LABOUR
BRIEFING
No 47 SEPT 9-22

INSIDE:
- Magnificent miners!
- Debate: proportional representation
- Women speak out
- Football preview
- Fighting deportations

40p

As TUC runs up the white flag:

MINERS ANSWER TUC

DEFEATISTS!



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

As most TUC leaders turn tail and retreat as fast as their legs will carry them, the decision of the miners' National Executive to set a deadline for an overtime ban comes as a welcome blast of fresh air.

By HARRY SLOAN

The run up to this year's most defeatist-ever TUC Congress has been marked by the rampaging arrogance of the EETPU scabs.

Elsewhere, too the white flag has been run up by union chiefs. As NUT leader Fred Jarvis chaired the opening session of the TUC, he left tens of thousands of NUT members to start the new term under the savage conditions imposed upon them by Kenneth Baker.

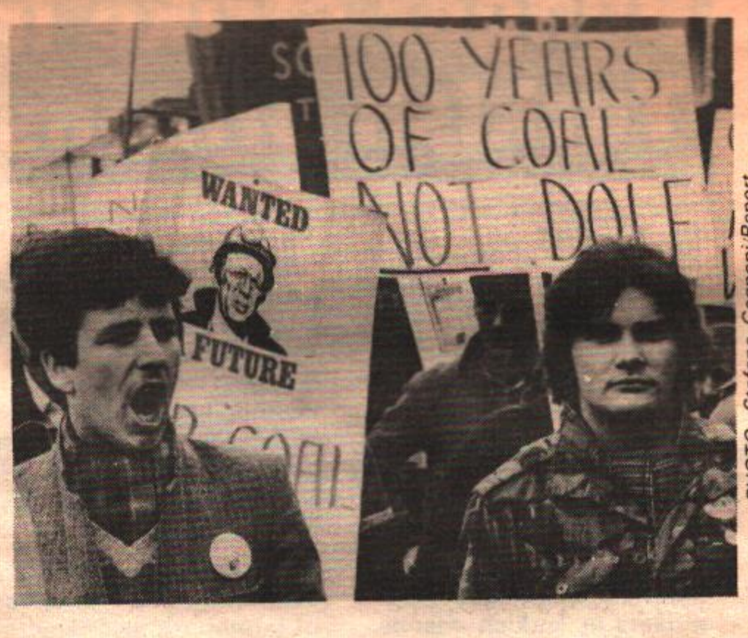


PHOTO: Stefano Cagnoni/Report

Worse, union leaders representing 1 million local authority manual workers have proposed a pay deal which threatens to bring 100,000 redundancies and the loss of premium payments for overtime and weekends; the union bosses have surrendered to competitive tendering before the Tories even legislate it (see p 11).

Against this background of prostration , defeatism and collaboration, the NUM's 77% ballot vote for industrial action against British Coal's discplinary code and the Executive decision to set the September 21 deadline for an overtime ban is a major shot in the arm for class struggle methods.

Arthur Scargill has shown himself prepared to stand and fight — and his firm lead has now been vindicated by massive rank and file support.

This backing will add weight to Scargill's challenge to the no-strike deals proposed by the EETPU, and rejection of the drift towards class collaboration in the TUC.

The prospect of renewed action by the NUM this autumn and the need to fight the political retreat by this year's TUC both underline the importance of the trade union Solidarity Conference being organised in Leeds on November 7-8th by representatives from recent and current disputes and by eight local support groups (see p. 12).

The miners have shown the way to answer the defeatists — now it's up to all those who support them to stand up and be counted. Book this date in your diaries now!

APOLOGY

In our issue No. 39, 11-24 March 1987, we made certain comments about Mr Jack Rogers in his role as Executive Council member of UCATT.

We would like to make it clear that those comments were wholly and utterly wrong and untrue. We unreservedly withdraw and retract these comments, and apologise for the distress and harm he has been caused. We recognise that Mr Rogers has been a life-long member of his Union and the Labour Party, and has made a substantial contribution to the labour movement.

We have paid Mr Rogers damages to compensate him for his distress and he has donated these damages to the funds of the Labour Party.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Black struggle/fighting racism

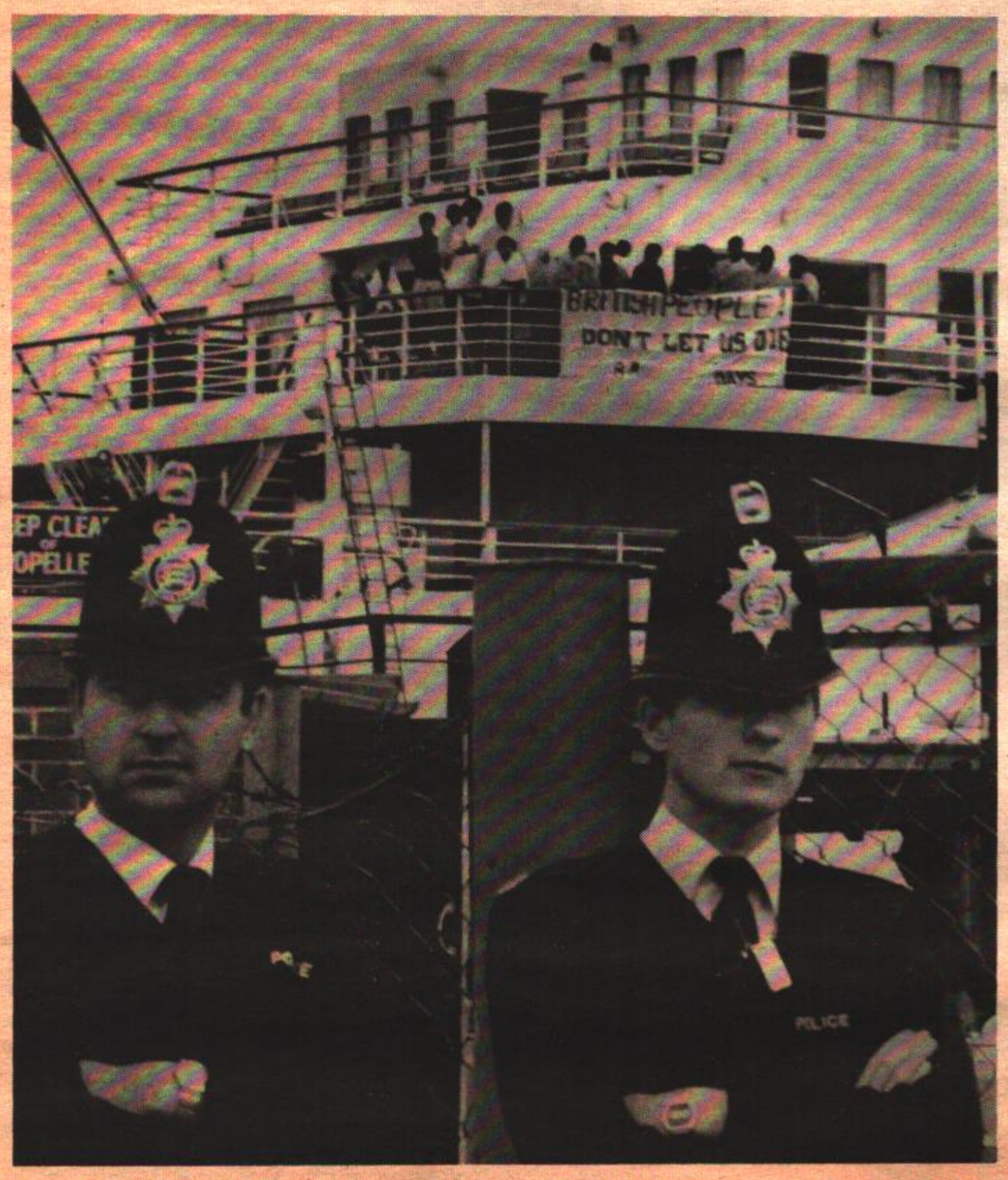


PHOTO: Chi Chan

Detainees on the Harwich prison ship appeal to British people for support — literally, over the heads of the police...

Keep up the pressure!

Following a call by campaign organisers for regular weekly pickets at Harwich Docks in protest at the detention of political refugees on the "Earl William" ferry, anti-deportation groups, Black groups, and trade unions based in South London mobilised their members for a successful demonstration (sponsored by Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark Trades Councils and Lambeth NALGO Black Workers Group) on August 8th.

The demonstration coincided with the start of a hunger strike by 53 of the detainees. They felt compelled to draw attention to the deplorable conditions on the ferry and to demand release, pending consideration of their cases by the law courts.

At the demonstration, Steve Biggs, Secretary of the Docks Branch of Harwich NUR, and Bob Rayner, Secretary of the Harwich National Union of Seamen Branch, spoke of their members' opposition to the use of ferries as detention centres and denied claims by Sealink (who sold the ferry to the government, with the promise of more sales) that it is "bringing jobs and prosperity to the people of Harwich".

Representatives of National Labour Party Black Sections, Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign and the Harwich Action Committee also expressed their support for the campaign. The government's calculating and cynical attempts to harass and discourage Black people from visiting or seeking political asylum in this country were roundly denounced.

The Harwich Prison Ferry is just one of the grimmest reminders of the government's widespread, profoundly racist, and highly repressive policy on immigration controls. Other aspects of this policy include ever-stricter visa controls for Black visitors; the long-term detention of visitors and refugees at detention centres, prison camps and police cells all around the country; the introduction of penalties for airlines who carry visitors without the correct documents; and the denial of basic civil and legal rights to people who "are not officially in this country because they have not been given entry clearance."

By Ai Meun Lim
Southwark Anti-Deportation Campaign

As we go to press, a major national day of action against detention, including a demonstration, is promised for Sunday September 6th.

The Harwich Campaign Committee is co-ordinating efforts to secure freedom and rights for the Harwich detainees and all refugees and to capitalise on recent gains (three detainees have had judicial reviews in their favour). For further information contact the Refugee Forum on 01 482 3829.

Finally, the Southwark Anti-Deportation Campaign, organisers of the South London demonstration on the Day of Action, are planning to draw together all relevant forces in South London to set up a South London anti-deportation campaign. Many sectors of the labour movement and many community groups recognise the need to mount a concerted fightback on this issue.

If you are a South London trade union branch, Labour Party ward, political or community group wishing to be put on the mailing list contact Harsha on 01 732 3640.

If you are not in South London don't wait around for a further National Day of Action! Anti-deportation campaigning is in the forefront of the struggle of the fightback against this government. Set up your own local campaign — contact the above number for further details of activities around Harwich.

Defend the Diamond Four!

Four Chinese waiters were sentenced to 2 years imprisonment for affray by Southwark Crown Court on 25th June 1987.

The injured "victims" were four "European males" (the term used by the police) who were customers at the Diamond Restaurant, Lisle Street, London WC2, where the defendants worked on the night of the incident on 29th June 1986. It was a jury trial.

Chinese waiters and waitresses in Soho were appalled at the conviction and the length of the sentences. They, and in particular the families of the defendants, see the whole system as biased against the waiters from the start.

The case was, according to the legal counsel, "rather undistinguished as an affray"; "there are worse examples to be seen in practically every Crown Court every week."

Despite this, the hearing was conducted under the cloud of repeated reports in the press that the "victims" were "clubbed like seals". Of the four victims, only one was injured seriously enough to require treatment — 7 stitches on the forehead. The other 3 were examined by doctors and discharged the same day.

The legal counsel also commented on the judge's summing up: "He took the main points of the prosecution case against each defendant and quoted chapter and verse from the evidence, largely ignoring those other parts of evidence which might have contradicted them. The overall impression was that of a Judge who had formed a view..."

From the beginning, the attitude of the police was to presume the waiters guilty. The police tried to obtain evidence against them and in defence of the Europeans. For instance, when one of the defendants, Mr Chung Fat Li, told the police interviewer, S. Taylor, that the Europeans refused to pay for the food and drinks they had consumed, Mr Taylor replied: "But they are all respectable people; not the sort of people to do this."

Furthermore, the Europeans were taken to hospital from the Restaurant while the Chinese waiters were taken to the police station despite the fact that they were also injured and requested to be taken to hospital. Only after detention for one day and one night at the police station were the defendants finally allowed to be examined by doctors.

Against the guidelines for this sort of case, the defendants were charged while requiring medical attention. They were not informed of their right to be represented by a solicitor.

The Defence Campaign believes that the court did not take sufficient account of the racial harassment and abuse experienced daily by Chinese waiters in restaurants over many years. This is a clear case of responding to racists in an act of self defence.

However, the result was that the racists got away with their abuse and the victims were charged and punished for daring to defend themselves.

The Diamond 4 Defence Campaign and the families of the defendants are appealing to witnesses who were not interviewd by the police to come forward to correct the distorted version of the event. There is a tremendous depth of feeling amongst Chinese workers in "China Town". Within a period of days, they donated over £10,000 in support of the 4 defendants. They see it as part of their own fight for the right to work without being racially harased and their right to defend themselves under attack.

Self defence is no offence!



Hunger strike in Turkish prisons

By S. Guler

Members of the Turkish and Kurdish communities started a hunger strike in front of the Turkish embassy (43 Belgrave Square, London SW1) on Monday 7th September.

The strike is to support hundreds of hunger strikers in Turkish prisons.

On 9th July hundreds of political prisoners in Sagmalcilar military prison in Istanbul started a hunger strike demanding basic human rights such as:

- a total ban on chains in prison hospitals and transport ("shameful chains");
- ban on prison uniforms;
- lift the brutal limitations and bans on family visits;
- lift the limitations and censorship on letters, books, newspapers, TV;
- allow food and medical aid from families and supporters;
- end the solitary confinement practised by the prison management;
- end the executions.

This strike spread rapidly and at the moment prisoners in Malatya e Type, Canakkale, Bursa, Eshisehir, Ankara and various Istanbul prisons are on strike. The hunger strikers are firmly committed and facing death.

On 1st Setpember supporters and members of human rights associations and the union of families of political prisoners marched to parliament to hand in a petition. Police attacked the march and 60 people were arrested.

Didar Sensoy (sister of a prisoner) was killed in the clash, and others were wounded.

On the seventh anniversary of the military coup — 12th September — there will be a march from Marble Arch to Belgrave Square. *Briefing* supporters are encouraged to raise the issue in their branches and unions and visit the hunger strike, join the march — and bring your banners and friends!

Ten years on

Remember Steve Biko

On 12th September, 1977, Steve Bantu Biko, outstanding South African leader and proponent of Black Consciousness, was murdered by South African security police.

Since detention without trial was introduced in 1963, *more than eighty* detainees have died in the hands of the Apartheid police. Not a single security policeman has ever been convicted of causing the death of a detainee.

During the past year, some 30,000 persons have been detained without trial in South Africa. At least a third of these have been under 21 years old, and many have been only 10 12 years of age. **Most of them have been beaten or flogged, and many tortured by electric shocks or near-suffocation. Brutal tortures have become routine to the methods of the security police and their viciousness is matched only by that of the troops in the townships, with their random violence and killings.**

Biko was an independent militant leader who inspired a generation of Black youth. Richard Attenborough's new film based on his life and death will be released soon. Will Biko receive the same bowdlerised, liberalised treatment that Attenborough lavished on *Gandhi* (the South African premier of which he personally attended?)

In any case, the film will not remain Biko's only memorial.

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Yes to democratic left unity

"Unity of the Labour Left" is the title of a statement recently published in *Tribune* over the names of Ken Livingstone, George Galloway, Anne Pettifor, Peter Hain, Marc Wadsworth, and others.

It calls current divisions amongst the left "a luxury we cannot afford" and raises a timely warning against coalition with the Liberals, which it describes as a "hidden agenda" within the Party and the possible end result of the Party's current "political dynamic".

"A Liberal-Labour Pact", the statement rightly declares, "might appear to be an anti-Thatcher coalition, but in practice it would be a coalition for perpetuating Thatcherism."

The statement then goes on to list fifteen points around which Left unity can and should be built. These include rejection of coalition, the development of "socialist economic policy, including the extension of common ownership", defence of trade unionism and strengthening of links between Labour and the unions, "radical democratisation" (including a Scottish Assembly), unilateral nuclear disarmament, "an independent socialist foreign policy", and support for the democratic demands of women and Black people within the Party.

Briefing welcomes the *Tribune* statement and in particular its recognition of the need for Left unity and for a specific programme around which it can be built. The scuppering of the joint Tribune-Campaign Group slate for the Shadow Cabinet elections, which the statement blames on the right-leaning Tribune Group majority, seems to have acted as a catalyst.

Clearly, it reflects a growing unease and disenchantment with the Kinnockism in which several of the signatories previously placed so much hope.

Coalitionism

They are right to see coalitionism as the ultimate drift of the present leadership's approach, and doubly right to raise a public cry of warning.

Briefing supporters, however, have a number of urgent concerns which are not mentioned in the statement.

For us, the key to left advance — in the Labour Party and elsewhere — is support for and unity around concrete, specific and immediate struggles. By organising solidarity with these struggles — and spreading it amongst the whole labour movement — we will show the real power of our movement, and by doing so draw new people into it. We will establish in practice that only a left socialist programme can met their real needs.

If we are to defeat "business unionism", strengthen Labour's links with the unions, and organise part-time and temporary workers — all laudable goals listed in the *Tribune* statement — then we have to organise the fullest possible practical and political support for all workers in struggle.

In this respect, the failure to support the miners in '84-85, echoed in the treatment of the printworkers and countless other groups, will prove to be the real watershed in the progress of Kinnockism towards coalition.

Only through vigorous — and successful — prosecution of existing trade union struggles will more workers be won to trade unionism. And only in this context will the radical socialist economic policy which the statement demands come to seem a reality for large sections of the working class.

Struggle

The statement makes no mention at all of recent and forthcoming struggles in local government.

This has always been a focus of activity for *Briefing* supporters, and Thatcher's "inner cities" onslaught has reconfirmed its importance. Already, the first clashes in the next battle on this front are shaping up, with Labour councils up and down the country making cuts and sacking workers. The outcome of the struggles against all cuts in jobs or services now being organised, with *Briefing* supporters in the forefront, will fundamentally affect our campaigns against the poll tax, privatisation, and the Tory plans to break up public sector housing and education.

These local government conflicts cannot be ignored. Defeats for council workers at the hands of Labour as well as Tory councils, with further erosion of already inadequate Council services as a consequence, will weaken the whole labour movement and certainly inhibit the kind of united left advance which the *Tribune* statement calls for.

The demand for "radical democratisation" in "politics, society and the economy" needs to be fleshed out. A good example of how this general principle can be turned into practical activity is the March for Civil Rights and Justice organised by the Broadwater Farm Youth Association for October 3rd. All sections of the Labour left should rally behind this ambitious venture, as well as the many urgently-needed anti-deportation campaigns springing up around the country.

"Democratisation" has come on to Labour's political agenda partly because of Tory attacks on democratic rights. The Tories have deliberately exploited anti-lesbian and anti-gay bigotry to divide the working class and paralyse it with fear. Our leaders have failed to answer this evil offensive, and indeed have colluded with it by targetting lesbian and gay rights as a "losing" issue for Labour.

