LABOUR BRIEFING

40p FORTNIGHTLY

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40p

## TUC must call Day of Action!

# March 14th: BACK COHSE'S CALL TO SAVE THE NHS!




PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

*Nurses showing solidarity with the Ford workers: keep the pressure up to win!*

**Rank and file pressure for action to save the NHS must be given official backing — and translated into the total mobilisation of the labour movement in support of nurses, other healthworkers, and in support of a National Health Service, free at the point of use, for the whole of the working class.**

By MARK SEATON

Unlike other aspects of the Welfare State, the NHS is used by virtually the whole working class. It therefore provides an immediate rallying-point for all sections of the trade union movement, and a chance for that movement to garner overwhelming mass support.

On no other issue are Tory policies so unpopular — or so potentially explosive.

Like Ford workers, NHS workers can see that the money *is* available. But Nigel Lawson's budget surplus will be dished out to the *rich*, and will be of no help to nurses any more than to the rest of us. Anything *we* can get back on a lower basic rate of tax will be swallowed up when the Poll Tax arrives!

Nurses have taken the lead. Other healthworkers have joined in. Solidarity action has been taken by Vauxhall car workers, Frickley miners, and local government workers.

Other workers are already planning to come out for the NHS on the Day of Action called by COHSE on March 14th.

We have to use every available channel to press the TUC (at national *and* regional levels) to make this action *official*. The rank and file are now running well ahead of the leadership — and if the leadership are fast running out of excused to keep the movement down.

Kinnock and the Labour Party leadership have also been left standing. While they are organising to "watch" hospital beds disappear, healthworkers and campaigners are taking action to keep beds open for use. Party members will have to drag the Party Leadership into the race.

The national demonstration called for March 5th is a good start — but we can't let the TUC off the hook now.

With or without official support, workers in every sphere should take action on March 14th. For solidarity in *action* — save the NHS!

**LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!**

Campaign Round-up

# Stop the Clause!




PHOTO: David Hoffman

*Protestors at Downing Street, 9th January. Since 10,000 protestors came out on the streets of London, the anti-Clause movement has grown to the extent that 25,000 demonstrated in Manchester at the end of February.*

## Organising in the trade unions

**Four days after its inaugural meeting, the Labour Movement Sub-Committee of *Stop Clause 28* took to the streets to join Inner London teachers on their February 9th demonstration against the Baker Bill.**

We distributed a leaflet explaining what the Clause will mean, particularly in schools, which was sympathetically received by most members.

**By Terry Conway**
**Islington North CLP**

We hope to have this kind of presence in as many labour movement activities as possible over the next couple of months.

Such interventions are a crucial part of building mass labour movement support for the campaign against the Clause and in particular in ensuring the largest possible turnout for the national demonstration on April 30th. Paper support for lesbian and gay rights must be turned into action.

It isn't surprising that NALGO had the largest number of banners on the January 12th demonstration. The work done by lesbians and gay men in NALGO over recent years meant that it was possible to get the issue taken up in the union paper and circulars sent to every branch.

At the same time, many lesbians and gay men took up the issue themselves in workplaces, amongst stewards, and in branches. But the existence of official support made it easier to raise the issue. Building the self-organisation of lesbians and gay men in other unions must remain one of our long-term goals.

Raising the issue of lesbian and gay rights generally, and the campaign against the Clause more particularly, should not just be left to lesbians and gay men. It is vital that all socialists take up this issue in as many forums as possible. Ironically, the introduction of the Clause gives a topicality to the issues which can more easily stimulate discussion.

Where national policies exist these should be referred to and debate should not only be focussed on getting people onto the streets on April 30th but on developing and implementing these policies. Where unions have no policy, steps should be taken to get them to adopt one as soon as possible.

It has been difficult in recent months to mobilise trade unionists around social issues because of the hold of the New Realists. So the campaign against Alton has so far had less organised labour movement support than the campaign against Corrie.

### Developments

But developments at Ford, in the health service and the size of the early mobilisations against Clause 28 demonstrate a new mood inside the working class. We have to sieze the opportunity if the gains made by lesbians and gay men over the last decade and more are not to be swiftly cast aside.

## Leeds Meeting

**Over 200 people, predominantly young and enthusiastic women, recently attended a meeting of Women Against Clause 28 in Leeds.**

Sam Chagg, from the national Stop Clause 28 campaign, outlined the parliamentary progress of the Bill and its amendments, and the horrendous effects it will have on lesbians and gay men across the country.

She saw the Clause as part of an increasingly homophobic climate encouraged by the government's increased emphasis on family life. She emphasised the growing number of violent attacks on lesbians and gay men.

Sam then described the nature of the national umbrella group and the forthcoming campaign.

In response to a request from the campaign, 50 MPs are pledged to introduce a Bill to repeal the Clause, It will also be taking test cases to the European Court.

### Opposition

Chris Root, Lesbian officer of Manchester City Council, explained how the Council's Gay and Lesbian Unit accounted for 0.07% of Council expenditure, while obviously lesbian and gay rate, rent and tax payers contributed far more.

Manchester Council is fully supporting the North West Campaign Against Clause 28.

Councillor Judy Thomas, Leeds City Councillor, said that the Leeds Women's Committee opposed Clause 28, and indeed the rest of the Local Government Bill.

### Campaigns

The two campaigns in Leeds, *Women Against Clause 28* and *Campaign Against Clause 28*, work closely together. The Women's Campaign has regular committee meetings of over 100. Campaign activitites take place every Saturday in Leeds city centre. A demonstration has been called for Saturday 5th March at 12 noon.

## Manchester demo

**In what was possibly the biggest demonstration ever seen in the city, 25,000 people formed a two-mile long procession through the centre of Manchester on Saturday February 20th.**

The well-organised, carefully-stewarded demonstration was called by the North West Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Equality, who seem to have succeeded in keeping the homophobic instincts of cop James Anderton under control for the day.

The colourful, confident and predominantly youthful marchers poured through the city centre in sufficient numbers to deter any bigots bent on disruption. A phalanx of banners proclaimed the presence of scores of lesbian and gay groups from small towns and big cities up and down the country.

A strong student presence, bolstered by dozens of coaches hired for the day by student unions, was further evidence, following recent FAB actions, of a significant movement among students back into militant political activity.

Banners declared support from NALGO, NUPE, NUT, COHSE, ASTMS, NUJ, TGWU and other trade union branches. Women's groups were also well represented.

Alas, Labour Party banners were few and far between. The size and spirit of the Manchester march is an indication of the highly determined and increasingly politicised mass movement which is now taking shape in opposition to Clause 28 – and more broadly in defence of lesbian and gay rights.

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Having blown its chance to lead the opposition to the Clause in Parliament, Labour must now work doubly hard to establish its credentials on this issue. As always, the big loser here will be the Party itself, which can only draw both power and purpose from the campaign to Stop Clause 28.

The first task is to win support amongst and mobilise Party members for the national Day of Action on April 8th and the major London demonstration on April 30th.

**Stop the racist Immigration Bill!**
**National Demonstration**
**Sunday March 6th**
**Assemble 2pm, Temple Place, Embankment tube**
**March to Rally in Hyde Park**
**Organised by Campaign Against Racist Laws**
For more information contact CARL, 56 Editha St, London SW9 9JP, tel. 01 733 8508

## NOLS Council report

# DL carve-up pushes out the left

**A walk-out by a significant number of delegates took place at the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) Council held on February 6-7th.**

It happened on the second day of the Council, just before voting was to take place to decide the NOLS candidate for NUS President.

The first day had been quiet. This was possibly due to the decision of the ruling clique in NOLS to invite Roy Hattersley as a guest speaker. It was clear that for many delegates Hattersley's presence could not justify spending an extra day in London.

NOLS Council has always been an unrepresentative affair. Affiliated Labour Clubs can only send one delegate each, regardless of their size. Yet any NOLS member on a Student Union Executive goes automatically. The result is a bureaucrats' jamboree with little rank and file input.

As in the past, this year saw many Labour Clubs "carved", as they saw it, before they even got to Council. Brighton Polytechnic gave their registration forms in to the NOLS office *by hand* the day before the deadline. One week later they were informed that the forms had not arrived until three days after the deadline!

Delegates have to be members of the Labour Party. Newcastle Polytechnic had a delegate disqualified because when asked on her NOLS card to tick a box indicating she was a Party member she had made her tick not in the box but underneath it!

Two out of the five delegates from Oxford Polytechnic were disqualified because their Club secretary had not told them that they needed to register in advance. However, the other three delegates from Oxford were fully aware of this rule!

What the delegate from Newcastle, the two people from Oxford and the whole delegation from Brighton had in common was that they were likely to vote for a left-wing candidate. Many delegates left with memories of a rigged conference with no legitimacy or relevance.

Due to the number of disqualified delegates, a number of people, mainly associated with the Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN), walked out of the Council before any vote was taken. Supporters of the ruling clique (calling themselves, with unexpected irony, the "Democratic Left") now claim to have selected the "official" Labour Party candidates for NUS officers in spite of the fact that NOLS is only affiliated to and not part of the Labour Party.

**By Ian McLarty**
**Oxford East CLP**

They have produced a letter from Larry Whitty threatening Labour Party members standing for NUS executive who are not NOLS candidates with disciplinary action. The bureaucrats of NOLS have teamed up with Whitty to witch-hunt those struggling for a campaigning NUS, for example SSiN.

### Autonomy

SSiN are, however, far from perfect. They do not fully accept autonomy for oppressed groups and have adopted a twin-state "solution" on Palestine. But they remain the only grouping within NUS to have argued that campaigns around the Education Bill and Poll Tax should be properly linked up with the trade unions and the wider community.

### "Official"

SSiN have decided to stand candidates against the "official" NOLS candidates in the forthcoming elections. The NOLS leadership are claiming SSiN are scabs and that they are no different to O'Grady standing against Peter Tatchell.

What they deliberately ignore is that the result would have been different had so many left wing delegates not been disqualified. It is only the undemocratic and ruthless nature of the NOLS Council leadership that has driven SSiN to stand outside of NOLS.

## Race Equality in Education

# 'National pride' replaces race equality

**Back in 1983, Berkshire Council was one of the first to adopt a policy of Education for Racial Equality, supported by Tory as well as Labour Councillors.**

This policy became a model for many others, including ILEA, who borrowed almost word for word from it for its own anti-racist policy.

Now Berkshire, with the Tories in control since 1985, has once again taken the lead. It is the first Council actually to *rescind* its Education for Racial Equality policy (as opposed to just leaving it on the shelf).

It has replaced it with new "Policy Guidelines for Multicultural Education" which faithfully reflect government priorities, focussing on the maintenance of "British individuality, culture and heritage".

**By Richard Hatcher**
**Birmingham STA**

They emphasise that the schools have to help black children "regard themselves as British, with all that this implies. Our textbooks and displays, the general ethos of our schools and colleges, all that we do, should reflect reasonable pride in our nation and things British."

The guidlines also note that "the Church of England is the established Church in this country."

As for language policies, they say that "terms such as 'support for bilingualism' and 'responding to linguistic diversity' will not be used in future. Those who have been using them will need to find more elegant and appropriate expressions."

Is this the shape of things to come?

Editorial

# BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

## Upsurge of Militancy — a timely reminder

Recent strikes in the car industry, the NHS, local government and education are a timely reminder to both the Tories and the labour movement leadership of the latent strength of the working class — and its ability to fight back.

Not since the miners' strike have we seen such widespread militancy. Many mainstream commentators have been caught on the hop, but *Labour Briefing* is not surprised.

The sweeping third-term Tory attack has left many workers with little option but to fight. The New Realist maxim — "Wait for a Labour Government" — now rings more hollow than ever. Car workers and others have seen increases in producitivity and company profits — and have demanded greater rewards. NHS workers are well aware of the budget surplus and tax hand-outs for the rich — they will not swallow the Tory lie about limited resources.

The rank and file has taken the first step. If this movement at the grass roots is to be consolidated, and is to really herald a long-awaited change in the political climate, the next step is up to the leadership.

Only the official labour movement, acting as one, and bringing all its resources to bear on the side of those in struggle, can ensure that the change is in our favour.

The stakes are high. Socialists have to try to tip the scales — and one way to do that is by building support for the national demonstration on March 5th and pressing the TUC to turn COHSE's March 14th Day of Action into a national general strike to save the NHS.

## International Women's Day

The rising tide of labour movement action is also rolling through the campaigns to Stop Clause 28 and Fight Alton's Bill.

Neither women threatened by Alton's anti-abortion offensive nor lesbians and gay men threatened by Tory bigots can afford to sit back and wait for Labour MPs to defend their rights. Both campaigns have been carried forward by the momentum of grass roots anger and determination.

International Women's Day on March 8th celebrates the long history of working women fighting together — for their own rights, for the rights of the whole working class, and for all the oppressed, here and internationally.

But many of the gains won by women are now under attack. Above all, the right to control our own bodies, to control our capacity for reproduction and child-bearing is now menaced by Parliament. This is a fundamental right — without which so many of our other rights (in employment, education, etc.) are useless. The best answer to Alton is a huge turnout for the FAB demonstration on March 19th — in keeping with the best traditions of International Women's Day.

## Witch-hunt: weapon of the weak

The latest round of witch-hunting in the Labour Party continues with the new wave of militancy in the trade unions and campaigns against Clause 28 and the Alton Bill.

For the moment, this resurgence is taking place mainly outside the Party; but Kinnock and his coterie are well aware that it is only a matter of time before it makes itself felt *inside*.

The organisational attacks on independent forces in the LPYS and the Women's Sections may have temporarily strengthened the Labour right, but the witch-hunts against Sharon Atkin, Mandy Mudd and other activists are surely signs of political weakness. Terrified of a spread of current militancy into the Party rank and file, Kinnock is brandishing the witch-hunt weapon with ever greater alacrity.

The witch-hunt is nothing but contemptible posturing by cabbage-patch authoritarians and the mass revulsion of Party members can easily cut them down to size.

## Tony Benn: Challenge Kinnock *now!*

There could hardly be a more propitious moment for the Campaign Group to launch its challenge to the Labour leadership. And Tony Benn, the one person who can give real substance to such a challenge, must act without delay.

Benn and the Campaign Group have the chance to place themselves at the head of the new wave of working class struggle. The positions vacated by Kinnock, Hattersley, and the New Realists in the TUC are crying out to be filled.

Benn's candidacy would unite all those fighting Tory attacks on the health service, on working conditions and living standards, on the rights of women and lesbians and gay men and countless others. It would provide a platform and focus for all these campaigns — and in doing so would give an enormous boost to the left.

Anxiety about the final result at Party Conference is misplaced. Those of us fighting against cuts in the NHS and local government, against the Alton Bill and Clause 28, against the pernicious influence of Kinnockism and its witch-hunts in CLPs and trade unions *cannot wait for another year.*

We need Tony Benn and the Campaign Group to act now.

Ireland

# Opposition pushes Thatcher towards a permanent PTA

**The final annual renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, made in mid-February, was accompanied by the announcement that it is to be made permanent in a new Bill to be introduced in the Autumn.**

**In themselves, neither event was surprising. What was entirely new, was the public opposition and the way this was reported in the liberal press.**

The PTA has now joined the Stalkergate scandal, the Birmingham Six decision and an impasse over extradition, to add to a developing crisis over British rule in Ireland.

The renewal of the PTA in the House of Commons was by 261 votes to 162 — a decision involving a much larger number of MPs voting against than ever before. In 1987 91 voted against; in 1986, 109; in 1985, only 35; and in the 1970s barely a handful.

Little has changed about the Act itself to make it more worthy of opposition. The facts speak for themselves. Between November 1974 and December 1987 6,642 people were detained under the PTA. Of these, 180 were charged under the Act — only 2.2%. The number actually convicted as a result was even lower.

**By Piers Mostyn**
**Labour Committee on Ireland**

In the same period over 50,000 a year have been stopped and questioned under its powers. It has been estimated that up to 1,000,000 people, overwhelmingly Irish, have been affected since 1974. Only a tiny fraction have had any proven connection with "terrorism".

It has always been a blatantly racist measure, directed almost entirely at the Irish community, with the aim of terrorising it and criminalising any whisper of opposition to British policies on Ireland.

What has changed has been public opinion, and in particular the willingness of the Irish community and small sections of the labour movement to speak out. Those who have supported it, kept quiet or done little about it over the years are now worried that the naked repression the PTA is based on is becoming counterproductive.

The 26 County Opposition Leader, Alan Dukes, has described it as an "unnecessary provocation" — despite saying nothing about the recent five year sentence of Don O'Leary in Cork simply for possession of a poster owned by thousands of people, using similar legislation.

Seamus Mallon of the SDLP was worried that the PTA's effect was to convince Irish nationalists they have no constitutional role to play in the British state — despite his call for people to join the RUC, which has exactly the same effect.

Roy Hattersley said it is a docile, supine, indeed a craven House of Commons which is prepared to accept such a reduction in civil liberties on the unsubstantiated word of a Minister alone.

Quite right — but how can he explain why he was so docile, supine, and craven to leave the House immediately before the vote on the PTA this time last year — contrary even to Labour Party policy? The reaction of the government has been almost as astonishing — to accuse the Labour Party of supporting the legalisation and funding of the IRA and INLA!

It is no coincidence that the government should have decided *now*, after 13 years of successful renewal, to make the Terror Act permanent. The PTA was brought into existence and sustained on the basis of a consensus of frenzied backing for anti-Irish repression in the period after the Birmingham pub bombings.

The consensus could only survive as long as people accepted the injustices, racism and lies it was based upon. If the Birmingham Six are seen as subject to a 13-year conspiracy and frame-up, then backing for the PTA will fragment too.



PHOTO: Martine Stead

*Bloody Sunday demo, January 1988*

Not willing to face the annual political risk of a substantial vote against measures that are so "draconian" they have to be seen as universally backed, the opposition sufficiently strong to force Hattersley to open his mouth, the basis exists for a major public campaign to make the passage of the new Bill as difficult as possible and to deny that any such consensus exists.

government has decided the Act must now be permanent.

This is yet another escalation of the attacks on Irish nationalists and all those who oppose British rule in Ireland. However, with a groundswell of

Trade Union Briefing

## Interview with Nick Hay, Secretary, Birmingham NALGO

# Birmingham unions must stand together and lead the fight

**A mass lobby of Birmingham Council's budget-making meeting on March 15th has been called by the Public Sector Liaison Committee in Birmingham. One day strikes are threatened against the cuts.**

**The left in Birmingham has traditionally been weak — so what is the background to this rank and file opposition to the right wing Labour controlled City Council policy of cuts in jobs and services?**

**JOHN WILTON spoke to NICK HAY, Secretary of the Birmingham NALGO branch.**

***John:* What is the present situation in the City Council?**
*Nick:* Because of the effort to avoid overspend this year, posts are already being frozen in many departments. Hardest hit is Social Services, where there has been a freeze since last November.

