a sky-high poll tax that benefits the rich. Most tenants have nowhere else to go: there are real possiblities for mass resistance if campaigns are built quickly.

● Thousands of **working class youth and students** can be won to a fight against Tory plans to slash higher education and float off the plushest middle class schools from local authority control. The new, elitist system would leave working class youth permanently at the bottom of the heap in run-down, underfunded schools with no chance of escape.

● **Unemployed youth**, schools youth and unions in the workplaces must link up to fight the Tory plan to conscript jobless youth into slave labour "training" schemes, while Tory Minsters' kids are free to loaf round the champagne and heroin circuit.

While Kinnock's team is too busy trying to stifle the Young Socialists, and the TUC too timid to raise more than token opposition, the scope is there for a real campaign to lift the lid on these vicious schemes.

● With a new round of post-election cuts looming, **health service unions**, local communities and the labour movement must build a real fightback now — or watch dozens more hospitals close their doors.

● **The privatisation** of water and other industries, and fresh attacks on shift patterns and demands for speed-up force union members to decide whether to fight back now knowing they may not get another chance.

● The growing tide of deportations and divided families is already a radicalising force in **black communities**. Campaigns to combat this and other racial harassment by police, the state and racist thugs can mobilise wide support.

If we had an official leadership that felt strengthened, encouraged and motivated rather than threatened by these struggles, there is little doubt that we could quickly see a mass challenge to the authority of this new Tory government.

However Kinnock and the TUC bureaucracy have very different plans for the next five years. The task of fighting to link and mobilise local Labour Parties, trade union bodies, campaigns, pressure groups and wider layers of the working class falls to the left wing of the labour movement.

Briefing supporters have no desire to "go it alone". These struggles could be most successful if all the currents, tendencies, organisations and individuals off the hard left — including the Campaign Group of MPs — were to join in a common fight for mass working class action. On this basis of active involvement in the battles of the working class there is a real chance to forge a new unity of the left, in which each current could retain its independent point of view within a democratic agreement on the next steps forward.

While the Kinnock team's bureaucratic, witch-hunting conservatism and passive parliamentarism sit like a dead weight on the labour movement, it is from workers' self-defence against Thatcher's reactionary radicalism and its brutal impact on the daily lives of millions that the best hopes of resistance arise.

local government

Camden council fails the test

On Thursday July 2nd Camden Labour Council passed a resolution which included a series of measures amounting to quite serious cuts in jobs and therefore in services.

The cuts include:

● a stop to all growth;

● a refusal to enter into any commitments that are not contractual, even if they're budgetted for;

● setting up a monitoring procedure for all further proposals on expenditure;

and, directly affecting staffing:

● to freeze all vacant posts, such as to not recruit, except in exceptional cases where the Council decides through some means that we don't yet know that jobs must be filled for the direct provision of services;

● that no more employees be appointed on temporary contracts or contracts extended for further periods — again, unless the Council is satisfied that the appointment or extension is necessary to prevent a serious breakdown in service delivery;

● that there should be steps taken to reduce overtime working and overtime costs.

These steps have been proposed to deal with the £12 million gap that's opened in this year's budget, as a result of various creative accountancy measures failing to materialise and not living up to expectations in terms of reducing budgets.

They have also taken some measures to start the process of bridging the gap in next year's budget. It is currently estimated that there will be a £60m between the money the Council can raise through the rates system, under the ratecapping legislation, and current expenditure.

To that end, various budget scrutiny teams are being set up in each department to monitor and reduce spending.

The Chief Executive has been asked to investigate and come back with a package of proposals around early retirement and voluntary redundancy schemes; and the workforce and trade unions are encouraged to seek an understanding with the Council about the redeployment of staff into priority work areas, flexibility of working practices and the necessity for the Council to determine the tasks that will be performed.

That was the proposal that went to the Labour Group and was voted for by all but eight councillors, namely Allen, Bevington, Birtill, Holding, Plummer, States, Lazenby, and Newbury. Councillor Shurety also voted against the proposals in the Labour Group, but wasn't present in the Council meeting — so he will probably be another supporter.

By Jo Fawkes
Chair, Camden NALGO

It does seem possible that this group will be expanded over the summer, as councillors come to realise that these short-term measures are not going to stave off long-term cuts, and as they realise that they will actually be presiding over redundancies by the autumn, unless they take a stand now.

The trade unions certainly recognise that these cuts are only the beginning, and while the councillors may only see it as a paper exercise, we're extremely aware of the human consequences of their policy.

For example, the Council know there are about 900 vacancies and about 300 temporary staff across the Council; but they don't know where they are. So they don't know what will happen if the vacancies aren't filled or the temporary staff leave.

Immediate

Our belief is that it will lead to immediate closure of services in certain areas, particularly in social services and the Chief Executive's department. We know there is a high vacancy rate in some sections; and in some places if one person falls ill, takes maternity leave, or even goes on holiday there will not be enough staff to provide the service. We believe this will happen fairly quickly.

In addition, some staff have been doing a bit of extra work out of good will — even though this is against union policy, staff don't like to see service users suffering. But any such good will is now likely to stop altogether, as staff realise that vacant posts will *never* be filled.

There is a lot of anger in the trade unions, at all levels, about they way these decisions were made. We were given *one week* to consult our entire membership; and the Council did not write to the staff to tell them what was being considered until after the Council meeting where the cuts were made — despite repeated requests from the unions.

The NALGO Executive Committee is therefore taking a motion to the branch meeting on July 9th calling for no co-operation with the Council in the implementation of the vacancy freeze and the ending of temporary contracts. We will be supporting all shops which take action in line with that policy.

We will also be launching a campaign to give the shops and individuals confidence to carry that policy through in detail.

Co-operation

Clearly, the Council want trade union co-operation to make their policy more effective. But if the Executive resolution is passed at the branch meeting, we will not be entering into the monitoring procedure or into any kind of implementation mechanism.

The Building Workers unions are likely to share that attitude; but it is not clear yet what NUPE's position will be — there is division of opinion within the leadership. NUPE's mass meeting is on July 15th, and their position will be clearer after that.

The Council meeting which made the cuts was in considerable contrast to the one where they first discussed defiance to the Rates Act two years ago. Then, Council meetings were held in the Camden Centre, with 2,000 members of the unions and the community present, all shouting their support for the councillors.

This time it was held in an atmosphere of maximum security, with all the doors locked and only 50 people allowed into the building. All town hall staff had been asked to leave the building, their place of work, at 5 o'clock to make sure there were no workers in the premises when the Council meeting started.

Sandra Plummer's motion, calling for further consultation with the workforce and the community, was ruled out of order by the Mayor.

To change the content of its policies, the Council has had to change its style. Now those of us who supported Camden Council's stand two years ago will have to mount an even stronger fight than we did then, and this time our first aim will have to be to change the minds of our own Labour representatives.

Trade Union Briefing

SOCIALIST TEACHER
SOCIALIST TEACHERS' ALLIANCE

STA prepares to fight the Tories on education

KEN JONES, a member of the NUT National Executive, writing in a personal capacity, assesses the AGM of the Socialist Teachers Association, which was held at the end of June.

The Socialist Teachers Alliance has more than doubled its size to 600 members over the last 18 months.

The growth reflects its role in campaigning for effective action to defend NUT members' pay and conditions against government and employers.

Like the rest of teachers, though, the STA now faces the tasks of defence and survival against the Tories' next round of educational warfare. The AGM spent its time discussing strategies for this fight.

There was agreement about education policy: the Tories threaten to dismantle free, locally-controlled, non-selective education and to replace it with a system that relies in equal measure on control and market forces. Yet their ambitions may over-reach themselves and produce a reaction in favour of equality.

The enthusiasm of those who would benefit from opting out of state education could be more than cancelled out by the anger of those who would remain in sub-standard schools. Appreciating this, the AGM voted to pursue through the Labour Party and teaching unions a campaign against the Tories' "reforms", while at the same time promoting debate in the labour movement about the kind of strategies which can win popular support for a radical education.

On other issues, there wasn't unanimity. All were agreed in their criticisms of union policy for fighting Baker's imposition of worse conditions upon teachers. All agreed on the need to continue local resistance for as long as possible — even without national support. There was agreement that national protest should continue against the loss of negotiating rights.

But there were disagreements on the relationship of local action to local negotiations: a majority favoured not seeking negotiations with local education authorities unless there was no other route of safeguarding members' positions — a position I do not personally agree with.

The meeting also voted to apply a policy of positive action for women in the STA, and in its organising bodies, and established policy for anti-sexist education, which will be of great use to teachers in fighting the retreat from anti-sexist policies which many schools and LEAs are experiencing, in the face of a Haringey-style backlash.

All in all, the meeting was a useful one, which prepared the STA well for the next phase of campaigning. It should continue to be capable of giving a lead on pay and conditions, while also taking up the wider issues which are so essential for resistance to the range of government policy.

COHSE Conference Report



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

COHSE Conference 1987

Whose world is real?

Hector McKenzie, the newly elected General Secretary of the Confederation of Health Service Employees, spent this year's annual conference wagging his finger at delegates like a headmaster ticking off naughty schoolchildren.

By Glen Birch
COHSE activist

Most of his audience, and those they represent, spend their working lives in poor conditions earning pitifully low pay. The platform repeatedly had the cheek to lecture them on living in the "real world" and that there was "no alternative" to bending the knee.

Their "real world" — according to policy pushed through this year — includes full surrender to Tory anti-union laws, YTS slave labour in the NHS, and a refusal to pursue a vigorous campaign to democratise health authorities.

The hard right leadership of McKenzie, O'Kane and Robinson pushed the line of "new realism" and the Kinnockite call to "wait for the next general election".

The atmosphere was aptly summed up by one normally reticent delegate from the north of Scotland, who was overheard to remark "this is the first time I've been at an SDP rally."

Although the Broad Left was vigorous and vocal (the President sarcastically offered them their "own" podium), they won the day on only a few occasions.

The main one was a resolution calling for a campaign to prepare for industrial action in support of the ancillary staff's pay claim. It was overwhelmingly carried despite frantic opposition and veiled threats from the platform. Later, when it appeared as if a resolution was to be carried in opposition to the Labour Party leadership's plans to take control of the Young Socialists, a card vote was called for and then delayed — until leadership supporters could be brought back into conference from the bars to vote in a debate none of them had heard.

The COHSE leadership may hope for a quiet life until the next election, but the "real world" — in the form of the Tories' wholesale cuts, and privatisations — will put the boot into the quiet life for all of us. The Health Service rank and file and the working class in general will fight back. Indeed, Hector — we have "no alternative".

LRT Builders walk out

By Kevin MacDermott
Deputy Senior Convenor, UCATT

London Regional Transport (LRT) Builders went on all-out indefinite strike in the last week of June in a last-ditch fight against compulsory redundancies.

Under the GLC the LRT Builders department employed around 1,000 skilled building workers.

The LRT Act brought London's transport under direct government control and stipulated that the department must prove its "competitiveness".

- In 1985 consultants were brought in, the department was restructured, and 600 jobs were lost through Voluntary Severence (VS).
- In the spring of 1986, 200 more painters and labourers were lost through VS.
- In November 1986, LRT demanded 460 compulsory redundancies, and gave the workforce 90 days notice. After negotiations, the VS list was kept open and the 90 days extended.
- Last January a secret ballot of the workforce produced an 80% majority in favour of industrial action against redundancies. Days and a week of action were held in the following months.

