LABOUR
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40p

ROLL BACK 'NEW REALISM'!

By ERIC HEFFER MP

Labour Party policy should be formed by members in the Constituency Labour Parties and the trade unions engaging in the fullest possible discussion.

Proposals coming out of the Party's Home Policy Committee to set up "Labour Listens" public meetings will only undermine the active involvement of Party members. The press would make its power felt at such public meetings and will use them to pump their ideas into the Labour Party — ideas tailored to the needs of the capitalist class.

What kind of political party simply echoes whatever ideas happen to be popular at any given time? If people tell us they want to see hanging brought back, does that mean hanging should become official Labour Party policy?

Yes, Labour should listen. *It should listen first of all to its own members.*

These new proposals are simply another means of weakening Party democracy and another excuse to drop socialist policies.

What makes the Labour Party different from other socialist and social democratic parties in Europe is its roots in the organised working class. The trade unions must continue to have a serious input into it — whether or not that input is always what people on the left would prefer it to be. Anything that breaks or weakens this tie with the organised working class — as proposals for "one member, one vote" would do — is dangerous and should be resisted.

The clamour for "one member, one vote" has confused many sincere people who want to see an extension of Party democracy. Current proposals offer "one member, one vote" *only* on the question of selection and reselection of Parliamentary candidates — not for the Leader or Deputy Leader and not on policy questions or the drawing up of election manifestoes.

Here again, the intent is to break up the power of activists in the Party. Proposals for postal balloting, in particular, would reduce party democracy to a sham.

Some good people have been kidded that "one member, one vote" and the rest of the changes being canvassed by the Party Leadership will make the Party more democratic. But in a federal party based in the organised working class, like the Labour Party, the most effective and democratic system will continue to be *representative* democracy.



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

It may well be that Conference will resist the proposed changes. There is a fundamental contradiction between the electoral college and the "one member, one vote" proposals. How can it be resolved?

The so-called "new realism" — which is neither new nor realistic — on display at the TUC will also rear its head at Labour Party Conference. Indeed, voices have already been heard arguing for a change in the very nature of Conference. Instead of resolutions and debates and policy-making, the Conference will become a mere talking-shop whilst real power is transferred elsewhere. Videos, workshops, seminars — all middle-class efforts to avoid decision-making — will replace democratic, collective debate and voting. Conference would be transformed into the opposite of what it is now.

If elections for the NEC were held, as has been suggested, on a region by region basis, the power and importance of the Conference would be further undermined. All this is part and parcel of the attempt to turn the Labour Party into a mere adjunct of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

This year's Conference will see arguments about "one member, one vote", about the Home Policy Committee proposals, about a referendum on unilateral nuclear disarmament, about individual share ownership in relation to public ownership. All these represent serious attacks on the policies of the Party and attempts to weaken them yet further. Delegates must be alert to these dangers and prepared to fight them.

Coalition is not on the agenda at the moment, but in the long term, if a new party comes out of the merger talks and appears to be doing well, there are people who will say we have to make an arrangement with it. The weakening of socialist policy and party democracy will only make their tasks easier.

What the Party should concentrate on now is formulating clear policies to win over a majority of working people. These would include a restatement of the need for public ownership coupled with democratic control, a programme for controlling the banks and the City, positive policies to end unemployment, and a non-aligned, independent socialist foreign policy.

Only radical socialist policies can deal with the crisis of capitalism. The Chesterfield Conference offers a great opportunity to formulate our alternatives and develop a programme we can fight for both inside and outside the movement.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Home News

Labour movement response required!

On Saturday September 12th, dozens of local labour movement supporters took to the streets of Dewsbury to combat the rising tide of racism in the town.

They came in response to a call from the socialist teachers of West Yorkshire.

They were collecting signatures for a petition to **Keep Racism out of our Schools.** Many hundreds of white and black people on the streets of Dewsbury signed. There was very little hostility.

The daily television saga of the poor parents seeking a "better" school for their children has been completely exposed.

A series of lies concerning Headfield Middle School at Thornhill near Dewsbury were presented to the media. Statements that the school was orientated towards Asian pupils turned out to be completely false.

The parents were simply seeking a more "white" school. For this they were willing to disrupt and wreck their children's lives day after day.

The highly political nature of the parents' protest was shown in the role played by the ex-right wing Tory MP for Dewsbury, John Whitfield, who became their solicitor and organised their daily actions.

Ray Honeyford, the infamous ex-headteacher of Drummond Middle school in Bradford, has also come forward in support.

The massive media coverage is meant to prepare the ground for the introduction of Baker's new Education Bill, which will allow the white middle class suburbs to develop racially

By Cllr Garth Frankland
Leeds

segregated schools.

The response of the Kirklees (Huddersfield) Eduation Authority has mainly been through officials. They say they are defending a multicultural education policy. Unfortunately, there has been little response from local Labour councillors.

Another problem is that Kirklees' multicultural education policy does not amount to very much. There is very little mother tongue teaching and no serious attempt to extend multicultural education beyond the schools which have Black students.

Headfield school has no teachers capable of teaching the heritage languages of the majority of its pupils.

In Leeds a special needs programme was introduced several years ago. This increased the teacher/pupil ratio in schools which had large Black populations. Increased provision was also given to schools which had more pupils whose parents were unemployed, single, etc. Teaching assistants and school liaison officers were introduced to overcome the problem of a lack of Black teachers.

The Black population of Leeds know that these measures, while tackling some urgent problems, are *not* sufficient. Kirklees has lagged even further behind.

The excellent initiative by Socialist Teachers in West Yorkshire (mainly SWP members) should be followed up by a campaign in the labour movement, involving the Socialist Teachers Alliance, to defeat the racists and develop proper multi-cultural education in Kirklees.



Children deserve a better deal

SCANDAL!

At the Labour Party Conference delegates will undergo massive "security checks".

They will be frisked, video-ed and have to pass through electronic barriers as they go in and out of the Conference venue.

The excuse is that this prevents the IRA blowing up the Conference. But the IRA does not have, and has never had, any intention of doing any such thing.

On the contrary, the Republican movement sees the labour movement in Britain as one of its chief allies in the struggle for Irish self-determination. In the last couple of years Sinn Fein has sought to establish close links with Labour Councils, trade unionists and rank and file Party members. There is more chance of the MI5 planting bombs at the Brighton Conference Centre than the IRA.

Anyone with the slightest knowledge of Irish politics knows all this. The Special Branch certainly know it, and so they know the pointlessness from a "security" point of view of their endeavours at the Conference.

This suggests that their exercise has other purposes. It is a political one: to help create an atmosphere of hostility to Irish Republicanism and mistrust of everything Irish.

The same occurred recently in an even more outlandish fashion with the arrest in Wiltshire a couple of weeks ago of three Irish people at a campsite. The three were tried and convicted by the press before they even appeared in court.

By Geoff Bell
Member, LCI NC

For the *Today* newspaper they were "IRA assassins who tried to bomb the home of Tom King". For the *Daily Mirror* it was an "IRA bomb drama" and in the *Sun* a camper was quoted as saying that because the three had Irish accents "it looks as though they were with the IRA".

Later, the *Daily Mirror* went on to give a phone number which readers were urged to use to call the police if they came across any suspicious Irish people. "People should not be afraid to make a mistake," said the *Mirror*. And with that the entire Irish community in Britain became fair game for harassment and intimidation.

The Wiltshire Three have little chance of a fair trial. It is exactly the same type of atmosphere and prejudice in which the Birmingham 6 and Guildford 4 were framed and convicted. To be Irish in Britain you can still be guilty unless proved innocent, and even if you're proved innocent you are still too often declared guilty.

SPYCATCHER

Continued from page 3

report. If illegalities came to light they would be dealt with and punished. No one is exempted from the law.

RR: **Isn't there a case for arguing that the head of security services should report directly to the cabinet, not just the Prime Minister as at present? Isn't there also a case for some kind of parliamentary scrutiny?**

TB: You've got a problem with the cabinet. How leak-proof is it? There are some secrets, like the budget, which have to be kept and which are only given to members of the Cabinet at the last possible moment.

But there could be provision for collective responsibility for the security services. Any cabinet minister could raise a question about them and the PM would have to answer it to the satisfaction of the cabinet.

On Parliamentary scrutiny, the first thing that's needed is an enquiry into the present security services at which anyone could come and present evidence in open session. Out of that could be hammered the outlines of a controlling structure which could then be debated and turned into statute.

RR: **Let's move on to the American connection. We know roughtly what the deal is between the CIA and MI5, namely that the British government via MI5 give the Americans certain kinds of facilities in Cyprus and the Middle East and also at Cheltenham GCHQ, in return for which it allegedly receives American intelligence information. There's also a whole nexus operating through NATO and the nuclear connection.**

TB: When we were an empire we had the most elaborate security services all primarily concerned to identify, in order to crush, any anti-imperialist movements. That's the origin of MI5.

The nub of what is called the special relationship is the nuclear relationship. Candidly, the deal is this: they will let us have Polaris, and now Trident, in return for which they vet — through MI5 and through spying directly, on their own in Britain — the nature of dissent in Britain.

In return we get nuclear weapons and access to the world-wide American intelligence system and, as in the Falklands, access to the satellite system, which was how we were able to sink the Belgrano.

Zircon was an attempt to provide an alternative satellite system so that we weren't so dependent on the Americans, but I read now that it proved too expensive and has been dropped. The security services are the new form of imperial control.

Breaking down this interrelated system as part of a move towards non-alignment would mean great changes. People will have different views on this but you mustn't pretend it can be achieved simply through parliamentary or cabinet control of MI5.

Scottish Labour Briefing

Assembly Campaign: off the ground, but only just!

Some 4,000 people marched in Glasgow on September 12th as part of a Festival for Scottish Democracy.

The event was largely organised by the Labour Party and trade unions after both Alliance and SNP had walked out, accusing Labour of lack of consultation.

The only things that can be said in favour of the event were that it actually took place and that it attracted widespread support with some people travelling hundreds of miles to participate.

It will have done little to advance Labour's Scottish spokesperson Donald Dewar's plans to use extra-parliamentary shindigs to put pressure on Scottish Secretary Malcolm Rifkind.

The September event illustrates the problems in this approach. On its own, the call for an Assembly is just another good idea, of *immediate* concern to very few. If you add to this Dewar's view that mass activity is at best back-up for Parliamentary horse-trading, and at worst a dangerous adventure to be carefully controlled, the result is poor mobilisation and a turnout which even the beleaguered Rifkind could safely describe as "pretty pathetic".

To be effective, the Assembly campaign needs to be linked to the immediate problems facing large sections of the Scottish people, to the attacks on state education and the health service, the privatisation of basic services and the introduction of the poll tax. Our campaign should not only demand an Assembly with powers to tackle these problems but should also take practical steps to fight the immediate issues here and now.

Dewar is looking for a campaign aimed simply at keeping Labour's electoral support in Scotland intact. What is needed is a campaign whose clear goal is mobilising mass resistance to the Tories' plans in Scotland. Only this type of campaign can deliver an Assembly with real power to determine Scotland's future.

Scottish LCC: no way forward on poll tax

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee continues to play a very influential role in the Scottish labour movement.

A conference organised by them on "Labour's mandate in Scotland" attracted over 300 people.

Platform speakers included the General Secretary of the STUC, Chair of the Labour Party Scottish Executive, and frontbench Labour spokespersons. Councillors and labour movement activists from all over Scotland attended.

All the more disappointing, then, that nothing came out of it. Alas, the LCC are not going to be able to take the timid campaign devised by Keir Hardie House by the scruff of the neck and point it in some meaningful direction.

All the pieces of the jigsaw were there. Workshops on the poll tax, extra-parliamentary activity, the Scottish economy, the role of the unions, etc. But nobody seemed able or willing to put them all together.

By Gordon Smith
Aberdeen

If the imposition of the poll tax, for example, is to be successfully resisted, somebody, sometime, is going to have to break the law. Reasoned argument and a silent majority against the tax are not going to divert the Tories from their course. Either local authorities refuse to collect the tax, unions organise to block its administration, or people refuse *en masse* to register for it or pay it.

As became increasingly obvious during the LCC Conference, local authorities are unwilling to break the law to oppose the tax and nowhere was there any evidence that a campaign was planned in the unions to block administration. So it all seemed to be down to the punter in the street, with only the sketchiest of idea of how such a mass campaign was to be organised.

The poll tax is to be the first major post-election fight in Scotland. What happens here and now will shape the next five years. It will also set the agenda for resistance to the tax in the rest of the UK.

It should be common coin that all levels of the labour movement must organise to fight the imposition of the tax in *deed* as well as words. *No compliance with the poll tax* is the only foundation on which mass resistance can be built.

Such non-compliance will remain a dead letter if it is not led from the very top. A vital part of any campaign against the poll tax will be to maintain maximum pressure on those who claim to speak for the labour movement in Scotland — our 50 Labour MPs, the STUC, our union leaders, and our Labour-led councils — to commit themselves openly to resisting its imposition up to and beyond the limits of the law.

A commitment to anything less leaves the working peole of Scotland exposed and forces on them an impossible choice: fight the poll tax alone — or pay up. All the signs at the conference were that the LCC doesn't see it quite the same way.

LETTER

Leaving out the politics

Dear *Briefing*

We feel compelled to protest about the treatment of our article in *Briefing* no. 47, entitled (not by us) Practical Solidarity Work.

It was bad enough that a whole chunk of the article which represented our political analysis of the South African miners' strike was left out, but what we found inexcusable was to "summarise" it in the words "Despite some drawbacks in the final settlement...".

Your readers can judge the scale of this distortion if we quote the ommitted passage.

