LABOUR BRIEFING
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40p

BRITISH TERRORIST TROOPS

OUT OF IRELAND!

★ Unarmed, undefended, untried, three IRA volunteers are gunned in the back by the SAS; an example of a well-known SAS "understanding" — take no prisoners.

By CHRIS KNIGHT



Soldiers after death of Hunger Striker Paisy O'Hara.

PHOTO: Eamonn O'Dwyer (Reuter)

★ Unarmed, silent, dignified, at the funeral of these three victims, a crowd of 2,000 mourners is attacked with bullets and hand-grenades. Bodies fall within yards of the coffins. Nothing can persuade the Nationalist community that this savage rampage is unconnected with the "security forces" themselves.

★ As if in stunning confirmation of this suspicion, two members of these same "security forces" drive a car at 40mph along a pavement towards mourners carrying the coffin of a victim of the earlier rampage. It is only after a shot was fired from inside the car that the occupants are summarily executed by a now-exasperated, frightened and angry crowd.

★ Margaret Thatcher, Neil Kinnock, and Britain's imperialist gutter-press continue to denounce "terrorism" in general and the IRA in particular. This rounds off a two-month period in which yet again a British soldier shoots dead an unarmed civilian at a check-point, when the Attorney General announces that known murderers and law-breakers within the RUC are not to be prosecuted, and when the British Army welcomes back into its ranks a convicted murderer who had shot dead a Catholic youth — in the back.

★ As *Briefing* goes to press, we must fear the horror will soon claim new victims. We hope, however, that some good may yet come of these events. Many workers — not all of them in Ireland may begin realising at last that this is war. Shocking as scenes on our television screnes were, the deaths of the two British soldiers outside St Agnes's church were inevitable under the circumstances. For the unarmed Republican mourners who believed they were under attack, there was courage and justice in siezing these men's guns and using them to deal with "terrorism" as the British do. Through all the distributions of the media we must stand firm in showing who the real terrorists in Ireland are.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Campaign Round-up/Home News

The ABC of stopping the Clause

A is for Autonomy and April 8th, 25th & 30th.
B is for Backing it and Building them.
C is for Co-operative and Constructive Heterosexual *support* and Contacting your Trade Union, Trades Council, Women's Section, Labour Party, Young Socialists.

As Clause 28* completes its progress through Parliament, the Stop the Clause campaign is coming under pressure for its resolute commitment to lesbian and gay autonomy.

The campaign is now involved in organising what will be the largest series of lesbian and gay rights events this country has ever seen — including the largest ever show of labour movement support.

By Sarah Roelofs
Islington North CLP

Lesbian and gay autonomy has been one of the Stop the Clause campaign's few inflexible principles — in order to ensure that the campaign was truly led by lesbians and gay men.

In practice this has meant that the weekly co-ordinating meetings are open to lesbians and gay men only.

Heterosexual support, especially from the labour movement, has always been seen as essential and open meetings have been organised to facilitate heterosexual involvement. But the principle of lesbians and gay men leading the campaign politically was doubly important given our past experience of being swamped by competing groups, all eager to tell lesbians and gay men what to do.

Whether this "advice" was well intentioned or not, it has been experienced as aggressive and dogmatic, often insensitive, and irrelevant to the reality of lesbians' and gay men's lives.

The campaign's insistence on lesbian and gay only meetings has incurred the wrath, hostility, suspicion, or at best, irritation of some heterosexuals or heterosexual-dominated groups. It is falsely counterposed to building a broad campaign, because it is seen as excluding or alienating heterosexuals.

Alternatively, there has been a wounded, quizical attitude of "but we're supportive and we want to help, but you won't let us."

What underlies this debate is a major *political* difference. Autonomy is a *political* concept; it strengthens oppressed groups and empowers them to organise themselves politically. As such it is the precise opposite of the "devisive" practice that it is sometimes claimed to be.

Autonomy literally means *self-government*. The ability to be self-governing is constantly denied to women, to lesbians, to gay men, to Black people, to the Irish, to those with disabilities — not to mention the working class.

The right to autonomy was a fundamental and hard-won principle of the Women's Liberation Movement. Women realised that the ability to conduct their own affairs gave them a political power previously unheard of. Needless to say, men didn't like it and whinged about being excluded.

Autonomy has often been confused — sometimes deliberately — with separatism. Separatism is a policy of total physical, organisational and political disconnection — not at all the same thing as a policy of self-government.

On the other hand, there are also those who make much of their support for women's autonomy, lesbian and gay autonomy, and then use this as an excuse for not getting involved in their campaigns.

That attitude only helps to keep oppressed groups politically ghettoised — thus re-enforcing the arguments of those opposed to autonomy in the first place! Meanwhile those who nominally support autonomy are off somewhere else and cannot be found when lesbians and gay men request support for mass mobilisations...

We, lesbians and gay men, are politely requesting *mass* heterosexual support for the initiatives that we have planned over the next couple of months.

We *need* that support. Clause 28 will be getting the Royal Assent in April — and will be law by June. The only way to stop lesbians and gay men becoming intolerably suppressed is for heterosexual people to show in practice that they believe lesbians' and gay men's lives to be as *equally valid* as their own.

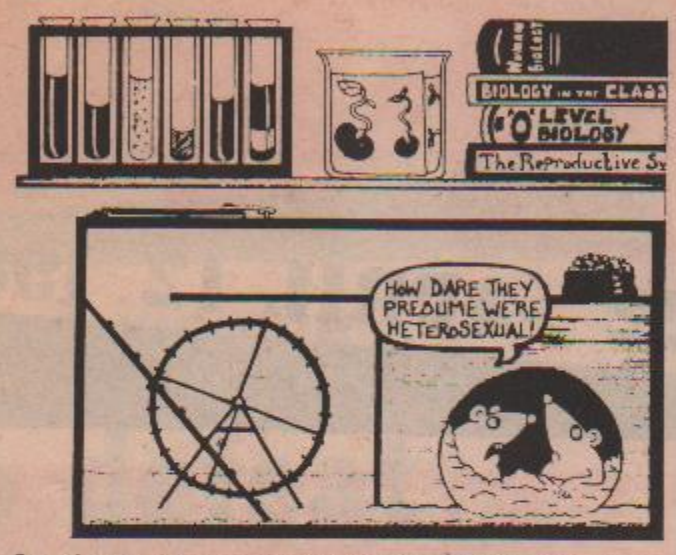
In particular, we need the whole breadth of the labour movement turning out in support of lesbians and gays. There are over 600 Constituency Labour Parties in the country and *only three* banners were seen on the February 20th demonstration.

Trade union support is slowly increasing, but much more is needed for the major national demonstration on April 30th.

Will your trade union be there? Have your CLP officers been mandated to take the CLP banner on the demo? Does the CLP *have* a banner??

Has your Women's Section arranged a time and place to meet so women can travel down together? Have you contacted your Trades Council?

*The House of Commons defeated a Lords amendment to keep contract compliance for those with disabilities, resulting in Clause 29 dropping back to 28!



One of a set of 8 postcards produced in support of the Stop the Clause campaign. Available from good bookshops or from Cath Tate, PO Box 647, London SW2 4JX at £2 the set (cheques payable to Cath Tate).

Civil rights

A one-day conference held on March 12th at the Haringey Black Women's Centre launched the manifesto of the Movement for Civil Rights and Justice.

The Manifesto, produced by the Broadwater Farm Youth Association, Broadwater Farm Residents Association, and the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, was born from the struggle of the Broadwater Farm community over the two and a half years since the events of October 1985.

By Helen Peters
Haringey Labour Briefing

The conference was introduced by speakers from the Broadwater Farm Youth Association, Residents Association, and Defence Campaign, who expressed the determination of the community to fight for a decent standard of living and to retain the substantial gains made in job creation, environmental improvement and reduction of the crime rate.

Those who have fought over the years for these gains are clearly determined not to stand by and see them undermined by the savage cuts being carried out by Haringey's Labour Council.

The fragile trust and co-operation which had been built between the Labour administration and the Farm has been dealt a heavy blow, leaving the community more determined than ever to fight its own battles and rely on its own strength.

In the afternoon speakers were heard from the ANC, the Nigerian Organisation of Women, the Catholic Association for Racial Justice, and the Hideaway Youth Project from Moss Side, Manchester, who attended with a strong contingent.

Many issues confronting black people were addressed: the impossibility of black people taking power through the existing system, attitudes to black MPs, the refusal of the Labour Party to confront or even acknowledge its own racism, as evidenced by the treatment of Sharon Atkin, the systematic criminalisation of black people by the state.

It was made clear that the Labour Party apparatus, locally and nationally, has lost any remaining shreds of credibility as a defender of basic human rights for both black and white.

Martha Osamor, Chair of the Conference, in her concluding speech, pointed out that if the current attacks on basic rights (poll tax, Clause 28, the Education Bill, Welfare Benefits, and the NHS) are fought as individual issues, it will be impossible to win and people wil burn themselves out. A concerted campaign is needed and, if anything is to be achieved through the Labour Party, people need to come forward and struggle for positions and power within it.

Broadwater Farm has become an example of what one community can achieve, and has initiated the Movement for Civil Rights and Justice to broaden and build on its achievements, and to unite others in its cause to create:

"... a better, more just and genuinely caring society where everyone may have genuine love for one another regardless of their colour, economic status, age, sex or creed and can walk freely in the streets of Britain." *(Manifesto of the Movement for Civil Rights and Justice)*

For more information contact Broadwater Farm Youth Association, Tangmere House, Broadwater Farm, London N17.

FAB

Winning the battle against Alton

The huge success of the March 19th demonstration against David Alton's attempt to restrict abortion rights shows the potential that exists to defeat the Bill.

However, too often people have been mobilised against Alton *despite* the Labour Party and TUC leadership, rather than because of them.

By Gill Lee
Labour Briefing Women

The TUC and the Labour Party NEC gave just £100 each to the costs of the demonstration while FAB with help from some individual unions, raised over £4,000 for the cost of placards alone.

Support from the rank and file of the unions and the Labour Party has been tremendous. But our labour movement "leaders" have distanced themselves from active opposition.

● Norman Willis, due to speak at the mass rally for the second reading, was absent having "discussions with Ronald Reagan".

● Neil Kinnock and the NEC have refused to take the most effective action to defeat the Bill — imposing a three line whip.

● Roy Hattersley, the Deputy Leader of the Party which adopted (by a vote of six million to 500,000!) policy in favour of a women's right to choose, has said women who died of back street abortions before the '67 Act "had a choice".

The Bill is due in Committee on March 23rd. As a one-line amendment it will be difficult to talk out. The campaign is now on to make sure that the Bill will be defeated at its third reading.

Abstained

Thirty-six Labour MPs voted for Alton at the second reading and 19 abstained. Five who voted against the Bill at that stage, and three of those who abstained, have since indicated they might be sympathetic to a reduction to 24 weeks, instead of Alton's proposal of 18 weeks.

Labour MPs who have indicated they will support an amendment for a reduced time limit, though they did not vote for the Bill at the second reading:

Roy Hattersley (Ab), Sparkbrook, against all abortion
Denis Howell (Ab), Birmingham Smallheath, Conscience vote
Llin Golding (A), Newcastle-under-Lyme, 24 weeks
George Galloway (Ab), Glasgow Hillhead, Reduction
Jack Straw (A), Blackburn, 24 weeks ("a majority vote can never cancel out the exercise of conscience by a minority")
Ann Taylor (A), Dewsbury, Consider 24
Peter Pike (A), Burnley, 24 weeks
Terry Lewis, Worsley, 26 or 24

Choose

These are just the Labour MPs who have come out in the open about it! We must force all Labour MPs to vote in favour of Party policy and a women's right to choose.

On April 16th, FAB is calling a meeting of local groups to discuss the way forward for the campaign. Part of that discussion must be about how Labour MPs, including those sponsored by unions which support FAB, can be dragged into line.

Roy Hattersley, in particular, must be challenged everywhere he speaks. As Deputy Leader of the "listening" party we have a message for him: *Keep your laws off our bodies!*

Socialist Conference

Policy Groups established

The national steering committee of the Socialist Conference has set up a number of policy groups with a brief to begin formulating socialist alternatives to Tory (and Kinnockite) nostrums. If you are interested in contributing or participating in any way, get in touch with the groups and their convenors via the Socialist Conference, 9 Poland St, London W1.

The Economy, *John Ure*
Democracy & the State, *Richard Kuper*
Black Liberation, *Narendra Makanji*
Women's Policy, *Women for Socialism*
Disabilities
International Policy, *Jeremy Beale*
Social Services, *Caroline Benn*
Green Socialism, *Andy Porter*
Lesbian & Gay, *Jamie Gough*
Media
Trade Unions

Regional and local Socialist Conference events are now being organised in Scotland, Birmingham and the West Midlands, the North-East, the South-West, Sheffield, Coventry, Brighton, North London and South London.

The national recall conference in Chesterfield will be held on June 11th-12th.

NUS

Back SSiN to beat the Stalinists!

In 1968 the NUS swung to the left, electing its first Labour student as president — someone called Jack Straw!

Twenty years on there is again the possibility of a move to the left in NUS. The confrontation is between two factions, both in the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS), the ruling Democratic Left (DL) and Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN).

By Simon Kemp and Ian McLarty

The Democratic Left have produced the likes of Phil Woolas, who was responsible for the Fabian pamphlet which originally suggested the dismantling of the Young Socialists (currently underway). Their basic influence was the small group calling itself Clause IV; they are affiliated to the LCC and are heavily tainted with Stalinism.

Stalinist influence has shown itself both in their conduct of elections and their decision to keep links with the "official" student organisation in Poland, rather than with Solidarnosc's student wing. Their attitude to both NOLS and NUS is bureaucratic in the extreme.

SSiN, supported by *Socialist Organiser*, emerged in 1982, and are seen by most (except the SWP) as a left-wing alternative to the DL. SSiN contains many people who do not share *Socialist Organiser's* politics and both independents and *Briefing* supporters are involved in it.

However, SSiN has adopted some of *SO's* more reactionary lines. The worst example of this is Palestine, where they argue for a twin-state "solution". At Christmas Conference they ignored Palestinian self-determination, going as far as to argue that Israel's Law of Return was not racist.

On autonomy for oppressed groups and self-determination for Ireland there are many within SSiN who do not hold progressive ideas.

The question is who should socialists support in NUS?

Issues such as poll tax and the Education Bill were debated at Christmas Conference. The DL solution included collaborating with the CBI, basing campaigns around pop stars and personalities, and condemning non-implementation. SSiN proposed non-implementation, no cuts, and linking effectively with trade unions.

At this time of Tory attacks on education generally, with students facing the additional threat of loans replacing grants, it is vital we have a campaigning NUS. This is something the DL have failed to deliver.

SSiN have proposed effective campaigns such as "Defend yourself — defend your union" and the full integration of part-time and Further Education students into NUS.

As a campaigning force, SSiN offer far more than the DL, but their views on autonomy and lack of true internationalism need to be challenged. Faced with the straight choice, however, the only possibility is SSiN.

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

A Question of Leadership

Despite the strikes and mass demonstrations of the past two months, Nigel Lawson presented his budget for the rich with supreme confidence. This was remarkable, not because it was a budget for the rich (no surprise there), but because it was so *brazenly* designed to benefit millionaires. No apologies offered — and none expected, any more.

The Tories are smug because they wager that the tens of thousands who demonstrated against them on March 5th will be let down by a useless and bankrupt leadership in the shape of Kinnock and Willis. This wager is more than a good bet — it's a sure thing.

Kinnock's idea of fighting the Tories is to go on being remorselessly respectable until the next general election. The only thing to cheer on Budget Day was the disruption in Parliament by Labour backbenchers, predictably condemned by Kinnock.

In light of Kinnock's failure to lead the crusade against Thatcher and the do-nothing attitude of the New Realist union leaders, it is especially disappointing that Tony Benn is shying away from a head-on challenge for the Labour leadership. Time is running out. Already, the failure to seize the chance to announce a candidature using the industrial upsurge as the springboard has allowed Kinnock loyalists and the LCC to go on the offensive against the very idea of an open contest.

Last year's decision by the Campaign Group to sponsor the Chesterfield Conference was a welcome challenge to Kinnock's road and a positive step in rebuilding the left. But much more than that is needed now.

Tony Benn's pronouncements nowadays often have an "elder statesperson" air about them; supporting struggles and making links is fine, but the best way to put real weight behind those struggles and make those links concrete is by directly posing an alternative — a leadership with the audacity and confidence to take on the ever more audacious and confident Tories.

The Campaign Group of MPs is currently the most likely source of this alternative leadership. Their reluctance to rise to the challenge is disturbing, as is the failure of *Campaign Group News* to deal with the question, along with other delicate issues, like Labour Councils making cuts. But it is still not too late to stand; and better late than never.

The "Moral" Backlash — Who's Next?

Clause 28, the Alton Bill, the new Social Security Act, new Immigration laws, the chillingly-named Great Education Reform Bill, attacks on AIDS sufferers, community bookshops, and the vestiges of independent thought in broadcasting... It all adds up, even to the myopic liberals of the "quality" press, to a major cultural "counter-reformation".

