LABOUR
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Lessons of Eniskillen tragedy:

BRITAIN OUT OF IRELAND!

The death toll from the Enniskillen bomb is the latest in a long line of Irish tragedies.

That the bomb went off by accident, leaving the IRA to express their "profound regret" over the explosion, heightens the tragedy. There were no victors at Enniskillen.

By GEOFF BELL
Hackney North CLP

There were those who sought to be. The dust from the bomb had hardly settled before the dead were being used as little more than political footballs. Thatcher used them to demand the Irish government implement extradition. Unionist leaders used them to call for martial law. Loyalist gun-men used them as an excuse to fire indiscriminately into a Catholic crowd.

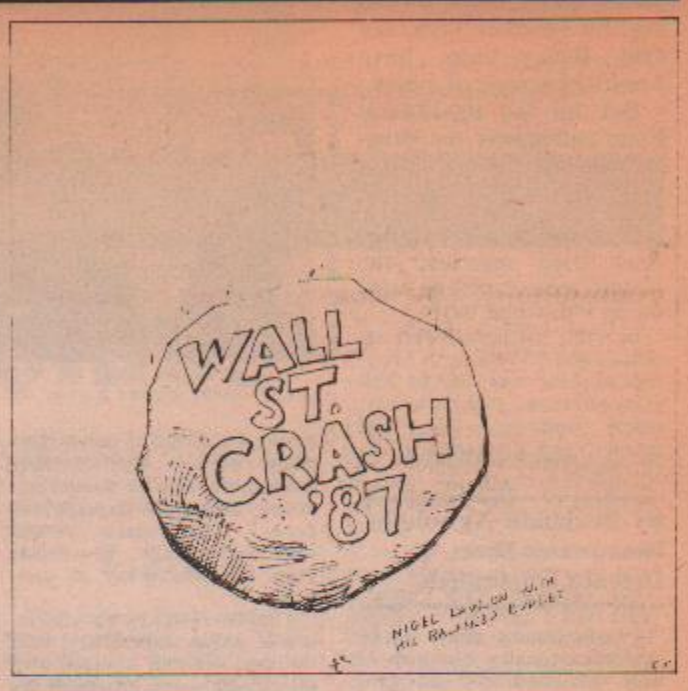
Such people do not mourn the dead at Enniskillen: they use them. For that reason and for many others — especially their own record of both indiscriminate and intended indiscriminate violence — they are in no position to give anyone lectures in morality. It remains a statistical fact that considerably more innocent people have died from British/Unionist violence in Ireland in the last 18 years than from Republican violence.

Rather than dwell on such gruesome death counts, or debate what someone in Ireland once called "the politics of the last atrocity", it is more profitable to look to the final cessation of political violence in Ireland. And to repeat what was obvious before and after Enniskillen: bullets, bombs, tanks, internment camps, plastic bullets, strip-searching, etc., are not endemic to the Irish but endemic only to the Irish political situation.

The essence of that is that British violence was allowed to triumph over Irish self-determination when Ireland was first divided. Everything that has happened in Irish/British politics since flows from that greatest act of criminality, including Eniskillen.

LAWSON STILL HOPES TO MAKE WORKING CLASS PAY:

WHAT A WAY TO RUN THE PLANET!



Chancellor Lawson's pantomime performance as the bearer of glad tidings may have caught the Labour Front Bench on the hop, but close examination of his autumn statement merely reveals once again the injustice, irrationality and dishonesty of Tory economic policy.

By MIKE MARQUSEE
Haringey Labour Briefing

● **The Public Sector Borrowing Requirement** is now down to £1 billion — and next year may see Britain's first balanced budget in 17 years. The Tories cheer. Labour mutters but fails to state the obvious: *of course*, you can always balance a budget by slashing expenditure on essential items like health, education, housing, industry and the environment while raising income by selling off assets (not only the nationalised monopolies but also Council houses and land) and taxing one-off oil revenues.

● What is the purpose of this balanced budget? And who shoulders the burden for balancing it? People waiting in the dole and hospital queues are not rejoicing over Lawson's coup. Labour should be championing their interests, instead of indulging in QC-style nit-picking over the Tories aileged "change of direction" on public spending.

● In real terms, **public spending** will grow by a mere 0.6% this year. This is substantially lower than was claimed in the March pre-election budget giveaway and in sharp contrast to the economic growth of which the Tories like to boast.

● The 1.2% rise in **health** spending in real terms is grossly inadequate to meet rapidly growing needs. It leaves local health authorities £200 million *short* of what they asked for and is way below the 7.8% increase recommended by the conservative British Medical Assocation. Health Authorities are being asekd to find £150 million extra from "cost-improvement" schemes.

● A pitiful 0.1% real increase in **education** will plunge schools and colleges into even deeper crisis. Education Minister Baker warned that even this "increase" could only be realised if Local Authorities cut teachers, close and merge schools, and reduce school meals subsidies. The £9.4 million Baker has earmarked for capital spending is a miserable pittance compared to the over £2 billion required in England alone to bring school buildings up to standard.

● A derisory increase of £6.7 million in **Health & Safety Commission** funding will not allow it to keep pace with the

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LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Campaign round-up

The reality of Remembrance Day

What is celebrated at the Cenotaph?

Remembrance Day is the official state occasion on which we are enjoined to honour those who died in two world wars and scores of other lesser conflicts before and since.

As a principle of human decency it is perfectly right to show respect for those who have died in wartime — whether as servicemen and women or as civilians.

What makes the whole Remembrance Day celebration so dubious, however, is its entanglement with the militaristic and nationalistic ritual of the Cenotaph ceremony with its implicit celebration not only of the fallen but also of the various causes and conflicts in which they fell.

Looking back on the hundred or so wars fought by Britain over the last century, one can't help concluding that most of them — with the exception of the anti-fascist 1939-45 war — had nothing to do with the self-defence of this country, or with the preservation of democracy and human rights there or anywhere else.

By PETER TATCHELL

For the most part, these wars were either old-fashioned inter-imperialist struggles in defence of Britain's global economic and strategic interests against those of rival Great Powers, such as Germany, or they were repressive counter-insurgency wars against national liberation movements in such diverse corners of the globe as Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, Oman, Aden and Ireland.

What British soldiers died for in these conflicts was, alas, frequently far from glorious. More often than not, they died propping up authoritarian and unpopular colonial regimes by means of undercover assassinations, psychological warfare, detention without trial, torture, and the framing of political opponents.

The shooting dead of 13 civilian protesters by the Parachute Regiment in Derry in January 1972; the systematic torture of political prisoners at El Mansoura Prison in Aden from 1963-66; and the mass round-up and internment of 16,000 suspected sympathisers of the Land Freedom Army in Kenya in April 1954, are only three examples from a lengthy, shameful catalogue.

In some cases, this repression was so blatant and pervasive that international human rights organisations were moved to launch their own investigations and to condemn publicly the British government for abuses perpetrated by its military personnel.

Allegations

Britain was brought before the Council of Europe in 1957 accused of 49 separate instances of torture during the Cyprus "emergency" of 1954-58.

In 1964 and 1966 respectively, the International Red Cross and Amnesty International both demanded, but were refused, permission to interview British-held political prisoners in Aden after persistent allegations that detainees were beaten, interrogated naked, refused toilet visits, and deprived of food and sleep.

Following claims of widespread army brutality in the north of Ireland, the British government was forced in 1971 to set up the Compton Committee. This Committee concluded that electric shocks, hooding, loud noise, and sleep and light deprivation had been used by the security forces and that these methods constituted "physical ill-treatment".

In 1976, the European Commission on Human Rights declared that the British army was guilty of "torture (and) inhuman and degrading treatment" in Ireland.

On Remembrance Day, as Britain's bloody imperial history is sanctified by the high priests of patriotism at the official Cenotaph ceremonies, we must remember the unspeakable things that the armed forces have often done in our name to people striving for independence and democracy in other countries.

Those people were on the side of justice and liberty. British soldiers were not. Lest We Forget!

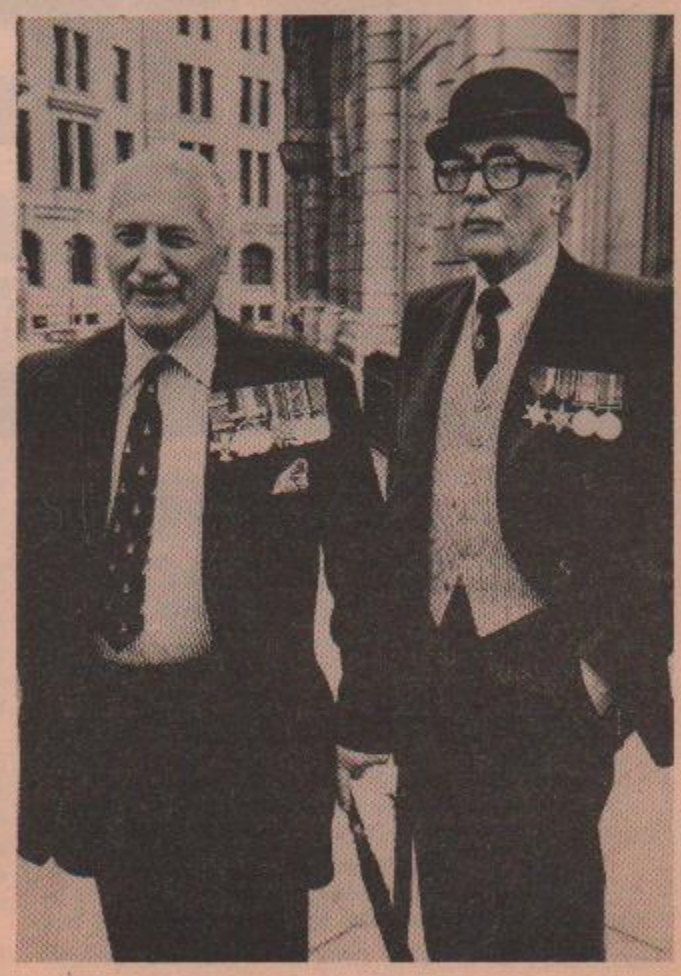


PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

Off to remember the dead — whose dead?

Broadwater Farm Trials end

Forty-two innocent youths in prison

When the Broadwater Farm trials came to an end on October 12th, the Old Bailey may have breathed a sigh of relief.

But for the Broadwater Farm community the struggle has only just begun.

The trials began in July 1986. Except for the murder trial, in which 6 defendants were tried together, the youths were generally tried on an individual basis.

In total, 361 people were arrested, and 157 charged. Sixty-nine of these were charged with grave offences, such as affray, petrol bombing, riot, and murder, and were tried at the Old Bailey.

By Benjamin Agwunobi
Broadwater Farm
Defence Committee

Twenty pleaded guilty and 49 pleaded not guilty, of whom 27 were acquitted and 22 convicted. Sentences range between 12 months and 30 years. Most defendants are appealing against their respective sentences, but already many appeals have been turned down.

What does the future hold for defendants' families and friends? What should the Defence Campaign do next?

One thing is clear: as long as 42 innocent youths are in jail there is no way the community can or will give up its fight. Although the immediate task is to work on the appeals, the fact that the community is still suffering the effects of the events surrounding the uprising on October 6th, 1985, means that there are numerous families and individuals whose lives have been drastically altered.

There are many children, juveniles, youths and parents whose lives will never be the same again, all because of the military-style invasion of Broadwater Farm before and after the uprising.

It must be remembered that during the period of police raids many homes were forcibly entered, doors were sledgehammered, and much damage was done. Individuals and sometimes whole households were arrested, many at gunpoint.



PHOTO: Broadwater Photo Co-op

Old Bailey picket during the murder trial

They were taken to various hostile police stations and held for days without contact with the outside world. Without any legal advice many were forced to manufacture the fantasy stories which the police clearly wanted to hear, not realising that such self-incriminating tales would sentence them to many years in jail.

In the courts, once the prosecution started describing how the Tottenham "riots" had been the "worst ever civil disturbance in mainland Britain," jury after jury was swayed. The atmosphere was always made worse when Blakelock was introduced, particularly the "hacking to death" aspect.

In the murder trial, it became obvious that in the wake of vulgar, racist pro-conviction publicity, the courts would be made to look ridiculous if it acquitted all the defendants.

When Justice Hodgson dismissed the case of the three juveniles on the grounds that their self-incriminating statements were obvious fantasy extracted under severe police pressure, the remaining question was whether the three remaining adults would also be acquitted.

After all, their alleged statements were not as self-incriminating as the juveniles'. In the case of Winston Silcott, "his" words would not in normal circumstances, amount to any sort of confession. He did not even sign the so-called statement.

Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite, who are not much older than the juveniles, did not say anything in their respective interviews that amounts to an admission of guilt.

Why then were they convicted for PC Blakelock's death? Indeed, throughout the trials, the prosecution was rarely able to produce any kind of concrete evidence. The Court was eager to find guilty parties and public scapegoats.

But the police officers who raided the home of Mrs Cynthia Jarett and contributed to her eventual death were never suspended or disciplined, let alone charged.

Is it not the case of one law for the police and another for the Broadwater Farm Community?

The Defence Campaign is still strong and has plenty of support. The ultimate objective is to ensure that justice is done, not just for those convicted, but for everybody connected with the uprising.

Economic debate

"Big bang" turns to "astonishing crash"

The scale and meaning of the astonishing crash of the world's stock markets is still being absorbed.

At the time of writing, it is estimated that £102 billion has been wiped off British share prices.

Because of the internationalisation and technological sophistication of the global stock market no major stock exchange escaped the effects of the crash — 24-hour trading means that the crash took just 24 hours to hit exchanges around the world.

What's behind the crash? Certainly, a situation in which stock trading is conducted on the basis of a diminished and severely recessed productive sector could not continue forever. Reagan's "military Keynesianism", running an enormous budget deficit based on ever-increasing military expenditure, has been causing great concern over many months and reflects the long-term decline of the US economy.

Other causes have been suggested, but one thing is clear. Whatever the precise cause, or constellation of causes, the left must acknowledge the severity of the crash.

We need to understand that 1987 is *not* analogous with 1929 for two major reasons. First, the post-war period has seen far greater state intervention in the economy than ever before.

Despite Thatcher's claims, the state is now intrinsically linked with the capitalist economy. Indeed, the whole long boom period can be directly accredited to the efforts of the state to *overcome* the market mechanism.

Thatcher may talk about non-intervention in the economy. But the state and the economy, in all the advanced capitalist countries, are meshed and the levers of direct control still exist.

Crash

Secondly, those who foresee the crash resulting in increased militarism, increased inter-state rivalry and economic autarchy neglect the *internationalisation* of capital that has occured over the last 40 or so years.

For instance, motor cars are no longer "Made in Britain" or any other single country — components are manufactured and assembled in a variety of countries spanning the globe.

By Mark Cole
University of York
Labour Club
(personal capacity)

Though the crash is severe, we should not expect the collapse of capitalism *as a result*. That smacks of spontaneism. What we should be prepared for is a political crisis, a crisis of the state as its *veneer* of impartiality vanishes. This is not inevitable but is certainly a possibility. The left should remind itself that the benefactors of the 1929 crash in Germany were not the socialists but the Nazis.

Most significantly, socialism has been re-established at the head of the political agenda. Kinnock and Gould's "weather vane" politics, constantly accommodating to the prevailing capitalist wind, have been smashed by the hurricane of the '87 crash.

Market

But it is Thatcher who will suffer most from these events, providing that socialists take up the correct arguments.

First we must make sure the so-called "free market" is exposed as phoney. It is not a perfectly functioning distributive entity. It is susceptible to crisis and collapse. And, insofar as the "free market" is the lynch-pin of the capitalist system and its ideological justification, the left needs to make maximum capital out of its patent failure.

Tosh

Secondly, the crash exposes the fallacy of "popular capitalism". It would be nice to think that in the light of recent events Hobsbawm and his Euro-Communist colleagues will be embarrased by the revisionist twaddle and empiricist tosh that they have been peddling over the last few years.

The *Financial Times* (24.10.87) carried a "Plain Man's (sic) Guide to the Crash" which advised small investors, interested in the forthcoming BP share issue, to — in the *FT's* words — "forget it".

All the recently denationalised industries fared badly in the crash and, for the first time since the Thatcher privatisation programme began, it is clear that ordinary people can, in fact, lose all their savings as well as make a quick buck on the stock market.

Remedy

The '87 crash provides socialists with a unique opportunity. Socialism provides an explanation of the crash — and a remedy, albeit an extraordinarily radical one.

The Left in the Labour Party needs to use these events to discredit Kinnock and his fellow-travellers by clearly posing the only genuine alternative to Thatcher. Outside the Party, we need to use the arguments outlined above to undermine Thatcher and, implicitly, capitalism.

This is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss.

Editorial

BRIEFING
LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Join forces to stop social security cuts!

Don't look now, but here comes another fait accompli!

Tory plans aim to demolish so much of the Social Security system by the next election that Labour's "new realists" will abandon even the promise of restoring it.

Since 1979 more than £10 billion has been cut from Social Security benefits: over £2 billion of this cash has been handed in tax cuts to the wealthiest 2% of the population.

Next April will see further huge cuts destroying Social Security as we know it. And as Chancellor Lawson and his City pals pigged it up at this year's Mansion House dinner, they were toasting the hopes of another £3 billion tax cuts next year — a chunk of which will again be stolen from the subsistence of the poorest claimants and pensioners.

Few workers, and far fewer claimants, will remember anything of Labour's feeble campaign against Norman Fowler's package of Social Security "reforms", pushed through in 1986. It was a sweeping series of brutal attacks designed to cut the benefits of at least 4 million claimants.

Already the Tories have done away with the maternity grant and the death grant. And only last week John Moore announced that child benefit has been frozen — clearly as a first step to its abolition.

But there is much worse to come. Next April the new law will:

- SCRAP Special Needs single payments — and replace them with discretionary loans from a cash-limited Social Fund, to be paid only after demeaning procedures, and repayable through deductions from weekly benefit payments.
- FORCE claimants to pay at least 20% of local rates (or poll tax) and all of their water rates.
- WORSEN and widen the poverty trap which penalises the poorest families for every extra pound they earn.
- CUT the special payments to people with disabilities.
- CUT at least £450 million a year from Housing Benefit payments, with 375,000 households (mainly pensioners) losing all benefits and nearly 4 million households getting less.
- CUT (and for many women abolish) the widow's benefit, to save £100 million a year by the mid 1990s.
- CUT the state pensions scheme, with a 20% cut-back in payments under the Earnings Related Scheme by 2013 — 26 years time.
- SCRAP Family Income Supplement, and replace it with Family Credit, *administered by the employers*.
- ABOLISH any right for claimants to appeal against a decision beyond their local DHSS office.

Scarcely a family in the land will remain unaffected by the Tory cutbacks, which bring back some of the worst aspects of the old Poor Law before the Welfare State, when hand-outs depended on charity. Yet the Labour response has been so pathetic that few will realise the horrors to come.

Valuable opportunities to campaign earlier this year in working class areas against the abolition of the death grant were lost as Kinnock & Co. shifted their sights from the working class voter to a much smaller layer of the middle class and white collar workers, producing June's election disaster.

But there is much more at stake in combatting the Tory offensive than chasing extra votes.