"With the Chamber of Mines clearly shaken by the rejection of their 'offer', COSATU's leader J Naidoo threatening to call a general strike and the South African state moving to overtly take on the strikers, Cyril Ramaphosa and the (SA) NUM leadership unfortunately chose not to face the consequences of fighting on and caved in. The terms agreed on were no better than those voted down by the strikers days earlier, and worse, no guarantees of reinstatement for the hundreds sacked.

"The result was a setback for the South African working class and a boost for the employers and the state; illustrated tragically by the hanging of Jantejies and Mielies two days later."

We gather that the reason for the omission of this was that the article would necessarily appear on the same page as an article concerning the South African miners' strike which *Briefing* had commissioned, and which had an almost diametrically opposed political line to ours, and that it was felt therefore to be untenable to have both analyses on the same page.

Briefing is meant to be a broad paper which can incorporate many differing views. But what happened in the case of our article was that the politics were arbitrarily removed, and the article published under the title "Practical Solidarity".

We feel very strongly that fighting for a political understanding of the South African struggle must be a central component of solidarity work and that *Briefing* would have played a more useful role in this fight had it allowed both articles to be printed in full.

Yours in struggle,
Two Oxford *Briefing* supporters

Editorial

BRIEFING
LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

HER MAJESTY'S LOYAL OPPOSITION:

The failure of the PLP

Denis Healey once said that being attacked by Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Foreign Secretary, was "like being savaged by a dead sheep."

Unfortunately, although Thatcher doesn't have such a good turn of phrase, she could well say the same of Kinnock and his front bench team. Their record of opposition in Parliament is abysmal.

The Thatcher government, during its last term and now since the election, could have been effectively attacked in at least three major areas — on matters of policy; on their banana skins and on scandals — but Kinnock and his "team" have shown themselves incapable of taking any advantage in any of these areas.

On matters of policy Kinnock's response to the radical and thoroughgoing nature of the Tories' programme is truly pathetic. The Tories intend to change fundamentally the democratic and social rights of large sections of the working class population — the right to a roof over your head, the right to a job, the right to a say in local democracy, the right to effective trade union support, the right to a decent education, to a Health Service — the list is endless.

But despite the extreme nature of the Tories' manifesto, Labour in Parliament is unable to muster an effective attack.

We had the same story on the banana skins of the last Tory government — the Belgrano affair, the Libyan attack from US bases in Britain, Westland, Rover. Again the list is long and again the Labour front bench made nothing of them.

Finally the scandals — in the City, insider-dealing and the Guinness affair; in the Secret Service, the Wright revelations and the scandalous use of the courts to gag the press.

The only group in Parliament who have done an even half decent job in exposing these things are sections of the Campaign Group. Dalyell (who has since left the Group) on the Malvinas, Skinner and Sedgmoor on the "Casino Economy", Livingstone on Ireland, and Benn on the Secret Service. Some of them have a good record of trying to support struggles and strikes too.

Just imagine how different things would be today if Labour's opposition in Parliament were led by Tony Benn, and if that coalition of forces which the miners' strike inspired had been allowed its voice in Parliament as the authentic alternative to the forces Thatcher represents! Whereas the Kinnock leadership, by contrast, have at best kept quiet on for example the miners' strike and Wapping: at worst they have actively disowned them.

Why does this Labour leadership seem worse than most in opposition? Why was Wilson able to score points off Heath and Hume while Kinnock seems to tail-end and even capitulate to Thatcher most of the time? Why can Benn and the Campaign Group succeed where the front bench fail?

To answer these questions and show that it's possible to make good socialist propaganda in opposition we need to look back at what has happened over the last ten to fifteen years.

Until the 1979 election both Tory and Labour governments had worked within an agreed reformist consensus — agreement on the importance of the welfare state, full or near-full employment, a Keynesian economy; agreement on foreign policy, Atlanticism and defence; bi-partisanship on Ireland; democratic rights and a low-profile for the forces of the state. But the economic crisis, from 1974 onwards, changed all that and the election of Thatcher, with answers to the economic crisis on behalf of her class, has meant that she's been able to take this consensus and shift it dramatically to the right.

The disgrace is that the Labour leadership have been unable to do anything about it.

It is to the credit of the small minority in Parliament, like Benn, that they do raise things which make it uncomfortable for the government. The reason why he and not Kinnock can do it is that only socialist policies and approaches can answer the crisis in the interests of our class. How can you answer the free-market economy with second hand Keynesianism? How can you reply to privatisation with a "socialist" version of a "share-owning democracy"? How can you attack the free reign of the Secret Service to undermine a democratically elected government if you accept the need for such a Secret Service in the first place? How can you support workers in struggle if you accept the ruling class's right to rule?

It is because some members of the Campaign Group understand some of these questions on the class nature of society, on the role of the state and the police, on the role of international capital, that only they in Parliament can attack some aspects of Tory rule.

With the Tories' large majority they are easily going to win all votes in Parliament. What then is the role of an Opposition? First and foremost the PLP should use the platform of Parliament and the publicity to be gained to support workers and the oppressed in struggle. Labour MPs should see themselves as "tribunes of the people". Secondly, they should expose at every opportunity the repressive and frequently illegal workings of the state. Thirdly, they should present a real alternative, a socialist and collective answer to the reactionary and individualist policies of the Tories.

The PLP should be questioning the Tories' right to rule in Scotland, supporting demands for a Scottish Assembly, discussing the question of devolution. They should be exposing the undemocratic nature of the Tories' proposals on local government, on the disgracefully short 5-week consultation for the break-up of the ILEA, for example. They should be demanding action on the huge profits hotel owners are making out of homelessness in the inner cities by calling for a programme of Council house building. They should be supporting the struggles of the Black communities in Tottenham, Brixton, St Paul's, Chapeltown, etc., in their struggle to survive against the harassment of the police and courts.

This list is also endless.

When the Campaign Group of MPs was set up one of the aims it set itself was to organise more effectively in Parliament. While this has been achieved to some degree, much remains to be done. But it is to them we must look to try and develop an effective opposition in Parliament.

Tony Benn on Spycatcher

A conspiracy against democracy

REG RACE interviewed TONY BENN about the recent Spycatcher controversy.

***RR:* Do you find the allegations in *Spycatcher* credible? Should they be investigated?**

TB: Yes. What Peter Wright says in effect is that MI5, and the right wing of MI5 in particular, operated as a state within a state, with its own political objectives, which they pursued by a number of illegal acts, directed mainly against Labour governments but also against others they didn't like.

I was a member of the Labour governments of the time and many of the things he refers to I knew about, but until now I had no confirmation from inside MI5.

Newspaper proprietors in those days liked to pour scorn on anyone who claimed MI5 was politically active and accuse them of left wing paranoia. Now they want to publish the story themselves!

The British establishment — including Labour ministers — has depended on MI5 for a long time. Anyone who inherits power has in the past had to do a deal with the security services. The deal is that we will not open your role for public discussion if you will assist us in dealing with our critics, particularly our critics on the left.

Here is a book containing major allegations of criminal activity. Yet the police have not acted. The government's claim to be the upholders of law and order has thus been exposed.

Likewise, the judges' ruling in favour of the government suppressing the book has exposed the mythology of an independent judiciary. When the media feel that it's necessary to break the law in pursuit of what they see as their duty, they do it. When the miners do the same, they are denounced.

The whole affair has helped to strip away the myths surrounding the British government and confirmed everything the left has been saying for years about how Britain is really run. Ironically, it's not the left that's done this, but the extreme right! It is independent confirmation of what we have always said — that the government is neither democratic nor accountable.

***RR:* What levels of destablisation actually occurred during he 1970s?**

TB: False stories were regularly published. MI5 appears to have made facsimiles of reports on individual Labour ministers, some of which may have been totally fabricated, and distributed them to the world's press.

As far as the actual destabilisation of the government, I look back to 1968 when Cecil King, then a director of the Bank of England and proprietor of the *Daily Mirror*, supposedly a Labour paper, was going round the country saying there would be another devaluation. Nothing could be more damaging to a government. It turns out that King was an MI5 man.

These charges, made by someone within MI5, are not even to be investigated.

***RR:* This destabilisation by the security services goes alongside other forms of resistance — from the civil service, the City and indeed the Parliamentary Labour Party. How can these forces be controlled?**

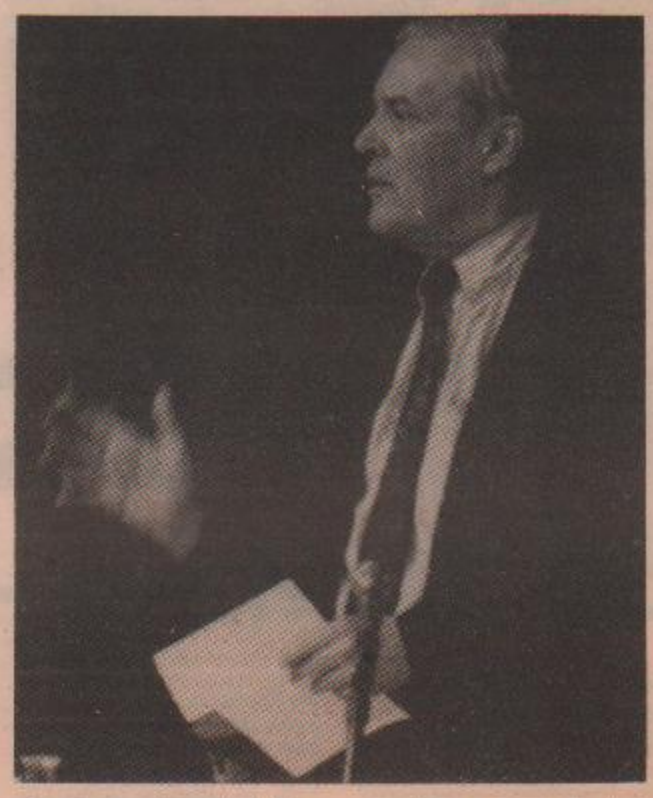
TB: I'd be wary of lumping the PLP, which is an internal Party matter, in with these other forces.

Certainly, those who wield economic, military, administrative and judicial power believe they have a god-given right to govern this country. If they think that a government is going off the accepted lines they haven't the slightest hesitation in mobilising a whole range of mechanisms against it. There was of course a run on the pound, which MI5 appears to have directly engineered.

The left must first understand what is happening — without paranoia. We have to know what we're up against but we mustn't allow that knowledge to frighten us into believing that our enemies are unconquerable.

***RR:* I raise the question of the ethos of the PLP because one of the ideas put forward for controlling the Security Services has been a select committee of privy councillors. That would be a step forward, but you would still have on that committee people imbued with precisely those values you've been describing.**

TB: You've got to recognise there is a need for security. It's the definition of what is and is not a matter of security that counts. This should be a matter of law — not left to individuals in the Security Services to decide.



Security policy should be publicly discussed and determined like all other government policies. In certain cases, where there is a threat to life, for example, the security services would have to act — but they would have to be accountable for their acts to the public.

The names of leading officers in the Security Services should be published like the names of all leading civil servants.

You've got to get rid of the idea that ministers have no right to know about individual operations. This is in effect a guarantee that no matter who wins an election the security forces can carry on in the same way they have always done.

If the dossiers were opened, 95% of them would prove to be about the labour movement. MI5 is a conspiracy against democracy and a major instrument for the prevention of any left initiative ever taking off with public support.

***RR:* But if a Labour government were elected on a radical, socialist programme and looked as if it was going to implement it, would not MI5 pursue precisely the kinds of destabilisation it used in the 1970s when a threat against the post-war consensus emerged on the left? How do we deal with that situation? Isn't there a case for arguing that MI5 should be scrapped from top to bottom and replaced with an entirely new security service?**

TB: I think there is. And what you say is true.

The real problem is that the struggle arises long before you get into office. In the past, to be accepted as legitimate, Labour leaderships have had to come to terms — before achieving power — with all the citadels of the *status quo*.

They've had to say to the security services: we won't interfere with you. The concessions to the City, the media, NATO, the Common Market, the civil service are made *before* you come into power.

***RR:* But what do you do when you're there?**

TB: First, you would have to appoint somebody to be in charge of them with a clear brief: to protect security as defined by legislation. You would prohibit the use of the security services for dealing with dissent.

You would demand an annual

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TUC Congress

When Norman's eyes lost their twinkle

Despite the best intentions of Norman Willis and his co-thinkers on the General Council, the shift to the right in the trade unions since the election in June has been a bit slower and more difficult than has been the case inside the Labour Party.

That is one conclusion which can be drawn from the events at the TUC Congress.

Willis hoped that the hardening out of the new realism over the past year would be endorsed by the Congess. He hoped that his central idea that the election results prove that it is impossible to challenge the Tory government — and that therefore no one should try — would go through on the nod.

He wanted unchallenged acceptance of the new kind of trade unionism he is frantically promoting, based on welfare benefits, credit cards and slick advertising videos.

It did not turn out exactly that way.

What pushed this off course was a development in the class struggle itself, represented by the 77% vote for action by the miners and the decision of the NUM executive to set a deadline for the ban the day before the Congress opened (even through this action has now been disastrously watered down by the right wing majority on the NUM Executive to ensure 5 day working).

By Alan Thornett

It was probably this result which stood behind a series of confident and effective interventions into the Congress by Arthur Scargill — which helped back up important stands which were made by SOGAT and the CPSA.

The successful reference back by Tony Dubbins of the TUC position on the print strike was the first and biggest rebuff of the week. Dubbins was greatly helped by revelations carried by the *Guardian* about the activities of Eric Hammond's scab EETPU in Wapping during the strike.

The reference back will not lead to very much without a very sharp fight by the print unions; but at least the issue is still open and the TUC position not endorsed.

Willis won the day, however, on the crucial issue of no-strike deals, with Congress voting to refer the issue to a sub committee to prepare for a decision next year. But it was a bruising debate which he did not want.