In this context the omission of any mention of the issue from the *Tribune* statement is unfortunate. We cannot duck or downplay it. We have to answer the Tory attack with broad-based, active, and popular campaigns for lesbian and gay rights, including full endorsement of "positive images" and "equally valid" initiatives. This means more than just hand-on-heart avowals of "support" but visible action on the streets, in workplaces, and on Council estates.

The "independent socialist foreign policy" which the statement demands will take shape and gain popular support partly through active protest around specific questions of international solidarity. The South African NUM strike — a harbinger of much more to come from the South African working class — was a perfect example of the kind of struggle which Labour should be organising around. The despatch of British ships to the Gulf, another fantastic adventure of a dying British imperialism, should have been met with an outcry from Labour MPs and from the Party as a whole.

This too would have promoted left unity and shown in practice what an independent socialist foreign policy is all about.

And where is Ireland? Left off the agenda yet again! Of course, the issue might well drive a coach and horses through the tentatively massed ranks of a newly united Labour left. Nonetheless it remains a touchstone, bridging domestic and international policy, and will not go away.

The statement rejects "new waves of disciplinary action" within the Party, which we welcome. But we will also be fighting for reinstatement of those comrades already victimised by the witch-hunt. Without the fullest possible inner-Party democracy and unrestricted debate, there can be little hope of significant left advance.

United

The same applies to the organisation of the left itself. A united left must also be a democratic left. Without active grass-roots participation from the Party, the unions and the various campaigns, the left can be united in name only. A real coalition cannot be decreed from small caucuses, whatever their policies, nor from what used to be called smoke-filled rooms (before the no-smoking revolt hit the Labour Party). It must be built through unity in action and wide-ranging rank and file discussion.

We need a democratically-organised national conference of the Labour Left, preceded and followed by local and regional left debates. Without this, the welcome initiative announced in the *Tribune* statement is unlikely to bear fruit.

Finally, we must openly declare the need to challenge — politically and organisationally — the existing Party leadership. The left will be built, in the foreseeable future, *in opposition to Kinnock*. Of course, the *Tribune* statement in its own way is nothing less than a critique of Kinnock and everything he stands for. For that reason, amongst others, we welcome it, and look forward to participating in the many discussions which will be underway throughout the left in the coming months.

The dangers hidden behind the merger

Well done, Dr Death & Co.

The unedifying spectacle of your single-minded subversion of the SDP has been good news for Labour.

By Mike Marqusee and Harry Sloan

We haven't laughed so much since you left the Party in 1981!

Many of the speeches by anti-mergerites at the Portsmouth vaudeville harped back to those halcyon days, when the "third force" (or was it the fourth?) first emerged.

With the solemn posture of deeply-held principle that only the most thoroughly unprincipled operators have the nerve to adopt, they explained why they must go their own, lonely way, once again, into the political wilderness, to establish a "fourth force" (or is it the fifth?)

What Marx said about history repeating itself almost applies. While the first time may not exactly have been tragedy, the second was certainly farce.

Maybe Oscar Wilde would make a better commentator. While it may be considered unfortunate to mislay one political party, to misplace two is simply careless.

Among the "principles" the Owenites claim to be defending are an implacable hostility to trade unions, a worship of the free market, and of course, the euphemistically called "nuclear element".

Owen's envy of Thatcher was apparent during the election. His accolyte, ex-Communist Party hack Sue Slipman, made explicit the Owenites desire to steal Thatcher's clothes.

The SDP's mission, Slipman declared, was to "civilise Thatcherism".

Repeating a familiar turn from her Stalinist days, she warned mergerites against what she called the "anarcho-syndicalist" tendency in the Liberal Party, allegedly as bad as the Labour left. *Briefng* will be actively seeking out these mythical creatures, and any sightings will be promptly reported.

New SDP leader Robert MacLennan, whose rise to prominence is testimony to the abiding virtue of a cultivated mediocrity, is also a great champion of "the nuclear element" (is somebody slipping plutonium into their claret?).

He promised that retention of nuclear weapons and nuclear power would be non-negotiable with the Liberals. David Steel, of course, will only welcome the opportunity to accommodate MacLennan and to finish off the dwindling ranks of Liberal unilateralists.

All factions of the SDP were united, during the debate on the "social market economy", in not having a clue what the phrase actually meant.

Their dilemma was understandable. The "social market economy", like the SDP itself, was an opinion-poll construction from the first, and utterly devoid of meaning.

Despite the fun to be had in watching these developments, the rightward split of the Owenites will bring real problems for the labour movement.

The mergerite majority and their Liberal colleagues have opened the door to a potential electoral deal with the Labour Party leadership. The only element lacking for this is a Labour commitment to Proportional Representation. Though such a policy is by no means the property of the right and coalitionist wings of the Labour Party, there is little doubt that their efforts to push it through will be redoubled.

Indeed the ditching of Owen, Cartwright and their gang from the ranks of the "third force" will strengthen this fifth column in Labour's right who are waiting to push the Kinnockite drift to its logical conclusion.

Just as the "nuclear element" will be foisted on the Liberals, so, in the event of coalition, it will be foisted on Labour, along with all the other shibboleths of politicians dedicated to the preservation of capitalism and their own careers and little else.

If nothing else, the SDP's debacle at Portsmouth demonstrates yet again the utter bankruptcy of Labour entering into coalition with any so-called "third force".

The abandonment of any socialist politics which that would entail (and the Liberal/SDP merger would not unite with Labour on any other basis) would deny the British working class any independent political voice — reversing the historic development it made with the formation of the Labour Party through a *split* with the Liberals at the turn of the century.

We need only look at the example of the USA, where the workers' movement *still* has not escaped from the clutches of the two bourgeois parties — the Democrats and the Republicans — to realise the political importance of an independent party based on the strength of the trade unions and the working class movement.

At root there are only *two* forces in society — the capitalist class, counterposed to the working class. It is the job of the labour movement to organise and defend the interests of the working class.

Anyone claiming to represent a third, fourth, or fifth force is pulling a fast one. They must be decisively defeated and driven from the political stage.

This can only be achieved by a Labour Party which sets its face firmly against coalitionism of any kind and strikes out boldly on the socialist road.

Trade Union Briefing

TUC CONGRESS
Limbering up for another betrayal

This year's TUC Congress takes place in the wake of the scabbing role of the General Council at Wapping and the generalised shift to the right which has taken place aross the labour movement since the general election in June.

The TUC leadership want to formalise this shift to the right as well as formalising Norman Willis's new (sic) concept of a trade union movement based on gimmicks, welfare benefits and public relations, rather than struggle against the employers.

They want to prepare the ground for the same shift to the right to be formalised at the Labour Party conference as well.

To clear the way for this, the General Council have been struggling all this week to make the agenda safe and protect Eric Hammond's business union, the EETPU. They moved first against a resolution tabled by the TGWU which would prevent them from signing no-strike deals with the employers.

Proposal

There was only one vote (Arthur Scargill) against a proposal by Willis to remove any debate on this from the agenda for a year and to table a meaningless statement instead — a decision which was afterwards condemned by Arthur Scargill as an attempt to cover up the issue.

The TGWU fell into line and

By Alan Thornett

did not push their resolution.

True to form, and true to the way such right wing unions now call the tune in the TUC, Hammond made no concessions at all, refusing even to say he would not sign any such deals before next year's Congress.

The EETPU have apparently threatened to leave the TUC if a resolution condemning such deals was passed — which would be a very good thing if it happened. They should have been kicked out of the TUC a long time ago for their role at Wapping.

Hammond knows, however, that his scab union would have everything to lose by being outside the TUC and the protection of the Bridlington agreement and the General Council.

Undermining

Hammond needs that protection because he has not the slightest hesitation in undermining or breaking unions in any industry he choses. He is challenging for members on non-electrical work from Aberdeen to the Docklands Railway.

On the Friday before Congress, however, the Generall Council were caught again with the same issue when they failed to stop a resolution from the CPSA which not only calls for the banning of no strike deals, but for industrial action if the government proceeds with fresh legislation against the unions. Unless more manoeuvres are pulled out of the hat, these issues will now have to be discussed.

Also in advance of this Congress the TUC's General Purposes Committee have ruled out of order a motion from SOGAT '82 which calls for a debate on the Wapping dispute. SOGAT intend to challenge this decision — but would need a two thirds majority to be successful.

The SOGAT motion would require the EETPU to hand over to the print unions the membership it has at Waping — doing printers' jobs.

Out of Order

The General Purposes Committee has ruled two motions out of order on the basis that the TUC does not have the power to intervene into inter-union membership disputes — something they regularly do!

Nor has the issue of workers' representation in the trade unions fared any better. A debate on whether the TUC should have a women's department is to be avoided by a statement from Willis which will talk piously about the need for more women to become involved without discussing how it can be achieved.

After Thatcher's third election victory, the TUC Congress of 1987 should realise that there is no Labour government waiting on the horizon to undo the Tory attacks. Unless we stand and fight now, no one else will stop the onslaught.

The TUC could have chosen this year to lead that fight — once more, it will miss the opportunity and betray its millions of members.

TASS/ASTMS MERGER
A Stalinist's fantasy...

Decision time is now fast approaching for the membership of the 390,000-member Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs (ASTMS) and the 260,000 member Technical and Supervisory Staffs (TASS) over whether the two unions should merge.

Both unions are holding simultaneous conferences on September 12th in Harrow, where the leaderships, their discussions now completed, will ask for a mandate to organise a full membership ballot, with backing for the merger.

Many of the reservations expressed by ASTMS delegates at their 1987 Annual Delegate Conference (in particular the need to retain branch-based representation at the forthcoming Rules Revision Conference) have been ignored.

The merger process has so far been dominated by the needs and concerns of these two unions' bureaucracies, rather than by any direct initiative from the membership. The objective of a merger should be supported, but not for the reasons currently motivating Clive Jenkins and Ken Gill, or their immediate supporters.

ASTMS and TASS have overlapping membership interests in a number of companies and industries: engineering, aerospace and computers. A principled merger could contribute towards establishing an alternative block within the TUC and Labour Party, around which the left could gather, and

By I. Baleares

contest the Kinnock/new realists.

But this is only possible if the political issues of trade union democracy are addressed, in a way that empowers the membership and encourages them to participate in struggle against the employers. This is not the

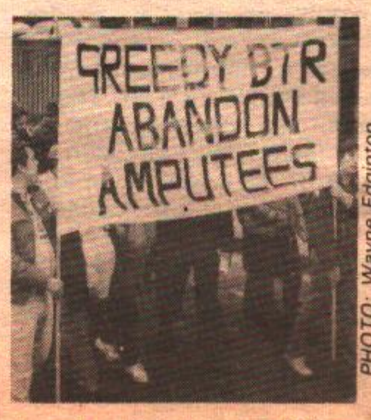


PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

intention of Jenkins and Gill — two trade union bureaucrats taking refuge in one another's organisational apparatuses.

ASTMS is a sprawling union with a membership across 20 industries, including the NHS, engineering, finance and insurance. Its internal politics are complex, but Clive Jenkins' pro-Kinnock leadership predominates.

TASS, by contrast, is essentially based on the engineering industry. It is tightly controlled by the *Morning Star* Stalinists led by General Secretary Ken Gill. Internal democracy is almost non-existent. Its conference is being reduced from 165 to 55 delegates! One of the chief reasons for the failure to merge with its previous partner the AUEW (now AEU) was its refusal to elect full-time officials.

TASS is by far the biggest union still dominated by the Stalinists, who see a merger with ASTMS as vital to rebuilding their influence inside the TUC. They see ASTMS as "ripe" and susceptible to takeover by the TASS "cadre".

If a principled merger is to be supported, then so is a full membership ballot. It would allow the membership to reject these particular merger proposals, and then open up a new campaign to formulate an alternative for an effective merger.

The Stalinist/Kinnock block which would come to dominate the new unions is more interested in organising block votes within the TUC and Labour Party than in supporting workers' struggles, such as the recent dispute at Hangers in South London. Indeed they may eventually fall out with one another, with a section of the Stalinist TASS grouping moving to the right.

But at the moment they share a comon fantasy of a "white collar T&G", partly provoked by concern over membership figures and a declining financial position.

The ballot results are due by December. If the merger is agreed, there will be a week-long Rules Revision Conference in mid-June 1988.

Opportunity

This Conference will be a major opportunity to organise for the democratisation of the new union, in particular the need for branch based conferences, with the rights of workplace organisation placed firmly at the centre of the structure.

There is however a very real danger that no policy making conference will be held at all in 1988, because the Rules Revision Conference will take exclusive precedence. This is but one more example of the dire future in store for the membership if the merger is uncritically accepted.

At all times the real need will be to create the circumstances which will allow the rank and file of both unions to work together, over an extended period of time, to prepare the merger of these two unions as a class struggle organisation, not a bureaucratic fan club.

Employment discrimination
Ireland: the cause of Labour?

The leaflet for the "Ireland: Cause of Labour" conference shows an Introduction Card from the Ministry of Labour-Northern Ireland — whose reverse side has a space in which the employer is invited to give the reason why the applicant was not given employment.

In this space is written one word: *Religion*.

The date on the card is 30 September, 1936.

But in the North of Ireland, nothing has changed.

The overall unemployment rate of Catholic men has remained two and a half times that of Protestant men and that of Catholic women one and a half times that of Protestant women.

Skilled

Catholic men are under-represented in skilled occupations and over-represented in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations. Catholic women are over-represented in low status, low paid jobs.

But this is only half the story. A deeper look at those statistics, which at first glance might indicate that Catholic women fare beter in the Loyalist six-county statelet, shows that Catholic women carry a double burden, as Catholics *and* as women.

By Patrick Sikorski NUR

All Catholics, men and women, suffer from the fundamental fact of life in the North: the state itself was created on the basis of a sectarian headcount with the sole aim of maintaining a permanent loyalist majority. The result was that most Catholics live in the western half of the province, west of the River Bann.

The natural industrial development in this half of the six counties was the western counties of the twenty-six counties state from which these people were now severed. Economic stagnation followed.

Between 1937 and 1961 90,000 Catholics and 69,000 Protestants emigrated from the North. While this meant a population loss to the Protestants of just 8%, for the Catholics it meant a decline of 21%. Most emigration was of course male. The women were left behind to look after children and the house, surviving on what little local work was available, usually in the traditional linen and shirtmaking industries and on the lowest and most poorly paid grades.

Nowhere is this more true than in Derry. Roughly half of the shirtmaking factories there have closed during the recent recession but there still remain a substantial number which profit from low-paid women's work. The expansion of social services during the 1970s has not changed this picture. New jobs for working class Catholic women were mainly in the part-time, low paid auxilliary grades.

Partition

Of course discrimination in employment originated long before partition in the era of the formation of the Irish working class. But once the sectarian six-county state was created, discrimination in employment — and indeed in every sphere of life — became institutionalised.

The rationale for the use of discrimination in favour of the loyalist population — to secure their loyalty — still remains, and therefore discrimination persists. Sectarian discrimination and partition are inextricably linked.

For these reasons "Ireland: the Cause of Labour" is billed as "a trade union conference on employment discrimination and its context in Northern Ireland". It will be held in the Camden Centre on Saturday, November 28th, 1987.

Why should employment discrimination in the North be of concern to the British labour movement?

Of course, we are implicated in this sectarian cesspit up to our necks. Over 80% of trade unionists in the North are members of British TUC-affiliated unions.

While the British TUC and Labour Party, quite rightly, campaign indignantly against the denial of human and civil rights in South Africa, they remain stunningly silent on the denial of these same rights within the present official borders of the British state. The material interests of British trade unionists demand that we oppose this discrimination.

An estimated 50,000 people left Ireland for London last year. The same figure is likely for 1987. The bosses will use this pool of labour to undercut wages and conditions over here.

Spotlight

It is the duty of socialists in the movement to turn the spotlight on the root causes of this immigration. Otherwise anti-Irish racism will go unopposed and the bosses will be let off the hook.

Ireland's economic crisis is rooted in partition, and sectarian job discrimination in the North is part and parcel of the dirty work of preserving partition.

Applications for credentials to: Ireland: the cause of Labour?; BM Box 5335, London WC1N 3XX.

Massey-Fergusson
Leading in the wrong direction

In April, multinational tractor firm Massey-Ferguson announced that 1,000 Coventry jobs "had to go".

840 would be shopfloor workers.

Over the last few months, through voluntary severance (accepted by many of the depressed and pessimistic staff), the number has dwindled until now 146 compulsory redundancies are required.

On August 19th, the Bonner Lane workers voted by a two thirds majority to accept a £20 per week pay cut, an increase in productivity and changes to working practice (which will mean the end of all demarcation lines) to save the remaining jobs.

In the past Massey Ferguson shop floor workers have always led the way. Their tradition is one of reformist militancy. For example, they were the first workforce to occupy a plant on a wages claim. Five years ago they occupied and won a no-compulsory redundancy agreement. They had international links with Solidarnosc in Poland, etc.

Now the workforce leads the way on pay cuts, higher

By Rod Sweeney Coventry SW CLP

productivity, and deteriorating conditions.

Ford, Case IH, and John Deere will not just sit back and let Massey Ferguson take an increasing share of a dwindling market. They will demand that their workforce take an even bigger wage cut, (and even higher productivity will be expected) to give them a competitive edge.

What will happen to the Banner Lane works? It's back to square one! The pressure will be on for another pay cut, still higher productivity, etc.

The workers are caught in a vicious circle of paying for capitalism's failure.

To meet management's challenge, lessons of other disputes must be learned, and a plan for the future must be drawn up at the joint shop stewards committee at Banner Lane.

We call upon militants at Massey Ferguson to join us at the Solidarity Conference in Leeds on November 7th and 8th to hammer out a strategy to reverse these repeated defeats.

In spite of everything...

Miners vote for industrial action!

The miners' recent national ballot calling for industrial action is the first step on the long road to recovery for the NUM.

"Post-strike blues" have bedevilled much of the NUM leadership.

Apart from Scargill and Heathfield, members of the NUM Executive have kept their heads down. This defeatist attitude on the part of Stalinist-style leaders has in many areas been reflected in despondency amongst the rank and file.

Militants of many years standing have opted out and taken redundancy rather than accept bullshit from management. They knew that if they agitated for action they might well face the sack, despite long service. Already, Mick McGinty and Paul Whetton have gone and they now have now been joined on the British Coal hit-list by Ted Scott of Stillingfleet in North Yorkshire.

If the NUM Area barons had pressed for action to reinstate sacked and victimised miners then the British Coal would have thought twice about sacking elected Branch officers.

By H.M. Greenaway
Rank and file Yorks miner

The men now taking redundancy would have been in the forefront of such action. The leadership's shameful defeatism has left activists isolated and vulnerable to vindictive management attacks.

Ballot

The positive ballot result, an overwhelming rejection of British Coal's new disciplinary code, has strengthened the negotiating hand of the NUM, vindicated Scargill's principled stand, and boosted rank and file confidence. Now militants must work at local Branch and Area level to ensure minimum coal output while maximising British Coal costs — through "machine down time" due to lack of maintenance.