The aim of the new authoritarian backlash is to squash the personal and sexual freedoms gained in the 60s. Limited and often largely symbolic as they may have been, these freedoms have been deeply resented and feared by the ideologues of the right. Thatcherite Toryism has created excellent conditions for the spread of all kinds of bigotry and division. Its economic and social programmes are now converging with frightening rapidity.

The labour movement, in contrast, has been slow to see the danger — and too often reluctant to mobilise against it. Indeed, the open collusion with bigotry perpetrated by Labour MPs and the national leadership has been a clear sign to the Tories that these questions are Labour's Achilles heel. They have taken the hint and are moving in for the kill.

What can be done? Standing back horror-stricken or fulminating from the sidelines is no answer. The lesson that has been lost on Labour's leaders is that although these attacks on personal freedoms and democratic rights have undoubtedly struck a chord in sections of the working class, they have also provoked a wave of angry and determined mass protest.

This protest is at present fragmented. Links have to be forged. Connections between campaigns need to be cemented. The labour movement stands at the crux of all these attacks — and of the resistance to them.

If our leadership is unable or unwilling to unite and build this resistance, they must be replaced. The moral backlash engulfing Britain is not a sideshow. It is a full frontal threat to the labour movement, and the quicker we meet its challenge, the better.

Green Politics

The centrespread in this issue of *Briefing* is dedicated to "the challenge of green politics". As readers will discover, this challenge is a difficult but also invigorating one, which the left ignores at its peril. We take seriously the questions raised by the green movement in its various forms, which is why we have produced the centrespread, and we will continue to cover the central questions of energy supply, exploitation, distribution, and control of resources, and global economic inequality which the green movement rightly raises.

But there is a challenge posed for the green movement also — the challenge of class politics.

The only force potentially powerful enough actually to realise the demands of the green movement is the international working class. And the only system under which they could even begin to be realised is socialism.

These demands are inimical to capitalism — and capitalists around the world will fight like hell against them. Moralistic fervour alone cannot win the day.

If green politics is to take root and flower, it must plant its seeds in the organisations of the working class, including the trade unions and Labour Party, and demonstrate to millions of working class people that it is not the preserve of middle-class eccentrics privileged enough to worry about apparently remote matters such as ozone layers and acid rain.

The British Green Party is patently unable to do this — and for the most part, indifferent to the task. Despite the presence in its ranks of socialists with whom *Briefing* supporters are happy to work, on the ground it remains a confused, often opportunistic conglomeration, easily swayed by shifting ideological winds, all too reluctant to oppose racism, sexism, and homophobia, and often fanatically anti-trade union.

Down with the Green Party — up with green *socialist* politics!

Budget Review

Capitalists at the trough — problems for the future

The Budget's most prominent feature was the cut in the standard rate of income tax from 27p to 25p, and cuts in the top tax rates (starting at £19,000) from 45-60% to a flat 40%.

In other words, nothing for the poor, crumbs for the employed working class, and big handouts for the rich.

For a single person on £5,000 a year, the tax reduction is worth 1.9% of total income; for someone on £70,000 a year, it's worth a massive 11.6%. In money terms, the latter's increase is 85 times the former.

In aggregate, the Chancellor's gift to higher tax rate payers is nearly as much (around £2.3 billion) as he is giving to everyone else put together (£2.8bn).

For employed working people, the increases in personal income (hailed by the *Sun* as "Lotsa Lovely Lolly") are overshadowed by continuing cuts in the welfare state. For those not in employment, the tax cuts do nothing. And the April social security changes will take big chunks out of their personal incomes (see p. 11).

The first message of the budget is that the campaigns to save the NHS and local government have so far failed to dent the government's strategy. The money was there, and Lawson gave it to the well-off and the rich. The nicely-nicely approach of TUC and Labour leadership has clearly failed.

But there is a long-term policy problem as well. Labour argued

By JAMIE GOUGH

against tax cuts and for more funding for the NHS. This is traditional Labour policy: to redistribute income *within the working class*. Socialists, on the other hand, should demand that the welfare state is paid for *from profits*, so that income tax on ordinary working people can be reduced.

Labour has been forced to stand by while a Tory government introduces the welcome independent taxation of married women. Less welcome is the way that the budget flagrantly and shamelessly promotes the family. Married couples, as compared with single people, will now be £340 better off a year — a £600m yearly subsidy of marriage!

In addition, unmarried couples with children will have their tax allowances *cut*. This fits in with the Clause 28 clampdown on one particular alternative to marriage — a lesbian or gay life.

The budget increases private responsibility for social welfare. In this society, that inevitably means *family* responsibility.

For the capitalist class the budget has two main effects. First, *it increases the share of the total surplus which is retained by the capitalist class and its periphery* (people earning over £25,000, say).

This is achieved through the top rate cut and through cuts in corporation tax, capital gains tax (worth £500m a yar), and inheritance tax (£200m).

In the medium term, the cuts in the standard tax rate may enable employers to give *smaller* wage rises; thus, although workers make some immediate gains, this part of the surplus is also likely to end up as private profit.

Secondly, in a more muted way, the budget continues the government's programme of *removing existing handouts to capital for specific investment purposes*. Already tax exemptions for fixed investment and regional grants have been massively reduced. Now the subsidies on company cars and investment in forestry (and, in a minor way, on owner occupation) have also been cut.

The problem here (and it's a problem for the government's whole long-term strategy) is that it resolves one of capital's problems only to make another worse. It puts more money in capital's hands; but it does less than nothing to help create profitable places to invest it.

Capital operating in Britain is hampered by gross underinvestment in skills, in civilian research and development, in funds for major restructuring, and (aside from the arms producers) state purchasing patronage.

The income tax cuts will probably have only the most marginal effects on "the real economy". They will make the labour market a little more fluid, and stop a few more professionals and managers from emigrating. But there is no evidence that the much-publicised "incentives" actually work, except that top earners can now work *less* hard and get the same money.

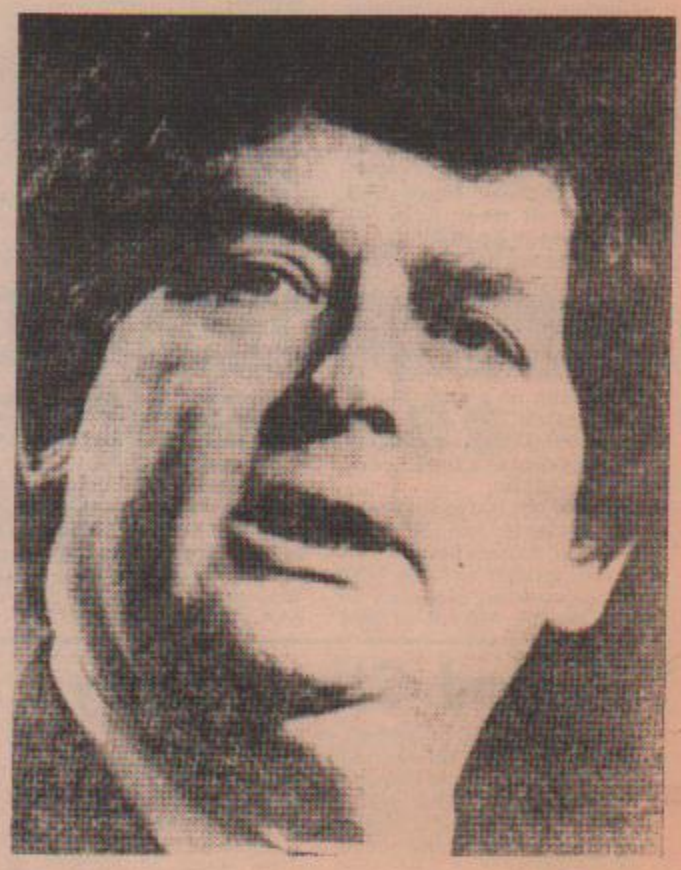
Not surprisingly, then, the Budget was condemned by ICI, by high-tech industrial pundits, and by sections of the CBI. To the extent that British capital is now only concerned with exporting capital and speculation, the Budget is fine. To the extent that British capital still needs to invest in Britain, it is useless.

And this is not a clear divide between two separate sections of capital. Even the *Financial Times*, usually associated with the City interest, noted that the meagre pickings from the poor and the NHS leave the budget seriously "one-sided".

But even in its main object, increasing the revenue to capital, the budget and its forecasts show big problems for the Tories. The amount of national income being collected in tax will *not* go down. Public expenditure in real terms is intended to *rise* over the next three years. State expenditure in a modern capitalist economy is simply too important *to capital* for it to be slashed in the way Thatcher likes to boast about.

In light of his failure to help the domestic economy, Lawson's claims that all is well are bogus. The coming world recession, and a cut in US imports, will hit Britain especially hard. Moreover, the national deficit in trade in manufactures is slated to continue its upward rise, *worsened* by the tax cuts.

This will produce a balance of payments deficit of £4bn this year, rising rapidly in the future.



The shadowy figure of Nigel Lawson...

Lawson's main concession to the domestic economy has been to try to limit the sharp upward climb of sterling, which tends to make the balance of payments worse (hence his interest rate cut). But the contrdictory pressures for British capital, between overseas and domestic investment, and between a US and an EEC orientation, are reflected in Thatcher's opposition to this policy, extensively publicised in the run-up to the Chancellor's speech.

The Budget is certainly nice to the rich and vicious to the working class. But it is also a picture of British capital floundering in its own contradictions. The fact is capital has no coherent strategy for its economic revival.

Trade Union Briefing

Unemployment

New attempt to unite the unemployed

Unemployment, or surplus labour (as big business calls it), is necessary to the operations of capitalists in their search for profits.

Unemployment allows the employers to control the wages and working conditions of the working class.

They use the unemployed to hold back the wages of those with jobs. It is the age-old method of divide and rule.

By Ernie Roberts
Secretary, NOUW

Those who own and control our industries, services, and land inevitably own and control the lives of the working class. The structure of present day society and its class relationships were not determined by a god; the kind of society we have is the result of struggles for power and profits. The minority in society grow rich and powerful at the expense of the majority, who do all the useful work.

The rich and powerful are united in organisations to defend and extend their interests. The working class must unite to win back all the wealth and power that has been stolen from them.

All workers have the fundamental human right to enjoy the wealth that they and their forebears have created. They have a basic Right to Work.

Today there are 28,000,000 workers *available* for work, 4,000,000 of whom are *not allowed* to work. The worst hit areas are given in a House of Commons research document:

Birmingham Small Heath 31.5%, Liverpool Riverside 30.7%, Manchester Central 29.1%, Tyne Bridge 28.3%, Birmingham Sparkbrook 27.5%, Glasgow Provan 27.4%, Glasgow Springburn 26.6%, Glasgow Maryhill 26.5%, Glasgow Central 26.1%, Greenock and Port Glasgow 23.7%, Clwyd North West 19.5%, Pembroke 18.5%, Ynys Mon 18.3%, Caernarfon 18.2%, Swansea West 17.8%, and inner London areas such as Hackney, Islington, Bow, Poplar, Bethnal Green and Vauxhall all have levels of unemployment up to 24%.

Thatcher and her government have £180,000,000,000 to spend, but a considerable amount is misspent:

- £18,200,000,000 on arms,
- £17,000,000,000 paid to userers who own most of the National Debt,
- £16,000,000,000 to maintain unemployment as a reserve pool of cheap labour,
- £5,000,000,000 to hold on to the Falklands and Northern Ireland as military bases,
- £800,000,000 to unite with the international capitalists in the Common Market to hold back food production and destroy food.

All this expenditure of £54,000,000,000 prevents useful work being done in housing, hospitals, schools, etc., and cuts investment, thus creating unemployment.

Over 200 MPs, MEPs, trade union leaders, and local leaders of unemployed groups have signed this statement:

"We the undersigned demand the Right to Work for everyone irrespective of sex, race, colour, creed or physical disabilities. All should have the right to training on the job, enjoy equal opportunities and equal pay. We claim a fundamental Right to share the nation's wealth created by our forebears and ourselves. Therefore we urge all unemployed throughout Britain to unite, organise, and struggle for the Right to Work. For this purpose a National Conference will be held in London to decide the form of organisation and action which shall be taken to bring an end to the dreadful scandal of unemployment."

A National Steering Committee of MPs to assist this effort to unite the unemployed has been formed including these MPs: E. Heffer, J. Corbyn, T. Benn, R. Brown, B. Clay, H. Cohen, B. Grant, K. Livingstone, M. Madden, D. Nellist, B. Sedgemore, D. Skinner, A. Wise.

This has been followed by meetings in the House of Commons of representatives of the unemployed and MPs. The aim is to set up a mighty movement of millions of unemployed, to unite those already organised in their area and those not yet organised, into a national federal body, to establish united links with the 18,000,000 unemployed in the EEC, and to elect from all the unemployed workers' organisations a National Committee which shall act as the leadership of the unemployed and decide upon organisation, policies, and actions.

We oppose the government attacks upon the unemployed:

- Conscription of labour into low-paid jobs.
- Refusing the unemployed proper training and offering no real jobs after training.
- Work for the dole.
- Stopping of dole for six months after leaving a job.

Our aims shall be:

- To fight for the TUC policy of 35-hour week, with no reduction in pay.
- The abolition of systematic overtime.
- Longer holidays with pay.
- Reduction of retirement age.

We call upon all employed workers in the labour and trade union movement, and all others sympathetic to the efforts of the unemployed, to join us. For more information please write to Ernie Roberts, c/o J. Corbyn MP, House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA.

Defend Steve Forey

As we go to press, members of ASLEF at King's Cross depot are being balloted on whether to take strike action in response to the sacking of the branch Assistant Secretary Steve Forey.

Forey and five other members of ASLEF Branch Committee were the subject of a High Court injunction after the branch decided to take strike action in support of NHS workers on March 14th.

Despite the fact that the strike was called off, the six were disciplined and Forey sacked — for distributing the official branch newsletter with the original strike call.

ASLEF militants are organising a high profile campaign, with four mass meetings, two meetings for other rail workers, stickers and leaflets sa well as seeking support from the NHS unions in the efforts to win the ballot.

If Kings Cross does come out, the task will be to spread the strike as rapidly as possible amongst rail workers, despite the refusal of the ASLEF bureaucracy to lift a finger in support of Forey.

For more information, and to send messages of support, contact Camden Trade Union Support Unit, 213 Eversholt St, London NW1, tel. 01 387 8436.

By a *Briefing* supporter on the railways

NHS: Wherever next?

"Where do we go from here?"

This is the question uppermost in the minds of health workers following the March 5th TUC demonstration, the COHSE Day of Action on March 14th, and the various events on March 15th.

March 14th gave many COHSE branches which had missed out on February 3rd a chance to take action, and many more a chance to come out again.

By HARRY SLOAN

Protest stoppages, workplace meetings, and demonstrations took place in hundreds of hospitals across the country. In some areas, similar activity — chiefly organised by NUPE — also took place on Budget Day itself.

All these events suffered from destructive inter-union rivalries at top level, though in many cases the rank and file are working togther happily.

Almost every area has now had at least two "days of action", a major demonstration, and a host of local events. Tens of thousands of health workers have shown themselves ready to fight for the NHS as have tens of thousands of other trade unionists — Council workers, bus workers, rail workers, miners, carworkers, and others — who took action in their support.

Almost every activist now believes that one-off stoppages are becoming less productive, but there is no sign that union leaders have an intention of stepping up the fight.

The ghastly "new realist" TUC approach was seen in the decision not to allow any trade union speakers on the platform on March 5th. Now, after the fierce rivalry of recent weeks, there are ominous signs that COHSE and NUPE are discussing a "comon strategy", with COHSE capitulating to NUPE's scandalous "do-nothing" line.

Chancellor Lawson's rich man's budget gave the Tories' two-fingered response to all the lobbies, petitions, and well-mannered appeals for extra NHS spending. It brought to an end the first phase of the fight, which focussed on forcing the reallocation of the vast Treasury surplus.

Union leaders who still believe that the Tory line can be changed by more one-off token actions may fool themselves — but are unlikely to fool their members.

To win this fight, action must now be taken that will affect services. This will also end the deceptive "honeymoon" period of press support (which has always depended on the healthworkers confining themselves to ineffective action). Only by raising the tempo and temperature of the fight can the dire threat to the NHS be overcome.

Lawson has called the unions' bluff: but more healthworkers are being radicalised all the time. While Lawson cuts Yuppies' tax bills, Health Authorities are cutting even more hospital beds in order to meet reduced cash limits in 1988-89.

- Bloomsbury Health Authority, with the country's longest waiting list, is considering a prolonged halt to all waiting list admissions, and hospital closures and cutbacks totalling over £9m.
- Crisis conditions similar to that facing Birmingham's Children's Hospital are developing in Manchester, and district after district faces new catastrophic cutbacks, forcing nurses and health workers to escalate their actions.
- At London's Maudsley psychiatric hospital, a staffing crisis has forced the COHSE Branch to contemplate a ban on overtime. In a ballot last month, the policy was endorsed by 151-31.