Nor was Willis happy when the Congress voted for a CPSA resolution caling for a campaign of opposition to the forthcoming new round of Tory anti-union laws. It is not so long since the TUC dropped all opposition to the last lot.

Despite these problems for Willis, it was definitely a "new realist" Congress. Hammond was able to strut around as a major force even if the smile was wiped off his face a few times.

The TUC is still moving to the right, and nothing happened to change that. Some of the things being said by Bill Jordan in the defence debate could have come straight out of a Tory election campaign brief.

Although a resolution for a referendum on nuclear weapons from the AEU was rejected, the main challenge to the policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament is planned for next year. The matter of nuclear energy was left until then as well.

On the matter of women's involvement in the TUC there was a typical TUC fudge. A COHSE resolution calling for a women's department, which would be a long overdue step forward, was adopted — but so was a General Council resolution which stopped well short of it! I wonder which one they will prioritise for implementation...

It is clear from the Congress that the problem of how to mount a challenge to the march of the new realism is a major problem for militant trade unionists.

In this respect the fight put up at the Congress by Scargill and Macreadie in particular is important. It points the way for those struggling for a principled alternative and class struggle politics in the unions.



PHOTO: Gerard Livett/Frame

Willis loses out on the print dispute; but wins out overall.

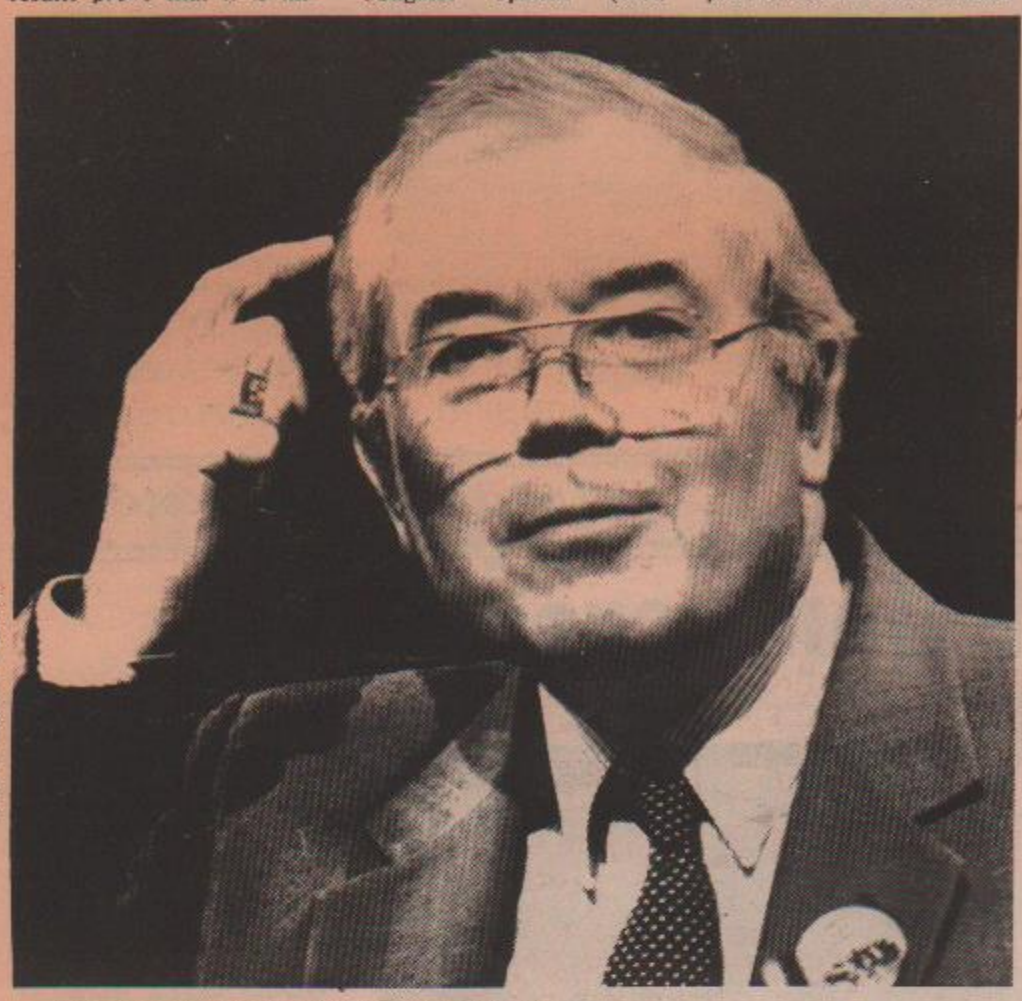


PHOTO: Stefano Cagnoni

Eric Hammond: still drawing the TUC to the right

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)

This approach says that the working class is bruised but not beaten by Thatcherism, and that if a lead is given the response will be there. That was how the Yorkshire miners responded to Scargill's "stand and fight" speech at the NUM Conference.

What is lacking in the trade unions at this time is even the focus for a discussion on such a fight back. There is no serious rank and file work taking place and little opportunity for a serious discussion of the political problems of leadership which the working class has faced in recent years.

Many groups of workers, large and small — from the miners and the printers to the Silentnight workers and Hangers have been through tenaciously-fought struggles which in the end led to isolation and defeat.

The lessons of those struggles have never been adequately discussed amongst a broad audience within the trade union movement.

An important initiative along these lines has been taken by the ex-Silentnight strikers, along with many others including Trade Union Briefing; they have called a two-day Solidarity Conference in Leeds on November 7th and 8th. They are organising it as an open, broadly-based conference with a wide ranging agenda and the chance to get to grips with some of these issues. Be there!

NUM

One step forward — two steps back!

The decision by Yorkshire Area NUM to ballot their membership on an effective overtime ban is a correct response to the National Executive's decision to draw the teeth from the national action.

Despite the 77.7% vote for industrial action against British Coal's imposition of a new dictatorial disciplinary code, and despite deciding under pressure from Scargill to set the September 21st deadline for the action, the National Executive still bottled out at the final moment — and opted for an ineffective action which would barely affect production.

By W. Head
Rank and file Yorkshire miner

The Yorkshire membership has been consistently out in front of the right wing NEC and of their own area leadership who have wobbled and wavered all summer on the issue.

At first Yorkshire area had called its own overtime ban to start on September 14th, in response to the victimisation and sacking of Ted Scott, secretary of Stillingfleet branch in the new Selby coalfield.

Scott had been offered reemployment (not reinstatement) at the doomed Wheldale colliery (an agreed closure in March 1988). This was seen as a six month "suspended sentence" before he was again switched to another pit not of his choosing.

The National Executive, far from backing the Yorkshire stand with national action, unilaterally called off the Yorkshire action!

The response from the Yorkshire branch officers, meeting at Kellingley Social Club, was to reaffirm support for Ted Scott and call for a Yorkshire-only unofficial overtime ban.

The same meeting also pressed the Yorkshire area to *instruct* Ted Scott not to accept the British Coal offer of re-employment — so making it a dispute with the whole union rather than him as an individual.

However, this proposal was overturned after the "Barnsley Barons" Taylor and Thompson intervened to oppose it. Taylor's line came as no surprise: his intervention in the midst of the 16,000-strong unofficial strike against victimisations at Frickley Collierty helped sabotage the mass movement over the disciplinary code, and obstructed the possible reinstatement of Ted Scott.

Arthur Scargill vehemently and correctly attacked no-strike deals at this year's TUC: yet Taylor still exerices a veto on strikes in Yorkshire. Perhaps someone should tell Taylor?

A resounding vote for a real hard-hitting overtime ban in Yorkshire would show once more where the rank and file stand and strengthen this vital fight against the disciplinary code.

A key instrument of the Thatcher revolution has been PRIVATISATION.

First it was the health service — that was the testing ground for the new ideology; the new way of transforming state *expenditure* to private *profit*.

Now local government workers face a massive onslaught; an attack which will come quicker and that more heavily given that the trade union leaderships have given up any desire to fight back.

Indeed, the health service union leaders have had their work cut out keeping back militant rank and file workers from fighting privatisation.

There is still time for public sector workers, and service users, to unite and defend our services. On this page we look at the current situation in the NHS and for local government workers. Read on!



National Health Emergency!

Still time to resist!

Just three months after the General Election, health authorities all over the country are counting the costs of the Tory victory as they grapple with huge cash crises and draw up panic packages of spending cuts.

- Doncaster health authority is to axe 69 beds to cuts £800,000;
- West Berkshire plans to close 70 beds and cut 3,000 operations this year — almost doubling Reading's waiting lists — to claw back £1.3m.
- Darlington faces cuts to meet a £900,000 overspend.
- Liverpool has slashed back £1m; Manchester and Birmingham face traumatic cuts; Brighton has closed beds; Basildon and Thurrock is planning to close an accident unit to help cut £600,000.
- The leafy Tory pastures of Surrey are being ravaged by bed cuts, ambulance cuts and other desperate economy measures; even Hampshire is being hit by the threatened closure of the Grove maternity hospital in Barton-on-Sea.

In London, disaster has hit almost every health district; three of the four health regions covering London have reported heavy overspending, with NW Thames leading the pack projecting overspending of £15m, and SE Thames not far behind on £9m. The upshot is a succession of panic cuts packages at local level:

- Paddington DHA is discussing a cut of up to 250 nursing posts, closure of beds, wards, theatres and whole units, community clinics and other cuts to save £1.6m.
- Brent DHA has already hacked back community and other services to save £1.3m; Tower Hamlets faces £750,000 cuts; and Barnet, Harrow, Hounslow, Riverside, Lewisham and Merton are among the districts chopping back services, with more to come next month.

By JOHN LISTER

This latest round of health cuts stems directly from government policy — and not least from the electioneering 9% pay award to nurses agreed by the Tories in the spring. While the Tories picked up a few votes, the health authorities were left to pick up the extra bill without additional funding — producing an immediate deficit averaging upwards of £250,000 for each district.

On top of this comes the impact of inflation, which is running much higher for NHS supplies equipment and services than the general price index.

In fixing this year's cash limit the Tories allowed only 3.75% for pay and price inflation; yet no pay settlement has been less than 5%, while prices are rising at 7.44%. Ministers have made it clear that they will give no extra cash to meet these bills.

Even before these back door cuts London's health districts were facing an overall cut in spending, and every health authority was struggling to cope with ever-increasing demand — especially for services for rising numbers of elderly people — with ever more inadequate cash limits.

To cap it all, the Tories have insisted since 1984 that health authorities have had to make "cost improvements" (a polite word for cuts in wages and staffing levels) amounting to 1.5% of their budget each year. Most managers have long ago run out of easy options for these cuts, and services are suffering.

Management reaction to this catalogue of calamities is predictable. After years of blandly denying that the NHS is in crisis, most managers have now adopted a new line: drawing up cuts proposals while arguing that the NHS can no longer expect to be properly funded through taxpayers' money.

The Institute of Health Service Managers is doing the Tories' job for them by drawing up a report on injecting private cash into the NHS. The financial squeeze is creating just the scenario the Tories need to move forward towards a major extension of private health care.

Worse is the passive attitude of trade union and Labour leaders who might have been expected to lead the opposition to this abject surrender. While some local campaigns have got off the ground — notably new "Health Emergency" campaigns in Pontefract and Wakefield — in general the labour movement has failed to recognise or respond to this root and branch attack on health services.

Whatever the managers may believe, the NHS is still fantastically popular; and health workers are still prepared to defend it, given any sign of support from local campaigns. Labour Parties and Trades Councils which fail to build a fightback to this round of cuts are missing a major opportunity to alert their members and the public to one of the most fundamental Tory attacks while there is still time to do something about it.



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

What future for our children, unless, as the placard says, "The Cuts Stop Here"!

Public sector workers

The facts behind the pay deal

The worst thing about Eric Hammond's "what the EETPU does now the other unions will do next year" — is that he tends to be right.

The latest and biggest sweatheart deal is being forced on local government manual workers by the leaderships of NUPE, GMBATU and TGWU — all three opposed in theory to the Hammond line.

What is more, the deal involves flexible working — a measure that even Bill Jordan is having difficulty foisting on to his members.

The origins of the deal go back to 1985 when the pay deal agreed to a job evaluation which was supposed to do something about low pay, and the low pay of women workers in particular.

In some quarters this was even held as an example of the union coming to terms with their women members and with feminist politics. The reality was different.

The evaluation, published in February, made very little change in the relative positions of "male" and "female" jobs — with the exception that home helps went up the scale and refuse workers went down.

By Brian Elkington Hull

Worse was to come. The employers made it clear that they would only discuss the evaluation if the unions would discuss "flexibility" and the absorption of existing enhancements. The unions agreed without any mandate from any membership body.

The final offer, published in July, contains the evaluation plus a pay offer of at least £5. It also includes a commitment to talk at local level on the number and spread of hours in a working week and the plus payments for weekend working as part of the normal week.

What the employers want to do is to cut out plus payments and overtime by changing the pattern of the working week. The example that is given is gardeners, who would work longer in the summer when it is light, and shorter in the winter when it is dark; over the year they will have worked the equivalent of a 39 hour week.

In an industry with such low pay, overtime and enhancements are an important part of pay, and conditions are pretty poor as they are.

The unions concerned with this are the 3 unions who pushed the "keep quiet and wait for a Labour government" campaign. Having successfully sabotaged every attempt at a fightback in the last 3 years, they have finally had to face the reality — there was not going to be a Labour government. Hence their conclusion — they would fight privatisation by agreeing to pay cuts; they would defend the national agreement by allowing the most important issue to be negotiated locally.

While it is true that there is a status quo clause, it is more than balanced by commitments to "genuine negotiations", "realising that changes in the role and operation of authorities will have to be faced in the years ahead."