Mine craftsmen will be in the front line of management attacks. Electricians and mechanics will be under pressure to take short cuts while carrying out statutory examinations of equipment. Members of the managers' union, BACM, will try to do essential safety work while arguing that craftsmen should be exempted from the overtime ban by the NUM.

Safety

In the recent past, some craftsmen have been almost forced to provide safety cover by threats from NUM Area offices. No essential jobs should be carried out without approval by NUM officers — but some officers approve anything, thereby making a mockery of the overtime ban.

Rank and file dissent is brushed aside with the excuse that the work is necessary to save the mine from closure due to fire or flood.

Area leaderships should put the approval of safety work in the hands of a local rank and file committee (who after all work in the mine, and have most to lose if it closes). If this were done, I am sure that 95% of so-called safety work would never be done in overtime.

Winning the ballot is the starting point for a renewed campaign to reject flexible working. The six-day week and all that goes with it is the main thrust of management.

Resistance

The Code itself is required to minimise activists' resistance to flexible working. Des Dutfield and his South Wales Stalinist crew were arguing that the Code should be rejected because it was obstructing negotiations over the six-day week and Haslem's carrot, the new Margam pit.

This style of leadership has demoralised miners in the past and must be opposed at every turn. It is twice as hard to win a ballot when you first have to undo the damage done by your own Area officers.

Frickley

The Frickley dispute in July — when 16,000 miners went on strike, only to be sold out by their Area leadership — should act as a reminder to all of the difficulties facing us.

The Frickley miners and the others who joined them weren't paid whilst in dispute, and lost substantial amounts in wages. Jack Taylor lost "nowt". His treachery, backed by the "New Realists" of *Marxism Today*, should prove even to the most sceptical the need for a national rank and file organisation independent of the Area barons' manipulations.

The push towards flexible working is a step towards the deunionisation and denationalisation of the industry. Thatcher had already indicated her wish to privatise electricity generation, by which she means mainly coal-fired stations. Certain stations, such as those in the Aire and Trent Valleys, are closely associated with neighbouring modern mines. It is not hard to envisage a sell-off of both the mines which produce the coal and the power stations which burn it.

Privatisation

The best means to resist joint privatisation would be the formation off a joint national rank and file, and militants should initiate Area and national meetings now to plan a joint strategy. A serious and determined demand for *one union in energy* would make Thatcher think again. A single union representing all energy workers would have immense economic strength. Both present workforces would benefit from the combined industrial muscle.

At the moment, both state-run industries are regularly ripped-off by privately owned supply companies, who charge 300% more than the market price for equipment. These companies should be nationalised and combined with the main industries. Open cast sites should also be targetted for nationalisation and the membership transferred from the TGWU to the NUM. These measures would strengthen the union and the workforce.

Multinationals

One union for energy and opposition to a privatisation sell-off to the multinationals must be fought for with tenacity. Let's remember that trades unions are fundamentally in conflict with capital. More union resources should be directed towards this conflict and less to the collaboration with management which has so weakened our union in the recent past.



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

Arthur Scargill, speaking in Yorkshire

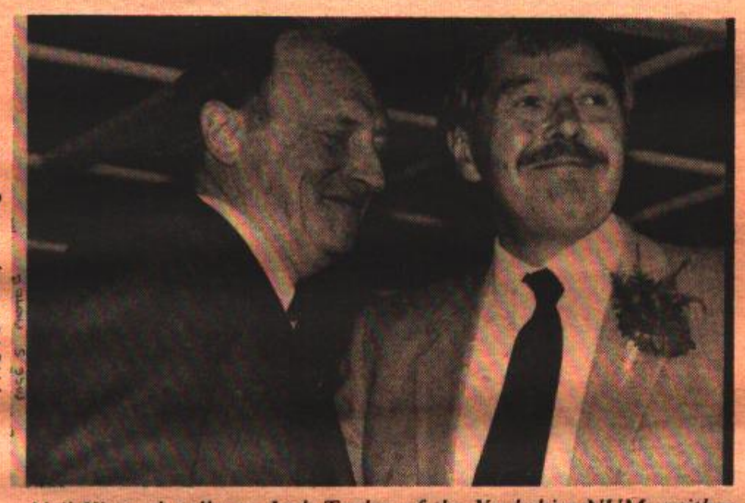


PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

Neil Kinnock talks to Jack Taylor of the Yorkshire NUM: neither of them would wish to see miners taking action now.

Health Workers take action

Shock waves in Yorkshire!

Barely two months after COHSE leaders told their annual conference to face "reality" (i.e. shut up and buckle down to 5 more years of Tory rule), struggles have broken out at grass roots level against the Tory onslaught on the NHS.

On Friday 28th August a one day strike in Wakefield and an indefinite overtime ban – held over the victimisation of NUPE branch secretary George Rusling sent shock waves throughout the Yorkshire region.

It followed an 84% majority in favour of strike action in a secret ballot organised by the joint district shop stewards committee.

The NUPE secretary had been disciplined for comments he made to the local press. He had described the transfer of elderly patients from the closed county hospital as more like an evacuation than a planned move.

Management had made scant provision for the move: no hot food, not enough chairs to sit on, and a shortage of clothing and bedding among other complaints.

By Glen Birch
COHSE

As happens all too often when elderly patients are decanted by NHS administrators, some of the patients have since died – raising suspicions in some people's minds that the move could have been a contributing factor.

Management described Rusling's comments as "wilfully malicious" and issued a final warning, refusing to lift it despite appeals from local and regional union officials.

Cook-chill

Wakefield Health Authority is preparing a massive £1 million cuts package – including introducing a version of the "cook-chill" system of catering which has been condemned by microbiologists as "unsound and unsafe".

The catering service, where George Rusling works, is therefore in the front line. It is no accident he has been singled out for victimisation – the shop stewards committee see the move as an attempt to gag union officials as management prepare the cuts.

The notorious right wing labourite Sir Jack Smart (knighted at Thatcher's recommendation), chair of Wakefield Health Authority, has been called upon to resign by local MP David Hinchcliffe.

Meanwhile in the neighbouring Pontefract district, *Pontefract Health Emergency* has been formed to fight a predicted £800,000 cuts in services. Set up from an initiative of the local health workers' joint union committee and Trades Council, PHE lobbied the Health Authority meeting following partial close of the only 24 hour accident and emergency department in the district.

Chair of the Authority is Roy Widdowson, another notorious right winger and cohort of Sir Jack Smart. One-time leader of Wakefield District Council, he was forced to resign following privatisation of domestic services – and has since left the Labour Party.

He is again facing public uproar, this time for using NHS money set aside for *600* operations to send only *250* patients to the private hospital Methley Park. Most of the 250 were on the waiting lists of consultants Peter Bloomer and Richard Nicholson who work for Pontefract NHS, but are also shareholders at Methley Park (as are 15 of the Pontefract consultants).

Junior doctors of several regions have accused the Tories of wasting millions of pounds of waiting list money to prop up a private sector made inefficient by over-expansion.

Meeting

The district health authority meeting on 24th September is expected to announce major cuts, and Roy Widdowson was making jokes about having to wear a bullet-proof vest!

A spokesperson for Pontefract Health Emergency said "we are planning a major campaign against the cuts and many health workers are beginning to realise that they will have to fight to stop these cuts. There is no prospect now of a Labour government coming to the rescue, its up to us."



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

COHSE members out on the picket line in Wakefield.

Women's Organisation

Different — therefore equal

The struggle in the Women's Organisation of the Labour Party for democratic reforms has been a long one. The latest stage is a review process — and now we are beginning to look at some of our basic demands in more detail.

MANDY MOORE, a member of the National Labour Women's Committee, looks at some of the issues facing women in the Party.

In discussing the Labour Party Women's Organisation, one principle must be paramount.

The women's organisation should not ape the "men's" organisation in order to gain power.

Equal power is our *right* — it is not something that must be gained by giving up our "difference".

Needs

Women's organisation should be built on an understanding of the particular needs of women, needs that have arisen because of our oppression both as workers and home-makers, needs that require different solutions to those offered by existing Party structures.

The Women's Organisation should not simply become a mini-version of the existing male-dominated structure. This would only diminish our organisation and our power.

Besides, is the existing Party organisation actually the best one for Party members *in general*? Perhaps the Party organisation as a whole should adopt women's methods of organising rather than the reverse?

Review

Forced upon us as it was, the current review of the women's organisation doesn't give us time to consider what we want from it. Given that any likely changes will be with us for decades to come, we should have had the opportunity to discuss what structures we would ideally like to see exist for women, then see what proposals were on offer for change, and then measure these proposals against our goals. There is no point in going for short-term gains which will make future developments of a long-term nature even harder.

The terms of the review restrict debate to six areas. The first, and one of the most crucial, is that of the allocation of votes at Women's Conference. In my view, we must avoid at all costs the imposition of a straight trade union block vote. We need to find a way of involving the trade unions more fully in decision-making (although the trade unions aren't as weak as we are sometimes led to believe) while maintaining, as far as we can, the radical nature of women's policy in the Party.

We also need to find ways to infiltrate this policy into the structures of the Party as a whole. My fear is that we will get a version of the "block vote" *without* the concommitant recognition or aceptance of our policies — which will be destroyed anyway.

Another issue of major importance is the structure of the National Labour Women's Committee. At present there is no specific trade union representation, although many of the women on the committee were trade union representatives at their respective regional conferences and were nominated by their trade unions for election.

Appalling

It would be appalling if these grass-roots trade union women were simply replaced by trade union national officers on the committee under the pretext of improved trade union representation. Ways should be found to promote *lay representation*, not perpetuate bureaucratic control.

Finally, there is the question of the five women's seats on the NEC. If, at the end of the review, we have *not* gained the right to elect the women's seats at women's conference, then the whole process will have been a farce.

Accountability of elected women representatives to the Women's Organisation must be our bottom line, however the seats are divided up. These seats have, for too long, been used as pawns in the trade union power broking that goes on at each Party Conference.

Young Socialists

Young people need autonomy!

By Toni Cardinali
Chair, Coventry SW LPYS

Internal opposition to Kinnock must be crushed — that's the way to win the next election.

Or so the *Daily Mirror* tells us!

At this year's Labour Party Conference, several autonomous organisations within the Party are under attack.

The "Sawyer proposals" are an attempt by the NEC to replace the Labour Party Young Socialists with something resembling a Red Wedge fan club.

Two of the proposals (a and c) are intended to by-pass existing YS structures, with regional and national "campaign committees" and even an annual conference with delegates from the YS, the CLPs, women's organisations, the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) and trade unions.

Delegates elected by and accountable to older members, and even non-members of the Party, cannot possibly be "representative of the whole of Labour Youth", as the NEC document says.

Sawyer also suggests reducing the age limit for YS membership to 21, reducing it to even more of a runt rump than it already is. The final humiliation is the proposal to remove the right of Young Socialists conferences to elect a delegate to the NEC. This is already the *only* election at YS conference.



PHOTO: Steve Rapport

The new look for Labour's youth section?

The *Militant* leadership of the Young Socialists, of course, being too scared of expulsion or too ignorant to understand the concept of autonomous organisation, have capitulated to the NEC and taken part in the sham "consultation period" which was interrupted by the general election.

Young people must fight for the right to determine their own policies and activities. No one denies the need for change in the YS, but we mustn't allow ourselves to be pushed around by a bunch of old cronies whose time would be better spent campaigning for socialism.

Persuade your branch and CLP, women's organisation, YS and NOLS branch, socialist society and trade union to write to the NEC telling them to *leave the LPYS alone*, and mandate your conference delegate to oppose the Sawyer proposals.

Remember: if they get us this year, they'll be coming for you next!

MPs' pay rise

The sleazy reality

One of the last acts of MPs before the summer was to vote themselves a substantial pay rise. From January, backbench MPs will be earning £22,000 per year.

Since June 1979, MPs have raised their own wages by £14,500. Their pay is now fixed to a senior civil service grade, thus avoiding the "embarrassment" of MPs having to vote themselves a big rise each year.

These increases are substantial by any standard and can not be justified. However, the picture is more complicated than it might at first appear.

By Reg Race
Tottenham CLP

Active MPs, like Dennis Skinner, cannot fund the staff they need and fulfill all their commitments without dipping into their own pockets.

Only a minority of Labour MPs can be described as being "active" in the three or four main roles that Members *should* perform. MPs *should* be:

- highly active in the constituency, dealing with the myriad real grievances of the people they are paid to represent;
- assiduous in dealing with legislation of all kinds, attacking the Tories in the House, and linking struggles in the workplace and in the community with those in Parliament;
- vigorous campaigners for socialism and democracy *within the Party*;
- active speakers and participants at meetings throughout Britain.

Most MPs do not perform all these roles. Some perform none of them. But if they *are* performed with seriousness and energy, the MP is involved in substantial costs.

Simply attending one outside London speaking engagement per week means an annual bill of around £2,000 — and people such as Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn and Eric Heffer, all in considerable demand, spend even more.

Donations

Active MPs also make donations to labour movement causes. In addition, by virtue of the time they spend working for the movement, they have little time left for anything else, such as decorating their homes or servicing their cars.

They also have to run a constituency office and often pay for staff additional to those paid for through the *Secretarial Allowance*. This allowance — even at its new level of £23,000 per year — is totally inadequate.

Active MPs need at least three support workers: one researcher-person to assist with issues, campaigns, Parliamentary questions, speeches, etc.; and two administrative/secretarial persons to run the office and deal with the torrent of mail and casework that now floods MPs' desks.

Should comrades disbelieve the need for this level of staffing, they should note that Labour MPs in most inner-city London constituencies now deal with *2-4,000 individual cases a year*. The more assiduous they are at dealing with casework (which is the result on an individual level of Thatcher's policies), the more cases they get.

An MP cannot employ three support workers within the confines of the £23,000 secretarial allowance, unless they are prepared to pay staff less than £6,000 per year for a demanding full-time job. The allowance has to cover not only wages but also employers' National Insurance contributions.

Most MPs deal with this dilemma by employing fewer workers and/or by not doing their job properly.

MPs' pay is certainly too high, but the allowances available to do the job are grossly inadequate. However, major scandals relating to the administration of the allowance as it now exists make it possible for many unscrupulous MPs to rip off the taxpayer and line their own pockets.

- MPs can claim the allowances by simply signing a form, without having to account properly for the cash received. It is possible to claim £23,000 by signing *one piece of paper* at the beginning of the year. This has been done in the past and is being done now.
- MPs can claim car allowances at hefty mileage rates on signature, and without real checks.
- MPs from outside London can buy second homes in their constituency or in London at the expense of the taxpayer, and can pocket the cash and any increase in market value when they come to sell.

Accountable

- There is *no independent accounting system* to make MPs financially accountable. Existing "controls" are widely regarded as a joke.

A serious socialist party cannot allow its legislative representatives to operate in such a manner. What should be done about it?

Party Conference should change the rules so that all MPs pay a slice of their post-tax pay to the Party. This method of financing the Party would be superior to the monetarist madness of sacking 40 staff and closing down *New Socialist* and *Labour Weekly*.

- The secretarial allowance should be *substantially increased* to enable MPs to do their job effectively.
- The self-employment option for MPs' secretaries and researchers should be *ended*, as it is a certain route for fiddles.
- MPs' tax returns should be *published* to the Party and in the local press.
- There should be a *compulsory independent accounting system* staffed by professionals and imposed on all MPs claiming the secretarial allowance, and reporting annually to Parliament and the public.
- The Party must prohibit Labour MPs from performing second jobs — whether as paid parliamentary consultants, barristers, or journalists — on pain of expulsion.

Media

- All *casual earnings* received by MPs from the media should be placed in the hands of the local Party.
- The substantial salaries paid by the government and taxpayers to the Leader of the Opposition, the Opposition Chief Whip, and the Opposition Pairing Whip, over and above normal parliamentary salaries, should be pooled and made available for use by the Party — and not for the enrichment of individuals.

It is not necessary to believe in hair-shirt socialism to be in favour of these measures. Many of them will help prevent fraud and abuse which, if detected amongst social security claimants, would lead to terms of imprisonment. Others are to make MPs less independent from the Party, and to bring their financial dealings into the open.

But let's not forget that MPs need the facilities, and the cash, to do the job for which they were elected.

SELL LABOUR BRIEFING

Have you thought of selling *Labour Briefing*? It's an easy paper to sell, and copies are available on sale or return. Just fill in the form below and send it to Labour Briefing, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ .

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Please send me ..... (minimum order 5) copies of *Labour Briefing* on sale or return, starting with the September issue.

Labour — Take the Power!
New pamphlet out now.
Available from 26 Crofton Road, London SE5.
Price 30p, plus 30p p&p.
Bulk order rates available on request.

Left unity at last!

Labour Briefing is urging full support for a united left slate for the constituency section of the Labour Party NEC.

For the first time in many years there is widespread agreement on the left on backing a full slate of seven names.

Briefing welcomes this step towards a united fightback by the left, which obviously involves a combination of common struggles and continuing political debate on the best policies and tactics.

Ths year in particular it is essential to support seven CLP members who are committed to opposing all witch-hunts and maintaining Party democracy. Only Eric Heffer, Diane Abbot and Ken Livingstone stand a chance of ousting sitting NEC members who — like David Blunkett and Michael Meacher — have voted for expulsions and closing of constituency parties.

It is particularly important to support Diane Abbot, as she is endorsed by Labour Party Black Sections, as part of the fight for black self-organisation in the Party.

All seven candidates have consistently shown support for workers in struggle — on miners' and printers' picket lines. The two new candidates on the slate, Diane Abbot and Ken Livingstone, have also challenged vital issues of oppression within our society, and supported the detainees on the Harwich prison ship; lesbian and gay campaigns; issues of policing, and other questions previously neglected by too many elected representatives.

Now, with the Party leadership and regional officials trying to stamp on support for radical issues, this is particularly important.

We hope that if elected these candidates will continue to listen to their CLPs and remain accountable to them in a way several in the present constituency section have not tried to do.

Briefing makes no secret of the fact that we have substantial political differences with both Ken Livingstone and Diane Abbot, not least over Livingstone's connections with the pro-Kinnockite Labour Co-ordinating Committee, which is leading the charge to the right among the 'soft left''. However, we are quite ready to discuss and debate these differences in the context of a common fight against the witch-hunters and coalitionists.

In similar spirit we welcome the fact that both *Socialist Action* and Socialist Organiser have this year seen the light and not repeated their support for "Lord of the Manor" Tam Dalyell — who followed his election by voting to expel *Militant* supporters and impose an unwanted candidate on Knowsley North. It is good to see that the Campaign Group of MPs have also dropped Dalyell from their slate.

Briefing had encouraged the candidacy of Sharon Atkin, following the disgraceful way she was sacked as a parliamentary candidate. However, Streatham CLP's failure to make a valid nomination ruled out any chance of her standing.