"Management have broken their promises to alleviate the situation. They are still admitting patients to wards which can't cope with them. Members are saying we can't carry on papering over the cracks," said Branch Secretary Ian Morton.

"An overtime ban would lead to bed closures, but it seems the only way to put on pressure. One ward has already begun a ban on overtime, regardless of what anyone says, and we have to back that action."

Nurses' unpaid overtime is estimated nationally at the equivalent of £150m a year. Yet their commitment to the patients is an obstacle to taking all-out strike action — an obstacle cycnically exploited by government, management, and the RCN.

A systematic national nurses' work-to-rule, and a ban on overtime and agency working could offer a way forward, allowing each local branch to decide what pace and level of struggle they can maintain in what is becoming a long-running battle to save the NHS.

The Maudsley workers are not only responding to a problem on the wards, they are showing a way forward in the aftermath of March 14th. More branches should follow their example, while pushing the health unions to get their act together, step up the fight, and demand the TUC call a one-day general strike to defend the NHS



PHOTO: David Hoffman

A seven year campaign by Mrs Joan Bye has succeeded in securing new safeguards against the epilepsy drug "epilim", which, she claims, killed her daughter.
On March 10th, days before healthworkers handed petitions in to Downing Street, Mrs Bye handed in a floral cross-shaped wreath of flowers — a cross of shame — to the Downing Street, and a book listing cases of children made ill by medical treatment. Mrs Bye made a special appeal to Mrs Thatcher as a mother to heed her cause.
Mrs Bye runs the "Parents Recognition of Paediatric Errors" group, a supporting organisation for parents, which can be contacted at Iatrogenic Clinic, 51 The Orchard, Newton, Swansea SA3 4UQ, a campaign which has achieved resonance particularly in her native Wales.
How can we unite the various campaigners on the many, many health issues?

NHS: *Thatcher's Achilles heel — or ours?*

Mark Seaton's "Solidarity — the way to save the NHS" (*Briefing*, no. 58) raises more questions than it answers and fails even to ask some important ones.

In fairness to Mark, though, he is clearly aware of the first difficulty I want to raise.

In contrast to Harry Sloan (*Briefing*, no. 57) who says that union conferences should be pressed to demand an extra £2.5 billion (to be funded no doubt by an *increase* in the basic rate of tax to 27p) Mark prefers "a fully-funded health service free of charge and accessible to all".

Harry and Mark are grappling with a real problem — how do we focus our demands for a proper NHS? Even Mark's formulation, which I prefer, needs thinking through.

How do you decide what fully-funded means? Our programme of action should be expanded to include the need for an *investigation* into health requirements, the causes of ill-health, and the type of health service we need.

Could it be that our reluctance to incorporate this into our campaign derives from our attitude to some of the biggest enemies of a socialist health service — the doctors who control the system and run it as one designed to *treat sickness* rather than *encourage health*? Their current bleating is not as progressive as it might appear. It is *their* system, after all — they can and will be pacified by new methods of funding.

By KEITH WHITE

Maybe a temporary alliance with these people is right? Maybe Thatcher has started something she will live to regret? After all, a mass movement demanding more money for the NHS might derail the government.

In my opinion we could not be more wrong. The Thatcherites are in the process of destroying the NHS and will succeed in doing so unless we realise just what they are up to. Their reassessment is not something forced on them. They have been planning it for years — running down the NHS in preparation for it.

They can destroy the NHS if they can come up with sufficiently attractive new methods of funding, if they can *"improve"* the service while they are doing this — or at any rate convince people that improvement is possible.

The 90% cited by Harry Sloan as opposed to Thatcher may rapidly become a much lower figure.

Moreover, Thatcher's much publicised retreats (nurses and transfusion workers) do not necessarily mean she was beaten. She retreated before the miners in 1982, a couple of years before the strike.

Our approach must take into account Thatcher's possible routes to victory, e.g. fostering further divisions in the workforce by the introduction of new payscales (locally rather than nationally negotiated), the ending of the right to strike, extra provision for politically sensitive problem areas, new systems of personal insurance cover, etc.

The cross-party unity of Frank Fields' Commons Committee demand for more money for the NHS was bought at the price of an open door for new methods of funding. It is all very well to unite with the likes of Field, and even Tory wets, to demand more money, but if we subordinate our strategy to an "alliance of all the people" we will not step outside the Thatcherite framework, and may well be out-manoeuvred and defeated.

If, however, we see the NHS for what it is — a golden opportunity to deepen the fight for a socialist planned economy — we can do more than inflict a strategic defeat on Thatcher. We can take a step towards real power.

Our orientation must be towards the mass of working class people — *especially women* — who want a decent health service. Campaigns built around their concerns and their health requirements will strengthen the hand of rank and file militants in the health unions and help us to isolate the Labour and trade union bureaucrats.

A mass movement such as this *can* win the middle layers who are at present worried about funding, but who may be vulnerable to Thatcher's reassessment proposals.

More money for the NHS is not a sufficient basis for a campaign. We need to discuss specific demands, tactics, and even our whole strategy more carefully.

NUT

Executive refuses to lift ban on abortion debate

Lewisham "Teachers in FAB" mounted a picket on Tuesday March 8th, of the a lecture on the Great Education Reform Bill by Dough McAvoy of the NUT Executive.

The purpose of the protest was to press the NUT to withdraw a circular banning debate on David Alton's Bill.

The circular advises associations to rule all attempts to discuss this Bill out of order. It states that "no contributions should be made to the campaign".

This is in keeping with a long, dishonourable NUT tradition of refusing to fight for women's rights. NUT leaders were reluctant to support the suffrage struggle and only gave lip-service to the battle over equal pay. They have consistently refused to allow a full debate on abortion.

By Valeri Coultas
Lewisham NUT

Only in 1982 was any progress made on this front, when an amendment was put to Conference calling on the NUT to oppose all attacks on family planning. A lukewarm proposal, perhaps, but it does suggest the NUT should be opposing Alton.

Fred Jarvis, as chair of the TUC, is part of an organisation sponsoring the March 19th demonstration. Yet his own union members, 70% of whom are women, are prohibited from even discussing abortion rights.

The argument about Catholic members is a complete red herring. Thousands of Catholic women travel from Ireland and Spain to Britain to have abortions. The male dominated NUT Executive has no moral, constitutional or political right to ban discussion on this issue of women's control.

The following Conference amendment is being circulated in support of women's rights and democracy in the NUT.

"Add at end:

'Conference further notes the circular distributed to local associations censoring debate on issues relating to present attacks on abortion rights. Conference, recognising that debate on this question does not conflict with the aims and objects of the Union and is of major concern to all members, instructs the Executive to withdraw this circular.' "

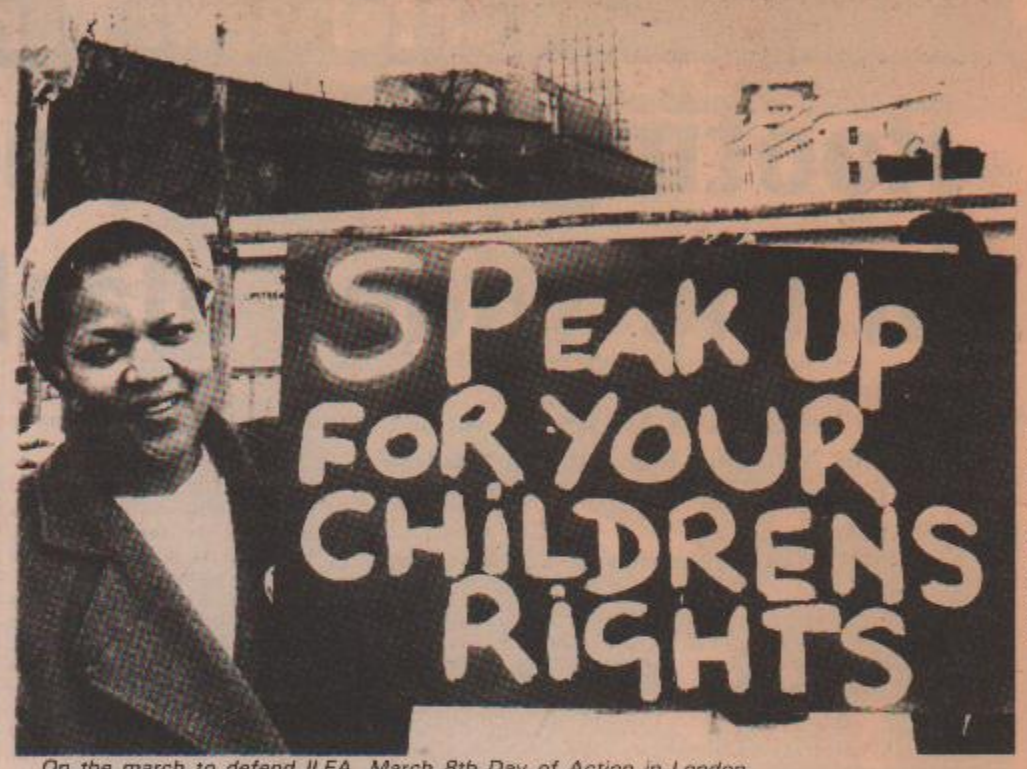


PHOTO: Martine Stead

On the march to defend ILEA, March 8th Day of Action in London

Women's TUC

On sisterhood and tired feet

Tuesday 8 March

Arrive Blackpool North 8.05pm, exhausted. Am I too old to go on marches?

Spent the morning tramping from Kennington Park to County Hall carrying union banner in defence of ILEA. Legs ache.

Discover hotel is miles out. Had asked for a hotel further south after last year's experience of an hour's walk to Conference each morning. Meant south of the Tower, not south of Scotland. Make unilateral decision to take taxis and charge them to the union; none of us brought flat shoes.

Wednesday, 9 March

Conference has been relocated to the Blackpool Tower Ballroom as the Sandcastle Centre, used last year, is boycotted by the Trades Council — non-union.

The Tower Ballroom is magnificent, a real Victorian gothic horror, red, gold, and lots of curly balustrades. My colleagues discover they are not allowed to smoke on the floor of conference and instantly suffer acute nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

Pat Turner from GMB in the Chair. This year, for the first time, the Women's committee will rotate the Chair in order of seniority. Eyes down as the serious business of conference begins. Yes, we've all noticed Brenda Dean's latest expensive outfit.

By Josie Irwin
Greater London Staff Association delegate

The debates begin and delegates slip off for coffee, a chat, and fags. Suddenly, there is uproar. MSF has proposed a composite on the new Equal Rights Department. The platform's verdict: "support with reservation".

Delegates consider this a crafty way of slipping in an ammendment as we are *not* allowed to vote separately on the "reservation". Uproar! Confusion on the platform.

Important little men run around whispering in ears. The Chair is challenged; unprecedented excitement! It wasn't like this in Ada Maddox's day! But this fails narrowly to get the necessary two thirds majority.

Debate on sexism in the media. Too late for emergency resolution, but NUT skillfully raise issue of Mandy Mudd in debate. Applause and support. Sympathy for appalling treatment — and blame place where it belongs, with Labour NEC.

Conference dozes off again but poor Pat Turner — the afternoon's final business is a debate on the reform of conference procedures!

Thursday, 10 March

Conference is now over an hour behind. Rumour has it that Pat Turner's problems of yesterday were due to nicotine deprivation.

Debate on part-time and temporary workers, women returnees, contract compliance, taxation, women and transport, and women in the media. Conference unanimously supports the campaign against Alton and any attempts to restrict the 1967 Act. Sisters from Palestine get a standing ovation.

The traditional Mayor's reception is to be held in the Tower's "Good Time Emporium"! Another example of understated decor! Our NUPE sisters take the floor; GMB, not to be outdone, joins in the jiving. The "Good Time Emporium" gets suffocating. Return to hotel to be woken by the NUPE delegation stumbling back in the early hours.

Friday, 11 March

NUPE delegation is late for breakfast. I have to speak on Family Credit and haven't finished my speech. Panic. Had forgotten spectacles. Will I find my way to the rostrum

The highlight of the day is an address by sisters from COSATU who speak movingly of conditions in South Africa.

Suddenly conference is over. Unlike many conferences and even despite the first day's uproar it has been a good-humoured event, in which each speaker was listened to by sisters, and voting on a show of hands only (as opposed to block voting at the mainly "men's" TUC) has encouraged genuine debate.

ILTA

Victory for Socialist Teachers Alliance

The attempt by officers of the NUT to expel or suspend much of the leadership of the Inner London Teachers' Association (ILTA) collapsed early this month, almost exactly a year after the dispute began.

In a flurry of faxed letters, solicitors for the national officers admitted that they did not have a defence to the ILTA claims.

The admission followed decisive rulings in the High Court and the Court of Appeal that the actions of the union's national officers and its Appeal Committee were unlawful and void.

Central to the legal actions was the impropriety of the national officers using their powerful position in the union and on the National Executive in particular to substitute penalties, describe by Lord Justice Stoker as "draconian", for those imposed by the independently-elected National Disciplinary Committee (NDC).

They found that ILTA had organised industrial action without national sanction, but were also very critical of the conduct of the national union. Lord Justice Stoker declared that the national officers had no right to appeal to National Appeals Committee, "the very body of which they are themselves an important and powerful part."

The reinstatement of ILTA's leadership is effective immediately. Bernard Regan resumes his membership of the National Executive of the union in time for its next meeting (and forthcoming Annual Conference). The election for the Inner London members of the National Executive, from which Mr. Regan was excluded, has been aborted and restarted.

Carole Regan resumes her membership of the union's powerful Conference Business Committee and has been reinstated to the ballot for re-election.

When Mike Loosley received final judgement in the High Court the temporary injunctions against the union became permanent. The remaining actions have been settled, with the union giving similar undertakings to Bernard Regan, Carole Regan, Anna de Casparis, John Esterson and Jane Shallice.

The decisions will also apply to Dick North, ILTA's treasurer, Paul Richardson, and a number of other ILTA delegates or former ILTA delegates who were required unlawfully by the union to sign "undertakings".

The NUT will meet all the costs of the litigation (thought to exceed £100,000). Mike Loosley, reinstated General Secretary of ILTA, said, "This is a victory for all union members. We were forced to take legal action to defend our rights and the democratic rights of all members."

"We were kicked out for fighting Baker's anti-teacher Pay and Conditions Act. We are coming back on March 8th, the day many trades unionists will be taking action in defence of the ILEA," said ILTA's Women's Officer, Carole Regan.

"We cannot forget the victimisation we have suffered over the last year at the hands of the national officers. However, the real fight is against the government which is making massive attacks on education, particularly in Inner London. We want to see a united union fighting alongside healthworkers and others against this government," said Bernard Regan, reinstated National Executive member.

The reinstatement, coming on the eve of the union's annual conference, is a tremendous boost for the left in the NUT.

**Taken from an ILTA leaflet*

Senior Colman

Ex-strikers return solidarity action

After 13 months, one week and three days, the strike at Senior Colman is over.

The majority of the strikers accepted an increased financial settlement offered by the Company. After such a long, hard struggle I feel both disappointed and disillusioned. By accepting the offer we not only sold our jobs but our principles, which we had proudly defended for so long.

By Tony Lowe
Ex-Secretary, Strike Committee

Manchester is a hive of activity at the moment, and is leading the campaign in defence of the NHS.

The strikers from Senior Colman, who enjoyed tremendous support from rank and file trade unionists, will now rally around one of our biggest and most solid supporters Thorn EMI, whose four shop stewards have been victimised for coming out on strike, with over 500 workmates, in support of the recent health service demonstration.

We must also not forget the lessons learnt during our strike. We hope we have proven to others (that includes trade union officials) that at some time you must stand up and fight for your rights.

Congratulations to the workforce at Ford
Who challenged their bosses with whom they crossed swords.
But take notice of the basis for the settlement
It's not for the strikers and their families' betterment.
Not because the Nation were suffering and doing without
Nor the loss of services that this strike brought about
It's a sorry state of affairs, their moral standard's pathetic,
The reason for ending this industrial action?
They were losing their profit.
©Barbara Smith,
N. Yorks Women Against Pit Closures

SOLIDARITY

Joint rally makes the links

On Budget Day, 250 people attended a meeting at Finsbury Town Hall, Islington, jointly organised by the recently formed Solidarity Network and North London supporters of the Chesterfield Conference.

COHSE's Pete Marshall detailed the success of the union's day of action the previous day and called on the TUC to organise a one day strike in support of the NHS.

He also argued for a nurses' work to rule and overtime ban as a focus for organising solidarity action.

NUS members Jason Croombridge and Duncan Denny from P&O Dover dispute proclaimed strikers's defiance. Both emphasised the safety hazards of seafarers' working conditions.

A North London Advertiser NUJ striker said the paper had systematically used anti union laws to prevent effective industrial action during the three month long strike.

By Pete Cooper
Trade Union Briefing

To cheers, he said, "There is only one alternative, and that is to break the law."