***John:* What major cuts do you think they'll put into next year's budget?**
*Nick:* The Labour Group are planning a budget based on a 5% rate increase plus cuts. All departments have conducted reviews to prepare a cuts budget; but whether it's cuts across the board or selected cuts depends on the power struggle in the Group at the moment.

Social Services seems the prime target. The group do not see it as a vote winner.

Councillor Barton was appointed Chair last year to make cuts, and to smash the unions in the department, whom the Group leadership mistrust and dislike. Our understanding is that he offered £1.5 million cuts in Social Services without any pressure at all.

***John:* At the end of January there was a conference of 300 public sector workers' stewards. What was the mood at that meeting?**
*Nick:* The overall mood was surprisingly optimistic. It was the very first meeting of all the stewards from Birmingham's public sector unions.

The Labour Group are using the Local Government Bill to justify cuts. They say that if you want to retain services "in house" under the Local Government Bill, then there is no room for improvements to conditions and wages, or for equal opportunities policies.

Everything must be sacrificed to the objective of keeping services "in house". Birmingham's manual workers will be the first affected by this approach.

As Council Leader Dick Knowles has declared he has no intention of breaking the law, or even really opposing it, there is no possibility that the Labour Council will fight the Local Government, Housing or Education Bills.

Indeed, the Council is already implementing bits of the Housing and Education Bills. They are already discussing selling off estates and have already started financial decentralisation of education. The total absence, even in comparison to other similar Councils, of any joint consultation on action to oppose the Bill is quite striking.

The unions now have to decide if they are going to oppose what the Labour City Council is doing or go along with it, accepting cuts in conditions to retain "in house", as they've done in the past.

The stewards' conference marked a change in mood. It may well lead to a determination to oppose cuts, and unity across different unions.

***John:* What is the next step after the Conference?**
*Nick:* We will lobby the City Council's budget making meeting on Tuesday March 15th at 12.30pm. That will be an important test of whether we can mobilise large numbers of union members, not just bring stewards to a Conference.

All unions are now consulting members on an immediate one-day strike in response to any compulsory redundancies in the City.

It is also important to build on the unity of the Conference across various unions, to attempt to have some central information system to counter the Labour Group leadership's divide and rule strategy.

***John:* Where do you see Birmingham's Fightback '88 Conference fitting into this?**
*Nick:* It is a key attempt to unify the left in Birmingham, and link the struggles in the Council with those outside — in the NHS for example. The Local Government, Housing and Education Bills, and the Social Security Act will affect large numbers of the working class. We need a common fight between those users and the workers who provide them.

***John:* Do you get any help from any Councillors?**
*Nick:* No; but many of them do not have the information on what's happening until they read about it in the press, because things are so tightly controlled!

We have recently written to all Labour Councillors pointing out what is happening in the City.

***John:* What is the Policy Implementation Sub Committee (PISC) exercise?**
*Nick:* PISC was set up in November 1987 to, in Dick Knowles' words, "redirect resources" — obviously a euphemism for cuts!

The Group Leadership is using PISC to pretend that an Authority can make "rational cuts". As Knowles has said:

"PISC is a means to an end — a political weapon to get us away from the old, worn-out methods of budgeting."

PISC is really a cover, to redirect resources from areas which the Group Leadership sees as vote winners by cutting in areas they do not see as priorities.

A Recreation and Community Services report, for example, states that "It is acknowledged that Birmingham has a low number of full-time youth workers, 45, compared with other cities in the UK of smaller size. However, given the current climate, it is unlikely that there will be more resources available for youth work in the city in the near future."

In other words, the Youth Services in Birmingham are crap, but because of the political nature of the review nothing will be done.

The PISC reports will have to come before the whole Labour Group some time. It may well be, however, that a number of Councillors, not only those on the left, will be quite alarmed by some of the proposals — like cutting the number of Adult Education co-ordinators by half. So there are battles to come over PISC.

Councillors are being pushed into supporting PISC by being told the only alternative is across the board cuts.

***John:* What effect will the Local Government Bill have in Birmingham? How do you think public sector workers will react to it?**
*Nick:* The City Personnel Officer has identified a minimum of 14,000 jobs at risk in Birmingham from the Local Government and Housing Bills, with cleaning staff the first affected.

Dick Knowles' view of all this is:

"I am certainly not in the business of going outside the law. We therefore do have to be competitive in those services that are going to be put up to competition, and the bids have to be realistic and workable if we are to succeed in retaining these services."

This states clearly that the Labour group want to use the Local Government Bill to cut pay and conditions, effectively holding workers to ransom in order to retain services.

The Labour Group is examining whether it can set up private limited companies (PLCs) under City Council control to bid for services, offering full-time trade union officials seats on the boards. So we are talking about a high level sell-out!

There are precedents in Birmingham. The National Exhibition Centre is run by a PLC, and I understand a PLC will run the Convention Centre and the Olympic bid.

I think the Labour Group Leadership wants to move to services being provided by a number of PLCs, on which it shares the directorships with some full-time officials.

This appalling prospect again rules out co-operation with the Labour City Council in fighting the Local Government and Housing Bills.

***John:* What sort of effect will Birmingham District Labour Party's policy review have?**
*Nick:* None at all! The cuts in Social Services, for example, include the wholesale closure of children's homes in the city, and the closure of the entire trainee social workers programme.

This was specifically designed to increase the number of black social workers — nearly all the trainees on it are black — and was one of the only pieces of real positive action taken by the City Council.

When you are confronted with cuts on that scale, to be talking about increased resources for crime prevention as the BDLP right wing leadership are is an absolute irrelevance.

This policy review is designed to keep all mention of "uncomfortable" areas for the Labour Group — equal rights issues, the provision of services to black people, women, lesbians and gay men, for example — out of the manifesto.

***John:* Politics in Birmingham is often said to be different from the rest of the country. Do you agree?**
*Nick:* The bipartisanship of the Labour and Tory administrations is extraordinary for a marginal city, where control has swung to and fro. You would expect keen political differentiation between them; instead relations between them are unbelievably good.

In recent months the Tories have criticised the cuts in social services. This may be bullshit hypocrisy, but Birmingham Tories have never been flagship privatisers or Thatcherites. They are totally in accord with the Labour Group leadership on the Convention Centre, the promotion of Birmingham as a home for industry and "business tourism", and on the Olympic bid (except for the recent hiccup).

Both Party leaderships share a desire to promote Birmingham as the big capitalist heart of England.

Birmingham is exactly the same as parts of London, as Liverpool and Manchester, and so on. But the backwardness of Birmingham in Local Authority terms is fantastic.

Manchester City Council, for example, has over 60,000 employees. Birmingham has under 55,000 — 5,000 fewer than Manchester for a city with 400,000 more people. So the actual level of service provision is incredibly low in lots of areas.

***John:* How do you analyse the political balance in the Labour Group?**
*Nick:* The PISC exercise is a classic example of a soft left fudge: you cut, but you pretend the cuts are a redirection of resources for political means. This strategy is designed solely to gain possession of the leadership of the Labour Group.

The one advantage that trade union activists have in Birmingham is that there is absolutely no temptation for anybody remotely on the left to fall for a collaborative cutting exercise.

The Council leadership sees rank and file trade unionists as the enemy. The Manchester, Sheffield, Camden, Lambeth, etc., situations do not exist in Birmingham.

Our disadvantage is that the left is chronically weak, both in the City Council and in the city as a whole. But at least we are not confronted by the danger of collaboration.

## NUCPS

# Broad Left election bulletin demands tough action on pay

**The newly-formed National Union of Civil and Public Servants (NUCPS), created by the merger of the SCPS and CSU, will be holding elections for its President and Executive Council at workplace meetings in April.**

The NUCPS Broad Left is standing candidates for all positions and has issued an uncompromising election bulletin.

The current NUCPS executive has submitted a claim for a 15% pay increase coupled with demands for a restoration to the "principle of fair comparisons with jobs in outside industry" and for "no offsetting reductions in staff levels or services".

The Broad Left believes the claim should include a flat rate increase, a 35-hour week, and six weeks annual leave. More importantly, they believe that "the only way a decent rise can be won is through a vigorous campaign amongst the membership leading to an all-out strike".

The election bulletin also discussed new technology, equal opportunities and the need for internal union democracy.

It supports the principle of one civil service union, but warns that mergers "must be seen as an opportunity to introduce greater democracy, and not as the expansion of bureaucratic empires".

The next issue of *Briefing* will carry a full interview with Mike McGrath, Broad Left candidate for NUCPS National President. For more information contact: Peter Lucas, 23 Plato Road, London SW2 5UP.

## Unemployed

# Congress called for April

**Organising the unorganised hasn't been the TUC's strongest suit during the Thatcher years.**

**In particular, every attempt to gather together unemployed people in a democratic, self-organised movement has been greeted with alarm at Congress House and instantly booted into touch by every bureaucratic means imaginable!**

Nonetheless, by fits and starts, grass roots autonomous groups of unemployed people have continued to crop up around the country.

One of the most persistent and successful of these, the National Union of the Unemployed and Workers, based in Lowestoft, Suffolk, has now called a National Congress of unemployed and claimants groups on April 23rd and 24th.

The Congress will debate the Tories' work-for-dole threat, the new Social Fund, and how a more formidable national organisation of the unwaged can be built.

Former MP Ernie Roberts has been appointed by the Campaign Group of MPs to help build such an organisation and fully supports the Congress.

Creche places and accommodation can be booked in advance. For more information contact NUUW, 8 Oakwood Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, tel. 0502-517360, or East Anglia Unemployed and Workers Centre, 33 Commercial Road, Lowestoft.

## Sheffield

# Rank & file plan action for March 14th

**Early in February every hospital in Sheffield was affected by strike action and over 700 health workers attended a daytime rally.**

**By Sheffield Labour Briefing supporters**

Encouraged by the support they are receiving from other workers, COHSE and NUPE activists have set up a rank and file committee to turn March 14th into a massive day of strike action.

Discussion has already taken place with NUM, engineering and local government workers to gain support for the day. Several factories have already pledged to take action. NALGO local government branch has called on its members to take action that day.

Sheffield Works Department Shop Stewards Committee, representing 4,000 building workers, has voted to mobilise for the March 5th TUC demonstration and has produced a leaflet calling on all workers to leave work and join the local demonstration on March 14th.

As support gathers momentum, March 14th could see the largest demonstration in Sheffield in a long time.

## Pension funds

# How they use our money...

**By FRANK SCOTT**

**According to "people's capitalism" we're all supposed to become punters on the Stock Market, a dodgy business at the best of times, and even dodgier at the moment, with shares still down 25% on average since last Autumn's crash.**

But one of the dodgiest bets of all must be Eurotunnel, a gigantic City deal where returns on investment only *start* when the whole cross channel link is completed, in maybe eight or nine years time.

What a surprise, then, to find that so many companies have been investing in Eurotunnel — with employees' pension funds!

One such is Metal Box, where the Company is actually taking a "pensions holiday". Because it's got rid of so many jobs in recent years, the company's expected pension payments to employees have been slashed. So the workers continue to pay into the pension scheme, while the company itself has a few years off, thus boosting its own profits.

Here, as in many other firms, the pension fund has invested in Eurotunnel. The duties of pension fund trustees are covered by arcane law, but the basis of it all lies in trustees acting as "prudent men" (sic), that is, only investing in things which can reasonably be expected to bring in a secure and profitable return.

Eurotunnel certainly doesn't fall into that category. It can therefore only be concluded that pension fund monies (i.e. workers' deferred wages) have been put into this speculative venture because the City and its friends need to have a big enough private sector investment in order to get backing from the finance houses to launch the whole enterprise.

A good "wheeze" was to use bits of numerous pension funds, i.e. our money...

# As union leaders try to sit on nurses' anger:



PHOTO: Martine Stead

Nurses pack the rally organised by London Health Emergency on February 3rd, after the rank and file had chosen the day of the rally as a focal point for action.




PHOTO: Wayne Edington

London Labour Briefing reaches the picket lines of Yorkshire

# We can fight on — how can we win?

**Tens of thousands of health workers, with 90% backing from public opinion, have taken some form of action in defence of the NHS since the Manchester nurses' strike of January 7th.**

**But as Health Secretary John Moore drops clear hints that new charges for treatment will soon be introduced, and Chancellor Nigel Lawson, blithely ignoring the protest, prepares his budget tax handouts for the rich, it is clear not only that the fight must go on, but that it must develop beyond isolated and short-term token strikes.**

The explosion of nurses' anger on February 3rd, with the involvement of thousands of NALGO and ASTMS white collar staff and ancillary workers, followed by more and more local and regional protests, and the STUC's February 24th Day of Action, are giving most health workers the chance to take at least one day's protest strike action.

## Demonstration

The TUC's March 5th national demonstration seems certain to be a huge affirmation of trade union commitment to the NHS. COHSE's call for a day of action on March 14th (the day before the Budget) could give other unions the chance to take supporting strike action — as the Vauxhall workers, Frickley miners, and many other sections have already done.

All of these actions have been important in organising and mobilising healthworkers, winning new members to the unions (and away from the no-strike Royal College of Nursing), raising the profile of the issue and winning new public support. Long-moribund union branches and structures have been forced into action and new activists have tasted a degree of control.

**By HARRY SLOAN**

The struggle will be a long one. Key political questions must be confronted if these experiences are not to be wasted.

The first problem is the attitude of the TUC and union leaderships at national level. The TUC fell far short of the Scottish TUC's bold call for an all-union Day of Action — and has only gone so far as to call a Saturday demonstration.

There is little doubt that the rapid growth of rank and file militancy alarms sections of the full-time trade union bureaucracy — especially in NUPE, where the spread of the February 3rd strikes took the leadership by surprise, and ran quite counter to the Tom Sawyer "new realist" line of passive public relations campaigns.

NUPE leaders (other than in Scotland) have since been working to restrict strike action, avoiding the word "strike" like the plague. They have tried to sabotage the COHSE call for action on March 14th, but without offering any alternative plans for action of any type on this or any other date. NUPE influence has made itself felt mainly in the TUC reprimand of COHSE leader Hector McKenzie for having the nerve to call on his own union to take action!

## Bureaucracy

However the bureaucracy is not monolithic on this question — and many local officials have been eagerly promoting strike action. The battle for a fighting policy of industrial action to defend the NHS must be taken up in the branches, divisions, and at national level in NUPE and the health unions. In particular, there must be a fight for common action, which produced such dramatic success on February 3rd.

Bureaucratic pressure to restrict the scope of action are only one part of the problem. Another is that the membership's militancy has arisen from a rank and file movement, and is therefore very uneven. While some hospitals are highly organised, others are almost inert. This could be quickly overcome by a firm national lead from the health unions, but it can take a long time for rank and file activists on their own to raise the whole union to their level.

Many of the nurses and other staff who have readily responded to one-day token actions would be reluctant at this stage to take more prolonged strike action (even with emergency cover). This would not only cost them lost wages but also bring to an abrupt end the "honeymoon" with the press, who would decry an all-out strike as hitting patients rather than the government.

How can we overcome these obstacles? Propaganda calls for all-out strike action against the cuts are not enough. We need to undertake a continual process of organisation and escalation of the dispute that will eventually show healthworkers the necessity for further action and strengthen their hand in taking it.

Lively local campaigns and actions against specific, visible cuts and closures (a new round of which will begin with the new financial year) should be combined with the generalised, national-level campaigns.

We must press the TUC to call an STUC-style Day of Action, which could open the way for a one-day General Strike bigger even than that over GCHQ. The Labour Party and TUC should also organise a full-scale national demonstration (or simultaneous regional events) in July to mark the 40th Anniversary of the NHS.

To keep healthworkers mobilised and broaden support there is no substitute for local work. This means:

- Bringing home to people the *specific* cuts affecting *their* local hospital and community health services. These take a different form in each district and always elicit the most emotive responses.
- Fighting for *united action* at local level by the health unions.
- Building campaigns like *Health Emergency* bodies that link-up in action with non-health unions, Labour Parties, and community organisations.

## Successful

All of the successful struggles against Tory cuts and closures have grown out of strongly-rooted local campaigns.

This kind of activity is not posed as an alternative to further protest strikes or to calls for an all-out strike, but as a means of promoting and developing the organisation and support necessary to make strike action of whatever kind effective and durable.

Local forms of action to challenge management may involve longer strikes, but can also include other types of industrial action. In Edinburgh, a 7-week overtime ban and work to rule by 600 nursing staff won 60 extra posts last autumn. Similar action could also be effective in challenging cuts and closures. An overtime ban can help focus the effort to strengthen union organisation. Indeed, it is one way (as the Edinburgh campaign showed) of drawing many RCN members into the campaign.

## Specific

Other specific forms of local action could include trade union boycotts on work to implement cuts and closures, such as moving beds or patients, or clerical and other work.

Where hospitals or facilities are threatened with closure, the tested tactic of *occupation* (or "work-in") should be considered. As long as patients remain in the hospital, management must ensure it is staffed — and must pay the staff to work there. Occupations have saved hospitals in Oxford and London, and prolonged the life of many others (sometimes for years), while providing an excellent focus for solidarity action.

A new fight to enforce "no-cover" policies for vacant posts can expose and confront management's "hidden" cuts. Wherever such action is taken it should be publicised in the local media and through local campaign leaflets — and, of course, in *Labour Briefing* and any other means of communication with health activists.

Healthworkers should also go onto the offensive to expose the role of non-elected health authorities and their government-appointed chairs, challenging this whole network of quangos which is doing the dirty work of carving up the health service.

Publicity can also be gained by "opening the books" — revealing the growth of waiting lists, the secret plans for future cuts, the financial trickery by which treasurers conceal the scale of the cuts.

## Unsuspected

Some healthworkers have already sensed their unsuspected powers through the provision of emergency cover. Others could also find ways of flexing their muscles by implementing action to disrupt management functions rather than patient care.

There will be no end to the Tory attacks on the NHS. The Spring offers a new round of flashpoints:

- April sees the pay review process begin — with the Tories suggesting only a 3% basic increase for nurses;
- April also begins the new financial year, with health service spending at least £400m short and new cuts imminent;
- During the summer the Thatcher "review" will begin to take shape, with the threat of new charges for treatment.

Union conferences should be pressed to adopt policies such as a national NHS overtime ban and work-to-rule (particularly by nurses, who can implement it with most effect on management and at least cost to themselves), preparations for sustained strike action, and a clear demand for extra NHS funding need of at least £2.5 billion — the equivalent of 2p on income tax.

## Instruct

Labour Party Conference must instruct the leadership to mount a real campaign to defend the NHS, mobilising the largely passive CLPs, and committing the Party to full support for strike and other industrial action taken by healthworkers.