Differences will continue to arise: they can be discussed in the course of the fight. What we must not allow is for the differences to divide the left to the extent that we strengthen the hand of the Kinnock—Hattersley leadership.

By Dan Carter and Harry Sloan

Constituency Slate:

Diane Abbot
Tony Benn
Eric Heffer
Ken Livinstone
Jo Richardson
Dennis Skinner
Audrey Wise

Witch-hunt

Expulsions hit the North East

Bob Newall, who successfully chaired the Blyth Valley election committee during the June campaign, has been expelled from the Labour Party after 16 years membership.

At a meeting in Newcastle, the National Constitutional Committee — Kinnock's witch-hunt juggernaut — heard allegations that Newall was a member of *Militant*. He has repeatedly denied the charge.

Newall was accused of selling *Militant* outside the Blyth Labour Club. No date or other evidence were given by the NCC. Despite a ruling of the NEC in January 1983 that selling the paper does *not* constitute membership of the tendency it appears that this was the only basis for his expulsion.

By Pete Turner
Blyth Valley CLP

Three witnesses, including Blyth's new MP, Ronnie Campbell, turned up for the hearings but were not allowed to speak in Newall's defence — although the NCC had earlier heard a witness against him. The trio, who had travelled 12 miles from Blyth, were asked to leave the room while the comradely investigators consumed tea and sandwiches!

Bob Newall could not attend his "trial". He had used up all his holiday entitlement from work during the general election campaign. His appeal for a postponement of the hearing fell on deaf ears.

The present witch-hunt began last year. Some right wingers, anxious to regain their ascendancy in the constituency, alleged that it had been "taken over by *Militant*". This groundless claim was energetically supported at the time by the MP John Ryman who threatened to resign his seat and cause a by-election if there was not a "thorough investigation".

In February, with a general election looming, the NEC probed the local party and concluded that there was no foundation for the claims of a *Militant* takeover. But they left open for later investigation the specific question of Bob Newall's alleged links with *Militant*. Meanwhile John Ryman and some of the others who had lodged complaints left the Labour Party. One actually joined the SDP!

The real reason for this expulsion is that Bob Newall, like the Stevenage 10 and others all over the country, is a fighter for socialism and a critic of the present leadership.

Five ward branches within Blyth Valley have challenged the NCC. More will follow. Resolutions call for our own investigation with expulsions, an end to witch-hunts, an emergency meeting of the GC and the reinstatement of Bob Newall — with full continuity of his membership.

Watch this space!

One member, one vote

The *real* democratic agenda for the Labour Party

Since John Evans (an MP twice imposed by the NEC upon his own, unwilling constituency) saw his proposals for "one member, one vote" (OMOV) defeated at Labour Party Conference, the right wing has been looking for a way to undermine mandatory re-selection.

This time round, the National Executive Committee (NEC) has been more sophisticated, circulating a list of eleven options in a sham consultation exercise.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) has pointed out that the consultation process, carried out in the election run up, was an unnecessary diversion. Unfortunately, the NEC's access to the Party's communication channels has enabled it to force the issue on to the Party's political agenda.

The Left must now respond to the right's offensive if we are not to lose further ground.

The right wing is attempting to assume the high moral ground with talk of modernising the Party to make it electable and extending the franchise to those Party members who do not wish to attend "boring" meetings.

Austin Mitchell was more honest when he argued on the *Guardian* agenda page that the NEC must curtail the influence of Party members by judicious use of the trade union block vote and increased power for the parliamentary Labour Party (PLP).

In an attempt to secure trade union block vote support for changes in the selection procedure, the NEC is canvassing a local electoral college arrangement. The NEC's motivation is cynical. But we should welcome the fact that they feel as yet unable to totally remove trade union participation.

By Bryn Griffiths
Hackney South CLP

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) is to give the proposals a radical gloss. The LCC has argued that OMOV will help the Labour Party become a mass party by extending participation to those who do not attend branch meetings. They point out that meetings are held in inaccessible places and at times that exclude those who have dependants.

On the surface, these arguments are more appealing than the swaggering of arrogant MPs such as Austin Mitchell and John Evans.

But is this not an attempt to substitute the postal ballot for real participation in the decision-making process? Meetings should be occasions at which we learn from each other and exchange ideas. If they are not, we must make them so.

We can only achieve socialism through our own activity — it is *not* available by postal ballot.

The left must promote its own agenda to democratise the party. We must ask ourselves how we can increase the involvement of those who feel excluded.

For example, did gay men and lesbians feel more able to participate after the Hewitt letter? Did the removal of Sharon Atkin as a Parliamentary candidate encourage the involvement of Black people? Did the failure to support the miners or printworkers make trade unionists more likely to put time aside for branch meetings?

Building a mass party capable of overcoming recent defeats means supporting the demands of the oppressed, including the demands of Black people for Black Sections, the efforts of the Women's Action Committee to empower the Women's Sections, and the struggles of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights. We should point out that the "new democrats" in the Labour Party, who have stolen Dr Owen's clothes, reject these democratic demands.

Participation

At local level we must improve participation in our branches. A basic but essential step is the introduction of *dependent care rotas*. We must make meetings more interesting and relevant — few people think that an evening of bureaucratic trivia is one well spent!

Most of the options being circulated by the NEC seek to break the link between the Party, through its General Committee, and the Member of Parliament.

MPs must be accountable to the body that selects them. If not, they are free from any meaningful counter-balance to the delights of the Palace of Westminster.

Two of the NEC options (numbers 10 and 11) do not break this crucial link. Option 10 maintains the status quo, but, in my view, option 11 would be an improvement on it. Option 11 maintains the General Committee as the selecting body but introduces the idea of mandation of GC delegates. The fact that, for the purpose of selection meetings, General Committee delegates are not accountable is an unsavoury anomaly.

Option 11 also seeks to introduce a recorded ballot a change few could honestly argue against.

Such reforms would undermine the idea that General Committee delegates are a better class of member by ensuring that they are themselves accountable to the members they are elected to represent.

Our defence of mandatory reselection must be fought on four fronts:

- encourage an extension of participation in the Party by supporting the demands of the oppressed and promoting changes that encourge involvement (e.g. care rotas);
- point out the limited commitment to democracy of many proponents of OMOV and the divisive nature of their proposals;
- explain the need to hold MPs accountable through General Committees, which can only be done if the GC retains the power of selection;
- support improvements such as mandation of delegates and recorded voting at selection meetings.

*Those comrades wishing to see a more detailed description of the proposed changes should write to the **Campaign for Labour Party Democracy**, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH.*

Efficient Management Organisation:

Yuppie language for centralisation!

In his book *Labour's Future: Socialist or SDP Mark 2*, Eric Heffer writes:

"Organisation is only important if it is understood to be complimentary to policies and principles."

He was referring to the Labour Party constitutional reforms of 1979/81; but the link between organisational and political change is equally relevant to what is happening in the Labour Party now.

The organisational centralisation within the Party is the foundation for the dumping of socialist policy, democratic accountability, and ultimately the socialist principles upon which the Labour Party was founded.

The real political purpose of the centralisation process now being developed — under the pretext of "modernising" the Party — was revealed by right wing Labour MP Austin Mitchell a few weeks ago.

Writing in the *Guardian* on "one member, one vote" (OMOV), Mitchell saw the Party's members as its problem. Consequently, accountability was out, as it gave the members (who, incidentally, Mitchell blamed for losing the election — so it's all your fault comrades!) too much power.

By John Wilton
Birmingham Edgbaston CLP

What is needed, according to Mitchell, is a low commitment, low involvement, large membership; with Conference being turned into a rally and a publicity platform for the leadership.

Presumably we should all accept that MPs like Austin Mitchell (and presumably Frank "coalition" Field) and the leadership know best, and only they understand what needs to be done. We should therefore leave it all to them.

Is this what Neil Kinnock means by "individual socialism"? Is he the *one member* who has the *one vote*?

This is, of course, an attempt to roll back the 1979/81 consitutional reforms. Mitchell is articulating the centralisation process already being undertaken by the smart-suited, merchant banker look-alike men at head office, in conjunction with the leadership — and with the backing of right wing MPs and the LCC "soft left" (sorry, I believe they prefer to be called the "democratic left" now).

The aim is the removal of any real power from the constituencies and members, and the production of a tame membership resembling a leadership "groupie" section. In this organisational respect, Eric, it is not as SDP Mark 2 they want, but a Tory Party Mark 2!

Ultimately it will be the Labour Party's traditional federal structure and constitution which will come under attack. You cannot have a centralised leadership, or as they will argue (against the background of the necessity for electoral success) a "modern efficient campaigning party", and have a decentralised, federal "old fashioned outdated" organisational structure and constitution.

We are witnessing the first steps in this process now under the guise of OMOV, with an accompanying "extension of democracy" camouflage argument.

OMOV will release MPs from accountability to their constituency parties; which will in turn strengthen even further, through the power of patronage, the central grip of the leadership in parliament over MPs.

Alongside this we have the attempted closure of *Labour Weekly* and *New Socialist*. This will remove any semblance of criticism and dissent from within the Party's own journals, stop the open spread of information to Party members, and will leave the membership free to be fed only what the leadership feels it should know, through the glossy, contentless, yuppified *Gardening Quarterly*. (Would you buy a second hand red rose from *Labour Party News*?)



Austin Mitchell

Part of the centralisation process has already been completed with the removal of the policy formulation process from the NEC, and the placing of it under the control of the Policy Directorate and the other directorates within the new "efficient management organisation", such as Campaigns and Communications under chief yuppy Peter Mandelson.

So what can we look forward to in the name of "modernisation"? Well, as Austin Mitchell proposed, we can expect an attempt to replace the present constituency based membership format with a national membership format.

This will assist in breaking down the federal structure of the Party, and help the head office bureaucrats to feed to individual members only the information it wants them to see. *Labour Party News* is already a part of the process towards a national membership structure.

We have already seen election candidates imposed by the leadership-dominated NEC. "Chairman Kinnock" will soon be wanting that to be the norm, once the Party's federal structure has been destroyed.

Eventually though, even this will not be necessary in the "modern" Labour Party — as we shall see a centralised list of head office/leadership approved candidates. I wonder how many of the members and constituency parties who are pushing Proportional Representation (PR) at present have really taken account of the consequence of this for the selection of candidates?

The organisational centralisation of the Party is designed to pave the way for the constitutional and political shift of the Party even further to the right, and eventually towards an accommodation with the newly merged SDP and Liberals.

PR may not be embraced by the leadership at present (though a few years ago Kinnock supposedly "supported" all sorts of things he does not support now, and was opposed to many things he now supports), but it will be supported by the leadership when it becomes politically and organisationally strategically necessary to do so.

For the leadership PR will be organisationally useful in requiring a centralised head office/leadership approved list of candidates.

It will also be much easier politically for the leadership to sell any deal with a newly merged SDP/Liberal Party if PR is *already* Labour Party Conference policy than making a deal first and selling it to the members.

In that way the leadership can avoid being accused of a "sell out" — and can even avoid charges of ignoring Conference policy.

Those comrades and constituency parties who believe OMOV, and even PR, are reasonable "extensions of democracy" should be aware that they are in fact completely the opposite as far as accountability, decentralisation and democracy within the Labour Party are concerned.



Neil Kinnock: biding his time, plotting and scheming — and, ultimately, a coalition-mongerer.

Labour Party Conference approaches; and a surprisingly large number of constituencies have tabled resolutions on proportional representation — reflecting a debate on the issue going on in the movement.

□□□□□□□

Here *Briefing* presents two articles PR, reflecting some of the points being made in the wider debate.

□□□□□□□

We welcome further contributions to this discussion.

PR is Don

Thatcher's third term is widely experienced as unjust, undemocratic and unrepresentative.

Surprisingly, this popular resentment has not generated much sympathy on the left for any democratisation of the electoral system.

It appears that the large number of resolutions to Labour Party conference in support of electoral reform has caught the left unawares.

Although I feel they are sustained by timidity and a damaging habituation to the first past the post system, the socialist objections to PR are firmly put and, at first, appear substantial.

PR is seen as a recipe for coalition governments and the abandonment of manifestos; as a diversion from the democratic reforms really needed; as a step away from participatory politics; as a mechanism designed to reduce MP accountability and prevent majority Labour governments.

Suspicion is also aroused by the fact that many of the socialists who argue the case for PR most consistently also envisage it as the midwife to a radical

An electo — a trap f

One consequence of our recent electoral defeat has been a growing belief that Labour can never again win a general election on its own.

An aspect of this defeatism has been the growth of support for proportional representation, which in turn will strengthen the coalitionist forces inside the labour movement.

Now, even elements within the "hard left" are saying that PR cannot be "dogmatically" opposed.

An alternative view would be that dogmatic intolerance *is* appropriate. Adoption of PR in any form would represent an important victory for the bourgeoisie. So far, we have had five majority Labour governments. Not one received a vote greater than 50% of the electorate. With PR, not a single majority Labour government would have been formed.

Briefing's view is that a Labour government, however inadequate in terms of socialism, represents a gain for the working class and a necessary experience on the road towards real power. PR would have denied us that experience and would deny it for the foreseeable future.

Entrenching coalition governments as a permanent feature of British politcal life, it would offer the bourgeoisie a constitutional bulwark against a Labour government with an electoral mandate for anti-capitalist change.

But perhaps we are suffering here from "Labourism"? One argument for PR is that it would enable a "truly socialist" party to gain seats in parliament, and thus provide a mobilising focus for the working class. Here, we are back to small-group mentality.

Briefing has never been interested in this kind of thing. We've always gone for united labour movement action and power, not for making some moral point or going down heroically in defence of some sectarian shibboleth.

PR would certainly give revolutionaries more "freedom" — but it would be the freedom to disengage from joint action and joint campaigning within the mass party of the British working class.

With little electoral pressure to hold it together, the Labour Party woud probably start to disintegrate. No longer would it be possible for us as revolutionaries to fight for the leadership of an organisationally-united labour movement. In place of a mass coalition of all the currents inside the working class, separate parts of the labour movement would campaign independently and reach post-election deals as often with the bourgeois parties as with each other. Openly capitalist parties would be a dominant feature in all governing coalitions.

Our own experience is relevant here. *Briefing's* rise was associated with the fight for change in London local government. Had PR and a proliferation of small parties prevailed prior to our struggle for a left wing GLC, does anyone think the result of London-wide elections would have been a coalition in County Hall behind even a Livingstonite programme, let alone something more socialist?

Even with fifty years to propagandise, it is doutbful whether we could have shifted opinion sufficiently unless we already had the legitimacy and platform which majority office confers.

good PR:
't perpetuate Labourism!

electoral pact with the Liberals or the formation of a new and viable socialist party.

Tony Benn, and others, argue that Austin Mitchell, the SDP, Liberals, a number of wet Tories and sections of the CBI favour reform as a means to political stability, and that we should therefore judge PR by its friends. But this ignores the possibilities it offers at precisely the time we should be organising to secure the most democratic form of PR possible.

Provisionally, I would suggest this is likely to be an Additional Member system: a hybrid, which supplements the existing arrangement of constituency representatives with MPs who also fought the election as local candidates and qualify for seats on the basis of the proportion of the national vote achieved by their party.

Would the centre be strengthened by such a reform? It must be conceded that a fused Liberal-SDP would win more seats — although this would simply be a consequence of its substantial electoral support.

Socialists whose objections to PR are based on a hostility to political coalitions must themselves concede that we suffer these within the Labour Party, or between it and the extra-parliamentary institutions of the right, such as the City, the CBI and the state, even when we have had majority governments.

These compromises are not wholly constitutional in origin, and the socialist politics which I suggest PR could foster in and around the Labour Party would erode their political basis.

By Kevin Davey
Chair, Socialist Society

As Additional Member PR would enable Labour to cash its full national vote, the pressure to tailor policy to suit the floating voter while taking its more militant support for granted would be reduced. The leadership's ability to manoeuvre could also be limited by the emergence of electoral options to the left of Labour, or around single issue campaigns.

There is a real danger of making the New Realism omnipotent, however, if we adopt the form of PR being canvassed by Robin Cook: the Alternative Vote, where candidates are ranked according to preference, certainly favours the centre.

The remaining objections to PR seem to me unfounded. Would Labour Party members, guided by the constitutional skills of CLPD, really be unable to develop the forms of accountability (including the recall and dismissal of MPs) required by an Additional member system? I do not doubt their democratic abilities.

It's too easy, in Labour strongholds, to concentrate exclusively on this relationship: ask any Labour voter in the rural South East what their direct and accountable Parliamentary representation is. Under PR those constituencies could get Labour members.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, far from being a diversion from other goals or implicated in dubious political projects, is it not the case that PR would assist us in our major task — winning the labour movement from labourism?

How easy would it be for a Labour leadership to jettison unilateralism if there was a peace movement genuinely in a position to inherit the unilateralist vote? Would Cunningham's position be tenable if a strengthened Green movement was there to inherit the anti-nuclear vote?

Enfranchising

By enfranchising these forces, PR could provide conditions which would aid the growth of a campaigning left within the Labour Party. The coalitions we fear might in fact be with the representatives of popular campaigns — CND, green, anti-sexist, anti-racist, Scottish, Welsh, Irish.

What would socialists really lose if PR gave these forces access to Westminster? Wouldn't it increase the traffic through the "crossroads" at which *Briefing* wishes to organise and turn it into a major junction?

And surely the work of the Campaign Group has shown how important a commitment by such MPs to extra-parliamentary activity could be in sustaining and legitimating officially disapproved struggles?

The accountability of parliamentary representatives; the development of a political opposition to labourism and its current form, New Realism; support for those forced into struggle against this government: as PR is compatible with these principles it deserves to share the widespread support they have on the left.

Labourism

The current electoral system helps perpetuate Labourism and gives this self-destructive ideology a longer institutional life than it merits or we can afford. The key question is not therefore whether to support PR or not, but to agree on which form most suits our needs and the means by which it is to be achieved.

PR would impose on Labour the task of building a popular socialist party and strengthen the hand of socialists who share that aim, whatever our opinion on the likely outcome of that struggle. And we shouldn't forget that outside the party and the left it has rarely looked as if socialism is about the extension of democratic rights and freedom. To this extent PR is essential (public relations) PR.

Under an authoritarian government, which is also the least representative in Europe, the left cannot afford to collude with the block vote which will crush the CLPs which dared to challenge Labourist orthodoxy by calling for no more than an inquiry into electoral reform.



PHOTO Paul Mattson Frame

Women campaign for women's health: together with many other activists, will PR offer them increased chance of their struggle being represented, or does their best hope lie in linking with the labour movement?

ral fraud
for Labour

Once the GLC was there, however, we were in a position to gain substantial "public opinion" support in defence of some aspects of the left's programme. But that is precisely the point: a certain measure of leadership "from above" succeeded in changing the consciousness of working class Londoners to an extent. We could legitimise many "difficult" causes because we had the electoral mandate to do so.

The previous existence of a united London Labour Party had given us the chance to fight for poltiical predominance within something *worth winning*.