Phil Morgan (ACTT) revealed how TV AM management had beamed in news from Washington DC and Australia to break the technicians' strike. Janet Seymour (ex-Silentnight striker) gave the background to the creation of the Solidarity Network and explained its vital role in linking struggles and passing on lessons to those newly in dispute.

Mandy Mudd (London Fightback) called for "all out indefinite action across the labour movement" as the way to beat the Tories. But she warned: "This moment will pass, as in 1985. We've got to seize it and not be afraid to act."

Drawing the links was Jeremy Corbyn MP. He emphasised the success of the NHS struggle in mobilising support from all sections of the working class. Were unity achieved, the Tories would be powerless.

John Laing (sacked print worker) made a financial appeal, which raised over £400, including a £100 pledge from Finsbury Park NUR.

Tony Benn, concluding the meeting, demanded the democratisation of the NHS, and the ending of private practice - which in the meantime should be requisitioned to clear NHS waiting lists. He dodged the question of the leadership contest, denouncing "personality politics".

From the floor, Terry French urged support for sacked and jailed miners. The warmth with which he was received well illustrated the solidarity being promoted.

Labour Party

Interview: Narendra Makanji

Rooting Black Sections in the wider black struggle

Long-time black activist and Labour Councillor NARENDRA MAKANJI will be standing for National Chair at Black Sections' Annual Conference, held on March 26-27th in Manchester.

SHAHID TILLY interviewed Narendra for *Briefing*.

As a candidate for the Chair of Black Sections what would you like to see the organisation doing?
We have come through a very difficult 12 months. We have seen some important breakthroughs and battles — some of which are still continuing.

But the main things in the next few months and year will be:

- for us to increase our work within the Black community by supporting campaigns, such as those on housing, policing, immigration, education and so on;
- to start shaping the agendas by saying what the important issues are;
- and to draw up plans for regeneration of inner cities — each locality producing a plan for itself and then using that document as a campaigning tool.

We must also increase our work within the trade unions. It is noticeable that black workers have provided key support in disputes at Fords, the Health Service, and local government. We have to make sure that this militancy is properly recognised by us — Black Sections.

Our members have been involved in these, or work quite closely with them, and it is important to harness this support in order to take the struggle forward.

The past year has seen leading Black Section members becoming MPs. What does this mean for the organisation?
The breakthrough of four black MPs would not have happened without the active involvement of Black Sections. For years people said that black members could not win these positions. The elections have proven them wrong, at the national level, in the full glare of publicity and in face of the onslaught of the racists.

We are very pleased about that. But it also needs to be said that it is only a breakthrough, not the full representation we seek.

If the Black community was adequately represented in parliament then we would have somewhere in the region of 25-30 MPs. This should still be our goal. But we should also make sure that those elected have considerable ideological and community support to ensure they are not isolated in Parliament or picked off one by one by the establishment.

Bill Morris's propoals for affiliation status will act as a backdrop to the conference. What are the reactions by your members to this proposal?
Black Sections conducted a fullscale investigation into the idea of affiliation well before Bill Morris's proposal was published in *Tribune*. The overwhelming view of Black Sections across the country was to continue our campaign for representation and recognition. One Black Section did argue for affiliation — but eventually did not specify what type of affiliation.

I think that Morris's proposals do not go far enough. My view is that should Bill Morris or the National Executive Committee or the TGWU want to put up a detailed proposal as to how black people can be represented within the Party then we should always be ready to discuss, negotiate, and thrash out the details. But we cannot continue to repond to proposals that appear in *Tribune*, or the *Independent* — or even *Briefing*.

Some of your leading members are now suggesting that you cannot go to Annual Conference year in and year out and get resoundingly defeated with increasing majorities.
We have to see this in context. The struggle against racism, colonialism, and imperialism is a long one. And the fight against racism within Britain is going to be a long one as well.

I will say to those people: four years is not a long time. Other struggles have gone on for much longer.

After all, no one is saying that the Labour Party should pack up after having lost three elections in a row. No one is saying to the ANC that after seventy years they should give up. On the contrary, we should analyse very carefully where we are at and redouble our efforts to achieve our objectives.

As a potential chair of Black Sections how would you explore the call for an affiliated Black Socialist Society?
I think there are some basic principles that black people are demanding of any political party: autonomy, incorporation, and representation. Any proposals should be measured against these objectives.

As one Labour MP told me, we are not in the kindergarten any more. And if we are now in the "big league" then we have to ensure that our methods and procedures are fairly thorough.

Affiliation status, in contrast to demands for a "section", seems fairly innocuous. Why has the Labour Leadership come out against it?
Mainly because the Labour Leadership does not know how to handle the issue of black representation. It has not learnt the lessons of the US Democratic Party who have had black caucuses for decades; or the New Zealand Socialist Party, which has a Maori Section.

This is a question that should be directed to the Labour Leadership. What is stopping them from arriving at the obvious conclusion?

Black people predominantly live in metropolitan areas. Some elements of Black Section leadership in local Councils have been implementing cuts in expenditure; while others have opposed these. What are the strains in Black Sections over this?
The issue of local government is going to be crucial for the black community and Black Sections as a whole because local government has a major impact upon our people's lives.

I am in favour of resisting the cuts all the way. We have to make sure that the communities that are likely to feel the brunt of these cuts are thoroughly mobilised. Councillors by themselves cannot do it, no matter how good their political positions may be.

That's going to be a big task for the Black Sections. We also have to look ahead to the attack on the inner cities that Thatcher is mounting and be prepared with a series of ideas over how to turn the tide in our favour.

The imminent introduction of the poll tax has long term implications which are very dangerous for black people. We should actively organise against its introduction.

When the pressure from the black grass roots starts building up then many of the Black Section Councillors who have opted for cuts will have to think again, or they will be swept aside.

Black Sections have been criticised for not having a firm involvement in the grass roots and for being too deeply lodged within the Labour Party bureaucracy. Is this true? How do you foresee Black Sections addressing this?
Obviously, we have to expand all the time. That criticism is a valid one which we have to address. What I would plan to do as Chair of the Black Sections would be to organise a national speaking tour in conjunction with other black organisations.

We would go round to all the black areas and explain what we are about, speaking directly to local activists so that some of the myths being put about by our opponents can actually be dealt with on a face to face basis.

We should also produce policy documents for discussion at local, regional, national, and indeed at the international level, where there are many developments which we need to be part of. Unfortunately, we have not really done much of this, due to being caught in this trench warfare.

There are black people who are quite cynical about Black Sections which they perceive to be a vehicle to enable black members to attain political office.
Politics is about policies and it is about power. And it is about people being elected to power so that policies can be carried out.

There will always be criticism of careerism of all politicans, black or white. All I would say is that I would sooner have a black person facing this criticism than a white.

There are many black workers, predominantly low paid and female, who are involved in the NHS dispute. What role does Black Sections see for itself in this struggle?
One of the conference discussion papers is on the National Health Service. The author argues very strongly that the NHS has always exploited black workers either as low paid labour, as nurses or even as doctors (only giving them jobs which white doctors did not want).

The Service has never fully addressed the health needs of the black community, such as sickle cell, the higher instance of heart disease, and so on.

In the coming years we will argue for black workers within the NHS to be liberated from this exploitation so that they can play an active role in adressing the health needs of the black commuity. If they are allowed and enabled to do that, if they fight to do that, then it would spark off a new way of thinking abut the Health Service.

There has been talk of alternative programmes being drafted by local black communities. This may have lessons for the rest of the left as well.
We have seen the bankruptcy of the government on inner cities. We have also seen the silence of the Labour Party front bench on ideas for inner city regeneration.

95% of black people in Britain live in inner cities. Our conference discussion paper argues that Black Sections should rally other black organisations in their localities to draw up plans for their particular area, on education needs, on health, infrastructure, or environmental improvements.

Through this activity we can show other people how we can take control over our own lives. The problems linked with inner cities will not be addressed by people coming from on high and offering solutions for us. It needs to be done by people within the inner cities and black people in particular have a major role to play in it.

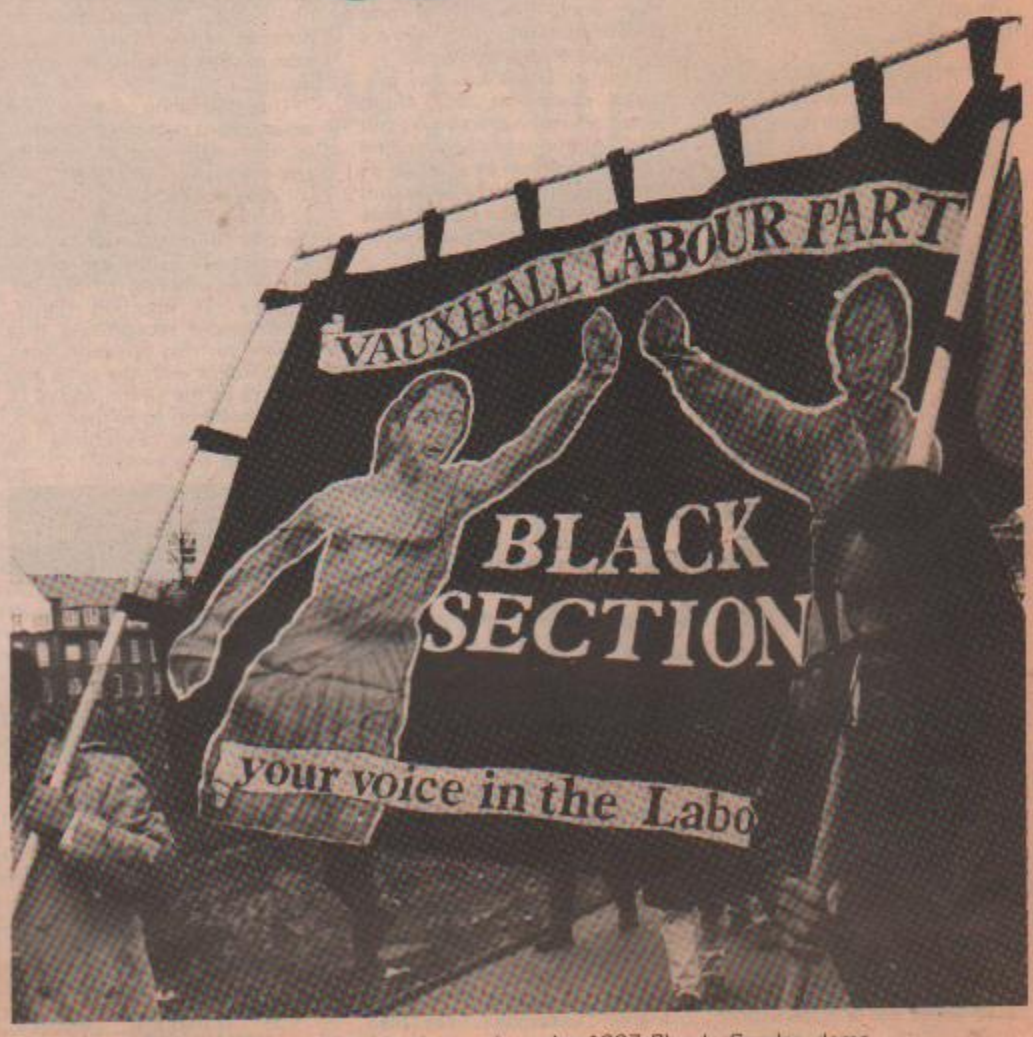


PHOTO: Martine Stead

The Black Sections banner takes to the road on the 1987 Bloody Sunday demo.



Narendra Makanji: standing for Vice Chair of Black Sections

Labour CND

Annual General Meeting

Saturday April 9th, 10-5

Sheffield Polytechnic Students Union
Nelson Mandela Building, Pont St, Sheffield

Groups and individuals welcome to attend — as long as you are a member of both the Labour Party and national CND.

£3 waged; free for unwaged

For accommodation and further information contact Carol Turner, Secretary Labour CND, 29 Stodmarsh House, Cowley Estate, London SW9 6HH.

Birmingham

FIGHTBACK '88

80 people took part in a local conference organised by Birmingham Fightback '88 on March 12th. The focus of the Conference was not big name speakers (though we did welcome the London dimension contributed by Cllr Pat Waylett from Lewisham) but workshops on the key local issues of Council services and jobs, the NHS and equal opportunities, as well as Clause 29 and the Birmingham 6 campaigns.

A wide spectrum of local activists took part in the conference, which was aimed at translating general principles into concrete policies and realistic strategies for challenging the dominance of the right in the Birmingham labour movement. A Fightback Steering Committee was set up by the conference, which marked a useful step forward in the long process of building an effective left in the city.

Scottish Conference

Lots of talk; little action

The Labour Party Scottish Conference, which met in Perth on March 11-13th, was dominated by the question of the Poll Tax, on which 31 resolutions and five amendments were submitted.

By Sheila Maher and Graham Sullivan Delegates, Kincardine & Deeside CLP

The tax was also the subject of many fringe meetings, leaflets, and pamphlets.

This reflects the importance of this poll tax question for the Scottish labour movement and also the level of opposition to it in Scotland as a whole. Recent opinion polls indicate that 42% of Labour voters are prepared to *refuse to pay* the tax.

Denunciations of the poll tax as unfair, unjust, unworkable, wicked, evil, against basic human rights, and anti-democratic were rife. However, the logical response to this — to organise resistance by all means at our disposal — was rejected by Conference.

Dick Douglas, an MP not noted for left wing views, said, "If the Party does not opt for non-payment now, it will be like leading an army into battle with a white flag."

Conference agreed to a statement from the LCC-dominated Scottish Executive which did not rule out a campaign on non-payment, but put off a decision to a recall conference scheduled for the autumn.

Of course, the Tories have no intention of delaying the tax; Labour should therefore be preparing now for a mass non-payment campaign.

Conference called for the monthly convening of an Assembly of the 50 Scottish Labour MPs in different parts of Scotland. The idea is to highlight the overwhelming Labour majority here and the Tory government's rejection of Scottish demands for an Assembly.

These demands seem to have made little impression on Neil Kinnock, who managed to speak to Conference for 49 minutes without once mentioning the Assembly. In a speech designed solely for the TV cameras, he said very little, except that the Tory government is not a nice thing.

Strong criticism was made of the 19 Scottish Labour MPs, many from constituencies with large Catholic populations, who either voted for or abstained on the Alton Bill. The Party must apply the whip to this question instead of hiding behind the "consciences" of individual MPs.

For the third year running, an extremely well-attended fringe meeting addressed by Tony Benn was organised by the Campaign Group. And, for the third year running, this opportunity to begin to organise Party members to the left of the LCC was squandered.

Once again, many activists on the left were gathered together, given fine words, and then sent away to carry on their work, without the strength that an organised left in Scotland could command, or even any call to build local left groups — a crucial task.

LCC split forms new group

A new pressure group, Scottish Labour Action, held its first open meeting in Perth on March 12th.

By Jim Niblock Glasgow

Consisting largely of young, leftward moving LCCers, the group rejected Donald Dewar's leadership and the manoeuvring politics of the LCC. Although they do not describe themselves as a split from the LCC, it's perfectly clear that's exactly what they are.

Their break from the soft left is hesitant and contradictory, forced on them by the objective situation that has developed in Scotland since the general election, rather than a critical look at their previous stance.

This confusion produces an eclectic political analysis that combines overall support for Kinnock's leadership and rejection of its application in Scotland.

The founding statement calls on the Party in Scotland to:

- Assert Scotland's right to self-determination on such a basis as the people of Scotland themselves decide.
- Recognise that the Conservative Party has no mandate in Scotland and to campaign on this basis.
- Support a policy of tactical non-co-operation with the government in the conduct of Scottish business in the House of Commons.
- Urge the Party to place more emphasis on initiatives launched in Scotland, where the Tories are in an embarrassing minority rather than Westminster, where they enjoy a massive majority.
- Support mass civil disobedience in Scotland as a legitimate means of protest for the Scottish people.
- Support, in particular, obstruction and civil disobedience in the implementation of the poll tax, leading to a mass campaign of non-payment, and seek early and public declarations of intent no. to pay from leading figures in the Party and beyond.
- Encourage the early establishment of an alternative democratic forum in Scotland.

It's clear that the new SLA is moving towards the left; Campaign Group MPs in Scotland and local activists should welcome and support the group, who are now organising a founding conference.

For further information on Scottish Labour Action contact Interim Co-ordinator Ian Smart, 26 Glasgow Road, Paisley, tel. 041 889 8578.

Women's debate

Now campaign to build on resolutions passed

The debate on Women's Rights was scheduled for 4.25pm on the Friday of Scottish Labour Party Conference — hardly ideal timing.

By Margaret Stewart Stirling Women's Council delegate (personal capacity)

The late hour was due to having to listen to 45 minutes of Neil Kinnock giving a speech which contained only a fleeting reference to the Poll Tax — a burning issue in Scotland.

A viedo recording displayed on a large screen would have had the same impact. We expect this kind of patronising attitude from the Tories but not from the Labour Party Leader — especially in Scotland.

The 45 minutes could have been much better spent in debating issues on the agenda, with more time allowed for women's rights, which in the end was rushed through in about 20 minutes.