Despite the miserable sell outs of the seamen and the Ford workers conducted by their union leaders, the NHS fight expresses the growing militancy of sections of the working class, and offers the best chance of defeating the Thatcher government.

We cannot allow union leaders to fritter away this opportunity in an endless, and ultimately depressing series of one-day token actions, as they did in the 1982 pay fight. But it is equally important to strengthen local organisation and thus lay a firm base for the industrial escalation that will be needed to win.

## National Health Emergency

Formed in January at an open conference called by London Health Emergency, National Health Emergency is already engaged in a wide range of campaigning activities.

Geoff Martin, NHE spokesperson, explained:

"With new NHS defence campaigns springing up almost every day the time has come to link up into a national pressure group. Clearly, the current NHS crisis isn't going away."

The latest issue of LHE's regular *Health Emergency* paper includes coverage on the national situation. Leaflets are also available.

NHE is pressing for a national demonstration in July to mark the 40th Anniversary of the NHS. Any and all organisations committed to building a national campaign in defence of the NHS should affiliate to NHE for a fee of *at least* £10.

There will be an open meeting of the NHE Steering Committee on Saturday February 27th, 12.30-4pm, at Leeds Civic Hall.

For more information contact:
Wayne Edginton, Pontefract Health Emergency, 128 Church Rd, Altofts, Normanton, W. Yorkshire WF6 2QS.
Glyn Humphries, South Manchester NHS Action Committee, Flat 1, 20 Salisbury Road, Chorlton, Manchester.
Rosie Newbigging, London Health Emergency, 335 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 01 833 3020.

## Leeds plan action

**KEITH WHITE spoke to NORMA HUTCHINSON, NUPE Shop Steward at Meanwood Park Hospital, Leeds.**

**"February 3rd was a great success. It got nurses thinking and talking amongst themselves and saying 'we've had enough'. Out of 149 who voted, only 22 opposed the action.**

**"We've met since and the staff are determined to carry on campaigning. We can't do much by ourselves. We need support from the whole health service and others. I joined NUPE because I believe in what NUPE can do for us as a fighting union.**

**"We feel now the way to touch Mrs Thatcher's heart, if she's got one, is for all the other unions outside the health service to do something on our behalf. We've tried already, but we're not giving up.**

**"The action on the third was a tremendous boost. Our picket line lasted from 6.30am to 9.30pm and lots of people came to visit us throughout the day — both healthworkers and others.**

**"Some people were annoyed that they couldn't come to the gates and help — staffing is so short anyway, people couldn't take action.**

**"In fact, normal staffing levels are lower than those required for emergency cover.**

**"On February 3rd, management called extra people in. It was the *only* day we *reached* emergency cover levels!**

**"We are organising for March 5th and we are going to discuss joining the COHSE Day of Action on March 14th."**

Labour Party

# Kinnock goes to market ... *to ditch Clause IV*

**Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley have put their cards on the table.**

**Their "fundamental statement of democratic socialist aims and values" extolling the virtues of the free market was published at the end of a week in which Kinnock had refused to appear on nurses' picket lines.**

Theory and practice have come together — in neither is Kinnock prepared to associate himself with socialist principles.

Following Labour's 1959 election defeat, then Labour Leader Hugh Gaitskell, a much more formidable social democratic politician than Kinnock, decided to "modernise" Labour by making an all-out assault on Clause IV. He was rebuffed by the Party rank and file.

Kinnock is taking a different tack. Clause IV will not be dropped; it will be "redefined" to mean its opposite.

The Kinnock-Hattersley document contains three interlinked ideas. It states that:

- in the distribution of most goods and services the "supply and demand mechanism" (i.e. the market) is "generally satisfactory";
- public utilities (water, gas, rail, etc.) and social services should stay in the public sector;
- it calls for new forms of "social ownership", including employee share ownership, and enterprises in which public and private capital are mixed.

Even in its own terms, the document is contradictory. If the market is "generally satisfactory", why should we bother thinking about any new forms of "social ownership"?

**By Phil Hearse**
**Islington North CLP**

Leaving such details aside, we must question whether the market *is* "generally satisfactory". Socialists must look at capitalism's track record and ask:

- Why are there 35-40 million unemployed in the advanced capitalist countries (where the market system prevails)? Do democratic socialist thinkers find this reality "generally satisfactory"?
- Why are there in these same countries *hundreds of millions* of people living on the poverty line? Is this also "generally satisfactory"?
- Why does a world dominated by market allocation of resources have millions of starving people in it?
- Why do tiny minorities control the bulk of the wealth and power *in every market-based country?*

The authors of the document fail to grasp one of the ABC's of the socialist critique of capitalism. If "most goods" are allocated according to the laws of the market, and most property is in private hands, then *that will determine everything else about the character of the economy and how it works.*

As night follows day, inequality, poverty, unemployment, and priority to the needs of profit, not the needs of people, follows a market-based economy.

When production retailing of goods and services is dominated by a private ICI, a private Fords, a private Marks & Spencer, then investment and production in general will be dominated by the same people. And the investment and production decisions made by the big monopolies determine the overall shape of the market, and therefore the overall distribution of resources in society.

## Authors

Social democratic myth-makers like Jay, Crosland and Strachey in the 1950s, and the authors of the NEC document say that governments can leave the big monopolies to produce useful goods and services, but determine the overall pattern of economic allocation by taxation and other legislative measures.

In fact this has never worked. The reformist Labour governments of 1945, 1964 and 1974 *never succeeded* in changing the fundamental distribution of wealth, of resources between public and private sectors, of investment, and even of employment.

To do that would have meant huge inroads into the prerogatives of the big monopolies. It would have meant, at the very least, massive taxation of profits, and compulsory planning of economic decisions — in other words *overriding the mechanisms of the market* and the prerogatives of capital. But none of the post-war Labour governments were prepared to do that.

## Utilities

The NEC statement does admit that utilities and social services (like the health service) are best left in public hands. But many of our basic nationalised utilities and services are now falling apart for lack of investment, which is a result of the overall priorities for investment and production determined by the market. Efficient public utilities and services, especially if they are to be democratically run and publicly accountable, can only be resourced by making major inroads into the profits of the private sector, and therefore the workings of the market.

The Kinnock-Hattersley statement adds together two statements which have caused much confusion on the left, and which need to be rejected. The first is that national economic planning automatically leads to an East European command-style economy. The second is that a mixture of private and public capital represents an improvement over both the "generally sastisfactory" market and the unsatisfactory East European style centralised economy.

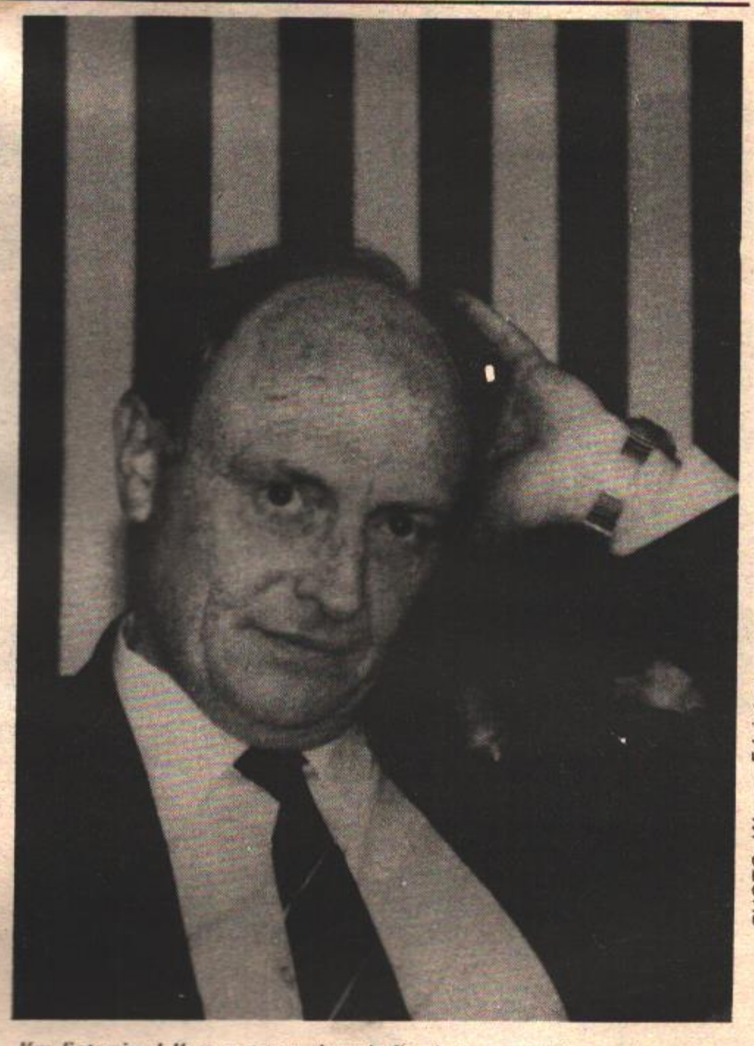


PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

*I'm listening! I've got my thumb firmly in my left ear, so now you can begin...*

## Economy

It is a myth that the left in the Labour Party wants an economy which would lead to East European conditions. It is quite possible to have a socialised economy *and* democratic control *without* private capital intruding into any of the major national industries.

Right wingers in the Labour Party point to the fact that the existing nationalised industries are authoritarian and unaccountable to discredit nationalisation. But they were never intended to be anything else.

It's true that socialists don't want a society dominated by 250 National Coal Boards. Neither do we want the private coal owners back, nor is private ownership of the mines by the coal miners themselves a practical proposition. But a nationalised coal industry under democratic workers control *is* a practical proposition — provided the same socialist principles are extended throughout the society in which it operates.

## Debate

During the post-1960 debate on Clause IV, Gaitskell attacked Aneurin Bevan by saying "surely we don't want a society in which every corner chip shop is nationalised?" But no sensible socialist (certainly not Aneurin Bevan) ever wanted to nationalise everything or to deny a role to small individual traders. In fact a socialist society would help the many people who own small businesses, by providing them with cheap credit and ending the power of their real enemies, the big monopolies.

Gaitskell used demagogy about chip shops to obscure the fact that he wanted to leave these *big monopolies* in the hands of private owners. The socialisation of the "commanding heights" of the economy would not necessarily eliminate a private sector consisting of small businesses and co-ops. But in a socialist economy this private sector would be subordinate to the socially owned and democratically controlled sector, which would dominate production and investment.

Hattersley said recently that Labour needs to get the "right mix" of private and public enterprise. This reflects the discussion in the Party about "new forms" of social ownership" which, allegedly, avoid the pitfalls of the bureaucratic nationalisation of the past.

But the really important questions about any large economic enterprises are: "who controls investment and production?" and "who gets the profits?" *There is no way that big capitalist concerns are going to put their money into any form of social ownership of workers' share ownership unless they own and control the operation as a whole and reap the bulk of its profits.*

Hattersley and Kinnock's argument, and indeed the core of social democratic argument for fifty years, goes like this: by avoiding the excesses of the market and of centralised state planning, a mixture of public and private enterprise gives you both efficiency and fairness.

## Paradise

This social democratic paradise, in which everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds, is an ideological confection, a fantasy, whether it is dreamed up by Kinnock, Robin Cook, or Peter Hain. All of them talk as if you can mix "markets" and planning, as if the economy were made up of multiple markets, separated from each other, which could be divided up between public and private at will.

But decades of experience have shown that the "mixed" economy is a myth. The two conflicting mechanisms cannot be harnessed together. Either a national economy works *basically* according to the laws of the market, dictated by the rate of profit, or it works according to the mechanisms of a national plan.

Perhaps the worst fraud perpetrated by the social marketeers is their claim that socialisation of the main means of production (and the banks and the finance houses) leads automatically to Stalinist authoritarianism.

## Always

This plays right into the Tories' hands. Didn't they always say that only capitalism can guarantee freedom? And that socialism means dictatorship?

Kinnock and Hattersley have now accepted their basic argument. By redefining Clause IV in terms of "market socialism" they are attempting to get round the quagmire in which Gaitskell nearly drowned — the prospect of an all-out fight inside the Party between socialism and social democracy.

But as Ken Livingstone said in his *Tribune* article on the possibility of civil war inside the Party, any attempt to impose social democracy on the Party will meet resistance. Either this hapless document is withdrawn, or it will provoke a major fight in the Party. Kinnock and Hattersley cannot have their pro-capitalist cake and eat it too.

## The Regions at Conference time

# Saving London from the Tories

**Regional Conferences are here again! *Briefing* will be covering the regions as the season progresses, with reviews and previews of Conferences, to try to present a flavour of what's happening in each region.**

**We start with a preview of Labour in London by JOAN TWELVES, Lambeth Councillor and London Regional Executive member.**

**The Tories' third term offensive threatens to destroy London's public services and essential infrastructure.**

**The capital's health service is already collapsing. Its main education authority is to be abolished and its education service decimated.**

Its transport, fire, and emergency services are deteriorating fast.

Public housing will soon be a thing of the past, as impoverished Local Authorities, unable to build new homes to replace slum estates, drown in the rising tide of homelessness.

## Tenants

Private tenants are faced with a new era of Rachmanism, while property prices soar well beyond the reach of ordinary people.

Local Authorities themselves are to be destroyed in all but name by UDCs, HATs, privatisation, and the poll tax.

London's industrial and manufacturing base is disappearing with jobs only to be found in the service and financial sectors. Unemployment in some areas is the highest in the country.

The redistribution of wealth — a central aim of London's local government since the days of the Poplar struggle — has been undermined by the loss of the GLC and will disappear totally if ILEA is abolished and the poll tax introduced.

What response has the London Labour Party made to this attack on our inner cities?

- To support Labour local Authorities which cut services, attack their trade unions, and make workers redundant, under the guise of "staying in power", despite the GLLP Special Conference in December which agreed that cutting jobs and services was not in the interests of the working class.
- To launch witch-hunts against socialists and opponents of the cuts — in particular against Bermondsey CLP and Mandy Mudd in Haringey.
- To launch a "campaign" on housing, which has been invisible, not surprisingly, as Regional Office has been so preoccupied with witch-hunting.

It has taken the Tories eight years to work up the confidence to launch their massive attack on London. They are only able to do it now because *Labour has capitulated in advance.*

Previous defeats, over GLC abolition and ratecapping, were partially offset by concessions wrung from the government — *because we fought.* For example, the Tories have been reluctant to use all the powers in the Rates Act or of reducing the Rate Support Grant too drastically too quickly.

They didn't dare put abolition of the ILEA in the original version of the Education Bill — or make it part of their election manifesto.

Support for Labour in London reached a high point of over 50% in 1984/85, during the Save the GLC and ratecapping campaigns. Despite defeat in Wandsworth and Tower Hamlets, impressive gains were made in the May 1986 ILEA and Council elections, fought on expansionist manifestos based on equal opportunities and decentralisation.

In our fight against ratecapping we argued it would lead to an unacceptable reduction in services for people already living in intolerable conditions. We were re-elected to continue that fight and to refuse to do the unacceptable.

Between May 1986 and June 1987 support plummetted, as the Tories and the gutter press launched one of the most vicious campaigns against Labour in London ever seen. Far from springing to London's defence, Walworth Road only added fuel to the fire. The London Labour Party proved itself totally incapable of challenging this offensive against its own policies. The result was general election defeat — and the current Tory onslaught.

The London Labour Party has to learn from the history of its own recent struggles. The fights which won us support were led by the GLC and the Labour boroughs, not the London Labour Party. Often during that period, it was said that this approach failed to involve all sections of the Party. Well before abolition, the GLLP knew that it would have to take on a leadership role.

## Leadership

It has failed to do this because, under the leadership of Glenys Thornton and Terry Ashton (abetted by Brian Nicholson), it has adopted the defeatist strategies of the Kinnockite "New Realists" rather than the campaigning approach of the GLC (warts and all).

Faced with the task of defending London against Tory attack, the right wing's strategy has been to attack those fighting cuts, to witch-hunt socialists, to "listen" to Labour's enemies (the famous Battersea poll only involved *non*-Labour voters), to demobilise and demoralise all those willing to fight.

As the class struggle has intensified again in the last few months, the GLLP has been forced to endorse public demonstrations in defence of the NHS and against Alton. But the Regional Executive (REC) refused to *even discuss* support for the March 8th action against the Tory legislative attacks.

It also refused to address the role played by leading NUPE officials in London (also members of the REC) in failing to support health workers in their struggle. At the London Labour Party's Women's Conference, nurses made clear what they thought of the actions of the NUPE bureaucracy.

## Firmly

In previous years, the REC always voted firmly against any witch-hunts. But when it found its General Secretary was compiling secret reports without even telling the Executive that he was doing this, the REC responded by asking the NEC to *speed up* its enquiries, and refused to condemn the witch-hunt or demand that our General Secretary stop wasting his time (and our money).

The London Labour Party's AGM is on March 4-6th. Jeremy Corbyn and I are standing for Chair and Vice Chair on a platform of:

- socialist policies for London
- support for those in struggle
- opposition to all witch-hunts.

The present regional leadership has proved itself incapable of defending the interests of Londoners in the face of the Tory attacks. If we are to defeat the Tories we have to rebuild support for Labour in London. This can only be done by the Party demonstrating clear and consistent support for popular struggles to defend services and jobs.

Rather than condoning cuts, the London Labour party should build on the popular anger at what the Tories are doing to London, by launching a massive, co-ordinated campaign throughout the CLPs and trade unions in London *for* public services, *for* local democracy, and *for* the resources Londoners need.

## Witch-hunt

# Right wing tactics seized by gutter press

**Does the Labour Party have a policy of leaking the names of members they want to witch-hunt to the press?**

Deliberate or not, the bandying of Mandy Mudd's name by Larry Whitty and others has led to a national trial by the gutter press — even before the Party's own witch-hunt machinery has got into gear.

And the charges, procedures and punishments involved in this trial are outside any even the NCC could dream up.

The *Sun* and the *Evening Standard*, neither known as great supporters of the labour movement, used the leak from Walworth Road to investigate Mandy's previous jobs and eventually to discover a photograph taken while she was working as a rolypolygram delivering a telegram to a birthday party. The photograph shows Mandy from the waist up, topless, standing behind the recipient of the telegram.

The use of such material, which has no relevance to her political activity or to the charges being brought against her, shows the utter hypocrisy of *The Sun* in relation to women.

**By Jane Kelly**
**Peckham CLP**

On Page 3 every day readers of *The Sun* are presented with a picture of the traditional male fantasy of the ideal woman. Young, slim and "inviting", she is the stereotype of female passivity and vulnerable to male power.

But the image also produces ideas of female sexuality for women. To be a young, slim woman is to be sexually attractive to all men. But the sexuality of fat women and old women is seen as completely different. It is represented only as desirable to what is described as a "deviant" male sexuality.

But unlike the actual sexual desires of the slim nude woman, the fat woman is presumed not to have any desires of her own.