Nigel Lawson's policy of handing out tax cuts is much more than a short-term expedient to line the pockets of the rich: it is part of the Tories' long-term strategy of social engineering.

As each new penny-pinching cutback on state spending is imposed, and each new state industry is flogged off, Lawson promptly hands out the proceeds in tax cuts — effectively pulling up the drawbridge behind him.

In this way, he creates the spurious, lop-sided "boom" for some of those in jobs (at the expense of the low-paid and unemployed): but he also confronts Labour's timid front-bench team with a dilemma.

Do they commit themselves to reverse the cutbacks, and embrace the policy which Kinnock, John Smith and of course Brian Gould have now dismissed as unthinkable — an increase in taxation?

Or do they kow-tow to yet another fait accompli, accepting that a future Labour government would not even try to restore the services and benefits which the Tories have destroyed and abolished?

This double bind for Labour arises because Kinnock's team has not the slightest grasp or adherence to any socialist policy. Of course, a socialist response does not accept that there are only the two choices, nor does it depend on simply raising taxes within the present unstable, bankrupt system.

Simply redistributing the inadequate output of productive forces shackled by capitalism can only share out the misery less unequally.

Unemployment, and poverty created by the capitalist system (even more so in the present synthetic asset-stripping "boom") can only be tackled by a planned *expansion* of the economy. This in turn requires the nationalisation of the banks, finance houses and the major monopoly firms — precisely the politics rejected by Labour's leadership.

To pave the way for a socialist solution, and combat the electronic embezzlement and computerised con-tricks of today's bankers and speculators, a fight must be waged by the trade unions and labour movement at every level for workers' control, and the opening of the books of the City to reveal the anarchic workings of the present system.

The latest phase of capitalist economic lunacy, and the latest moves by the Tories to reshape society in their own vicious image, do not invalidate but rather underline the necessity for bold socialist remedies.

The labour movement must not be led by the nose into a defeatist acceptance of Tory policies: workers and claimants must be alerted and urged now to join forces to fight the imposition of the Social Security cuts next Spring.

There is still time to make this the one fait accompli that Lawson and Thatcher could not accomplish!

The coming US recession:

A view from the ruling class

The following extracts are taken from an article by leading American financier Felix Rohatyn. Known as the "man who saved New York", he is the financier mainly responsible for stitching up a deal with merchant banks to bail out the bankrupt city at the expense of the workforce and the poor.

The article, which appeared in the June 11th issue of the New York Review of Books (i.e. four months *before* the Stock Market crash), illustrates the alarm now spreading through the ranks of the US bourgeoisie, and recently evident in the desperate — if inconclusive — attempts at a bipartisan financial consensus in Washington.

The United States today is headed for a financial and economic crisis. What appeared to be only a possibility 5 or 6 years ago became a probability more recently, and has now become a virtual certainty. The only real questions are when and how. In addition, when the crisis occurs, it will entail, quite possibly, a worldwide recession.

We are no longer an independent country. For the first time in our history, we depend on foreign capital to finance day-to-day operations of our government. In 1986, almost half of our budget deficit of about $180 billion was financed by foreign purchases of treasury securities, mainly by the Japanese. From a financial point of view, we are being colonized...

In order to provide Japan and Germany with the funds that we need to borrow, we have allowed our domestic markets to absorb an ever-increasing amount of foreign goods, largely as a result of a gross overevaluation of the dollar during the years between 1980 and 1984. Even though we have dramatically changed course since 1985, collapsing the value of the dollar with other dangerous consequences, our trade deficit reached $160 billion last year and seems to be locked in for years to come. It is worth noting that, even if we were able to reduce our trade deficit by $20 billion per year, by 1995 our external debt would be about $1.5 trillion and the interest on that debt about $120 billion annually.

...our domestic national debt has doubled over the last 5 years and is well over $2 trillion. Interest on the debt alone will be about $125 billion. Corporate debt, partly as a result of unbridled takeover activity fuelled by the new phenomenon of the junk bond market, is at its highest level in 25 years. By the end of 1986, the total long- and short-term debt of non-financial institutions was about $1.6 trillion.

Debt

... the debt of the less-developed countries (LDCs) to governments and banks is now more than $1 trillion as a result of year-after-year rollovers, whereby debtor countries borrow the interest on their debt and add it on the the principal amount.

Political

There is no purely American solution to any of our major economic problems. The US cannot afford a recession that would drive our deficits to more than $300 billion and possibly cause a crash in the value of the dollar as well as in the stock and bond markets. The result could be extensive domestic and international banking defaults, a world recession, and the political instability in large parts of the globe. ...

The coming weakness in the US economy must be replaced with growth in foreign economies. As the dollar collapses, the German and Japanese economies will slow down considerably, for both countries depend significantly on sales to the US. Combined with the inability of less-developed countries to grow as a result of crushing debt service, we are coming close to causing a world-wide economic slowdown without helping ourselves in any real way.

Dwarf

There is no precedent or analogy for the worldwide financial structure that has been created in recent years. The amounts of capital that are richocheting around the world dwarf anything that has been experienced. One and a half trillion dollars *per day* now flows through New York's Clearing House Interbank Payment System (CHIPS), which processes all the domestic and foreign payments passing through New York banks. This amounts to one third of our *annual* Gross National Product. The relationships between exchange rates and trade, between interest rates and economic activities, between fiscal and monetary policies, have become less and less predictable. The potential for a major shock in the credit system and the securities markets gets greater and greater.

Radical

The fallout from some of these problems goes considerably beyond the economic sphere. The ability of democratic governments in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, the Philippines, etc., to survive in the face of continued reductions in the standard of living is questionable. Radical political movements will spring up, calling for the repudiation of debts to the Western banks; whether or not they succeed, they could bring on right wing military dictatorships that may follow similar debt-related policies. The problems that would be created for the US by a radicalized Mexico are obvious. Whether the radicalization is left wing or right wing, the result may be the same: virulent anti-Americanism and an increasingly unstable southern border. The problem of illegal immigration, already extremely serious, will become even greater. The racial and political tensions in the US, especially if we are in the throes of a recession, will heighten considerably. And no one has made any kind of estimate of the additional military cost of having to maintain tighter security on the US-Mexican border.

In our own country, we have combined runaway borrowing and deficits with neglect for our domestic needs and a climate of deregulation pushed to dangerous extremes. For the sake of competition, we have broken up AT&T, and the result has been both bad service and higher prices. We have deregulated the airlines and the resulting price wars did, indeed, lower fares. However, one airline after another is on its way to bankruptcy or to being acquired by another. The result will be a few huge airlines, with questionable financial structures, poor services with possibly higher pices, and worrisome safety factors. Deregulation of the financial markets has resulted in an explosion of private debt, unprecedented market speculation, and the sordid abuses in the financial industry that have been coming to light in recent months. Deregulation, as with most things in life, has to be done in moderation; it has been carried too far. The free market is not always right; it surely is not always fair. It should not be turned into a religion...

Unwaged Alliance

On October 31st and November 1st over 100 unemployed delegates from 35 of the strongest unemployed and unwaged local, regional and national groups from all over Britain assembled to forge a joint alliance.

Throughout the 80s, we have continued fighting to maintain and improve our living standards and secure our basic needs as a right (i.e. a decent income for all, homes, meaningful jobs, etc.), and to demand respect for our voice and full participation in the life and decisions of the community.

The major unemployed organisations — the Federation of Claimants Unions (established 1968), the National Union of Unemployed and Workers (established 1981), the London and South East Federation of Unwaged Groups (est. 1981), the Midlands Unwaged Federation (est. 1986) and the Lothian and Central Soctland Federation (est. 1987) — agreed to unite to co-ordinate and further their struggles by establishing a national **Congress of Unwaged Organisations** to be held annually. The first will be in Bradford, March 1988.

A **Co-ordination Network** was created, based upon regional and national secretariats.

To further our oposition to government plans to force us and the millions of our fellow unemployed on to **work for dole** schemes (JTS, YTS, Community Programme, etc.), a national **Day of Action Against Slavery** has been called for Monday December 14th.

We are calling on all trade unionists to boycott these schemes, for those on them to take industrial action, and for all unwaged groups to publicise and take relevant action in their own areas.

We seek not sympathy or charity but Solidarity and Justice!

CONTACT

Lothian & Central Scotland Federation, c/o Lothian Claimants Union (Edinburgh Branch), 2 Cranston Street, Edinburgh.

Midlands Unwaged Federation, c/o Claimants Fightback, 448 Stratford Road, Birmingham 11.

London & SE Federation of Unemployed, Claimants' and Unwaged Groups, c/o Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Sq., London WC1.

Federation of Claimants Unions, 296 Bethnal Green Rd, London E2.

National Union of Unemployed & Workers, 8 Oakwood Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk.

CRE v. NATFHE

The CRE has decided to support a Birmingham Black lecturer's appeal against the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) scheduled for the New Year.

Mrs Bismillah Weaver, an employee at Bourneville College of Further Education, registered with the Chair of Governors a complaint of racial harassment against other members of staff. When Mrs Weaver, a NATFHE member, asked NATFHE for advice they refused, choosing to represent the three members (all officers of NATFHE) against whom she had made the complaint. The reason they gave was thought by Mrs Weaver to be racially discriminatory and to contravene the Race Relations Act.

The Industrial Tribunal, held in Birmingham, in June 1987, was extremely critical of NATFHE's role. It criticised:

- the NATFHE Regional Officical who had conducted the preliminary enquiry on the union's behalf, for not considering the issue of racial harassment in the report he presented to NATFHE's head office.
- the NATFHE Head Office Official who considered the issue, for drawing the conclusion that one of the members Mrs Weaver complained about was not a racist.

A NATFHE official at the hearing confirmed NATFHE policy by stating that even when an applicant's complaint (including one of racism) had merit, NATFHE "would not have pursued the applicant's complaint because it coud have led to loss of tenure for another union member."

Despite the severe criticism of NATFHE and the manner in which it dealt with Mrs Weaver's allegations of racial harassment against co-trade unionists, the Tribunal decided that NATFHE, in accordance with its policy, has "a legitimate duty to protect the tenure of its members and to avoid breaches of obligations to members whose tenure is at risk which outweighs the limited discriminatory effect of the condition imposed."

The decision of the CRE to support Mrs Weaver's appeal can be seen as an important development in the two year struggle she has waged with NATFHE in her search for both justice as a trade union member and accountability from trade union bureaucrats to rank and file members.

Serious questions concerning the rights of Black and women members in trade unions, and in Local Authority employment, have been raised by this important test case.

GEC Coventry

ASTMS members at GEC Telecommunications, Coventry, met on October 23rd to discuss the unresolved position of two colleagues recently declared redundant and the forthcoming merger with Plessey.

The membership decided to proceed to ballot.

The meeting was "off the clock" and unpaid — factors which deterred some members from attending and participating in the debate. The hire of the venue cost us £325 — a result of the company's unwillingness to permit the use of a hall on site.

This typifies the bloody-minded obstruction of GEC management, which has insisted that any discussion of this issue by the union side must be in our own time or without pay. The most astonishingly insensitive example of this was a decision to deny paid leave to senior ASTMS and TASS representatives attending a joint meeting with Plessey collegues the day after a Plessey director had been shown around the main Coventry GEC site.

In the absence of concrete information from management, the rumour mill is working overtime! Having starved us of facts on which to base realistic assessments, management then exhibits pained surprise when people believe the speculations of the trade and business press.

Nevertheless, ASTMS will be trying to work with our colleagues in other unions. To this end our Conference centre at Knutsford is the venue for a meeting of union representatives on November 14th, which will endeavour to gather colleagues from all unions and all sites to discuss the merger.

Broad Left conference

The problems associated with taking control of a major trade union dominated this year's CPSA Broad Left Conference.

The Conference, the largest since the Communist Party and Kinnockites left the organisation in 1984, took place in Liverpool on the second weekend in November.

More than 300 activists gathered to discuss future policy after a 5 month period in which the Union has been controlled and run by a Broad Left National Executive Committee. Inevitably the performance of the Executive came under close scrutiny.

The two main discussions followed a remarkably similar pattern in debating the 1987 Civil Service Pay Campaign and the Executive's role in the recently defeated London Passport Office dispute.

The whole issue of pay is absolutely crucial for CPSA. The defeat of the 1987 Campaign has led to widespread demoralisation among the membership and has strengthened the hand of the employer.

By Alastair Wallace
CPSA Broad Left

Despite coming into office too late significantly to alter the course of events, the Broad Left NEC has had to pick up the pieces. Within this context the right wing and soft left (who are becoming increasingly indistinguishable) have had a degree of success in forcing the Executive onto the defensive.

The debate on the defeat of the 1987 Pay Campaign polarised between a motion which blamed the Broad Left (SWP) and one which exonerated it (*Militant*). The truth, of course, lies somewhere in between.

Mistakes were made; but they were not the reason for the defeat. The important point is that lessons must be quickly learned before next year. In voting for the *Militant* resolution it is not clear that the Conference has done this.

The Passport Office strike, in a Broad Left stronghold, was in response to management victimisation of CPSA members in the wake of this year's pay campaign. Seven members of the Office branch committee were disciplined and one sacked.

The membership responded with a 4-week all-out strike, but were driven back to work after other Passport Offices failed to come to their support.

It is undoubtedly true that the Executive could and should have done more for the dispute — for example, it was virtually unheard of outside London.

However, SWP members unfortunately turned the issue into an attack on *Militant* supporter John Macredie, and the emotion was lost, with the debate agian failing to draw the lessons of the dispute.

Both debates illustrated well the problems facing a hard left union leadership in the current political climate. In addition to the attacks by the government, the EC have faced a mercilesss battle waged by the bureaucracy of CPSA, aided by the right wing and the soft left. They have attempted to block the implementation of policy at every turn.

Too often, however, the Broad Left majority has chosen to back down.

The way out lies in the fundamental nature of the Broad Left. Unlike its enemies it is a rank and file organisation based on democratic accountability and the need for struggle.

It needs to draw on these strengths, ensuring that the whole weight of the organisation is thrown behind those who are willing to fight.

The coming months see the start of two major campaigns in CPSA: 1988 Pay and affiliation to the Labour Party. It is its work around these issues that will determine whether the Broad Left sinks or swims.

BC disciplinary code

A "bigot's charter"

The National Union of Mineworkers is worried that British Coal's new disciplinary code could be used against miners who are gay or HIV positive.

The code allows BC to discipline employees for behaviour *outside* the workplace — even if no offence has been committed and even if they have been acquitted in the courts.

Managment will have the power to dismiss a miner if it feels his behaviour renders him unsuitable to do his job or unacceptable to his fellow workers.

The NUM has described the code as "a draconian threat to civil liberties." The general secretary of the Notts Area NUM, Henry Richardson, said:

"We are worried that the code might affect gay miners and those who are HIV positive. It's so open-ended, it could be used to discriminate against anyone. A homophobic manager could easily use it to take out his prejudices against gays."

By Peter Tatchell

A spokesperson for BC in Nottinghamshire was evasive:

"It is impossible to give any definite answer about how the code might affect gays and those exposed to AIDS. Each case would have to be decided on its merits."

However, he did admit that the code could be used against a gay employee convicted of gross indecency — on the grounds that miners have to shower together after each shift!

At BC's London headquarters, Keith Beeston stressed that the new disciplinary code was based on model proposals drawn up by the conciliation service, ACAS, which had already been adopted by 20 other major corporations.

When asked whether gay employees woud be affected by the code, Beeston was also noncommittal:

"It all depends," he said. "I cannot give you a clear answer to what is a purely hypothetical question. One could imagine certain circumstances where it might apply."

When pressed, he suggested that BC medical staff who were required to undertake physical examinations of employees might be regarded as unsuitable to continue their employment if it was discovered they were gay or had been convicted of a gay sexual offence.

Beeston alsoconceded:

"If other employees objected to working alongside a person who was gay or HIV positive, management would have to consider invoking the disciplinary code."

This interpretation of the code is described by Richardson as:

"very disturbing... The disciplinary code is effectively a bigot's charter because it will allow people to be sacked because of the ignorance and prejudice of others around them."

FUSE turns into damp squib

The privatisation of the electricity supply industry is the biggest sell-off yet planned by the Thatcher government.

With assets of £50 billion it could raise in a single flotation more than all the money raised in privatisation from 1979 to 1987.

This privatisation is necessary if the government is to raise the funds for their reactionary programme.

On Saturday October 31st a Conference was held in Leeds by FUSE — the Federation of Unions Supplying Electricity — which has been set up to oppose this privatisation.

FUSE itself comprises the unions in the electrical supply industry — but the Conference was an open Conference with special invitations to the unions in industries directly involved such as coal mining and railways. Both these industries will suffer massive job losses if the flotation goes through.

By Alan Thornett
Trade Union Briefing

Principle speakers at the Conference, in which the most prominent union was NALGO and in which the EETPU was not in evidence — were Dave Feidkent, NUM Research officer; Paul Jagger, Secretary, Yorkshire and Humberside TUC; Phil Beeley, leader of Bradford City Council; John Edmonds of the GMB; John Prescott MP; Mike Jeram, NALGO National Officer; and the Director of the Electricity Consumers Council.

Although the Conference was well funded, it had not been campaigned for and attracted only 80 or 90 people, despite the enormity of the issue.

However, it was not that those who did attend were given any kind of perspective as to how to fight the privatisation. It emerged as a typical officially-backed cuts campaign — aimed not at mobilising the workers in the industry against the move, but "influencing public opinion".

Alan Bell, a NALGO member from Essborough power station in Yorkshire, was quickly put down by the platform when he argued that if public opinion was effective in stopping privatisation of this sort the government would not be able to touch the NHS — which has massive public support!

He called for united action between Power workers, miners and railworkers — starting with a one-day strike.

The policy of FUSE, however, had been decided in advance, behind closed doors; and no decisions were allowed at the Conference.

It is hard to see where the campaign can go with its present policy, and another opportunity to start to take action against government policy has been lost.

Socialist solidarity is the answer!

One hundred and fifty people attended the Trade Union Solidarity Conference in Leeds on the weekend of November 7th and 8th.

It was called by ex-Silentnight strikers, Oxford and Tower Hamlets Disputes Support Committees; and suported by ex-strikers at Hangers, Wapping and a number of other groups involved in recent disputes and support committees, the Campaign Group of MPs, several Trades Councils and trade union branches.

Tony Richardson (Oxford Disputes Support Committee) outlined the aims of the Conference.

He attacked the TUC's "new realism" which had led to Union leaderships selling out strikes including the miners, printworkers, Silentnight and Hangers.

He called for the formation of a national network of support committees to help break down the isolation that these strikers found themselves in.

A speaker from GCHQ outlined the now years-long struggle to maintain trades unionism at Cheltenham.

Roy Butlin from Coalville NUR related the heroic stand of his members who refused to move coal from their depot for a year, despite the fact that only 30 Leicestershire NUM members were on strike.

By PETE COOPER

He pointed out that since the strike 3 neighbouring depots, including Leicester, all of which worked during the strike, had been closed or threatened with closure, thus exposing the tie that collaboration with the employers guarantees jobs.

Terry French (Kent NUM), gaoled as a result of the miners' strike, told the Conference of his experience in prison and since in his campaign for reinstatement of sacked and gaoled miners.