There is a recognition by Council workers that the talk of "good news" and major breakthroughs is a sham, but it is not enough just to reject this deal. This deal is the leadership's only response to the attacks on local government. If it is thrown out, workers must then build their own response.

The leaderships won't change their politics — unless Eric Hammond is about to lead a 12 month strike of the EETPU!



Next meeting
Oct 22nd 1987
10am
Camden Town Hall
London Authorities Joint Trade Unions

Labour Party

Chesterfield Conference

Mobilise for socialism: *A fresh start for the left!*

The Socialist Conference to be held in Chesterfield on October 24-25th is a significant development for the whole labour movement.

The conference is sponsored by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, the Socialist Society, the Conference of Socialist Economists, as well as numerous individuals from across the labour movement.

Its aims are simple:

- To generate practical discussion, in a non-sectarian way, on the future of socialism in Britain in recognition of the fact that socialism has been pushed back by Thatcherism.
- To begin developing a socialist programme for the 1990s; and in doing so to bring forward arguments and policies which have been neglected in the past.
- To reassert the need for fundamental changes in the structure of economic life in Britain.
- To find ways of putting socialism on the agenda — both in society as a whole, and in the political and trade union organisations of the movement, where it has been undermined by revisionists and so-called "new realists".
- To show that there is no future in the coalition politics, now being mooted as a serious proposition by the Gould faction of the Party.

Following the General Election defeat and the Blackpool TUC, the present Labour leadership aims to dismantle as many of the Party's commitments to radical and socialist policies as possible. Fundamentally, they are on course for an *ideological* accommodation with those forces represented by the "merged" Liberal Party.

This drift must be halted. We must put socialism back on the agenda.

The Conference will be addressed by national and international speakers. But it will also be a Conference at which the rank and file of the movement will have a major voice.

Our three main themes are Peace, Internationalism and Development; Economic Power; and the Democratisation of our society. Working groups will cover a wide range of individual issues. On Sunday there will be an open discussion on how we can relaunch socialism as a dynamic force in British politics.

Already we have had a huge demand for places. Get your delegations together *now*. You can come as an individual, or as a delegate from your trade union branch, socialist society organisation, or ward or constituency Labour Party — which will give you an opportunity to report back, and tell others some of the ideas debated at Chesterfield.

The Chesterfield Conference is *not* to be missed.

Reg Race

Sponsored by The Campaign Group of Labour MPs ● The Socialist Society ● The Conference of Socialist Economists ●

Chesterfield - Winding Wheel Centre
24th and 25th October 1987

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SPEAKERS ● GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Discuss the future of socialism in Britain

- **Develop** solidarity to renew socialist ideas and obtain mass support for them.
- **Challenge** the dominant ideas promoted by the Tories.
- **Develop** Socialist ideas and an agenda for the next five years.
- **Share** your experiences of campaigning and developing alternative policies.

THEMES:

- **The problems of Peace, Internationalism and Development.**
- **The ending of discrimination against all oppressed groups**
- **Visions and strategies for a Socialist Economy.**
- **Extending democracy and curbing state power.**
- **Now is the time to start fighting back.**

The Conference is open to all Socialists.

● BOOKING FORM ●

I/We wish to attend the Conference:

Name _____ Name _____
Address _____ Address _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
Phone _____ Phone _____

Name of your organisation (if any): _____

Will you require overnight accommodation YES/NO
Will you require any of these facilities?
Creche YES/NO
Number of children: _____
Ages of children: _____
Facilities for the Disabled: _____

(NB Wheelchair access to, and within, the Conference Centre is good.)

CONFERENCE FEE per person: £6 waged, £2 unwaged
(Please send money with this form).
Donations towards the substantial organising costs would be very welcome.

Please return completed form to:
Socialist Conference Office
The Socialist Society
9 Poland Street
London W1V 3DG
Telephone: 01 734 8501

Cheques payable to Socialist Conference

PLEASE REPLY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Whose Conference is it?

By Paula Watson
Westminster South CLP

This year's National Conference shows every sign of being as carefully stage-managed as the last.

A glance at the agenda indicates that the Conference Arrangements Committee has been up to its usual tricks to limit serious debate and to keep controversial items off the agenda altogether.

For example, a matter of some importance is the proposed reorganisation at Party headquarters, including the sacking of up to 40 workers and the closure of *Labour Weekly*, *New Socialist* and *Socialist Youth*.

Whatever we think of these papers, the whole question needs to be considered by Conference. Yet the agenda has been arranged in such a way as to make this extremely unlikely.

Three resolutions on the papers have been hived off into a section of its own headed "Party Publications", which is most unlikely to reach the conference floor. But in the section on Organisation and Campaigns there is no mention of the proposed reorganisation, although this group has 26 motions, which are, therefore, sure to be composited and debated.

Fortunately, there is an amendment to one resolution in this section, which deals with the question of the papers, so this at last may reach the floor.

As usual the motions on the economy have been divided in such a way as to make serious discussion difficult. Social ownership, for instance, is separate from the general section on the Economy, making compositing tricky. It is useless to discuss the problem of, say, low pay outside the context of an extension of common ownership.

If Conference is not to become some sort of Tory style rally, it is vital for the left to get a majority on the Conference Arrangements Committee.

Hackney NUPE Officers branch

Sends greetings to Conference

Defend Jobs

and Services!

NUPE

NUPE

March for Civil Rights and Justice!

★ **October 3rd** ★

Fringe Meeting at Labour Party Conference

Thursday, October 1st, 5pm
Preston Suite, Westbeach Hotel,
135 King's Road, Brighton
With:

Tony Gifford Tony Benn
Dolly Kiffin Stafford Scott
Sharon Raghip Bill Silcott

Sponsored by:
The Movement for Civil Rights & Justice
Organised by:
The Broadwater Farm Youth Association

Greetings to Conference Delegates from

VERSO

- socialist publishers

Just Out:

Labour and the Unions by John Kelly, with a foreward by Jim Mortimer, published in conjunction with the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, 48pp, £2.95.

This timely pamphlet argues that Labour's links to the trade unions are a vital source of strength. Labour's failure to tap that strength was a critical weakness in the 1987 General Election campaign.

Also available:

Peace through non-alignment: the case for British withdrawal from NATO, by Ben Lowe, £1.50.

A Million Jobs a Year, the case for full employment, by Andrew Glyn, £1.50.

Justice: the Miners' Strike 1984-854, by Dennis Skinner et al, £1.95.

SOCIALIST LEGAL SERVICES CAMPAIGN

Calls on all delegates to vote for the introduction of a national legal service as an essential part of Labour Party policy.

Secretary: Valerie Vaz
18 Elthorne Park Avenue, London W7

Features: black struggle

Anti-racism after Dewsbury

By Shahid Tilley
Haringey Labour Briefing

What do the following have in common:

Cat Stevens, Bernie Grant, Muslim Parents Association, Ray Honeyford, Roger Scruton, Cllr Rabbi Abraham Pinter (Lab), Cllr Ambrozine Neal (Con) and Cllr Yasmin Ahmed (All)?

Yes, you guessed it — they all support increasing state funding for separate religious and ethnic schools.

Such strange political alliance should surprise no one. It is the logical outcome of two different forces that have gained strength over the past decade.

On the one hand, right wing ideas are in the ascendant, especially in the field of education. Notions deemed by the educational establishment of yesterday to be beyond the fringe are suddenly respectable and turn up as central plans in the Tory manifesto.

Right wing think tanks with overlapping membership have been churning out "Black Papers" and policy documents — for years. They include:

- the Centre for Policy Studies (which was set up by Sir Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher to think the unthinkable);
- the Institute for Economic Affairs;
- the Campaign for Real Education (amongst whose leadership are Black Tory Cllr Ambrozine Neal and Liberal Cllr Yasmin Ahmed);
- the Hillgate Group (R. Scruton and Baroness Cox);
- Parental Alliance for Choice in Education (whose member Fred Naylor is closely involved with the Dewsbury rebel parents).

The second force involved in the present crisis is much closer to home. It has its roots in the response of local Labour Authorities to the rebellions of 1981: the setting up of "multi-cultural units" and "ethnically sensitive" polices without any critical analysis of how to fight racism.

These policies have come home to roost in more ways than one. The left in the Labour Party has been ideologically bewildered over how the state should relate to culture, religion, and ethnicity.

The parents in Dewsbury have helped to clarify the situation with their little stage rehearsal of what will happen if and when grant status for religious and voluntary schools is extended. (Roman Catholic



and Church of England schools at present have grant status and the "equal opportunists" argue that it is racist not to support the demands of Muslim schools seeking similar status).

The argument goes: "The minorities have every right to preserve their religion and their customs to the extent they wish." This from Ronald Butt, the right wing columnist of the *Times*, who then takes it to its logical conclusion by adding the "national majority have a right to preserve theirs too."

To their chagrin, multiculturalists in local authorities now find their vocabulary and ideas hijacked by an ever more belligerent and sophisticated right.

The Dewsbury rebel parents, no doubt with some help from Fred Naylor, say their concern is not racial but "cultural". As good parents they are worried about sending their children to Headfield School where 85% of the children are Asian.

They fear that their children will miss out on the cultural traditions of English people (read *white* people). They allege that Shrove Tuesday and Christmas are not celebrated in the traditional religious manner.

In the tabloids, Ray Honeyford and other right wing ideologues have been busy whipping up support for the parents' right to chose to retain their English cultural traditions. The campaign has not been confined to the popular press alone. Even the beloved *Guardian* got in on the act, lured perhaps by a strong whiff of new realism (or in this case pure Thatcherism!).

Its prize-winning new columnist, Melanie Phillips, wanted to know how the parents could be bigots when some of them were Asian themselves. She then added, "the parents are worried that their children will be disadvantaged by mixing with so may children for whom English is not their first language. Is this concern necessarily to be despised?"

Yes, Ms Phillips, it *is*.

The parents' actions are *not* based on culture but on racism. The standard and level of education in Headfield School is not significantly different to any other local shcool. This was common knowledge from the start of the dispute.

As the dispute dragged on, the parents changed tack. They have now hoist the banner of "Freedom of choice" and are hoping to sweat it out until Baker's Bill becomes law.

Though the contents of the Bill have not been finalised, there is one thing we can say for sure, given the government's track record. Poor and working people will lose out.

Though led by a former Conservative MP, most of the Dewsbury parents have a working class background and will find that under the new dispensation many local schools will become "sink schools". Only small sections of the skilled working class and middle class which have escaped the blight of manufacturing industry in West Yorkshire will be able to afford to move out to escape the inevitable decline in local education.

This in turn will give further impetus to race, class and religious segregation in education. And from educational segregation to residential segregation is only a short step.

Socialists in the Labour Party now have to ask two questions:



PHOTO: Paul Mattsson/Frame

Has the anti-racist strategy of the past couple of years been successful?

● If not (which should be obvious post-Dewsbury), where do we go from here?

Much of the effort of the left in the Party and in local authorities has gone either into "multiculturalism" or into trying to elect anti-racists and Black people to posts within the Party. Unfortunately for the former (and for the whole Black community) its rhetoric has been lifted and put to new and frightening uses by the likes of Fred Naylor, Ronald Butt and Ray Honeyford.

We now find that we have no effective, coherent critique of their campaign.

The other strategy — focussing our energies on winning labour movement positions — leaves us in the lurch when those we elect fail to develop an incisive anti-racist policy or indeed simply retreat into careerism.

Our failure is clear. The attacks upon the Black community have continued relentlessly. Unemployment, homelessness, poverty, police brutality, and deportations are all on the increase — yet they hardly reach the bottom of the agenda. Maybe we have reached a stage where we need to shift away from "ethnic sensitivity", "cultural traditions", and "identity" politics, — and instead inflect our anti-racist work with a more socialist content.

A fringe meeting at the Tory Party Conference being organised by Sir Alfred Sherman will feature M. Le Pen (leader of the French National Front). Sir Alfred calls for separateness and unmixability of cultures.

The right have used race (along with patriotism and greed) to consolidate popular support. Sir Alfred's Centre for Policy Studies ideas on education came in from the cold. There is no reason to doubt that Sir Alfred's and Le Pen's ideas on systematic repatriation will not also take centre stage in the coming years.

How do we face up to Thatcher's third term?

UNMESH DESAI, long-time activist in the struggles of Britain's Black communities, known especially for longstanding involvement in the Newham Monitoring Project, speaks to DAVE PALMER of Haringey Labour Briefing about the present impasse in Black British politics.

***DP:* Thatcher's third term has already seen a major increase in racist activity and levels of popular racism. Events in Notting Hill, moves towards segregation in Dewsbury, the Tower Hamlets evictions, the Harwich prison ship — all are clearly linked to the Tories' programme for the inner cities and their attacks on local government. Where is this leading?**

UD: In Thatcher's first term we had the attempt to crush trade union combativity. In her second, she finished off the political opposition and discredited "socialist ideas".

In her third, we are going to see a fundamental ideological version of Thatcherism on the rampage — which aims at a social and cultural revolution.

In the Black community, we need an honest assessment of where we are going. If you look at two or three recent events — Dewsbury, Tower Hamlets, Harwich — there is no national organised response. Ideologically we are not intervening from the left into the debate on these issues. More than anything else, Dewsbury proves that.

The left is not effectively using its available platforms to challenge these developments. The Dewsbury debate has been couched in the Tories' terms — lack of choice, freedom of choice, etc.

The situation will clearly get worse. The authoritarianism which has developed in the Thatcher years will now be unrestrained. We need to respond by changing how we organise by developing our demands. This is why debate over initiatives like a Civil Rights Movement is so important.