While many women, including Labour MP Clare Short, have attacked *The Sun's* use of the Page 3 nude, this has never been an attack on the women who model for Page 3. They have to earn a living, and one way to do that is to pose nude for *The Sun*.

Similarly Mandy Mudd and others like her who work for Kissogramme companies, had to earn her living. There is no difference.

But *The Sun* seeks to create a difference. Images of passivity and available sexuality represented by page 3 nudes are the ideal, and anyone who doesn't conform is open to ridicule.

Women who are strong, who campaign for their own and others' rights, who support people fighting for justice, who reject homophobia and sexism, who refute the nationalist and reactionary ideology favoured by the right wing press — *The Sun* hates them all, and is prepared to go to any lengths to attack them.

*The Sun and The Evening Standard should be made to pay* for their sexist assaults. But so too should the Labour Party politicians who feed them names and then cry hypocritically "We never meant it to go this far!"

**Yet again the gutter press expose their hypocrisy, the same newspapers which daily depict naked women now suggest it is not a good idea. Feminists have always argued against the economic pressures which force many women to pay their way through selling the commodity men seem most anxious to purchase.**

**The fact is that it is precisely family men like the Tory Councilors who now attack Mandy who buy the large quantity of pornography sold in the High Street newsagents, and "family men" who use the estimated one million women who work as prostitutes.**

**Mandy Mudd may have worked as a strippergram many years ago, but she is no less a feminist for it, and has done nothing to warrant this public villification, which is a typical case of male double-standards.**

***Linda Bellos*, Leader Lambeth Council**

***A Haringey Against the Witch-hunt — Defend Mandy Mudd* campaign has been established to counter the NEC's move against a leading local anti-cuts activist.**

The campaign is circulating a petition, model resolutions, and a press pack and is gathering support around the country.

The witch-hunt has already brought us the unpleasant attentions of the rabid right wing press, but the campaign intends to continue its efforts to raise the case of Mandy Mudd far and wide.

This particular witch-hunt is a clear signal that anyone actively opposing cuts in jobs and services is considered fair game by the NEC. All socialists should take steps to oppose it, starting with getting your CLP, Women's Section, Branch, YS, trade union or other organisation formally to sponsor the *Haringey Against the Witch-hunt — Defend Mandy Mudd* campaign and make a donation.

Contact the campaign c/o Ian Lund, 23 Earlsmead Road, London N15 4DA, tel. 01 885 3286.

### Organise

We should organise pickets of *The Sun*, forcing it to recognise the strength of feeling amongst women against its reactionary sexism.

We should also organise a campaign in the Labour Party, demanding a statement from Kinnock and the NEC, condemning the press's use of irrelevant sexist material to attack Party members. We should demand they stop leaking to the press names of Party activists whose politics they dislike and whom they intend to witch-hunt.

Papers like *The Sun* have no interest in the Labour Party other than to attack it. The Party Leadership and full-time officers should know better than to feed them names of individuals who disagree with Kinnock's rightist politics.

## Model resolution

**We condemn the decision of the NEC to refer the "case" of Mandy Mudd to the National Constitutional Committee. This is clearly part of a widespread and growing witch-hunt against socialists in the Party, and their right to hold views contrary to those of the leadership and to organise and campaign around those views.**

**Mandy Mudd has consistently spoken out against the cuts, job losses, and privatisation of local government services. In doing so she defends the interests of trade unionists and working people. We call for the immediate dropping of these charges and for the Labour Party nationally to get on with the job of fighting the Tories instead of witch-hunting its own members.**

## Bermondsey Suspension




*Successful lobby against Southwark Council's threat to close nurseries in Bermondsey*

# Are you, or have you ever been, a member of...

**PAUL FOLEY interviewed JOHN BRYAN, Labour candidate for Bermondsey/Southwark in the 1987 General Election, about the suspension of Bermondsey/Southwark CLP.**

**What happened at the NEC meeting on January 27th?**

Terry Ashton's secret report was revised by Joyce Gould, who deleted all specific allegations and references to individual Party members. This was after the Bermondsey Party officers had taken legal advice.

A few days before the NEC we received anonymously a copy of the Gould report, which enabled us to draw up our own report. We sent it to Walworth Road, with a solicitor's letter to make sure they received it.

The report was made to NEC members, but I don't think they read it because we rebutted all Joyce Gould's allegations and still only four NEC members voted in our favour.

**Can you give us an example?**

In Joyce Gould's report it is alleged that Bermondsey CLP threatened to deselect Councillors who voted in favour of a cuts budget. This is completely untrue.

### Produced

Anne Matthews, Leader of Southwark Council, produced a report outlining a programme of cuts, and invited responses. Bermondsey CLP replied opposing cuts and urging the Labour Group to lead a campaign against the Tories in line with our 1986 manifesto and what was then Labour Group and LGC policy.

We called a special EC meeting to discuss Southwark's financial crisis and invited all Bermondsey's Labour Councillors to discuss the Matthews report and our response, not threaten them with deselection.

This meeting was attended by Steve Morgan, Regional Labour Party Organiser, who had no complaints concerning the conduct of the meeting. The very fact that we responded to Anne Matthews' invitation is now the basis for one of Joyce Gould's allegations.

**What was the NEC decision?**

The NEC immediately suspended the Bermondsey CLP pending an investigation by national officers of the Labour Party on behalf of the National Constitutional Committee. This enquiry will take months.

The day after the NEC decision, every Party and ward officer received a letter from Walworth Road informing them of the decision and inviting them to give evidence to the enquiry.

We have lost all rights to send delegates or motions to any Labour Party Conference. As far as we are aware individuals have not been suspended.

**What will the consequences be?**

Most importantly, we will not be able to campaign amongst local people. Our campaigning record has been very good recently.

We organised a campaign against glue-sniffing on Council estates; we've helped Tenants' Associations campaign for improvements on local estates.

### Contingent

Our Women's Section has been very active in the FAB campaign, organising a contingent of over 300 on the recent London demonstration. We have liaised with the nurses' action committee in their struggle against local NHS cuts.

The Women's Section organised a successful fightback against the proposed closure of local nurseries for under 5s. We have campaigned against Clause 28, and our banner was on the recent demonstration.

**How will the suspension affect the fightback against the Council's cuts in jobs and services?**

Bermondsey CLP has opposed cuts in Council jobs and services since the anti-ratecapping campaign of 1984-85. The 1986 Manifesto included a commitment to fight cuts.

The suspension means that Bermondsey's voice will not be heard on the Local Government Committee. With Peckham CLP also suspended, the LGC will be dominated by Dulwich CLP whose delegates, by and large, are not in favour of a fightback against the Council's cuts.

Another problem will be the proposed surcharge of Southwark Councillors following the fight against ratecapping.

I am in favour of organising the campaign through the CLPs. If it is done through the Council, then many potential supporters will ask themselves if it's worth supporting surcharged Councillors who are now voting for cuts.

**What does the suspension of Bermondsey CLP have in common with other curren. disciplinary actions?**

The Labour CLPs, Councillors and activists now under threat of expulsion have all, without exception, taken a stand against cuts in Local Authority spending.

What links Liverpool, Bermondsey, Lambeth and Haringey is opposition to cuts. Felicity Dowling, Sharon Atkin and myself were all Councillors now surcharged or threatened with surcharge.

### Leadership

It is obvious to me that the current leadership of the Labour Party has to, for its own reasons, get rid of those fighting back against these cuts. So anyone opposed to cuts must be vulnerable to investigation.

In addition, the threat to us is linked with the gerrymandering of Greater London Labour Party Executive boundaries. The new electoral areas are so absurd the conclusion can only be that they are an attempt to reduce the influence of CLPs in general and the left CLPs in particular within the GLLP.

**What can the left do?**

We are calling on all Labour Party activists to support our campaign for reinstatement. We are urging them to support all defence campaign meetings; pass motions supporting Bermondsey CLP in wards and GCs; invite speakers from Bermondsey to address wards and GCs; and raise money to support the campaign.

No CLP money has been — nor will be — used.

**All motions supporting Bermondsey should be sent to Larry Whitty at 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT, and Bermondsey Labour Party Defence Campaign, c/o 103 Adams Gdns, Brunel Rd, London SE 16.**

## Exeter

# Witch-hunters turn censor

**The witch-hunt against *Devon Labour Briefing* supporter Peter Bowing in Exeter CLP is being stepped up.**

The constituency officers have ruled that there can be *no discussion* of the matter at the GC or in the branches.

Were the wider membership to learn that the only charge levelled against Peter was that he had written articles in *Devon Labour Briefing* and elsewhere, they would no doubt demand an immediate end to the witch-hunt.

This latest attack on *Briefing* in Exeter goes back to an open meeting for all Party members held last year to discuss our response to the Tory attack on local government. Everyone was agreed on the scale and venom of the attack, but the local right wing leadership proposed nothing more in response but a leafletting campaign.

An attempt by *Briefing* supporters to table a plan of action was dismissed despite protests.

Peter Bowing protested at this travesty of democracy and made a public call for Labour to mount a real resistance to the Tories by supporting resistance by local people and local government workers. In response, disciplinary proceedings were initiated against him.

### Dissent

What is at stake in Exeter is the right to dissent within the Party. Since the aim of the local leadership is to stamp out such dissent, it is not surprising that they have tried to muzzle debate on the witch-hunt amongst party members.

However, two branches have already defied the edict of CLP officers and have discussed and opposed the witch-hunt. Many people are fed up with the right wing CLP leadership, which supports measures like the Lib/Lab pact on the City Council, local Labour Party sponsorship for fascist William of Orange celebrations, etc.

The right want to stop the flow of criticism by witch-hunting socialist members on malicious and trumped up charges. More than ever, it's clear that the fight against the witch-hunt is part and parcel of the fight for socialist policies.

**Model Resolution**

We note that disciplinary proceedings are being initiated against Peter Bowing by Exeter CLP principally in response to an article written by him in the *Flying Post*, a local commuity newspaper.

We believe that if such proceedings go ahead it would put at risk any individual who sought to advance opinions critical of local or national leaderships. These proceedings therefore threaten the right to dissent and to promote alternatives. As such, they constitute a serious threat to the democracy of the Labour Party.

We support the right of Peter Bowing and other individuals to put their views on how to advance the cause of Labour. We therefore call on Exeter CLP immediately to stop all disciplinary proceedings.

*Please send copies to P. Bowing, 19 Culverland Road, Exeter and to The Secretary, Exeter CLP, 26 Cliffpo Hill, Exeter.*

Trade Union Briefing

## Tories' new anti-union Bill

# The gory details

**The Tories' latest Employment Bill is likely to be law by this summer. It tightens the screws of existing anti-union legislation and introduces new obstacles to workers organisation and industrial action, including new balloting requirements.**

- **Postal ballots will be made compulsory for all executive posts and for votes on political funds.**
- **The requirement of election every five years is extended to *all* participants in National Executives — whether they have a vote or not (the so-called Scargill Clause).**
- **Strike ballots in split site firms will need to gain a majority *on each site* — not just an overall majority of the whole workforce.**
- **The Secretary of State will be empowered to issue "codes" on balloting, similar to the notorious codes on picketing, often given the force of law by the Courts.**
- **The most controversial part of the Act outlaws disciplinary action by unions against members refusing to take part in industrial action, even after a lawful strike ballot. The Tories claim this protects the individual's "right to work".**
- **Trade unions' right to indemnify members and officials against legal action will be severely curtailed — especially important with the increasing use of "contempt" to criminalise civil proceedings against trade unions (as at Wapping).**
- **The closed shop will now be virtually outlawed, as the new Act will withdraw legal immunities from industrial action in its defence.**
- **There is a new duty to reveal union accounts on demand, potentially costly and intrusive.**
- **The right to bring injunctions against unlawful industrial action is to be extended to individuals, not just employers — another gift to the scabs and the professional union-bashers in the Freedom Association and the Economic League.**
- **The Act creates a new office of Trade Union Commissioner. This will be an official whose full-time job will be to investigate unions and initiate legal action against those breaking the Tory rules.**
- **The Manpower Services Commission is to be renamed the Training Commission. The Secretary of State will be able to dilute the influence of trade unions on this body with his own appointees.**

Report compiled by Martin Huseyin
Hackney South CLP
Haldane Society Employment Law Committee
(personal capacity)

# Fords Sell out denies us the victo

# WHAT A LOST OPPORTUNITY!

**The Ford strike has been cynically sold out by national trade union leaders and the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC).**

**The workforce has now voted by two to one to accept the management offer.**

**The only plant with a majority against the deal was the Paint, Trim and Assembly Plant in Dagenham — which voted 3-2 against it.**

Shop stewards in Dagenham and Halewood, who had called for rejection of the deal, were furious at the sell-out, which came as European plants began closing down and the strike was 100% solid.

The stewards were right. The only change from Ford's original offer was to cut a three year deal to two — which means that the changes will be forced through in a shorter period of time. Everything else — the money and the strings — remains the same.

The acceptance vote was a direct product of the recommendation and blatant lies of the NJNC. There was even a claim that strings had been removed from the document by people who knew full well that this was not the case. A massive victory was claimed — yet every member of the NJNC knew full well that this had not been achieved.

Not only do the strings remain a part of the document but there is now a precise commitment by the trade unions to provide for their implementation within the life of the agreement. The revised deal states clearly:

*"To ensure that there is no misunderstanding... Constructive discussion at local Joint Works Committees will start within one month of the application of the principles. Implementation will be ongoing as required and as appropriate to each plant, and with the full support of the unions in this process.*

By ALAN THORNETT

*"If, in spite of your agreement to the principles, areas of difference occur in local discussions, the issue will be referred to the NJNC for positive resolution and may, if appropriate, be referred in turn to the relevant unions. With the above agreement from the unions we cannot envisage where these changes would need to be imposed."*

So the real position is that the unions have committed themselves to support fully the introduction of the changes and management will only impose them if the unions are unsuccessful!

Knowing all this, Derek Horn, Vice Chair of the NJNC, told the London *Evening Standard*:

*"People are talking about conditions but the simple fact is that there are no strings at all attached to this agreement. We have an historic deal..."*

Nor is it just the right wing who are taking this line. The *Morning Star* was just the same. It quoted Jimmy Airlie, a Communist Party member and secretary of the NJNC, saying that Ford workers had won a "terrific victory".

None of this double talk should come as a total surprise. These are the people who have been in favour of the "strings" from the start!

Jimmy Airlie even said during negotiations that they were necessary for Ford to compete in the world market!

Mick Murphy of the TGWU last year enthusiastically accepted similar conditions in Austin Rover. In fact Murphy has been more honest than most in the Ford situation. He told the *Financial Times*:

*"The importance of what we have achieved is that the company will get the changes it requires, but will carry the workforce with it."*

Ford management agreed.

The effects of this betrayal, however, are not confined to the conditions contained in this particular agreement. "Flexibility" strings were introduced in the

# Why the car companies are

**Commentators in the British financial press identify the key factor behind the present strikes by Ford, and other car workers, as being the "Nissan factor" — the influence of working practices introduced at the new Nissan plant in Sunderland.**

**This is a very narrow view of what are in fact worldwide developments in the car industry. For if the Sunderland plant did not exist, car workers in Britain would still face a similar situation.**

**There has been a new generalised offensive by the car companies designed to raise efficiency and productivity to new levels.**

**The successful Japanese companies are the primary, but not the only, model used by much of the industry.**

By ALAN THORNETT

But this is not a new thing. The Ford "AJ" or "After Japan" plan was drawn up in the early 1980s after Ford UK executives visited plants in Japan.

The detailed plan was designed to achieve Japanese productivity levels in their British plants. This plan remains a central factor behind Ford management strategy today.

What is new in the car industry today, however, is the scale of technological development and the scale of investment in new models taking place. These are new pressures to which Ford and other producers have to respond.

In Europe the lead in this is being taken by Fiat, Europe's second largest manufacturer. They are in the process of launching the Tipo — a new family car in which they have invested over £1 billion.

It makes their plant in Cassino the most advanced in the world. They claim a 100% automated paint facility and 55% automation on assembly — beating hollow the record previously held by Europe's biggest car manufacturer, VW/Audi with their 40% automation at the Hall assembly facility in West Germany.

Productivity levels produced by investment and automation are ony one side of the equation. High investment needs to be linked to high productivity of labour. This means brutally hard work, continuously carried out, and subject to repeated speed-up — a factor which is affecting workers involved in the production of volume cars all over the world.

Japanese car employers make their major contribution on methods of speed up. They have developed techniques which have led the world in harnessing the mental and physical capacity of workers to continuous very high speed production — although many of the others are now catching them up.

These techniques have been developed in Japan since the mid-1950s and are central to the profitability of Japanese industry.

The Ford package contains the main principles involved in these techniques. They want the introduction of short term contracts, the ending of all demarcation and the introduction of complete flexibility, including putting skilled men into one group and the introduction of "group leaders", creating a higher-paid force of Company spies on the shop floor. They also want the so-called Quality Circles which have been developed to a sophisticated level in Japan.

Quality Circles have far more to do with productivity than quality. In principle they are the same as the "worker participation" scheme which the last Labour government introduced into British Leyland in 1975, in the shape of the Ryder Report.

It had disastrous results for the shop stewards' movement and the workforce. The objective is to change the thinking of the workers. Instead of putting their own wages and conditions first, the problems of producton and profitability are prioritised. It also undermines trade union structures — particularly the shop stewards' movement, which is more responsive to the demands of the workforce.

In Japanese car plants everyone is involved in a Quality Circle. They are required to meet reularly, generally weekly, in their own time, to discuss ways of improving their production performance.

In some plants failure to produce positive proposals from such meetings is regarded as "uncooperative" or "anti-management" and can lead to dismissal.

Clearly, Quality Circles could not yet be introduced as effectively as this in Britain. They began to be introduced in Japan after the smashing of the independent unions and the creation of company controlled, yellow unions.

Their most extensive use in Britain is still in the Sunderland Nissan plant. But that plant is still in a honeymoon period. They are not yet pressing the workforce as hard as they intend to — and it is not a higly capitalised plant.

But Quality Circles have already been established in some other parts of the car industry in Britain. They were a condition in the last two year deal in Austin Rover and were strongly supported by national union leaders who pushed the deal through.

The same individuals negotiated the current package with Ford. Mick Murphy, the TGWU national officer, became well known, but not so well respected, for saying that he was "over the moon" with the deal, a deal to which the workforce has become increasingly hostile.

In some Austin Rover plants, including the Cowley Assembly Plant at Oxford, the Quality Circles — under the name of "zone circles" — are already in operation, although in most places they still lack authority.

They were imposed from above by the employers, backed by trade union officials, and were to have one hour per week "facility time" — time to meet during working hours.

In the Cowley Assembly Plant they have been backed by right wing senior stewards and convenors and exist extensively throughout the plant. They operate on a voluntary basis and meet in working hours.