He attacked the majority of the NUM leadership and the new leadership of Betteshanger for their indifference and inactivity to their plight.



Terry French

PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

He explained how 38 sacked miners had been driven on May 1st this year to picketting out nine pits in the Doncaster panel of S. Yorks Area — involving 13,000 miners — despite the opposition of the Yorks Area leadership.

This action led to the Frickley dispute, and to threats of expulsion from the union and consequent withdrawal of financial support for the sacked miners.

The Conference enthusiastically agreed to supporting (including financially) Terry's determination to see that a conference of sacked miners takes place (in accordance with NUM policy) and that decisions on the future of the sacked miners happen there.

Janet Seymour, ex-Silentnight striker, and John Laing, ex-Wapping striker, and others spoke of their experiences on their long strikes, and pointed out the need to break out of their isolation. This, they said, could be helped by a national network of support groups.

Over a dozen workshops were held over the weekend. A discussion on fighting for new leaderships in the trade unions revealed a range of opinions on how to challenge the current defeatism and betrayals of practically every trade union leadership.

Most people spoke in favour of the need for a rank and file movement, although clearly different things were meant by this.

Workshops were also held on sacked and gaoled miners, building solidarity in the Labour Party, on women and black people and the trade unions and on lesbian and gay rights. Dot from Kellingley Women Against Pit Closures reminded us that WAPC is still alive and well; and they had recently opened up a women's centre concentrating so far on educational and social activities.

The Conference agreed after a lively debate, to elect a 16-person Steering Committee, over 50% of whom are women, to co-ordinate future Solidarity work and to produce a regular bulletin. Conference rejected a resolution from the Gateshead Support Group demanding a structure agreed to by a recent solidarity conference in Manchester as a precondition for a united national solidarity network.

The new national network was given an immediate shot in the arm when the delegate from the Hull docks promised boycott action in support of strikes being supported by the national Solidarity Network. This would also be taken to the national port stewards committee.

As Terry French said, "This Conference has given me some hope for the first time in a long while."

The first meeting of the new Steering Committee will take place on December 12th in Leicester. For details of the national network contact Janet Seymour, 3 Hill Street, Barnoldswick, Coln, Lancs; 0282 812864.

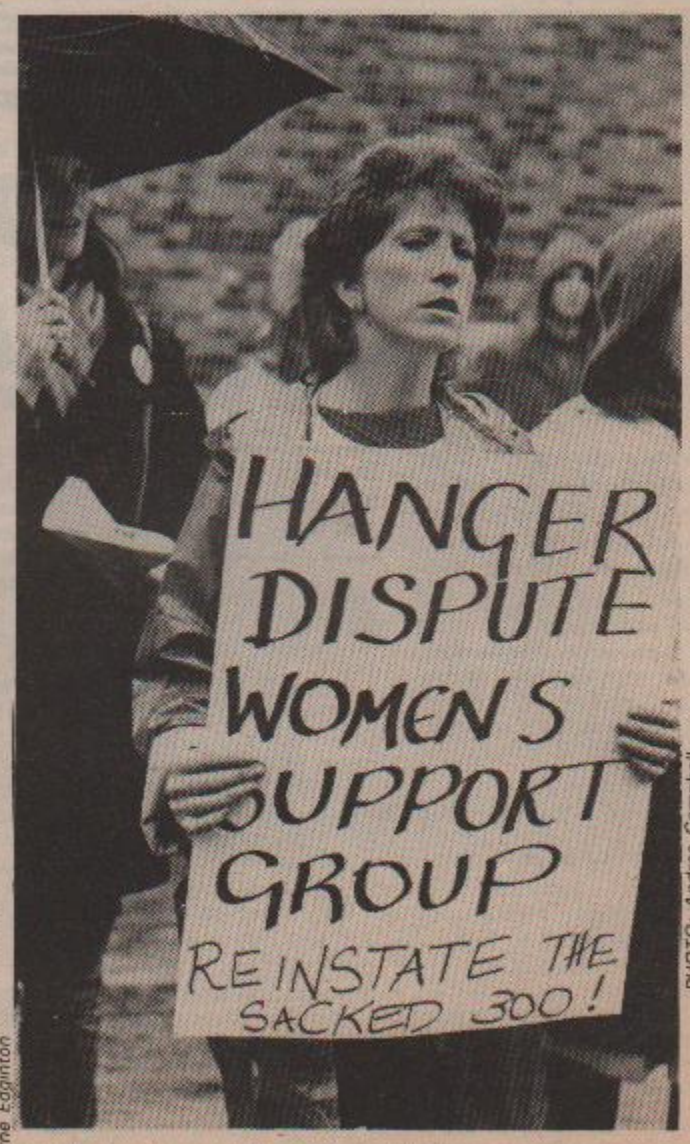


PHOTO: Andrea Campbell

John Laing

I was involved in the Pit Support Groups and in the Pit Strike. We were asked to form Print Support Gorups on behalf of SOGAT.

I was a member of the Tower Hamlets Support Gorup. Being a sacked worker, I had to liaise with the Tower Hamlets Support Group.

When the dispute ended the group decided to carry on as a workers support group, getting involved in local issues not just industrial disputes, along with several other prominent support groups the idea of a national support group network emerged.

Wapping was lost due to the unwillngness of the union to spread the dispute and the rank and file membership being stifled in their attempts to form their own elected strike committees. Support groups will be able to assist disputes not only on the moral, physical and financial support but also on the lessons learnt from previous disputes.

There should be a challenge to the existing leaderships of SOGAT, but many activists are not only beng victimised by newspaper companies, but this is also being allowed to happen by the unions to prevent these members becoming active within the union. I myself have been recently dismissed by the *Daily Telegraph* and have received no support financially, which is usually a union minimum. I was dismissed for supporting the FOC who was also victimised by management in an attempt to break the union.

I feel the Conference has been beneficial for many people who have become frustrated by their trade union's acceptance of what is happening within the labour movement. I also feel that people in attendance have realised that class struggles that other people have been involved in are not solely based in industrial disputes.

I think it should link up by being seen to be there and active. It should be non-sectarian. As individual Labour Party members we should be involved.



Pickets outside Wheelers restaurant

Janet Seymour

At the end of the Silentnight dispute we wanted to build some sort of Support Work Group to help people as we had been helped.

This was printed in the letter we sent out to thank our supporters.

On the strength of that letter the Oxford & Tower Hamlets Support Groups contacted us, and encouraged us to set up a Support Group and to take it further to learn the lessons of the disputes which could possibly help us with future struggles, and to work directly with established support groups and eventually build up to a national network of support groups. We felt this was a good idea and went forward.

There are a lot of lessons from our struggle, and they are parallel to a lot of other disputes. For instance, there were things that we started doing some months into this strike, that we should have been doing six weeks into it.

The boycott campaign wasn't started until quite late into the strike.

Another was what Terry French mentioned in the Conference — that while finance is very important to sustain the strike, it does not win any dispute.

If we could get together with those who have been in and supported disputes, we would find between us where the common things apply and what we could do to change things.

If there was a body which could give advice at the beginning of a strike then they would be more successful. I don't only mean strikes but also victimisations of workers, tackling racist issues, etc.

The basic network in the unions is there but it's not enough. We need extra help to win disputes. If the unions changed now, you will need support groups because people wish to get involved.

I am pleased with the Conference. People have come, worked hard and debated. Providing we go away from there with a network, I will be more than happy. There is a strong common feeling that we need to work towards something else.

Labour Party

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Get out your wigs and gowns, comrades!

The new electoral college procedure for the selection of parliamentary candidates is going to be a nightmare for the Party, and a blessing for the legal profession.

I suppose this has nothing to do with the fact that a large number of Labour MPs are solicitors and barristers. Over to you, John Smith, QC.

By John Wilton
Birmingham Edgbaston CLP

Make sure you do not end up as a constituency secretary in a year or so, comrades — you could be in for sleepless nights and headaches trying to fathom the new procedure — especially the breakdown of the weighted percentage proportional split between branches and affiliated organisations.

A maximum of 40% of the overall vote is to be allocated to affiliated organisations. How that 40% is split between those organisations is a *real spider's web*. The Party Franchise document outlining the procedure offers this helpful advice:

"If an affiliated organisation does not send delegates to the General Committee or whose delegates are ineligible they will not be eligible to participate in the ballot."

Reassuring, isn't it?

If less than 40% of your General Committee (GC) is made up of affiliated delegates, then you had better get some large batteries for your calculators, comrades, because you are in for fun and games working out "weighted" percentage votes.

Under the old procedure a member could vote several times at the *nomination* stage. Now, in Neil Kinnock's "modern" electoral college "one member, one vote" (OMOV) system you have the real Thatcherite choice of the free market.

The "new realism" in the electoral college procedure is that you can vote several times at the *selection* stage — at your party branch, at your trade union branch, at the affiliated organisations you are a member of (i.e. Fabians, Co-op, Socialist Societies, etc.). What a good idea, Neil: "One member, six or more votes"!

The procedure for affiliated organisations is vague and unregulated. This, of course, has to be so as they are autonomous bodies and as such their internal working cannot be dictated by the Labour Party.

Consequently, in the Party Franchise procedure guidelines it states:

"The Secretary of each affiliated organisation will receive a ballot paper for that branch to be completed in order of preference and returned to the CLP. The organisation will determine *if* it will hold meetings for the levy-paying members of the trades union or the members of socialist societies to interview the candidates." (my emphasis)

All this is designed to protect sitting Labour MPs — predominantly white males, which is why the attempt at Brighton to get the constitutional amendment of "at least one woman on every shortlist" (as agreed by 1986 Conference) incorporated into the electoral college procedure was opposed so bitterly.

The procedures in the Party Franchise documents clearly allow for shortlists of one, in most cases excluding the presence of at least one woman on every shortlist.

The document states:

"When the Executive Committee are recommending a shortist of more than one person there must be at least one woman on the shortlist where a woman has been nominated."

The indication here is that where there is a shortlist of one (the sitting MP) there need be no women (unless, of couse, the MP is a woman).

Most constituencies with sitting MPs therefore will be tempted to opt for shortlists of one — the sitting MP — rather than enter the administrative, bureaucratic and possible legal tangles of the electoral college.

This is precisely why getting the constitutional amendment of "one woman on every shortlist" passed by 1988 Conference and incorporated into the selection procedures is of prime importance. Many of the white, male right wing MPs could then find themselves opposed only by left wing women.

This offers the chance of a real breakthrough for the left, and good ground on which to fight the leadership. The macho sexist leadership can be shown in its true colours and its wheeler-dealing and manoeuvring behind the scenes exposed.

Our main response to the "unworkable" electoral college therefore must be to fight to get at least one (socialist) woman on every shortlist. But other approaches must be pursued as well. For reselection to be more effective we have to get more people from the left to stand.

We have to ensure that those people presented as left candidates at selection conferences are just that. In too many cases so-called left candidates (and subsequent MPs) have acquiesced to the leadership, metamorphosing into Kinnockites or worse!

We must also use the Party's policy review to our advantage and link it to the new selection procedures. We must build broad support among the rank and file membership for existing, and new, left policies, and then use the result of the policy review to test the "credentials" of candidates at selection meetings.

In this way, we can expose those, both of the right and of the so-called left, who do not endorse left policies. We must judge people by their actions, not just their words.

Rank and file members at selection meetings must be made fully aware of the record of sitting MPs and of all other candidates.

Finally, we must ensure that our trade union branches and affiliated organisations do hold proper metings to interview all the candidates.

The electoral college is Kinnock's half-way compromise. He, and the right on the NEC, *lied* to the members in the Party Franchise consultation paper about not bringing any proposals on selection and reselection to the 1987 annual Conference. His nose just gets a little bit bigger with each lie.

Ultimately, when the electoral college is seen not to work, he can argue for shift to the "one member, one vote" system he wanted all along. This move is facilitated in the Constitutional Amendment passed at Conference (which delegates only received a few days before, and some never saw until they got to Conference).

Hidden away in this was the statement "The NEC will have the right to modify the procedure, if required, subject to ratification by the subsequent Party Conference."

And is Party Conference really going to overturn 50, 60 or more selections and reselections carried out under any procedure "modified" by the NEC?

Constituency Labour Parties should use this clause to bombard the NEC now with resolutions calling on them to incorporate the "one woman on every shortlist" constitutional amendment (i.e. no shortlists of one man) into the selection procedures, with subsequent ratification by next year's Annual Conference.

Kinnock wants OMOV and the removal of accountability. The fight over the selection and reselection procedure was not completed, or finished, at Brighton. It was only just starting. We have to devise further ways of making MPs accountable. If necessary, for instance, we will have to organise regular monthly or bi-monthly constituency membership meetings.

We also have to make MPs accountable in other ways. We should submit resolutions to 1988 Conference demanding that MPs have one job — that of being an MP.

The fight over reselection and accountability is one the left cannot afford to lose. All our policy gains are useless if our representatives are not accountable, and it all gets left to whatever goes on in Kinnock's wooden head.

Task for Black Sections:

Turn the unions into an anti-racist force!

The policy review agreed by Labour Party Conference at Brighton presents the Black Section with an unprecedented opportunity to establish anti-racist socialism as a positive force in British politics.

For the last twenty-five years — including its eleven years in government — the labour movement has vied with the Tories in attacking the Black communities.

These attacks have taken the form of immigration laws and the proliferation of racist practices in all aspects of life.

More subtly, leading Labour politicians have rubbished the protests made by Black people on a variety of issues, ranging from the lack of police accountability to the lack of multi-racial education.

By Narendra Makanji
Vice Chair, Labour Party Black Sections

The Black community has resisted all these attacks.

Bill Morris, the deputy general secretary of the TGWU, has paid tribute to the politics of the Black communities, saying:

"Black people could take a lead in revitalising a labour movement that in many cases has grown stale and tired. Great reserves of militancy and commitment exist in the Black communities. They could be a priceless resource for the unions, if the unions could only learn to open up to them. That needs *structural changes* in the trade union movement." (My emphasis)

Trade unions hold more than 90% of the vote at the Labour Party Conference and are uniquely placed to bring about an end to racist practices — particularly in the workplaces — and to deliver anti-racist policies for the Labour Party.

The growing ranks of Black members must spearhead this process. Black Sections can help by concentrating on achieving change in the trade unions, including the establishment of Black caucuses, an uphill task.

Success in carrying out such an initiative will require the mass participation of Black trade unionists, supported by anti-racist *action*, not just words.

Other strategies on offer to Black Sections only highlight the problems we face, and do nothing to solve them.

The "affiliation" option proposed recently by Paul Sharma in *Tribune* is not new. It was considered in 1985 when proposals came from three different sources: Poale Zion, Eric Heffer (then a member of the NEC), and a minority report from the NEC "Positive Discrimination" working group.

What is proposed is the same structure adopted by Poale Zion and the nine other socialist societies and organisations like the Co-op, NOLS, SEA and the Labour Clubs. They band together for one place on the NEC.

Eric Heffer suggested the establishment of a new "division" on the NEC — the same as for women and youth. This proposal was defeated 16-8 by the NEC on June 13th, 1985.

Since then, significant developments have taken place in the unions. TGWU at its Biennial Delegate Conference this year agreed to set up Black Members Committees and GMB has reserved ten places on its ruling national executive for women members.

If powerful groups like these were to support any similar new proposals for Black Socialists, capable of winning majority support on the NEC and at the Labour Party Conference, we would be open to persuasion. But there is currently no offer on the table which would guarantee a Black voice within the Party.

One way or another, we have to organise in the trade unions and use the strength of Black membership to transform them into an anti-racist force.



Narendra Makanji

LIVINGSTONE INTERVIEW:
My strategy for Labour

This is Part II of our interview with KEN LIVINGSTONE.

Here, Ken gives his views on the Monarchy, and on relations between a future radical Labour government and the State. He also discusses his current attitude to *BRIEFING* and the hard left.

The interviewers were JENNY FISHER and CHRIS KNIGHT.

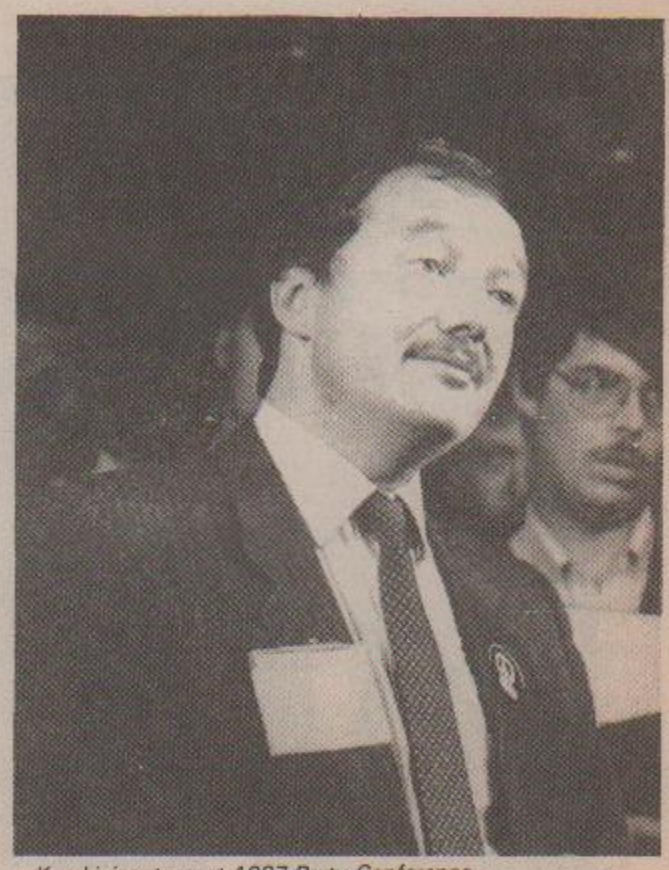


PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Ken Livingstone at 1987 Party Conference

***Chris:* The defeat of the miners, the fiasco of the GLC's response to rate-capping and its eventual abolition, the failure to check privatisation and of course the Tories' third electoral victory have all contributed to the sombre mood on the left. How would you propose lifting the movement out of this demoralisation? What realistic prospects can you hold up for defeating Thatcher?**

Ken: There were similar periods of demoralisation in the 30s and late 50s. We came out of the 30s because of the war, which created a labour-capital consensus which lasted a generation. We came out of the 50s in a more trivial way, hyped-up on Wilson's PR gimmicks.

Whereas 1945 represented something substantial — a genuine deal struck between Labour and the ruling class — Wilson, Callaghan, and the rest could negotiate nothing from the ruling class whatsoever because they had nothing to offer.

We can't conceivably go back to that. I believe Labour might have won with an Alternative Economic Strategy-type package in a period of world economic growth.

If we'd had the Alternative Economic Strategy in the early 60s, we might have done wonders with it. But we're now in the fourteenth year of an economic downturn. No variation on the AES is adequate to the problems this poses for us.

We can't advocate simply putting taxes up. It was a mad error to go into the last election promising that. There is no realistic alternative to taking control of capital; you have to take control of enough to fund your programme.

***Chris:* I've never understood what this phrase "control of capital" means. If it doesn't mean expropriation, nationalisation — Clause IV — then I'm very suspicious of it.**

Ken: It means we have to direct the investment. Suppose Nat West has X-billions. We direct a certain proportion of X-billions towards the reconstruction of our productive base, or inner cities, or the Welfare State.