***DP:* Debate in the Labour Party over Black issues has been dominated by the question of Black Sections. Also the Black left has been dominated by a "pro- or anti- Black Section/Labour Party" divide. That debate seems to have become a bit sterile. How can we break the polarisation down?**

UD: Not only is that debate becoming sterile, it's also becoming irrelevant. What we need is maximum unity around a set of principles in order to advance the cause of Black people as a whole. The ground is being taken away from under us by Thatcher. We have to start to consider a lot of unpalatable things.

The question of whether we join the Labour Party or not can no longer be used as a litmus test of purity. This has led us down a blind alley. It has hindered the development of a strong, effective Black resistance movement.

We have to go back to basics. At a national level we have to admit we have failed miserably — however effective certain local initiatives may have been.

***DP:* There is clearly then a need for national initiatives in two areas: first, against state racism, secondly against the massive attack on democratic rights throughout Britain. These questions are obviously linked. But can they be joined in a single movement? Is it possible to build such a movement?**

UD: It's not just a question of whether it is possible to build such a movement — it is essential that we make the attempt to build it.

The two developments are in no way contradictory. On the one hand the fight against state racism requires specific organisations and strategies. That in itself is part of a broader fight.

First, we have failed to build relationships between different campaigns and to crystallise them in some form of national organisation.

Secondly, we have failed to make an impact on established political processes. The fight against state racism needs to be related to wider sets of demands as well.

As to whether such a movement can be built — this is the challenge we now face. That is where any debate about any Civil Rights Movmenet should be. We have got caught up again in a false debate about whether the term Civil Rights is appropriate or not. What name should we call it, who should take part in it...

The question that should be posed is how broad can we make it? How many progressive forces can we involve?

The left is on the defensive. The key question is to make a clear socialist correlation between different struggles. Then we can use that strength to affect developments in the Labour Party, in progressive movements, and also in national politics.

We can influence things at a local level, where our priorities need to be in this new period, simply because we obviously can't influence events at a national level straight away.

The debate which should take place after the Broadwater Farm Civil Rights March should allow us the opportunity to tackle these issues — though I am afraid on past experience such a debate will not take place.

***DP:* The events on Broadwater Farm have had a huge resonance but potential support seems never to have been realised. The March on October 3rd is obviously a useful way to carry things forward. How do you think a Civil Rights Movement should proceed?**

UD: The Broadwater Farm Conference, coming so soon after the election, gave us a good opportunity to start the debate on how to proceed straight away. Unfortunately, that opportunity was wasted. That's water under the bridge.

A good turnout for the March is essential to show there is support for building a movement. We need to work at two levels. At the local level, progressive elements of the left along with Black organisations need a vision of what we are and where we are going in order to seize platforms and mount ideological challenges. At the same time, a national focus is needed.

The way we view it from Newham, the whole term "Civil Rights" means the linking up of the issues raised around Broadwater Farm with those raised by Wapping and the Miners' Strike. The key is building alliances, alliances of principle



PHOTO: Andrea Campbell

Protest against Tower Hamlets racist evictions

to make sure those demands stay on the political agenda.

If we can do that in our own areas there is no reason it can't eventually come together in a national movement. The threat of Thatcherism needs to knock some sense into our heads and bring us together.

***DP:* The Campaign Against the Police Bill (CAPB) was something of a failure. It had two different models: one for a labour movement-based alliance and the other based in the Black community and led by Black people. Neither model worked. Could either work now? Which would you choose?**

UD: For me the debate now is not in that framework. I would not counterpose the two. We need to marry these elements. We need to look at the hard time we are in and learn from the mistakes of the CAPB. One of these was, I think, trying to assert a set of political principles, as opposed to how to put those principles into action, and win the broadest possible support for them. The debate took place in the CAPB at the largely theoretical level and had the stuffing knocked out of it before it ever got off the ground.

***DP:* The Labour Party nationally is distancing itself from any form of Black struggle in order once again to adapt to the new framework Thatcher is setting. Can elements in it be pulled back in any way?**

UD: I think the trend in the Labour Party nationally will be hard to reverse. Policing and civil liberties issues were hard enough to put on the Labour Party's agenda when times were better. As long as this "new realism" sense prevails it will be hard to move them forward.

Having said that, there are large sections in the unions and the Labour Party which are calling out for some sorts of answers. They do not want the Labour Party to become an SDP Mark II. They key task is to offer these people some sort of involvement, some sort of perspective.

This is why initiatives like a Civil Rights Movement are so important, linking Labour Party people with forces active outside it, offering scope for involvement.

The question before us is whether these elements, combined with people in defence campaigns and from the Black communities, are capable of making any fundamental dent in a body politic that has been completely remoulded by Thatcherism?

The question is are we strong enough, mature, united enough to rise to that challenge.

ORGANISE THE RESISTANCE!

Labour Briefing Labour Party Conference Fringe Meeting

PRESTON SUITE, ROYAL ALBION HOTEL

Sunday 28th September, 6pm

Speakers:
Sharon Atkin, NEC-removed PPC
Eric Heffer MP
Terry French, victimised miner
Sarah Roelofs
Graham Bash, *Briefing*
Chair: Jeremy Corbyn MP

Periscope



Send snippets and info to Greg Bassett, Periscope, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ

ASTMS officials go underground

The looming prospect of a merger between ASTMS and TASS has led to some panic manoeuvres and now some red faces.

The latest problem arises from the political differences between the two unions. While Ken "Gulag" Gill's TASS leadership rests on a bureaucratic, Stalinist, so-called "Broad Left", which runs the whole union from top to bottom, in ASTMS the most recent Broad Left was a genuinely left wing, rank and file challenge to the Jenkins leadership.

Just before the TUC a small clique of self-seeking ASTMS bureaucrats jumped the gun, and opted to organise their own TASS-style "Broad Left" before the merger as their passport to fame and fortune when Ken Gill takes over the show.

However, one of the conspirators, having indulged in too much TUC hospitality, made the mistake of inviting a genuine left winger along to one of their clandestine meetings.

Angry protests reached the ears of the ASTMS NEC, which was pushed into holding an inquiry into the whole affair, with dire consequences threatened for any officials caught red-handed.

That is why two well-known officials — one recently appointed to a top job, and one former National Union of Students hack — are now hoping against hope that they have covered their tracks sufficiently to avoid the chop.

Things that go Bonk

A tragic typing error has been blamed as the root cause of the events exposed in the recent embarrassing confessions of George Havitaway MP, the outstanding, energetic former director of his own charity.

Reporters had gasped when George, one of the left-leaning "members" of the Liaisons and Copulation Committee (LCC), admitted having sex with numerous Greek women, a goat, a kebab and an Elgin Marble during a 24-hour business stopover in Athens.

"It was all a ghastly mistake," Havitaway told Perisocope in a Westminster wine bar. "I was returning after completing a 'round the world sponsored bonk', when I received this note from Head Office. It had been mistyped. It should have said '24 hours to screw *some money out of* the Greeks.' How was I to know?"

Until this story broke, Havitaway had been seen as more on the "cuddly" than the "hard" left.

Priorities?

Fighting sexism is all very well — but among Brent Council leaders it clearly takes second place to fighting any militancy among the workforce.

The dismal rally against privatisation organised last weekend by Brent Council was made even more embarrassing by the effects of abundant free liquor on at least two trade union speakers. In particular it appeared to loosen the tongue of one TGWU official.

Lurching to his feet to speak from the platform, he fumbled his way agonisingly through some of his notes before stopping in a ghastly silence. Recovering, he was quick to excuse himself:

"Sorry about that. I lost my stride there: a good-looking bird just went past."

Brent's "right on" equal opportunity councillors did nothing to intervene, or rebuke the spark for this outrageous comment, more appropriate to the *Star* or *Sunday Sport* than a labour movement platform.

But council leader Merle Amory was quick enough to attack the real enemy. She turned her speech into a rant against the militant contribution from a vehicle maintenance shop steward, who had had the nerve to argue for workers to take the lead in fighting privatisation...

No strikes please, we're nurses

A London COHSE official has set a new low in trade union solidarity by attempting to whip up nurses, patients and the press against striking transport workers.

COHSE officer Brian Lynch issued a press release seemingly tailored for the right wing press. Headed "Nurses prevented from caring for the sick," it calls on NHS management to ensure that "provisions are made to ensure that staff get to work in the likely event of public transport stoppages."

A supporter of the Irish "Workers Party", Mr Lynch makes no statement of support for the bus workers who have been striking against privatisation. Instead he calls for DHSS national guidelines and finance to be available "if and when these emergencies arise."

So nurses would have scab buses laid on by management. But how would the patients get to hospital? Why should *they* be inconvenienced by a transport strike? What about their visitors in hospital? Why should *anyone* put up with transport strikes? How about COHSE banding together with reactionary commuters' clubs, and calling for the army to be brought in, like in the good old days of 1926?

Mr Lynch does not mention the problem of COHSE officials getting to work during a bus strike: but then he will have his union car — which he could also use to drive at any TGWU picket line he might pass on his way!

Quirk conversion of the year:

The decision of London-based *Daily Star* "journalists" to desert to *The Sun*.

The reason for their move? They wanted to go up-market, away from the new *Sunday Sport*-style "I bonked for Britain" soaraway *Star*.

The departure of Labour MP Joe Ashton from the paper is eagerly awaited.

D.C.

Free thinking

The *Evening Standard* revealed shock-horror details of *Militant's* attacks on lovable CPSA General Secretary John Ellis.

Their disgraceful actions consisted of taking away his free car and threatening — wait for it — his American Express card.

What do they think they are! Trade unionists?

D.C.

Quick Conversions II

Reports in the media of a rift between Broadwater Farm's Dolly Kiffin and Tottenham's new MP Bernie Grant are *not* exaggerated.

Dolly — and indeed the whole Broadwater Farm Community — are *incensed* by Grant's vituperative support for Haringey's new *cuts* budget.

Only 6 months ago, Grant was Leader of a Council whose progressive activities he now regularly denounces, joining with local Tories in calling for the use of the Public Order Act to evict travellers, supporting segregated Chasidic and Seventh Day Adventist Schools, and rapidly putting as much distance as possible between himself and the people who put him in Parliament.

Speaking at the packed launch meeting of *Haringey Fights Back*, Dolly described Grant as a "yellowbelly" and charged — correctly — that he had failed to learn the real lessons of the struggle on Broadwater Farm. She denounced Grant's attempt to reassure her that the Farm was safe from cuts.

"We don't want to be safe when everyone else is being attacked. It will only turn the rest of the community against us."

Responding to Dolly's attack at a Labour Group meeting, Grant made his position clear:

"I don't owe anyone here anything," he said.

Brighton Labour Briefing sends greetings to Conference

Labour Party Black Sections

sends solidarity and greetings to all conference delegates.

★ Support Diane Abbott and Linda Bellos for the NEC!
★ Oppose all expulsions and disciplinary actions against socialists in the Party!
★ And support Black Sections!

Camden Labour Briefing

Sends greetings to Conference

No ifs, no buts...
Fight back against the Tories!

No cuts in jobs and services! Fight the Tories all the way!

Kate Allen, Steve Bevington, Angie Birtill, Caroline Holding, Gloria Lazenby, Karen Newbury, Sandra Plummer, Graham Shurety, Adrian States

Greetings to Labour Party Conference from Camden Councillors kicked off Committee Chairs for defending council workers and the community and standing by the manifesto

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Tottenham CLP Women's Section

Women Leading the Struggle for Socialism!

NUT I.L.T.A. FIGHTING FOR LONDON'S TEACHERS.
Inner London Teachers Association (NUT)
sends greetings to the Labour Party Conference
The fight against the imposition of Baker conditions and for the restoration of negotiating rights goes on.

Devon Labour Briefing

sends greetings to Conference

Fight the Witch-hunt!

Labour - take the power!

Socialist greetings to all Conference delegates!

Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP says:
Make Ireland an issue!

Comradely greetings to all socialists from
The Officers of the Coventry North-East Constituency Labour Party

---

Hanover Branch, Brighton Labour Party

sends greetings to all 1987 Labour Party Conference delegates and observers

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Free the Guildford Four and Broadwater Farm Three!

Whoberley Ward Labour Party,
Coventry South-West CLP

Alf Lomas

MEP
London North East
sends greetings to Conference

Haringey Labour Briefing

NO CUTS IN JOBS OR SERVICES!
MARCH FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND JUSTICE, OCTOBER 3RD!
HARINGEY FIGHTS BACK!

Hornsey & Wood Green Young Socialists

sends greetings to all Young Socialists and calls on all delegates to Party Conference to:

- Keep the age limit at 26!
- Reject the Sawyer proposals!

Hackney Labour Briefing calls on councillors to stand firm.
We say:
No cuts in council jobs and services; no rent rises!

Birmingham Labour Briefing supporters

send greetings to Conference delegates

Chessington South *Briefing* readers send greetings to Labour Party Conference

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LABOUR MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN for PALESTINE

Fringe Meeting
Tuesday 29th, 5.30pm
Westbeach Hotel

Speakers:
Ken Livingstone
Sharon Atkin
Harry Cohen
Chair:
Jeremy Corbyn

The way we were...

If voting changed anything, they'd abolish it, **Ken Livingstone, Collins, £12**

Ken Livingstone's new book is no great political treatise.

But as a day to day narrative of the rise and fall of the GLC — and of Ken Livingstone — it simply cannot be missed by *Briefing* readers.

It's fashionable nowadays to criticise the early *Briefing* for our close involvement with Ken in the struggle for a left GLC. This book reminds us just how right we were.

What comes across is the enormity of the GLC's achievement. For all its limitations, it broke the mould of British politics, gave hope and inspiration to millions of Londoners and many more further afield, and showed that a determined socialist administration could take on the Tories and win genuine mass popular support.