The deadline for compulsory redundancies kept being moved and more workers took VS: 21 more jobs had to go when the May deadline was postponed yet again (when the election was announced) until the end of June.

- On June 25th, at a meeting with full time officers and shop stewards, LRT Board members announced that although only 10 more redundancies were required they would still be made compulsorily.

A mass meeting was called for Monday, June 29th, at Hammersmith Town Hall. It decided to embark on "indefinite all-out strike action to prevent the introduction of compulsory redundancies at LRT".

The strike is virtually solid throughout the department and involves members of UCATT, FTAT, TGWU, NUR, AEU and EETPU. Picket lines are up outside LRT Builders opposite Parsons Green tube, Chiswick LRT Builders Depot, and the Oval Depot behind the Oval tube.

LRT Builders are now visiting other LRT areas — bus, tubes, engineering, etc. — to ask for moral, financial and industrial support.

For speakers or for more information, contact the LRT Builders Joint Convenors Committee, c/o Camden Trades Council Support Unit, 102 St Pancras Way, London NW1, 01 482 4106.

1987 APEX Conference

Merger-mania won't halt decline

APEX — the 90,000 strong white-collar union — held its annual conference on June 6/7th in Scarborough.

The Conference was shortened to 1½ days in view of the General Election, and will be reconvened in November.

***Briefing* spoke to APEX activist and *Briefing* supporter, Karen Raybould, about the weekend's events.**

What was the major issue at the Conference?
Merger. APEX has been in talks with six unions, and reports of these discussions had been circulated. But effectively the decision had been stitched up beforehand. The Executive Council favoured the GMBATU, and had already argued the case to members in the APEX journal.

Other, more sensible options for the membership, were ASTMS and TASS (in discussions themselves) and the TGWU.

Unfortunately, the former two were preparing a separate clerical section within the merged union, which is unnecessary and divisive. Talks with the TGWU had however gone well.

In the debate, to APEX's credit, any merger with the AEU was overwhelmingly rejected. This was mainly due to its links with the EETPU and that organisation's role at Wapping and support for no-strike agreements.

Opposition to the GMBATU focused on the need to at least continue talks with other unions. But ASTMS-TASS was rejected, the TGWU hardly mentioned, and the decision taken to continue talks with the GMBATU only.

This decision potentially strengthens the "official" right wing within the TUC, should a merger be approved later in the year in a ballot of the membership.

Unfortunately it was also supported by recently-elected "left wingers" on the EC — Julian Brennan (Holborn) and Lynette Savings (Westminster TUPs). They saw it as the best that could be won in the circumstances. The huge rejection of the AEU showed the unnecessary caution of that view.

A merger with the GMBATU would mean APEX taking over its white-collar section, MATSA. The new structure would guarantee APEX EC members their positions, and APEX/MATSA conference would continue. The spokesperson for the APEX officials at least was quite honest about the importance of self-interest in supporting the GMBATU option.

Did this set the mood for the rest of the debates?

APEX

Yes. The lack of any serious left wing opposition, together with a lack of fight amongst most delegates just prior to the election (after 8 years of Thatcher) contributed to the EC's almost total dominance of proceedings. In six years of going to Conference, I've never seen delegates so muted.

This year was Rules Revision too...
There was a motion to move from branch-based ballots in EC elections to postal votes. It seemed to be narrowly defeated. President Ken Smith declared it carried though, and there was not enough co-ordinated opposition to even get a card vote. So postal votes it is.

And another motion to remove APEX's "proscribed list" was defeated, with the Coventry No. 1 branch delegate (inaccurately) witch-hunting the GEC Coventry branch for the second year running.

What other debates were there?
A composite motion caling for the withdrawal of APEX and TUC support for YTS was taken with just 10 minutes left of the Saturday session. The EC won the "debate" by arguing for local union monitoring of YTS and winning improved conditions. But of course Roy Grantham, APEC General Secretary, is one of the three TUC Commissioners sitting on, and giving legitimacy to, the MSC.

There was one positive note at Conference, though — in the debate on South Africa. Resolutions were carried which included calls for APEX members to refuse to handle contracts and goods connected with South Africa. Whether this will be implemented is an entirely different matter.

What of the future?
There is an urgent need for socialists within APEX to organise. The new Tory government's attacks will intensify the spiral of membership decline, which a merger with the GMBATU will not solve.

The key lies with the ordinary membership. It is to them we must look for future leaders within the union, however it develops.

Call for Solidarity Conference launched

Ex-Silentnight strikers, together with the Tower Hamlets Print Support Group and the Oxford Disputes Group have launched the call for a national solidarity conference in the autumn.

The call has been backed by the Hangers, Caterpillar, Triders and Senior Colman strikers and ex-strikers.

A letter published by the conference organising committee explains:

"(We) decided to make the call for such a conference after the defeat of strikes like the miners, Wapping and Silentnight, amongst others.

These disputes were defeated, particularly because of the lack of support from the leaderships of the official movement. To try to change this situation we need to discuss the lessons of those disputes in order that these lessons can be taken into support for future struggles."

But the need for such a conference is not confined to these kinds of industrial disputes. The letter continues:

"Public sector workers have been attacked by the government on wages, working conditions, and jobs. The removal of negotiating rights at GCHQ and from the teachers unions poses a threat to trade union organisation nationally."

Two well attended organising meetings have taken place so far in Leeds and Leicester.

These meetings decided that the discussions at the conference should encompass a broad range of issues facing workers in struggle and trade unionists faced with the attacks from the Tories and employers.

Discussions will include organising solidarity; support for jailed and victimised workers; women organising; privatisation; the law and the trade unions; organising in the trade unions; supporting black workers and fighting racism; trade union democracy; international solidarity and organising against apartheid.

During the Tories' third term the government and the employers intend to go to town on wages, conditions and trade union shop floor organisation. They will use new anti-union laws, privatisation, unemployment and a battery of other means to weaken and destory workers' resistance.

It is quite clear, however, that the trade union leaderships as a whole will do little, nothing or worse to stop them. This applies to the "lefts" of the T&GWU and NUPE as well as the open scabs of the EETPU leadership. They will hide behind the Tory anti-union laws and the threat of sequestration rather than organising the necessary solidarity action and support as at Wapping.

But workers will continue to fight on as at Silentnight, Hangers, in the teachers and civil service disputes. Each of these disputes has been left to fight on alone, plant by plant, sector by sector.

The Conference will be a welcome step forward in breaking down this isolation, and beginning to build a network of trade union activists who can both extend mutual support in their struggles and begin to discuss how to build an alternative leadership for the labour movement which is, in Arthur Scargill's famous phrase, "as loyal to our class as Thatcher is to hers."

It is hoped that the Conference will draw in activists both from the support committees and from across the trade union movement, especially those involved in "Broad Lefts" and rank and file groupings.

By Pete Cooper
Trade Union Briefing

For further information about the Conference contact Janet Seymour, 3, Hill St, Barnoldswick, Coln, Lancs.
Tel. 0282 812864



PHOTO: Andrea Campbell

Solidarity for Hangers: can we widen support for isolated struggles?

NUM must stand firm

No retreats on 6-day week!

The Coal Board believe they have the NUM on the floor — and are putting the boot in.

They have imposed a pay deal for 1987 on all NUM members, and moved ahead with increased production targets of 5 tonnes per man-shift, "quality circles", claw-back incentive schemes and plans for 6-day working at the new Margam Drift mine and later elsewhere.

The current plight of the NUM is in stark contrast to Scargill's pledge when he was elected of a "campaigning union" that would fight for a 4-day week, shorter shifts, a new technology agreement and improved pay and safety conditions.

We know Scargill himself is still arguing along the same class lines. But he is constantly undermined by the Stalinist-led soft left in the bureaucracy. It is time to dump the Stalinist old-guard intellectuals who gained favour in the pay strikes of 1972/4, but who so ill-advised Scargill in the great battle for jobs of 1984/5 and now in the fight for the very life of the union.

Among these figures is Professor Vic Allen, seen skulking around the Yorkshire Miners' Gala: the sight of this "storm cow" is proof that Scargill has failed to learn the political lessons of the strike — some rank and file members have made much more political development.

By H.M. Greenaway
Yorks Coalfield

With Prendergast and Lynk of the UDM offering management a greasy hand of collaboration in organising 6-day working at Margam, rank and file miners will not be taken in. But this intervention may yet sway some of the old NUM bureaucrats into capitulation.

The South Wales leadership which played the key role in ending the strike without a settlement is now in favour of accepting the 6-day week plan at Margam. Des Dutfield is said to have argued for accepting the Board's package now, and hoping a new Labour government would reverse the measures later: but Kinnock has made no such promise — and his record on the NUM is more than suspect.

Behind Dutfield stands another academic advisor, Kim Howells, who was sacked for only two days — and then reinstated! — for knifing the strike by saying publicly on TV that there should be a return to work without a settlement.

Howells got his job back — but hundreds of sacked and victimised miners are still suffering from his policy two and a half years later.

Indeed even in South Wales where only two miners still in jail have not been re-employed, the jobs they were given included — according to Terry Thomas — work in private mines.

The South Wales bureaucrats remain the pace-setters in sell-out formulae: but others egged on by the Communist Party are not so behind. Yet the 6-day week issue is of fundamental importance.

As one miner told *Briefing*:

"*No way* will we accept 6 day coal production. I don't work Saturday nights now, and under capitalism I never will.

"Saturday night is when we wash the dust out of our throats with a few pints. It's sacred to the working classes and non-negotiable.

"If they want coal on a Saturday, the Board and its supporters amongst the bureaucrats should form a coal-cutting team. I bet me and my mates bring more coal out in the tread of our boots each day than they'll produce in a *year*!"



PHOTO: Wayne Edgmton

Hold back the NCB! Scargill speaking at the Yorks Miners' Gala

Society leaders pull out

As intimated in the last issue of *Briefing* the attitude of the SCPS leadership to the continuation of the Civil Service pay campaign was in considerable doubt.

However, nobody expected them to pull out of the already agreed selective action which hit London on June 25th and 26th, and moved to Wales and the Midlands the following week.

The action by the leadership and the manner in which it was done — effectively one day before the action was to begin — left SCPS activists climbing the walls.

By Alistair Wallace
CPSA Broad Left

Censure motions have rained in from even normally moderate branches and more active areas simply ignored the instruction.

The conclusion CPSA members are forced to draw is that the SCPS leadership is more interested in attacking the CPSA Broad Left NEC than it is in winning the pay campaign.

In the short run this has led to a mood of defiance but in the longer term it will make it more difficult to win the ballot on all-out action.

The ballot itself is currently taking place and will finish on July 15th. In the aftermath of the SCPS leadership's sabotage it is even more clear that all-out action by CPSA members is the only way the campaign can progress.

Everything (?) comes to those who only wait

An open letter to *Socialist Action*:

The "sacked and victimised" miners were told to "keep their heads down, not to rock the boat but to wait for the return of a Labour government." This sterile, non-combative, empty policy was put forward soon after the miners' return to work in 1985.

Some Yorkshire Area officials pushed this policy as a recipe for reinstatement. The 1987 election result, giving Thatcher a third term with a massive majority should finally bury this degrading policy.

I regret that the officials who argued strongly along those lines whilst vociferously condemning the actions of the late respected comrade Jack Collins of Kent, couldn't have been buried instead of him! Jack was a class fighter who never ceased to campaign for the reinstatement of the victimised mineworkers. His actions and policies were an inspiration to all the activists around the "great Strike" and since. He is sorely missed!