Two good resolutions were passed unanimously. The first called for support in the fight against David Alton's Bill. It called upon the Labour Party to campaign for improved health and educational facilities, for an end to NHS cuts, for improved abortion facilities and increased access to early terminations.

It also called for Labour MPs to stick to Party policy on abortion and noted that Labour whips had not implemented the decision of 1985 Annual Conference policy abandoning the "conscience clause" on abortion.

The mover, seconder, and speakers all called for the right of women to exercise *their* freedom of choice and for MPs, whose personal views were respected, not to vote on that personal view in Parliament, thus denying thousands of women the right to exercise *their* conscience when the time comes.

The second resolution reaffirmed opposition to the humiliating practice of strip searching taking place in Cornton Vale Women's Prison in Scotland and expressed concern at the widening use of strip-searching on women arrested at demonstrations, pickets, and peace protests, as well as at customs.

It called for support for the Scottish Campaign Against Strip Searches, national women's action against strip searching, for the Labour Leadership to support these actions, and for the next Labour government to end it, with legislation applying both to Britain and Northern Ireland.

Much campaigning and hard work is to be done on the issues raised in these two resolutions and continued pressure maintained both in the fight to defeat the third reading of Alton's Bill and campaigns against the degrading and humiliating practice of strip-searching.

LAW '86



PHOTO Martine Strahl

Mandy Mudd speaks to Greater London Labour Party Conference, March 1988, on an emergency resolution against her witch-hunt.

Defend Mandy Mudd

Very few newspapers have been able to resist persecuting Haringey anti-cuts activist Mandy Mudd, who faces expulsion for "sustained activity against the interests of the Party".

The techniques used in this exercise are so abhorrently sexist that they have produced a reaction of disgust from a broad spectrum of the left.

By Linda Blane LAW '86

Haringey Against the Witch-hunt has now decided not only to defend Mandy's right to argue her views inside the Party, but also to expose the sexism and character assassination techniques so love by the British press.

In this case, the tactics of the gutter press could well backfire. The credentials of the "journalists" involved are at stake — but so are those of the Labour right who have traditionally been on good terms with the Fleet Street hacks.

The particular story that the "investigative" journalists of the *Sun* got hold of was that Mandy had once worked for a Kissogram company. They duly printed pictures next to articles filled with vile personal abuse about Mandy's size, aimed at causing her the maximum personal distress.

They suceeded up to a point, as they always do when they focus on the powerless rather than the powerful. Mandy had to leave home, was at first unable to return to work, and had to take legal advice. Two Tory MPs have now called on the ILEA to sack her.

We might be forgiven for asking these Tory defenders of public morality whether they think Cecil Parkinson and other well-known figures who have commited adultery and other so-called sins should also be sacked? Their behaviour has no economic basis, unlike that of thousands of women who are forced to work as strippers, page-three girls, prostitutes, or models in an advertising industry that exploits degrading sexual imagery to the full.

In our society, many women are forced to sell their bodies in some form because these industries are encouraged by decadent late capitalism. The labour movement must challenge the value system of the ruling class when it comes to the sex industry. Only a system where women have full educational and employment opportunities will obliterate these options — by punishing the pimps and profiteers, not the women themselves.

Of course Mandy stands condemned not simply because of her "morality" but particularly because of her size. As a fat women her crime is much worse. The implication is clear. She should be ashamed of herself and hide away.

Victoria Keir in an extremely vicious and sarcastic peice in the *Evening Standard* even went so far as to attack all "fat women" on the left in a mercenary article entitled "Big Girls Don't Cry".

In opposing the gutter press campaign against Mandy we must not lose sight of why she is a victim. *Private Eye* pointed out that Bernie Grant, former Leader of Haringey Council, must be delighted to see his "arch-enemy" ridiculed after her determined defence of positive images of lesbians and gays and her opposition to Haringey's budget cuts.

We hope Bernie Grant will dispel this rumour by supporting Mandy's defence campaign. But this case shows that erstwhile Bennites who hang onto power at any cost, even if it means breaking manifesto pledges and attacking workers' jobs and living standards, only succeed in signalling to the establishment that they have changed sides.

Meanwhile, the Labour right and centre at Walworth Road are eager to aid this process through disciplinary action and timely leaks to the press.

The Labour left, along with those members of the National Union of Journalists who take their code of practice seriously, must challenge the right of the press to destroy individuals' lives simply because they do not conform to the *Sun*'s notion of what constitutes an "acceptable" female form. Whenever a women is put on trial by the press, her looks immediately become an issue. The Party as a whole should reject this kind of attack — and put a stop to people in its own ranks colluding with it.

LAW '86 model resolution for 1988 Annual Conference

1. Conference notes that there is a widespread and growing witch-hunt against socialists in the Labour Party and their right to hold views contrary to those of the leadership and to organise around those views.
2. Conference condemns the suspension of CLPs, the disciplinary action against Mandy Mudd, Sharon Atkin and numerous other individuals within the Party.
3. Conference calls for the immediate dropping of all suspensions and charges and for the Labour Party to get on with the job of fighting the Tories instead of witch-hunting its own members.

Exeter

Witch-hunters win

The fires of the witch-hunt burn brightly in Exeter. Exeter Labour Party GC voted last week by 44 votes to 7 to refer *Devon Labour Briefing* supporter Peter Bowing to the NCC.

Witch-hunting spokesperson Martyn Snow told the GC that the case was based purely on Bowing's writings in *Devon Labour Briefing* and elsewhere, which constituted a "course of conduct prejudicial to the Labour Party."

The right wing Labour Leader of Exeter City Council, Chester Long, had already made his position clear: "I'll sell my house to get Bowing out of this Party." His deputy, right winger Pete Hutchings, threatened an uncommitted GC delegate who questioned details of the proceedings with expulsion. One right winger told the meeting that people were dying as a consequence of Bowing's writings (i.e. Bowing had lost Labour the election!

The lynch-mob right called for expulsion, but many uncommitted GC delegates had had enough of the bigotry, the bullying, and the banning of any discussion of the matter in branches. Sixteen voted against an expulsion recommendation.

The right had already been dealt an embarrassing blow earlier in the week, when Tony Gifford refused to attend a Bill of Rights conference in Exeter, which was partly funded from the City Council's William of Orange celebrations budget.

Devon Labour Briefing

Feature: Green Politics

Debate

A VIEW FROM THE GREEN PARTY

Green politics and socialism

The green alternative to capitalism is here to stay.

Most socialists have barely begun to recognise, let alone come to terms with, the green challenge.

But in many European states the socialist currents have already been subsumed into a combined green opposition to the old "grey" parties.

In Britain, the dominance of Thatcherism and "popular capitalism" threatens not just Labour, but the survival of any credible socialist culture.



PHOTO: courtesy Third World First

Gathering crops in Africa: socialists need to promote self-reliance in the under-developed world

By Mark Douglas
Member: Association of Socialist Greens and Green Party

At a historical level some green politicians now argue that socialism itself as a distinct philosophy has been incorporated into the new, wider vision of green renewal. Both Rudolf Bahro, the German Marxist and Die Grünen radical of the 1970s, and current leaders like Tim Cooper, co-Chair of the British Green Party, have said that the best elements of socialism are now to be found in green politics.

The creation of a new balance between human and natural interests, the right of all citizens to basic material security (e.g. a basic income scheme for all at about £60 per week), a new international trade system which promotes self-reliance in the under-developed world through "anti-imperialist economics" and the cancelling of all captialist debts — these green policies are not only far more radical than anything advanced by socialists or communists, they represent the central "socialist" issues that many socialists have forgotten.

The green claim that socialism, in whatever variety, from Fabian/Social-democratic through to revolutionary Marxist, has lost its historical relevance. The dominant culture of the late twentieth century is *industrialism* and *technocracy*.

Both capitalism and state collectivism are now *forms* of this rampant industrialism — east, west, and south. Hence the world ecological crisis. Socialism has no answer to this; all it recognises is continuing class and inter-state conflict.

Who's responsible for acid rain? The wicked capitalists? But Czecheslovakia is the worst acid pollutant in Europe.

Who caused the ozone layer crisis? Multinational drug companies or unrestrained consumerism? Class conflict is still there, but all sides are fighting for a slice of the same rotting cake. Greens say that we need a new "cake", half of which belongs not to the workers of the North, but to the crisis-racked millions of the southern hemisphere. And we don't forget that a large slice of "the cake" belongs to the natural world, like the rain forests.

Until the socialist movement, in its majority, rejects the culture of industrialism and "cars for everyone, please" it will not be able to challenge "popular capitalism".

The green movement challenges all socialists to confront two historical facts. First, capitalism, although less than 250 years old, has brought the Earth to the brink of ecological collapse. Resource depletion, world-wide pollution, and the direct threats to continued life on earth via the ozone layer holes (on both poles), the destruction of the rainforests, and the "greenhouse" syndrome, allow *less than another hundred years* before extinction unless there is radical correction soon.

Secondly, socialism has divorced itself from the natural world by creating an artificial *homo-centric ideology* cut off from the bio-centric imperative of life. It has become an unwitting accomplice of capital by *elevating* imposed social culture *over* the regenerative, life-enhancing, natural world.

These two scientifically provable trends demand that the modern socialist movement must make an *unconditional* alliance with the emergent green movement or face its own demise.

On a more mundane and politically immediate level, any socialists who think Labour in Britain is able to defeat Thatcherism are fooling themselves. It's not going to happen — primarily because Labour cannot pretend any more to represent a majority in an increasingly diverse and pluralist society.

Labour remains monolithic, hierarchical, centralist, statist, and without any aptitude for winning great popular support. Only an alliance, based on fair votes (i.e. proportional representation) and a thorough-going pluralism will topple the Tory consensus, hopefully before the end of the century.

Neither Labour nor the Green Party can gain a majority — but socialists and greens can help build a new, progressive plurality. Its up to socialists to change... and fast.

Book Review

What can we learn from Die Grünen?

The German Greens — A Social and Political Profile, **by Werner Hülsberg, translater by Gus Fagan, *Verso*, £9.95 paperback**

Having won an 8.3% share of the vote in the Federal elections of January 1987, the German Greens, with their Die Grünen parliamentary group re-elected, re-enforced their claim to be one of the most promising radical developments in Europe.

By Eric Darier
SERA

This important book, written from within Die Grünen and from a socialist (Trotskyist) point of view, documents the evolution of Green politics in West Germany.

The author reminds us of some of the events which have shaped the contemporary German political scene:

- the military defeat of the Nazi regime;
- the superpower rivalry leading to the partition of Germany and her re-militarisation;
- the creation of a showcase capitalist economy by the Americans;
- the entrenchment of anti-communism in the Federal Republic's institutions;
- and the open abandonment of the struggle against capitalism by the Social Democratic SPD in 1959, whcih went on to join a coalition government with the Right (CDU/CSU) from 1966 to 1969.

The intellectual and student radicalism of the 1960s, combined with the emergence of new social movements in the 1970s, resulted in what the author calls a "Second Culture", the base from which Die Grünen were to rise.

The creation of a Green Party and the adoption of a radical strategy was a painful process. In the early days several ecological groups inside Die Grünen were more inclined to reformism and accommodation. These non-radical elements finally abandoned Die Grünen in 1980.

Today there are four main currents in the German Greens:

- *the proponents of realpolitik*, who are the most willing to accept some kind of parliamentary coaltion with the SPD;
- the *Fundamentalists*, who refuse any kind of tactical compromise;
- the small Eco-Libertarian group, remnants of the conservative elements who left the party in 1980;
- the *Eco-Socialists*, who would at best tolerate a coalition with the SPD, but who seek to avoid the political neutralisation of Die Grünen by emphasising extra-parliamentary activities carried out by the new social movements and the trade unions.

I believe that this book could have important consequences for all of us involved in green politics in Britain.

For Werner Hulsberg, the success of Die Grünen, lies in the fact that it "is not a purely ecological phenomenon", but a larger movement which has managed to incorporate feminism, gay and lesbian liberation, anti-racism, peace, and a radical socialist critique of capitalism.

The Greens in Britain are still widely perceived as being a one-issue Party; at the same time the Green-Socialists located in the institutionalised labour movement are more concerned about symbolic shifts in official policy (admittedly significant) than in building a strong extra-parliamentary base.

However, there is no simple "Die Grünen Model" for us in Britain. As Werner Hulsberg concludes, each green struggle has to be adapted to the specific political culture.

THE CHALL OF GR POLITI

Socialists in the UK are at last beginning to discover the green movement — all too often only to dismiss it without much thought.

The "environment" is quickly added to the bottom of the socialist programme, the Greens are dismissed as liberals, and socialists rest easy in the knowledge that because capitalism is the obvious cause, traditional socialist solutions are the equally obvious answer.

The real situation, however, is not always so easily accommodated within traditional socialist programmes. It does present a challenge to many of our ideas and practices. This is not to deny that the roots of much green politics can be found in the libertarian and utopian traditions in socialist history.

By ANDY PORTER
Convenor, Green Socialism Policy Discussion Group for the Socialist Conference

The green concept has different meanings to different people (just like socialism) but there are some common fundamentals to green politics of all types. They represent not just an emphasis on environmental problems, but a particular way of addressing them.

- An acknowledgement that there is a global ecological crisis caused by "industrialism", "capitalism", or a combination of the two, and that this crisis is one of the most important political issues of the age.
- A commitment to direct action — to taking action now both to limit the damage and to make alternative futures possible or more likely. This type of action ranges from immediate physical opposition (as in the high profile Greenpeace actions or in strike action by workers) to working for specific and pragmatic green reforms through parliament or local government.
- A critique of conventional economic growth and its implications for the use and abuse of resources. Where socialists would contrast anarchic profit-led growth with socially useful production and sustainable growth in chosen areas, some greens might argue for no growth at all.
- A commitment to an extension of democracy and to the equal distribution of power in society — whether through workers' control, democratic local government and electoral reform, or through decentralisation and a reduction in the scale of institutions, organisations, etc.

Activist

Like myself, Mark Douglas, the author of the accompanying article on the Green Party, is on SERA National Council. After years as a Labour Party activist, he quit Labour to join the Green Party and now takes a particular (and I would say utopian) view of green politics. *Briefing* readers may not agree, but his ideas represent a challenging new socialist current and deserve to be met with serious debate (please write in!).

Key points of controversy in this debate concern "industrialism" and economic growth. The critique of "industrialism" assumes that the cause of the ecological crisis is the ideological commitment to growth, wealth and the domination of nature. This ideology is seen as common to all classes, and thus

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the green task is seen as a challenge to individual lifestyles rather than to capital and the ruling class.

This is where the charge of "liberalism" sticks. Certainly Tim Cooper (referred to by Mark Douglas) is openly more interested in an alliance with radical liberals than with the left; similarly Rudolf Bahro of the German Greens has disowned the German Left and argues against support for strikes in industries that create environmental damage unless the dispute directly tackles the issue.

In all this, the crucial role of the ruling class gets lost. Many greens would even deny the existence of such a class, and it is important for socialists to keep on emphasising that it is *production for profit* rather than *production itself* that lies at the root of our problems.

However, we have yet to produce convincing green socialist explanations of why the so-called socialist countries follow the same damaging industrial patterns. It is too simplistic to say that they are all "state capitalist" and leave it at that. (Any offers for an article?) It is also too simplistic to blame all the problems of industrial society on capitalism.

Would a socialist society have predicted that a harmless chemical developed to make aerosols work better would end up threatening the ozone layer? I doubt it. We can only say that a socialist society would be able and willing to respond immediately when the threat was recognised.

Ecological

The reality is that there is an acute worldwide ecological crisis and that socialists need to respond to it. This is the challenge of green politics. The ecological crisis is not just an aspect of the crisis of capitalist economy; it is a new problem in its own right.

This is the key to the economic growth debate. We can no longer subscribe to the view that capitalism will lead to a beneficial development of the productive forces and that this is a necessary precondition for socialism. Rather, capitalism is producing a crisis of ecology that, by threatening the planet's ability to support human life at all, makes socialism *less* rather than more likely.

Of course, in relation to the national economy we support growth in specific areas of social need, but few greens would now disagree with this.

Many of these issues were discussed at the Green politics workshop at the Socialist Conference in Chesterfield. As a result of the interest roused by that workshop, green socialist politics will be a much more prominent theme in the recall conference on June 11th. There is also a separate Red and Green Conference in London on May 14th and 15th at Kingsway Princeton College, Sidmouth Street, London WC1. Details are available from the Socialist Society at 9 Poland Street, London W1.

The Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA) is a socialist organisation committed to campaign on environmental issues.

Join us, or subscribe to our magazine *New Ground*, by writing to SERA, 26-8 Underwood St, London N1.

Green and Red!