The same would apply on a national level. Even with centuries of campaigning, it is doubtful whether we could persuade more than 50% of the population of the intrinsic merits of Marxism in the abstract — in advance of an election and the chance to show in practice what were the problems of implementing measures resisted by the ruling class.

There is nothing intrinsically mobilising, or empowering, about a few seats in Parliament. A *majority* of seats can be empowering under the correct leadership, but a minority is different.

By Chris Knight
East Lewisham CLP

It has been said that PR would face us with a "healthy" challenge", forcing us to turn outwards in seeking the necessary electoral support. But this is a chimera. You don't turn outwards by standing nowhere and appealing to public opinion. To turn outwards, you must have a base to begin with.

The *Militant* comrades in Liverpool were given a chance to turn outwards towards the working class in a big way once they had gained control over the Council. Resigning ourselves in advance to permanent minority status in local and central government will only make it harder to turn outwards.

Leninists understand what Thatcher in her own way has shown she understands: that change cannot be brought about by first winning over "public opinion" and then instituting radical measures in response to popular demand. To bring about the necessary change in consciousness, simultaneous action is required "from above" as well as from below — leadership has to be given *in action* and not just in propaganda.

That is why we supported the struggle for a Labour government under the leadership of Tony Benn. We knew full well that this wouldn't be the whole solution — indeed, if we were successful it would produce a crisis of something like the kind faced by Allende in Chile in 1973. But at least a left Labour government would provide a legitimacy for socialism in working class eyes, posing the need to defend such a government — including Parliament — from the extra-parliamentary forces of the state.

As readers of *Spycatcher* will know, the threat of a military coup would be very real. And those of us demanding the necessary disarming of the ruling class, the disbandment of the police, armed forces, etc., would be able to make a strong case for "our" government leaders to break with the bourgeoisie and take full state power into their own hands, mobilising the machinery of the labour movement to replace the unaccountable bourgeois apparatus of the state.

"Take the power!" we would be able to argue in such a situation; "or make way for those of us who will!" (This was how the Bolsheviks fought against their Menshevik and Social Revolutionary opponents in the Provisional government in 1917.)

This wouldn't guarantee victory, but at least it might give us a chance. Instead of remaining perpetual oppositionists, we would have the opportunity to make explicit and popular the positive revolutionary programme of seizing state power for our movement and class, explaining this necessity always in defensive terms.

With PR, we would of course still have capitalist repression and the class struggle, with the possibility of mass industrial action, occupations, anti-racist resistance, etc. There might even at some stage be the possibility of a general strike.

But even then, the basic problem for revolutionaries in the West — the problem of parliamentary democracy — would remain. Why has there been not a single socialist revolution anywhere in the world where conditions of bourgeois democracy prevail?

Absence of the necessary leadership is the usual and correct answer; but this is connected with the fact that in the West, you must have the legitimacy of a parliamentary mandate for at least some kind of class action before you can go further and transcend it. And here, even with massive class struggle, in the context of PR, it is hard to see how a left Labour or Socialist government could ever get elected.

Even in a General Strike, you can't just organise the overthrow of Parliament. Our opponents will always be able to use the argument that an election must be called to decide matters. And with PR it is hard to see how a general election could be anything other than a fraud — even more of a fraud than existing elections — demobilising the working class and producing a paralysing coalition instead of an administration radical enough to develop the class struggle further and enable us to democratise the labour movement and prepare for the establishment of soviets and workers' power.

It may be said, however, that Marxists ought to support PR because it is hard to argue against it "on principle". It would be "more democratic", a welcome extension of bourgeois democracy.

The Leninist answer to this is that abstract formal "principles" have no place except to the extent that they are subordinated to our own class interests. We are not interested in "extensions" of bourgeois democracy except in so far as they further the cause of revolutionary socialism.

Where bourgeois elections are concerned, what makes them democratic — to the extent that they are so at all — is the factor of *real choice*. Choice isn't at all guaranteed by printing a long list of different party names on each ballot paper. Choice means that if you vote one way, you have one type of government in class terms, and if you vote another way, you have another type.

In this context, PR is the most anti-democratic system ever devised. It means that *whichever way you vote*, some kind of "national government" or coalition involving bourgeois parties (and granting them a veto) is a virtual certainty.

There is no denying that a perfect system of bourgeois democracy would be based on PR. For *Briefing*, however, the point is surely that the class content of democracy is also important.

Where capitalism prevails, the press barons, the corruption of labour leaders, the extra-parliamentary power of the ruling class will all remain, PR or no PR. Whilst capitalism exists, attempts to improve the voting system can only legitimise parliamentarism still further, concealing the fact that the whole thing is basically a fraud.

By preventing a left wing outcome, PR would conceal a basic truth — that should the voters miraculously produce an anti-capitalist governing coalition, the ruling class and its state would not concede to this verdict but would do all in its power to destroy it.

Bourgois parliamentarism is not our game, and it is not our job to think up improvements. Genuine socialists interested in perfecting democracy should concentrate their attentions elsewhere — on the struggle for a workers' government as a step towards replacing parliamentary democracy altogether with workers' soviets in control of state power.

The fight for PR is a complete distraction in this context. It draws attention away from the real struggle, which is to elect a Labour government and *democratise our own movement* — so that it becomes fit and strong enough to defend Labour in Parliament, resist its capitulations, deal with the bourgeosie's extra-parliamentary powers, and utilise a crisis situation to assume full power.

If our movement is ever to assume power, it will need to be much more democratic than any system of bourgeois parliamentarism has ever been or could be. We would need to "sovietise" the labour movement. This would involve strict mandating, recallable delegates, pluralism, and multi-tendency democracy *within* the overall framework of the TUC and Labour Party.

Leninists do not object to "coalition government" *within* the unions and labour movement, because that is what unity and strength are all about. The labour movement *is* a coalition, and necessarily so. Consistently-applied PR in determining the composition of Labour's NEC and other organs within the labour movement would therefore be excellent. What Leninists object to is not PR or coalitions in the abstract. It is the role they play in paralysing independent working class action and tying the labour movement to the ruling class.

It is surely unthinkable that *Briefing* of all papers should go down this defeatist road.

Features

Football Season Preview

Not in our League!

August saw the beginning of the Football League's Centenary season.

While fans dream of trophies and Wembley, the people who run the game can't seem to stop thinking up more and more crazy schemes designed to "improve" the game.

By Craig Brewin
Chair, London Branch of the Football Supporters Association, in a personal capacity

All League clubs are now expected to make admission to half their ground dependent on being a member or part of a membership scheme. Some clubs have complied, but others are still scratching their heads in bewilderment.

Take Arsenal, for example. On the opening day of the season Arsenal attracted 55,000 spectators, their largest crowd in five years. If they had followed the League's instructions and introduced a members' scheme it is likely that half the ground would have been nearly empty, while the other half would have been overcrowded (and thousands of supporters would have been kept outside, unable to gain admission at all). And this would be happening at a time when football claims to be desperate to draw back the crowds.

Some clubs have found a more straightforward way of stopping people going to matches — banning them. Luton, Colchester, and Torquay now have 100% membership schemes. Away fans are not allowed to join (though at Luton, several thousand have slipped through the net).

Luton claim their scheme is an anti-hooligan measure. Colchester claim theirs is designed to save the club from bankruptcy, because policing costs outweigh the income generated by away supporters. The scheme has proved less popular locally than Luton's, though that may be because they have never experienced anything like Luton's Millwall incident.

The new season appears to be marked by widespread fixture fixing. The first Saturday saw re-runs of last year's FA Cup, Littlewoods Cup and Freight Rover Trophy finals, with the winners playing at home to the losers. No prizes for guessing who Charlton Athletic would have played first had they been relegated.

This will be the second season to finish with play-offs. The authorities insist the play-offs have brought increased attendances. But does the validity of a competition depend solely on how many people watch it? What's the point of deciding promotion or relegation over four games when the teams have already played 42 or 46?

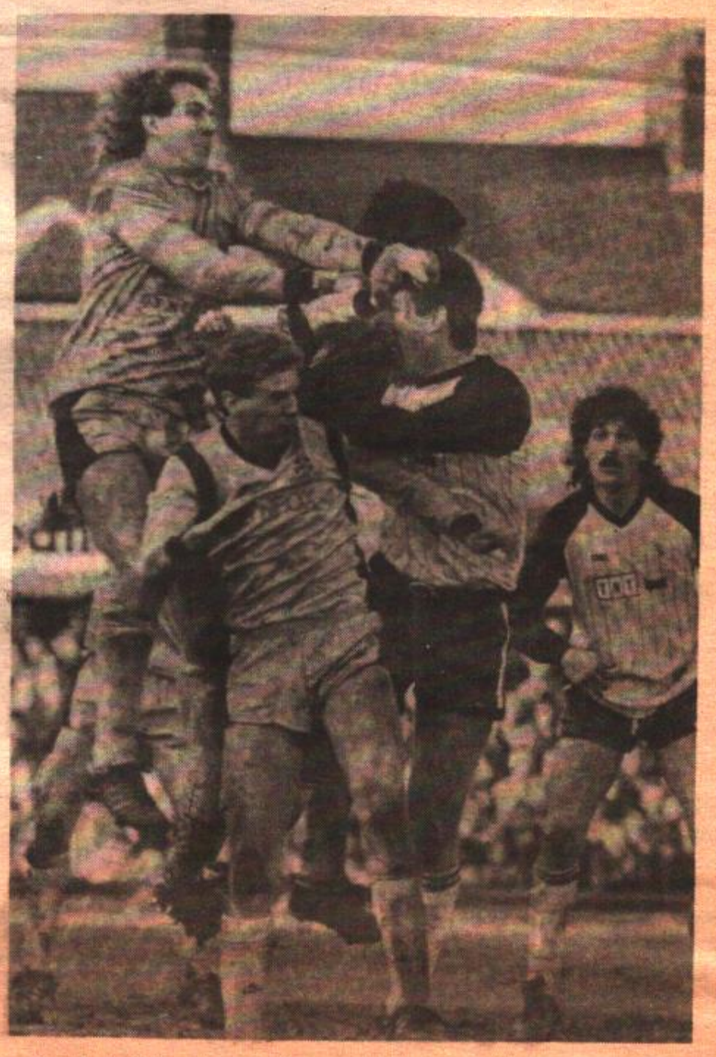
One purpose of the play-offs is to reduce the first division to 20 clubs in the next two years. (There are 21 clubs now). It is logical enough to try to reduce the excessive number of games played by League clubs. But with the absence of European competition, the top clubs have fewer fixtures anyway, and several clubs are keen enough to get extra fixtures by entering the Full Members' Cup.

Because of the odd number of clubs in the top two divisions, each club should have one free Saturday during the coming season. In fact they will have two. The League have cancelled all fixtures for a Saturday later in the season, not, as you might think, to help England prepare for the European Championship qualifier against Yugoslavia, but to clear space for a Centenary six-a-side tournament! Bobby Robson must be well pleased.

For most supporters what matters is what happens on the pitch and this season promises to be a good one. With Beardsley, Barnes, and Metgood staying in England, the League has been lucky enough to keep some of its most talented players. The signing of Brazilian Mirhandinha by Newcastle will also generate interest.

John Barnes has become the first Black player to sign for a Merseyside Club and for that reason alone I hope Liverpool, rather than Everton, will end up top of the first division at the season's end.

I cannot see any other clubs mounting a serious challenge, but then the last three seasons have seen the likes of Coventry City, Oxford United, and Norwich all winning major competitions. So much for the Super League!



As football clubs struggle for survival many adopt sponsorship deals, as for example Northampton Town (above) — sponsored by scab lorry firm TNT, busters of the Wapping strike.

Capitalism in Crisis

A simple guide to the City

Capitalism's in crisis!

Well, most of us on the left can get that far — but where is the detailed socialist economic response?

***Briefing* has plans for regular coverage on economic issues in the autumn.**

As a preview to our forthcoming series, here's an article about the some of the basic terms used about the City of London — one of world capitalism's major financial centres.

The City's recent bout of jitters, caused by the rise in interest rates, wiped millions off the value of stocks and shares.

Fortunes were made and lost because pieces of paper had fallen in value. But what are these pieces of paper?

The following very simplified guide to the City will help to explain what happened, not why interest rates rose (that was the result of Thatcher's pre-election boom), but why the change caused such panic.

By Paula Watson
Westminster South CLP

The City is a device for circulating money. When a company wants to raise funds it issues pieces of paper to those who provide the cash. The bits of paper are called **Securities** and fall into two broad categories.

A company can raise money by selling a part of itself, in which cash the securities are called **Share** or **Equity** and represent ownership of a part of the company.

Value

The value of shares is determined by the market and for a variety of reasons the price of a share can, or may be allowed to, fall well below the true value of the company it represents. In those circumstances another company may stage a takeover bid by buying up these undervalued shares.

An **Arbitrageur** is a person who tries to identify and buy under-rated shares before a takeover bid is made (or to get information from insiders).

Stocks

If a company wishes to borrow money it will issue pieces of paper called **Stocks** or **Bonds**, which are basically IOUs, pledging the borrower to repay the money borrowed on a certain date and to pay interest in the meantime.

The lender of the cash can then sell his or her piece of paper or stock to another dealer, the price being fixed in accordance with the current rates of interest and the credit worthiness or **Credit Quality** of the borrower.

Dealer

For example, if the piece of paper or stock pays interest at above the current market rate, a dealer will be prepared to pay over the face value and vice versa if the interest rate is low. Hence, in part, the recent panic, since many stocks were carrying interest below the new bank rate.

A Primary Market Trade is when borrowers issue notes directly to lenders in exchange for cash. **The Secondary Market** occurs when the lenders trade the stocks among themselves.

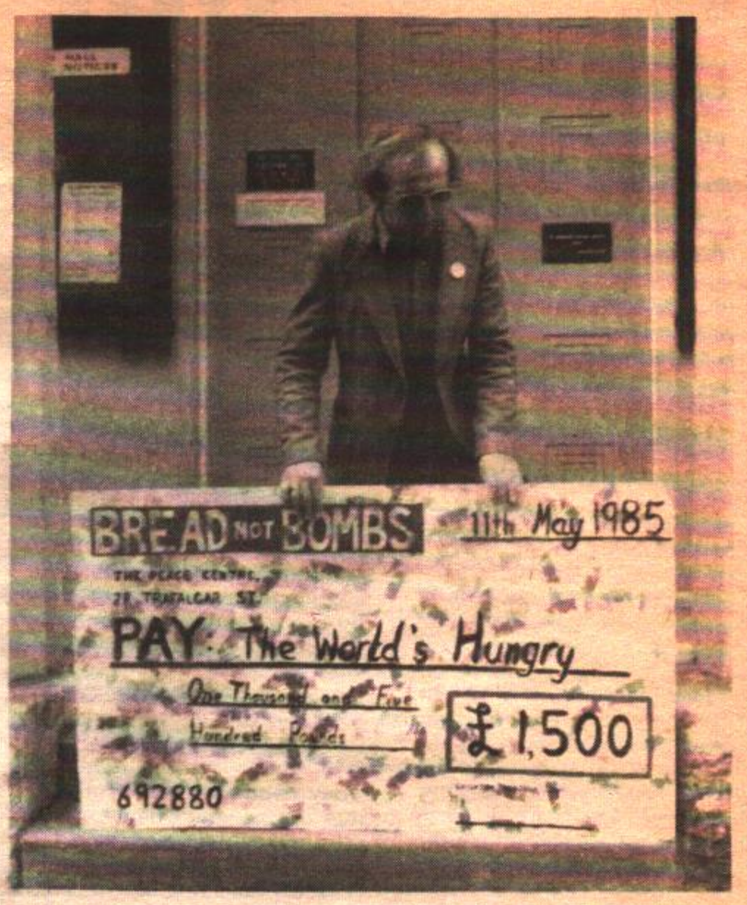
Market

There are several debt markets, all highly specialised. For example a **Commercial Paper Dealer** only deals in short term debt and this market is chiefly influenced by changes in interest rates. The long term market may be more concerned with the quality of the borrowers and the effect on them of economic changes.

Borrow

When the government needs to borrow money it also issues pieces of paper, called **Gilt Edged Stock**, to lenders in the City. Any government can be forced to change its policies, even be destroyed, if the City refuses to buy Gilts, i.e. lend money. Hence the ease with which all Labour governments have been brought to heel.

Merchant Banks are the institutions which provide advice to companies as to when and where to raise cash. They charge fees for these services but they also try to make profits by buying and selling paper themselves.



What does a piece of paper represent? There are different answers for the City to those coming from the world's poor.

The London International Futures Exchanges or **LIFE** is peopled by speculators who want to gamble on the future movement of currencies and interest rates. They contract to pay an exporter, who is due to receive payment for goods in a foreign currency at a fixed time, a guaranteed amount of sterling at that time.

The speculators gain or lose according to the changes in the foreign currency's value in the interim. A rise in bank rate can alter the exchange value of the pound, thus upsetting the calculations of the speculators and adding to the panic.

Women speak out

More than most men imagine...

Dear *Briefing*,

As a London Labour Party member who regularly reads *Campaign News*, *Socialist Action*, *Socialist Organiser* and *Socialist Worker* as well as *Labour Briefing*, I wasn't exactly surprised that you were the only paper that even began to put forward a socialist solution to the age-old problem of child abuse (recently prominent in the press).

Socialist Worker's main point seemed to be the defence of the "good old working class family" against the agents of the state. Most of the other Left press ignored the issue totally (presumably women's liberation began and ended with Women Against Pit Closures, with maybe a detour to pack the latest WAC Conference!) *Marxism Today* ran a glossy article that said absolutely nothing.

So I was relieved and impressed by *Briefing's* coverage. (Of course the debate has only begun!) Can we expect motions at Annual Conference calling for the resignation of Stuart Bell? How many other women who have suffered rape and sexual abuse were sickened by his ready assumption that the accused fathers of Cleveland are the real 'victims'? And the so-called socialist *News on Sunday* really did hit the pits.

Are we going to let these anti-working class and anti-women men get away with it? Isn't it time for a *Briefing* 'Scum' manifesto?

Don't think I'm joking. Last year my older sister killed herself, unable to live any longer with the memories of years of pain and violent abuse. How many other women reading this have felt the same desperation, but to this day have never dared to tell? More than most men would ever imagine.

Which will be the first London Borough to establish a refuge for the victims of father-daughter rape? And can we expect *Briefing* to lead the fight against the howl of protest that would surely follow — not least from our own well-dressed and respectable PLP "family-men"?

(Name and address witheld for personal reasons)

Briefing welcomes responses to these and other articles.
Write to: _Labour Briefing_, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ

The politics of Conception and pregnancy

The sad and tragic deaths of the premature septuplets born to Susan Halton raise a number of serious issues for socialists.

Already the *Guardian* has pointed out the cost of keeping the babies alive worked out at £350 per day!

It is argued that multiple births and the medical back-up they require take away resources from other areas of need. Why spend money on premature babies when children and adults are dying of cancer, etc. If we have limited resoures, are we not forced to direct them to the area of most need?