Terry French, a natural leader, is, since his recent release from prison, continuing the fight. In advocating action to achieve reinstatement he is constantly vilified by the "Stalinist soft-lefts of Yorkshire" and surprisingly comes in for criticism from misguided supporters of *Socialist Action*, all because he is prepared to fight for his and the other "class war casual ties' " jobs back.

Surely *Socialist Action* should support this activity and encourage its supporters in the coalfields to shoulder some of this burden rather than advocating that they just sell badges as they were doing at the Yorks Miners Gala. The less politically able sacked miners could fulfil this role, thus releasing your supporters for a more agitational role.

The NUM 1987 Conference started on July 4th, but has no mention of the sacked and victimised miners in any of the resolutions. This omission is even more marked as all the main resolutions are decided upon and handed out like sweets to the *left Areas* by the National Miners' Forum as motions to the NEC for adoption into the conference agenda.

The election of Thatcher is a clear mandate that an *emergency resolution* be tabled and taken as a *first priority*, immediately the conference opens. I'm sure the President's address could wait, as I am also sure that the sacked miners have waited long enough!

To gain reinstatement the sacked miners should adopt the slogan "*Stand and Fight!*". To this end it requires that they are motivated into attending the conference.

I know that some will be there lobbying and are actually having to sleep under canvass — unlike others who will be well looked after in their efforts to sell badges and promote *Socialist Action*.

William Head,,
Yorks NUM
rank and file

Excluded motion!

Voices were raised and salaries defended when a N. Western Area motion to conference was **excluded** from the 1987 Conference Agenda at the May NEC meeting.

The motion was on the lines of "Miners wages for miners' leaders". It was moved as a right wing manoeuvre to embarrass National President Arthur Scargill. The right had hoped he would rule the motion out of order, thus allowing them to point the righteous finger of condemnation at a "greedy President". Much to their chagrin, Scargill moved that the motion be voted upon by the NEC.

To their credit, the three Yorkshire Area officials voted in support of the motion. It is to the shame of the smaller Areas who are heavily subsidised by the National Union that some of them must have voted against the motion, because it fell and was then excluded from the Conference agenda.

S. Wales miners (who already pay a subsidy to maintain their officials) would be well advised to ask the anti-Scargillites Dutfield and Rees which way *they* voted, who mandated them, and how much a year they draw of *your money*.

Wiliam Head, Yorks NUM rank & file

Frontline: Local Government

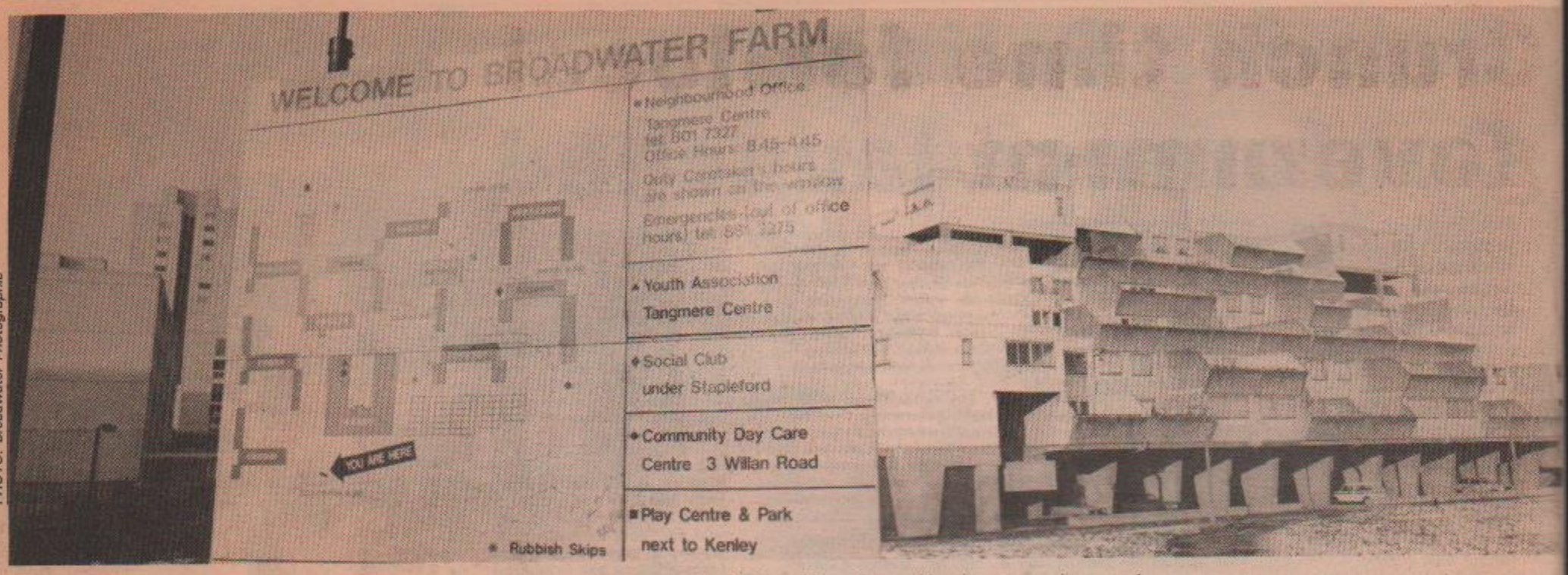


PHOTO: Broadwater Photographic

Broadwater Farm: the thorn in her side. Thatcher will use her third term to hit the inner cities with everything the state can throw at them.

How the Tories plan to shackle local government

There have been 42 pieces of legislation from the government since '79 which affect local government powers in England and Wales. The new Tory government aims to go much further.

Since 1978/9, the last financial year of the last Labour government, local authority capital spending has dropped by 41% in overall terms and almost 60% in housing.

Now, Section 1 and Schedule 1 of the Local Government Act 1987 impose restrictions on deferred purchase deals which have played an important role in house-building and other schemes.

Deferred purchase is a means of borrowing money from banks to fund schemes which could not be paid for out of normal capital allocations. Generally, the repayments start in three years' time (1990/91).

Nearly all the big Labour authorities in London have entered into substantial deferred purchase schemes. The 1987 Act will give the Secretary of State power to regulate all but the smallest of these schemes — those under £3m.

The route of deferred purchase has therefore been at least partly closed off, though there may still be some loopholes in the wording of the Act.

A local authority can only use any capital receipts it obtains on a proportionate basis, rather than all in one year. There is a new control in the 1987 Act which gives the Secretary of State *the power to change the definition of revenue income*.

This is very damaging to local authorities because of a shortage of revenue (or sometimes the other way round).

Revenue regimented

Revenue spending remains under strict control. Precepting authorities have to make the precept by March 10th, the rating authorities have to set the rate by April 1st (introduced by the Tories after the deferral of rate-setting a few years back).

There is a legal duty to balance income and expenditure, as well as a legal duty to act "reasonably" and to take account only of "relevant considerations" and to keep within the administrative law.

The government decides what percentage of total local expenditure it is going to fund. That amount has been going down continuously since the Tories came into power and is likely to fall further.

The government can also change the balance of block grant and specific grants, which are given for specific named purposes, increasing and decreasing them as they see fit. The proportion of specific grants has been rising, compared to general block grant, thus further restricting the right of local authorities to make their own decisions on funding.

Finally, the Rate Support Grants Act of 1987 has ended the process of "flowback" whereby some of the grant lost by Labour Authorities which "overspent" was recouped under a complex government formula. About £250m which high-spending Labour authorities would have expected to receive this year will now stay with the Treasury.

Rate-capping revisited

We still don't know what the financial regime is going to be for 1988/9. There will be the usual announcement about Rate Support Grant, and the July list of ratecapped authorities. The government also now has the power to determine the penalties for each Labour Council in London individually — rather than treating them all in the same way, under the same rules, as in the past.

This will obviously help to undermine any attempt at united resistance by Labour authorities. It's a fair bet that rate-capping will be extended to other Labour authorities like Waltham Forest, Ealing, Hammersmith, and maybe Manchester.

Thatcher faces a dilemma. On the one hand, she obviously wants to penalise as many Labour authorities as possible through ratecapping and other financial measures. On the other hand, she does have to consider the question of the poll tax and its political implications.

In inner London the poll tax is likely to cause huge increases for individuals. The Tories would like to see rates going up now to make the poll tax look more attractive. There may be pressure on the Tories to be more relaxed in London over the rates issue, though Thatcher's instincts may well lead her the other way.

New Legislation

We know from the Queen's Speech that the Tories plan to rush most of their new proposals through this parliamentary session. The first Bill contains further controls on local authority publicity, new controls on contract compliance, and new provisions for compulsory competitive tendering.

The Bill names six services to be put out for tendering, with the Secretary of State empowered to add others to the list. The proposed starting date is April 1st, 1989, so local authorities will have *just over a year*, if they are to comply with the law, to get their act together over tendering.

There are also transitional provisions forcing local authorities which agree a contract between now and April 1989 to re-examine it if it conflicts with the tendering principles in the Bill. There is therefore little opportunity to squeeze in "contracts in perpetuity" for Direct Labour Organisations.

Contract compliance has caused a long-running row between Home Office and Department of the Environment ministers. The Home Office supported controls on the political aspects of contract compliance (e.g. Labour authorities withholding contracts from companies who work on nuclear installations). But they disagreed with the DoE who felt that local authorities should also be stopped from taking account of existing laws on racism and sexism.

The DoE has won and local authorities will no longer be able to impose contract conditions regarding the number of women and Black employees, local working conditions, union rights, training, health and safety monitoring, etc. This provision is clearly racist, sexist, anti-union and anti-health and safety.

Gagging the left

New proposals to restrict publicity by local authorities will be a priority. The Tories tried this before (in response to the GLC abolition campaign) but the worst excesses of the government's legislation were softened by the Lords. They have come back now with even more sweeping restrictions.

"Prohibited materials" are defined as that which "refers to a political party, or persons identified with a political party, or promotes or opposes a point of view on a question of political controversy which is identified as the view of one political party and not another."

In six months' time we could find ourselves unable even to criticise the poll tax. *It is an astonishing attack on the right of local authorities to speak out on behalf of the people they represent.*

Poll Tax

The poll tax legislation is not expected to be published until October or November. It will replace domestic rates for local households, and introduce a uniform business rate. This latter is designed to help big business in inner city areas.

But there is a fly in the ointment for the Tories. A uniform rate means pitching it between the current highest and current lowest. That will mean substantial reductions for businesses in inner cities but big rises in Tory shires, with consequent political problems.

The replacement of the domestic rate with the poll tax poses other problems. It will need a register with *36 million names* on it, separate from the electoral register. Every one of them will have to be billed separately because the householder currently paying rates may not be responsible for paying the poll tax on behalf of the others in the house.

Evasion costs will be at least 10% of the total, as opposed to 1% on the rates. Therefore, poll tax levels will have to be that much higher to compensate.

By Reg Race
Tottenham CLP

A fantastically intrusive bureaucracy will mushroom. Officials will knock on the door and ask: how may adults over the age of 18 live here? Can I see them? Are you sure? Can you prove you are who you say you are? Local authorities will be forced to administer this system.

The level of poll tax in inner London will be drastically higher than current rates. In Greenwich, the current rate averages £324 p.a. The community charge (poll tax) will be £672 *per person*.