In the Body Plant, where the left-wing is stronger, there has been more resistance. They have been pushed through by the convenors on the basis that the shop stewards will be involved in them as well. This actually makes the situation worse, because it is then easier for management to use them as an alternative to

# ory we needed:

ast Ford deal as well and onditions in the Ford plants s in other car plants involve peed-up, victimisation and ackings over work effort.

The Ford workers needed victory not just to stop this articular agreement but to everse a management nslaught which has been oing on for several years. It this factor as much as the hreat of the new deal which reated the solidarity of the trike.

This sell-out has robbed orkers of that strength and ut management in an even tronger position than efore.

Politically, a major vic- ry for the working class at is time would have given a ocus to a major national ghtback. The sell-out has obbed us of that opportuni- — although the present ave of industrial struggles likely to continue.

The Ford strike was a otential major challenge to e policies of the Thatcher overnment. The same nion leaders who make speeches about the evils of Thatcherism are prepared to employ the most cynical manoeuvres and double talk in order to pre-empt that challenge. The sell-out was a political betrayal of the working class as well as an industrial betrayal of the Ford workers.

Ford workers now have to regroup and reorganise. The issues involved in the strike are relevant to car workers whichever company they work for. Management's methods have been developed and employed nationally and internationally. Both Vauxhall and Land Rover workers are now poised for strike action. Militancy in the industry is continuing to grow.

A conference of car workers and shop stewards — an idea welcomed by many activists — to discuss the present situation and the way forward could now give us the opportunity to learn the lessons of the Ford sell-out and boost those sections getting ready for action.




PHOTO: Jim Thain and Martine Stead

*Ford picket line: workers demand, and receive, Europe-wide solidarity*

# cracking down

e trade union structures.

The introduction of uality Circles in Austin over has gone alongside e abolition of whole tegories of workers — par- ularly grades such as in- ection and rectification, volving many hundreds of b losses. These have been placed on the tracks by lf-inspection and self- ctification.

Just as important as uality Circles is flexibility labour. To be able to ove workers from one job another across grades and ill demarcations is crucial r management if work is be continuous, irrespec- e of breakdowns and her production problems.

If non-production rkers can be switched to oduction when those rkers are absent or there e abnormal production oblems, management can t the number of absentee d relief workers needed or en abolish them mpletely.

The only break the track rkers get, apart from ief official relief times, is en the track breaks down. ith flexibility production rkers are required to do nning maintenance emselves or help the fitters the repair of bigger eakdowns. They are also pected to do general clean- to cut out the need for itors.

This is all designed to en- re that there is no break in workload throughout the ift.

Short-term contracts are other major innovation. ey are massively used in panese plants and allow nagement to maintain a re experienced labour rce which can work flat- t.

At the same time they ploy casual labour to cover peak periods and sack them at the end of it. This creates a labour force outside trade union control and vulnerable to management moves. Such contracts have already been introduced in some British plants. In newly privatised Unipart, the Austin Rover service division, short contract labour is regularly used to meet peak demand periods.

There have been disputes in Austin Rover over the introduction of these conditions. Management had already successfully introduced some of the conditions Ford are seeking into some of their plants. Short term contracts are being introduced in the Swindon Body plant, although the idea would be strongly opposed in the main plants.

Other developments are taking plce across the industry. Discipline has been stepped up. New disciplinary procedures have been introduced. In many plants the rate of dismissals has gone up massively. In the main Austin Rover plants workers are sacked every day for "offences" such as failure to keep pace with the track, failing to work to standard or breaking the very strict management codes on lateness or absenteeism.

It is these conditions — the strings attached to the deal — that have been central to the Ford strike. It is not just a matter for Ford workers either. The success of the employers in the next stage of this process in Britain will be greatly increased by the sellout of the Ford strike in Britain. The victory for the Ford management will lead to another round of speed-up. Car workers in Britain have to seek ways of confronting this.

The generalisation of this employers' offensive has some lessons for car workers in Britain and internationally. A generalised offensive needs a generalised response. In the British car industry, where the multi-union set-up fragments the workforce there is an urgent need for contact at rank and file level, particularly through the shop stewards' movement.

Some shop stewards in Ford and in other car manufacturers are calling for a national conference of car industry shop stewards to be held urgently to assess these developments and develop a strategy in response to them. This would be a very popular initiative and could be the starting point for a fightback in the car plants in Britain. It could also lay the basis for greater links with car workers across Europe, the USA and elsewhere.

The high level of militancy in the car plants in Britain is likely to continue and increase despite the sell-out of the Ford strike. Already the Land Rover plant in Birmingham has rejected a wage offer from management and has voted to strike.

The General Motors plants in Liverpool and Luton have voted for strike action over the decision by mangment to plunder tens of thousands of pounds from their pension fund, using new Tory legislation.

There needs to be an international response to this as well. The employers are organising their offensive across national frontiers. It is an international offensive with internationally developed techniques of attack. We need a forum in which at least car workers from Europe, if not beyond, can pool their experiences and develop a response beyond national limitations.

# How victory was turned to defeat

**"It's like being five goals up in the first half, and your own skipper putting six past you in the second," was the bitter comment of one Dagenham Shop Steward after the back-to-work vote.**

**The strike was rock solid. There wasn't a single scab in the whole of Ford Britain.**

The impact of the strike on Ford Europe was stunning — at the end of the first week all European plants were at a standstill, with the exception of Valencia in Spain. The Cologne Works Committee refused to allow the company to change work schedules.

In the 1978 strike it took seven weeks to reach this position. If we had stayed out for another couple of weeks, management would have had to come back to us on their knees.

It's not surprising that the deal was accepted by a majority of 22,00 Ford UK workers (the vote was 16,000 to 6,000).

Meetings at the Bridgend and Dagenham engine plants were told that the strings on the deal had been removed, which is a lie. Many of the 10,000 who didn't vote at all simply didn't know about the meetings.

The Dagenham Paint, Trim and Assembly (PTA) plant was the only one which voted to reject the deal — by a 3-2 margin. This happened because the stewards committee and TGWU 1107 branch explained clearly what was involved. The mood there is very bitter.

The money is the same as immediately before the strike,

**By a Ford UK worker**

and all the strings are still very much attached. The only difference is that the deal is now binding over two years instead of three.

We will receive 7% from November 1987 and a further 7% in the second year. This compares poorly with our overall claim of 16% for line workers in one year.

A further 3,000 jobs are planned to go from the body and assembly plants by 1992, with more lost in other Ford operations. There is no way that management can acheive these reductions without the implementation of the new "strings".

Team working and employee involvement will now be introduced. "Group leaders" will be running these teams. They will be company people in our own ranks. Skilled workers will be forced to work on the line.

Although the introduction of temporary workers has been removed from the national agreement, it has been made subject to local negotiations, with reference back to national level for "positive resolution" of local differences. In other words, they will continue to bring temporary workers into the weaker plants like Enfield as a prelude to forcing the rest of us to accept them.

Our claim for shorter hours and longer holidays was not even considered, despite the 40% rise in productivity in the last two years, and Fords projected £350m 1987 profits.

A leaked management document states that yearly output of cars per worker at Dagenham Body and Assembly operations is *already* higher than that at Nissan's in Sunderland.

In some ways the deal is *worse* than the previous position. With the collaboration of union national officials, Ford now expects to get in two years what it sought to impose in three. There has never been any disagreement between the company and union officials Murphy and Airlie about objectives, merely on how quickly they could be acheived.

Nevertheless the government is unhappy about the deal because of the money involved. They fear that other workers will be encouraged to fight for bigger wage increases, particularly in "successful" companies which, like Ford, are showing increased profits.

We intend to build on the international and national support we received during the strike. We sent out bulletins to Ford plants worldwide, including Brazil, Australia, and New Zealand. Our only problem was in Spain where the Workers' Commissions supported us but the Socialist UGT supported the company.

In Britain, we got support wherever we asked for it. We spoke to meetings of local government workers and teachers. Nurses, miners, and other workers came down to the picket line to support us. This support will be reciprocated — particularly in regard to the health service.

We hope to repeat the action of the Vauxhall workers at Ellesmere Port who came out for 24 hours in support of the NHS.

The disgraceful role of the trade union officials in forcing through this sell-out deal shows once again that we need to continue to fight to change our leaderships.

In particular it would be nice to see Brian Nicholson ousted in the TGWU Region No. 1. He's a linch-pin of the union's "new realist" and has used his position to organise the right in the Labour Party as well.

Ford workers know as well as anyone what his kind of leadership means — and increasing numbers are determined to oppose it.

Features:

# King's Cross fire inquiry:

# 'MacDonald's' management comes to LRT




PHOTO: Brenda Prince, Format

*"Passengers have lost confidence in the safety of the Underground trains they use every day..."*

**Fire alerts on London's Underground have increased "quite dramatically" since the King's Cross fire — according to the London Fire Brigade.**

**This has emerged as the King's Cross fire inquiry begins to wade through some 80,000 pages of documents plus witnesses' statements and official submissions from organisations such as the trade unions.**

Despite early attempts by London Regional Transport to avoid real issues, Stage One of the inquiry came up with a catalogue of neglect and preventable hazards.

**By DAVE WELSH**

On day two on the inquiry, Lionel Read, counsel for LRT, gave a long account of what London Underground was doing to improve fire safety. He also argued that arson had caused the fire, prompting Roger Henderson, Counsel for the inquiry, to reply that the arson theory did not "withstand analysis".

### Emerge

What began to emerge was that on November 18th, 1987, King's Cross station was being "left to its devices". The picture is frightening: understaffed, overcrowded, with problems caused by building work and lack of familiarity with station layout or location of equipment, a sprinkler system that did not work, and fire extinguishers hidden behind contractors' hoardings.

A survivor summed up the feelings of underground users:

*"People have lost confidence in the safety of the public transport system and it needs to be restored."*

It would also be true to say that *staff* have lost confidence in the system and will be expecting Stage Two of the inquiry to challenge the whole LRT and government strategy for public transport. Just compare LRT's total of £2 million a year spent on safety with the Paris Metro's £40 million in fire prevention alone.

Already, it has become clear that LRT chiefs are simply unwilling to consider the serious risks of running a rail system as though it was MacDonalds. In 1985, the Managing Director of London Underground outlined his ambitions:

*"To take a system as old and large as the underground forward into the 21st century is a huge task, incorporating new technologies and changes in working practices."*

Safety is glaringly omitted from this management programme. It plays little role in the plans of LRT boss Sir Keith Bright, who advocates what he has called the "Japanisation" of LRT.

**"TUBEWATCH" monitors London Underground and British Rail on safety, jobs and privatisation. The first issue of *Tubewatch* is out now and contains stories on King's Cross, LRT catering workers, the cover-up of the Green Park fire, and much more.**
**Contact TUBEWATCH at PO Box 22, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8.**
**Subscriptions (1 year/12 issues): £10 organisations, £5 individuals, £2 unemployed.**
**Please make all cheques/POs payable to Transport Resources.**

Over 12,000 jobs have been lost on LRT since 1981. Plans have been drawn up to reduce staff by another 5,000 by 1989. "Experts" like Richard Hope of the *Railway Gazette* have applauded these moves:

*"Productivity gains to come include conversion of the remaining tube lines to driver only operation, and abolishing ticket barriers at many stations — one change that passengers will welcome even if the unions don't."*

Most of LRT's subsidiaries (responsible for building, computing, architecture, cleaning and medical services) have been hit by competitive tendering.

### Responsible

- The Works and Building Department (formerly responsible for fire sprinkler maintenance) has been closed down.
- Computer Services was sold off.
- The Cleaning Department has been drastically reorganised with a reduction in staff from 402 to 320.
- Part-time work with easy hire and fire is on the increase and private cleaning firms like Pritchards given the contract for over 100 stations.
- The Lifts and Escalators Department budget has been cut from £11 million to £6 million, despite the glaring need for maintenance of both old and new equipment.

### Managers

The rule of government-appointed managers on three-year contracts has led to a host of resignations amongst supervisory staff disgusted at "spiv" management. One supervisor wrote to say he was resigning because he was "revolted by working for such a degrading company."

### Strategy

The "MacDonalds" strategy is aimed at creating a core LRT network with minimum staffing, most ancillary services in private hands, docile trade unions (and possibly single-union, no-strike deals), and a tightly-controlled workforce.

The King's Cross fire and inquiry have exposed this process and shown up the stark contrast between the "new-look" underground and the run-down reality of London's transport system.

## The Women's Health Department

# Speculum: A midwife's musings on how to find your cervix

**Sisters — if it were only that simple!**

**You may be hell-bent on finding your cervix, but I'm more desperate to find the doorstop from the sitting room so that I can keep Jimmy from banging the door incessantly.**

A search behind the settee reveals: quite a bit of Lego, several books, my asthma inhaler for which I've been searching fruitlessly for two weeks, and — hooray! — the doorstop!

Now all I have to do is replace the little wheels from the settee, which always fall out when I move it, and remove about sixty grams of playdoh which one of the children has stuffed down the asthma inhaler, rendering it useless, and I'll be ready.

Right, your **cervix**; gateway to the magic, womanly place where babies (and sometimes infections) grow; end of the potential tube (your vagina) where infections (and sometimes penises) enter.

Some of you may be able to find your cervix, but do you know what it looks like? *Should* you know what it looks like?

**By TESS KEWLEY**

It's such an important part of our bodies that I think we should all be able to feel our cervix, and know what it does. You can also visualise it if you invest in a disposable speculum and a torch. Quite apart from anything else, you do need to be able to find the damn thing if you're going to use a cap for contraception.

The first thing to remember is that different women have their cervices positioned differently, according to the angle at which their uteri are resting. So, most women will find that their cervix is quite far back, and only just reachable with their fingers. This is an indication that the uterus is *anteverted* and *anteflexed* (normally situated).

However, some women will encounter their cervix as soon as they insert their fingers. This is not a problem — it just means that your uterus doesn't lean forward as much as most women's do.

Occasionally, women with uteri that are *retroverted* can encounter difficulties with infertility and miscarriage. However, the majority of you will have a cervix which is right at the end of your vagina.

So, how do you find it?

First of all, wash your hands well. A bit of KY Jelly on your fingers can help. Recline, supported by a couple of pillows, and draw your legs up well.

### Gently

Gently insert the index and middle fingers of your hand into your vagina and keep shoving them ever upward until you encounter what feels like a firm round thing with a tiny hole in the centre. If you've had a baby, the hole in the middle (the **os**) will be much more obvious.

Have a good poke around while you're in there — you can't do any damage. Your cervix is about two centimetres long and projects down into your vagina. It feels a little like the tip of your nose in consistency; the cervix in the pregnant woman feels more like a mouth — altogether softer and slightly more pliable.

### Softening

In fact, this softening of the cervix used to be one of the old-fashioned ways by which pregnancy was diagnosed — before chemical testing of urine was invented.

If you are going to use a speculum (that phallic instrument which doctors and nurses insert so that they can take a smear, for example) you can buy a disposable "Cusco's" from a good chemist.

Position a mirror on another pillow so that you will be able to see inside yourself, and use plenty of KY to lubricate the speculum. Slowly and gently insert the speculum until it won't go in any further, then open it; shine a torch inside and you should be able to see your cervix clearly.

Sometime there are tiny lumps on it, or small red areas — these may not be significant, but you should get your doctor to check you over if you see anything you're worried about. *In most cases* they will merely be a simple erosion — quite innocent, and readily amenable to treatment or not even requiring treatment.

### Uterus

So what does your cervix do? Keeps your uterus safe, I suppose. Also, by remaining closed in pregnancy, it keeps the developing baby safe, too. Once it starts to open up, the baby can emerge. It's magic, really.

PS: I thought you'd like to know about the feedback I've had now that a few of these articles have hit the press.

Women will not be entirely surprised to learn that I've been asked by several hypochondriacal *men* to write about their stupid ailments. Naturally, Sisters, I refused.

However, one woman did ask me to write about her pet subject — multiple orgasms. When she put her request to me (in an Indian restaurant where we went to celebrate Mike Marqusee's birthday after a particularly trying GC) the whole table stopped gabbing and looked round in surprise.

Even Councillor Craig Brewin was sidetracked momentarily from his two pet subjects: sex and football; and the waiters looked askance at the noisy uproar which followed.

As I said to the lads, it's all a question of technique and position, and anyway, I'm *not* a Sex Counsellor.

Incidentally, it was the most shocking and hysterically funny GC imaginable. We were spied on by stooges from Walworth Road who told us how to win the next election — thank god they didn't presume to tell us how to have multiple orgasms.

## Interview: Peter Huntingford

# The only logical stance is... Abortion on demand

**PETER HUNTINGFORD has worked with the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) and other pro-choice organisations for many years. Among his many achievements, he established the Mile End Day Care Abortion Clinic, which was later run by Wendy Savage. During his career he has been reported by anti-abortion organisations for supposed breaches of abortion law.**

**Two years ago, LEONORA LLOYD of NAC interviewed Peter Huntingford for NAC's internal bulletin; and a shortened version of the interview is printed in the Spring '88 edition of *NAC News*. This is an edited version of that text.**

**Can you tell me when you first decided to specialise in obstetrics and gynaecology?**
It was very early, about 1954. My first house job in obstetrics and gynaecology made me realise that that was what I wanted to do as a career.

I think I was attracted to it because one was dealing with people who were fit and well, and the results of one's work were over fairly quickly — in other words the pregnancy was nine months, so you had your answer fairly quickly.

**What about your early training?**
I went to the London Hospital in 1946 and left in 1955. Whitechapel was quite a deprived area, much like the one I was born in, which was why I was attracted to it. I had no training at all in therapeutic or legal abortion.

**So when did you first come into contact with any kind of abortion?**
When I started specialist training people didn't ask those like myself who were part of the medical establishment. It was around 1964, when I was already a consultant, (I was a professor by 1965) that requests to people like myself began to increase.

Up until then it was a clandestine affair. People either got abortions done by local women, or they went to Harley Street and paid over the odds for it — and that sort of request never came my way.

**What about the women who went to local women — did they ever end up in your hospital?**
Oh yes, one saw the end result of induced abortion performed by local women, particularly in the East End.

Presumably if you got it done in Harley Street you got a fairly safe abortion. I'm not decrying the women who did backstreet abortions, because I think they were mostly very caring people, trying to help their sisters. But obviously the circumstances under which they did abortions were not good and the accidents were terrible.

**What was your attitude to the women who had illegal abortions?**
I think, to be honest, one didn't notice. Certainly my teachers tended to blame the woman and be angry towards the abortionists. They had very little sympathy for women having an unwanted pregnancy or the consequences of trying to get rid of an unwanted pregnancy — she was blamed for bringing it upon her own head.

There was no help to give women adequate family planning and no part of my specialist training included family planning. It was almost regarded as a dirty occupation and not one that was talked about to medical students. I suppose I was part of the generation that saw we had to do something about it.