That achievement belonged to hundreds of us — but above all, it belonged to Ken. And we cannot begin to understand the scale of his later defection unless we recognise the extent of that initial achievement.

Conditions at the time were by no means favourable. Ken's successes were achieved in the teeth of the most vicious Tory government for two generations and with a GLC Labour Group that had nowhere near a left-wing majority. That such a group could be used in the way it was is testimony to Ken's greatest strengths — his immense talent as an intuitive practical politician and his ability to cut across political divisions and *build alliances*.

What emerges also — from the book's opening dedication onwards — was the consistency of his commitment to the liberation of the oppressed — women, Black people, Irish, lesbians and gays.

These issues, which emerged from the upheaval of the '60s, "took over a decade to reach the attention of the political parties." Ken points out: "it was only with the 1981 GLC administration that they finally took their rightful place alongside and integrated with the traditional agenda of the left."

The way Ken stood out on these questions placed him head and shoulders above every other member of the Labour Group and almost every other prominent Labour leader.

Writing of his early days with *Briefing*, Ken explains "those of us who produced it shared a common belief that the personal was political and politics affected every aspect of our daily lives. We wanted to produce a left paper which was not under the control of any faction or tendency... We also sought to raise the kind of issues affecting the individual which other left papers chose to avoid... For the first time a left journal was talking impotence, monogamy, the way in which men possess women as property."

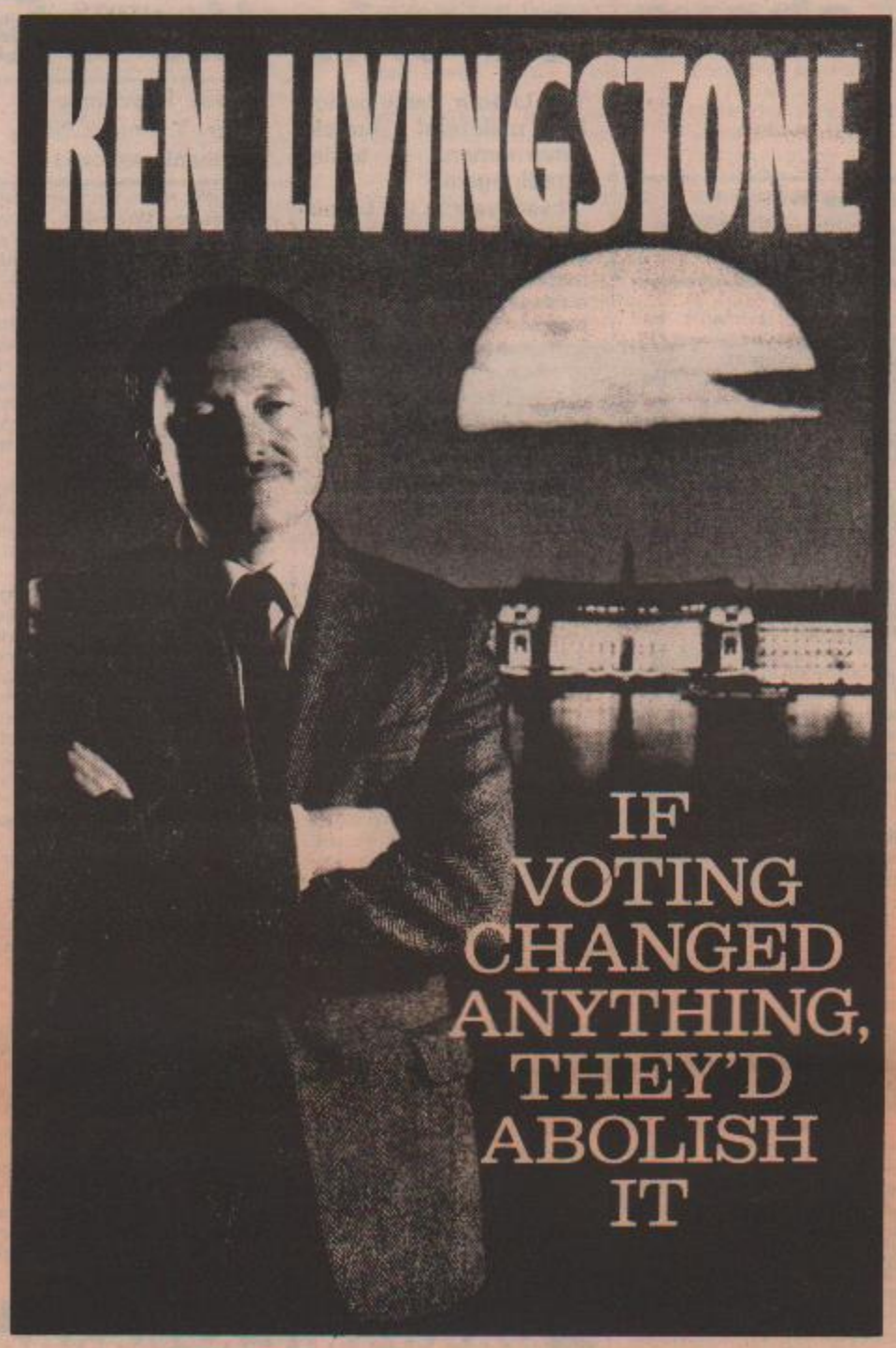
By Graham Bash
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

But Ken's democratic impulses had their limits. The ferocity of the debates in *Briefing* over the actions of the GLC — especially on the fares issue — prompted Ken to loosen his links with us. He then became part of a group that set up *Labour Herald*, despite warnings from a number of us about the type of organisation he was getting involved in. Ken preferred his uncritical mouthpiece.

From the beginning, his strengths contained the seeds of grave weaknesses. He was a practical politician but often lacked any overall socialist analysis and the kind of ideological tempering that would, for example, have made it impossible for him to have supported the Queen opening the Thames Barrier.

He was committed to the liberation of the oppressed but lacked the same commitment — the same gut feeling — to the class struggle and the trade unions. Thus in his description of the fight against rate-capping, it becomes clear that the unity between that struggle and the miners' strike — and its potential to bring the government to its knees — never even entered his calculations.

To retreat under enormous pressure was one thing — to reject the criticism and turn the retreat into a systematic defection was something else.



In building alliances, Ken often didn't know where to stop. He lacked the political cutting edge that would tell him where to draw lines of demarcation — the very opposite of the sectarians who are wonderful at drawing lines but incapable of building unity in action. When the crunch came in the fight against rate-capping, Ken was to find himself led into a new alliance — this time *against* the left.

What was lost was nothing less than succession to the leadership of the Left after Tony Benn — a leadership that the whole of the previous period had prepared him for.

His defection during and after the rate-capping fiasco was therefore not a bolt from the blue. Neither was it, I insist, an inevitable conclusion from his previous record.

Few of the leading figures come out of the episode with much credit. But Ken's absence of leadership, control and knowledge of what was going on was quite remarkable. His plaintive cry of "Why wasn't I told?" says it all.

Ken's vote helped to break the solidarity of the Labour boroughs and scupper any possibility of a united fight against the government. What followed was infinitely worse. To retreat under enormous pressure was one thing — to reject the criticism and turn the retreat into a systematic defection was something else.

It was a bitter experience for his friends to witness Ken's ideological defence of his actions in his infamous and nauseating interview with Bea Campbell in *Marxism Today*. "Come aboard," she seemed to be saying as he publicly attacked the Labour left — people like us! — as "tankies".

Ken cut himself off from his former comrades and joined forces with those who were hostile to everything he'd stood for. He promoted the realignment of the Left, made peace with a rightward-moving *Tribune*, and joined the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, an enemy of the Labour Left and a cover for the Kinnock leadership.

Ken's account of this period is the saddest and least satisfactory part of the book. He expresses honestly his own pain and bitterness at the break-up, but appears unable to comprehend how betrayed his former comrades felt.

What was lost was nothing less than the succession to the leadership of the Left after Tony Benn — a leadership that the whole of the previous period had prepared for him.

Yet here we are, two years later, with Ken moving left again, breaking away from many of his new friends on the soft left and centre.

So what are we to make of him? Ken Livingstone can neither be trusted nor relied upon. But it would be foolish to write him off. He will no doubt continue his zig-zags. From time to time our paths will cross and we will work together again.

Who knows? No promises, little hope perhaps. But come the day of reckoning — especially if we appear to be winning — Ken may yet find his way to our side of the barricades.

From Militancy to Marxism

Building a fighting socialist leadership

From Militancy to Marxism, **Alan Thornett, Left View Books, £9.95.**

This is the first of three projected volumes on trade union organisation and politics in the Cowley car plants in Oxford.

Alan Thornett was a leading trade union militant in Cowley for twenty years.

This book is more than a collection of memoirs. It is also an account of the political and industrial history of the sixties and early seventies, and a text book on socialist intervention in the trade unions. The personal, political and historical complement and illustrate one another.

Beginning with the struggles to unionise the British Motor Corporation's Cowley works in the late '50s and early '60s, the book details the building of the shop stewards' movement of the late '60s and early '70s. Throughout this period, an immensely powerful shop stewards' movement was built up throughout British industry, especially in engineering, founded in post-war industrial expansion and its favourable consequences for the labour movement.

The history of the shop stewards movement is at the same time the history of the bosses' attempts to crush it, and of the trade union bureaucrat's attempts to bypass and ultimately surplant it. It is also the history of the attempts of various currents of the Marxist left to build themselves during a period marked by major class battles.

The importance of the Cowley experience lies in the role that revolutionary socialists played in building strong shopfloor level trade unionism and the lessons that they drew from their struggle for leadership: a struggle not only against managements and governments but also against a trade union bureaucracy determined to marginalise unruly militants and establish "responsible" industrial relations.

By Dave Shepherd
Hackney North CLP

Thornett tells us that BMC management in 1967 called a series of top level meetings with the general secretaries of all the BMC unions (meetings from which plant convenors were excluded). These resulted in a joint push by management and union to achieve "sensible manning levels" and "reasonable mobility".

This was opposed by the BMC stewards and the Regional Automotive Committee of the TGWU. It was then formally dropped as union policy. But this did not end the efforts of the top union bureaucrats — in collaboration with management — to stifle shop floor militancy.

The special TUC Congress of June 1969 was told by General Secretary Vic Feather that "avoiding and settling" disputes involved taking measures to "discipline members who refuse to accept the democratic procedures of the movement". He meant, Alan Thornett points out, "those who refused to go back to work when he told them."

The book is enlivened by numerous anecdotes which supplement its broad sweep. It has a real feel for how the big political events affected workers and militants on the shop floor.

During the May '68 general strike in France, TGWU convenor Bobby Fryer addressed a meeting of 300 shop stewards. It had been called to discuss factory issues, but Fryer, we are told, had other things on his mind. He opened the meeting quoting the opening line of the *Communist Manifesto*, "A spectre is haunting Europe, the spectre of communism". He then went on to discuss the events in France and the prospects for socialist revolution.

From Militancy to Marxism is the story of the most serious attempt since the war to build a principled, fighting socialist leadership in an important section of the working class. After eight years of Thatcherism, years in which the tameness and timidity of the leadership of the labour movement has plumbed new depths, the telling of this story is more urgent and necessary than ever.

by ALAN THORNETT

from MILITANCY to MARXISM

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SPECIAL OFFER TO BRIEFING READERS: send this advert with a cheque for £9.95 for free p&p.

Birmingham Labour Briefing

The cleansing of Birmingham District Labour Party

Last March Birmingham District Labour Party (BDLP) was closed down, while in 1986 the Labour Group leaders had walked out of discussions on the manifesto and issued their own for the local elections.

This year, by closing down the District Labour Party, a different method was used to achieve the same end.

By John Wilton
Birmingham Edgbaston CLP

Following the local elections in May (where the right wing Labour Group manifesto lost five seats), and the General Election (where right wing candidates fared far worse in Birmingham than left wing candidates), BDLP was reconstituted by the Regional Organiser.

An AGM was called in July by which time the right had successfully manipulated the delegations, as best they could, from constituencies in the city.

This meeting, however, got no further than attempting to elect a chair. After two hours the meeting had to be adjourned as after three ballots the vote was tied between the soft left candidate and the right wing candidate.

The AGM was reconvened by the Regional Organiser on September 9th, by which time the right had stepped up the pressure. A letter was by now circulating in the City which claimed that a right wing candidate for one of the District Labour Party Officer positions had been subjected to intimidation from the hard left through anonymous threatening letters and phone calls.

The letter also claimed the same person had been threatened with fire-bombing.

Resolution

Edgbaston CLP has since unanimously passed a resolution at its September GC calling upon Regional Office (whom the letter claimed had been informed of this alleged intimidation) to investigate the letter, and the claims within it. The Regional Organiser stated such an investigation would be difficult to carry out!

At the reconvened AGM the right won the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. The effect of this is to clarify the position in Birmingham regarding the Labour Group, the District Labour Party, and the rank and file members in the branches and constituency parties.

There can surely be no illusions now concerning the nature of the intentions of the right wing in Birmingham City Council Labour Group, and in Birmingham as a whole.

Over the last year they have continuously attacked the left. These attacks have included the closing down of the District Labour Party, opposition to the formation of the Summerfield Group in Birmingham, and attacks on the Black Sections meeting held in Birmingham which culminated in the suspension of Sharon Atkin as PPC for Nottingham East.

All this has been used by the right wing-controlled Labour Group as a smokescreen to ignore any semblance of accountability to BDLP and to override BDLP policy (and in the case of the abolition of the City Council Women's and Race Relations and Equal Opportunities Committees override national Labour Party policy!).

While the struggle over BDLP has gone on the right wing Labour Group have continued on their own sweet way with £130 million Convention Centres, Super Prix road races, and Olympic bids, all contrary to BDLP policy.