Even in Wandsworth, where the Tories have kept down the rates to an average of £185, the average community charge will be £397. The poor old ratepayers of Wandsworth are going to be got by their own Secretary of State!

The Tories may try and juggle the increase over a few years to hide its real dimensions, or give a much higher taxpayers subsidy to local authorities for a short period to prevent huge rises.

Even people on social security will be obliged to pay 20% of the community charge. At the moment rates are not paid by those on social security. The Tories say they want to increase the accountability of the Council to the electors. What they mean is that if the poor have to pay the community charge they won't vote Labour any more!

In a concession announced just before the election, the Tories promised an increase in benefit of 20% to compensate those paying the community charge. But this will be at a *uniform national rate*, which means those in inner London, with higher authority spending, will be worse off.

Housing hypocrisy

Private lettings will be decontrolled, which will send rents through the roof. Council tenants will have the right to take the maintenance and management of their estates out of Council control. Landlords will then be chosen by tenants from a so-called approved list, submitted by the Department of the Environment. No one yet knows how people will get themselves on this list!

The Tories aim to end local authorities' right to subsidise council housing out of the general rate fund. This will lead to huge rent rises in Labour authorities; a £31 per week increase in Camden, £18 in Tower Hamlets, £17 in Lambeth, £16 in Haringey, and so on.

This measure will of course be introduced *before* tenants are asked to vote on who they want as their landlords.

ILEA undermined

The Tories will introduce a separate Bill enabling local authorities to opt out of the ILEA, which will undermine its capacity to function. Were Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster to opt out, ILEA would be forced to deal with 60% of its children with only 40% of its resources.

Maintained schools with more than 300 pupils will be allowed to opt out of local education authority control and get funds direct from the Secretary of State for Education. More powers will be given to governors and more parents will be placed on governing bodies.

The creation of new Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) is on the agenda. In London we already have one — the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) — responsible for destroying jobs and homes and for schemes like Canary Wharf, where public land is being leased to private businesses at £400,000 per acre, when the real market value is more than £3m per acre.

The UDC strategy enables the government to by-pass local Councils and local communities, abrogate democracy and give free rein to the speculators and profiteers.

Summary of planned attacks on local government

- Privatisation of six areas of local services, including cleaning and vehicle maintenance, leading to massive job losses.
- Ending local authority subsidies to Council rents, leading to huge rent rises.
- Allowing tenants to opt out of Council control, thus breaking up local authority housing.
- Ending contract compliance conditions by local authorities, leading to worse health and safety and trade union conditions, and encouraging racist and sexist employment practices.
- Stifling the powers of local authorities to speak out on behalf of those they represent on any matters of controversy or political debate.
- A community charge (poll tax) to replace rates, which will drastically affect the less well-off, especially in the inner cities.
- Allowing local authorities to opt out of ILEA, undermining a democratically elected London-wide authority.
- Allowing local schools to opt out of LEA control, thus introducing selection by the back door.
- Establishing more Urban Development Corporations (UDCs), and by-passing local authority democracy and accountability.
- Continuing the financial squeeze on local government through curbing so-called "creative accounting".

Crunch time for local government

The Tories' new plans for local government are far worse than their attacks from '79-'87.

Thatcher said it was her main regret not to have sorted out local government in her first two terms of office. Now she intends to put that right!

If all the new proposals (see box) go through, the face of local government will be changed forever. A whole era of radical, Labour-led local authority initiatives will come to an end. The Councils will be degutted, rendered powerless, and thoroughly discredited.

They will be forced to act as the Tories' agents, implementing huge attacks on jobs, services, and local living standards. For this they will be blamed, just as much as the real guilty party — the Tory government.

The response of London's "radical" Council leaderships has been appalling. Those who for years urged the use of creative accountancy in order to put off the confrontation with the Tories, but who swore a thousand times that they would *never* make cuts in jobs and services, are now lining up to do just that. Some are even jumping the gun, as in Camden (see elsewhere on this page).

In a paper to the Association of London Authorities (ALA) Margaret Hodge outlined three options to the Tory attacks. Defiance, she said, had been "tried, failed and discredited.' You may wonder where it has been tried. Her own Islington Council has certainly never even contemplated resistance!

Abdication or resignation of seats is also ruled out in Margaret Hodge's paper — "no matter what difficult choices lie ahead, surely it would be better for Labour councils to be making them."

The preferred option is "remain in power and use all the imagination at our disposal." Perhaps we should start by imagining that the Tories aren't really in office, and don't plan to dismantle local government. Then council workers can imagine that they haven't really been sacked by the Concil... the imaginative possibilities are, as always, endless!

By Davy Jones
Islington South CLP

The Hodge/ALA line, doubtless supported by Kinnock, the TUC, and the local government national unions, is basically surrender. It will do exactly what the Tories want. It will make Labour local authorities seem no different from every other previous arm of national and local government — more interested in staying in office than fighting for the interests of its community and workforce.

These leaders will be seen to preside over and participate in the dismantling of local government, mounting crushing attacks on their own workforces and communities.

Instead of uniting with their workers, tenants, local unions and parties in an *offensive campaign against the Tories*, local Councils are gearing up to attack their own unions, especially NALGO, singled out as the main obstacle to cuts in jobs and services.

It is not true that resistance has been tried and failed. The scope of attacks on local government have the potential of uniting millions against the government — the local communities, parents, tenants, voluntary groups, unions, Council workforces, and Councils. There is a minority in every Labour Group across London which supports such an approach. In many CLPs and local government union branches they will be in a majority. From that base, support can be built.

Briefing aims to bring all those forces together, to encourage unity amongst all those willing to resist the Tory plans. It is obvious that Councillors will not in general lead this fight. The left must campaign in the communities, on the estates, in the unions, and drag the councillors and the weak-kneed union and Labour leaders into supporting them.

In each locality a campaign needs to be built against the Tory plans, for an expansion of local services and jobs to meet local needs, and for the democratic control and accountability of local services.

The left needs to try and coordinate these local campaigns London-wide and nationally. *Briefing* will be doing everything it can to help such a campaign.



PHOTO: John Chapman

This Southwark council meeting in 1985 reminds us how trade unionists and the community can be mobilised in defence of jobs and services. Now the left must give a lead.

Painful decisions: *our pain, your decisions!*

What is happening in Camden is an example of the choices we will all be facing soon.

It is happening to us first because this current year's budget is falling to pieces. The Council plans to freeze vacancies, stop all growth and stop renewing contracts of temporary staff throughout the Council.

The Party's response to these proposals has been depressing. Holborn & St Pancras not only supported these short term measures but also demanded a *3% cut across the board*. Hampstead & Highgate GC supported the Leader's short term proposals.

Perhaps the Parties don't really understand the significance of these measures. Vacancy freezes sound painless, and stopping temporary contracts sounds reasonable. But some services depend almost exclusively on temporary staff, especially newer services where a lot of people were hired on short term contracts, which have then been renewed over and over again, sometimes for up to two years.

We have tried to get these posts made permanent. Now these people are vulnerable. Their contracts will not be renewed unless we take industrial action, or can otherwise persuade the Council to think again.



PHOTO: John Chapman

Comrades from Lambeth went to Camden Council meetings in 1985 to support not setting a rate. Camden echoed Lambeth in 1987: in each borough, just 8 councillors voted against cuts.

In Social Services the vacancy freeze will be disastrous. Already in those high-pressure services people feel that where they have a choice between taking industrial action and "doing their best" to help a client, they will do the latter and cover for vacant posts (despite union policy).

When vacancies are no longer filled, those who have been trying hardest for longest will be worst hit.

Many people will feel betrayed by councillors. After the '83 election people felt that a Labour council offered them some protection and encouragement. Now it is quite clear that the Council will be the *agent of the cuts*.

Some people will despair and withdraw, which poses a real problem for the unions. Already there are divisions opening up inside them, especially within NUPE.

In other cases there will be a sense of outrage. People who have offered the Council goodwill, especially in the services where they have been trying to cover without a fuss, and who have believed management's promises, will be enraged.

Some people have been waiting more than two years for certain promises to be kept for posts to be filled and initiatives to be started. Now those posts will never be filled, the initiatives never started, and the temporary staff let go when their contracts expire.

Labour councillors often talk of "protecting frontline staff" at the expense of office services. But you can't run a nursery without a legal department, or meals-on-wheels without organisers.

Organisers need premises and these premises need to be cleaned by somebody, and that has to be organised by somebody else. It is a myth that there is a great deal of slack which you can simply chop out without hurting the services. It shows a complete lack of understanding of the complexity and interdependence of local government services, which in the case of councillors who have been around some time is frankly quite shocking.

These measures seem "painless" only to those seeking an easy way out of a difficult choice.

The job of the union branch leadership is to create a channel for members' anger and to create confidence so that they can express that anger through taking action. Our branch will probably not be asking for all-out industrial action over the vacancy freeze, but for hardline implementation of NALGO's national line of no cover.

By Jo Fawkes
Camden NALGO

This is a practical measure which can get national backing, and would have an immediate impact on services. Some right wing Councillors have already indicated they want to step up disputes, suspending people, docking pay, etc. This summer may see their chance arrive at last.

These measures will buy some time, and allow us to build a long-term fight. We are likely to face a £60m revenue deficit in the 1988/89 budget. What happens this summer will determine what happens if and when the Council introduces redundancies to cover the deficit.

There is a clear determination by some councillors to break NALGO as a force of resistance, using a lot of rhetoric about NALGO not being affiliated to the Labour Party, not being socialists or really working class. Attempts to divide NALGO and NUPE are likely to increase. Yet with the privatisation proposals hitting mainly manual workers there will remain some degree of joint interest. In Camden we have managed to achieve a fairly healthy joint union working relationship.

There are already splits in NUPE, and will be so in NALGO, too, as some people think our best bet is to cooperate with the Council. They are taken in by the language of Council Leader Tony Dykes who contrasts the Tories "sacking staff and withdrawing services", and a Labour council "protecting services and jobs" as best it can!

Nowhere do any of the councillors refer to cuts. It's always "painful decisions"! We must spell out that this means our pain — their decisions.

What has been encouraging so far has been the number of people who have said we may well lose, but if we want to keep the spirit of trade unionism and local democracy alive then we have to go down resisting. We cannot confine ourselves to a negotiating table at which the only item of discussion is who is to be made redundant. There *will* be resistance in Camden.

The level of support we get from the local parties and from the national unions is crucial. The role of local councillors will be important too, standing on platforms with us, fighting the cuts.

There is still the potential, if the councillors would support the unions, for a long-term joint campaign. That becomes less likely every day as the Council goes on the attack — not against the government, but against its own workforce.

We still have "London Bridge" acting as an information exchange forum for the unions. When Tony Dykes told the Labour Group in Camden that his proposals were already common practice in every other London borough, we were able to disprove this and show that no other London borough yet has a vacancy freeze!

Keep your eye on Camden. Our struggle will spread as more councils face the financial crunch.

The articles on this page are taken from speeches made to a meeting of local government activists in London on June 27th. These questions affect us all: reports from other areas of the country will follow in future editions of *Briefing*.

Building Briefing

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Labour Briefing leads the way in Coventry!

A successful AGM of *Coventry Labour Briefing* was held on Monday July 29th.

We wanted to review the past year and the activities of *CLB* since we started on June 2nd 1986.

Briefing has developed into the recognised "hard left" of the labour movement in the city — more so than either *Militant*, whose isolation in the S.E. constituency has increased, or the SWP, whose activity is limited mainly to work within a few trade unions.