**When did attitudes begin to change?**
The Family Planning Association was working hard in the late 50s, and was regarded as a group of people outside the specialisations in any orthodox way. They were tolerated and allowed. Specialists of my sort were glad that there were family planners around, but didn't think much of them. They thought they could prevent abortion by providing family planning.

Once the discussions leading up to the 1967 Abortion Act began, the public thought the law had already changed and began to ask people like myself more and more for help in respect of abortion. Coming from my background, not regarding abortion or family planning as one of my jobs, this challenged my own attitudes.

Listening to more and more women requesting abortions, I went through three or four years of turmoil and conflict. I gradually shifted my ground from reluctantly taking part, including making judgements about the women, to a situation where I said to myself: "It is not possible for me to make a judgement on behalf of (a) somebody else and (b) particularly when that someone else is a woman, because it is no part of my experience to have an unwanted pregnancy." I found that the only logical stance was to grant abortion on demand, request, whichever word you want.

My conviction grew that the only person who could decide whether or not to continue the pregnancy was the woman herself, on her terms. I reached this point about 1969, two years after the Abortion Act, when the demand was going up and up in the public sector.

It became obvious that you had to develop a system that responded to that demand, or else you delayed the women from getting their abortions, and increased the illness and suffering that arose out of the delay. It was necessary to cut down the waiting time for women to get their request heard, and to get the operation done.

It was already clear to me that in the main women sought abortion early and not late and it was necessary to set up a service that carried out abortion on a day basis. If abortions are carried out early you don't need to admit the women to hospital, because the complication rates are kept low.

**If the NHS was not responding to need, people like you who were prepared to do abortions must have felt as if you were running a factory.**
I learnt that the abuse of women was increased by the need to pay money.

I believed that the NHS should meet 100% of abortion need, but even senior people in the NHS cannot command funds to do exactly what they want. You have to fight for it, convincing colleagues who didn't see abortion as a particularly high priority in the hospital service — that is still the biggest problem I face.

I set up a day care service at St Mary's in Paddington in 1970 and faced the frustration of entrenched attitudes. From 1971 until 1974 I was with the World Health Service, then I returned, as Professor at the London (Tower Hamlets) and Barts, in 1976.

It took me nearly three years to get a day care abortion service in Tower Hamlets, fighting all that time, and meanwhile providing the service for as many women as I could.

I left in 1981, mainly because I was no longer in sympathy with the constraints under which I had to teach medical students.

Most of the medical profession act in a paternalistic way, not liking their image and status in society challenged, whereas I believe medicine should be consumer-dominated. Doctors are mainly technicians and should only take on a priestly role when they are asked to by the patient. I think doctors are confused about these two roles.

**What about your experiences of being threatened by anti-abortionists, with prosecutions, etc?**
It's happened several times. It's obviously worrying at the time, but not once has it made me change my point of view. It has succeeded in getting some of the things I would like to say said in public; but in the past I have managed to say all the things I've got to say.

**You believe in giving women choice, but what about very young girls, whose parents may have a different idea from her and are putting pressure on her?**
I like to take the pressure off by seeing her on her own. I think my role is to try to provide people with the ability to gain experience for themselves and work out for themselves how to deal with their dilemma. I have to make it clear that there is always time enough to make a proper decision.

I think the young girl wanting to keep her baby is sometimes trying to assert her independence and also sees the baby as the means to give somebody the sort of love she is perhaps missing herself.

Once the atmosphere around her is relaxed, my experience is that the girl will usually decide on an abortion, especially with the older ones, around 15. Where the pregnancy is the result of incest, the girl seldom actually resists termination.

**How can late abortions be made less distressing?**
The doctor who doesn't find it distressing shouldn't be doing it. Once you lose your sensitivity to the distress of the situation, you can't behave properly to the woman concerned.

Up to 18 weeks, skilled abortionists can carry out vaginal terminations under anaesthesia by dilation and evacuation in one sitting. After 18 weeks it is very distressing for the woman, because a long, drawn-out procedure cannot be avoided. Using intro-amniotic injection of prostaglandins together with hypertonic urea, ensures the expulsion of a dead foetus and placenta within about 24 hours.

Other techniques are more dangerous for the women. But some techniques cause more pain and can result in live fetuses. I am sure some doctors use them to punish the woman.

I remember very well when I was a registrar, a consultant saying: "I will terminate this pregnancy for her, but she'll remember it the rest of her life, because I'll put a scar from her umbilicus to her symphysis."

**What changes would you like to see in the law?**
I don't think counselling should be mandatory, but every woman should have the opportunity to discuss the situation if she wishes.

I would like to see the Act making abortion a crime (the 1861 Act) repealed, then of course there would be nothing on the statute book referring to abortion.

If abortion was no longer a crime, you wouldn't need a '67 Act. I would then make it mandatory for local Health Authorities to provide a service which meets the need for abortion in a safe and considerate way.

**Given the current attacks on time limits, how would the need to balance the rights of the foetus and the rights of the woman be resolved in legal terms?**
This is not terribly important in numerical terms. Very few women request late abortions. Where they do, the circumstances are pretty exceptional and most people, I think, would not have much difficulty in deciding whether or not the rights of the baby or the rights of the mothers should be paramount.

In the last ten years, I have been asked to do about two or three abortions after 24 weeks. If the limit was reduced to 20 weeks, then we're dealing with much larger numbers and most of those people would be denied abortions where their child would be severely handicapped.

Obviously, it's a question of your personal morality and beliefs. I don't see why a woman who doesn't see it as wrong shouldn't decide to have what she knows will be a handicapped baby killed at that point in time rather than allowing it to be born.

I'm deliberately using the words that the opposition like to use about us because, if we don't use those words, then in one sense we're ducking the issues. The numbers involved after 24 weeks, it would be wasting Parliament's and other people's time on a change of that order.

**What about sterilisation with abortion, including of some very young girls, that continues to take place?**
The figure for the combined operation is coming down, but not much. Most of them are done on the NHS, from which you can only draw the conclusion that women are not choosing to be sterilised at the time of abortion, otherwise it would be done in the private sector.

So doctors are saying that women can only have their abortions if they also agree to sterilisation. A lot of doctors really do believe that they know better than the woman how many children she should have — what I call fascist medicine.

I would guess that the young women having the combined operation are mentally subnormal in some way, in which case it's quite appalling that they're being sterilised. If you work in association with large institutions, the number of pregnancies which occur is much smaller than I would ever have dreamt.

If a girl gets pregnant, she should not be sterilised then. A decision affecting her long-term interests should be carefully considered by a group of people who are going to act in her best interests.

I don't believe there is ever a justification for sterilising anyone without her consent. The opportunities to get pregnant for someone with a mental age below that where she can give consent are really very small. I'd rather abort her four, five times than sterilise her.

For all women, the combined operation is so much more dangerous than the separate operations. I would never do it. I know that black women suffer more from pressures to have the combined operation in ways that if not overtly fascist are at best patronising, and which don't give the women credit for making their own proper decisions.

In Tower Hamlets the proportion of black women who were single mothers was higher. There was definitely cultural pressure not to have abortions. We tried to help the women make their own decisions. If we detected a social problem — housing, etc. — we tried to help, so the woman could make what is the best decision.

There should be more counsellors from the minority groups. At the Tower Hamlets clinic we deliberately chose local women with local accents.

I think counsellors should be women and they should have discussion sessions to work out some of the conflicts that arise out of the counselling situation on a regular basis. The service provided by the NHS should preserve privacy, dignity, and anonymity.

**On another subject, what are your feelings about embryo engineering, etc?**
In my list of priorities, I wouldn't give money to it. I think it is wrong that people should be able to buy that sort of service, and I don't think the NHS can afford to pay for it, either in monetary terms, or in terms of the skills that are available. I mistrust the motives of some individuals to keep the moral issues in a correct sense of perspective.

There are limits to what we as a society can afford to do and to say that every woman has the right to a child is not the same as saying that a woman has the right to have an abortion.

I think more research needs to be done about causes of sterility, rather than more research into finding the answers for a few of those who are sterile.

**Over the forty years you've been working as a doctor, what are the biggest changes you've seen?**
During my lifetime in medicine the rate of change has been greater than at any other time. It's been a privilege to be part of a rate of change that's never taken place before in history.

I'm grateful for that, because it's made me change and, I hope, increased my social conscience. The worst thing that I remember — and I think it still exists — is that doctors are basically concerned about themselves as professionals, and most doctors, although they might say that they are socially concerned, essentially aren't.

### What NAC stands for

**Our aim is to build a mass, non-racist campaign to fight for all women's right to determine for themselves whether or not to continue with a pregnancy. Whilst recognising the limitations in the present law, we will fight any attempts to further limit our rights, at the same time campaigning for laws which will eliminate all medical and legal restrictions on women's ability to control their own fertility.**

**Towards this end, we campaign for freely available contraception, abortion, sterilisation and fertility treatment, for all women regardless of race, age, marital status or sexual orientation, to be available on the National Health Service, and for adequate sex education, public information and counselling services for all women and men.**

**We oppose all forms of coercion on women to have abortion or any other fertility control treatment without their express informed consent.**

**We will work with all organisations with similar policies and all those who seek to extend women's ability to control their own fertility.**

***Our Bodies, Our Lives, Our Right to Decide!***

***Free Abortion on Demand: Women Must Decide!***


nac news

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# Letters

## WRITEBACK!

**We welcome your letters!**
**Write to Labour Briefing, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ**

### Trade Unions and NAC

Dear *Briefing*,

Can I just correct the information about trade unions affiliated to NAC in your last edition?

At national level, we have unions affiliated: APEX, NALGO,NAPO, NATFHE, NCU, NUPE, SOGAT and TGWU. In addition, the Tobacco Workers' Union was a member and retains its affiliation, although now part of the new MSF.

We also have branches of ASTMS/MSF, CPSA, NUT and the NUJ in membership. The National Union of Students is another union with policy to affiliate, but for some reason does so through its women's committee (so again, we would ask students to chase this up).

In fact, in all those cases where unions have pro-choice policy, members should be working towards affiliation to NAC if it does not already exist. The current attack is just the first of a whole new series — the anti-abortionists are serious in their determination to put women's lives second to those of the yet to be born — and only NAC can ensure that an equally serious response can be mounted.

In addition, we have ongoing campaigns around our demand for abortion to be the woman's choice, not the doctors and for facilities on the NHS for early and late abortions.

We have now produced a poster in two sizes (15p & 30p) calling for day care clinics to be available to make early abortions easier to get, as well as a full range of literature and propaganda material — send an SAE for a publications list.

In sisterhood,
*Leonora Lloyd*,
National Abortion Campaign

### Filling out the Euro-programme

Dear *Briefing*,

Colin Meade (*Labour Briefing* no. 54) asks why my Euro-manifesto, which appeared in *Labour Briefing* no. 56, did not include support for "social, economic, national and democratic rights in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union".

Unfortunately, with limited space available in *Labour Briefing*, I was unable to elaborate on *several* specific areas of policy — including my longstanding support for the self-organised democratic, trade union, peace and national independence movements in the Eastern half of Europe.

I had hoped, however, that my support for these movements would have been obvious from my manifesto commitment to a "united, *democratic* and socialist Europe" and from my call for "support and solidarity with *democratic* and *national liberation movements*."

I stand by all that I wrote in my book *Democratic Defence*:

"The Soviet system today represents the exact opposite of almost everything that the Left in the West is striving for — obsessive state secrecy rather than freedom of information, centralised bureaucratic control instead of devolved decision-making and public accountability, total state power over the individual as opposed to inalienable civil liberties, authoritarian economic management rather than trade union freedom and industrial democracy, and a government-manipulated media instead of greater diversity and choice in news and information sources."

Just as the left fights for democracy in the West and for national liberation in the Third World, so it must also campaign against state repression and Soviet hegemony in the Eastern Bloc.

To do so, is not collusion with the Cold War and anti-Sovietism, but a concrete expression of socialist internationalism and democratic socialism.

More than ever before, we need to work in solidarity with the people's movements of eastern Europe and the USSR. They offer the greatest hope for transcending the divisions between West and East and laying the basis for the ultimate goal of a "united, democratic and socialist Europe."

Yours in comradeship,
*Peter Tatchell*

## Periscope



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

### So that's why they invented Clause 28!

Tories in Haringey have requisitioned a special Council meeting for April 25th in an attempt to use Clause 28 to force the Council to reverse its policy of "positive images" of lesbians and gay men.

A prime target of the Tories is the Council's £25,000 grant to the local *Reading Matters* bookshop, allegedly stocked with shocking tomes "promoting homosexuality".

*Briefing* supporter Dave Palmer, who works in *Reading Matters*, admits that the bookshop has done good trade in the aforesaid unmentionable volumes.

"The Parents Rights Group and the local Tories have been among our best customers," he reports. "They bought out all our copies of *Towards Gay Communism* (an obscure Italian autonomist tract). No one else has expressed any interest in it."

When the "Positive Images" controversy first broke out in Haringey enraged bigots repeatedly threatened to close down *Reading Matters*, seen as a centre of subversive anti-family activity.

"I knew they were fanatical about shutting us down," said Dave, "but I didn't tnink they'd go as far as to change the law of the land!"

### Amazing, but true

In a letter to *The Guardian* ex-GLC soft left Michael Ward denounced an allegation in the LCC local government pamphlet *Labour Councils in the Cold* that "Labour Councillors have treated local government as a toy" as "unfounded, patronising and gratuitously offensive."

Ward is listed as a co-author of the pamphlet, which he says "appears to be another example of the move in the LCC to replace the intolerance and sectarianism of the far left with a new intolerance of the centre."

Ward has announced his resignation from the LCC.

### Squalid, ugly, uncomortable

Hanif Kureishi, screenwriter of *My Beautiful Launderette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, had some interesting words for our green and pleasant land in a recent newspaper article:

"England seems to have become a squalid, ugly and uncomfortable place. For some reason I am starting to feel that it is an intolerant, racist, homophobic, narrow-minded authoritarian rathole run by vicious, suburban-minded, materialistic philistines who think democracy is constituted by the selling of a few Council houses and shares.

"Its government, elected for the third time, has attacked most forms of legitimate opposition: the trade unions, the newspapers, the BBC, local government, the universities, the welfare state:, gay and black organisations have all been weakened and undermined by a government that really only believes in democracy insofar as it supports them.

"The few areas of freedom and dissent left are contracting fast. There is sporadic opposition and complaint, but it is feeble and ineffective. The Thatcher 'permanent revolution' has been too swift and far-reaching for coherent response."

### Anyone got any old 'Squeezy' bottles?

Scene: a GC meeting in a North London constituency.

Two full-time paid officers of the Greater London Labour Party have come to explain *Labour Listens* to some 80 GC delegates. An easel is set up — in the far corner of the room, where whatever is written on the paper it displays is illegible to most people present. After protest, the easel is moved to the centre, and the lecture commences.

The words *Labour Listens*, written in neat felt-tip characters, become clear.

"What is *Labour Listens*?" asks the full-time official, like a voice-over on Blue Peter. She turns the paper on the easel to reveal the words *A Way of Life*.

"It is," she tells us solemnly, "a way of life".

Blue Peter now gives way to a Stalinist re-education camp. Another sheet of paper appears, listing the "new techniques" which we can use in our *Labour Listens* exercise: leaflets, questionaires (sic), petitions, public meetings...

The delegates' gasp of profound shock at the revelation of such novel and adventurous methods gives way to delight. We, too, can learn to *listen*! We, too, can reach the dizzying heights of the recent Wandsworth Council by-election, praised by our visiting full-timers as a "model campaign".

No one had the heart to tell the earnest souls that we had lost the by-election, despite telephone trees and target mailings. But then, *Labour Listens* grew out of a much-praised *general election* campaign, in which the result also seems to have been the least important point.

### Caught with his trousers down?

Scourge of the left **John Golding** was exposed by the unspeakable *News of the World* for a liaison with a prostitute in his £200,000 Westminster pad.

The £30,000+ General Secretary of the National Communications Union has not denied the story — which included a detailed account of his anatomy and interior decor.

The male-dominated Broad Left-led executive of the union, true to its habitual opportunism, saw its chance and formally called on the hated Golding to "consider his position".

The gamekeeper turned poacher responded stating that in order to spare his wife Llin (who inherited Golding's seat as Labour MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme) from further difficulty he would not be taking the matter further.

*Militant* supporters have also joined in the puritanical witch-hunt of the witch-hunter. Whatever the episode reveals about JG's attitudes towards women, it reveals a great deal more about the attitudes of the broad left, and in particular their ready and eager embrace of Victorian values and a painfully-familiar double standard.

### Name that man!

Kinnock and Labour's N. Ireland spokesperson Kevin McNamara have denounced "Our Ken" yet again — this time for his outbursts over the RUC's shoot-to-kill policy and his calling the Attorney General "an accomplice to murder".

McNamara insists victory over the government was in sight on this issue, and will pursue it with all the vigour and energy that he can muster.

What's he going to do, you ask?

"Table a series of questions, in an attempt to obtain more details."

Bet the government's quaking in its jackboots.

### *Which* way is the down turning?

We thought the SWP, in their syndicalist mania for action at every opportunity, were *always* in favour of workers going on strike.

But no! Having spent months urging comrades in the local government struggle to recognise the centrality of industrial action, and building for the Day of Action on March 8th, SWP members in NALGO are now going around arguing *against* it!

Clearly, the SWP has no intention of allowing too many workers to contradict their faith in the "downturn".

### Quote, unquote

"For our party is, and must remain, a party of radical reform — committed to widening opportunities for all and breaking down the vested interests which obstruct those opportunities."

*Peter Brooke*, Chairman of the Conservative Party, *Conservative Newsline*, Jan. '88.

## Building Briefing

### CONTACT BRIEFING

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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The winner this week is number 487 — again a long-standing standing order to *Briefing*. The supporter is B. Young.

## Book review

# A student generation in revolt

**Ronald Fraser demonstrated his skills as an oral historian in *Blood of Spain* and his insight into the political power of memory in *In Search of a Past*. He has now produced a wonderfully readable and sympathetic history of 60s student rebellion.**

*A Student Generation in Revolt*, **by Ronald Fraser and others, Chatto & Windus, London £14.95**

Fraser is firmly committed to the aspirations and anger that fueled the generational revolt, while keenly aware of its contradictions and limitations. He tells the story of the revival by the student left in Britain, the US, France, Germany, Italy and Northern Ireland through extensive quotations from participants in the events themselves.

The scope of the book is wisely confined to the US and Western European student movements, which enables Fraser to show both the international developments which united them and the local conditions which devided them. Again and again the same questions arose: What are the forces for social change? What is the role of leadership in a dynamic social movement? What is the nature of the "student condition"? How can students build alliances with other groups in revolt?