***Jenny:* So you'd confront the owners of capital and remove their power to deploy their wealth? In effect, that would mean expropriating them, wouldn't it? So why not say it?**

Ken: It just depends whether you are a theoretical purist, or an inveterate electoralist like myself. If I was running Labour's campaign, I'd have a series of advertisements simply saying it was economic treason for these people to be investing this money wherever they liked. I'd be saying it was Britain's money, our money — and the message would be quite simple: "We want our money back." Don't forget the impact of those SNP adverts: *"It's Scotland's Oil!"*

***Jenny:* "Ours"?**

Ken: Of course its ours!

***Jenny:* But a lot of "our" money has been conned out of the Third World. We would want to share it back again, wouldn't we?**

Ken: A Labour government would want very rapidly to develop those kinds of links. You've got to show people in Britain, first of all, that we are fabulously wealthy.

Second, that most of the wealth has slipped abroad out of our immediate control.

Third, that as it's ours, we want it back. We would then need to support Castro's demand for the abrogation of Third World debts. We can't impose change on those countries from outside. They've got to resolve their own internal problems. What we can do is lift the great millstone we've placed around their necks.

***Chris:* Tony Benn's emphasis is his recent speeches has been slightly different from yours. He has been talking about the need for "control", but he has also warned us of the impediments to acquiring control.**

In pointing to the obstacles placed in the path of previous Labour administrations he has vividly described the dominance of the Whitehall bureaucracy, of the state machine, the armed services chiefs, the monarchy itself. He has questioned the possibility of using *their* state machine for *our* socialist purposes. He has focused on the question of power.

Ken: There's no difference between power and control.

***Chris:* Exactly. So why not speak of "breaking the power of capital"? The idea that capital can somehow be "controlled" seems misguided.**

To the extent that we did genuinely threaten ruling class power, wouldn't the full weight of the state machine be brought to bear against us, with the press, the top civil servants, the monarchy, and finally the armed services used to legitimise such an intervention?

Benn is not denying we could mobilise to deal with such obstacles but the implication is that we must know where the dangers lie and be adequately prepared.

Ken: The survival of a radical Labour government would be decided in two phases. It would be a national version of what they tried to do to the GLC: twisting laws, civil servants rebelling, and so on.

So when you get a Labour government in, you have to first say "Get rid of those civil servants who have shown they can't work with us." And you have to bring in replacements to shift the balance of power inside that machine.

It's a lot easier than you think, because 99% of them are just people doing jobs. It's in the top layer that the danger lies.

Several of them might work quite willingly for you. But as for the rest, they'd have to go. You'd have to bring in at least ten Labour people to head each main Ministry in order to even begin to get control, and you'd have to resource them properly.

You'd have to have very rapid action against the press. Now that three individuals control 75% of the national press, there has got to be an immediate extension to Fleet Street of the power to impose political balance which the IBA have in relation to broadcasting.

As soon as you start talking about a nationalised press or state control — you've lost the argument. It's just too big a jump.

You've got to start by saying that there are three unpleasant men — and we can describe them in detail — who control the press. And you have to argue for removing that partisan bias, so that they have to report both sides of the case.

Then there's the question of the judges. Mrs Thatcher and Lord Hailsham between them have completely packed the Law Lords and the Court of Appeal.

They've done it without any fuss or nonsense at all, and this gives us a valuable precedent. I'd be in favour of immediately dropping the age of retirement and creating a lot of vacancies. There are people like Lord Gifford, Jeremy Smith and others, who, without losing their left politics, have for a long time been battling their way inside the judiciary.

Then there's the long-term survival strategy. We'd have to face up to the international pressures and any possible domestic military moves.

Dealing with the internal threat involves completely redefining what sort of constitution we have in Britain.

We would have to say: "We want a proper constitution, a constitution which defines the powers of Parliament, the powers of the trade unions, the powers of local government, the powers of the individual, the powers of the monarchy."

So then you'd come down to asking what figure you'd have as Head of State. An amiable old German-style President, or Charles the Third? Honestly, I don't think that's a key issue. It's a question of the *powers* which they have.

***Chris:* And the army? You were accused in Tory election posters of being against a standing army.**

Ken: That was a complete lie.

***Chris:* It didn't seem to do you any harm.**

Ken: No, it was damaging. I'd be in favour of keeping the army. The point would be to make sure it was ours.

***Chris:* But there's a problem. Nothing you have said so far would necessarily lead to the conclusion that you understand the nature of the state.**

The point is that if you were leading a Labour government at the head of a massive mobilisation, you couldn't really break with the tradition of reformist administration, couldn't really *"take the power"*, without unleashing a social revolution, supporting and legitimising the working class in dismantling and replacing the existing state machine.

"The survival of a radical Labour government would be decided in two phases. It would be a national version of what they tried to do to the GLC."

"You have got to accept the right of people to remove you. (...) Once you start saying "All Power to the Labour Government!" there's a clear implication that once you've got power, you're going to keep it forever.

Ken: I suppose it's a question of whether you start from your strongest or from your weakest point. If, when this interview comes out, the media can point to it to scream *"Livingstone says 'Hang the Queen'"*, then anything else which might be useful in it would completely forgotten.

What's interesting is the way in which the establishment itself is beginning to distrust the monarchy. We have all been aware of the schisms between Thatcher and The Queen. And it may be a much bigger schism with Charles the Third.

His politics are several notches to the left of his mother's. It may not be Labour which gets rid of the monarchy. It may be the establishment which seeks to get rid of Charles and put some old reactionary in his place.

I don't think the establishment trusts Charles to do the kind of thing you fear. They are not sure he would allow himself to be used by the military or whomever to act against a democratically-elected Labour government. And I think they may be right.

When you come down to the questions: "Who is Prime Minister?"; "Who is King?"; "Who are the judges?"; "Who are the trade union leaders?"; then the question of who *exactly* the individual is in each case starts to have an impact.

***Jenny:* And Parliament? Are you wedded to this place permanently?**

Ken: The biggest advance the working class has made is to gain the right to vote. Before there was a labour movement,the ruling class actually met here; it was in these buildings that they planned how to govern the best part of a third of the world.

As soon as the Labour Party began winning seats and forming governments, power started to be dragged away. We have to argue for power to be dragged back here where it belongs.

This place should be where decisions are made — not in private meetings with members of the Queen's household or in secret dealings in the boardrooms. This should be the highest forum of the state, an open forum where power resides.

There should be other forums: at the workplace, in local government, a decentralised society. But the big national decisions should be made here. What's the point of having reselection of MPs if those MPs haven't got any power when they get here?

***Chris:* If you follow that logic through, then given a reforming Labour government, armed with an electoral mandate but in conflict with unelected state institutions, wouldn't we stress our commitment to democracy by urging "All Power to the Labour Government!"?**

Wouldn't we urge the majority in Parliament to mobilise the movement to take power to carry through our programme?

Ken: I remember you writing about that scenario in 1968.

***Chris:* Doesn't it coincide with what you've just said?**

Ken: No; because you have got to accept the right of people to remove you.

***Chris:* Sure, but you take the power first. They have elections under their class rule. Why shouldn't we have elections under ours?**

Ken: Once you start saying "All Power to the Labour Government" there's a clear implication that once you've got power, you're going to keep it forever.

***Jenny:* So ours would be an *accountable* Labour government?**

***Chris:* Although I realise you would disclaim this, you are perceived by the media, and probably much of the left, as perhaps our most articulate spokesperson. You are seen as potentially a leader of the left as a whole.**

Whether we in *Briefing* would trust you in such a role, after all that has happened, is uncertain. Do you feel you need the trust and support of the hard left now as much as a decade ago? How seriously do you want to repair the damage done to your relationship with *Briefing* over the past three years?

Ken: The fracture between us was the most personally hurtful thing that ever happened to me in politics. The venom of my response showed how much you hurt me. I'm delighted we're talking together again after all this time.

"The fracture between us was the most personally hurtful thing that ever happened to me in politics."

Can you trust me? Put it this way. In order to sell out, I'd have to junk lesbian and gay rights, the Irish question, and much else besides. That would be the precondition and it would be impossible.

Do you really doubt that? It would mean abandoning all I believe in for some personal advancement which has no actual appeal. I don't find the status-symbols associated with this place some kind of ego-trip; I actually find the whole thing quite boring. I don't think there's a leader of the left. Clearly, in the run-up to the Benn deputy leadership campaign, Tony was the person who had done all that work on policy, who held out in cabinet, and who brought the coalition of extra-Parliamentary forces together.

It was a clearly-defined issue, and had he won, the whole history of the last decade would have been transformed, possibly even beyond national boundaries.

What you've got now is different. While there is no dominant leader-figure, we have a very much strengthened Campaign Group.

I've come into it and developed a very good working relationship with Dennis Skinner. As soon as you mortify the Tories, he's on your side. As soon as I made my maiden speech, he decided I was worth supporting after all!

The appearance of the black MPs in the Campaign Group and of Joan Ruddock and most of the women there — all this means that the efforts to marginalise the Campaign Group have failed.

It's the *Tribune* Group that's all over the place.

What's particularly important are the links being made across the left, both inside and outside Parliament. That's why I've supported Labour Left Liaison so strongly, and all the component parts of it — even *Socialist Organiser*.

In the Campaign Group they are always looking beyond Parliament, to what can be delivered in the Constituencies, what can be done to strengthen links with WAC, or with the miners, or with Black Sections.

Anything that damaged Labour Left Liaison I'd fight determinedly because it is the focus of the coalition which will eventually deliver the Party to socialism. It's got a long way to go, but it prefigures the labour movement as it will clearly be a decade or so from now.

There are forces trying to smash it. We should strengthen it. In those areas whre it's weak or unrepresentative, we should try to bring more people, more groups in.

***Chris:* You said your rupture with *Briefing* was the most personally hurtful thing which has happened to you in politics. Would you now acknowledge that in that rupture *we* didn't move politically, but *you* did?**

Ken: No, I wouldn't. This is the problem. What was required of me in order that I should remain close to *Briefing* was that I should get up and lie. Once I knew what the GLC's financial situation really was, I couldn't keep pretending otherwise.

Enough people knew we were in for a growth budget at least a week before rate-capping in any case. Then the whole thing just fell apart.

I take full responsibility for not having made certain that the full facts were known to the whole Party earlier, in January. We would then have had two whole months to ask ourselves how to adapt the strategy in view of financial realities.

"What I could never understand was how so many of you could apparently believe the immediate knee-jerk response that I'd sold out, bottled out, and so on. I expected that after fighting alongside you for so long, in so many joint struggles, you would say to yourselves, "Well, the track-record simply doesn't square with this analysis."

I share the guilt and the incompetence in that respect. But what I could never understand was how so many of you culd apparently believe the immediate knee-jerk response that I'd sold out, bottled out, and so on.

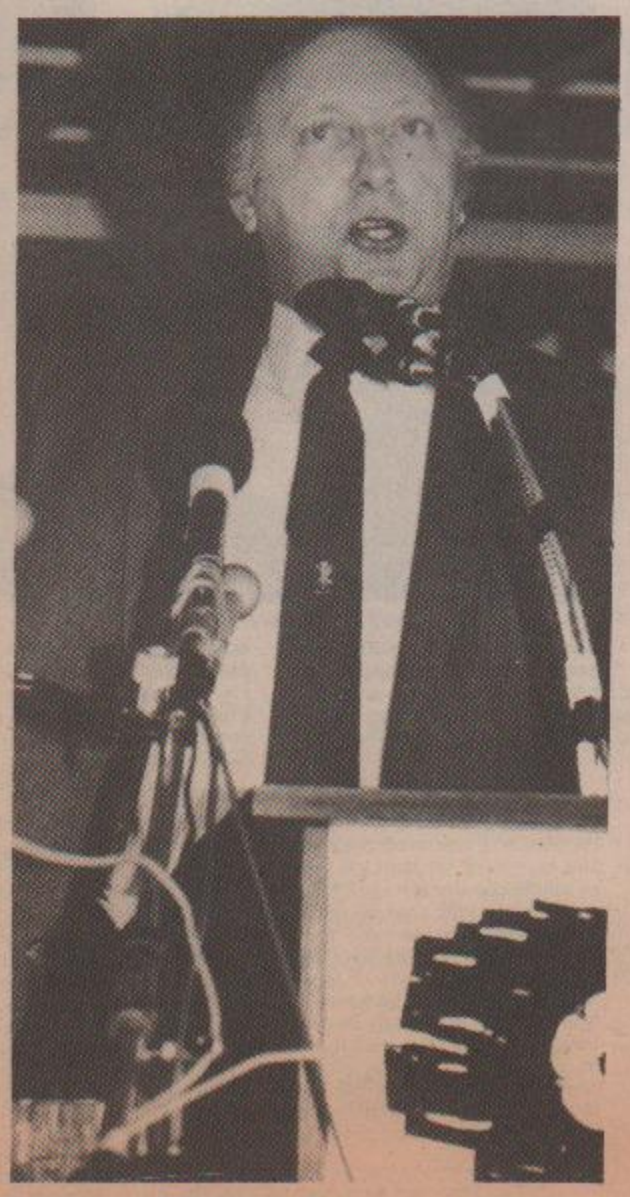
I expected that after fighting alongside you for so long, in so many joint struggles, you would say to yourselves. "Well, the track-record simply doesn't square with this analysis."

***Chris:* But then you appeared to align yourself with the right in attacking those of us who stood firm!**

Ken: I am sure I over-reacted in my response. But it was an incredibly bitter period.

Mike Elliot at Chesterfield:

I blame the police for the trouble we're in. There's two at the front of No. 10 and two at the back — and still that woman gets out.



Arthur Scargill at Chesterfield:

New Realism is not new and it's not real. New Realism is another name for class collaboration; it means as it did in the 20s and 30s, that you collaborate with the capitalist system in order to offer palliatives rather than revolutionary change.

I don't want to win electoral power; I want to win political power to smash the capitalist system and to change fundamentally the direction of our nation.

We should be revolutionary in our demands.

What's wrong with a policy aimed at eliminating that vile disease of unemployment?

We should pay tribute to those in Lambeth and Liverpool who stood firm against the policies of this Tory government.

WOMEN FOR SOCIALISM

If you would like to be involved in "Women for Socialism" please return this to: Women for Socialism, c/o Mandy Moore, 89 Woodside Gardens, London N17 6UN.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Organisation .....

Trade Union .....

To cover the costs of administration an initial charge will have to be made of £5 waged, £2 unwaged — please enclose.

The Chesterfield Conference offered the left not only a valuable talking-space and morale boost, but a timely opportunity to begin building a lasting, democratic and determined socialist movement that can brush aside the Kinnocks and Willises on the way to unseating Thatcher and, yes, it must be said, overthrowing the irrational and inhuman capitalist system.

Here we present the views of several participants in the Conference and their visions of the future of the left after Chesterfield.

Women for Socialism

A vital new venture for women

An exciting new organisation, "Women for Socialism", was launched at the Socialist Conference in Chesterfield.

Women organised the first and only fringe meeting of the weekend and hundreds of women came along to get involved.

"Women for Socialism" provides a unique opportunity for women on the left to organise on a political basis in a broad-based radical organisation.

By Mandy Moore
Tottenham CLP

The aims of the organisation are to:

- promote socialist feminist policies in the labour movement;
- debate and develop such policies and campaigning initiatives;
- develop links with the whole range of women's organisations, including lesbian and black women's groups and others challenging racism and imperialism in our society;
- link up with organised trade union women;
- provide an international perspective for women;
- offer a forum where women can exchange ideas and share experiences.

No other women's organisation offers this sort of platform. No other women's organisation offers women a chance to develop ideas and policies in relation to the labour movement. Consequently, "Women for Socialism" is already gaining extensive support.

Proposal

The launch in Chesterfield enabled us to link up with women active in Women Against Pit Closures. They had, quite independently, been discussing changes to their organisation to widen and develop it, and they welcomed "Women for Socialism".

Betty Heathfield and Kim Young from WAPC expounded their ideas for a "Women's Union" on a number of occasions in Chesterfield, and this will be a major proposal as the structure of "Women for Socialism".

Many other groups of left women are also involved. The sponsors of the launch meeting included Sharon Atkin and Martha Osamor, both of whom provide vital links with Black Women's groups, something which has been sadly lacking in other women's organisations.

Sponsors

Sharon has prepared a paper on black women and both she and Martha will be prominent in ensuring that the organisation is one in which black women can participate.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Sharon Atkin addresses launch meeting

Other sponsors include: Dawn Primarolo, MP; Pauline Purnell, Chair Labour Women's Action Committee; Nadine Finch and Mandy Moore, National Labour Women's Committee; Sarah Roelofs, Labour Women for Ireland; Ros Young, SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign; Terry Conway, Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights; and Labour Briefing Women.

The organisation will provide a strong base for women to discuss and develop policy initiatives on the left. In the Chesterfield Conference papers, one section on "The Politics of Gender" highlighted some of the problems we face:

"Any society which aims to provide equal rights for women must have planned economic and social policies. A central objective of such planning, based on whatever forms of popular participation are appropriate, must be to lift from women the burden of home and family care. It is not enough, however, to shift this burden albeit as paid employment to other groups of women..."

Policies

The paper goes on to raise several pertinent questions:

"How do we develop policies which involve men in family and home care on an equal basis with women?"

"What is the importance of community facilities — canteens, laundries, clothes mending centres, etc? What difference would women's input make for the planning of transport systems, home design, leisure facilities, education, housing estates, etc? Would women place more emphasis on ecological issues?"

In these and other areas women have major contributions to make.

"Women for Socialism" has its work cut out. As one sister from *Briefing* put it, "We need to reclaim the years we have lost."

Open

"Women for Socialism" is in its infancy. We need to examine options for its structure so we can build as open, cohesive and forceful an organisation as possible — because women need a *doing* organisation as well as a *talking* one.

"Women for Socialism"is open to all women socialists. A meeting will be organised in a few months time to debate the structure and elect officers, etc. In the meantime *all* women are welcome to get involved in this exciting new venture.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Inside the Chesterfield Conference

No ti

In an extraordinary and Chesterfield Conference that began with the Sto

As the bottom fell out cher's economic strategy, from varying traditions ass socialist movement to ch Labour leaders.

The big turn-out was a rea spect of another five yea breathtaking inadequacy of th ships' response to it.

Despite Thatcher, Kinnock, remain tens of thousands many in the Labour Party, othe tivists in the women's, Bla movements, and especially in Chesterfield because the org native — and a non-sectarian

By Davy Jones
Islington South & Finsbury

Some came to bury Ches quickly to dispose of the corp verdict of a "missed opportu friends as did their sectarian itself.

The *New Statesman* hedged lack of "realism" , yet u something important had stir

The truth is that for most weekend neither disappoint aspirations. Just being there mind renewed morale and ene proceedings was a breath o managed Labour and TUC Co

The commitment of the org ing the weekend, to maintain they had brought together me present it had achieved some with the launch of the Women

Of course, there were prob policy papers were extremel teresting and incisive: others as a whole was very male a especially on the platforms. were virtually invisible. And any strategic notion of rebuild few months of local conferenc a recall conference.

Yet could the conference than a contradictory, faltering different comrades from diffe social, geographical, and shoulders for the first time i

★ FOR A UNITED, DE



The litmus test is action!