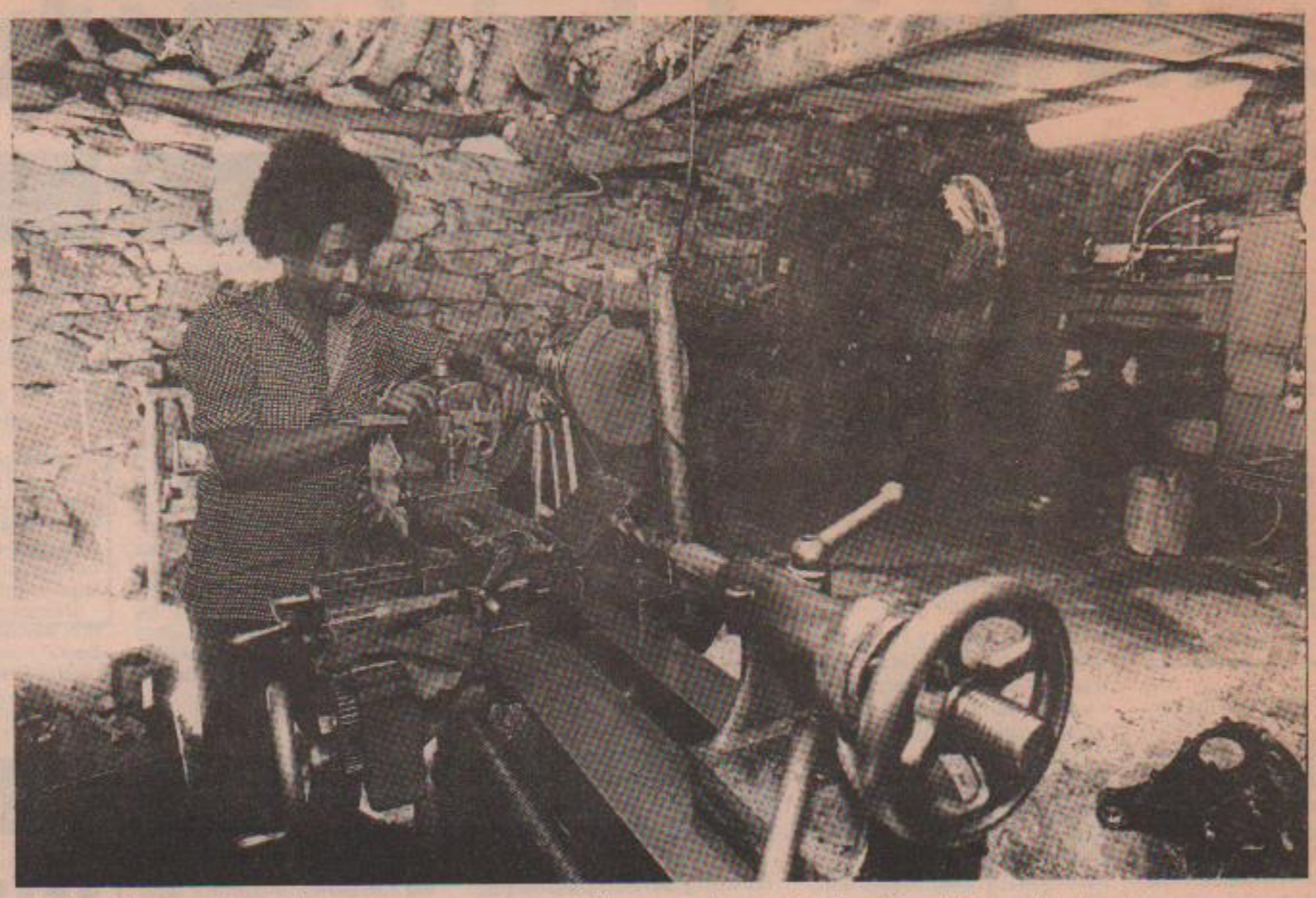


PHOTO: Network

Third world economies need to retain a greater share of their own produce in the face of capitalist exploitation. Here, a workshop makes new parts for trucks at sheb, Sahel province.

How Greens can save the left — and the planet

Far more horrendous than any of the class inequalities which preoccupy the British left are the global divisions between rich and poor nations.

These global disparities transcend the East West conflict. They put the industrial nations of both Western and Eastern Europe on the side of privilege, and consign capitalist and socialist Third World countries alike to abject impoverishment and underdevelopment.

20% of the world's nations consume 80% of the earth's resources. The consequences of this inequity make even the poorest British person seem rich.

Lives

The sheer dehumanisation of the lives of more than half the world's population can only be suggested by statistics:

- 2,500 million people have no safe, clean water supply;
- 1,500 million are either starving or chronically malnourished;
- 2,800 million live in slum or overcrowded housing conditions;
- 3,000 million receive only the most rudimentary education and health care.

In the 30 poorest countries, the average income is under £100 a year, the average infant mortality rate is 40%, and the average life expectancy is less than 50 years.

Monstrous

Such monstrous global suffering requires a priority response from socialists in the rich industrial metropolises. Yet, historically, the left in the West has always put the plight of the world's "have-nots" near the bottom of the political agenda.

The left has never even bothered to develop a coherent and plausible strategy to remedy what is self-evidently an intolerable gulf between the rich and poor nations.

Traditionally, the left's answer to Third World problems is the expropriation of foreign entrepreneurs and indigenous big business to establish a socialist society where the economy functions for the benefit of the working classes.

Though often helpful to the process of economic development, this strategy is not, alas, sufficient. The combination of nationalism and nationalisation cannot, by itself, remedy the unequal terms of trade between the rich and poor nations, nor does it necessarily halt the outflow of raw materials from Third World economies.

By PETER TATCHELL

No number of capital confiscations and no degree of state ownership can ensure Third World development when large portions of a nation's resources continue to pour abroad on terms which favour already privileged countries.

Yawning

If the yawning gap between the industrial north and the agrarian south is ever to be overcome, Third World countries will need to retain within their own economies more of the human and natural resources which are the building blocks of development.

Put bluntly: the economic progress of Asia, Africa, and Latin America is crucially dependent on the rich nations of the West and the East making do with *less resources*. The flow of raw materials out of the poor nations onto the production lines of the rich manufacturing states has to be substantially reduced.

Few socialists have ever faced up to this harsh reality. They have never been able to see how Britain could get by on less resources without provoking a massive, and electorally unacceptable, decline in living standards.

Insights

Thanks, however, to the insights of the green movement, this predicament at last seems resolvable. By reorganising our society around an ecological-based socialist economy, we will use less resources, and use them more efficiently. In this way, making do with less would not have to mean a lower standard of living — though it would mean a *different* standard of living.

To reduce the resources required by our society, we need to develop radically new patterns of production and consumption founded on a *green socialist* economic ethic.

The present free market system — with its rapacious devouring of raw materials must be replaced by a planned green socialist economy based on wiser and more efficient use of resources. We must place far greater emphasis on the manufacture of stronger and more durable commodities, as opposed to planned obsolescence, transient fashions, and disposable "throw-away" consumer items.

Priority

It means that we have to give a higher priority to the reconditioning of second hand products and the recycling of waste materials such as paper, glass, plastics, metal, and so on.

In the field of energy, by developing the advanced technologies of fluidised-bed combustion, our coal-fired power stations could double their fuel-to-electricity conversion rates. The setting up of Combined Heat and Power stations could tap much of the remaining hot air and water which is wasted in the energy conversion process and pump it into district heating systems linked to local factories, offices, and housing estates.

A far-reaching programme of energy conservation and insulation could reduce our energy needs by 25% — which wuld obviate the need for any expansion of the energy industry till the year 2000 and create five times more jobs than the government's proposed expansion of nuclear power.

Vast medical resources could be saved if the NHS shifted its whole emphasis from curative to preventive medicine.

Tobacco

Alcohol, tobacco, and high-fat foods are the three major causes of ill health in our society. Health education campaigns, punitive taxation, and advertising bans on these products could dramatically cut the incidence of cirrhosis of the liver, lung cancer, heart disease, and emphysema, thus preventing much suffering and saving many lives — and in the process saving vast medical resources currently consumed in the treatment of these preventable illnesses.

Commitment

If the left is serious about its commitment to a fairer global distribution of resources and the remedying of Third World under-development, then it has got to start thinking and acting green.

We need the courage to recognise the valuable insights of the green movement and the foresight to adapt and update our socialism accordingly.

The future of socialism is green and the left ignores it at its peril. What is at stake is not only the future of the left, but the fate of our class, our nation and our planet.

Features

Social Security Act
Junk food and junk jobs

When the new Social Security Act comes into force on April 11th, the rights of several million claimants to financial help and assistance will change.

- Supplementary Benefit will be abolished.
- Family Income Supplement will be abolished.
- Housing Benefit will be restructured.
- Single or Urgent Needs Payments will be replaced.

The government estimates that the Social Security Act will reduce expenditure by £450 million.

By Steve Taylor
Camden Labour Briefing

The Act is a straightforward attempt to cut the amount of money currently available to people living in poverty, and to redirect these funds towards the wealthy in the form of tax relief and reductions.

However, the Social Security Act is not merely a *financial* mechanism. It is primarily a *political* mechanism which is part of a much more insidious attack on those individuals and communities who subsist on or below the poverty line.

By reducing the amount of financial support available to the unemployed, the government aims to force them into low paid and/or part-time jobs, which have become the economic indices of Conservative revivalism.

The Social Security Act is also linked to the introduction of forced labour techniques through YTS, Job Start, Community Programming, and Re-Start. The Tories' intentions are clear — they want us all to wear a McDonald's uniform.

The aim is the creation of a "fast food economy" for the underclass — garish and cheap, efficient and streamlined, low-paid and part-time, non-unionised, and virtually non-edible. It is the reduction of economic choice for the poor to the lowest possible denominator.

Income Support

Income Support, which will replace Supplementary Benefit, is intended to meet the regular weekly needs of people not in full-time employment.

Income Support will *not* be paid to anyone who is in full-time employment (which has been reduced from 30 to 24 hours per week).

Income Support will *not* be paid to anyone with capital of over £6,000, regardless of their income.

Income Support will be *reduced* for claimants with capital of between £3,000 and £6,000.

A basic weekly allowance will be paid to each eligible claimant *with the exception of childless claimants under 25*, who will be paid at a lower rate.

Payments previously made to claimants with special needs — the elderly, single parents, the disabled — will be abolished, and replaced by "premiums" which categorise claimants according to their "client group".

Transitional payment will be made to compensate claimants whose Income Support entitlement is less than their previous entitlement under Supplementary Benefit. However, these payments will be phased out over a period of time.

Social Fund

The current system of Single Payments and Urgent Needs Payments will be replaced by a system of loans and grants, paid to claimants from the Social Fund.

The Fund will be operated by local DHSS offices, who will not be allowed to exceed strict cash limits. Payments from the Fund will be discretionary and there will be no legal entitlements.

Decisions about payment or non-payment will be made by Social Fund Oficers appointed by the DHSS. The right of appeal to an independent tribunal will be abolished. Instead, a claimant can ask for an internal review of the decision.

Budgetting loans and crisis loans made from the Social Fund must be repaid. The Social Fund Officer must decide whether or not the local DHSS can afford the loan, whether or not the claimant's need justifies the loan, and whether or not the claimant will be able to repay the loan.

The loan will be repaid over a fixed period of time from the claimant's Income Support entitlement. Repayment of the loan can be rescheduled by the Social Fund Officer at any time.

Housing Benefit

Housing Benefit payments, which provide help for rent and rate bills, will remain the responsibility of Local Authorities.

The Benefit will now be assessed on a claimant's net income rather than their gross income.

The maximum *rent* benefit will remain 100%. However, the maximum *rate* benefit will be reduced from 100% to 80%; and claimants will thus become responsible for paying *at least* 20% of their rate bill.

Anyone with £6,000 capital will now be ineligible for Housing Benefit. Anyone with capital of between £3,000 and £6,000 will have a certain amount deducted from Housing Benefit.

A claimant may be considered as possessing a "notional income" or capital where he or she is performing a service for which he or she either receives no payment or a payment less than the going rate.

Housing Benefit can be determined *at the going rate*, i.e. the claimant will be deemed to be receiving the payment and Benefit reduced accordingly.

Family Credit

Family Credit, which replaces Family Income Supplement, is payable to people in full-time work on low wages with dependent children. Family Credit claimants will no longer be entitled to free school meals, milk or vitamins.

Dental health matters
Who really needs a six monthly check-up?

If you don't go to the dentist every six months you probably feel quite guilty.
But why? What is so mysterious and different about your mouth that it needs checking so frequently?

Women have fought to take control of their bodies, but we all have a remarkably relaxed attitude to our teeth. We relinquish our mouths to dentists every six months, and remain in total ignorance of what is going on in there.

By Paul Shafee
Community Dentist

This is the old mechanistic approach to medicine that we have challenged with the rest of our bodies, but not yet with our mouths.

Check-ups simply make us more dependent on dentists, and less independent and able to look after ourselves.

Women are more health conscious than men, attending the dentist more regularly; yet they not only receive more treatment, they also lose their teth more quickly! *The truth is that the more you attend the dentist the more damage is done.*

On average, decay takes three years to reach the point when a filling is necessary. So why go every six months to have X-rays which may have side effects?

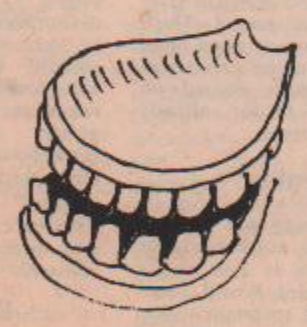
What is the point in having your teeth scaled by the dentist when any necessity for this can be avoided by proper brushing? Scaling does not prevent gum disease, but daily brushing does.

It has long been accepted that tooth loss in the first half of our life is due to tooth decay, and in the second half to gum disease. There is now evidence to show that damage caused by dentists is more important than gum disease.

Each time a filling is replaced the hole gets larger and the tooth weaker. The large fillings and crowns cause more gum disease because they have overhangs which harbour bacteria. This is the tooth death spiral.

Gum disease does not progress inevitably with age and can be prevented by effective daily tooth cleaning. People are also getting fewer cavities due to the use of flouride toothpaste and eating less sugar.

The most worrying thing is how dentists will react



to decreasing levels of need. They are paid for each filling. White papers have encouraged dentists to limit clinical intervention to the absolute minimum to give prevention the opportunity to work.

Under the present system of payment, they will be forced to treat ever smaller deviations from the norm in order to maintain their standard of living. In 1984 some dentists earned over £200,000 a year out of the NHS — and the number of dentists is still rising.

Changes do come about by making demands. A consultant in orthodontics (using braces to straighten children's teeth) recently told a group of dentists from the East End that standards of treatment had to change because patients no longer accepted poor work, and are more likely to sue.

Take control of your mouth by being less dependent on your dentist and instead think of *diet* (eating sugar less frequently) and *dirt* (cleaning your teeth effectively).

From the ages of 5-7 a six monthly check-up is recommended. From 7-14 years a once a year check-up, and for most adults check ups every two to three years are enough.

● Tess Kewley is taking a rest. She will be back next issue with another edition of *Speculum: A Midwife's Musings*

After Brussels summit
What future for Britain in the EEC?

Strange how circumstances in politics repeat themselves.

At the recent summit in Brussels we witnessed the re-emergence of the Franco-German alliance to thwart the British Tories.

It was Adenauer and de Gaulle who united to form the Market in 1958 and then rejected Britain's application to join the Six, piloted by Ted Heath.

By John Hayball
Chair, Chessington South BLP

Clearly, at one point in the Brussels negotiations, the French, led by Chirac, turned on Thatcher (they are not reputed to enjoy the best of relationships) and told the British they were not needed by the other members.

Juncture

At this juncture Spanish leader Felipe Gonzales provided the bridge for an unholy alliance between the dissenting partners. Without doubt, this represented the most notable intervention yet by the newly arrived southern states.

Clearly Thatcher did not get anything like 95% of her aims at Brussels. Whilst the British press sought to cover up the fact that something strange had happened at the summit, with their predictable support for Tory policy mixed with groans of disapproval, the foreign press was far less restrained.

Reported

The West German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported that Thatcher appeared "depressed and dejected". No wonder! The very real gains of 1984 at Fontainebleau had been blown away and the problems of the Market thrown wide open.

As veteran anti-marketeer Peter Shore noted in the House of Commons, Britain's contribution has risen by 45% as a result of the Brussels deal. The formula for the British contribution based on VAT has gone up from 1.4% to 1.9%.

At Fontainebleau restrictions on overproduction were fixed. At Brussels these were effectively lost.

Ruptured

The World Stock Market Crash of October 1987 profoundly ruptured exchange rates, particularly between the imperialist nations and the New Commonwealth. In 1919 the first crash was followed by a second. If that happens again, in 1988 or 1989, then the rupture this time could well be most marked between Britain and the EEC, since we have been allied historically with the USA and its hegemonic dollar.

This would lead to a spiralling of the Monetary Compensation Amounts, which become payable for cross-border trade in the EEC, and which Brussels did not tackle.

Objective

The Tories have long had the objective not of a United States of Europe but of a European Union led by the Right. However, in the event of failure, Thatcher has always kept her distance from the EEC by maintaining a profile of chauvinist British self-interest and refusal to take sterling into the European Monetary System.

The goal of a capitalist US of Europe is as far away as ever. The European Right persists in a policy of achieving a "single market' through "harmonisation". The question of a common currency remains at the bottom of the agenda.