In each country, different answers were thrown up, as students responded to, and often reacted against, long-standing national traditions.

The sheer pace of events, the spontaneity of the mass response, and the frequent organisational and ideological chaos are evoked by survivors with rueful nostalgia. But a proper emphasis is also placed on the fiere violence of the state response.

The British movement escaped relatively unscathed, but elsewhere casualties were high. If the whole thing was just a frivolous Oedipal-lark, as renegades allege, why the heavy response?

Fraser rightly locates the origins of the 1968 mass action tactics and rhetoric of "participatory democracy" in the US Civil Rights Movement, and in particular its student wing, SNCC. The clear account of the US movement, so often shrouded in a muddle of recantation or hyperbole, is one of the book's biggest assets.

Fraser reminds us that in the early 60s the left found itself reduced to minute, isolated factions, wondering if it could ever reach out to larger forces. No one was able to predict the social explosion which gripped the academies only a few years later. Surely there's a leson here for 1988. And one of the best ways for comrades of all ages to learn it — and gain or regain some sense of the scale and depth of the revolt — is to read this book.

**19 68**

## Book review

John Baker

# Arguing for Equality

**In this useful *Verso* book, John Baker tackles one of the central ideological questions in contemporary Britain — the question of *equality*.**

*Arguing for Equality*, **John Baker, Verso, London £6.95 in paperback**

Not "equal rights" or "equal opportunities" but good, old-fashioned, unapologetic social, political and economic *equality*.

Baker is well aware of the endless ramifications of this apparently simple notion, and he spells many of them out in this jargon-free, step by step analysis.

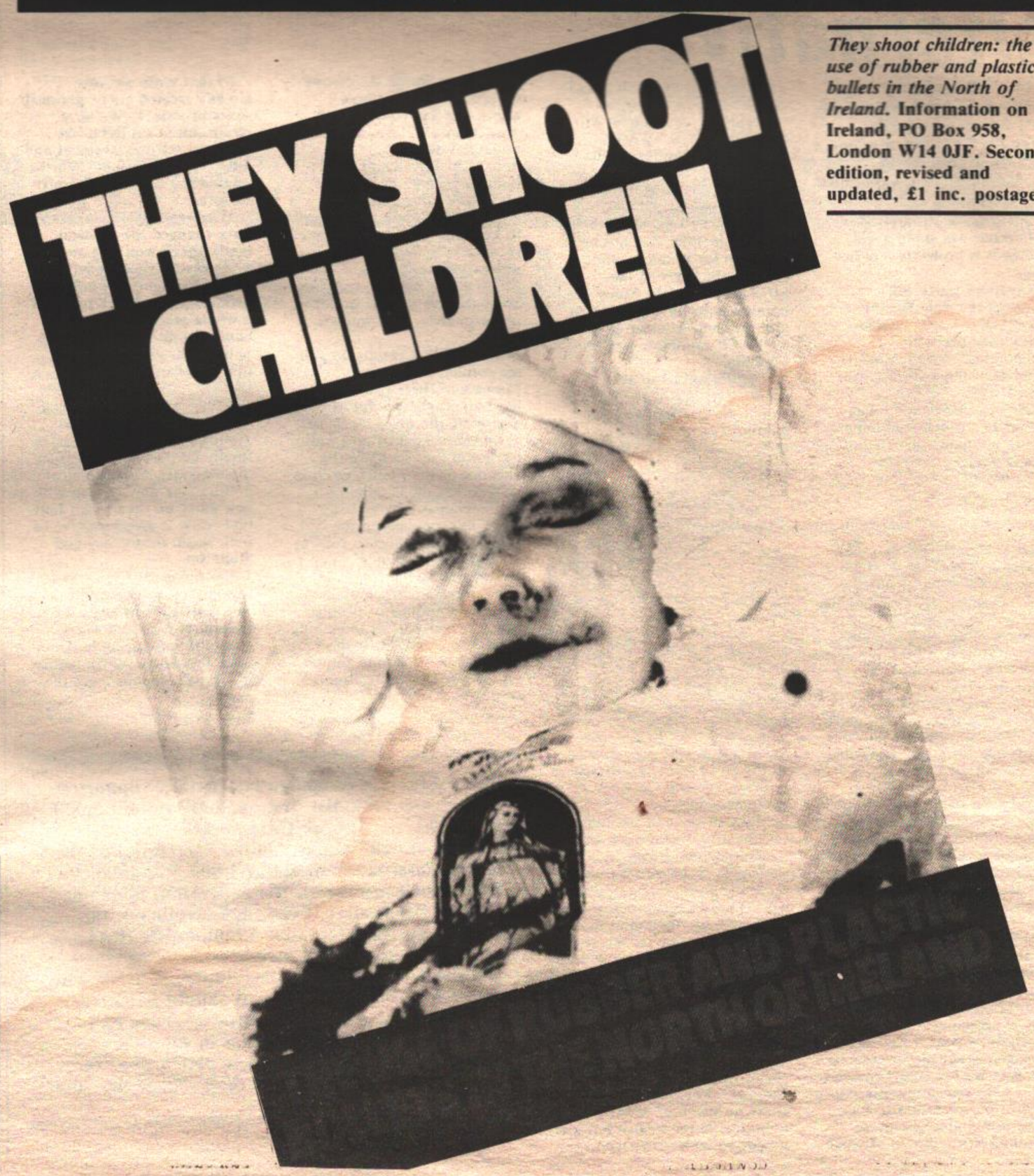
He answers weach of the familiar objections to egalitarianism in turn, and in so doing provides useful ammunition for socialists arguing on the doorstep (or, increasingly, with the born again "individualists" in the Labour Party).

Baker has designed his text for ready reference and ease of use. The arguments for equality he makes are not based on Marxist premises (although they are certainly compatible with Marxism) and perhaps might be defined as a successful attempt to do the sort of thing the likes of Blunkett and Hattersley claim they want to do — without ever producing the goods.

## Book review

# THEY SHOOT CHILDREN

*They shoot children: the use of rubber and plastic bullets in the North of Ireland.* **Information on Ireland, PO Box 958, London W14 0JF. Second edition, revised and updated, £1 inc. postage.**




## Of Presidents & Present Dangers

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International Briefing

# Amid discussion, controversy, news and planning:

# *CNA revs up for action!*

**The Campaign for Non-Alignment's first annual conference kicked off with a rallying call from Tony Benn and ended with one from Jeremy Corbyn — and was considered a success by most of the participants.**

This was probably the first campaign to try to link arguments about Third World debt, Third World liberation movements, and the need to challenge nuclear weapons, NATO, and Cold War ideologies.

**By BEN LOWE**

The campaign was set up nearly two years ago, in the wake of the Libya bombings to challenge Britain's foreign policy, develop a new progressive alternative to it, and set about securing Britain's withdrawal from NATO.

It was evident from the range of delegates present that the campaign reflected a general feeling among many activists that CND had failed to respond to the grass roots desire for a campaign against NATO, and that it was time for a new initiative.

Much of the energy in the new campaign comes from the Cruise resistance and anti-bases movement, which has long had an ambiguous relationship with CND, and which has always been actively opposed to NATO and the US presence in Britain.

Nonetheless, several Greenham and Cruisewatch women now occupy influential positions inside CND, which has begun to switch its attention to NATO in response to strong pressure at the last Conference and a rapidly changing international situation.

The second day of the conference was enlivened by contributions from two key parts of the world. Rita Jacaman, a Palestinian activist from the West Bank, gave a graphic and moving account of the recent uprisings, and was ably backed by Linda Clair of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

The importance of small islands in the Pacific such as Palau was highlighted by Bridget and Zohl from Women Campaigning for an Independent Nuclear-Free Pacific.

Palau, which developed the world's first anti-nuclear constitution, is now fighting American attempts to install a base — as a fallback in case of possible adverse developments in the Philippines — where the US has its main Pacific nuclear bases.

Jeremy Corbyn provided an excellent summary of the debt crisis and its implications, while John Palmer and Oliver Macdonald caused great controversy by suggesting a pan-European superstate was the only viable alternative to a Europe divided between East and West and dominated by the superpowers.

It was a fascinating discussion, with important questions such as the future of Germany in a united Europe, and the question of how to relate to the new Soviet Union outside a Cold War context being posed.

The CNA will now begin organising an international conference of anti-NATO groups and forces. Spanish comrades attending the conference were enthusiastic about this idea, while also providing an inspiring summary of anti-NATO activities in Spain over six years.

There will be anti-bases activities, supported by CNA, following the ratification of the INF treaty, and a major demonstration against the first Cruise convoy to leave Greenham on an exercise following the signing of the treaty (details from Cruise Resistance, CND office, 13 Paton Street, Manchester M1 2BA).

CNA delegates will also be attending the NATO Defence Ministers Conference (NATO Defence Planning Committee) in Brussels, March 2nd-3rd, to oppose any replacement of Cruise and Pershing II with new nuclear weapons.

The Campaign is now at last underway. With a new membership structure, and efforts now being made to boost the CNA's profile through publicity work and campaigning, it is well placed to make its mark over the coming year.

**Contact: Campaign for Non-Alignment, 129a Seven Sisters Rd, London N7 7QG.**

## Presidential elections in France

# New forces rejuvenate *alternative*

**France's Presidential elections in April will see at least one new and vital force on the political scene, mobilised around the candidacy of ex-Communist Pierre Juquin.**

**It is still not clear whether Mitterrand will stand again, though it is probable that he will.**

**Raymond Barre will represent the right for the conservative UDF. Jacques Chirac, the present "cohabiting" Prime Minister, plans to triumph for the neo-liberal RPR.**

**The extreme-right Le Pen has made a substantial impact. So far, campaign debate has been dominated by these personalities rather than political issues.**

**On the left, Pierre Juquin is now leading an important "alternative" movement of ex-communists, young people, and much of the French far left.**

**Juquin, who was the official spokesperson of the Communist Party before being expelled in 1986, has not been afraid to break many taboos close to the heart of the official French left. Some opinion polls have even given him the same number of votes as the CP candidate Andre Lajoinie.**

***Briefing* talked to Jean-Marc, secretary of the Parisian committee campaigning for Juquin. Jean-Marc is a member of the small but influential PSU (Parti Socialiste Unifie).**

***Briefing:* Two years ago the French "Left of the Left" was almost totally marginalised. You yourself were saying that we faced extinction. What's changed since then?**
*Jean Marc:* Obviously the most important events are the students' revolt and the train drivers' strike in the Winter of 1986. These were to first social movements in France since the 1970s that have had any effect on society as a whole.

When Pierre Juquin was thrown out of the Communist Party he went directly to the people who had been involved in these actions. The entire left was revitalised. After years in the desert something had finally "moved"!

***Briefing:* What direct relation do these new forces have to Pierre Juquin's Presidential campaign?**
*Jean-Marc:* We have about 15,000 people who are officially organised in committees for Juquin. Only a minority are actually members of any formal political group.

Most of our supporters are to be found amongst those who had first come to activism through the students' and train drivers' movements. You'd be surprised at how many of them have never been involved before.

***Briefing:* What kind of politics are you campaigning for?**
*Jean-Marc:* We represent a real alternative to the Socialist Party's increasingly right-wing stand, and the Communists' sectarianism. We are opposed to the government's austerity policies, and are for workers' self-management.

Many of the ex-Communist "renovators" who work with us are anxious to take up ecological issues and a truly anti-imperialist foreign policy. They want to break out of the straightjacket of Stalinism.

Many of us see ourselves as a French version of the German "Greens", though we are much more clearly rooted in the socialist left, and the "official" French ecologists *les Verts* are standing a candidate against us in the elections.

***Briefing:* Where does Juquin stand on defence? Many militants on the British left are unable to understand why France has not produced any substantial disarmament movement in recent years?**
*Jean-Marc:* We are for total, unilateral nuclear disarmament. This in itself is quite something in France's prevailing atmosphere.

Even the Communists want to keep the "Force de Frappe" (France's "independent" nuclear "deterrent"). Mitterrand's role in promoting an aggressive nuclear policy is, unfortunately, well known.

***Briefing:* What results do you see coming from this campaign? Have you really been able to break out of the ghetto of the old French left?**
*Jean-Marc:* First of all I must warn you that such are the vagaries of the French election system that the Communists and Socialists may actually block us from getting the necessary signatures to present Juquin as a candidate. They are quite afraid of us!

We have literally mobilised tens of thousands of people. Many perceive us as something quite new. Some polls show that they can't situate Juquin on the normal "Left/Right" spectrum at all.

**In that sense we have already created a new political space in France. We have reintroduced subjects, like workers' self-management and nuclear disarmament, that the established Left would prefer to forget.**

**Whatever the outcome we have changed the political landscape. I won't lie and pretend that we have left our years of infighting wholly behind. But the very fact that a whole new generation has come to our "alternative" politics has altered the way that we work.**

***Briefing:* So you are basically optimistic?**
*Jean-Marc:* Totally. We have finally been able to construct the basis of another kind of politics. We may end up with a new party on the French Left that really is an alternative to both social democracy and Stalinism.

I'm doing all I can and I find myself working with Trotskyists, ex-Maoists, ex-Communists, and a whole group of young people that have never been active before. It's quite a change from the past!

**Pierre Juquin's campaign is officially supported by the ex-communist "renovators" (about 3,000 militants), the League Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR, United Secretariat of the Fourth International, about 1,000 militants), the PSU (1,000 members), the Federation pour une Gauche Alternative (FGA, 400 members), the Parti pour une alternative Communiste (PAC, ex-Maoist, about 300 members).**

**This of course leaves over 10,000 activists who have no formal affiliation. It should be noted that all of these organisations except the ex-Communists standing together in the 1986 legislative elections on a single platform as the "Alternative" received less than 1% of the vote.**

## Colombia

# United response to repression

**The National Unity Committee (CNU) of Colombia was founded on April 2nd 1987 at a Congress of Unity attended by 4,500 delegates representing around 1,500 social and political organisations. It is now appealing for support from the international community.**

The CNU involves progressive forces which propose a democratic solution to Colombia's crisis. Today the question of the right to life and of respect for basic human rights is critical.

In response to the latest wave of assassinations, disappearances, attacks on trade union and political activists, both local and national (over 1,000 are murdered each year), the Hector Abad Gomez International Campaign against repression has been launched.

The CNU fully supports this campaign and urges the British labour movement to circulate information on the repression carried out by para-military and government forces. It also asks for messages of protest to be sent to the Colombian government demanding an official explanation for the systematic violation of Human Rights.

**MODEL RESOLUTION**

This ..... agrees to circulate to the members information on human rights abuses and attacks on democratic rights in Colombia. We note the alarming rise in paramilitary activity documented by organisations such as Amnesty International and the Colombian Committee for Human Rights.

We note also the murders of Hector Abad Gomez, Liberal Party candidate and President of the Human Rights Committee of the province of Antioquia, Jaime Pardo Leal, leaders of the Party Unidad Patriotica (in opposition), and the death threats against the executive of the trade union confederation (the CUT) and against its President, Jorge Carrillo Rojas.

This ..... agrees to send a message of protest to the government of President Virgilio Barco Vargas condemning the killings of trade union, peasant and political activists, calling for an explanation for the disappearances, and calling for the dismantling by the government of the para-military forces which currently operate with impunity.

This ..... suggests that our MP/MEP lodges a similar protest with the Government of Colombia.

Colombian Embassy: 3 Hans Crescent, London SW1.
Affiliate:
Colombian Solidarity Committee, Priory House, Kingsgate Place, London NW6.
Colombian Committee for Human Rights, 29 Islington Park St., London N1.
Correspondence to: National Unity Committee of Colombia, Ap. Aerea 34925 Bogota, Colombia.

# How Kinnock *almost* changed his spots...

**At first it looked like our Leader's latest adventure in international statesmanship might for once actually prove worth the effort.**

Kinnock's expressions of shock and anger at the treatment of Palestinians on the West Bank and in Gaza were a pleasant surprise to those of us who have tried for so many years to place this issue on the Labour Party's agenda.

Never mind that only a hermit could have been unaware of what's been going on in the Middle East in recent weeks — and that therefore "shock" could only be an artificially stimulated emotion.

Never mind that only a moral idiot could have failed to condemn the brutality of the Israeli army which has murdered some 65 Palestinians since the uprising began in December.

Never mind that the Tory Minister David Mellor had already attacked the Israelis and thus legitimised the political terrain in the eyes of the British media.

**By MARK SEATON**

Coming from Neil Kinnock, such a forthright statement of outrage at oppression is so rare that Party members could only be grateful.

Then he blew it. On leaving the region Kinnock praised the Israeli Labour Party (fraternal member of the so-called Socialist International), backed the Jordanian attempt to co-opt the Palestinian revolt, told the PLO to stop practising "terrorism", and opined that the Palestinians should settle for a "homeland" rather than an independent state.

Pity. *Briefing* was all set to publish a rare (unique?) laudatory article about the Leader. On any future visit to South Africa, can we expect Kinnock to embrace Inkatha and praise the Bantustan "solution" to Apartheid?

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# The arrest, imprisonment and trial of Tseko Nkoli

# "Committed to the rights of black and gay people.."

**PETER TATCHELL interviews gay anti-apartheid activist TSEKO SIMON NKOLI now on trial in South Africa charged with High Treason.**

**In South Africa, on June 30th last year, Tseko Nkoli was released on bail of 15,000 Rand after 33 months in prison.**

Nine of these months were spent in solitary confinement in conditions so horrendous that Nkoli was driven into acute depression and had to be temporarily transferred to Johannesburg Psychiatric Hospital.

Speaking about his release on bail, Nkoli says: "It is only semi-freedom. My movements are severely restricted. The trial still continues and I could face execution if found guilty."

The bail conditions imposed on Nkoli are extreme. In addition to being required to attend the court every day (which prevents him from earning an income), Nkoli has had to surrender his passport and must report twice daily to the police.

He is banned from visiting the Vaal region where his family live, and he is forbidden to attend political meetings or issue political statements.

He cannot even attend the funerals of friends murdered by the security forces if there is any likelihood of political banners being displayed or political speeches being made.

Together with 21 other people, collectively known as the Delmas 22, 29-year-old Nkoli was charged with High Treason following the mass protests in the black townships of the Vaal region, south west of Johannesburg, in 1983 and 1984.

He also faces charges of subversion, terrorism, murder, and furthering the aims of the outlawed African National Congress.

The Delmas 22 trial is the most important trial in South Africa since Nelson Mandela and other ANC leaders were gaoled in the early 60s. In addition to Nkoli, the 22 defendants include leaders of the main legal anti-apartheid organisations, the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO).

The trial has dragged on for over two years. Despite the acquittal of three defendants, it is expected to last at least another year. The remaining 19, including Nkoli, could face death sentences if convicted.