The most important outcome of the Socialist Conference is a new mood on the left.

Since 1981 the left, both inside and outside the Labour Party, has been in retreat. The loss of two general elections, and substantial numbers of industrial and political defeats, have created an atmosphere of frustration and despondency.

This has been manifested in accommodations between elements of the left trade unions and the Party leadership, in poor results for the left in the NEC, and, in extreme cases, of people leaving the Party altogether.

By Reg Race
Tottenham CLP

The Chesterfield Conference has, for a very large number of socialists, been a psychological turning point. Many now believe that there *is* a substantial left out there, and detect a new willingness to define and campaign for socialist values and policies. This psychological change must not be underestimated.

Action for the Future

The real litmus test for the Chesterfield conference is: what happens next? All too often, grandiose plans and campaigns are constructed by the left but remain confined to paper because they are not firmly rooted in reality and have no real resources to back them up.

What, then, are our priorities?

- We must demonstrate to the whole movement that the Chesterfield Conference was not a flash in the pan — and that it is the beginning of a serious, organised left, defining itself around ideas and policies and not around personalities.
- We must mobilise the resources necessary for us to implement our plans effectively.
- We must set up the *Policy Discussion Groups* outlined in the Chesterfield statement. These need to be established on *key* issues — such as economic policy and green socialism — in order to work out a radical and persuasive socialist programme that will engage the imaginations and win the support of the millions of working people who have deserted collectivist ideas.
- We have to organise a vigorous campaign *throughout* Britain. We need local and regional "Chesterfields" in every part of the country — and we need to make sure that they are well-organised and are not set up on a sectarian basis.
- We must create the promised Socialist Directory in order to connect all parts of the movement, and to prevent the isolation and fragmentation which often exist because of geographical as well as political factors.
- Decisions must be made concerning the **resourcing of campaigns** mounted by the movement. This means active support for strikers and community battles, for women's and black groups in battles against the establishment, and an active, practical advice role to assist any comrades who may need help.

There *will be* a recall national conference next year.

Combination

This programme of activity will not take place unless there is a *combination* of serious local initiatives and a determined national lead. The conditions for a successful movement now exist. We cannot afford to miss the tide.

- **For further information, speakers for meetings, and consultation on establishing local Socialist Conferences, phone Reg Race on 01 808 9796.**

me to waste!

apt coincidence, the wrapped up the week k Market Crash.
f the Reagan and That- two thousand socialists rted the need for a new allenge both Tory and

ction to the appalling pro- s of Thatcher and the e Labour and union leader-

Willis, and the media there committed socialists — rs unaligned, as well as ac- k, and lesbian and gay the unions. They came to nisers promised an alter- alternative at that.

CLP

terfield and have moved se. But *Socialist Worker's* ity'' will win them as few nterventions at the event

its bets — sneering at our neasily recognising that d itself.
people at Chesterfield the d nor satisfied all their ith so many others of like gy. The spontaneity of the fresh air after the stage- nferences.
anisers, strengthened dur- nd develop the movement ant that for most of those thing positive, particularly for Socialism organisation. ems and weaknesses. The uneven. Some were in- appalling. The conference d overwhelmingly white, Lesbian and gay politics ttle thought was given to g the left beyond the next es, a socialist network and

ave been anything other first step? With so many nt traditions and different political bases rubbing decades, could the con-

ference have really been expected to proceed beyond an initial gathering together and reaffirmation of socialist ideas?

The disappointment of some comrades is only a measure of the high hopes which they quite properly brought with them to Chesterfield. We need to harness, not dampen, those hopes, and get on with the work of building something lasting out of the enthusiasm and sense of purpose demonstrated in Chesterfield.

Our success or failure in this will be determined by our ability to respond to the stock market crash and the new situation it creates, by bringing together all those forces fighting the Tories and organising them in a united democratic socialist movement that will sustain an overall challenge to the leadership of the Labour Party and the unions.

Such a movement built on struggle and the common desire to develop a socialist vision as an alternative to Kinnock and Willis should itself become a model of democracy and unity in action.

This is not a fantasy or wish-fulfilling daydreaming. As Ken Livingstone rightly argued in his Chesterfield speech, the crash has changed the world. It has undermined Reagan and Thatcher. It has given the labour movement an opportunity to link the inevitable range of defensive struggles *against* the Tories to an offensive struggle *for* a socialist alternative to an irrational, bankrupt system.

A massive united campaign of opposition to the Alton Bill should go hand in hand with building the new Women for Socialism organisation, independent from but linked to the Chesterfield movement. Building solidarity with workers in struggle can lead directly into the fight for democratic, rank and file left movements in the unions.

The Chesterfield Conference promised to support those in struggle, to hold local and regional mini-Conferences, to set up policy groups and to hold a national recall Conference next May.

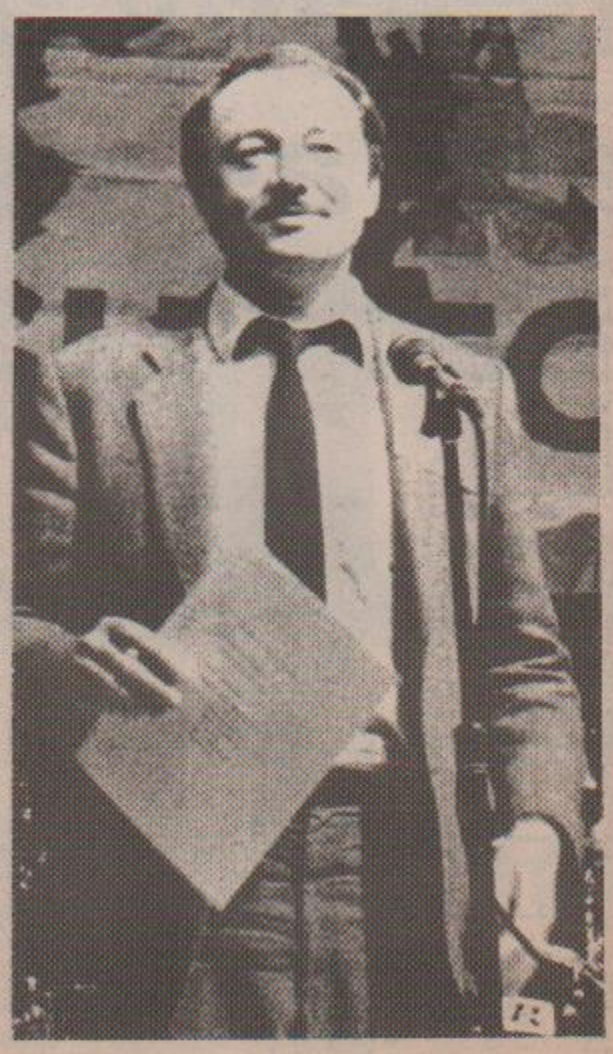
Briefing endorses all these proposals and will play an active part in making them a reality. The local Conferences should focus on key policy issues *and* directly involve those in struggle. The national organising committee should work hand in hand with organisations like Women for Socialism, the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, trade union solidarity networks, anti-cuts bodies, and anti-imperialist campaigns.

The policy groups should be asked to work towards producing policy options for debate at the recall conference, which should vote on these and elect a broad-based democratically accountable steering committee.

The movement must begin to look like a movement — with distinctive policies and a democratic structure.

Chesterfield gives us the best chance for many years to develop a serious movement of socialists — in and out of the Labour Party, in the unions, the movements of the oppressed, and amongst the left intelligentsia — to begin a systematic challenge to the bankrupt leadership of the labour movement.

MOCRATIC LEFT! ★



Ken Livingstone at Chesterfield

However important we feel this Conference is, it isn't one millionth as important as what has happened in the stock markets of the world this week.

Nothing else in our lifetime will have as much political impact as what has happened in the last six days as one financial market after another has collapsed.

It is a devastating setback for those who have told us that Thatcherism and Reaganism and monetarism are some new way of life we have to adapt to.

The whole agenda for socialism is back at the forefront of society right the way across the face of this planet.

Each time Labour has been in goverment it has failed because it did not take control of capital. It used every other expedient and there is no other alternative before us now.

No generation of socialists has been better prepared for the tasks that face us. We have seen too many failures in the past to say we can go round the route of Wilson and Callaghan again.

We can only win when we convince the tens of millions that we know what we want to do with the British economy and we have the political will to take control of it and use it in the common good and not just for the greed of the few who have dominated the City of London for the last few years.

In supporting every group of workers in struggle we also have to defend those not simply fighting in the workplace; we need to defend women's rights, and especially against the Alton Bill. It is an issue of conscience for the women concerned, not Labour members in Parliament.

You can't create socialism in Britain whilst propping up an America which butchers its way round the rest of the world in order to shore up its economic gains and immediate military and economic interests.

We need to expose the nature of the British state. It is the intelligence services which are a threat to democracy.

Leadership at crucial times does matter. If you've got Ramsey MacDonald up front you haven't got a cat in hell's chance of getting anywhere. How long would the miners' strike have lasted if Joe Gormley instead of Arthur Scargill had been leading it?

The battle to beat Thatcher won't be won in Parliament.

Features: Abortion Law campaigning

As early as possible and as late as necessary!

Almost twenty years to the day since the passing of the 1967 Abortion Act, Liberal MP David Alton's Abortion Amendment Bill received its first reading in the House of Commons.

This is the fourteenth attempt to restrict the '67 Act since it was passed and is one of four anti-abortion initiatives currently underway in Parliament.

But David Alton, like James White, Corrie, and others must now realise that he cannot ride roughshod over the lives of women without encountering tough opposition.

By Judith Arkwright Norwood CLP

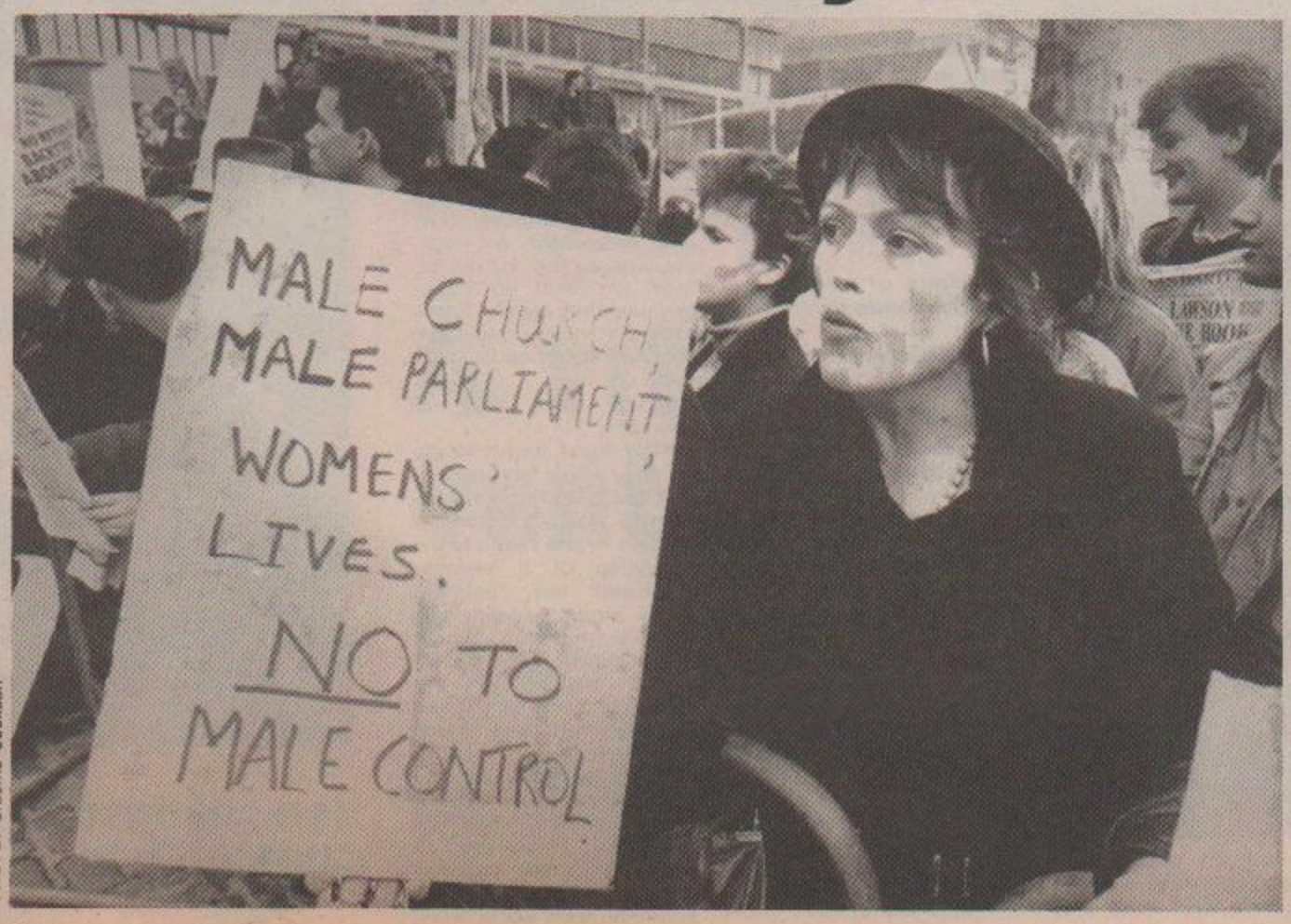


PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

Picket outside the LIFE rally, Central Hall, London, 27.10.87

Already the campaign to fight Alton's 18-week time limit is well underway. FAB (Fight the Alton Bill) now has groups established in all major cities and towns and is sponsored by NALGO, NCU, NAPO, TASS, and NUS nationally, with other unions now considering it.

There are a vast number of individual sponsors, including celebrities, MPs and trade unionists. Even Alton's own party leader (and architect of the '67 Act) David Steele has come out publicly against the time limit under pressure from angry Liberal Party women.

The anti-abortionists campaign in support of the 18 week time limit is as usual based on a series of false assumptions.

● **Lie no. 1:**

It is claimed that the Act was originally passed in the "permissive sixties" and that in today's moral climate it is inappropriate.

This argument shows that the Bill is not simply designed to reduce the time limits, but is the first salvo in a campaign to make abortion illegal altogether. The moral climate may have changed but women's lives have not.

Three million women have had abortions under the provisions of the '67 Act. In order to control their own lives women will always need abortion — especially when contraceptive and other facilities are so inadequate.

● **Lie no. 2:**

The 1967 Act provides abortion on demand.

If only this were true! One of the reasons for the number of late abortions in this country is the fact that women do *not* have abortion on demand and must get two doctors' signatures before obtaining an abortion. Following massive cutbacks the NHS now provides only 50% of all abortions performed. In some hospitals there are actually *waiting lists* for women seeking terminations.

● **Lie no. 3:**

David Alton's main argument for reducing the time limit to 18 weeks is that by then "a child has sentience and it is no different except in size and weight from the child at 28 weeks."

Not true! Under 22-24 weeks the lungs of a foetus are insufficiently developed for it to survive even on a ventilator. Of those born at 24 weeks only 25% survive. The 18-week limit is completely arbitrary.

● **Lie no. 4:**

Alton claims that by reducing the time limit he is seeking to cut the number of late abortions.

In Scotland, where there are no legal time limits on abortion the percentage of late abortions is no different from that in England and Wales.

No woman chooses to have a late abortion. A 1984 report by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists shows that the main reasons for delay are the NHS referral system and the lack of sex education in schools.

It is young women and women at the age of menopause who may not know they are pregnant until late on who will suffer most from any restriction in the time limit.

The best way to prevent late abortions is precisely to provide what the anti-abortionists most fear — abortion on demand.

Alton is a hypocrite. He is not seeking to prevent the suffering of the 6,000 plus women who had late terminations last year, but is merely trying to cut the total number of abortions performed and reduce the effectiveness of the '67 Act.

For this reason, FAB has made clear its opposition to any change in the current 28-week time limit. If the Bill is amended to 22 or 24 weeks in committee we believe it should still be opposed. Women should not be punished for needing late abortions and any change in the time limit restricts our ability to exercise our right to choose.

FAB is now calling for regional and local activities to be co-ordinated across the country on January 16th, when the Bill will get its second reading. On this day mass regional and/or local demonstrations should be organised, including pickets of MPs surgeries and other events which can mobilise the local women's and labour movements.

On January 21st a mass rally in Central Hall Westminster and a lobby of Parliament followed by a women-only torchlight demonstration is planned. All these activities are particularly aimed toward putting massive grass roots pressure on the TUC to call a *national demonstration* some time in March. We know from past experience that mass action is the only way to defeat the anti-abortionists.

At the 1985 Labour Party Conference a resolution was passed, despite the opposition of the National Executive Committee, proposing the abandonment of the idea that there can be a conscience clause or a free vote on abortion.

This should have been included in the 1987 manifesto. Instead, the 1987 NEC statement says "Labour stands by the Abortion Act and, whilst respecting the individual right of conscience of Party members..."

Labour Party members should, therefore, push resolutions to the NEC and the National Labour Women's Committee demanding that they take up the Conference decision, as well as getting branches, CLPs, Women's Sections, etc., to affiliate to FAB.

If those of us fighting for women's freedom have all the moral and political arguments on our side there is one thing we lack which the other side have in plenty thanks to their allies in high places — and that is money.

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Make sure your organisation sends money urgently to FAB, c/o Wesley House, 4, Wild Court, London WC2B 5AU. If you want speakers or a contact with your local FAB goup, ring 01 405 4801. Leaflets and petitions are also available.

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Amongst the current sponsors of the Campaign are:
MPs: Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, Bernie Grant, Ken Livingstone, Alice Mahon, Dawn Primarolo, Jo Richardson, Chris Smith, Audrey Wise
Caroline Benn, Tony Gifford, Betty Heathfield, Peter Heathfield, Anne Scargill, Peter Tatchell, Jill Tweedie and many others

Labour MPs known to support Alton's Bill are:
Dale Campbell Savours (Workington), John Cummings (Easington), Albert Duffy (Attercliffe), Calum Macdonald (Western Isles), Jack Thompson (Wansbeck)

A woman's right to choose...

A recent TV programme on the Alton Bill ended with a doctor producing a test tube from his pocket, waving it in front of the cameras and proclaiming it contained a foetus' pair of hands — hands that would be writing by now, if it hadn't been aborted.

During the same programme Harriet Harman MP accused Alton supporters of "using handicapped people as a political football" — a valid point, but unfortunately Harman was guilty of the same tactic herself.

In response to Alton's propaganda film — part of which argued about the full lives that many people with disabilities can lead — Harman recited a sob story about women being forced to have severely disabled children doomed to early death or in need of continual special care.

Emotive language aside, there are points in Alton's and Harman's arguments which really need to be considered and fully discussed — *but not within the context of abortion rights for women*. The issue of what a woman should do on discovering she is carrying a foetus with abnormalities, in varying possible degrees of severity, is a highly sensitive and complex one.

It encompasses a range of problems, including capitalist society's appalling discrimination against and lack of facilities for people with disabilities and a value system that promotes the perfectly functioning, superpowerful body beautiful as the ultimate physical ideal.