That's not to exaggerate *Briefing's* importance — merely to say that ours is a more thorough, a more rounded, approach to the labour movement, both its trade union and political wings.

We have taken a number of important initiatives in the last 12 months, not least producing a regular local paper to supplement the national *Briefing*. Others include:

- A number of successful anti-apartheid pickets at Bell Green Sainsbury's;
- a recent initiative to try and organise the "left" Labour councillors, which will now be followed up by particular ward parties;
- the first public showing in Coventry of the Zircon film;
- a major role in support of the fight against the closure of Paybody and Whitely hospitals — suggesting a demonstration on Saturday June 6th, for instance.

The steering committee which deals with day to day business and is responsible for the production of the local *Briefing* needed exanding. This was particularly important to ensure a good flow of articles for the new fortnightly version of the local bulletin.

Discussion on work for the next year covered many aspects of *Briefing's* work. There was a report on the Council and Local Government work; and comments on a meeting of left wing councillors and their forthcoming alternative manifesto.

We agreed to maintain monthly public meetings with the Coventry Poly Labour Club and to try to get more national speakers to give us a higher profile and open up further debate.

There were ideas for intervening into the redundancies dispute at Massey Ferguson — until recently regarded as a bastion of trade unionism and a "job for life".

We agreed to set up constituency *Briefing* caucuses on a campaigning basis and report back to the monthly city meetings. The meeting and the work and ideas coming out of it bode well for an even better second year for *Coventry Labour Briefing* than the first!

Letters

Write to: PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ

Why call for sacrifices?

Dear *Briefing*,

Hilary Wainwright comes dangerously close to running a potentially very important argument in her piece on Labour's campaign (*Briefing*, no. 44).

She is quite right to point out that "swathes" of working class people voted Tory. This can indeed be explained partly by the fact that real incomes have risen for a whole section of the working class since 1979 and partly also by the inadequacies of the Labour leadership's economic policies.

But it is utterly wrong to characterise a whole section of the working class as "Thrusting and greedy". All the more so when the evidence given for this supposed "greed" is that they "earn a good wage and expect better" or that they "own their own home and expect to sell it at a profit".

What on earth is wrong with working class people earning decent wages and aspiring to higher ones? Home ownership is today at a level of 66% (according to *The Economist*, 16.5.87); a *majority* of the working class therefore live in privately owned homes. Should socialists attack working people for wanting to sell their house or flat for a profit?

Of course not! Indeed it was one of the most pernicious (and, even from the point of view of purely electoral politics, stupidly short-sighted) aspects of the Labour leadership's campaign that they based their economic policy on the argument that the "better off" sections of the working class should be prepared to "make sacrifices" to help the "less fortunate". As Hilary's article implies, this kind of appeal amounts to *handing over* votes to the Tories.

Socialists should start from the kind of policies that can unite the working class — and the starting point of socialist economic policy is that all "sacrifices" should be borne by the capitalist class. No section of workers should be made to pay for a crisis not of their making. If we are to develop such policies we will have to avoid any hint of ambiguity on the question of who is to blame for the fact that millions of workers voted Tory.

There can be no question that this was largely the result of the inadequacies of the strategy and policies of the Labour leadership both before and during the election campaign. When the labour movement is led by those whose starting point is the defence of the material interests of the whole working class, we will see the withering away of the working class Tory vote.

Only then will we be justified in castigating the rump of workers who persist in voting Tory in the terms used in Hilary's article.

Dave Shepherd,
Hackney, London

Law, order and the police

Dear *Briefing*,

The *Briefing* Election Special issue carried a section headed "Law and Order". Whilst this contribution carried much I would agree with, there were some points I cannot accept.

To Leninists, the capitalist state is not neutral, but an organ to repress and break the working class, the only agent for social change. The capitalist state should therefore be smashed.

However, Lenin also considered that socialists should try to win over working class people even in such areas as the police, whose ranks in this country hold large numbers of working class people.

The police in Britain as a section of the labour movement have had a stormy history and one that has not always been dominated by right-reactionary ideology.

Between 1913 and 1919 the free National Union of Police and Prison Officers (NUPPO) was founded and achieved recognition after a brilliant strike in 1918 led by the Scargill-like and Marxist President James Marston.

The NUPPO was tragically smashed, GCHQ-style, just one year later, after a further strike, by the Liberal Prime Minister David Lloyd George.

From the Second World War to the present time, Marxist speeches have become a regular source of embarrassment to the National Conferences of the Police Federation.

Clearly, if we claim that "the police force is riddled with corrupt and criminal officers" not only are we adopting an anti-Leninist attitude towards the police but also we are providing ammunition for the bourgeois press to prove that Labour is anti-police.

Most important of all we are driving the Marxist, socialist, and Labour-voting police officers into a desperate, backs-against-the-wall position in the face of attacks from both the press and right-wingers within their own ranks like Leslie Curtis and Tony Judge.

We should also oppose calls to disband the SPG (already disbanded) and the Special Branch.

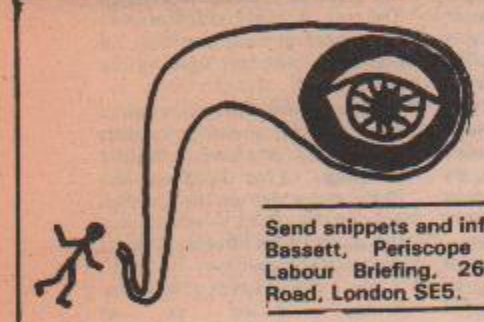
An incoming Labour Government is going to inherit a vast increase in crime from the Thatcher administrations, as stated in the Election Special. It will need District Support Units in the short run if not the longer run — call them what you will — to cope with exigencies such as football and other sporting violence and to fulfill obvious obligations for the protection of diplomats from terrorist attack.

These problems will not immediately wither away. We need a Special Branch that acts in the interests of and protects the working class and not the ruling class. Even the Bolsheviks had the Cheka.

The British police badly needs reform not disbandment. Socialists must support and identify with progressive movements in the police, such as for the free police union. We should give no credence, as politicians such as Ken Livingston have done, to those in the upper echelons, from ACPO down to chief inspector level, who run the force in the interests of capital and in the 1980s in the reflection of the corporations who are undemocratic and racist. It is they who should be disbanded.

John Hayball,
Chair,
Chessington South CLP

Periscope



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

We're all going on a summer holiday

Next time your bosses question your request for a holiday, tell them you're just following your MP's example. Our hardworking representatives have just given themselves one of the longest summer breaks on record — July 24th to October 21st.

The question is, now the Labour Party leader has come down firmly against extra-parliamentary activity, does it mean they have to do nothing for three months? *D.C.*

Up, up... and away!

While Richard Branson funnels more hot air into the remains of his transatlantic balloon, some rather different balloon-like objects were set for lift-off.

The fun-loving Tory has handed £5m of his loose change to a non-profit making trust, whose first major project is to flog cut-price condoms as an anti-AIDS promotion.

To be marketed at 10p a time ("two bob a job"?) the new name of "Mates" may give rise to some ribald jokes (not in this column! - Ed.), but it appears that the original suggestion of "Virgin Megajohnnies" was rejected as too macho, while "Virgin on the Ridiculous' was seen as a put-down.

Presumably sales will soon be on the up and up. Then the grinning Branson can further impress Margaret Thatcher by conscripting teams of jobless youth to clear up the used product from parks and laybys!

Both hands up

"One member, one vote", goes the new slogan of the day in the Kinnock camp as they ignore the Tory offensive and focus their fire against the Labour left.

Central to this new offensive was of course the TGWU Executive decision to support the constitutional change with its block vote in October.

But who took that decision? At the vote-out, the Executive was evenly split 18-18. It was up to professional proleterian **Brian Nicholson**, as chair of the meeting, to use a *second* casting vote in order to overturn the status quo and embark upon a new series of internal wrangles.

A case of not so much "one member, one vote" as "one bureaucrat, 1.5 million votes". Nice one Brian!

The crankies break cover

Like the tendies of *Marxism Today*, the cranky fanatics of the Committee for a Free Britain favoured a tactical vote at the last election.

However, their tactics consisted in voting Tory in lieu of any *real* hard-line defenders of private enterprise. Now they have issued their own "fringe" manifesto going way beyond present Tory plans for privatisation.

The CFB, a headbanging bunch of has-beens, rejects and bigots, put together £210,000 for a series of vicious anti-Labour newspaper ads; but it claims to be non-party political.

In this respect, too, it would appear to have common ground with the Communist Party journal, some of whose policies they appear to endorse.

But in fairness, perhaps even *Marxism Today* might baulk at including CFB speakers in their next "Moving Even Further to the Right" spectacular.

Among the panel of CFB sponsors are UDM godfathers David Hart and Colin Clarke; Lord Harris of the ultra-right Insitute of Economic Affairs; ex-Labour loudmouths Brian Walden, Lord Marsh and Lord Chalfont; Soviet reactionary Vladimir Bukovsky; and two more prominent Tory figures, former government whip Baroness Cox, and ex-Downing Street policy advisor Christopher Monckton

According to Mr Hart, the grouping has been "working together behind the scenes for five or six years" — meaning that this barmy brigade had a direct link with the Thatcher government before and throughout the miners' strike.

Missing from the list, though, are any of the show-biz reactionaries linked up behind the Tories. Surely they have room for the awful Ted Rogers — or have they consigned him to the Dusty Bin of history?

We have nothing against people called Brian (but...)

Last week we were analysing why Labour had lost the election. This week Brian Gould is announcing how Labour will win the next election!

The answer? Simple: we must have policies that are popular. In fact, we should *choose* our policies on the basis of what is already popular — that is the way to win.

Presumably Brian is about to announce the wholesale adoption of the Conservative Party Election Manifesto — an off-the-peg collection of proven electorally popular policies — as Labour Party policy!

At least this forthright approach dispells quickly any illusions that Labour literature in 1992 will be embossed with a pink rose. They're just going for the white feather and having done with it!

C.M.

Straight Drilling

London's Drill Hall, known to many as venue for numerous radical, and in particular lesbian and gay, meetings, socials, rallies, dances, etc., is set for a very different kind of cast in the near future.

The Walworth Road apparatus is throwing a party for all those involved in Labour's spectacularly unsuccessful election media binge. Mine host will be none other than virile family-man and self-styled reactionary Neil Kinnock.

The Drill Hall will never seem the same again. *I.A.*

"My ten year plan"

One of the better-known new MPs at Westminster is KEN LIVINGSTONE, ex-leader of the GLC — now MP for Brent East in London. His reputation as "Red Ken", scourge of the right, defender of the oppressed, precedes him. But since the defeat of the Miners' Strike and the Ratecapping Campaign, many on the left think he has sold out, working with the Kinnockite LCC and attacking the hard left.

Now he's in the Parliamentary Labour Party what is he up to? Is he working to unite the Campaign Group and Tribune? Will he work to link up the PLP left and activists in the constituencies? Or will he be taking a back seat to bide his time?

GRAHAM BASH and JANE KELLY from *Labour Briefing* went to the House of Commons to ask him these and other questions.

***Labour Briefing* will be taking up some of the issues raised in this interview in the next issue.**

***Briefing:* Ken, during the election campaign you were quoted as saying that this was the most radical election campaign that Labour had fought for a generation. Was that really your view, or was that just for public consumption at the time?**

Livingstone: It wasn't my view and I didn't say it.