The answer is simple — we *cannot* accept the present low level of provision which forces the NHS to choose between equally valid areas.

The pain of a family shown on the television, whose child was in desperate need of a kidney transplant, is obvious.

The pain of a woman who is suffering anguish and frustration because she wants a child is almost invisible.

By Ann Flowers
Hackney North CLP

In my case, I became pregnant three times. I lost all three of my children, at 25, 18 and 24 weeks. In 1981 when I miscarried at 25 weeks, there were doubts whether, had my child survived, there would have been room in a neonatal unit for her.

Now with the help of a fertility drug my body is ready to get pregnant again. The problem is how? I am not at the moment having a relationship and there is at least a two year wait for AID (artificial insemination by donor) with the NHS.

And despite fine words about women's rights, there are very few socialist males ready to part with their sperm for women's self-insemination!

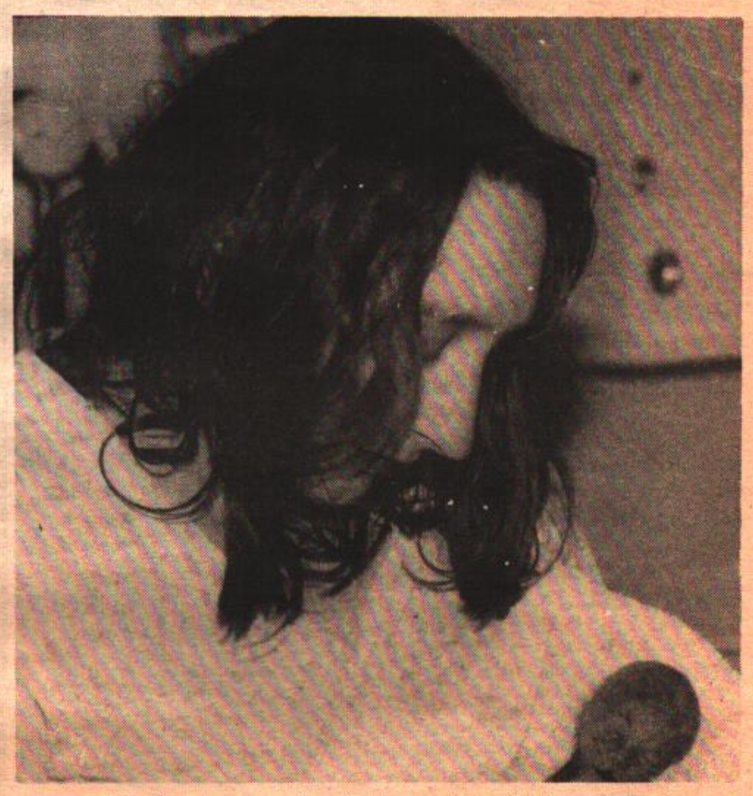


PHOTO: Jane Stockton

Ann, with Sarah-Jane after her premature birth and death.

It seems that individual women will have to suffer the frustration of being childless because the NHS cannot cope. As money to the health service is restricted, childless women will be amongst the first to suffer.

Our pain will be privatised.

Co-ordinate resistance!

With the third Tory government now ensconsed, huge cuts in local government jobs and services are looming.

Thatcher has publicly regretted her previous failure to deal with local government. Now she plans to put that omission right, and local government services and employees are target number one.

Along with the reactionary poll tax, the Tories plan to introduce compulsory competitive tendering (privatisation) to outlaw contract compliance, thus preventing Councils from campaigning in the interests of the people they represent; to force Council rents up (by stopping subsidy from the general rate account); to break up Council estates by encouraging tenants to opt out; to destroy the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA); and set up unelected Urban Development Corporations (UDCs).

Even before these measures are introduced the financial noose is being tightened around Labour Councils as creative accountancy measures come to grief.

Up and down the country, Council leaders argue that there is no alternative but to comply with these attacks. "Humane" cuts in jobs and services are the order of the day. Never mind the "dented shield": now we're simply falling on our own swords — Roman style.

By Jeremy de Kerdrel
Camden NALGO

Manifesto commitments to no cuts in jobs and services are thrown out. Even reputedly left-wing Councils are making big cuts or attacking their own communities.

Manchester Council has announced 4,000 voluntary redundancies; Lewisham has ordered a big rent rise; Camden has ended all temporary contracts. Others are discussing even more draconian cuts at September Council meetings.

Fortunately, a fightback is emerging almost everywhere. In London, Council trade unions are opposing cuts in jobs and services, and many local anti-cuts committees have been set up, linking local tenants and community groups with the Council workforce. And in most Labour Groups a minority of Councillors is giving support to these campaigns and refusing to vote for cuts.

It is vital that we co-ordinate the fightback nationwide. The first steps are being taken in London with a meeting of local government shop stewards called by London Bridge, and a London-wide conference against cuts in local government jobs and services called by Camden NALGO and London Bridge for Sunday, September 20th at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Council workers say: No to 1987 pay deal!

Name a device for setting worker against worker, men against women, women against men.

The answer is job evaluation — it pays more to those at the top and less to those at the bottom.

It means what it says — putting a value on the job. And it's about as scientific as work study!

What is the result this year? Wage increases ranging from £5 per week to £16.40 per week.

So much for flat rate increases for all. *It's a recipe for the biggest rows we've ever seen at work — between ourselves! — just when we need unity.*

Here are some facts about points in the agreement.

The Working Week
This section poses the biggest threat ever. The new agreement says the standard working week will *normally* be 39 hours *however...*

The "however" is that local negotiations are to be set up to negotiate variations to the national agreement.

Councils will not have to pay time and a half for Saturday and double time Sunday, or pay overtime when more than 39 hours is worked. You could work 30 hours in the winter and 48 in the summer all on basic rates.

So the wage increases given with one hand could be taken away with the other.

Defending the National Agreement
This will be the beginning of the end of the national agreement. All over the country employers will be attempting to introduce local agreements — reducing enhanced rates. *No longer will the national agreement lay down the **minimum** rates for workers.*

Annual Holidays
There will no longer be any obligation for employers to at least give us two weeks holiday in the summer.

Training
The pay deal abolishes the extra rates for training qualification.

New Job Outlines
These haven't been sent out yet. But they are less detailed than the existing agreement giving employers more flexibility.

School caretakers
Abolition of the minimum floor area for a full-time caretaker. Meaning? The introduction of part-time and mobile training caretakers.

Plus Rates
All to be abolished.

Fighting Privatisation
This deal is about giving councils the ability to *reduce council workers' pay* in preparation for tendering.



PHOTO: Philip Wolmuth

Thousands of school meal workers have already lost their jobs — now other local authority workers' pay and conditions are under threat

National union negotiators even admit this. They say this agreement is about giving employers more flexibility so that there is no "margin" for contractors.

What is this margin? It is our standard of living.

Where is the union campaign against privatisation? We stand to lose thousands of jobs. If we allow councils to pick us off one by one we're certain to be defeated.

- We need unity not discord created by job evaluation.
- We need the protection of the national agreement.

This pay deal represents the biggest threat to our jobs and wages ever.

Chuck it out!

Lobby NUPE National Committee
Say NO to pay deal!
Wednesday September 16th
at
The Great Northern Hotel
King's Cross
London N1
Assemble: 9.30am to 10 am

For further information please contact the NUPE Broad Left:
Send a stamped addressed envelope to Steve McKenzie, Flat 1, 32 Saint Augustines Road, Belvedere, Kent.

Building Briefing

500 Club Winner

Congratulations to No. 24! That's P. Ward of Sheffield, who has won our £25 prize draw this issue.

There's not much space this issue; but we must say thank you to all those who have responded to the letters we've sent and the phone calls we've made and sent in paper money and standing orders. It seems we've found a way of getting through. As Gordon Smith of Aberdeen put it:

"Thanks for your most recent begging letter. I've filed it with the many others I've received over the years.

"This one must have been extraordinarily effective, however — please find enclosed a cheque for issues 44-46 enclosed. This brings us up to date — a historic achievement for the workers and farmers of Aberdeen."

Your efforts have certainly improved our cash flow as we go into the autumn — but it's very important you keep the cash coming, and the standing orders. See you in a fortnight!

Bankers Order form for Labour Briefing 500 Club

Bankers Order

To: .....

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

At (address) .....

From: ..... (your name)

(your address) .....

.....

My account number is: .....

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

Starting on .....(date)

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

Signature .....

Dated .....

Labour Briefing Dayschool: Labour's Future

Saturday October 31st,
11am to 5pm
Barts Tavern, Batholomew St West, Exeter.
Workshops and Speakers: South Africa & Imperialism; Ireland; What is happening to the working class; Sexual politics.
Restaurant booked in evening for collective meal
Evening gig
Free entry to Day School for comrades from outside London
Contact: Exeter (0392) 79531

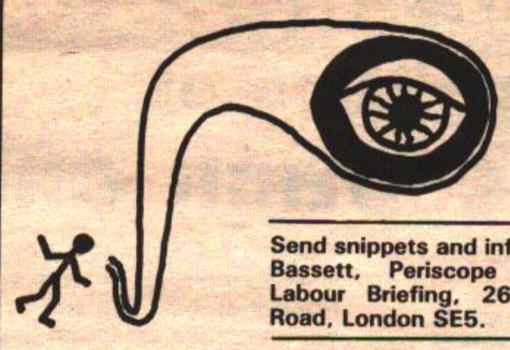
Trade Union Solidarity Conference

Leeds Trades Council Club Saville Mount, Leeds
November 7th, 11-6
November 8th, 9.30-4.30
£3 (waged), £2 (unwaged; creche available
Credentials and correspondence to: Janet Seymour, 3 Hill Street, Barnoldswick, Coln, Lancs. (0282 812864)

Conference Ads:

Greetings to the Labour Party Conference may be placed in the next issue of *Briefing*. Special rate £10 per col. inch.

Periscope



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

Hands up for Havana?

For many rabid British patriots, Diego Maradona is only remembered as the man who had a decisive hand in England's last World Cup debacle.

Imagine the chauvinist hysteria that could have been whipped up by the tabloid sports writers if Maradona had been a commie as well as an Argie!

Few would regard the footballing superstar — who picked up £1,000 a minute for his recent anniversary appearance at Wembley — as a political activist, still less a left winger.

But according to the Argentine left wing paper *Solidaridad Socialista*, Maradona has recently voiced strong support for the Cuban way of life after a visit to Havana:

"I was impressed at not seeing barefooted kids. I come from a poor town, and know what it is not to have shoes... In Cuba everything seems untroubled. It is easy to explain why there is almost no robbery or crime; that is good.

"I felt in complete agreement with Cuba's sporting policy. They have a physical training instructor for every 500 Cubans... in contrast in my country it seems that everything is planned to allow one Vilas or one Sabatini to emerge...

"I do not believe in sport for an elite... in this we must copy Cuba."

Whip lash?

"Scot's Whip Kicks Ken's Bum" could be the next tabloid sensation if the latest war of words between Ken Livingstone and Labour's Scottish whip Allen Adams continues to heat up.

Adams, Paisley North's answer to the boorish Joe Ashton, pens a column for the *Paisley Daily Express*, in which he recently allocated space to a diatribe against Livingstone headlined "Expel this pipsqueak clown now."

As self-appointed defender of Scots machismo, Adam's rage had been rattled by Livingstone's inviting him to a conference celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Sexual Offences Act.

Even this hint that prejudice against lesbians and gay men is a problem provoked Adams to reach for his pen and urge his baffled readers into action. He insisted that it was high time some (presumably male and impeccably heterosexual) Scots or Geordie boot was directed "at this pipsqueak's posterior" (is this now to be known as the Whip's Position?).

Carried away with his rabble-rousing, Adams absurdly urged the Labour Party to "end this gauleiter's reign of terror (!) in London," (presumably to replace him with a gang of rabid reactionary bootboys?).

Adams had been hypersensitive following Livingstone's sweeping allegation that most (male) Northern and Scots MPs spend their time in London in wine bars or brothels.

Good to see what enlightened individuals Neil Kinnock has chosen to enforce discipline on Labour MPs.

Ugly duckling?

A number of people have been trying to come up with a "swansong" for David Owen.

How about: *It's my party and I'll cry if I want to...* *D.C.*

Staph association?

A high powered international conference on Hospital Infection in London this week heard hospital wards described in terms more reminiscent of a David Bellamy programme than Dr Kildare.

Glasgow microbiologist Dr Baird argued that the worrying activities of the antibiotic-resistant "superbug" MRSA had not proved so extensive as had been feared.

This was because the bacteria "have to compete for their preferred ecological niches (open wounds) with other strains of staphylococcus aureus that are endemic in our hospitals."

Is this a good thing?

Dr Baird's paper called for an "ecological approach": but the logic of leaving the rival strains of bacteria to slug it out amongst themselves for dominance of the wards and operating theatres might not appeal too much even to the most hardened naturalist or Greenpeace activist.

Remember what happened to the Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly???

Book recalled

Copies of the controversial book *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*, which contains illustrations showing a five-year-old girl sitting in bed with her homosexual father and his lover, have been recalled by the Labour-controlled Inner London Education Authority.

Jenny's still living with Eric and Martin — but we don't talk about it any more

Everyone was waiting to see what difference Neil Fletcher would make as Leader of ILEA. Now we know — from this article in *The Independent* (it isn't; nor are we)

Briefing readers are asked to see if they can find a more harmless children's book in their local library... D.C.

Scab Law

British socialists appalled at the way a handful of scab miners were able to use High Court injunctions to paralyse the finances and activity of the NUM during and after the miners' strike may still be amazed at the latest legal horror story from the USA.

A renegade former member of the Seattle-based Freedom Socialist Party has hauled the organisation through the courts: he is now demanding seizure of its headquarters or confiscation of assets of nine leading FSP members and supporters in order to refund — with interest and legal fees — a donation he gave in 1979.

The donation — $22,500 from the re-mortgaging of his house — was freely given to the FSP's "Eviction Fund" when they seemed in imminent danger of losing their headquarters building.

But the FSP managed to stave off the eviction and did not buy a new building until 1985. Meanwhile the rogue member, Richard Snedigar, resigned from the group — only to come back three years later demanding a refund of his cash — and backing this up with a volley of lawsuits.

Snedigar tried and failed to get the Washington state courts to impound and wind up the Eviction Fund: he has since tried to have a judge rule the case in his favour without trial because the FSP has defied court orders demanding they hand over full membership lists, confidential minutes and other files to Snedigar and to the court.

The case has obvious severe implications for any US organisation dependent upon voluntary donations. Over 56 civil liberties groups, socialist and labour movement organisations have backed the FSP stand on this vital issue (and *Briefing* readers would no doubt agree): but the case is now up for review before a 3-judge panel.

Messages and donations to the FSP, New Freeway Hall, 5018 Rainier Ave South, Seattle, Wa 98119. USA.

Sits Vac?

With many trade unionists being thrown out of work simply for joining a union, you may have thought that the influx of "radical" new MPs was one place where the spirit of trade unionism was at its strongest.

In the main, that is so. But why, asks Parliamentary correspondent Ivor Windbag, is the talk in the lobbies that Paul Boateng — newly elected Labour MP for Brent South — is employing a member of staff who *refuses* to join a union? *D.C.*

Whose vote is it anyway?

The Labour Party leadership has just carried out a lengthy consultation process about its various proposals for how to introduce "one member, one vote".

(We thought we already had one member, one vote in the Labour Party — it's called going to your ward meeting; and that OMOV must surely be a new brand of washing powder, marketed under the red rose label, available on mail order from *Labour Party News*, but that's another story.)

Well, the good news is that the CLPs voted by 113 in favour of the present system of reselection *or* strengthening it to include mandating of delegates to 104 in favour of OMOV

For the bad news, wait till Labour Party Conference — and see what attention the Leadership pays to these views. *GM*

Watch out! There might be a MEP about...

Readers should look out for certain trends emerging amongst certain members of the Party involving raising the following issues over the next few weeks: **the obscenity of Common Market food mountains; the importance of the European Year of the Environment; the need for a European-wide campaign on Jobs, or on Peace, or on little red stickers on the backs of cars denoting something-or-other.**

For our correspondent in Brussels, Ivor Winelake, reports that the reselections for candidates for the 1989 Euro-elections have now been given the go-ahead and the scramble is on for one of the few jobs in the labour movement which has expense accounts in telephone numbers and travel all over the world. *D.C.*

What they say about us

The following is an excerpt from an article in *The Wall Street Journal*, US capitalism's leading daily newspaper, published August 26th, 1987. The headline was "Britain is hostage to the Loony Left".

It seems as if every Briton familiar with his country's local government can tell stories of violence and corruption, of dangerous extremism — from Liverpool to Lambeth and Brighton to Brent.

One of the main agents causing the problems is an extreme left-wing group called Labor Briefing. Labor Briefing shares few of the moderate, social democratic qualities of Labor as foreigners know it: It has pledged to "smash the system." In last year's local council elections in London, 100 out of 913 Labor candidates were supporters of Labor Briefing. Neil Kinnock might have seemed radical when he called for the abandonment of a nuclear defense by Britain in this spring's elections. But his goals fell far short of Labor Briefing's, which include disbanding the army and police force and replacing them with an "armed workers' militia".

The group also advocates abolishing the monarchy and the judiciary, and going beyond "parliamentary (read: democratic) politics to mobilise in mass actions to challenge, combat and break the capitalist state." The "trappings of bourgeois society," according to Labor Briefing's plans, will be replaced by the "machinery of class rule." A part of this revolution by stealth is to be achieved by destroying the "tenets of bourgeois morality" through support of male homosexuals and lesbians.

One Labor Briefing-dominated council has even gone as far as to ban the use of the word 'family" in council documents. Others have set about borrowing money against municipal property, such as town halls, to finance their activities. According to financial reports by the Department of the Environment, the national agency responsible for overseeing such local government bodies, local councils have amassed loans of up to £5 billion in this way. This deliberate escalation of debt to Third World proportions is part of a stated Labor Briefing plan to "take on" international finance.

The classic Trotskyist analysis applied here sees the council battle as part of the international class struggle, part of a front that includes countries like Cuba. (...)

To be sure, the councils are duly elected bodies of British government. But their structure means they are particularly vulnerable to Putsch-style domination. Voter turnout in council elections is low — one Southwark ward polling recently pulled in only 16% of the electorate — making them an easy victory for extremist elements.

Meanwhile, closer to home, here is a definition of *Briefing* from Lord McIntosh's review of Ken Livingstone's *If Voting Changed Anything, They'd Abolish It* in the *Evening Standard* on 7th September.

Graham Bash will be reviewing the book in the next issue of *Briefing*.

"Briefing was, and is, the mainspring of the hard Left in London, publicising slates for Labour Party elections, announcing excommunications from the flock, and seeking to manipulate or terrify elected Labour councillors throughout London. Livingstone reports the bitterness when they finally, in turn, denounced him as a traitor, as they would inevitably denounce all those with any real responsibility in public life."