**"Lesbian and gay rights cannot be separated from other human rights. They are part of the wider struggle for liberation in South Africa...**
**"It is largely because of the consistent support of the lesbian and gay movement that I survived all the terrible days and nights I spent in prison."**
***Tseko Simon Nkoli*, October 1987**

Before his arrest, Nkoli worked in the Education Support Progamme run by the South African Institute of Race Relations. Previously, he had been active in the Young Christian Students during the Soweto uprising of 1976 and was general secretary of the Vaal branch of the now-banned Congress of South African Students from 1980-81.

After leaving college, Nkoli got involved with UDF-affiliated organisations such as the Detainees Support Committee which aids political prisoners and their families. He also became active in the Gay Association of South Africa as the leader of the Saturday Group, which was established to unite black and white gays and forge a multi-racial gay political movement.

## Arrest

Nkoli's arrest on September 23rd 1984, while attempting to attend the funeral of a close friend, Joseph Sithole, who was murdered by the security forces took him completely by surprise: "I had no idea the police were looking for me. I never figured that I would be arrested — let alone charged with High Treason along with leaders of the UDF and AZAPO."

The prosecution alleges that Nkoli attended the inaugural meeting of the anti-apartheid Vaal Civic Association in October 1983 and that speaking on behalf of the banned student organisation, COSAS, he incited people to hatred and violence against the government-approved community councillors.

Nkoli denies this: "I didn't attend that meeting. In fact, on that day my lover had a car accident and I was in Johannesburg with him."

Additionally, the prosecution claims that during the riots in September 1984 Nkoli was seen at the home of a community councillor who was later found murdered and that he took part in a "stay away" and protest march against rent increases knowing that violence was planned by the demonstrators.

Nkoli's account is different: "All I did was join the march to support the people of the Vaal townships. I grew up in that area and my family still live there. I wanted to show solidarity with their opposition to the government-imposed rent rises which the people cannot afford. As for the other allegations against me, they are all false."

## Conditions

Conditions in Pretoria Central Prison and Modderbee Prison, where Nkoli has spent most of his time since being arrested, are severe: "We were not allowed to have food parcels and visits from our families and lovers were refused. Our letters and books were censored and we could only read the pro-government *Citizen* newspaper."

## Tension

Unfortunately, there has been considerable tension between Nkoli and some of his co-accused: "Several did not want to associate with me because I am gay. Occasionally, they would utter things about AIDS and pass anti-gay remarks. But others, especially Gcina Malindi and Johnny Mokoena, have been very supportive about my gayness and they have now become my close friends."




*Thousands of anti-apartheid campaigners went on A-A's major demo last year: Tseko Nkoli was arrested for going on a protest demo in South Africa.*

Nkoli is angry at the way the Gay Association of South Africa has ignored his plight: "I have had no support from GASA since the moment of my arrest, through all the interrogations and imprisonment, and during the trial itself. Even after my release on bail, they have not contacted me or offered to help."

## Support

Together with his other co-defendants, Nkoli has, however, received constant support from Winnie Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu: "They know I am gay and both of them have expressed their solidarity and visited me, and my fellow accused, during the trial. I used to work with Winnie's daughter, Zindzi, and we are good friends. Archbishop Tutu has given me his blessing and while I was in prison he appointed a chaplain to the lesbian and gay community, Fr. Don Dowie, who regularly came to visit me."

What of the future? "With the trial result still hanging over my head, it is very uncertain. For the time being, given the restrictive bail conditions, I intend to do what I can for the lesbian and gay community by working to unite people of all colours, doing advice and counselling work, and visiting isolated gay people in hospitals, prisons, and homes for the elderly.

"Whatever happens in the coming months, I shall remain committed to the human rights of black and gay people. The struggle for lesbian and gay rights is an inseparable part of the struggle for the human rights of all South Africans."

# US Presidential elections

# The Empire strikes back

**Pick up any quality newspaper nowadays and you are bound to find the "overseas news" dominated by US politics.**

**Whilst the Presidential election is not until November of this year, the complex system of caucuses and primaries that leads up to the selection of the candidates of the two major parties is currently in full swing.**

For many on the British left, the whole process is seen as little more than a circus, with its personality politics and "show-biz" elements.

But, just four months after the Stock Market Crash of '87, we need to take the whole affair a little more seriously.

## Distorted

The British press has traditionally distorted our picture of US politics by grafting the ideological configuration of the British two-party system on to US Democrats and Republicans.

In reality, neither of the US parties can truly be considered to be a national party; they are more like confederations which only really cohere during presidential elections. The component part of these confederations, the city and state parties, have but one aim — to supply candidates for elections and to secure their election.

In such a system, ideology plays very little part. Whilst it is true to say that big business favours the Republicans and trade unionists the Democrats, it is completely wrong to imagine that the Democrats are an American "Labour" Party.

**By Mark Cole**
**University of York**
**Labour Club**

Organisationally, historically, and politically, the US Democrats cannot be compared to European social democratic or Labour Parties.

Lack of ideology makes both Democrats and Republicans remarkably broad churches. The Democratic Party embraces both Rooseveltian New Dealers and reactionary Southerners. On the Republican side, the current field runs the gamut from Reagan's loyal Vice President George Bush (who seems to have a relationship with the truth not unlike that enjoyed by Kurt Waldheim) through to Rev. Pat Robertson, a "James Anderton in mufti" with an unpleasant line on the inevitability (and imminence) of nuclear Armageddon.

Among the Democrats, only Paul Simon, who sells himself as an unreconstructed New Dealer, replete with anachronistic image, and Jesse Jackson, with his Rainbow Coalition, stand out in a field of mediocre careerists.

## Emerged

One of them, Dick Gephardt, has emerged from the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries with a real shot at the nomination, and deserves to be inspected more closely.

Gephardt, according to a recent report in *The Observer*, "...used to be a 'moderate' (i.e. right wing) Democrat. He opposed abortion and was ambiguous about the Contra war. Now his handlers have pushed him towards a blend of left wingery and xenophoic populism."

## Protectionism

The latter manifests itself in his crude calls for US trade protectionism. Indeed, he is the author of an amendment to a "Trade Bill" which has just restarted its journey through the labyrinths of Congress. His amendment would place special tariffs or sanctions on countries that run trade surpluses with the US.

We need to see this protectionism in the context of the '87 Stock Market Crash. Back in November of last year I wrote in *Briefing* no. 51 that "...those who foresee the crash resulting in increased militarism, increased interstate rivalry and economic autharchy neglect the internationalisation of capital that has occured over the last 40 or so years."

Whilst that remains true, the resurgence of protectionism in the US, which Gephardt's electoral success embodies, does make the advent of increasingly belligerent trade blocs in the world economy more likely.

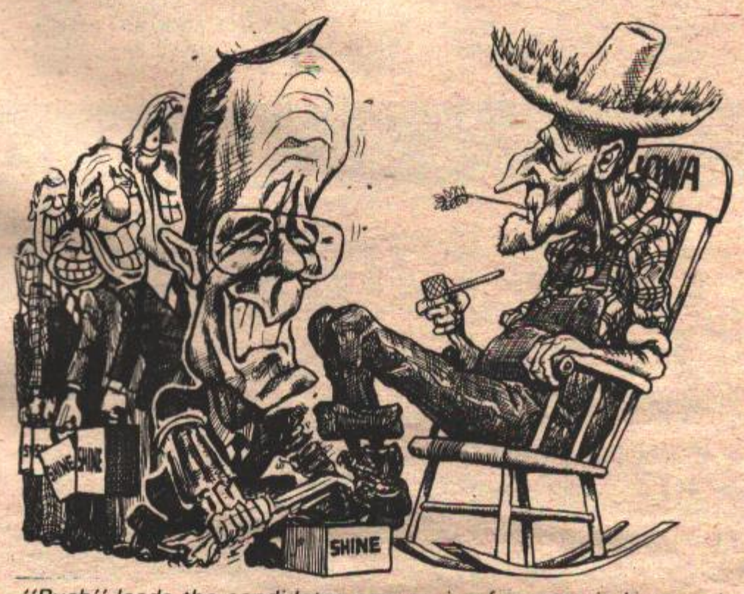
## Capitalist

Shortly after the Crash, the *Economist* spelt out clearly to the capitalist governments what must be done to avoid a 1929-style slump.

Demand must be maintained by continued central bank intervention. The US budget deficit must be reduced (which has happened) and West Germany and Japan must "loosen" their economies (which has not). The Louvre Accord on the world's currencies must be modified. And, lastly, protectionism must be discouraged.

## Excitement

The effects of the Crash of '87 are actually yet to be felt. After the initial excitement and panic we have entered a period of uneasy calm in which the capitalist governments consider their options.




*"Bush" leads the candidates canvassing for votes in Iowa... the American way.*

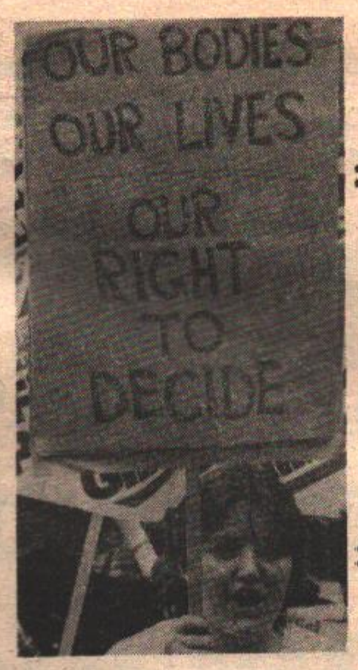
The US has moved to reduce its budget deficit and to increase taxation, but on their own these measures are simply not enough. The Japanese and West German economies need to assume the mantle of responsibility for keeping up the level of world demand by putting to use their current trade surpluses.

Without this, the adjustments in the US economy will simply lead, as Stuart Holland has argued, to a fall in exports to the US which could drastically affect Latin American growth and thereby give a new urgency to the debt crisis.

Gephardt's protectionism may be attractive to US workers whose high but fragile standard of living is threatened in the current economic climate, but it is not the way to encourage the European and Asian economies to "open up".

It is, instead, a recipe for increasing international tension and its attendant dangers.

LABOUR BRIEFING




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## Interview with Sharon Atkin

# How Black women are fighting Alton

**For the last few months, despite being witch-hunted by Labour's NEC (her case will be heard by the National Constitutional Committee on March 3rd), SHARON ATKIN has been campaigning up and down the country against David Alton's anti-abortion bill.**

**JUDITH ARKWRIGHT spoke to her about why she is fighting the Bill and how she views the role of Black women in the pro-choice movement.**

**Tell us about your own personal experiences and how they have influenced you.**

I have had two terminations, the first when I was 19. I already had a son, who was six months old, my marriage had broken up, and I was living in rented accommodation.

I went to my GP when I was six weeks pregnant. He was a Catholic and would not help.

I was living in Berkshire, far away from friends and relatives, and had no idea where to turn next. There were not many advice services available and what few there were were not well advertised.

### Situation

In that situation you kind of will yourself not to be pregnant. I didn't look pregnant — even late on. So time drifted on.

Around Christmas I was staying with my grandparents and I went to their GP, and told him I was three months pregnant — although I must have been about seven months by this time. He examined me and for some reason or another failed to notice this.

Eventually he referred me to the hospital. I remember going there and having a lot of students prodding me about and saying, yes, I was about 12 to 14 weeks pregnant. Then I had the X-ray and they found I was 29 weeks!

### Possible

Of course, they said I couldn't have the abortion. I felt like killing myself. I had no income and no prospects. They had found a possible cyst and wanted to operate. They were about to give me the pre-med for this when suddenly they came up with the proposal that if I was prepared to undergo sterilisation, they were prepared to break the law and perform the abortion. I agreed.

The consultant in charge explained to me that the operation would be like a caesarian. A woman doctor who was there realised what was being proposed and obejcted that it was unethical.

### Consultant

The consultant replied that there were a lot of young Black women like myself having children without thinking of the consequences and it was his job to stop this.

In the event they performed the abortion and not the sterilisation because there had been other complications and the sterilisation was deemed unnecessary.

When I came round from surgery there were relatives and a priest gazing at me. I thought it was the end! It was odd to have a priest because on the form I had written I was an atheist!

### Obstetrics

After that I became a nurse and did my stint in obstetrics, midwifery, and gynaecology. I came across women in a similar situation to myself. I saw pregnant young girls of 14 and 15. I saw one consultant inject wax into a 13 year-old to induce an abortion. He used this method as a kind of punishment.

I heard a consultant suggest sterilisation for a 15 year-old in exchange for termination.

Five years later I became pregnant again even though they told me I wouldn't. I went to King Edwards' Hospital in Ealing. I was only eight weeks pregnant and this time I was sterilised.

**All these experiences of consultants' attitudes — were they overtly racist or were they directed towards young working class women in general?**

Both. They don't like doing terminations. They try to make you feel guilty. They see terminations as a punishment, a way of warning you not to do anything foolish again. But with the sterilisation — I only ever saw that offered to young Black women.

**It has been suggested that because of their different experiences, Black women don't have the same interest as white women in fighting something like the Alton Bill. What's your view?**

First, the experience of Black women in other countries, for example in South Africa, is very different. Their lack of control over fertility takes a different form and therefore their attitudes to abortion will be different.

### Differences

Also, you have to take religion and cultural differences into account. Rastafarian women are against abortion.

The point is that Black women's experiences in this country are different. Many have terminations, but their experiences are so negative they may not be keen to preserve the status quo.

It doesn't mean that something like the Alton Bill doesn't affect them or concern them. Proportionately, you saw more Black women forced into the backstreets for abortions before 1967.

### Communities

Within the Black communities the family is sometimes a strong unit and where there is a religious background (Muslim or Pentecostal), Black women will often not always be so visible on the issue.

Women's Sections and other organisations tend to reflect the concerns of white middle class women. A lot of campaigns tend to be set up by political activists. It's the old, old problem about the relationship between these people and Black and working class women.

### Changing

Mind you, things are changing. I have been asked by Black women in Nottingham to speak to a group of them who want to set up a Black Women's Section in the Labour Party.

**So though our interests are the same, our priorities and concerns may be different. How, then, can unity be achieved?**

Black women may come to FAB meetings, but organising for ourselves is the main way. I spend a lot of time going round the country speaking on Alton, but I don't go along to FAB, although I might do.

I'm involved in Women for Socialism, and I see that as an umbrella within which Black women can organise separately.

**What mistakes, if any, has the pro-choice movement made?**

I think FAB and others should have called for a three line whip on Labour MPs from the beginning. We should have made a lot more of this.

### Disciplined

Someone like Canavan who's in the Campaign Group and voted for Alton should be disciplined. Women are too much on the defensive sometimes. They don't expect enough.

I'm not a great believer in single-issue campaigns. You dissipate your efforts into one thing and you let men off the hook. In those types of campaigns you get the activists. More work needs to be done in the trade unions. The existence of FAB groups can sometimes give them an excuse for doing nothing.

**How do you see the relationship between Black women and the pro-choice movement developing?**

Obviously, the publicity, the speakers, the content of speeches should be geared towards Black women.

But if this is to be developed it must also be done by Black women through their own organisations. Some may come to FAB or NAC, but by and large they will do it first through these organisations.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

*Sharon Atkin, speaking at the Chesterfield Conference which saw the first meeting of Women For Socialism.*

## Campaign Update

# FAB turns its fire on fifty-five Labour absentees

**Support for the March 19th Fight the Alton Bill demonstration is growing steadily — particularly in the labour movement.**

**Fifteen national trade unions as well as the TUC are sponsoring the event.**

NALGO is making a big contribution to the publicity and mobilisation.

The NUT executive, who issued a circular in January banning debate on FAB in local associations, has been forced to withdraw it after protests from rank and file members.

The Labour Party NEC has also agreed to sponsor the event and contribute to the costs. The Party's Women's Officer, Anne Wilkinson, is writing to all Women's Sections asking them to remind Labour MPs of Party policy — which commits members to oppose all restrictions on abortion rights, including a time limit reduction to 24 weeks.

**By Valerie Coultas**
**Vauxhall CLP**

In Parliament, committee discussions seem to be causing David Alton some problems. He has complained of filibustering by MPs opposed to his Bill, and wants a motion passed to speed up the committee process. Pro-choice activists in FAB have decided to target the 55 Labour MPs who failed to vote against Alton's Bill in the second reading.

The question of the "conscience vote" has been a key one for the pro-choice movement over the last two decades.

The Labour Abortion Rights Campaign has been at the forefront of campaigning to ensure that Labour MPs follow Party policy. LARC has argued that the right of millions of women to control their bodies takes precedence over the rights of male MPs to exercise their "consciences".

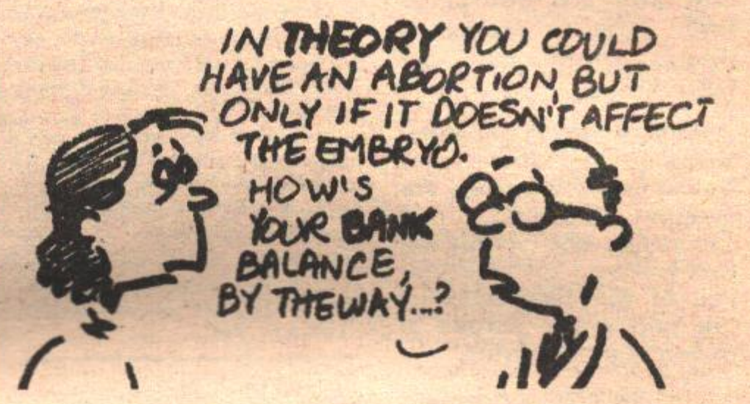
At the 1985 Party Conference, women secured a victory on this issue only to be thwarted one year later by an NEC statement which qualified that vote.

The Labour Women's Action Committee, at first hesitant on the call for a 3-line whip on the Alton Bill, has now added its voice to those calling on MPs to abide by labour movement decisions on this issue.

FAB has requested a meeting with the Parliamentary Labour Party. Local FAB groups will be mounting campaigns in each of the 55 constituencies to put maximum pressure on these male renegades.

Concerted action against the 55 can only add to the problems David Alton already faces in the Parliamentary Committee now considering his Bill!

**DEMONSTRATE!**
**March 19th**
**Assemble 12 noon,**
**Hyde Park**




## LEEDS FAB

**Following the successful mobilisation of trade unions for a picket of Alton, Leeds Trades Council together with Leeds FAB, is organising a public meeting to mobilise local unions for the national demonstration on March 19th.**

**A focus for activity in Leeds will be West Leeds Labour MP John Battle, who refused to tell Leeds FAB how he was going to vote in the run up to the Second Reading. Then, defying both Labour Party Conference and his own Constituency Labour Party's policy, he voted for the Bill.**

**Leeds FAB and pro-choice activists in his constituency will be working hard to make him accountable to women at the Third Reading.**

***Sue Owen*, Leeds North East CLP**

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