Whilst it is right to point out that Alton's 18-week time limit would affect women's access to tests for foetal abnormalities, the main point is that this takes away a woman's right to important information which she needs to make her *own decision* as to whether or not she continues her pregnancy; information she can consider along with other questions that she is likely to be asking herself at the same time.

I was appalled by the line taken by the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) at the recent Chesterfield Conference. They argued that we must not campaign around the slogan *a woman's right to choose* because it is individualistic and therefore bourgeois. "No," they insisted, "we must campaign only around *free abortion on demand!*"

Besides being bloody ridiculous — the latter can only be achieved *in practice* once the former has been established *in principle* — it displays an alarmingly narrow definition of *a woman's right to choose*.

Have the RCP learned nothing from the divisions that arose within the women's movement due to the neglect of the effects of abortion issues on black women, lesbians, women with disabilities and working class women in general? What makes the old slogan politically relevant is that, if used correctly, it can encompass these differences.

Obviously, when fighting Alton's Bill; we are primarily concerned with a woman's right to abortion — to choose *not* to have a child. Here, Harriet Harman rightly argues that no woman takes lightly the decision to have an abortion, particularly a late one, and attention should be focussed on the need for better sex education, family planning services, etc.

By Emma Tipping Sheffield Labour Briefing

However, what Harman and other public opponents are failing to point out, and what the RCP line excludes, is the other, equally important aspect of *a woman's right to choose*: the right to choose to *have* a child.

This year has seen:

- the scrapping of the Maternity Grant;
- freezing of Child Benefit;
- further cuts in child care provision;
- an escalation of strip-searching with no exceptions for pregnancy;
- "increasing" levels of child abuse;
- the Campaign for Normal Family Life's statements on single-parent families producing juvenile delinquents (the root cause of all society's evils!);
- the promotion of married, heterosexual, god-fearing people as the only fit parents;

The contradictions and hypocrisies surrounding the question of women "choosing" to have children should be obvious.

The point I want to stress is that the decision to have a child before or during pregnancy, is much easier for white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-class, married women.

Black women too frequently have contraception forced upon them or are pressurised into abortions by racist doctors. Lesbians are for the most part denied the right to get pregnant in the first place.

Women with disabilities are told they cannot possibly manage children. Unmarried and single women face reactionary prejudice and social stigma.

faced with a lack of the financial, practical, and emotional support necessary in a society which makes life extremely difficult for women with children.

Only by campaigning around *a woman's right to choose*, a woman's right to control her own body and make her own decisions about her life, whilst highlighting the lack in practice of rights and real choice for so many women, can we be in a position to defend women's rights in general.

The likes of SPUC and LIFE will stop at nothing to get the Alton Bill passed. They will seize on every form of base emotional blackmail to win support and attack opposition.

Briefing supporters and all those forces on the left who want to fight the Alton Bill must not be trapped into using the same sorts of tactics, nor accept the false social agenda posed by the anti-abortionists. Remember, time-limit reductions are a *tactical* measure paving the way to outlaw abortion altogether. If we do not advance our own agenda in defeating this Bill we will greatly weaken our position in resisting further attacks from the anti-abortionists. The Alton Bill is not the first such attack on women and, whatever happens to it, it won't be the last.

SEVENTY YEARS AFTER THE REVOLUTION



Defending the Moscow Soviet, October 1917

Ideas and inspiration for embattled socialists

With this article *Briefing* begins a short series on the experience and issues surrounding the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Future issues will cover the women's role in the revolution, the achievement of Soviet power, and the hideous triumph of Stalinism in the Moscow Trials.

Seventy years on, the Russian October Revolution still has rich lessons for today's battered and bruised workers' movement.

For those weary of battling for socialist principles against the odds, it is important to remember that world history was fundamentally changed in 1917 by what had been, only a few years before, a small class-struggle minority within the Second (Socialist) International.

By JOHN LISTER

"Parliamentarism illuminated only the surface of society, and even that with a rather artificial light. In comparison with monarchy and other heirlooms from the cannibals and cave-dwellers, democracy is of course a great conquest, but it leaves the blind play of forces in the social relations of men untouched. It was against this deeper sphere of the unconscious that the October revolution was the first to raise its hand. The Soviet system wishes to bring aim and plan into the very basis of society, where up to now only accumulated consequences have reigned."

Leon Trotsky
History of the Russian Revolution

At the turn of the century, the tiny Bolshevik faction of Russian Social Democracy was pitted against the vast bureaucratic machines, the parliamentary deputies, and the trendy "new" reformist thinking of the German, French, and other social democratic parties.

Seventeen years later, Lenin's Bolsheviks put their principles into practice. Russia's bourgeois Provisional Government was overthrown, and the world's first workers' state was established.

Those Russian Social Democrats who stuck with the majority line of the Second International — the Mensheviks — also put *their* principles into practice in 1917 — by joining the capitalists in the Provisional Government, and then angrily storming out of the Congress of Soviets after the workers had taken power.

Social Democratic parties around the world threw in their lot with the imperialist and Tsarist white armies fighting to restore capitalist rule in Russia. In Germany the Social Democrats betrayed a working class revolution in 1918-19, allying themselves with the capitalist state and its armed forces to crush the newly-formed Soviets and murder the revolutionaries Luxembourg and Liebknecht.

This betrayal helped isolate the new Russian workers' state, laying a base for its later deformation and bureaucratisation under Stalin.

Contrary to popular myth, Stalinism is thus the offspring of reformism, rather than revolutionary Marxism.

Today, with "new realism" dominant in Social Democratic parties in Britain, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere, it is useful to look back to the history of the Second International (to which all these parties belong) and trace the pattern of its degeneration.

Though founded on a Marxist programme in 1889, the International soon came under ideological pressure. Its large mass parties were able to win parliamentary seats and utilise the possibilities of an expanding capitalism to make trade union gains.

Within ten years an openly reformist current had been given theoretical expression by Engels' literary executor, German Social Democrat Eduard Bernstein. In 1899, French Socialist leader Alexandre Millerand accepted a post in the French bourgeois cabinet.

Lenin commented:

"What this new trend, which adopts a critical attitude towards obsolete dogmatic Marxism, represents has with sufficient precision been *stated* by Bernstein and *demonstrated* by Millerand.

"Social Democracy must change from a party of the social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms... It was denied that there is any counter-distinction in principle between liberalism and socialism. *The theory of the class struggle* was rejected on the grounds that it could not be applied to a strictly democratic society, governed according to the will of the majority, etc...

" 'Freedom of criticism' means freedom for an opportunistic trend in Social Democracy, the freedom to convert Social Democracy into a democratic party of reform, and the freedom to introduce bourgeois ideas and bourgeois elements into Socialism."

(Lenin, *What is to be Done?*)

In rejecting this approach, Lenin went back to the basic class analysis of Marx. He insisted that as an oppressed class denied the opportunity spontaneously to develop its "own" ideology, the working class needed a vanguard party based on a scientific approach, capable of combatting reformist and parliamentarist pressures.

British socialists smarting under Bryan Gould's latest efforts to import bourgeois ideas into the labour movement can test out the accuracy of Lenin's warning:

"To belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn away from it in the slightest degree must strengthen bourgeois ideology."

The task, in Lenin's view, was to build a new type of party, which aimed *not* to reflect the existing consciousness, but to *change* it and *lead* the working class. It would not simply make propaganda on broad policies, but would keep its eyes on state power and offer leadership in day-to-day struggles, recognising that the living lessons and experiences of such struggles were the key to developing revolutionary consciousness.

Above all, this party would conceive of the struggle for socialism as an international one. This internationalism was a fundamental distinction between Lenin's vision and the practice of the mainstream social democratic parties.

The mass socialist parties, developing in the relatively privileged, material conditions of the imperialist countries, gradually succumbed to pressure from their "own" capitalist classes, relapsing into nationalism and complicity in colonialism.

Pressed by Lenin and Rosa Luxembourg, the 1907 Stuttgart Congress of the Second International clung to the semblance of a Marxist position on war and militarism, prefiguring Lenin's later line of "revolutionary defeatism" against the First (imperialist) World War.

It was a Bolshevik amendment, fought for by Luxembourg, which insisted that:

"In case war should break out ... it is their duty (the working class and its representatives) to intervene for its speedy termination, and to strive with all their power to utilise the economic and political crisis created by the war to rouse the masses and thereby hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule."

But the Stuttgart Congress was the last international Social Democratic congress to take anything like a principled stand against war. The mass parties, aiming only to reform capitalism, became more and more wedded to their "own" capitalist classes. By 1914 the rot of national patriotism had sunk so deep into the Second International that only a small minority stood out against the war efforts of their "own" capitalists.

Though many workers were also initially swept along by the chauvinist tide, the Bolshevik line of combining opposition to the war with building class resistance to the employers and the government won increasing support.

In 1917 Lenin's seemingly hopeless dream of "turning the war into a civil war" had been translated into the October revolution, while social democrats across Europe were still urging workers into the imperialist slaughter.

Perhaps the most decisive element in the success of the Russian Revolution was the ability of Lenin and Trotsky to *learn* from the developments of the class struggle, and to develop Marxism beyond the traditional schemes they had inherited.

Orthodoxy insisted that proletarian revolution could only take place after a "democratic revolution" and a prolonged period of capitalist development had created a mass working class. Yet when Trotsky and later Lenin analysed the events of the 1905 Russian Revolution and the peculiarities of the backward Russian society, they concluded that there was no scope for such a period of capitalist development.

The Russian bourgeoisie was too weak, too dependent on international capital, and too frightened of the new working class to carry through any real democratisation.

The mass peasantry clamoured for democratic rights, including a revolutionary solution to the land problem: but the only secure route to democratic rights was under the leadership of the working class, which alone had the power to combine the democratic and socialist revolutions. Contrary to expectations, the power of imperialism could and would be broken at its weakest point — in the most backward of the imperialist countries.

While the mass parties of European social democracy remained dazzled by their newfound ability to elect MPs to bourgeois parliaments, Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks kept their eyes on the revolutionary experience of the 1871 Paris Commune.

This was how they were able to respond so positively to the appearance in Russia in 1905 and again in 1917 of a totally new expression of working class power — the workers' councils **(Soviets)** which posed an immediate threat to the centralised power of the capitalist state, while also embodying the seeds of a **new, proletarian** power, and a higher form of democracy.

Creatively applying Marx's method, developing a party and a programme based on the international character and revolutionary strength of the working class, learning the lessons of setbacks and defeats as well as victories, Bolshevism laid the foundations for the October triumph.

After 1917 the Bolsheviks renamed their party the Communist Party, and called for the formation of a new, revolutionary International to lead the working class. By then the gulf that had emerged between the internationalist, revolutionary Bolsheviks and the routinised, bureaucratised, chauvinist parties of the once-Marxist Second International was enormous.

Though the names have changed, that gulf continues to exist today.

While Bolshevism (and the Bolshevik tradition, defended since the 1930s by the Trotskyist movement), has proved itself the most implacable opponent of the capitalist order, the so-called "socialist parties" have since 1914 become a pillar of the capitalist establishment on a global scale. They have helped the ruling classes escape the wrath of the workers through two world wars and a host of economic and political upheavals and crises.

The anniversary of the Revolution of 1917 should remind us that though the bureaucrats may have the block votes and the mass media behind them today, they offer not the slightest hope for socialism tomorrow. Now, as in 1900, genuine socialists will be part of the class struggle minority, preparing the ground for a British October.

After all, it is only *our* side of the argument that has ever brought the working class to power; and it is only our side that will ever do it again!

"To workers, Soldiers and Peasants:

...The Soviet authority will at once propose an immediate democratic peace to all nations, and an immediate truce on all fronts. It will assure the free transfer of landlord, crown and monastery lands to the Land Committees, defend the soldiers' rights, enforcing a complete democratisation of the Army, establish Workers' control over production, ensure the convocation of the Constituent Assembly at the proper date, take means to supply bread to the cities and articles of first necessity to the villages, and secure to all nationalities living in Russia a real right to independent existence."

Declaration of All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, November 7th, 1917.

Letters

The House Paper of the Ken Fan Club?

Dear *Briefing*,

I found your Oct 28-Nov 10 issue truly amazing. It read at times like the house paper of the Ken Livingstone fan club.

First Alan Thornett's piece on the stock market crash devoted two columns to Livingstone's speech at the Chesterfield Conference, apparently setting Livingstone up as the economic guru of the Left and brushing aside the man's appalling record.

Next, the Editorial started by quoting at length from the same speech and ended by calling for a challenge to the Kinnock leadership, presumably intending to leave your readers in no doubt as to who *Briefing's* candidate will be.

Finally, two whole pages were devoted to an interminable interview with Livingstone. This was headed by a glowing tribute.

Livingstone, we were breathlessly informed "has returned to form... firmly realigning himself with the Left and establishing his credentials as our most articulate spokesperson."

Really! What about Benn, Heffer, Skinner, Scargill? I think whoever wrote the caption cannot have read the interview, unless *Briefing* has suddenly developed an unexpected sense of irony.

Livingstone's recipe for dealing with the economy is to send along a few socialists to the managing boards of companies. And the interviewers let him get away with this.

Surely they could have pressed a little harder. Who is to appoint these persons, who will be eligible to serve, to whom will they be accountable and what of the shareholders, will their shares be converted to non-voting holdings, will dividends continue to be paid on shares and interest on loans?

Apparently realising Livingstone's inadequacy on this topic, the interviewers hurried on to nuclear disarmament. Surely here the hero would distinguish himself? Not a bit of it.

All he did was to defend Joan Ruddock's betrayal of CND and argue for the use of Trident as a bargaining counter. He proceeded to identify with some of the grubbiest careerists around like Peter Hain and Diane Abbott and brushed aside his performance at National Conference, when he tailored each speech to the tastes of his audiences, left, right or centre.

Ken Livingstone is a cynical opportunist, who during his days at the GLC betrayed every important manifesto commitment, eventually throwing in his lot with the soft left.

Finding this collapse under him, he is now making a cynical bid for the leadership in order to mount a challenge to Kinnock.

Briefing does no service to its readers by endorsing his claims. To exchange Kinnock for Livingstone is like swopping Tweedledum for Tweedledee.

By all means let the left put up a candidate to challenge the present leadership, but make sure that candidate is a person of integrity and real socialist commitment. Leave Livingstone as the licensed buffoon of the TV, a medium for which his phoney charm is ideally suited.

Paula Watson,
Westminster

An incredible history

Dear Comrade Editor,

Further to Graham Bash's review of Ken Livingstone's book, I would like to underline some of the glaring falsifications of history which have been printed in Ken's account of his rise to power and fame.

In the concluding pages, Ken desperately tries to pass the responsibility for the rate-capping fiasco onto John McDonnell, the former deputy leader of the GLC, claiming that he (that is Ken) had been misinformed about the true financial position of the GLC, and that only John McDonnell had been informed.

This story is so incredible, so manifestly untrue that even a review in *Tribune* finds his version of events to be untenable. *London Labour Briefing, Socialist Organiser, Labour Herald* and the ten comrades who held firm during this shabby episode are all criticised for daring to challenge the politics of compromise — and sell out.

The brutal truth is that the massive GLC cave-in over rate-capping — despite the much publicised "defiance" by its leaders — completely undermined any serious possibility of the London boroughs or other Labour controlled authorities holding the line. Lambeth and Liverpool were left on their own, carrying the can for the gesture politics of the GLC Labour majority.

Ken's description of his rise to prominence and power in the GLC over the period 1973-1981 is equally incredible. Ken's history is a mixture of Walter Mitty and Joseph Stalin — with people and events conveniently scored out when they fail to support his version of events. What on earth has happened to Charlie Rossi, Deirdre Wood, and Merle Amory, to mention but a few missing persons — one might ask!

Among those referred to is myself, where I am converted into one of the chief reactionaries of the '73-'77 GLC administration.

The innocent reader might well be forgiven for imagining me to have been the leader, deputy leader, chair of policy and resources, chair of finance — or at least — the chief whip during that period!

Ken bleats about the GLC's 1973-1977 cuts, conveniently overlooking the fact that the chief architects of the GLC cuts during that period were Illtyd Harrington (deputy leader) and Harvey Hinds (chief whip) who were the very people who both facilitated and hoisted him to power over the hapless Andrew Mackintosh! What on earth is he complaining about!?

As far as ILEA is concerned, Ken's selective reporting of his much publicised medial opposition to the ILEA cuts of Sir Ashley Bramall, again conveniently overlooks the fact that when Charlie Rossi (who is a non-person in the book) and I tried to do something about the ILEA cuts by proposing a motion to restore them in early 1981, Ken refused to support it on the grounds that it might rock the boat! — and this from Ken!

Ken would be well advised to take a break, and stop attacking comrades on the left. His own record on:

1. voting to double the fares after the Denning Judgement;
2. his abject performance in front of the Queen at the Thames barrier;
3. his disastrous handling of the rate-capping fiasco from which we are still suffering today;

and 4. his current failure to condemn outright his LCC friends in Brent, Haringey, Lambeth, etc., for the swingeing cuts in services which he defended so vociferously in the past;

hardly qualifies him to criticise the GLC administration of 1973-1977, whose failings compared with Ken's enormities seem positively benign!

Yours fraternally,
Councillor *Ellis Hillman*
Barnet

Fred Naylor, ideological mentor to the Dewsbury parents, began a recent tirade in the *Times Education Supplement* with:

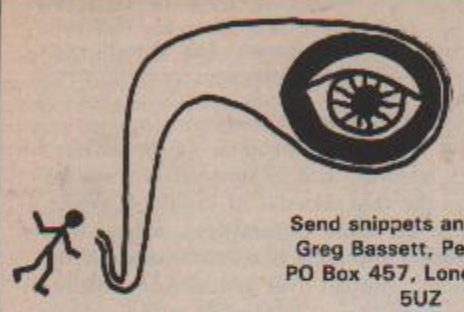
"The real issue in Dewsbury is not how Mr Baker's proposals for open enrolment would have helped the parents. It is the more enduring one of reconciling parental rights with the curricular policies of sole local education authorities.

"This was recognised by Shahid Tilley in *Labour Briefing* no. 48: 'The Left in the Labour Party has been ideologically bewildered over how the state should relate to culture, religion, and ethnicity.' He added that the rhetoric of multiculturalism 'has been lifted and put to new and frightening use by the likes of Fred Naylor, Ronald Butt and Ray Honeyford. We now find that we have no effective, coherent critique of their campaign.'

"It is not only Labour's Left that is bewildered by Dewsbury. The more reasonable David Blunkett in his Platform articles (*TES*, September 25th) was never able to reconcile his sensible recognition that the aspirations of white parents need to be supported, in the same way as those of black parents, with the curricular imperatives of fashionable multicultural policies inspired by the Left."

***Briefing* sees no reason to give credibility to what Naylor calls "the aspirations of white parents" — those aspirations being, in the Dewsbury case, to an all-white education in an all-white society.**

Periscope



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

When in doubt...

Hot air merchants were thick on the ground in Chesterfield, to no one's surprise. The award for the most flagrantly bogus rhetorical claim must go to MP Bernie Grant, who exceeded even the wildest assertions of the RCP in his speech to the Saturday evening socialist jamboree.

Heckled by members of the audience enraged by his recent support for cuts in Haringey Council's budget — and challenged by Ted Knight — Grant chose simply to *deny* the whole affair. "I've never voted for cuts," he claimed, with the breath-taking audacity of the born-again careerist.