Perdition by Jim Allen

Uncovering the painful past

***Perdition* — a play in two acts by Jim Allen. Ithaca Press; £4.95 (paper), £12 (cased).**
(If you have difficulty obtaining this book, Ithaca Press can be contacted at 13 Southwark Street, London SE1 1RQ.)

Unless you were in Edinburgh for the Festival you won't have seen the play, and it's unlikely you'll ever see the film, not to mention the television production, but now you can read the book.

Ithaca Press has bravely published the script of Jim Allen's *Perdition*, along with relevant historical documents, criticism, and press clippings.

A brief but furious media campaign forced the Royal Court to cancel the play last spring. Its attempt to dramatise the wartime collaboration between Zionists and Nazis in Hungary has been charged with inaccuracy and anti-semitism.

***Inaccurate?* Buy the book and read the background documents — including hostile judgements by pro-Zionist historians — and judge for yourself.**

My own asessment is that Martin Gilbert's allegation of "sixty historical inaccuracies" is nothing but a smear lodged by someone afraid of answering difficult questions. While Gilbert and others query several of the specific instances of collaboration which Allen cites, and question his presentation of others, their real objection is to the play's overall indictment of the official Jewish leadership of much of pre-war and wartime Europe.

By Mike Marqusee Haringey Labour Briefing

Perdition charges that they failed to offer the Jewish masses any strategy of resistance to their Nazi exterminators, and took refuge instead in a Zionist notion of saving a remnant and establishing a future homeland in Palestine.

***Anti-semitic?* Not unless you believe any criticism of individual Jews or of the Jewish establishment or indeed of Israel or Zionism is anti-semitic.** Particularly ludicrous is the charge that the play uses anti-semitic stereotypes of Jews as cowardly, greedy, etc. One of Allen's merits is that he understands that there was and is debate and divergence within various Jewish communities, not least about how best to combat anti-semitism.

Amongst Jews, as amongst every other oppressed people in history, there were and are people who collaborate with the oppressor. This makes us no different from Black people in South Africa today (or indeed in Britain).

If we are to understand the Holocaust, and draw lessons from it that we can apply in today's struggles against racism and fascism, then we need honest discussion of the various political strategies and subterfuges employed in the past.

Like much courtroom drama *Perdition* uses its characters too often as mere vehicles for argument. On stage, interpreted by skilled actors, they might well come alive, but on the page the drama is often inert. The sparks are generated by the issues themselves and not by their dramatic treatment.

The play's principle weakness is its one-dimensional presentation of the link between Zionist ideology and the actual behaviour of individual Zionists in Hungary in 1944.

Clearly, there was a temporary convergence of interests between Zionists and Nazis. The Nazis certainly used the Zionists, not least to arrange the orderly deportation of a million Hungarian Jews to the death camps. The Zionists, for their part, were not above using the Nazis, as *Perdition* shows, to advance their overriding goal of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

However, many Zionists did resist the Nazis (as Allen fully acknowledges) and ideology does not always serve as a mechanical conduit to action. Dramatically, the motives of Allen's collaborators remain shadowy, and the attempt to fix them in an abstract political programme seems artificial.

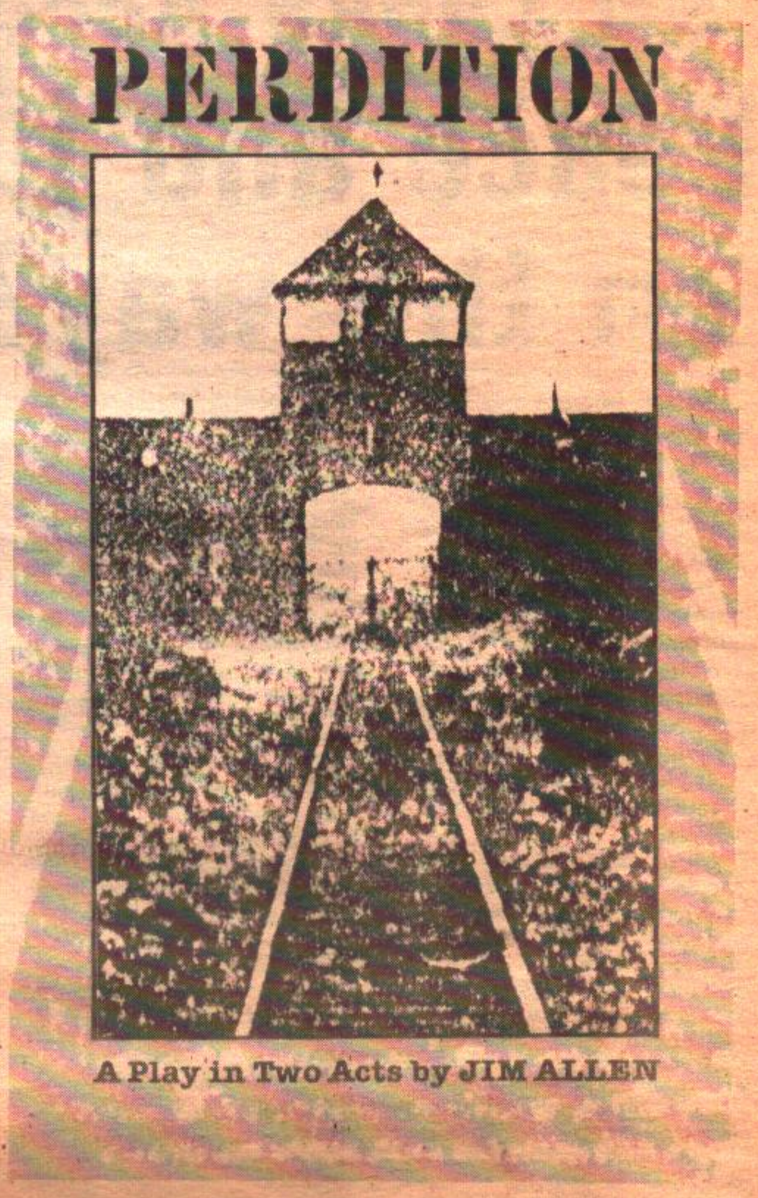
Politically, this artificiality leaves Allen open *not* to a charge of anti-semitism or of inaccuracy but to one of over-simplification.

No one should be surprised at the violent reaction to *Perdition*. The Jewish Establishment, not only in Britain but throughout the Diaspora, is now overwhelmingly pro-Zionist (which it certainly wasn't before 1948). It has embraced the State of Israel with a chauvinist fervour that can brook no argument.

Their claim to moral ascendancy, badly damaged by Israel's invasion of Lebanon and growing awareness of the justice of the Palestinian cause, cannot tolerate the kind of painful questions raised by an honest examination of the role of Zionism in the thirties and forties.

When I attended Jewish Sunday School at a Reform synagogue in the New York suburbs in the mid-sixties, we were regularly shown those disturbing film clips of Auschwitz and Dachau, with bodies piled high and skeleton-thin survivors. These were followed up by lectures extolling the glory of the modern Israeli state, often by young Israelis imported to America for that very purpose.

The link between the trauma of the Holocaust and the commitment to Israel is forged deep within the consciousness of many Jews. To challenge it — a vital necessity — will not be easy, as Jim Allen has discovered. But it must be done, and *Perdition*, in its brave attempt to open the debate, is a welcome contribution. Let's not relent in our efforts to get it performed wherever and however we can.



COMRADES

Whose Tolpuddle Martyrs?

***Comrades;* a film by Bill Douglas, now showing in London and Edinburgh.**

***Comrades* is an epic, three-hour treatment of the Tolpuddle Martyrs story, painted in broad strokes on an immense canvas.**

The film depicts in meticulous (but perhaps too picturesque) detail the appalling poverty in which farm workers of Dorset lived and their utter dependence on the whims of local landlords for survival.

It traces the ideological origins of their rebellion to Methodist church meetings, Biblical and literary studies, and popular entertainments.

Many of the scenes set in Dorset are persuasive recreations of the bare, spare miserable world of the labourers. Douglas makes little of the actual trial or the political furore which ensued. His interest is in the martyrs and their families as individuals. To Douglas, they are simply "good men" and those who oppose them are "bad" — though Robert Stephens as the principal ruling class baddie is asked to display a wholly unlikely twinge of conscience after he has managed to get the six martyrs transported to Australia.

By Mike Marqusee Haringey Labour Briefing

The Australian sections of the film are pure invention, but in them Douglas is free to explore the individual resources and responses of each of the martyrs in an imaginary, at times allegorical, setting. The film concludes with the martyrs reunion and triumphal return to London, saved by the collective protests of London's nascent trade union movement.

Bravado

The film is interspersed with episodes involving a travelling lanternist, a diorama side show, a silhouettist, a heliotropist, a penny peep show, etc. The figure of the showman or artist in all these vignettes is played with bravado by 7:84 Scotland veteran Alex Norton, in various guises.

Fascinating as these examples of pre-cinematic history-telling are, it is hard to see what light they shed on the events portrayed in the film. One can imagine how Brecht would have used the device to comment ironically on historical events and compel the audience to compare and contrast them with events of the present day.

But this is the problem with the film. It has no particular point of view on the martyrs. Class is not seen here as a critical factor, but as an unfortunate injustice which a decent society can remedy by acts of generosity.

Apolitical

Comrades is an amazingly apolitical treatment of a subject which cries out for a *contemporary* political interpretation. Douglas has boasted that he knows nothing about politics. It shows.

Despite a number of impressive scenes, and excellent acting, notably by Robin Soans (playing martyrs' leader George Loveless with a convincing mixture of naievete and cunning, self-effacing humour and visionary determination) the whole is a good deal less than the sum of its parts. The artistic and political opportunities offered by the Tolpuddle story go begging for want of any real understanding of why it remains, in Thatcher's Britain, a story very much worth telling.

New fiction

A voice from the other side of the Raj

***Kingdom's End and other stories* by Saadat Hasan Manto, translated by Khalid Hassan, Verso, £11.15 (hardback).**

Forty years after the partition of India and Pakistan by a Labour government under Clement Attlee, the publication for the first time in English of Saadat Hasan Manto's Urdu short stories serves as a sharp reminder of the grimness of life under the Raj in its dying days.

By L. Pool

Manto, who wrote for the glamorous movie world of Bombay, knew all about the bright lights and the big money of India's elite. But it was the cruelty and bravery of the lives of the urban poor which drew him as a short story writer.

Kingdom's End is peopled by pimps and thieves and swindlers and prostitutes. Some cultivate bizarre justifications for their activities, like the Indian property developer in Pakistan who justified building lethally dangerous blocks of shoddy flats by assurances from leading religious scholars that those who die in accidents are blessed with martyrdom.

More often, death, separation, and brutality are without apparent cause, save one: the harshness of poverty in the cities of a country literally being torn apart. Popular, the most widely read in India, Manto's stories are given additional political edge by a style whose anger is only heightened by its apparent lack of emotion.

The sensitivities of Stalinist and conservatives were offended by Manto's dispasssionate accounts of senseless murder and brutal sex. They dragged him through the courts for obscenity.

But Manto's readers knew that he wrote of the truth. He lived amongst them as the many autobiograpical accounts here testify. He knew life was hard and he never lost this acute sense of irony.

His dying words, as he eyed a freshly bought pint of whisky, were "pour me two measures".

from MILITANCY to MARXISM

by ALAN THORNETT

a personal and political account of organising car workers

This, the first of three books planned by ALAN THORNETT on trade union organisation and political work in the Cowley car plants, is a unique account of such work from someone directly involved themselves.

SPECIAL OFFER TO *BRIEFING* READERS: send this advert with your order and a cheque for £9.95 for free postage and packing

Order from Left View Books, BM Box 3956, London WC1N 3XX.

Sri Lanka Accord:

Peace and justice on the way?

A Peace Accord was signed by the Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi, and the President of Sri Lanka, Junius Jayawardene, on July 29th.

It seeks to end the military conflict between the Security Forces of the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Guerrilla organisations in the Northern and Eastern Provinces of the island.

It also seeks to redress the Tamil's long-standing grievances.

Three major factors forced the Sri Lankan government to conclude the agreement swiftly.

- Jayawardene recognised that as long as Tamil guerrillas enjoyed the sanctuary of South India the Sri Lankan Armed Forces could not defeat them.
- The military conflict and the resources it was devouring — 35% of the national budget — was undermining Jayawardene's grip in the South. Elements in his own party were reportedly plotting to replace him and the Opposition — both Left and Right — was beginning to challenge his oppressive regime.
- The imperialist aid donors, who sustained the Sri Lankan economy for the last ten years. let the Sri Lankan government know that they could not go on pouring money into a disintegrating economy.

Without imperialist support, the Sri Lankan government could not pursue further military action against the Tamils.

The Peace Accord do *not* grant the Tamils "Eelam", a separate Tamil state in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka.

The Indian government has always emphasised that it does not support the demand for Eelam, and has recommended the creation of an autonomous region with a degree of decentralised political power in the Tamil areas. In that context Tamil guerillas could win the Eelam demand only with the support of another major foreign power prepared to intervene in the South Asian region. Not surprisingly, no candidate stepped forward.

Many Tamils saw the Eelam demand only as a bargaining counter. The left-wing guerrilla groups such as the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) were always for *regional autonomy* rather than separation.

The new agreement provides for Provincial Councils within the unitary framework of the Sri Lankan State. It also provides for the devolution of power from central government to the Provinces in a number of areas — education, policing, land settlement, etc.

There will be a Chief Minister and a Council in each Province which will carry out executive and legislative functions.

On one of the contentious points — the establishment of one Provincial Council for both the Northern and Eastern provinces — the Tamil Tigers and the Sir Lankans reached a compromise. For one year the two provinces will be administered jointly by a single Council, and after that a referendum will be held in the Eastern province to ascertain whether the inhabitants wish to be ruled by a Council of their own.

The Tigers have given up their quest for one Tamil homeland, ruled by one Provincial Council, because it is very unlikely that the large Muslim population in the East, though Tamil-speaking, would agree to be a part of a unit dominated by Hindu Tamils.

By Lalith Perera

Nevertheless, the Agreement is a major climb-down for the Jayawardene government.

- Tamil (and English!) will be recognised as official languages in addition to Sinhala.
- The Northern and Eastern provinces will be recognised as "areas of historical habitation of Sri Lankan Tamil-speaking peoples."

In the past Sri Lankan governments have sought to establish Sinhala settlements with government grants and support in these areas without similar settlements of Tamils in predominantly Sinhala areas. By implication, this strategy will now be abandoned.

- The creation of Provincial Councils by means of an amendment to the Constitution, and not by a Presidential decree as earlier proposed, will guarantee the devolution of basic powers.

Grievances arising from the deployment of non-Tamil speaking Sinhala policemen in the North and East, the denial of the right to higher education for Tamil students, and the disproportionate distribution of government jobs to Sinhala people can now be resolved by a Provincial government with responsibility in these areas.

- Perhaps most importantly, the Sir Lankan government has at last acknowledged Indian political and military strength in South Asia.

Opposition

This aspect of the Accord has already aroused great opposition among Sinhala political organisations.

In the predominantly Sinhala South the Peace Accord is opposed by the main bourgeois opposition party, Mrs Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party, as well as a sizeable section of the Buddhist clergy who consider it a sell-out.

They have organised a number of attacks on government buildings and Members of Parliament in which one MP was killed. A section of Jayawardene's UNP is also opposed to the Accord — including the Prime Minister and the National Security Minister — even though they have decided to stifle their dissent for the moment. Discontent has compelled the government to impose a curfew and strict press censorship.

The opposition — both inside and outside the government — is unlikely to be able to mobilise mass opposition to the Accord in the immediate future. Jayawardene's foes and "friends" will bide their time. The Presidential election are due next year and Parliamentary ones in 1989.

In the North the Peace Accord may become unworkable if the two rival groups — the nationalist Tamil Tigers and the left-wing Eelam People's Liberation Front (EPLF) fail to resolve their differences. In the first week of August the EPLF refused to surrender their weapons as long as the Tigers continued to hold hostage 15 of their members.

The landowners, businessmen, and wealthier sections support the Tigers and it will be difficult for EPLF to dislodge the Tigers without the support of other forces. Since neither Group is likely to surrender all their weapons, internecine strife could continue for some time.

Troops

The presence of Indian troops on Sri Lankan soil will compel Sinhala as well as Tamil groups to refrain from directly challenging the implementation of the Accord at least for the time being.

In the long run, however, these constitutional changes will not resolve the ethnic conflict.

- There will be continuous differences about the division of powers between central government and the Provincial Council. Unless India acts as permanent arbiter of such conflicts these differences could spark violent conflict. Perhaps it is with this in mind that the Indian and Sri Lankan governments have agreed to set up permanent consultation machinery between the two countries.
- Jayawardene, the only person capable of keeping together the warring factions within the ruling United National Party, is already 89 and very unlikely to run for another term in office. The death of Jayawardene would create a new period of instability. This could pave the way for forces opposed to the Peace Accord to come to power in the South and the beginning of a new Civil War.

The military campaign against the Tamils could not have lasted long without the support of the imperialist countries. The ability of a future Sri Lankan government to pursue militarist policies against the Tamils will depend not only on local factors but also on the ability of the Sri Lankan government to remobilise imperialist economic and military support.

For the Sinhala majority this Accord provides the last change to maintain a unitary state. If they do not seize this opportunity Sri Lanka will experience a long and bloody civil war.

So far only the Tamils of the North and East have been involved in an armed confrontation with the Sinhala-dominated state. Even the Tamil Tigers have ignored the fate of the Tamil tea plantation workers who live in the central highlands and who suffer much greater exploitation and discrimination. Once this section of the oppressed wakes up, their struggle for justice and equality could dwarf the struggle for Eelam.

It is unlikely that the Sinhala capitalist elite will learn the lesson of the Eelam struggle or the potential of the Tamil plantation workers. Long-term peace can only be achieved when the forces of the oppressed — North and South, urban and rural — join forces to change the social structure that engenders chauvinism and oppression.

The Peace Accord has destroyed the powerful tool of divide-and-rule repeatedly exploited by the Sinhala ruling class. This is the main achievement of the Tamil guerrilla movement. The progressive forces must now build on this and unite on a platform of equality and recognition of the Tamil nation as a political force that can prevent the stabilisation of capitalist rule in Sri Lanka. They must seize the time.

WORKERS' LIBERTY

No. 8 out now 90p

Gorbachev and the workers

Rosa Luxemburg's previously untranslated work on the British labour movement

Z. Kowalewski (exiled former left-wing leader of Solidarnosc) on Solidarnosc and the workers' struggles in Poland

Bob Fine on black miners' struggles in South Africa

Plus Liz Williams on child abuse, Belinda Weaver on "Why today's movies are so bad" and discussions around Scottish nationalism, Ireland and "Perdition".

Available from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA



PHOTO: David Hoffmann

Bikes to Nicaragua!

One hundred desperately needed bicycles are on their way to Nicaragua, purchased with funds raised by last year's Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign sponsored London-Oxford bike ride and trade union donations.

With massive fuel and spare parts shortages, and poor road conditions, bicycles are helping Nicaragua overcome its transportation crisis. The one hundred new bikes will beused by teachers and health workers on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast.