What has happened over the past year is part of an attempt to cleanse BDLP of left wing influence, and any semblance of socialist policy, in order to lay the ground for even further capitulation to the Thatcher government's next onslaught on local government. The right are petrified that in next May's elections in Birmingham Labour will lose control. Their answer is to present a moderate image.

Capitulation

The flaw in this strategy is that it will lead to futher capitulation to the Thatcher government. The result will be the implementation of further cuts in services and jobs which will cause even greater hardship for Labour supporters in Birmingham, and make it even more difficult to win elections and retain control of the Council.

Already a budget incorporating cuts of £44 million (7%) is in preparation for next year. Education, Social Servies, Housing, and the whole range of services people in Birmingham depend on will be savagely affected.

Strangled

If BDLP is to be "strangled" by the right, the fight in Birmingham against cuts in services, and against the Tory government's oppressive onslaught on local authorities, must be carried on outside in the communities.

It must be conducted not only in and around groups like Birmingham Campaign Briefing and the Summerfield Group, and in the Labour Party branches and constituency parties, but also by forming links with rank and file council trade union members whose jobs will be at risk.

Electorate

Most importantly the fight must be conducted with the support of the wider electorate, all of whom will be affected by the cuts — whether it is their children's education that suffers, their social services, their housing repairs, or their search for somewhere decent to live in Birmingham.

This means forming links with tenants associations, community groups, pensioners groups, and many other groups throughout Birmingham, as well as rank and file council trade unionists, through a political campaign against cuts and against existing and forthcoming Tory attacks on local government.

If the right wing controlled Labour Group on Birmingham City Council, having cleansed BDLP, will not fight against the Tories and defend people in Birmingham from the onslaught of Thatcherism, the wider labour movement must.

International Briefing

Stand by unilateralism!

We don't need a referendum if we win the election!

The Labour Party policy for unilateral nuclear disarmament is under attack again.

By Joy Hurcombe
Chair, Labour CND (personal capacity)

Every year at the Labour Party Conference there is an attack on our commitment to get rid of all nuclear weapons and bases. Every year we ask conference to reaffirm its position.

We have had a clear majority for the past 7 years but we can never be complacent.

This year, the attack is dressed up to appear as the voice of sweet reason. The EETPU and a motley group of CLPs are asking for a referendum on nuclear disarmament to follow the election of a Labour government. Six resolutions make this demand and clearly there will be a debate at the conference.

The call for a national referendum on nuclear weapons is totally disingenuous. Since the issue is such a vital one, we must put our policies before the voters at the election, as we do with all our policies on the vital issues of national and international concern.

We are not the SDP/Liberal Alliance who cannot even convince themselves what they stand for.

The call for a national referendum as part of an election policy would just mean that we would fail again to campaign. The Tories would have a field day, misrepresenting our disarmament policies as a threat to national survival, whilst we would be silenced by our agreement to put off the debate.

Now, when the superpowers are making progress with disarmament talks, is not the time to appear weak and indecisive. We have always suffered from thinking that we can't be on the winnng side. This time the winning side is tipped towards disarmament.

We could use this to support a vigorous campaign which would make sense in the eyes of the voters. We could marginalise Thatcher for being alone in Europe (apart from France) in continuing the nuclear arms race.

We need a clear campaign putting the arguments before the people in a consistent way. The last thing we want is a referendum.

Referendums are never genuinely democratic. They can be a hostage to fortune, with money buying access to every home with mail shots and right wing media advice. But then, the EETPU know this. They really want to sabotage the nuclear disarmament policy without openly stating their pro-nuclear line.

Don't give them a chance! Throw out the call for a referendum: *it is not what it appears!*

Conference wil be asked to pass a composite committing all money from nuclear weapons to be re-allocated to jobs, hospitals, schools and homes. This is to stop the Labour Party leaders from promising to increase military spending on conventional weapons if nuclear weapons are abolished. We already have a high defence budget and real security can only be obtained by decreasing international arms spending not by increasing another arms race.

The Labour Party Conference will be able to hear the arguments for getting out of NATO; there are just enough resolutions for a debate.

Once again delegates will be told that it is a contradiction to belong to an alliance that is committed to nuclear weapons when we reject them. Bill Jordan will no doubt stay his piece.

The same anti-Soviet line will be rehearsed against a resolution supporting the Soviet peace proposals. Both these resolutions should be supported, although the second one has a weaker line.

Our polices for peace and disarmament could win us the election next time. But only if we can convince the voters that we believe them ourselves. Why doesn't the EETPU let us get on with the job?



PHOTO: Gina Glover, Photo Co-op

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

Reagan/Gorbachev Accord

The dangers of the new detente

There was a surge of euphoria amongst officials and politicians in the main Western capitals on September 18th as President Reagan announced a breakthrough on the elimination of medium range Cruise, Pershing and Soviet SS-20 missiles in Europe and Asia.

This statement had been accompanied the night before with an annoucement by Shultz and Shevardnaze that they will begin full-scale negotiations by December to reduce — and ultimately eliminate — all nuclear testing.

This breakthrough was presented by Shultz at the press conference in the White House as having been built on the important progress made at Rejkjavik. In fact, Gorbachev had then called Reagan's bluff with the so-called "Double Zero Option" proposals.

It is too early to say what this will mean for international politics, but it is being widely interpreted as a fundamental shift on the part of Washington from the "New Cold War" strategy launched by America from the end of the 1970s.

This policy included economic sanctions and trade embargoes against Moscow and was particularly aimed against the West German connection and "Ostpolitik". This was followed in 1982 by Washington's attempt to block the gas pipeline and the forcing through of embargoes on high tech goods.

The aim of US policy is to further integrate political and economic relations within the Western Alliance under its hegemony. In this respect, the new medium range missiles had a political function over and above their military role.

They spearheaded an intervention into Western Europe which blocked the emergence of a purely European military defence policy based on a Franco/German military link up (based on France's "force de frappe") and further reinforced US dominance (through NATO) of the Western Alliance.

By Dave Hamilton

Although Europe is key for US diplomacy and interests, in fact the new Cold War policy was made up of three prongs, and included a heightened interventionist stance against the rise of revolution in the semi-developed world, in particular Central America.

Already the US global offensive had come up against a number of obstacles, not least of which was the rise of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union and a new direction for Soviet policy — Double Zero Option, etc.

The Gorbachev initiative was able to exploit a number of difficulties already faced by Washington — the failure of the Contra war against Nicaragua, the rise of a massive new peace movement across Europe and the United States and now a new rise in workers' struggles in Europe, highlighted by the recent large scale mobilisations of workers and students in France and Spain.

The ruling classes in Europe are also divided on the INF policy, all of which is undermining "Atlanticism" and the post war settlement.

Both sides had some need to come to a deal. The Soviet Union wants "normalisation" fo relations with Western Europe and a new version of "Ostpolitik", while the US wants deals over Central America, South Africa, Afghanistan and the Middle East and of course has its interests in Europe.

There is much to trade off. We know that these regional issues were on the agenda of the talks in Washington, but their outcome is as yet unknown, and remains part of the secret diplomacy.

While socialists must support the removal of the missiles, and give support to the opening of trade with the Soviet Union, the international workers movement must be wary of the dangers of the new "detente" for the Nicaraguan revolution and the development of revolution in southern Africa and other parts of the globe.

Moses Mayekiso

Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, executive member of COSATU, and chair of the Alexandra Action Committee, will soon be on trial for his life.

He and four comrades face charges of high treason, sedition and subversion.

South Africa's apartheid regime will be hoping that protest will be muted and that Moses will not be as widely known and respected abroad as he is in South Africa — this is why the Friends of Moses Mayekiso have been campaigning, including arranging a full page advert in the *Guardian*, showing the wide support Mayekiso's case has in the British labour movement.

Unfortunately, this excellent initiative has been attacked by bureaucrats claiming to act for the ANC and Anti-Apartheid Movement. They ask why Mayekiso has been singled out when so many others face death or imprisonment.

The answer is simple. He is a major trade union figure. Bringing the struggle against apartheid home to the British labour movement means building links with the activities of our brothers and sisters in South African trade unions — and mounting vigorous campaigns against repression.

Free Moses Mayekiso!
Contact Friends of Moses Mayekiso, c/o Acorn House, 314-320 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP.

Aquino moves right as CIA moves in

PETER TATCHELL interviews LUIS JALANDONI of the National Democratic Front.

In the wake of last month's coup attempts against Philippine President Corazon Aquino, the left-wing opposition has accused her government of shifting rapidly to the Right.

According to Luis Jalandoni, international representative of the outlawed National Democratic Front: "After each successive coup attempt, Aquino has become more and more dependent on the right wing loyalist faction of the armed forces. This dependency is forcing her to bow to military demands for a crackdown on the left.

"Aquino's dependence on the military is proven by her extreme lenience with previous coup plotters. Those who participated in the Manila Hotel coup attempt in July 1986 received the ridiculous sentence of 30 push-ups.

"The President's lack of independence from the military is also evidenced by her refusal to prosecute members of the armed forces involved in human rights abuses," according to Jalandoni.

"In the first 6 months of her government, from March to October 1986, 1,157 cases of human rights violations were reported to the Philippines Commission on Human Rights, the official body set up by Aquino when she first came to power. Though most of these violations were committed by members of the armed forces, not a single soldier has been prosecuted.

"In January, 5 members of the Commission on Human Rights resigned in disgust at the way their attempts to initiate prosecutions were being blocked by the military and at the use of the armed forces to harass and intimidate their investigators.

"At first, Aquino responded by urging them to retract their resignations. Then, in May, following pressure from the military, she ordered that the Commission on Human Rights should be abolished.

"These actions prove that Aquino is not in charge of things. She is dependent on the generals and beholden to their demands.

"The loyalist faction of the army are happy to keep Aquino in power because her popularity can be used to win legitimacy for right wing policies and to provide a convenient facade to hide the true extent of repression."

Behind the Filipino military, Jalandoni sees the guiding hand of US strategists: "Last November, the Commander of the US Forces in the Pacific, Admiral Ronald Hayes, held private talks with top generals from the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

"Since the, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* has reported that retired US General John Singlaub, a former commander of American undercover forces in Vietnam and current adviser to the Nicaraguan contras, has been involved in recruiting a mercenary army for clandestine counter-insurgency operations in support of the Filipino military.

"In March, *Newsweek* revealed that President Reagan had authorised the expenditure of $10 million for the expansion of CIA activities in the Philippines. This funding was for the recruitment of more local CIA agents, the channelling of funds to right wing political parties, and the stepping up of psychological warfare, disinformation and propaganda against the left.

"Amongst the future options listed in an attached intelligence brief were proposals to send US military advisers to the Philippines and to use US aircraft for reconnaissance over areas held by the guerrillas of the New People's Army."

The first fruits of US covert operations in the Philippines are evident in the emergence of anti-communist vigilante groups. Often with the tacit approval of the police and the army, and sometimes with weapons supplied by them, the vigilantes have embarked on a wave of terror against peasant and trade union organisers, leftist politicians, human rights workers, priests, and suspected guerrilla sympathisers.

It is believed that vigilantes, working together with military death squads, were responsible for the assassination last November of Rolando Olalia, the chair of the left-wing union federation, the KMU (May First Movement) and for the attempt on the life of Bernabe Buscayno, a leader of the radical Partido ng Bayan (People's Party), in June.

Aquino originally backed the establishment of the vigilante groups as a "concrete manifestation of 'people power' and an effective weapon against communism". Later she qualified this support and said it was only for "unarmed groups".

In March, her Local Government Secretary stated that on the island of Mindanao 15 of the 22 provincial governors had agreed to "form unarmed civilian units to counter communist inroads in their areas."

Despite reports of widespread vigilante atrocities, it is notable that Aquino had failed to order any significant military crackdown against them.

"According to Ramsay Clark, the former US Attorney-General who led a recent fact-finding mission to the Philippines, the CIA has probably been involved in setting up these vigilante groups," says Jalandoni.

"Ex-CIA agent Ralph McGhee, who also participated in the fact-finding mission, pointed out that the vigilantes are very similar to the CIA-sponsored death squads in Latin America and they directly parallel the liquidation of political opponents which was carried out by the US in Vietnam under the notorious Phoenix Programme."

The Philippines Support Group (1-2 Grangeway, London NW6 2BW, 01-624-7819) campaigns in solidarity with the left and produces a bi-monthly newsletter, *Kasama*.

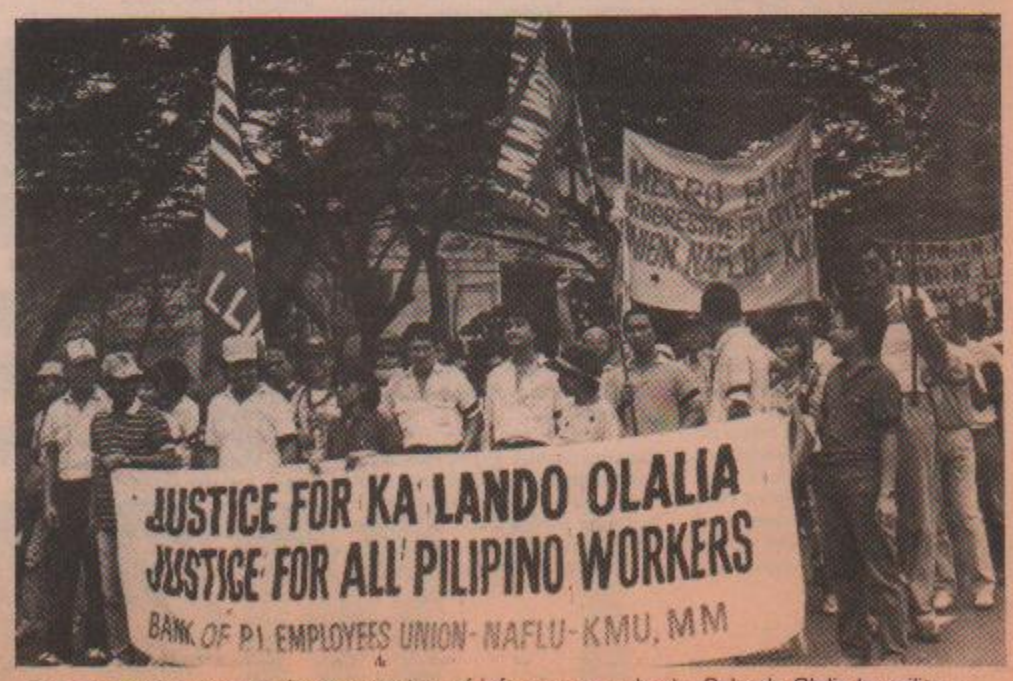


PHOTO: Philippines Resource Centre

Protest march following the assasination of left wing unon leader Rolando Olalia by military death squads last November.