There was a tremendous amount of press distortion as bad as anything going back to the beginning of the GLC. The press went right back to "Red Ken" and all that. So unless people heard me say something from my own mouth during the campaign it would be wise not to believe anything that was in the papers in that period.

I said that we were likely to have the most radical Parliamentary Labour Party since 1945 — or ever — after the election, and a lot of the press went beserk after that.

I also thought the campaign was the best organised, I would say since 1964, in terms of slickness and efficiency, and the packaging. They had clearly taken on board all the ideas of the GLC.

What they hadn't taken on board was the idea that you use that packaging to get across a very strong political message — perhaps in a subtle way. But in so much of the campaign it seemed the packaging was all. What was it that McLuhan said "the medium is the message" — that was almost the epitaph for our campaign.

Politics was blurred, and so on key issues — like how we were going to pay for our programme — all the policies that had been devised about a punitive level of taxation to repatriate capital disappeared from day one. We ended up, I think, convincing all the skilled workers that we were going to increase their taxes and they were going to bear the burden of the relief of poverty in Britain.

There was quite a marked swing away from Labour amongst skilled workers in the closing stages of the campaign, once we'd completely screwed up the issue of taxation.

We aren't going to win skilled workers back until we go into the campaign saying that capital will pay the cost of reconstructing our industry and our welfare state. Unless we make that quite clear they know full well that as in '65 and '74 they're going to pay.

So give credit where it's due about a good campaign, and the enthusiasm that Kinnock put into it, but it was a fundamentally flawed campaign in the absence of so much of its politics.

I think also what the campaign revealed was the contradiction between getting rid of your own nuclear weapons and remaining in NATO, which is the nuclear defence shield of America. It wasn't as damaging this time as it was in '83 because the emergence of Gorbachov means that most people are no longer as worried about nuclear weapons. They see an intelligent political leader there who is clearly working for nuclear disarmament, so it wasn't the big issue it was when we faced a defence row 4 years ago with Brezhnev as Russian leader.

***Briefing:* You are now in the Campaign Group. How do you see the Campaign Group, and how does the Campaign Group see you? What are the major tasks facing the left in parliament and outside in the next four or five years?**

Livingstone: I'm in the Campaign Group and the Tribune Group, because I'm one of those people who has said clearly for some time there should be one left group in parliament, and that there should be a merger between the Campaign Group and the genuine socialists inside the Tribune Group.

I think that strategy has had a setback with the decision of the Tribune Group by 37 to 27 against a joint slate, and clearly there's been a degree of entrism into the Tribune Group by people who are there primarily I think to prevent the emergence of one overall left organisation in parliament. They want to keep the split, the weakness, they want to provide a sort of false left cover for those MPs who want to keep their CLPs off their back by saying "I'm in the Tribune Group."

So it's going to be a long haul to actually achieve a united left.

I think there is a small strand of sectarianism inside the Campaign Group, and some people inside the Campaign Group who don't want to work with the best elements in Tribune. But there's a much bigger strand of sectarianism inside the Tribune Group, with some MPs saying they won't even be in the same room as a member of the *Militant* tendency. Mind you, that doesn't stop them sitting in the House of Commons with the same people. So I think the whole thing is basically rather whipped up.

I think that the next step for the left — I know a lot of people think this is hopeless but I think it's important — is to achieve a broad degree of unity — if not an organisational unity, certainly a unity around the sort of agenda the left should be setting. I think we're now at a low point and we might yet sink lower even.

There's no point having a lot of triumphalism about we're on the verge of taking power or something — we're clearly not. What we have to see is a sort of 10-15 year strategy in which we now set the agenda, and gradually win the movement to it — constituencies, trade unions, and the MPs under that sort of pressure will respond to it.

No one should be encouraging people to join the Labour Party in the hope of achieving socialism before the next election. They've got to come in with a far more detailed and worked out understanding of the long haul we're into.

***Briefing:* What kind of agenda do you think that should be? What would be the political basis of such an agenda? What issues?**

Livingstone: There's so many. Clearly virtually the whole of the left is now united behind the idea of withdrawal from Ireland in one parliament.

The left is still split on the issue of whether you come out of NATO. People who at the moment are saying you've got to stay, don't say that because they believe it but because they think it's electorally expedient or it's the only way of keeping some old right wingers in the Labour Party and so on.

But I think underlying almost all of the left is an acceptance that the whole of Europe needs to be moved to a position of neutralism, to follow a independent and quite distinctive foreign and defence policy from the USA. And with the emergence of Gorbachov there's a possibility of achieving that.

There's clearly the question of who pays for our programme, and that has to be the control of capital. The nonsense of going into an election where you don't say anything to offend the City of London, where there's about 20 thousand voters, but you offend about 20 million because you say we're upping taxes to pay for our programme — that is an act of lunacy.

There's also an agenda to be set around equal opportunities, but that has been severely damaged by this election. Half the Parliamentary Labour Party seem to think the only reason we lost the election was because some London councils have got Lesbian and Gay committees or are employing too many Black people, or something.

Undoubtedly a lot is being stoked up now; hatred against London and equal opportunities policies. A lot of people who have been quite sympathetic in the past are reverting to saying "well, we've got to look after our traditional supporters" and a "traditional" agenda.

Yet this was the most traditional election campaign that we've had for years in the sense of the people we targetted. So setting the agenda now — for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Women's Rights, the Rights of Black people in Britain — is going to be more difficult than it was before the election.

On all the other issues it will actually be easier, because we've lived through all the problems of trying to run the election campaign as we did.



PHOTO: John Chapman

Ken Livingstone plans his future...

***Briefing:* Ken, what links would you like to see made between the "united left" of the Parliamentary Party to which you refer, and the constituency and trade union activists outside?**

Livingstone: I think clearly that the form that has emerged is the one of Labour Left Liaison, and that must be widened to take in any strand of opinion on the left that actually wishes to be a part of it. At some point the Campaign Group will put an effort into establishing Campaign Groups up and down the country.

This will have some effect, it will assist, make matters easier. But the key to success is actually having a group of MPs who see their role as building links with the struggles outside. The moves the Campaign Group made in developing a link with Labour Left Liaison and establishing Campaign Groups in the last parliament, were a very valuable step in that direction. That's the first time the left in parliament has seen a sort of extra-parliamentary wing. We must build on that.

***Briefing:* What about links between that left and the trade union left?**

Livingstone: I think that's one of the strengths of groups like some of the people in the Campaign Group and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. There are very good links with the trade union lefts there.

The trade union broad lefts tend to work on a much longer time-scale than constituency activists do. It often takes 20 years to build up to take control, to win a majority on a National Committee, whereas constituency activists are used to the next election or the next AGM.

There's a linkage there already. Clearly in a lot of unions like NUPE and the T&G there is a solid base for the left. The new ASTMS/TASS link-up will actually give us a situation where those three unions, with a small scattering of left unions, could be a majority inside the electoral college, the trade union vote at Conference and also even inside the TUC.

***Briefing:* Ken, you must be aware that a lot of *Briefing* supporters still have a number of doubts about you following the rate-capping conflicts 2 years ago, and following what was seen as your "defection" to the ranks of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee which a number of us would regard as a kind of Kinnock-loyalist group. What can you say to try to persuade *Briefing* supporters that we could support you with a clear conscience for the NEC this year?**

Livingstone: It's not part of my political role to give *Briefing* supporters sleepless nights or something — or even allow them to sleep easy.

What people in *Briefing* have to do is what anybody else in politics has to do. You have to look at objectively, what is a person doing, do you support it or not?

You can have endless speculation about what their motives are or what they might do in 5 years or what they did 5 years previously, or whether they're actually working for British Intelligence and are playing a wrecking role.

All those things may be the case. But at any one point in time when an issue is before you, or a campaign is being run, all you can do is look round the room and see who's got their hand up at the same time as you have. If they have you should back them. That doesn't mean you should give them a blank cheque for the future or for ever and a day.

I had a very good working relationship with *Briefing* over a long period of time on a whole range of issues. Then this split came. I saw it as being witch-hunted out of the left. A lot of people were innocently used by those people pursuing that witch-hunt for their own careerist ends. So there are very different perceptions of that period.

***Briefing:* And what is the basis on which you are standing for the NEC this year and why specifically should they support you?**

Livingstone: Oh gawd.

***Briefing:* Well, I think it's important.**

Livingstone: Well it is, it is, but look how much I've written in Tribune, everything I've written since the election... People cannot possibly look and say "what are you standing on". I'm standing on the basis of a whole range of policies I've been committed to all the way along. There's never been any policy disagreement between myself and *Briefing* at all, right the way through the last 7 or 8 years.

There might be tactical disagreements about how quickly you pursue a particular issue or whatever.

I'm standing on the basis of trying to unify the left and bring the Party to accept the policies I spelt out at the beginning of this interview about equal opportunities, nuclear disarmament, the economy, and so on.

I'll be campaigning for the democratisation of the Parliamentary Labour Party, making the Shadow Cabinet accountable to the Parliamentary Labour Party, hopefully eventually to the Party Conference; defending automatic reselection; defending all the gains that we've made in the past; supporting those Councils that are now in danger of being screwed into the ground; working for an amnesty for the miners; the lifting of penalties on the surcharged councillors...

It's an endless list of all those things — and trying to make the Labour Party the sort of thing we envisaged when we set up *Briefing* back in 1980.

That doesn't mean to say there won't be tactical differences. *Briefing's* in a position where it can be much more critical of the Party leadership than I can be. If I do or say anything that can be misinterpreted by the press into a leadership challenge they'll do so.

So I have constraints operating on me that *Briefing* doesn't have and you need to understand that in terms of how you analyse my operation.

Labour Party

Tribune votes with the right

In the recent annual election of Officers of the British Labour Members of the European Parliament, the left had a setback.

Previously, all the Officers were Tribune Group Members, with the exception of myself, who although in the Campaign Group had supported Tribune for many years and have always worked for closer relations between the Campaign and Tribune Groups.

When I defeated Barbara Castle for the Leadership 2 years ago, I did so with the support of what was then the broad left group, consisting of Campaign and Tribune members.



Alf Lomas

By Alf Lomas MEP

Now, thanks to a shabby deal done by some members of Tribune together with the right wing, we have two right wing officers, one with a track record of hard right activities. A third right winger on their slate was defeated.

It is important that the left in our movement should know that some Tribune members are prepared to do a deal with the hard right in order to get themselves elected to positions and to defeat left wing candidates.

I have no axe to grind about the elections as I had decided not to stand for re-election as Leader. This was partly because the leadership of the Party had refused to discuss the problems membership of the EEC could cause a Labour government (they had refused to allow the Labour Group to distribute a paper on this matter to Labour Party affiliates!) and partly because I wanted to spend more time campaigning in my constituency in the East End of London on the many problems facing my electors.

But, other Officers were replaced by this unholy alliance of right wing Tribunites and right wing members. It meant that Tribunites like the Chair, Stan Newens, Secretary, Janey Buchan, and the Deputy Leader, Tom Megahy, who have given a lifetime of dedicated work to the left in the labour movement, were booted out to make room for political opportunists like David Martin from Scotland, Richard Balfe from London and Glyn Ford from Manchester.

They ended up gaining office by giving their support to hard line right wingers, but have totally lost the respect of people on the left in the European Parliament.

The results were naturally greeted with delight by the right wing press, but it is certainly no cause for celebration by the left in our movement. It augers badly for the coming discussions on the left which will have to take place following the General Election debacle.