Pictured above are Alexei Sayle and James Fearnley (of the Pogues) with the Mayor of Ealing at the start of the long peddle up the A40.

Imperialism out of the Gulf!

After seven brutal years of bloodshed the Gulf War is regularly hitting Western headlines: but not because of any concern for the Iraqi or Iranian dead.

The biggest US war fleet since the Korean War, dwarfing susbtantial British, French and Italian flotillas, is cruising the sea lanes with trigger fingers itching for an excuse to blast Iranian targets.

They are there because the Iraqi dictatorship which :with a nod and a wink from Washington) started the war in 1980, has cynically escalated the tanker war in the hopes of provoking a US intervention.

Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein knows that after years of fence-sitting Reagan's advisers now favour an Iraqi victory. He also knows that his only hope of defeating Iran is to destroy the Iranian economy by halting seaborne oil exports: Iraq's own oil flows out through pipelines.

It is no secret that in May Iraq launched the attack on the US warship *Stark*: since then it has engaged in continual bombing missions against undefended tankers and cargo vessels. Iraq is also quite capable of laying missiles to disrupt shipping lanes, especially if the world's media is slanted to make Iran take the blame.

The hope is that the Iranians will be goaded into attacking a US-protected vessel, and prompt a massive counter-strike. The US aircraft carrier Constellation alone carries over 80 modern fighters — nearly three times the whole Iranian airforce. The US battleship Missouri with 16-inch guns and Tomahawk cruise missiles could hit targets up to 700 miles away.

By Harry Sloan

But despite his firepower Reagan is reluctant to strike first: he fears that this could drive Khomeini into the arms of Moscow, and in imperialist attack could also help buttress Khomeini against any internal opposition forces.

Though Washington, along with the feudal Saudi rulers and the reactionary Gulf regimes, now backs Iraq, this does not mean that socialists should side with or have any illusions in Kho neini's regime, which is if anything more murderously hostile to the working class than Saddam Hussein's vicious dictatorship.

Even the reactionaries are divided over whom to suport: among others the Zionist regime in Israel is a prominent arms supplier to Teheran and has promised to continue even if an arms embargo is imposed.

A military victory for either Khomeini or Hussein would represent a blow against the working masses of the Gulf and the middle east. To end the horror of the futile war and its appalling death toll demands a mobilisation on both sides and the overthrow of both bloodthirsty regimes.

This is the one outcome which all of the main participants and observers in the present crisis — USA and USSR alike — would unite in opposing.

The task of the labour movement is clear: we should be campaigning in every way possible for the withdrawal of the menacing imperialist battlefleets from the Gulf.

Campaign for Non-Alignment
Saturday 12th September,
2-5pm
Hammersmith Town Hall,
King Street
Jeremy Corbyn MP, Rebecca Johnson, Annette Harrison (Green Party(, Eric Heffer MP, Jaya Grave (Indian Ocean Campaign).
Discussion and contributions from the floor

London Labour CND AGM
Sunday 13th September,
2.30
Red Rose Centre, Seven Sisters Road.
Speaker: Jeremy Corbyn MP

SUBSCRIBE TO BRIEFING

Make sure of your copy of the fortnightly Labour Briefing. For an annual subscription send £12 to Labour Briefing, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ (cheques, etc., payable to Labour Briefing).

Name .....

Address .....

.....

The magnificent miners

The Black miners of South Africa are back at work; the biggest strike in the country's history is over.

There has been no concession from the employers over the main demand for a 30% pay rise. All the NUM's negotiators were able to squeeze out of The Chamber of Mines was an improved package on holidays and death benefits.

As Cyril Ramaphosa said as he came away from the meeting with the bosses:

"I knew the industry was tough but I did not realise how tough."

It is a tragic irony that the strike should come to an end the day before the explosion in the lift-shaft at the Gencor mine in Welkom, Orange Free State, adding more deaths to the 800 who were killed in mining accidents last year. Safety measures was one of the issues which the mine bosses refused to put on the agenda.

The strike is over, but that it happened at all, that the union — with a signed up membership of 200,000 — could bring out over 300,000 miners is a lesson the barons of the Chamber of Mines will never forget.

They said it could not happen. The Black miners, walled up in company-controlled compounds, could not be "got at" by the "agitators". They could never be organised.

In 1982, when Cyril Ramaphosa led a delegation into the hallowed sanctum of the Chamber of Mines, he was met with incredulity. "They probably felt that we

By Charlie van Gelderen Brent South CLP

did not know what we were letting ourselves in for," he said. "They did not believe that the workers in the (mining) industry could be organised."

Today, only five years on, they know better. Yes, the workers have conceded defeat, but, to quote Cyrial Ramphosa again, the mining corporations have been "taught a lesson they will never forget." The strength of the turn-out astonished even the trade union leaders. It came as a bombshell to the bosses.

The demand for a 30% across the board wage increase was little enough; the counter-offer of between 16% and 23% was derisory. With the rising price of gold in the world market, profits and dividends have soared.

As an example, the partly British-owned Consolidated Goldfields made a profit of R335.6 million in 1987 as against R290.2 million the previous year. The giant Anglo-American made vast gains in the same year.

According to the independent Labour Research Services, average real wages on the mines, after climbing to a peak in 1984, dropped below that of 1983 last year. These figures are not disputed by the Chamber of Mines and are, in fact, drawn from their annual reports.

Labour Research Services estimates a minimum living wage of R850 a month (R3.5 = £1 approximately). The cash wages of the lowest-paid black miners — surface workers grade 1 — stand at R160. White miners get an average of five times the pay of a black miner and many fringe benefits such as 30 days holiday with pay; injury compensation, etc. A black clerical supervisor, in a relatively privileged job, gets a princely R500.00.

Conditions in the mines are atrocious. In an interview in the Johannesburg *Weekly Mail* (August 14-20th), Jacob Mokopane described meals undergound:

"When we go down at 6 am we are given four thin slices of bread and nothing else. We have to eat that bread during the nine and a half hour stay down in the bowel of the earth digging up the country's most precious metal."

Management deducts R140 from miners' pay for board and lodging. According to union analysts, they get only R70 worth of room and board (ibid).

The magnificent solidarity of the miners was not enough to overcome the determination of the bosses — and especially of the "liberal" Anglo-American — not to yield on the wages issue. They saw this as a test of strength between the NUM and the Chamber of Mines.

They knew that the threat to sack tens of thousands of striking miners would be a powerful weapon in their hands. In Lesotho, Botswana and Mozambique, in the "homelands" of the Transkei and Ciskei there were as many thousands of hungry and jobless men waiting to take the places of the sacked men.

These were facts which the union leadership could not ignore. An orderly return to work was preferable to a panic retreat.

In addition to the digging in of the mine bosses, there was always the potential of direct intervention by the state. Gold is the foundation of the South African economy. Although only 15% of the local gross domestic product is directly and indirectly accounted for by gold mining, more than half of foreign exchange is earned by gold sales, with coal now ranking almost second in importance.

If the strike had continued for much longer, massive and violent intervention from the security forces of the state was inevitable. The Chamber of Mines sustains apartheid and is sustained by it.

According to the Johannesburg *City Press* (August 29th), the Reserve Bank was already moving in to cut off foreign funds to the NUM. The union had no financial reserves, the strikers received no strike pay. That they could hold out for 21 days is no mean achievement.

It is estimated that the strike cost the industry a loss of £100,000 in lost production. Anglo-American may reckon that it was worthwhile to demonstrate its strength and to flush out the "weaknesses " of the NUM but it has for ever tarnished its carefully cultivated liberal image.

The union has shown that it has a disciplined membership willing to make sacrifices. It may have lost this first major battle but there will be more battles to come.

The miners have retreated in good order and with morale unshaken. Their very conditions make it inevitable that they will fight again, better prepared for victory.

As Jay Naidoo, the General Secretary of COSATU, put it: "The strike has transformed the face of labour relations in South Africa."



Practical solidarity

Organising support for NUM(SA)

On August 25th, Oxford Trades Council, in conjunction with Oxford Anti-Apartheid, organised a public meeting in solidarity with the South African miners.

Called, necessarily, at short notice in the middle of holiday season and student vacations, the meeting nevertheless attracted over 100 people.

In addition to speakers from SACTU and Oxford Anti-Apartheid, David Kitson addressed the Town Hall gathering before going on to a Peggy Seeger concert down the road and the two collections ensured that well over £200 could be sent to the strike fund.

Plans were laid during the meeting to generate more cash and support for the dispute. Five days later, however, the strike was over.

By Oxford *Briefing* supporters

Despite some drawbacks in the final settlement, the South African miners' strike demonstrated beyond doubt the huge strength, determination and potential of the South African workers. Following the end of the strike, the Oxford Disputes Committee (a sub-committee of the Trades Council which was very active during the miners' and printworkers' disputes) has resolved to continue campaigning and solidarity work around the South African NUM.

It is vitally important that all labour movement bodies in Britain do the same.

Along the color line

The Politics of Austerity

Black folks are told to accept "less" by white America.

We're told to "work hard" and to get off welfare, when in many communities few jobs at decent wages can be found.

We're told that affirmative action (positive discrimination) rewards the incompetent and discriminates against whites — and never mind centuries of racist discrimination.

We're told to take pay cuts and accept low wages — so that the US can become "competitive". We're told to tighten our belts — when many of our people don't even have belts. In short, the politics of racism is also usually the politics of austerity: "stop complaining, work harder, and earn less."

But in the late 1980s, the financial chickens are finally coming home to roost. As millions of white skilled workers, farmers, and white collar employees experience joblessness and welfare lines in the age of Reaganomics, there's a growing mood which questions the basic ideological assumptions of modern political conservatism. The "Iran-Contra Scandal" and the Democratic Congressional victories last November are manifestations of a broader and more decisive political sea change which may lie ahead.

Reagan was elected twice by campaigning against Big Government, Big Labour, and "Reverse Discrimination" against whites. After six years of disastrous budget cuts in social services and job training programmes, a growing section of the white middle class finally recognises that the fundamental problem isn't Big Government at all, but Big Business.

Back in 1979, according to Lou Harris polls, 69% of Americans gave large corporations a "favourable rating". Last year, by way of contrast, barely 35% judged Big Business favourably. The popular mood towards Wall Street and the corporate giants has turned more hostile following the scandalous greed displayed in recent takeover manoeuvres and the Boesky affair.

Even some Reaganists have begun to distance themselves from the financial backers — at least in public. Former Treasury Deputy Secretary Richard Darman, a chief architect of Reaganomics, has used the denegrating term "corpocracy" to attack US corporate inefficiency, greed and mismanagement.

The American public increasingly supports the idea that liberal, activist government can provide meaningful solutions to social and economic problems.

Recent opinion polls illustrate that three quarters of all Americans believe that the Federal government "should play a more active role" in expanding programmes to promote public health care, to address environmental ills, and to provide aid and shelter to homeless people.

Over half of all Americans desire increased Federal spending for low-to-moderate income housing, loans and financial grants to univeristy students, and nutrition programmes for mothers and children. Less than one quarter of Americans polled favour hikes in "Star Wars" expenditures.

More significantly, even some Republican voters are becoming uncertain and uneasy about their commitment to the "politics of austerity". About 55% of them state that they would allocate more money to social welfare, education and health programmes than on the Pentagon if they had to choose between these options.

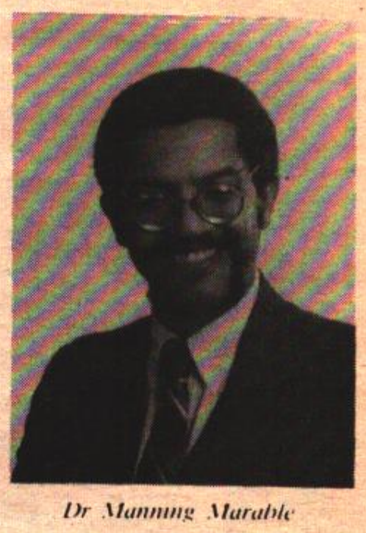
Are the Democratic presidential candidates for 1988 listening to the people? So far, there's little indication that many white Democratic leaders will move beyond a lukeward version of Reaganism — or what can be termed "Reaganism with a human face"

Delaware Senator Joe Biden frequently quotes Martin Luther King Jr, and Missouri Congressman Dick Gephardt repeatedly condems the waste, inefficiency and corruption of Big Business.

But neither they nor their ambitious white colleagues recognise the new political equation which could spell victory in 1988 — that an activist, progressive government which addresses people's needs and checks the power of the US corporate sector is required for the 1990s.

Only Jesse Jackson has expressed this understanding to date. Jackson is making greater efforts now then in '84 to reach the economically dispossessed and alienated of all races. Campaigning throughout Iowa this spring with the message "Farms, Jobs and Justice", Jackson called for massive new investments in housing and education.

Only Jackson has questioned why the government doesn't "blink over a $17 billion cost over-run for the B-1 bomber" yet hesitates to "bail out the farmer". The Rainbow Coalition and Jackson represent the clearest challenge to the state politics of austerity in both major parties.



Dr Manning Marable

A personal view of current affairs in the USA by Dr Manning Marable

Doing the Tories' dirty work in Scotland

By Frances R Wood
Leith Labour Party and formerly Councillor for Broughton Ward

On 26th August 1987, along with three comrades (Cllrs Alex Wood, Sadie Rooney and Marjorie Bain) I resigned from Edinburgh District Council.

Our resignations come at a time when Labour has never been more successful in Scotland, yet a Tory government has forced a rating income reduction of £9m on the Council — and the District Labour Party has instructed Councillors to make cuts in line with central government dictat.

Real cuts in jobs and service levels are already biting in Edinburgh, with most vacancies frozen and recreation facilities subject to increased charges and random, temporary closures.

Edinburgh's Labour Council (its first ever) has achieved much since 1984 but has now embarked upon a course that can only reverse its advances, administering the system for the Tories, and hitting working class people where it hurts.

Prior to the General Election, there was much talk in Scotland of the "doomsday scenario" — where the Tories won overall, but Labour took a majority in Scotland. Labour victories in the district elections of 1984 and the regional elections of 1986 were, indeed, followed by a resounding Labour vote on June 11th.

Instead of using this result as a springboard for a fight, Labour councils faced with Tory demands to cut spending have proceeded to do so. Any resistance appears to have been forgotten in favour of waiting for the next General Election.

Some comrades have suggested that a struggle against the poll tax (to be introduced in Scotland next year) can be mobilised. The only way to stop it, however, is for Councils to *refuse to collect it* and for individuals to refuse to pay it.

Illegal

Both actions are illegal — and Labour has made quite clear its attitude to illegality. "Obey the law, hold on to power at all costs, and administer the system as best you can." In others words — Labour cuts are better than Tory ones!

Is this really the role Labour should play? Do we stay in office, no matter what price we pay? There comes a point when to stay is not only effectively to do the Tories' dirty work for them, but also *to delay the day when any sort of fightback might begin.*

To reinforce Labour's role as the best manager of the capitalist system is to damage any prospects of changing Labour in the long-term.

The role for socialists in local government should be to highlight this — not effectively to aid and abet those who seek to make Labour a right-wing, anti-socialist party of government at all costs.

How can Labour Party members who, as trade unionists or tenants activists, oppose local government cuts in jobs and services, implement these cuts as Labour Councillors? There is no credibility in this position and socialists in local government should seriously consider whether there is a place for them there — and whether being there works for or against socialist and working class interests.

Those of us who have resigned from Edinburgh District Council have made our decision and intend to campaign against Tory policies in Scotland, and for a socialist Labour Party, which we can only do by publicly refusing to carry out Tory-inspired cuts.

Left-wing councillors quit in protest at £9m cuts

By DAVID ROSS

FOUR left-wing Labour councillors resigned yesterday in opposition to a £9m cut in services by Edinburgh District Council.

Former Council leader Alex Wood, his wife Frances, and Marjorie Bain and Sadie Rooney announced their resignations at yesterday's council meeting, where it was decided to comply with Government strictures to cut spending and save 2.8p in the rate pound. This will save the average ratepayer 90p a week.

In a joint statement yesterday the four council[illegible] said that [illegible] creation of jobs and resistance to Tory attacks on local government.

"That Tory Government has continued to attack local councils. Despite this, however, Edinburgh District Council, more slowly than it would have wished, has continued till now to improve services and create jobs," the statement said.

"The Tory Government has now cut Edinburgh's rate. The council is, as a result, cutting services. The Labour Party opposes such attacks on local government. It believes, however, nationally and now locally, that the Conservatives had any mandate for their policies and presented the district election results of 1984, the regional results of 1986, and those of the recent General Election as evidence.

The statement went on: "The Labour Party has now, however, agreed that to protect its services as best it can, the District Council has no alternative but to implement these cuts. We have, therefore, with great regret, decided that we can no longer effectively and adequately represent our party in these chamber[illegible] would mean

The four indicated that they remain with the Labour Party Councillor Mark Lazarow the leader of the council w wrested the position fro Councillor Wood last yea expressed regret that the four h decided to resign. He said t was tempered only by confidence that the Labour Pa would increase its majority in t four by-elections scheduled for th autumn.

Councillor Lazarowicz said th the £9m cut in services would achieved at the expense of t revenue budget with nothi

Glasgow Herald, August 7th

Published by Labour Briefing, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ
Printed by Press Link International UK (TU), London SE17

LABOUR BRIEFING

SCOTLAND THE GUINEA PIG:

DON'T PAY THE POLL TAX!

Dewar vows to oppose poll tax all the way

Glagow Herald, June 30th

The Poll Tax is directly in conflict with the demands of the Scottish labour movement for an elected Assembly with revenue raising powers. Charles Gory of Strathclyde Region sees the poll tax as:

"...part of a cold, calculating strategy to reduce the power and ability of local government to provide services. The Tories are intent on centralising and privatising services..."

Taking the business rate out of the hands of local authorities will give central government control of more than 80% of local government income.

The Scottish labour movement could now launch a mass campaign coupling the demand for a Scottish Assembly with revenue raising powers with total opposition to the poll tax, led by local authority representatives.

Scotland is being made the guinea pig. The Scottish labour movement must respond in kind.

The abolition of domestic rates (Scotland) Act 1987 is due to come into effect by the beginning of September.

From that date, local authorities in Scotland will have a statutory duty to prepare for the new community charge.

By Roland Sheret
Scottish Labour Briefing

The poll tax is scheduled to take effect in Scotland in April 1989, one year before its phased introduction into England and Wales. The period between now and April 1989 will be a testing time for Labour-controlled authorities and local government unions.

Strathclyde Region has refused to begin any preparations for collecting the new tax. Will they still refuse when pressure from the Scottish Office is backed with legal threats? The failure to fight cuts in services makes one doubt this.

Community Charge register is a massive task requiring the co-operation of Regional Councils and local authority staff. Community Charge bills are to be quite separate from rent bills and it will be up to the local authorities in each area to come to agreement as to how to collect the tax. Regional Councils will have final legal responsibility.

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!