To set the record straight: Grant persistently attacked Steve King and Martha Osamor's attempts to lead the Council down the no-cuts road of defiance.

On July 13th in full Council, he voted *against* the Labour Group's motion and *for* the right wing's 3% cuts motion.

At the crucial Group meeting of September 15th, Grant voted *for* the motion to censure Steve King and Martha Osamor and *for* the motion demanding a "legal" cuts package.

He absented himself from the Council meeting of September 22nd, at which the cuts package was finally voted through; no doubt well aware that his former supporters from Broadwater Farm would be present — and their chant of "*Bernie — Judas*" could not be misinterpreted. *M.S.*

Plugging the gap

Despite a break-even budget proposed by the staff, *Labour Weekly* has been shut down by the NEC. Only seven members voted against the proposal — Blunkett couldn't even be bothered to turn up.

In the absence of *Labour Weekly*, Party members will recive no details of selection conferences in other constituencies.

Briefing intends to plug the gap. In fact, outraged *Labour Weekly* junkies could do worse than subscribe to *Briefing* — at least we won't run off with your subs money half way through the year. *D.C.*

'Labour listens' — *to whom?*

Dr John Cunningham is all set to sit down and listen to the voluble opinions of the guests invited to the first of the new "Labour listens" public-relations sessions.

The subject is the poll tax.

In attendance will be: the **Building Societies Association**, the **Association of British Chambers of Commerce**, the **National Federation of Self-employed and Small Businesses**, the **Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors**, and the (non TUC-affiliated) **Royal College of Nursing**.

At least Cunningham should feel at home. An audience more reflective of the working class he is supposed to represent would have frightened the wits out of him. *M.S.*

Kinnock "no sell-out" shock

Heavy promotion, the hard sell, topicality, and incalculable free publicity do not always a best-seller make.

Publishers Basil Blackwell are scratching their heads and wondering where they went wrong. Neil Kinnock's **magnum opus** *Making Our Way*, despite special offers to Labour Party members, gratuitous but unrequited hype in *Labour Weekly*, and a fetching jacket photo of the leader himself has sold ***a mere 1,400 copies***.

Of these, 500 were a bulk order from the Labour Party Bookshop itself.

This derisory figure compares poorly with current sales on Livingstone's *If Voting Changed Anything*... or Tony Benn's *Diaries* or indeed Alan Thornett's *From Militancy to Marxism*.

Television, radio, and newspaper audiences have little choice. Kinnock is thrust down their throats willy nilly. Book buyers, on the other hand, can and indeed have to, be more discriminating, as shown in their wise decision to steer clear of the collected Kinnock.

The Times ain't a-changin'

Comparisons between the crash of '29 and the crash of '87 may be misleading or even dangerous, but one similarity cannot be disputed: in both cases, the pillars of the establishment rushed to defend the market from radical criticism of any kind, as can be seen in this comment from the front page of the *New York Times* of October 25th, 1929:

"Confidence in the soundness of the stock market structure, notwithstanding the upheaval of the last few days, was voiced last night by bankers and other financial leaders. Sentiment as expressed by the heads of some of the largest banking institutions and by industrial executives as well was distinctly cheerful and the feeling was general that the worst had been seen. Wall Street ended the day in an optimistic frame of mind.

"The opinion of brokers was unanimous that the selling had got out of hand not because of any inherent weakness in the market..."

Building Briefing

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The *Briefing* Editorial Board, and the following Commissions, can be contacted at PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ, 01 733 7016:
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Next meetings: Friday 13th November, Thursday 19th November, Friday 27th November.

Briefing Steering Committee:
Next meeting: Sunday December 6th: ***NOTE 11.30 am is revised starting time.***

Deadline for articles:
Issue no. 52 (out November 25th): notify EB as soon as possible, all articles in by Tuesday November 17th.
Issue no. 53 (out December 9th): notify EB as soon as possible, all articles in by Tuesday December 1st. There will be a Xmas break after issue no. 53.

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Book review

Black struggle in the USA

Racial Formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1980s, by Michael Omi and Howard Winnant, Routledge & Keegan Paul.

Recently black activists such as Manning Marable, and now Winnant and Omi, have attempted to examine the changing contours of racism and black liberation in the United States over the past two and a half decades.

Racial Formation explains how, in the '60s, race occupied centre stage of American politics in an unprecedented manner with a mass-based proletarian resistance, and how it fused with and provided impetus for other social movements such as gay liberation, the women's movement, and the Vietnam solidarity movement.

The book then proceeds through the 1970s, the years of quiescence and decline, with the unravelling of the movement into various strands: electoralism/institutionalism, a marginalised Marxist-Leninist current, and the isolationism of the cultural nationalists.

The book is strongest in its analysis of the past decade of reaction, detailing the efforts of the far right, "New Right",and the neo-conservatives to ensure that the economic and political dislocation of the '70s were understood *racially*.

Omi and Winnant show that racial issues were high on the agenda of those forces seeking a rightward realignment in US politics. The plethora of organisations, resentment felt by the skilled blue collar and lower middle class has an ominous familiarity to readers in Britain, casting a glance over their shoulders at Dewsbury.

By Shahid Tilley Haringey Labour Briefing

The authors also attempt to construct an alternative model of race/racism which emphasises the social nature of "race", its historical flexibility, and the secondary importance of physical characteristics in determining it. This is welcome in light of the right's use of coded language (e.g. mugging, inner-city, reverse-racism, and alien-culture) which makes little specific reference to race at all.

The book does not fully explain why racism is such a strong motor force in the first place, one capable of mobilising powerful resentment, and this is an inadequacy. There is also an absence of any acount of the rise of neo-conservative elements *within* the black community, and of their relationship to that community as a whole and to the state.

The book will be useful nonetheless in helping to break down the parochialism which is so deeply embedded in the heart of the British left.

TELEVISION

The radical Shelley rediscovered

***Briefing* readers deterred by the very thought of watching an hour-long Sunday night televised lecture by Paul Foot on the poetry and politics of Percy Bysshe Shelley missed a rare opportunity to hear the (original!) Chartists' favourite poet recited with some of the revolutionary passion with which he wrote.**

By Mike Marqusee Haringey Labour Briefing

Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein* and the poet's wife, commented after his death:

"Shelley... believed that a clash between the two classes of society was inevitable and he eagerly ranged himself on the people's side."

Expelled from Oxford for publishing a pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Aetheism*, denounced and disinherited by his aristocratic father, and pilloried in the conservative press, Shelley placed his hopes for change not in middle class social reformers but in:

The Spirit that lifts the slave before his lord
Stalks through the capitals of armed kings,
And spreads his ensign in the wilderness.

In his visionary epic *The Revolt of Islam*, he imagined a day when:

...earth's immense and trampled multitude
In hope on their own powers began to look...

In the same poem he raises another question with a dramatic resonance in our own time:

Can man be free if woman be a slave?
Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air,
To the curruption of a closed grave!
Can they whose mates are beasts, condemned to bear
Scorn, heavier far than toil or anguish, dare
To trample their oppressors?

On television and in print, Paul Foot has done an admirable job of rescuing Shelley from the literary conspiracy which has sought to silence this radical poet's real voice for over a hundred years.

BOOK REVIEW



"The formation of the revolutionary leadership" 1926

The murals of Diego Rivera

In his book *My Life, My Art*, Diego Rivera, the revolutionary Mexican artist, explained the purpose of his vast public murals:

"to reproduce the pure basic images of my land. I wanted my painting to reflect the social life of Mexico as I saw it, and through my vision of the truth to show the masses the outline of the future."

Fresco

In his fresco cycle in the agricultural college in Chapingo, near Mexico city, painted between 1924-1928, Rivera depicted Mexico's agrarian revolution, and took as his theme the dictum of the peasant revolutionary, Emiliano Zapata:

"Here it is taught to exploit the land, not the man."

The panel from the Chapingo cycle above is entitled "The Formation of the Revolutionary Leadership" and is reproduced in an excellent new book *The Murals of Diego Rivera*, published by Journeyman Press, £12:95 in paperback.

There is an exhibition of Rivera's work (mainly smaller easel paintings) at the Hayward Gallery in London until January 10th 1988.



"Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda", detail 1947

Smiths Disband:

The Queen is dead

The recent announcement that The Smiths have disbanded is probably the most significant event in popular culture since the Sex Pistols burst onto TV screens ten years ago.

The Smiths encapsulated a particular attitude generated by a particular social system at a particular moment in history.

Emerging from the industrial wastelands of Manchester in 1982, their songs articulate the frustrations of working class youth who have known nothing but Thatcher.

For these youth, *the times are hopeless*, a fact which goes some way towards vindicating the group from the accusation that they offer no hope and therefore no call to socialist action.

Beneath the depressing surface, the songs demonstrate a more subtle and positive ideology in operation.

By William West Haringey Labour Briefing

The band reacted against the "star" syndrome regurgitated by the pop bands of the early '80s. Hence the overtly ordinary name, and the hearing-aid and NHS spectacles worn by Morrissey, the singer.

They saw mainstream pop as sterile and divorced from working class experience. As Morrissey sings in "Panic", their most successful single, "hang the dj/"cos the music that they constantly play/says nothing to me about my life".

The Smiths freely borrowed the music and imagery of working class culture of the 1950s. In this way they signalled a desire to escape the present by returning to a "golden era" of working-classness, whilst acknowledging not only the impossibility of such a return, but also that such an era probably never existed in the first place.

But all this analysis ignores the real humour of The Smiths, whose music and identity were a pastiche of every cliche in pop music and life itself.

Who can miss the comedy in "Girlfriend in a Coma"; "Unhappy Birthday"; or the lines from "There is a Light that Never Goes Out":

"and if a ten ton truck/kills the both of us/to die by your side/the pleasure and the privilege is mine"?

Perhaps in the end The Smiths had to disband — they became a pastiche of themselves. In a recent South Bank Show, Morrissey claimed that "the death of The Smiths signals the death of popular music."

The Smiths took on all the cliches of pop and turned them inside out to show how ridiculous and exploitative the whole system is. They pushed pop to the limits.

The Queen may be dead, but the legacy, one hopes, lives on...

International Briefing



A LITTLE-KNOWN SOCIETY:

Visit to Albania

This should quell any suggestions that *Labour Briefing* is London-centric!

Here we begin an occasional series of *Socialist Travellogues*, with GLENN SUTHERLAND, Norwood CLP, recording his impressions of Albania, Dismissed sometimes by the left, even to the point of providing Alternative Comedian Alexei Sayle with material, very little is known about this virtually closed society; yet there is much to study about the way a Stalinist state can survive, with apparent popular support.

We welcome contributions to Socialist Travellogue from all *Briefing* readers.

We crossed the border from Yugoslavia into Albania in the middle of the night.

At first, we were all silently apprehensive — not least because we were welcomed on the Albanian side by searchlights and border guards with Chinese uniforms (complete with red starred caps) and Kalashnikov rifles.

Of course, we had all heard the stories about tourists being turned away form Albania because of their clothes, and of men getting beards shaved off and hair cut before being allowed in.

Our fears proved groundless. We left the border post minus a few English guidebooks to Albania, but with the same amount of hair (facial and otherwise) and in the same dishevelled state in which we had left Yugoslavia.

On the wall of the border post (all faded elegance and crumbling plaster) was a large slogan in English:

"Even if we have to go without bread, we Albanians do not violate principles. We do not betray Marxism-Leninism — Enver Hoxha."

Although the principles which guide the Party of Labour of Albania (PLA) may have little to do with Marxism or Leninism, the Albanian people have undeniably made enormous sacrifices, both before and after Liberation in 1944, in order to safeguard their country's national independence and economic self-sufficiency.

Apparently, these sacrifices are made more or less willingly, and the results, at least on the economic level, are impressive.

Before Liberation, Albania was a semi-feudal society which had been ruled, directly or indirectly, by foreign powers since the founding of the first Albanian state in 1444.

What few industries had developed there were wholly owned by Italian capitalists. Italian landowners owned all the most fertile land on the coastal plain, and even this land consisted mainly of malarial swamps.

Immediately after liberation, the Albanian Communist Party (later to become the PLA) embarked on a crash programme of building hydro-electric power stations and draining the coastal swamps.

Today, the whole country has electricity and 40% of the power produced in the hydro-electric stations is exported. The swamp drainage has led to a huge increase in land productivity and has eradicated malaria, which used to be the main killer disease.

Agricultural exports include tobacco, cotton, grapes, and rice. Albania also exports copper, iron, steel, cobalt and oil. It is the second biggest producer of chrome in the world — after South Africa.

From about 1500AD, when the Turkish armies overran the country, until the Liberation in 1944, Albania was the only Muslim country in Europe. There were two main religious minorities: an ancient Roman Catholic community in the North of the country, and a more recent Greek Orthodox minority in the South.

Banned

During the war-time occupation the leaders of all three main religions collaborated with the Fascists and actively worked against the Partisans who eventually liberated the country.

As a result, large sections of the population turned against the traditional religions.

According to the official version, support for religion steadily declined and it was officially abolished in 1967. All the remaining churches and mosques were closed and religious services were banned.

In recent years churches and mosques of "cultural interest" have been renovated and opened as museums, whereas those of no "cultural interest" are used as meeting halls, sports clubs,etc.

Apparently there are still believers among the older generation, but there does not seem to be much of a movement to legalise religion. It is important to remember that the average age of the Albanian population is only 26, so most Albanians were children when religion was abolished in 1967.

Much of our time in Albania was taken up with visits to museums, exhibitions, state farms, and other organised trips. However, none of these were compulsory and we had plenty of free time to wander around on our own and try to talk to ordinary Albanians.

Racism

The Albanian language is a direct descendant from ancient Illyrian and bears no relation to other European or Near Eastern languages. Not surprisingly, none of us spoke any Albanian, so our conversations were mostly in French or English.

Language teaching in the schools and universities appears to be excellent. My grammar was frequently corrected — both in French and English!

Understandably, in a country with such a long history of foreign domination, extreme nationalism is widespread and is sometimes expressed in the form of virulent anti-Slav and anti-Greek racism. There seems to be real mass support for the PLA and the government which cannot be unconnected with its xenophobic policies.

A lot of resources are put into traditional Albanian cultural activities and crafts, and feudal lords who fought against the Turks in the 15th century are regarded as national heroes.

Support

The PLA's mass support must also be due to the lack of any political alternative. The official history of the PLA is repleted with successful struggles against "Trotskyite agents", "Kruschevite revisionists" and "British/American spies" in the bureaucracy, but these power struggles mostly seem to have taken place (and been "resolved") behind closed doors.

The relative material well-being of the population compared with the years before Liberation is also a big factor in the PLA's popular support. The average industrial and agricultural wage is 500 Leks (about £40) per month. Bread costs 1 Lek (about 8p) per kilo. When the lack of any taxation is taken into account, food prices in real terms are probably lower than those in Britain.

'By law,' the highest wage in any enterprise can only be a maximum of twice the lowest wage. At the state farm we visited in Kavajë, south west of the capital Tiranë, the manager received 1,000 Leks per month and the labourers 500 Leks.

Anyone with a disability, chronic illness, or injury which prevents him or her from working will receive a pension of 75% of his or her previous working wage.

Maternity leave consists of eight weeks off work and a further 10-12 weeks on half time, all on 100% wages. Children go to free state nurseries from birth to the age of four, when education begins.

Labour

Officially there is no unemployment. We did, however, see three or four children in Tiranë going through dustbins for something to eat. Clearly there is a small section of the population which falls outside the social security system, but we were unable to find out why or how this comes about.

Although the population has nearly doubled since Liberation, and now stands at 3 million, there is a chronic shortage of labour.

Agriculture, which is easily the largest employer, is still mostly non-mechanised. Tractors are rare, and most transport is by horse and cart. The cotton and tobacco harvests are gathered by hand, mostly by women.

Divorces

Because of the shortage of labour (and, presumably, as a form of social control) large families are encouraged. Pre-marital sex is illegal — although rarely punished; the male is regarded as the guilty party automatically. Similarly, homosexuality is illegal but rarely punished.

Divorces, while legal, are discouraged. Only 0.7% of marriages end in divorce, the only grounds for which is "mutual incompatibility".

The labour shortage is also made up by scheduling one third of school students' time for "productive labour", which usually takes the form of unpaid agricultural work.

The other two thirds of students' time at school is taken up with traditional education and military and physical training. By the time they leave school Albanian students know how to clean, assemble and shoot a variety of small arms, and are familiar with the theoretical side of guerrilla tactics.

Every man does two years national service and there is also a large professional army.

Albania's population is well armed, with most families in possession of at least one rifle or shot-gun. The fields are liberally scattered with pill-boxes and other gun emplacements. While it is strictly forbidden to take photographs of military installations, it is virtually impossible not to!

I left Albania with regret, having only scratched the surface of a country which is all too little understood.

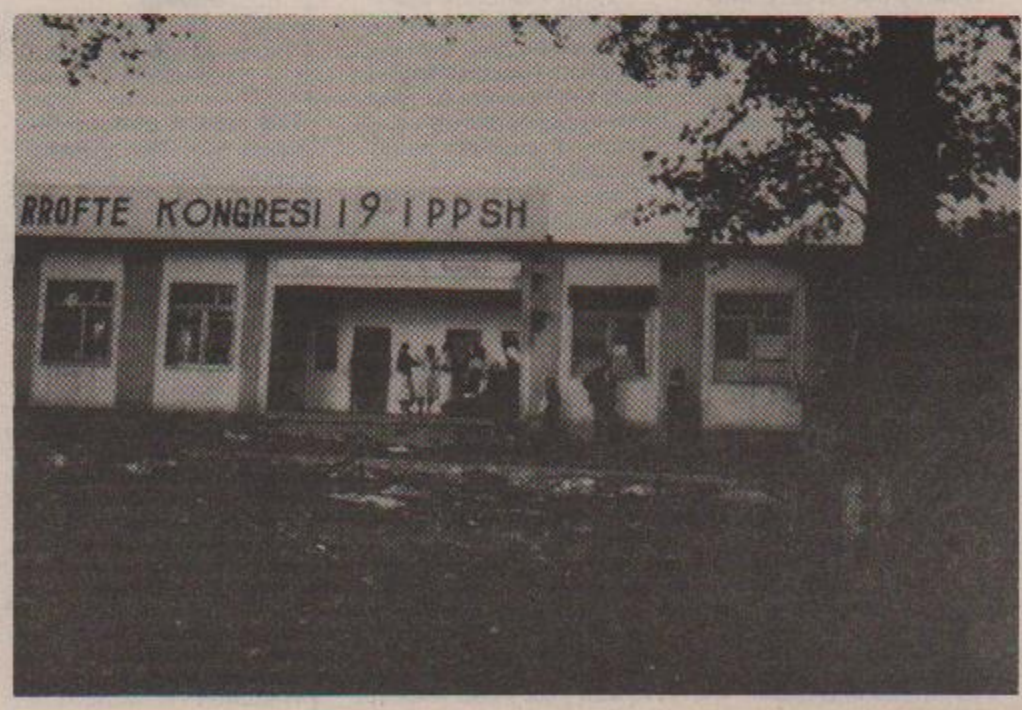
As socialists, we have a duty to study and learn the lessons from states where capitalism has been abolished, but workers' democracy is non-existent. It is regrettable that Albania, as a particularly "pure" form of Stalinist state, is largely ignored by British socialists.