It is particularly detrimental to the moves that are being made in other places to try to unite the Campaign and Tribune Group members.

Perhaps one of the saddest things of all in this sordid business was the statement attributed to Neil Kinnock in the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Financial Times*, that the result of these elections was "the best news I've heard since the election."

Debate: child abuse

Sexual abuse: not just a class issue

The controversy caused by the actions of Dr Marietta Higgs and Cleveland social services in cases of child sexual abuse raises many questions for socialists to think about.

In the past, we have often regarded the nuclear family as the basic unit of capitalism and as a primary location of women's oppression.

The sexual abuse of children with the family is related to both these issues, but has been largely ignored by socialists as well as by bourgeois society.

However, the influence of feminism has sparked off a growing awareness of the problem, and ever increasing numbers of children are now prepared to report sexual abuse by members of their own families or close family friends.

Whether they can find anyone to listen to them or believe them, once they have plucked up enough courage to take that step is far too often a question of luck. The social services, the police, the courts and the schools are far from having developed an adequate response. And as usual, the left has a lot of catching up to do as well.

By Dani Ahrens Watford LPYS

The July 4th issue of *Socialist Worker*, for example, devotes a whole page to this issue. Its main point seems to be that middle class social workers and paediatricians shouldn't go round breaking up working class families, and that if only we had adequate housing and nursery provision then everything would be OK.

Most studies of child sexual abuse within the family agree that it is a cross-class phenomenon, overwhelmingly but not uniquely perpetrated by men against girls and young women. A father who rapes or otherwise abuses his daughter is not expressing frustration at the lack of good nursery provision, he is exploiting the power he has over his child in a male-dominated society.

Socialist Worker completely ignores these aspects, and makes no mention of the inherently oppressive nature of the nuclear family. If society were not organised in small family units then abusive fathers would at least not have the almost unlimited access to their children that they do now.

In this particular case, the question seems to be: do we defend the family against the state or the state agent against the family? However, to ask (and answer) the question in this way is meaningless for socialists, who see the family and the state as interlinked agencies of social and economic control. I would say the more immediate problem is how to prevent children being abused.

Cleveland social services, Dr Higgs and her colleagues have at least tried to tackle this problem and have recognised that urgent action is needed in families where abuse has been disclosed or discovered. The howls of outrage from the right wing press reveal the importance to capitalism of preserving the nuclear family, if only as an ideological construct.

I support Dr Higg's attitude that something must be done quickly to prevent the abuse continuing, although where possible I would favour removing the abuser rather than the child. The involvement of the police is unnecessary and likely to cause further anguish for the child, especially given the attitude of local police surgeon Dr Alastair Irvine, who insists that an internal examination is necessary.

Socialists must campaign for a greater awareness of the problem; for widely available counselling and therapy services for women and girls who want them; for state funding of self-organised groups for survivors of sexual abuse and in defence of the right of every child to have control of her/his own body.

Scottish Labour Briefing

Labour leads fight

The STUC has called a Labour Day rally for August 29th at Glasgow Green which will clearly pose the demand for a Scottish Assembly.

Further rallies, concerts, petitions and demonstrations will be held, leading to the presentation of a Devolution Bill at Westminster towards the end of the year.

These actions, amongst others, are being organised by the Scottish Council of the Labour Party, which is aware it must give leadership to the Assembly campaign.

However, the Scottish Council has not previously been noted for its ability to mount a sustained campaign, nor is it at all clear what will happen after the (almost inevitable) failure of the Bill to achieve a Commons' majority.

The problems facing the Scottish Council were starkly displayed at a recent Special Council meeting of the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly.

It was and still is possible that the CSA could become the focus for a broad campaign for an Assembly in the aftermath of the election. Indeed the SNP, Liberals, SDP and Greens all called for the CSA to be reconstituted on a broad democratic campaiging basis. The SNP seemed willing to have it organised virtually as an alternative party.

The Labour Party, whilst wishing to have consultations with the CSA, sees the Campaign mainly progressing through the STUC, trade unions, convention local authorities, etc. Given the weight of Labour in these bodies, this means total control by the Labour Party and equally total responsibility for failure or inaction.

Labour have taken responsibility for drafting the Bill and have set out a timetable for discussions with Shadow Cabinet, NEC, STUC, etc. Whilst discussions with other parties will take place, the key issues of powers and structure will be set out by Labour. This includes a "first past the post" electoral system which all the other pro-Assembly parties oppose. The SDP may vote against the Bill if this is included.

By Gordan Morgan Glasgow Central CLP

More seriously, all the other Parties appeared to support the call for a constituent Assembly to be set up. Labour was unwilling to discuss this and has essentially deferred the problem until after the Assemby Bill is presented. However, it is clear from the statements of Dewer that the last thing he wants is openly to challenge Westminster's legitimacy. He would clearly prefer 4 years campaigning on "safe" issues until the hopeful return of a Labour government.

The argument of Dewer, that the Scottish vote was largely a class vote with little nationalist sentiment, has been implicitly accepted by the Scottish Council in its call for joint action with the Northern England and Welsh Labour Parties. If nothing else, this splits the focus of the Labour led Assembly Campaign.

However, there is little to support Dewer's belief from the election results. Labour increased its vote by 27%; the SNP by 26.5%. In Labour seats, the SNP increased its vote by over 40% and was seen as a left alternative to Labour.

If Labour falters in pursuing a vigorous campaign, it can only benefit the nationalists.

● **Stop Press:** We have heard that the 'August 29th event may have been changed to September 12th — watch this space for further details!

Militarism in Scotland

Scotland's geographic position in the North Atlantic, with its situation between Iceland and Norway, gives the USA virtual control over USSR maritime movements which are restricted anyway to the Kole Peninsula.

We are inevitably included in America's forward defence planing strategy which is designed to keep the fighting of a third world war off its own territory.

For small countries the real political situation is that if you are in a situation of strategic importance you will not be free of USA or USSR domination.

In Scotland we are integrated into America's international communication system which draws us into a global context of its defence system. Scotland provides strategic nuclear submarine communication links, anti-submarine stocks, signals and intelligence.

Nuclear plans have changed in that we just don't have one range of missiles lined up against another. It is now much more diffuse, with a web of communication systems checking and counter-checking each others' movements to maintain "the deterrent".

By Marion Davis Chair, Paisley South CLP Member, Scottish Labour CND

Another indication of where the next war is to be fought is that Scotland also has a reinforcement role. All our airports (Stornaway and Mairehanish have been extended) can be taken over. Under an agreement between Britain and the USA all National Health Hospitals, accommodation and manpower can be taken over by the USA in time of emergency. According to Sparven in Fortress Scotland there are 219 military bases in our tiny country and the majority of the population don't know what is going on.

It would appear that the removal of missiles from Central Europe is destined to make the seas around Scotland a very dangerous area — for George Younger would not rule out putting cruise missiles on submarines. SCND are now campaigning along with the peace movements in Iceland and Scandinavia on this issue.

For a Nordic nuclear-free zone

Since its proposal in 1963 by the Finnish president Kekkonen, the establishment of a Nordic Nuclear Weapon Free Zone has been one of the main goals of Nordic pacifists.

A turning point in the fight for the Zone was reached in 1983 when peace movements from all the Nordic countries held a meeting in the Nordic House in Reykjavik. This meeting agreed upon a common proposal for the Zone and has acquired increasing support since its introduction.

The governments of Finland and Sweden support the proposal as do the largest political parties in Norway and Denmark. In Iceland the idea of Nordic NWF Zone has support within all political parties and according to opinion polls 80-90% of the population supports the idea.

A Nordic NWF Zone is not planned to be a passive, isolated island in militarised world threatened by the escalating nuclear build-up. Rather the zone is planned to become an active alliance that aims to expand and free countries and oceans from the danger of nuclear destruction.

The Nordic countries could become the starting point of a zone that would enlarge to the south and form a nuclear free belt on both sides of the iron curtain in Middle Europe. It could connect to a possible NWF Zone in the Baltic and Balkan countries.

Another possibility could be the expansion of the zone to include oceanic areas around Iceland, which are already heavily militarised and experience a steadily increasing nuclear build-up.

A Nordic NWF Zone would focus the attention of the world on the Nordic countries, and make them an example for others in the struggle for the survival of mankind.



(Taken from the bulletin of the Campaign Against Military Bases to the Reykjavik summit, October 1986. Contact at Mjolnisholti 14, 105 Reykjavik, Iceland.)

Along the Color Line in the USA — By Manning Marable

The 1988 Election — and after

Since Gary Hart's disastrous demise as leading contender for the Democratic presidential ticket, white party officials and the media have waged a dishonest and dirty campaign to belittle the only Black candidate in the race, Jesse Jackson.

Why? Because few can bare to admit the simple political truth that Jesse is now the legitimate Democratic frontrunner.

Only a few years ago, the idea of a Black presidential candidate seemed absurd to the bulk of white, middle America. Now the leading decision-makers are shuddering at the disturbing spectre of an articulate, progressive and Black leader who is making significant headway against all odds.

In the most recent *New York Times* poll, Jackson was ranked *first* with 17%, followed by Michael Dukakis, 11%, while all others each received 6% or less.

Few seriously believe that Jackson will actually win the Democratic nomination. But that's not the crucial purpose of this campaign. The Rainbow Coalition has articulated a visionary, progressive agenda for social justice and economic reforms which is attracting thousands of converts among white farmers, white unemployed workers, and the white homeless. Fundamental change can advance the economic and social interests of Blacks, Hispanics, and the majority of whites.

Americans are hungry for a message of new directions, and Jackson is now being taken seriously as a viable political option. Even before Hart dropped out of the campaign, Jackson was running first or second in every Southern state. In Iowa, Jackson is polling 13-15% of the vote, a credible second place behind Congressman Richard A. Gephardt.

By Manning Marable

One rival Democratic campaign official recently stated that "the people of Iowa think Jesse Jackson has a lot to say. His message of anti-establishment populism is finding a real audience there."

And in Montana, according to state party chair Bruce Nelson, Jesse "was really well received... He attracted 6,500 people in four cities, and a lot of people really thought he had something to say."

The key to Jackson's recent success is that he has refused to follow the crowded field into an opportunistic "neo-liberal" political posture. Only Illinois Senator Paul Simon espouses the old-time liberalism of Roosevelt and Johnson; while Jackson, further to the ideological left, represents a more dynamic break with the Democratic mainstream. Or as Democratic Congressman Charles E. Shumer puts it: "Other than Simon, the field looks like 'Jesse Jackson and the Yuppies'."

The real difficulty ahead for Rainbow Coalition proponents will be to conceive of the challenges and opportunities *beyond* the 1988 presidential campaign. We should understand, clearly and without any ambiguity, that there is no long-term viability for working within the confines of the Democratic Party.

Give the reactionary nature of the Republicans, this simply means that we must struggle to achieve a new realignment of partisan electoral forces. Hopefully, this can be achieved in the next twelve years — and a national government committed to "Rainbow Politics" can win power by the year 2000.

In the short run, however, a Third Party option would polarise large numbers of Black, Hispanic and working people, and isolate us from the majority of American voters still committed to the two-party electoral system.

If Jackson fails to win the presidential nomination, as seems certain, our task should not be to decide whether or not to back the neo-liberal, white "lesser evil" candidate, nor simply to stay at home on election day. The point is that no matter who is elected to the White House — Biden, Gephardt, Cuomo, Bush, Kemp, etc. — we must still be prepared to build a mass democratic movement to challenge the administration's policies.