Even with the internationalisation of capital on its present day scale, the rock-like edifice of the nation states and all that goes with it is far from submerged by the supra-state.

That is why the Kinnock position, spelt out in his letter to Enrique Baron of the Socialist International, committing the Labour Party to the EEC, is so dangerous. It could inflict huge damage on our electoral standing in the event of EEC collapse or of a British withdrawal.

Features

THE NEW RIGHT
"Maoist" Thatcherism and Clause 28

DAVE PALMER is a *Briefing* supporter who works in READING MATTERS BOOKSHOP in Haringey.
Reading Matters is currently the focus of attacks by local and national Tories and may soon be used as a test case for Clause 28. Here, Dave analyses the political and social context of the attack on Reading Matters and predicts more trouble ahead.

The basis of Thatcherite Tory policy and ideology is the combination of neo-liberal economics with rigid social and state authoritarianism.

The freer the market, the more repressive the social

This is now well documented after Thatcher's nine years in power. The Tories increasingly depend on the quasi-absolutist powers of "sovereignty" and "royal prerogative" devolved to the Prime Minister from the monarch under the United Kingdom's oligarchic "unwritten constitution".

This authoritarianism at the heart of the British State has been strengthened by the passage of a whole range of repressive legislation affecting both social activity and basic democratic rights (already extremely limited in Britain).

The New Right, which played a key role in the germination of Thatcherism in the mid-70s, following the crisis of the Heath government, is now exerting more influence than ever over mainstream Tory thinking. As a consequence the "fringe" elements of the New Right have come out into the open — Theresa Gorman, who replaced Harvey Proctor as MP for Billericay, for example.

We can see these these lineaments of a populist, "campaign-based" far right movement in Britain, untainted by old style 70s' fascism. The antics of the FCS and Albert Sherman's abortive invitation to Le Pen are now a sideshow to the main event. This is understood perfectly by Norman Tebbit, who aims to head up these new developments.

As most of the proposals initiated by the New Right for restricting trade union rights have passed into legislation they have set themselves new goals in the arena of social "order" and "morality". Through carefully planned legislation they intend to reverse the social "liberalisation" of the 60s and banish the ideas associated with that liberalisation.

The aim of this "cultural counter-reformation" is not the return to a "pre-60s" social order, based on a *repressive* consensus, and traditional hierarchy of race, gender and sexuality. Rather, it is a new type of *coercive*, rigidly hierarchical regime which uses state power to put women, black people, lesbians and gays "back in their place". All this is in harmony with the "Victorian values" of mainstream Thatcherism.

The New Right's propaganda activities complement the introduction of market-determined allocation of resources in health, education, housing, and social services. Ben Pimlott neatly expresses it in the *New Statesman* (March 13th 1988). Thatcherism, he says, is in its over-the-top "Maoist phase", in which "the only significant pressure from within the Conservative Party comes from the bonkers, and exceedingly nasty, ultra right."

The New Right's integral role in the Tory assault on the public sector has had its greatest impact in Baker's education reforms and the "debate" surrounding them. The New Right has fought a number of important setpiece "propaganda" battles on this terrain: Honeyford, McGoldrick, Dewsbury, Positive Images.

They have successfully pursued the themes of parent power and parents' "rights" (linked to an economic "freedom to choose" and "opting out"), the defence of "family values" and "morality", the reorganisation of the curriculum around "British" and "Christian" culture, and most important of all, purging the education system of "subversive" ideas.

These ideas (e.g. multiculturalism, pluralistic sex education, anti-sexism) are seen as having been "infecting" the minds of children, especially in inner city Labour-controlled Authorities (ILEA, Brent, Haringey).

The aim of the New Right has been to deal once and for all with the "carriers" of this "bacillus", "left-wing teachers" and "loony left Councils".

They have effectively promoted the simple, powerful notion that a series of "subversive" ideas and social practices are being "promoted" in schools by progressive teachers and Labour Local Authorities. Their campaign has now moved up a gear, thanks to a clever bridging tactic to which Thatcher has given direct support.

The infamous and deliberately vaguely worded Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill, which forbids the "promotion" of homosexuality or the teaching of its acceptability as a "pretended family relationship" by Local Authorities is certain to become law.

Significantly, SDP-member Viscount Falkland's attempt to amend the Clause to protect the expression of homosexual ideas in the arts failed in the Lords, despite backing from the powerful liberal arts establishment.

The history of Clause 28, particularly its backround in events in Haringey in North London, provides an excellent example of the development and tactics of the New Right. Following its victory in the '86 local elections, the Labour Group on Haringey Council attempted to discuss the introduction of teaching and curricular resources to promote "positive images" of lesbians and gays as part of the education curriculum.

Local bigots quickly organised into a "Parents' Rights Group" (PRG). Claiming to be "ordinary", non-political people, they were in fact backed and organised by the extreme right Tottenham Tories, led by neo-fascist Tory Councillor Peter Murphy, who has a significant white working class base.

National support soon emerged from the New Right. David Hart, the shadowy link between Thatcher, Big Business and the Notts miners, and his Committee For A Free Britain soon became involved, as did the Freedom Assocation and Aims for Industry, in providing legal and other support for the PRG.

The Tory Party, assisted by the gutter press, used the Positive Images issue as a key part of its propaganda campaign against "loony left" Councils in the run up to the general election.

The Labour leadership joined in the attack. Patricia Hewitt's infamous letter suggesting the Party should ditch support for lesbian and gay rights was leaked to the *Sun*. The so-called "London effect" was then used to scapegoat the hard left for Labour's disastrous election result.

It now appears that Thatcher met the PRG and its national allies Jill Knight and Baroness Cox (both leading figures of the Freedom Association) either prior to or soon after the general election. She gave them her assurance that the government would back an amendment to the Local Government Bill which would outlaw the "promotion" of homosexuality in schools. Once the Bill is enacted Haringey is likely to be used as the first test case for its implementation.

The labour movement is weakest and social bigotry in general most intense on the question of sexuality. The New Right saw its opportunity to use this question to promote a wide range of authoritarian objectives.

They were comforted by the appalling performance of the Labour front bench and PLP when the Clause was first introduced in the Commons. Labour MPs joined in the attack on left Councils and a large number actually voted for the Clause.

This stands in sharp contrast to the large mass movement that has emerged against the Clause, and the intense disquiet it has generated amongst "liberal" elements of the establishment (even Mary Archer is against it!).

We are now certain to see the New Right take up a series of themes arising from the Clause, including a generalisation of opposition to the "promotion" of "ideology" (for example, Black "subversion" of the education system through race quality initiatives), a large-scale exploitation of the issues of child abuse, paedophilia, and AIDS as part of a wide-ranging attack on lesbians and gays, equal opportunities in the voluntary sector, public sector social services, and the anti-censorship lobby.

Without doubt, the Clause is a stalking horse for other methods of extending censorship over publicly subsidised arts and, more importantly, electronic media.

Thatcherism in its "Maoist" phase is directly tied to the New Right agenda. The stakes are high. Beneath the surface are deep divisions and tensions within the British bourgeoisie. There is little agreement over the type of social and political regime necessary in post-Thatcher Britain.

When David Hockney (an ardent Thatcherite) stated that he would remove his paintings from the Tate if the Clause was passed, he called Thatcher a hypocrite for being in favour of more freedom for the businessman but less for the artist. Of course, the contradiction is as much Hockney's as Thatcher's. Yet what Hockney expresses in the cultural sphere is part of a more general split bewtween those who favour a "consolidation" behind a veneer of pluralism and the authoritarian neo-liberals who want to go for broke.

This division, which totally supercedes the old wet dry alignment, will determine many of the main characteristics of British politics over the coming period. Clause 28 gives us a glimpse of the body of the beast that is about to emerge.

Reading Matters' windows were smashed by an unknown party on the night of March 17th. This followed threats to burn the shop down made by leading local Tories at the Haringey Council meeting held earlier that night. Police have declined to investigate.

On the morning of March 18th, news came through that Ray Honeyford and others had tried to set up a "Majority Rights" organisation, dedicated to defending the "indigenous English" population from "oppressive laws and parasitic bureaucracy... introduced to combat discrimination".

Immigration laws
More racist than ever

Three thousand people marched through London on Sunday March 6th against the Tories' new immigration law.

Contingents of the Indian Workers Associations from around the country provided at least half the demonstrators; but the turnout from the labour movement was poor.

NALGO was the only union officially represented, and even the far left was limited to a token presence.

Of course, it was the day after the massive March 5th NHS demo but that is not the main explanation. Many comrades on the left still don't even know about the new law. Comrades, it's time to wake up.

The main aim of the new law is to make it even more difficult for black people to bring their families to this country. It has the subsidiary objective of making racist political capital for the government.

Under the new law, people in this country with spouses abroad will have to prove conclusively that they can financially support and accommodate them before they will be allowed to enter the country. No provision is made for the possibility that wives or husbands will be able to work and contribute to their own support.

Of course, this measure will be applied in a racist way. You are going to find it much easier to bring your Swiss boyfriend or girlfriend into the country than your Bangladeshi wife or husband.

This new attack on the right of family reunion comes at a time when the number of emigrants now far exceeds the number of immigrants. Its racist intent couldn't be clearer.

For the first time "overstaying" will be made a criminal offence. Each day of overstaying will be a new, additional offence, and subject to separate penalties. Overstayers, or alleged overstayers, will be subject to summary deportation by the police.

It is going to be made much harder to campaign against deportation. Several stages of legal procedure – including the right of MPs to intervene and the right of appeal to the Immigration Appeals Adjudicator – are effectively being removed.

By Phil Hearse
Islington North CLP

Someone who claims to be a British citizen but cannot produce a passport to prove it will be subject to summary deportation. This will apply mainly to people arriving at airports. Again, rights of appeal and of intervention by welfare organisations are being eroded.

Extraordinary

Another extraordinary feature of the new Bill is the provision which will in future prevent "second or subsequent" wives of polygamous marriages coming into this country. In fact, over the past decade, fewer than 30 people from polygamous mariages entered the country. This measure is a transparent attempt to make the issue of polygamous families a racist "issue" one which will go down well with sensationalist tabloids.

Many on the left may have imagined immigration law was already as racist as it could get. But never underestimate the ingenuity of the Home Office.

The March 6th demonstration was organised by the Campaign Against Racist Laws, a small group of people who should be congratulated for their persistence in the face of widespread indifference. It is really not acceptable that hundreds of black workers should mobilise on the streets on this issue, and get such scant support from the labour movement.

It is late in the day to fight back on this particular issue but not too late to raise it. And it is certainly not too late to take up the fight on behalf of those threatened with deportation, like Viraj Mendis, and Marion Gaima in Hackney.

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Letters

WRITEBACK!

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

Join NUCPS against the Clause!

Dear *Briefing*,

I trust it was merely an oversight that reference to the NUCPS banner was omitted from your report of those union banners present at the Manchester demo against Clause 28 (*Briefing*, no. 57).

In fact, apart from the NUJ, ours was the only *national* trade union banner there.

It is absolutely crucial that support for the campaign against the Clause is mobilised within the trade union movement. Unions have access to vast communication machines which should be used to raise the issue with the membership. TUC sponsorship for the FAB campaign should be extended to that against the Clause.

Victory against the Tories will only be achieved by mass action across the entire labour movement. I trust there will be more than two national union banners on April 30th!

Yours fraternally,
Paul Smyth,
Secretary, NUCPS Lesbian & Gay Group

Save Chapel Allerton

Dear *Briefing*,

Campaigning to save Chapel Allerton Hospital in Leeds, the 210 Chapel Allerton/Newton Green Wing COHSE Branch, with other unions, demonstrated outside the hospital on Jaunary 18th 1988 to highlight what the Authority was planning to do regarding the hospital, which is classed as a home from home.

We expected coverage by Radio Leeds, Radio Aire, and the *Yorkshire Evening Post* but, sad to say, nothing was publicised. When we enquired the reason why, none was given. Since then a number of us have been interviewed expressing our concern regarding the hospital.

Around August 1987, at the Authority's meeting, the chair emphasised that closure was not on the cards for the next seven years. It now looks like this valuable and unique hospital could be closed much earlier.

The struggle is most definitely on. Morale is low, but we press on as brave soldiers fighting for a good cause.

The catering service was won in-house by hard work and strong determination, with some staff applying for redundancy. Those left behind are struggling, working their fingers to the bone.

The domestic tender was won, but with great hardship for those now working for less money, and trying to do a good job.

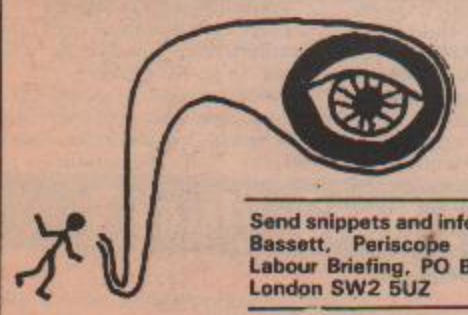
Things are not the same, but with grinding teeth and frustrated smiles we are struggling on, campaigning to save Chapel-Allerton Hospital. The community, patients, and employees, numbering more than seven hundred souls, would be torn apart if this hospital was closed.

At the moment, only emergency maintenance work is being done and some essential work is being left undone.

The boiler house has been contracted out to a private company. Cancer screening is carried out at the hospital. The operating theatre suite has just been upgraded. The hospital provides valuable professional care to the citizens of Leeds and is easily accessible, as it is on major routes.

Yours faithfully,
L.H. White
Branch Secretary, COHSE, Chapel Allerton Hospital, Leeds 210 Branch

Periscope



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

It can happen to the best of us...

Briefing stalwart Graham Bash, stricken by a mysterious virus, has been forced to while away his invalid hours reading *War and Peace*.

Briefing asked Graham for his verdict on Tolstoy's lengthy masterpiece.

"Good read," said the word-weary Bash, "but he's got the wrong line."

Enemies chime in

"It is only a modest exaggeration to suggest that Labour's handling of the Gibralter episode provides a microcosm of much of what is wrong with the Party's pitiful performance as a Parliamentary opposition. It can be summarised in one word: timidity."

Ian Aitken (arch-enemy of the Labour left) in *The Guardian*, March 14th.

Silence on crossed wires

The following letter was sent to Ken Hulme, LCC Organising Secretary, with a copy to Michael Meacher. Neither Hulme nor Meacher has yet replied.

"Dear Ken,

I was disappointed to see from the LCC's recent mailing that you have asked members to report to you the political leanings of individual Constituency Youth and Student Officers. I do no think this is an acceptable practice.

You will appreciate that personal assessments of the kind you are soliciting are readily susceptible to misinformation. This may be motivated by malice and it can lead to actions which, in the context of the Economic League and its vetting facilities, Michael Meacher has described as "McCarthyite".

You will be aware that political characterisations of each member of the Bermondsey CLP General Committee produced by LCC members grossly overstated the number of *Militants* involved, including an assessment of Jim Mortimer as a "*Militant* fellow traveller".

In view of this, I would be grateful to be informed of the following:

- Is the LCC registered under the Data Protection Act?
- Does the LCC hold personal information on computer files?
- Do you support Michael Meacher's call for the Act to be broadened to take in manual indexes? He has raised this matter in connection with the Economic League.
- Will the LCC reconsider its practice, notify members that you are withdrawing the request made in the recent mailing, and will you destroy any such personal files you may be keeping?
- I would like a copy of any information you may be holding on me.

Yours sincerely,
Geoffrey Sheridan
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP"

Harry is against

Oops!

As you may have realised, despite the error last issue, MP Harry Barnes voted *against* the Alton Bill.

The point being made was that *three* members of the Campaign Group — Denis Canavan, Ronnie Campbell and Bob Parry — voted *for* it.

Invisible Fleet Street hacks work miracles

The current attack on **Reading Matters** bookshop in North London was spearheaded by an article in the *Sunday Telegraph*, falsely claiming the bookshop had sold "Scum", an obnoxious anarchist pamphlet, to children.

Workers at the bookshop wrote to the paper, pointing out the numerous errors in the article.

The managing editor refused to print the letter, but replied by post to the workers, asserting that one of their reporters had actually purchased the pamphlet in the bookshop the week before.

This same assertion was made by reporters from the *Standard* and elsewhere. But the workers have no recollection of *any* of these Fleet Street parasites entering the shop in recent weeks.

Labour Briefing

Annual General Meeting

Yes, the event you've all been waiting for. Never mind the Socialist Conference, the NHS, or even the Labour Party Annual Conference in Blackpool. The Labour Briefing AGM will be held on Saturday July 2nd, in London.

Workshops, reports, debates, a rally and a social are planned — so mark your diaries now and start organising to ensure that *Briefing* supporters from every part of the country attend.

Details of planned events — and arrangements for transport and accommodation — will be announced soon.