Party headquarters — Tiranë. Above the building is written "Glory to the PLA".



Copper wire factory — Shkoder. The gist of the slogan above the main entrance is "Learn from and implement the historic decisions of the ninth congress of the PLA".



Local Executive Offices — Durres. The slogan reads: "Long live the ninth congress of the PLA".

An interview with Alexander Cockburn

The other side of the special relationship

ALEXANDER COCKBURN is now widely recognised as America's leading left-wing journalist and a much-feared scourge of Reagan's corps of tame intellectuals, journalists, and bureaucrats.

A collection of his writings charting, amongst other things, the rise and decline of the Great Communicator and his epigones, entitled *Corruptions of Empire*, has just been published by *Verso* and is highly recommended to anyone interested in the contours of the US political landscape.

***Briefing* supporters DAVE PALMER and MIKE MARQUSEE interviewed Cockburn on his recent visit to Britain. In this first instalment, Cockburn discusses the stock market crash and its implications for the US ruling class. In the following instalment, to be published in the next issue of *Labour Briefing*, Cockburn analyses the prospects for the American left.**

***Briefing:* Let's start with the Stock Market crash. Is it the absolute end of Reaganism?**

Cockburn: First, in the stock market itself, there was major panic.

Is it exactly like 1929? There are obvious differences. They have learned a bit. The day after Black Monday the Federal Reserve announced that it would support liquidity, unlike in the early '30s, when they denied liquidity.

But if you go back and look at history there was a recovery after '29 and the real crash came in '32. So what one would expect at the moment is wild upswings and downswings.

Boom

The second thing to realise is that the Reagan boom was always a mirage. If you calculate in real terms, using a constant dollar, if you take the average Dow Jones Index for 1965, which was the peak of the post-war American boom it is 10% higher than the peak of the Reagan boom in August '87.

So you can't say there has been a huge capitalist surge under Reagan. In fact, there has been fairly steady decline. I.F Stone (venerable voice of the American left), to his great shame, and a lot of so-called "liberal" Democrats are now calling for austerity and belt-tightening. Stone said "we could do with a dose of much needed austerity in the style of Brazil or Argentina."

A lot of Democrats, and a lot of columnists from the neo-liberal centre right, are making these calls for austerity and balanced budgets, all of which in my view will induce a severe recession.

Deficit

The deficit, for example, accounts for about 6% of GNP. You can't remove 6% of spending in the economy without incredible effects. The fact that a major faction of Democratic opinion, including, I believe, Jackson, is calling for balancing the budget is an indication of the primitivism of the political spectrum in America.

The old Reagan supply-siders, who do at least know that you don't try to balance a budget and raise taxes in the middle of a delicate market situation are caught in an incredible bind. On the one hand the economy in America is not strong.

Logic

The market has gone steadily down since the mid-'60s. Real family income has gone down; real wages have gone down. The only thing keeping the whole balloon afloat is enormous personal and national debt.

Real interest rates, i.e. after discounting for inflation, are at an all time high in US history. Logic would dictate that they should lower interest rates and increase money supply to increase demand.

Manoeuvre

But they are caught in a contradiction between trying to inflate the economy, on the one hand, and on the other keeping foreign investors in the country — which requires high interest rates. They have very little room for manoeuvre.

***Briefing:* Is there a contradiction between America's role as world policeman with its consequent huge military spending and its financial indebtedness to everyone else?**

Cockburn: I disagree with many on the left who say military spending is in itself bad for the economy. If you go to Los Angeles County, where 10% of all US military production takes place, the wealth is obvious.

Clearly you can argue that in the long-term military spending distorts the whole shape of the economy, apart from the immorality of arms production; but military spending is the backbone of the Reagan boom.

***Briefing:* The social alliance behind Reagan is based on this military spending. Will it now fall apart?**

Cockburn: Military spending is integral to late American capitalism. The Democrats can't cut it. Without political candidates coming out with a socialist programme of massive wealth redistribution and a real major socialist assault on the American economy, we don't have a prayer of converting our military-based economy to anything else.

You can't say cut military spending and build roads, houses, and hospitals and everything will be all right. It won't be all right unless you also say we must have an absolute redistribution of wealth, centralised planning — the whole socialist menu.

The Democrats are about to repeat Mondale's mistake of '84 when he said "I want to raise taxes." The American people told him to get lost. Now they are doing the same thing again. The Democrats end up sounding like bankers, like the IMF.

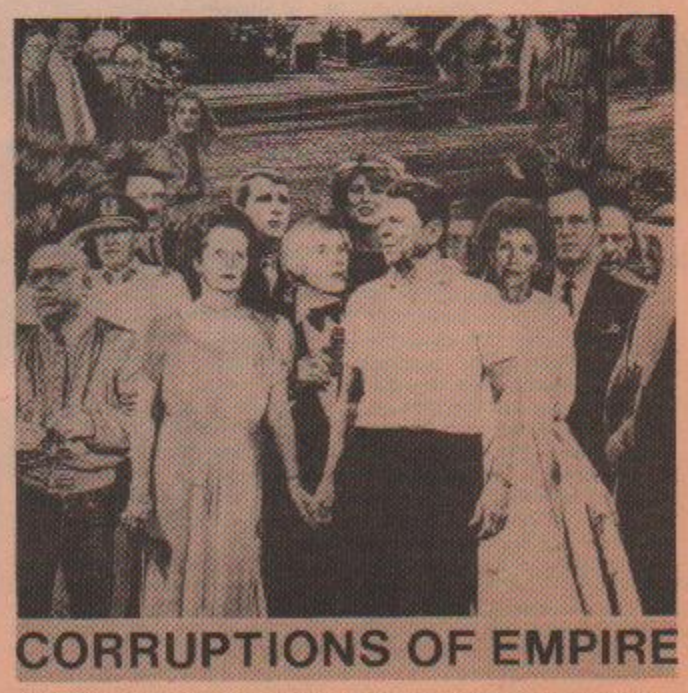
***Briefing:* Will this breed pressures for protectionism and isolationism?**

Cockburn: There are enormous pressures for protectionism. The UAW (United Workers Association) has lost a large part of its membership and they now call for protectionism. The Republican elites are against it, but the Democrats are flirting with it.

But they do remember what happened in the early '30s and they know that protectionism is a disaster. It can't be a proper strategy for American capitalism.

Crazy

To sum up: the economy is not in good shape. They are going to have a recession and the measure of its depth will be dictated by what they do. If they have a recession there will be problems for the banks because all the loans they have out are under serious pressure. From Thatcher through Kohl to the Japanese the US's allies are all saying Reagan must do something about the deficit. They are crazy. If Reagan does something about the deficit there will be a huge crash.



*A section from the front cover of Alexander Cockburn's book **Corruptions of Empire**.*

***Briefing:* Where does that leave the "Special Relationship" between Britain and the US? Clearly it has now gone into reverse gear.**

Cockburn: The Special Relationship is under pressure in a number of ways. First, the mythic lineaments of the special relationship — Thatcher and Reagan as the prince and princess of revived capital, striding up the isle of endless prosperity — has now been proved to be horseshit.

I always thought that the difference between Reagan and Thatcher was that Reagan promised joy and Thatcher promised pain. Now if you promise joy and people are no longer joyful then you've obviously failed. That's what's happened to Reagan.

Other factors have changed. Gorbachev is clearly not Brezhnev. The whole relationship between East and West is changing very rapidly.

Will any new administration in America see the essentials of the Special Relationship in a new way? I don't think so. One of the rockhard elements in late capitalist ideology in America is the Atlantic relationship. It is largely determined by politics rather than economics.

***Briefing:* The links between Thatcherism and Reaganism are close, not only economically but in virtually every aspect of social and political policy.**

Cockburn": It is closeness not only of speculative capital but also of the intelligentsia. There is a very self-conscious cohort of intellectuals who are constantly refreshing each other with mutual admirations and shared ideological objectives. These are self-conscious efforts to form a trans-Atlantic ruling class.

LCI Employment Discrimination Conference

Labour needs an answer to King's cosmetic measures

Kevin McNamara, Labour's Principal Opposition Spokesperson on Northern Ireland, will be giving the opening address to the trade union conference on Employment Discrimination in Northern Ireland.

The Conference will also be addressed by Sean McBride, who helped formulate the McBride Principles on employment discrimination in the North.

Glaring

The overall title of the Conference, "Ireland: The Cause of Labour?", is especially apt in view of the Labour Party Conference's recent rejection — albeit by under a million bloc votes — of the composite condemning the glaring denial of basic human and civil liberties in the six counties.

The Conference will discuss how we can win a majority at next year's TUC and Labour Party conferences on this issue. Among the contributors will be John Carroll (General President of the Irish TGWU), Noireen Green (Executive member of the IT&GWU from the North), Oliver Carney (Fair Employment Trust), Christine Crawley, MEP, Clare Short, MP, and Ken Livingstone, MP, who will make the closing remarks.

By Patrick Sikorski NUR

The scores of delegations already registered include the South Wales Area NUM, the Durham Mechanics NUM, over a dozen Trades Councils and Divisional or District Committees, and numerous Constituency Labour Parties.

Employment discrimination was of course one of the original grievances which touched off the present period of struggle by Northern Nationalists.

Almost twenty years on, the structural nature of job discrimination has not been tackled. Behind Tom King's bluff and bluster and his recent launch of a "new" initiative against discrimination the basic facts remain the same as ever.

The rate of unemployment for Catholics/Nationalists has varied between two and two and a half times that of the Protestant/Unionist population.

Unskilled

The former are over-represented in unskilled and under-paid grades, despite an annual turnover of 100,000 jobs in the Six Counties (representng some 20% of the workforce) and despite a gradual levelling of educational attainment between the two communities.

The Tory government is only making this new cosmetic effort because the campaign for the adoption of the McBride Principles (especially in the United States) has forced the issue into the open.

King's exercise is nothing new. In the '70s, the Van Straubenzee Report led the Labour government to pass the Fair Employment Act and establish the Fair Employment Agency.

Toothless

The initial report called for the use of statistics for purposes of monitoring and establishing goals and timetables. By ignoring this demand, Labour rendered the legislation toothless from the start.

The new Tory proposals are no different. Reference to gaols and timetables is confined to the supplementary document (*Guide to Effective Practice*) but only in relation to job applications, thus excluding affirmative action from hiring, training, transfer, or promotion. There is no legal obligation to implement anything in the guide.

Furthermore, the details of the proposals for "contract compliance" make it clear that the 8,000 firms which have signed the present sham Declaration of Principle and Intent (i.e. which qualifies them for government grants) will simply be transferred to a register of signatories of the new Declaration of Practice, which will be deemed sufficient evidence of "contract compliance".

Nobody looking at this sorry story can be left in any doubt that only principled and consistent opposition from the labour movement can force effective action.

But first the labour movement in Britain (and its 300,000 affiliated members in the North) must get its own house in order — and at least get its policy right.

The Conference on November 28th will be an important step in this direction.

Ireland: the Cause of Labour?
A trade union conference on employment discrimination in Northern Ireland
Saturday November 28th
The Camden Centre
Bidborough St, London WC1
(opposite St Pancras Station)
Contact: Labour Committee on Ireland, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX

Sinn Fein Ard-fheis

The 83rd Annual Conference (Ard-fheis) of Sinn Fein took place in Dublin from October 30th to November 1st.

It was hardly the sort of gathering that those who depict Irish Republicanism as an apolitical, gun-loving, bomb-throwing, blood-letting organisation would expect.

There was little of the leadership-worship associated with the Tory and increasingly with Labour Party Conferences, even less of the emotionalism which is meant to characterise Irish nationalism, and there was no attempt to hide the reality that Sinn Fein's struggle will be long and arduous. Instead, the Ard-fheis got down to the routine tasks of developing and articulating a set of economic and social policies.

The wide-ranging discussions covered "democratic socialist" proposals for youth, education, health, emigration, privatisation, agriculture, fisheries, trade unions and unemployment.

But for the delegates the main priorities for Sinn Fein over the next twelve months will centre on discrimination in the North of Ireland and extradition of political offenders from the South of Ireland to the North or Britain.

The resolution passed at the Ard-fheis saw the proposals on extradition "as the ultimate in collaboration with the British goverment" and "the most abject surrender to British demands yet". Both the resolution and speakers to it pointed out that those who had formed, 60 years ago, the party which

By Geoff Bell
National Council, Labour Committee on Ireland

now finds itself in government — Fianna Fail — would have been subject to extradition under the measures the Irish government has now agreed to in principle.

Indeed, the leader of Fianna Fail and Taoiseach (Premier) could himself be extradited because of his alleged involvement in gun-running to the IRA in the early 1970s.

Although the Irish government has yet to implement the extradition proposals the indication is that sooner or later they will do so. And there is little doubt that if they do, it will not be just Irish republicans who will suffer, but also Irish sovereignty.

As Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams MP pointed out, it is one more consequence of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which was meant to give the South more influence in the North of Ireland but which is ending up giving Britain more influence in the South.

But if Britain faces little sustained opposition from the Irish government on the extradition issue, it is facing increasing problems over the anti-Catholic discrimination in employment in the North of Ireland.

The MacBride campaign in the United States — which has stressed the need for those investing in the North to ensure there is equality of employment there — is creating major difficulties for the British. Sinn Fein has now come out with its own detailed proposals — the discrimination question is now threatening to upset more than one British applecart.

The Sinn Fein leadership argued that because of the priority given to the extradition and discrimination issues, other campaigns could not be taken up. Specifically, they spoke against resolutions calling on Sinn Fein actively to participate in defending the right to give information on abortion, although the leadership did state its full support for such rights.

This debate was one of the most heated, with the leadership's position eventually being carried.

Even with the heat this debate caused, the over-riding impression of the Conference was a proletarian attendance and a determination to continue Sinn Fein's political development.

Continued from front page

recent increase in industrial accidents or stop the haemorrhage of inspectorate staff into the private sector.

● Arts, museums, libraries, scientific research have been consigned to the back-burner for years. Now the flame has been cut off for the foreseeable future. Arts Minister Luce's generosity to the Arts Council is a cover-up for the much more significant decimation of arts and libraries at Local Authority level.

● The £45 million "windfall" investment in housing comes entirely from unexpectedly high income from "right to buy" council house sales and will not make the slightest dent in Britain's housing crisis.

● For the fourth time in five years the Treasury's contribution to the National Insurance fund is cut, this time by £650 million. Although this is only possible because of increased income from employee/employer contributions, no reduction in contributions is even considered. Instead, the unexpected extra cash will probably be used to subsidise tax cuts.

● At £19.2 billion, the defence budget, though cut by some 3% in real terms (as compared to the 5% cut originally planned for this year) remains larger than transport, environment, housing and industry budgets combined, larger than the education budget and just short of the total health budget, and a staggering 12.25% of planned public spending.

● Clearly, the Tories do believe in "throwing money" at *some* problems, as ilustrated by their plans to "invest" several hundred millon pounds, in over 21,000 *new* prison places in the next few years, and their big new subsidies to the electricity and water industries — fattening up the goose for a big privatisation sell-off next year.

● A 9% rise in electricity prices next year (followed by a rise for water) to make privatisation more attractive and raise Treasury revenues is simply a backdoor tax increase with no useful social purpose.

● Lawson's 70p "floor price" for benighted BP shares (a peculiar form of renationalisation in whch the taxpayer foots the bill and yet gains neither income nor control) gives the lie to his claim that the "soundness" of the British economy protects it from the crisis in America.

For once the stock markets may be more in tune with reality than either ministers or financial commentators, who keep scratching their heads and asking why, if all is well in Britain, is everyone getting so panicky about America.

The painful reality is that US efforts to correct its budget and trade deficits — or failure to do so — will inevitably resound on European economies. Already Lawson has admitted that overall UK economic growth will *fall* next year from 4% to 2%. The balance of payments deficit will rise from £2.5 billion to £3.5 billon — which, in turn, only disguises what is now a £9 billion deficit in manufacturing trade.

The Treasury figures — on the basis of which Lawson forecasts "sustained growth and steadily rising living standards" — do not yet incorporate the full effects on investment of the Stock Market crash. They *assume* a continued growth in the volume of world exports, steady oil prices, and even a stable exchange rate!

What is Labour's answer to this catalogue of fraud and oturight capitalist banditry?

● John Smith, a dismal flop in his debut appearance as Shadow Chancellor, asks meekly *"Is this not the opportunity to cut interest rates?"*

● On *Question Time*, Jack Straw finds himself inadvertantly defending the Reaganomic of high military spending.

● Kinnock tries to make "statesman-like" noises about international co-operation amongst capitalists.

By default, it seems, Labour's response to the current crisis is to advocate — in measured tones, of course, — a kind of unplanned world-wide spending spree, coupled with the utterly uncovincing assertion that a Labour government would simply manage the whole thing much better.

Now is the time for socialists to dare to question the world capitalist system. Now is the time for Labour — in the Commons and outside — to pose the only practical alternative to it: a planned economy based on public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

LABOUR BRIEFING

Beyond rate-capping:
MAKING THE POLL TAX BITE

By Reg Race
Tottenham CLP

Councillors to levy a rate or precept greater than that specified by Ministers.

There are also reserve powers in the Act to extend rate-capping to all local authorities in England and Wales.

It has always been clear that the government would need to amend the Rates Act in light of the replacement of rates by the poll tax. If they had not introduced "poll tax capping", then every Council now ratecapped would have been able to set its poll tax figure at a high enough level to restore cuts in services made to keep it within the law.

But the new controls go way beyond any simple change necessary to take account of the switch from rates to poll tax.

Government Ministers have recently announced major changes in the way new legislation will control local authorities' ability to raise taxes to pay for services.

These changes have provoked little reaction; but they are of fundamental significance to every Labour Councillor in the land, *whether or not* his or her Council is presently rate-capped.

Most existing financial controls flow from the Rates Act 1984, which allows Ministers to *designate* individual Councils if, on a national formula, they are deemed to be spending too much.

A designated authority then has a spending limit and rate limit announced by the government; it is illegal for

We will have to wait for the poll tax bill to be published at the end of November to see the precise proposals. But, on the basis of what we now know, controls will clearly be extended in a new draconian fashion.

● Poll Tax capping would cast its net wider than rate-capping. *Every* local Council could be capped *at any stage* in the financial year, amounting to a general scheme of tax limitation that Ministers stated would only be introduced in an emergency.

● Poll Tax capping could be introduced at any time, notwithstanding the fact that a Council had made a legal budget. It could be introduced as a direct response to *any* item of additional expenditure of which the government disapproved, if it were introduced in the middle of a financial year. Thus, capping might not be a response to the overall spending level of a given Council but rather to a particular initiative of which Whitehall disapproved for political or other reasons.

● The new measures will be a field day for opposition Councillors and disgruntled officers. They would be able to report individual items of spending to Ministers and ask for Whitehall intervention. Government can then demand: drop this additional spending, or the Poll Tax capped next year.

These new measures will decrease local authority autonomy and will be used against Councils which implement radical policies. They will be used extensively, in conjunction with new powers to be granted to District Auditors, to obtain injunctions preventing Councils from taking budgetary actions which are *thought* to be illegal by the DA.



LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!