This mass protest movement should consist of several critical components: community-based, grassroots-style organisations advocating Rainbow policies in hundreds of neighbourhoods; the cultivation of new progressive, local leaders; and the expansion of the Rainbow's programme to embrace new constituencies across the colour line.

The Jackson campaign of 1988 can help to promote the achievement of all three elements, but its focus must transcend the charismatic personality of this candidate. Our eyes should see beyond the 1988 election, looking toward the development of institutional structures and leaders who are independent of both political parties.

Certainly, we must be prepared to engage in traditional partisan politics, but not at the expense of our long-term agenda.

For 1988 and beyond, we must advocate a two-tiered approach to progressive politics. First, we must actively support the real frontrunner, Jesse Jackson, throughout the Democratic primaries. Second, we must use the general election to raise the Rainbow's agenda to evaluate all candidates, and mobilise for the social protests and political confrontations to come.

Starting in this issue, *Labour Briefing* will be carrying regular contributions from *Manning Marable*, leading Black American socialist and scholar.

In the tradition of W.E.B. DuBois, C.L.R. James, and Walther Rodney, Marable combines historical and theoretical writing with continuous political activism. His many books include *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*, *Black American Politics*, *Race, Reform and Rebellion*, and *African and Caribbean Politics: from Kwame Nkrumah to Maurice Bishop*.

Future Marable contributions will include up-to-date reports on the Rainbow Coalition and the Jackson campaign, the latest outbreaks of racist violence and the struggles against it, and other developments in American society and politics.

Whilst the views of Manning Marable do not necessarily reflect the views of *Labour Briefing*, a chance to read an inside view of events in the USA will be welcomed by us all.



Where's Labour's defence policy going?

Time to start the real fight against the Bomb

One prime example of the ineffectiveness of Labour's election campaign was that it enabled the Tories to push defence to the forefront of the election campaign at no political cost to themselves.

They were never made to explain or justify their own policies.

As socialists and unilateralists we welcome the high profile given to the defence issue, but the way Labour's policy was presented left us all cringing. There is now a serious danger that the policy will be dropped by the leadership before the next election.

We must resist these moves and campaign within the Party for a coherent neutralist position.

Kinnock's problems began with the policy itself. A clear contradiction exists between unilateralism and membership of NATO. For Britain to disarm unilaterally would have a major destabilising effect on NATO. This is an argument *in favour of the policy*, not against it. In this context, Labour's repeated pledges of allegiance to NATO seemed nonsensical.

The Party was also hindered by the fact that the Labour leadership has for the past 40 years accepted and legitimised nuclear weapons. To undo 40 years of myth and prejudice requires more time and more commitment than the Labour

By Craig Brewin
Haringey councillor

Party leadership have been prepared to give.

Another problem was the way that Kinnock chose to argue his case, taking as his starting point the same premise as those who support nuclear weapons, i.e. that the main threat to peace is the Soviet Union and that the only way to secure peace is through military strength and "deterrence".

Our unilateralism was therefore presented as merely a *tactical* move, an alternative form of "deterrence". This was not the argument that won any of us to unilateralism in the first place and hardly one that would convince the undecided.

Kinnock also still seemed wedded to the disastrously incoherent 1983 notion that "unilateralists and multilateralism must go hand in hand."

In preparation for the next election Labour should argue for a defence policy based on the rejection of all nuclear weapons. This should begin with a complete rejection of the theory of deterrence, spelling out clearly that a defence strategy based on deterrence *increases* the likelihood of war.

This is because both sides must continue to show their willingness to use nuclear arms and continue to develop more useable, more destructive weapons. Civil Defence becomes both part of this bluff and a means of obtaining public acceptability at home for nuclear war. We should therefore continue to campaign against civil defence exercises.

Nuclear winter theories have now superceded deterrence theories. No potential aggressor can drop a nuclear bomb on Britain without seriously damaging itself. The independent deterrent is even more irrelevant than before.

Potential aggressors do not in fact exist in abstraction, only in the context of concretely existing international relations. Again, the Labour leadership were unable to grasp this. Kinnock continually argued for his policy in a series of hypothetical and often ludicrous scenarios. We have to break down the public conception of international relations in which the "democratic west" is under permanent military threat from the "totalitarian east". The myth of the Soviet threat and its anti-communist backing must be confronted and exposed.

Sticking with the current approach, the Labour leadership will never convert a majority of voters to unilateralism. This will have to be done by grass-roots activity by local Labour Parties. This must start by resisting all attempts by Party and union leaders to drop unilateralism.

Trotskyism in the USSR?

"You are wading through the blood of yesterday's friends and comrades, staging court trials which surpass medieval witch-hunts in the absurdity of the accusations. You have clamped Soviet arts into your thumbscrews, made them suffocate and die. On the eve of war, with the spearhead of fascism aimed at the Soviet Union, you are destroying and beheading the Red Army, killing its most talented commanders.

"Your insane Bacchanalia cannot last forever. Sooner or later, the Soviet people will call you to account as the betrayer of socialism and the revolution, as the major villain, as the true enemy of the people, and organiser of famine."

These words might well have come from Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*.

They are part of an open letter to Stalin by Fyodor Raskolnikov, once one of the leaders of the revolutionary sailors from the Baltic Fleet in 1917, writing from exile at the height of the purges of the Red Army on the eve of the Second World War.

Astonishingly, they have just been published for the first time in the Soviet Union by the mass circulation weekly colour magazine *Ogonyok*.

Raskolnikov's defiant letter has been published alongside an official Soviet Defence Ministry revelation of the extent of Stalin's destruction of the Red Army command. Three out of five marshals, 3 out of 5 army group commanders, 10 of 10 army commanders, 50 of 57 corps commanders, 154 of 180 divisional commanders and 401 of 456 colonels were killed in the purges of 1937-39, *Olgonyok* reveals.

The magazine goes on to describe Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation campaign as inadequate, and calls for a full investigation into "the reasons and conditions that led to the appearance of the Stalin cult, and the historical experience of the struggle against it."

By Chris Knight
Lewisham East CLP

All this is a by-product of Gorbachev's "glasnost" or "openness" campaign — designed to loosen the Soviet bureaucracy's catastrophic stanglehold over the economy whilst preserving that same bureaucracy from the spectre of workers' power which would accompany any real move towards democratisation.

It is a difficult tightrope to walk. "Glasnost" is an economic, social and cultural necessity if the Soviet Union is to avoid cracking under the weight of bureaucratic inefficiency and sinking dangerously far behind the West in productivity, living standards and strength. But unless the editors of *Olgonyok* are restrained, the "investigation" they are demanding might become a reality.

And unless the research and discussions were extremely vigilantly orchestrated, controlled and quickly terminated from above, it is difficult to see how they could avoid blowing the lid right off the tight censorship which has stifled Soviet historians for over fifty years. Any even half-serious "investigation" would mean removing the taboo against discussion of the heroic struggle waged against Stalinism by Leon Trotsky himself.

No doubt, the editors of *Ogonyok* went "too far" and will be curbed. Probably we are not about to see a new phase of press freedom or the publication of more works by Old Bolsheviks whom Stalin and his heirs have always branded as "Trotskyists".

There is unlikely to be any real freedom allowed to writers, artists or historians. If there were — as all post-war experience in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland has shown — it would risk a drift towards political revolution.

Once freedoms of any kind are allowed to intellectuals, workers begin demanding them for themselves. And if the flames of workers' revolution were to break out in the Soviet Union itself — who then could send in tanks enough to quench them?

Lesbian and Gay Pride demo

OUT, PROUD, and READY TO FIGHT!



PHOTO: Lesbian & Gay Socialist magazine

By Alan Holder
LCLGR

This year's Lesbian and Gay Pride march was the biggest ever.

Up to 15,000 lesbians, gays and our supporters showed the government and the right-wing homophobes that we are out, proud and ready to fight for our rights.

For the first time ever there was an official solidarity contingent on the march. This was populated with numerous labour movement banners, and is a clear sign of the links forged between the lesbian and gay community and the labour movement during and since the miners' strike.

Also on the march was a sizeable presence from the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign. Lesbians and gays have been very active in building the VMDC and were doing a lot to publicise the march against all deportations and in support of Viraj.

Viraj's case is under judicial review; and the march is on July 11th in Manchester. All lesbians and gays who believe in anti-racist struggle should go!

This year's pride march was particularly important, coming close on the heels of Thatcher's third election victory. With a new intake of Tory MPs to join the existing complement of the rabid right, even the '67 Act is under threat.

Fortunately for lesbians and gays there are now a number of left Labour MPs prepared to stand up in defence of our rights.

However, we must continue to fight at all levels in the labour movement to win people to our demands. Lesbian and Gay Pride '87 showed more than ever our determination to fight on and not be marginalised inside an increasingly defensive labour movement.

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LABOUR BRIEFING

KIM WON'T FIX IT!

BY JOHN LISTER

The sight of tens of thousands braving vicious tear gas to challenge Darth Vadar-suited, baton-wielding cops in South Korea should be an encouragement to every class conscious worker.

Of course the protestors were by no means all working class: most numerous among the crowds were students and the urban middle classes; there were even Buddhist monks, nuns, and elderly bourgeois politicians.

It is the spirit of rebellion against the US-backed dictatorship of President Chun Doo Hwan and his hand-picked successor Roh Tae Woo which is the vital factor for socialists.

For while the students themselves may have little clear conception of a political alternative, and while the two main opposition leaders — Kim Dae-Jung and Kim Young-Sam — are a million miles from the working class or socialist politics, the rights and living standards of the Korean working class are central to the Korean events.

The "economic powerhouse" which Reagan and the capitalist press so admire in Chun's regime relies upon the brutal repression of trade union rights and working class political independence. For decades South Korea's rulers, propped up by a massive US military presence, have used ballot-rigging, corruption, and repression — including the mass slaughter in 1980 of over 1,000 students and protestors in Kwanju, which heralded the installation of President Chun's military rule.

The bogey of the Stalinist regime in the North has been ruthlessly exploited by successive regimes as the pretext for savage anti-communist laws. This has helped stifle the development of any mass working class political party, while US and Japanese, international capital has been able to cash in by screwing huge profits from low-paid workers.

The obvious unwillingness of Chun's regime to risk a prolonged disruption of these profits — and even jeopardise the prestigious Olympic Games — by attempting a wholesale crackdown on the mobilising middle classes, exposes some of the contradictions inherent in this type of dictatorship, and which also played a role in the downfall of Philippines dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Despite their facade of impregnable strength, heavy handed military regimes cannot survive without the acquiescence or active support of key sections of the middle classes. The eventual break-up of this consensus — coupled with the rising strength of a resurgent trade union movement — has already been the key to the ending of several dictatorships in Latin America.

But while we celebrate the resistance, enjoy the spectacle of cops on the retreat before Korean students, and urge on the demonstrators to force a full amnesty for all 3,000 political prisoners, socialists should also be looking further ahead. Neither Kim will "fix it" for the working class.

Middle class protestors can alter government policies and force retreats; they can even topple governments; but they cannot — and do not wish to — change the system or lift the burden of repression from the trade union and workers' movement.

This lesson is clear enough from the Aquino government in the Philippines. To do that, a working class political leadership is vital.

We must hope that the space opened up for political debate, and the renewed evidence of the effectiveness of mass action, will help to kindle new life in the powerful Korean working class, which must now assert its demands — and fix its sights on state power.

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!