Palestine

An open letter to the British Labour Party from Professor Israel Shahak, Chair of the Israeli League for Civil and Human Rights

Israel Shahak is no stranger to the politics of race hatred and mass deportation. A child of the holocaust, he experienced life in the Warsaw Ghetto and survived a succession of Nazi concentration camps before arriving in Palestine at the age of twelve.

Shahak's call for the rescinding of the 1944 resolution is no symbolic gesture, nor even an attempt to set the record straight. The fight to prevent mass expulsions of Palestinian Arabs from the Occupied Territories is a deadly serious and increasingly urgent one — in which the British Labour Party is being used to support the wrong side.

The fact that several resolutions on Palestine have since been passed by successive Labour Party Conferences, all of which implicitly negate the 1944 resolution is, says Shahak, of little consequence in this particular situation. A formal rescinding of that resolution would, however, be guaranteed a fair level of coverage in the Israeli media, and would be an important gain for the Palestinians and those fighting with them.

The Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine will be launching a campaign at Labour Party Conference to fight for the rescinding of the 1944 resolution, and will be calling on the support of all MPs and CLPs. For further details see future *Briefings*, or contact the LMCP at BM Box LMCP, London W1N 3XX.

For a long time, many Zionists, including some of your colleagues, the Labour Zionists, have been preparing plans for a total or nearly total expulsion of Palestinians from Palestine, usually disguised by the use of such terms as "transfer of the population" or "exchange of the population".

In July 1987 those plans have been given a new respectability in Israel.

An important public figure, General (Reserves) Rehavam Ze'evi, has proposed "to transfer" **all** the Palestinians of the occupied territories from the West Bank and Gaza to the surrounding Arab countries. He was supported by several other important Israeli politicians including Deputy Minister of Defence Michael Dekel.

One of their most important and influential arguments is the 1944 resolution of your party, which I understand is still valid, which called for the total transfer of all Palestinians from Palestine.

"There is surely neither hope nor meaning in a 'Jewish National Home' unless we are prepared to let Jews, if they so wish, enter this tiny land in such numbers as to become a majority... Let the Arabs be encourged to move out as the Jews move in."

This resolution influences many Israeli Jews into believing that the total expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland cannot be such a bad thing, since even the British Labour Party once recommended it, and formally this policy still has not been revoked.

I have seen and heard **this** argument used here, in Israel, many times in the last few weeks, usually with quotations from Labour Zionist leaders of that time.

I call on the British Labour Party and its National Executive Committee at its 1987 Conference to rescind with all due formality that wicked resolution which now has such a harmful and dangerous effect on Israeli Jewish opinion and which may be a factor in persuading a large and growing number of Israelis to support the expulsion of Israel's Arabs. I call on you to do this in addition to any political position you may or may not adopt on what is called "The Palestinian Question" and which should be called "Justice for Palestinians".

You owe this very minimal act to yourselves and to us. Do not continue to be, even in an indirect way, accessories to incitement to a crime against humanity. Your act of honesty in 1987 may be even more important than that of 1944.

(Prof) Israel Shahak

MacBride Conference

Keep up the pressure!

By Patrick Sikorski NUR

Kevin McNamara, Labour's newly appointed Principle Opposition Spokesperson on Northern Ireland, has isued legislative proposals on employment discrimination in Northern Ireland.

Condemning the Tories' proposed measures as a "missed opportunity", he puts forward a detailed blueprint, including a statutory duty on all employers in both public and private sectors to promote equality of opportunity and a demand that government contracts should be subject to equal opportunities requirements.

It is undoubtedly the most advanced statement of intent from a Labour Northern Ireland spokesperson on an issue which confronts sectarian loyalism in its heartlands.

Can it be implemented? This statement has not yet been adopted by Labour 's NEC. If it were, it would then have to win through into a manifesto, await the return of a Labour government, and then be successfully placed on the statute book.

Westminster legislation on the North doesn't have a good record. The Fair Employment Act (Northern Ireland) has been on the statute book for over 10 years. It, and the Fair Employment Agency to which it gave birth, have been a total and abject failure in face of the deeply entrenched bloc of loyalist workers and management.

Meanwhile the Thatcher and Reagan regimes are mounting a massive counter-offensive against the rapidly growing campaign against employment discrimination in the six counties.

Five American legislatures have adopted the MacBride Principles which are aimed at achieving equality of job opportunities in the North. Six more are considering adopting them.

The American ambassador to Britain has voiced his full support in Belfast recently to a forthcoming trip by Northern Ireland Secretary Tom King to the States aimed at halting the anti-discrimination campaign in its tracks.

McNamara acknowledges the role that MacBride has played to date but now says that the debate should move on. He is opposed to any campaign on MacBride:

"I oppose any moves towards disinvestment form Northern Ireland which I regard as unhelpful."

Unlike some in the movement the reasons he gives for this are not that "MacBride isn't for Britain — it was written for the States."

No, McNamara's reasons are clear when he states that his proposals have been worked out in full consultation with the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and other major trade unions in the North; and that he personally is making moves to facilitate multi-national investment in the North (De Lorean Mk II?).

The effect of such a strategy is to turn away the ever brightening spotlight being focussed on what is probably the murkiest and most disgusting corner of the British labour movement.

Around 80% of trade unionists in the North are affiliates of the British TUC. The recent cosmetic, public relations orientated intervention by trade union officials against the display of loyalist regalia in Short's was precisely because of the *threat* of disinvestment caused by the MacBride campaign in the USA.

Effective action cannot be postponed for at least another five years on the promise of Westminster legislating to defend individual rights. The British labour movement must bring collective censure and sanction to bear now against an injustice that must not be swept under the carpet yet again.

Ireland: the cause of Labour?

28th November
Camden Centre
Bidborough St, London WC1

Contact: Labour Committee on Ireland, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX

Black Sections

We will organise ourselves!

Once again this year the Labour Party Black Sections will go before our Party's Annual Conference to seek recognition of the right of Black members to organise and be represented at all levels of the Party.

By Kingsley Abrams National Secretary, Labour Party Black Sections

Once again, Black members will be seeking the legitimate right to lead the struggle against racism, and to be involved in the formulation of anti-racist policies.

Will it be the same as at this year's Greater London Labour conference, where we won the arguments but lost the vote? As people of the Black diaspora struggling against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, our history has taught us that whatever gains we've made over the years have had to be fought for. We know that nothing will be given to us.

It is well known that western civilisation is based upon the exploitation of Black countries. Douglas Rogers (*Tribune*, 7-14 August 1987) is correct when he comments that "the passionate hostility to Black Sections does not suggest that the Labour Party yet understands the deep hurt that Black people feel about their history under imperialist exploitation and the disabilities they still suffer."

Whole countries and continents were stolen from Black people. What is the USA today but a country stolen from Black people, from the native American people who were mercilessly killed while the declaration of Independence was being drawn up, and who today are confined to Bantustan-type reserves, where despair festers under white barbarism?

And where would the American economy be without its cotton plantations and the Black slavery upon which that economy was based? Hawaii, the 50th state of the USA, is not even part of the American mainland. Its original natives and their culture have been brutally repressed and reduced to a minority.

In Caribbean countries like Jamaica, white Europeans first wiped out the original native inhabitants, the Arawaks, then brought slaves from Africa to labour on their plantations.

From this historical perspective, the hurt we felt when our Party's leadership brutally denied a Black woman (Sharon Atkin) the right to stand in the general eleciton is all too understandable. That hurt was felt throughout the Black community where high unemployment, bad housing, low pay, police harassment, and deportations are a daily occurrence. After Sharon's removal, Labour lost Nottingham East by just over 400 votes.

The Labour Party is now faced with two contradictory phenomena. On the one hand, parts of the white working class are abandoning their allegiance to the Party, while on the other hand, Black people are demanding representation. Social democratic ideology, which has successfully penetrated the white working class, has failed to permeate into the Black community.

Within this context the Labour Party must address the question: to what extent has it taken the working class vote for granted? The Labour Party has historical links with the organised working class and the fact remains that working class people have for the most part aligned themselves with it.

Although the Labour Party has enjoyed the votes of the Black community its record on race relations and immigration in particular has been shameful. For a "socialist" party, the Labour Party has completely lacked any analysis of race and racism, allowing itself to be totally manipulated by the needs of capital.

In turn, despite the fact that the Labour Party has been responsible for the most stringent immigration controls (including the notorious "virginity test") Labour's public image is that "it is soft on race".

The Labour Party is caught up in this contradiction and has consequently itself been used as a scapegoat, together with Black people, for all the ills of the capitalist economy. Two different interpretations of this dilemma arise:

- that it exposes the antagonism between race and class politics, or, alternatively,
- that it demands the synthesis of the two.

Over the past four years the Labour Party Black Sections have been campaiging for a voice in the Party. We've argued that Black members must be given the opportunity to influence Party policy. We will continue to demand that anti-racist policies are part and parcel of the Party's overall strategy and campaigns.

Labour Briefing

NEC SLATE

Together with the Campaign Group, CLPD, and Labour Left Liaison, *BRIEFING* is urging support for the left slate for the NEC, printed below.

We have a number of publicly stated differences with some of those on the slate. Nonetheless this slate provides the left with the best chance of resisting increasing right wing control in the Party.

We urge all delegates to support the slate — and make sure the left's voice in the Party is heard.

Constituencies
Diane Abbott MP
Tony Benn MP
Eric Heffer MP
Ken Livingstone MP
Jo Richardson MP
Dennis Skinner MP
Audrey Wise MP

Women
Margaret Beckett MP
Linda Bellos
Joan Maynard
Clare Short MP

Treasurer
Gavin Strang MP

Conference Arrangements Committee
Dennis Canavan MP
Pete Willsman

500 Club:

Congratulations to this issue's winner — D. Robinson of Haringey. Well, Haringey Briefing supporters are currently leading the table of individual Briefing groups numbers of standing orders — so it's not so surprising the prize goes to Haringey again! For details of how to join the 500 Club, see centre pages.

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LABOUR BRIEFING

JOIN THE FIGHTBACK!

London fights back! An all-London campaign against the cuts in Council jobs and services which have perhaps hit London first and hardest was launched at a meeting held on Sunday September 20th. But the cuts will spread — and many places outside London are facing the same problems. MARK SEATON reports on the London campaign; we hope that *Briefing* supporters will organise similar broad campaigns in other parts of the country.

Delegates from trade unions, Labour Parties, voluntary groups, and others from across the capital attended the well-organised, day-long conference.

Reg Race kicked off proceedings with a graphic description of the next wave of Tory attacks. His sense of urgency was shared by others.

Speakers from Camden NALGO, which had initiated the Conference, described how Camden's Labour Group had unloosed the cuts juggernaut this summer. Reports from Haringey, Brent, Lambeth, Islington, Lewisham, Ealing, Hackney, Southwark, ILEA and elsewhere followed a familiar pattern.

The rhetoric of "Labour's caring cuts", placing services before jobs, freezing vacancies, ending temporary contracts, rent increases, overtime reviews, early retirement schemes... McGregorism has found a new home in London's town halls.

Too often, Council Leaders have tried to hide the scale of the crisis from the workforce and the community. They have employed divide and rule tactics — pitting workforce against the community, and manual against white collar workers.

Workers from Tory-controlled boroughs, like Westminster, outlined the savage attacks they currently face which, one delegate said, amounted to a campaign to eradicate local government trade unionism.

The clear message was that a united, determined, long-term campaign of resistance needs to be built from the bottom up. Local fightback campaigns are active in some areas, notably Haringey, but a great deal of intensive work needs to be done on the ground.

How do we go about building unity between workers and service users? How do we convince people that there is an alternative? That it is possible to fight back and win? How do we give people a sense of their own power?

These questions cropped up again and again. Ready answers there were none, but an honest resolve to work them out collectively prevailed.

Bill Bowring, one of the 31 surcharged Lambeth councillors, won applause when he called for an immediate fightback against present cuts to lay the groundwork for a successful campaign against privatisation, the break up of Council housing and the poll tax.

Afternoon workshops brought together local fightback campaigns, self-organised groups, NALGO members, manual workers, and anti-cuts councillors. Practical information and experiences were shared.

When the meeting reconvened, amendments to the founding statement proposed by the organisers were debated. All but one was accepted.

The rejected amendment, from the RCP, proposed that councillors be excluded from the campaign and that trade unions withdraw from all joint bodies with Labour Councils, and — appropriately — received even fewer votes than did the Red Front candidates in the General Election.

A co-ordinating committee of 20 was agreed by the meeting. They will have their work cut out for them. Resistance to the cuts across London is uneven. Communication, co-ordination, organisation are now top of the agenda.



PHOTO: Brian James (Public Eye)

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!