May Day Greetings

***Labour Briefing* invites you to send May Day Greetings to the labour movement through our columns.**

Rates:

£2.50	per col. inch
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£45.00	Quarter page
£85.00	Half page
£150.00	Full page

Special May Day offer
Five column inches for £10!
Deadline: April 19th
Send message & cheques, payable to Labour Briefing, to Labour Briefing, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ

Stop the Clause Calendar

April 8th. National and International Day of Action
April 25th. Lobby of Haringey Civic Centre
April 30th. Mass demonstration in London. Meet at noon on the Embankment, rally and festival at Kennington Park.
Stop the Clause Campaign Meetings. All lesbians and gay men welcome to the weekly meetings Wednesdays, 6.30pm, Islington Town Hall, London.

CONTACT BRIEFING

The *Briefing* Editorial Board, and the following Commissions, can be contacted at PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ, 01 733 7016:
Trade Union Briefing, Youth Briefing, Student Briefing, Lesbian & Gay Briefing, Briefing Women and International Briefing.

Briefing Steering Committee:
Next meeting: Sunday, May 1st, London.
Briefing Editorial Board:
Next meetings: Friday March 31st, Thursday April 7th.
Deadline for articles:
Issue no. 60 (out April 13th): notify EB as soon as possible, all articles in by Tuesday April 5th.
Issue no. 61 (out April 26th): notify EB as soon as possible, all articles in by Tuesday April 19th.
NB: *Briefing* will be taking an extra week's Easter holiday between issue 59 and 60.

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This week's winner

Out of London for this week's winner — all the way to the Midlands. Dave Spencer of Coventry certainly found it lucky to take out a second share in the 500 Club. No. 469 missed the draw — but no. 470 came up!

Book Review

Two tales of one city

Liverpool: a city that dared to fight, by Peter Taafe and Tony Mulhearn, *Fortress*, £6.95
Inside Left, the story so far... by Derek Hatton, *Bloomsbury*, £3.95

In the spring of 1985 the miners were still on strike and local government was about to become our second front against the Tories.

As Taafe and Mulhearn painfully recall, a year later Kenneth Baker was able to gloat, "*The united front of the Militant left has crumbled before our eyes. Instead of opening a second front with the miners some of their troops have fled the battlefield.*"

Today, as Labour's municipal leaders find it impossible to think beyond ameliorating the worst effects of the cuts, and some stoop to repatriating homeless Irish people and setting riot police on squatters, the hard left needs to look critically at its own record in local government.

In this regard, the book by Taafe and Mulhearn will be of use. Unfortunately, Derek Hatton's will not.

Hatton describes his passage from choirboy and schoolboy star in the *Merchant of Venice* to the great man which he is convinced he has become.

His book, serialised in Murdoch's scab *Sunday Times*, is littered with invective against the London left. In his introduction he proudly declares:

"We were not the loony left — more concerned about black mayors and gay rights than we are in building council homes."

When it was said that women had to be represented on the platform of a national public meeting this wit suggested that John Hamilton should don a dress.

To David Blunkett and his LCC understudies, Hatton's comments provide ample justification for the witch-hunt. We would remind Blunkett that it is not usually an expulsionable offence to share some of Neil Kinnock's reactionary ideas!

If Blunkett really opposes such views he should recognise that the Liverpool purge set in motion a witch-hunt that has now extended to Mandy Mudd and Sharon Atkin, whose record of fighting against sexism and for all the oppressed is immeasurably better than his own, not to mention Hatton's.

By Bryn Griffiths
Hackney South CLP

Whilst it is right to oppose the witch-hunt unreservedly it is also right to ask *Militant* how it was possible for someone with the politically backward views of Derek Hatton to become so powerful within *Militant* and its Liverpool stronghold.

Chapter 13 of the Taafe-Mulhearn book on "the Sam Bond Affair" describes the clash with the Liverpool Black Caucus as a clash between a "class conscious labour movement" and the "race relations industry". This explanation may have a grain of truth but it is by no means the whole of it. The reason the clash became so bitter was *Militant's* political failure to grasp the right of the oppressed to organise autonomously.

Militant's bureaucratic approach to the black community helped the Black Caucus to win 477 votes standing in a Council by-election in opposition to Labour. There can be little doubt that *Militant's* approach to the question of race weakened the City Council's struggle against the government.

The Taafe-Mulhearn book begins by describing the conditions of economic crisis that allowed *Militant* to grow on Merseyside and charts the efforts of *Militant* to build a working class leadership in the local labour movement. Comrades who feel demoralised in the current climate and are considering resignation from the Party or positions on local Councils would do well to learn from *Militant's* example.

"The decade between 1964-74 was a turbulent period of struggle in the labour movement during which Militant and its close allies on the left made a powerful impact on events," say Taafe and Mulhearn. *"This prepared the basis for the historic events of 1983 and after,"* (my emphasis').



PHOTO: Tim Rigby

Eric Heffer and Liverpool councillors (later to be surcharged) joined forces to lead this march in support of the Council's achievements and in support of the miners.

In the 60s *Militant* was swimming against the tide not only of Labour's right wing but also much of the left, who heaped contempt on *Militant's* immersion in the Labour Party. Today's conditions are positively encouraging by comparison.

In contrast to many *Militant* publications, this book is quite readable. It narrates the attempts to apply their *Militant* programme rather than merely repeating the programme in the abstract. The discussion on budget tactics is particularly interesting.

In contrast to Ted Knight and much of the London left, Liverpool advocated a deficit budget. They argued that this would allow greater trade union participation and would be easier to explain than the more passive "no rate" tactic. They only agreed to abide by the "no rate" strategy in the interests of unity with other Labour Councils.

It is ironic that Blunkett criticised Liverpool Council for waging a (successful) struggle in 1984, and urged them to wait for the "real fight" in 1985 around abolition and rate-capping. A year later Blunkett attacked Liverpool Council for fighting to the end and abiding by the 1985 "no rate" strategy.

The isolation of Liverpool and the problems arising from the "no rate" strategy eventually led to the terrible blunder of issuing redundancy notices. It should be stated that there was never any intention to make people redundant. It was merely a device to buy time.

But, any trade unionist worth his or her salt was bound to resist such action. Kinnock pounced on the error, making one of the most disgraceful speeches seen at a Labour Party Conference in many years.

As in the case of the Black Caucus debacle, *Militant* failed to realise that even a Council leading a courageous fight against the governemnt has constantly to earn the trust of the working class. The leadership of such a struggle has to develop tactics that foster unity in action. They cannot simply *inform* trade unionists or black organisations of the next tactical move.

Kinnock's speech at Conference was the turning point in this particular struggle, but it will by no means be the end. Already the 1987 general election result in Liverpool has vindicated the *Militant* stand. In the course of the fight houses and sports centres were built, rents kept down, and the Croxteth School was saved. These achievements will remain.

Criticisms of particular tactics employed by Liverpool Council can and should be made. But the overwhelming responsibility for its eventual defeat rests on the shoulders of Neil Kinnock and others in the movement who failed to stand alongside Liverpool in its fight with the government.

All socialists should read *Liverpool — a City that dared to fight* and learn from the city's struggle. Hatton's book does not warrant the same effort and is probably best forgotten.

Book Review

Radical Chic turns reactionary

The Bonfire of the Vanities, by Tom Wolfe, *Jonathan Cape*, £12.45

"Insulation. If you want to live in New York you've got to insulate."

So goes the advice of Rawlie Thorpe, stockbroker at Pierce and Pierce, to colleague Sherman McCoy.

But Sherman McCoy, the Wall Street wizard, wearer of $1,800 suits and self-styled "Master of the Universe", fails to heed the warning. One night he takes a wrong turning — into the Bronx and his Nemesis.

The insularity and racialism expressed by "insulate, insulate" underlies the whole novel, which teems with pessimism and anomie. New York is here seen through misanthropic eyes.

A jaunty, flippant misanthropy, in which ugliness of human nature is described with lingering attentiveness.

In a news office journalists are "rooting about like starving weevils". The language radiates malice and misogyny: women at a party are described as "social x-rays... women of a certain age (starved to near perfection). To compensate for the concupiscence, missing from their juiceless ribs and atrophied backsides, they turned to the dress designers."

By Caroline Rault
Reading Matters
Bookshop

Characters compete for the choicest racist epithets: Kramer the Jewish D.A. from the Bronx says, "the Italians were pigs and the Irish mules and goats." A crowd of black protestors taunt the Mayor with cries of "Yo Hymie, Yo Goldberg". Because the author fails to intervene, this racism and intolerance are almost celebrated and come to seem both universal and irreversible.

Wolfe's previous protrayals of black people have been insulting. In *Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing The Flak Catcher* he perfected his "ghetto dude/hustler" stereotype. There is no progress here.

The main black character, Reverend Bacon, is an unsympathetic, corrupt community leader who gets his way by bullying or guilt-tripping, (a theme repeated from *Radical Chic*). His sidekick is a character called Buck (!) who wears a gold earring and walks with a "pimp roll".

Despite differing jobs, class positions, etc., the main male characters all share the same motivation (the women hardly signify): self-interest and an obsessive fear of ridicule. In fact, Kramer's and McCoy's interior monologues are practically interchangeable. They both fantasise constantly about women and live in perpetual fear of being made fools of. This makes for poor fiction and shows glaringly the limits of Wolfe's satire.

It is difficult to sustain interest in the characters because they are uniformly unlikeable. Who cares if Sherman goes to jail or not? Who cares if Farrell, the obnoxious English journalist, gets his scoop or not? Ultimately, Wolfe the satirist never has to make a moral stand; to him, everything is equally ridiculous and worthless.

However, I have to admit I did go on reading. Despite the superficiality and the engulfing cynicism the writing is often mesmerising. Not a brilliant novelist Tom Wolfe, the dandy and observer, is possibly the creator of a new genre: docu-fiction perhaps?

● *Bonfire of the Vanities* and other new books are available from *Reading Matters* Bookshop, 10 Lymington Avenue, Wood Green, London N22.

Book Review

SWP Shock! Lesbians don't exist!

Out, Proud and Fighting: Gay Liberation and the Struggle for Socialism, by Noel Halifax, pamphlet published by the Socialist Workers Party, £1.00

On the Manchester Stop the Clause demonstration in February, I was angry that the slogans raised by the SWP related exclusively to gay men and ignored the existence of lesbians.

Reading *Out, Proud and Fighting*, their new pamphlet on gay liberation and the struggle for socialism, I discovered that the specific oppression of lesbians was systematically ignored and lesbians treated as mere "female gays".

In places this leads to completely ludicrous formulations. We are told, for example, that "lesbians and gays are ... in all likelihood married and at best try a bit of illicit gay sex in the local cottage"!

Apart from this major flaw, the pamphlet is useful in presenting a lot of historical material in an accessible form. However, history is often simplified and distorted to lead the reader inexorably to the conclusion that the only way forward is... wait for it... to join the SWP!

By Terry Conway
Islington South CLP

It ignores the existence of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, which has led the struggle in the Labour Party over the last decade. It rewrites much of recent history, giving false accounts of the role played by the left in the Labour Party in Haringey over the "Positive Images" policy, of the response of Labour Party lesbians and gay men to the Hewitt letter and to the position of the Labour leadership on Clause 28.

Perhaps more surprisingly it also ignores developments within the trade unions both on policy questions and on the self-organisation of lesbians and gay men. This includes omitting any mention of the SWP-initiated Gay Rights at Work Campaign which did have a fair degree of success in the early 70s, but which presumably doesn't fit the current model.

The SWP have always had an ambivalent attitude to the self-organisation of the oppressed, of women and black people as well as of lesbians and gay men. It is unfortunate that at a time when lesbians and gays are under such vicious attack the only solution put forward is to join an organisation which lacks either the analysis or strategy necessary for lesbian and gay liberation — or, indeed, for socialism.

Spanish CP

From tragedy to farce

The preliminaries to the recent Twelfth Congress of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) resembled a belated epilogue to Manuel Vazquez Montalb'an's detective novel *Murder of the Central Committee*.

The internecine struggle waged by prominent personalities within the PCE leadership to avoid assuming the post of General Secretary could only be adequately explained if Gerardo Iglesias, the out-going General Secretary, had been found slumped over his desk with a knife between his ribs.

By Andy Robinson
Barcelona

But nothing of the sort had happened.

Iglesias, having braved three years of relentless criticism from Santiago Carrillo and his new party PTE(MUC) — which boasts more initials than supporters — cheerfully decided to let someone else have a go.

He must have felt quietly satisfied when a series of desperately modest refusals followed nominations for his successor.

"I feel there are several more capable comrades than I," each comrade generously acknowledged.

Three days before the Congress closed, Anguita, the ex-mayor of Cordoba and leader of the outstandingly successful United Left (IU) campaign in Andalucia (now challenging the socialists for control of the Autonomous Parliament) firmly declared that he would not accept the post: "When I make a decision, it's irrevocable."

The following Monday, he became the Party's new General Secretary.

Santiago Carrillo, leader of the Spanish Communists from prehistory to the dawn of the post-Franco democracy, is understandably appalled. To a battler like Carillo, such reluctance to dirty one's hands smacks of cowardice.

What's worse, his own name didn't even crop up in the worst-case contingency plans. Most members of the PCE would prefer "La Pasionara" (92 years of age, and spending most of her passing time reconstructing the Asturian miners' insurrection of 1934) to Carrillo, who is now a classic example of a person with a great future behind them.

His pompous call for "unity of Communists" seems to have been heeded by all sections of the divided party, from Ignacio Gallego's "pro-Soviets" to the most unashamed "eurocommunists", with the notable exception of his own supporters, still clinging to the Carrillo bandwagon after so many emergency stops and U-turns.

Aided by reforms in the Soviet Union, the "pro-Soviets" will rejoin the PCE in the coming months. Carillo's "Movement for the Unity of Communists" will then be the only obstacle to the realisation of its own ostensible objective.

Carillo's attacks on the strategy of "Izquierda Unida" (Left Unity), which tries to build non-sectarian left opposition to the PSOE "socialist" government, fell on deaf ears when Iglesias was in charge. Anguita, whose claims to the party leadership (if he had only staked them) derived from his management of the Andalucian IU campaign, is even less likely to listen to them.

Carillo ought to reflect on the policies that he personally imposed on the PCE during the late seventies and early eighties:

- the PCE's 1977 "historical compromise", for example, when he signed the "Moncloa Pacts" guaranteeing industrial peace for Adolfo Suarez's fragile coalition of liberals and conservatives and "a hundred years of tranquility for foreign investment," as Carrillo candidly put it;
- or when in 1978 he telephoned the party's Executive Committee from Roumania to advise them to respond to the socialists' challenge to Suarez and the monarchy with the words "Just forget the Republic, support the Monarchy and that's that";
- or the "deleninization" of the party which led to a deep split, the formation of the pro-soviet People's Communist Party, and a series of expulsions.

Carrillo will spend the rest of his days whining in the wilderness because his decision to sell everyone and everthing down the river for the sake of consolidating Spain's delicate democracy was emphatically rejected by the electorate and by the party itself.

Having given the once militant and clandestine party just over 10% of the vote in 1979, the public spurned the consensus-obsessed PCE of 1982 with 3.8% . And between 1979 and 1983 an astonishing 120,000 militants (65% of the membership) abandoned the PCE.

All this is not to say, however, that Carrillo's critcism of the IU strategy is baseless. Seeing in the vast, imaginative anti-NATO campaign built before the 1986 referendum the potential for a broad-based anti-government movement, the PCE leadership forgot that even the loosest of political fronts must have a solid programme.

In the absence of a concrete platform nebulous terms like "progressive" came to define the Izquierda Unida parternership.

The Carlists ("progressive" in the same way that any remaining Scottish followers of "Bonnie Prince Charlie" are) were invited into the IU ranks, while revolutionaries who had played important roles in the "No to NATO" campaign remained outside. In the 1986 election campaign Izquierda Unida became, for most people, the Communist Party by another name. The election results confirmed this popular cynicism.

The IU gained only a few more votes than the PCE had done in 1982 and returned the same number of MPs. The exception was in Andalucia, whre, led by the "caliph of Andalucia", Julio Anguita, the IU launched an uncompromising attack on the government's half-hearted land reform programme and won over large numbers of industrial and agricultural workers from PSOE, gaining over 17% of the vote.

Now that Anguita has taken up office in Madrid, he will face problems that didn't ever arise down south:

- to what extent should IU work with PSOE in areas like Catalonia where conservative nationalists control almost all the non-urban areas?
- how far is the PCE prepared to cede its identity to IU?

It was weighty issues like these that made Anguita and his colleagues so reluctant to take up the party's leadeship in the first place.

Labour response to Gibraltar:

Ireland's British problem

Things have come to a pretty pass when *The Daily Telegraph* is to the left of the Labour Party.

But that is exactly what happened in the aftermath of the Gibraltar assassinations.

"We find ourselves less sastisfied with the government's account of events than the Labour Front Bench," said a *Telegraph* editorial, noting Labour's enthusiasm for the shoot-to-kill operation in Gibraltar.

By Geoff Bell
Hackney North CLP

That enthusiasm had been expressed by one of the Party's foreign affairs spokespersons, George Robertson MP. When Geoffrey Howe informed the Commons of the assassinations, Robertson's first words were:

"May I congratulate those responsible."

He later told *The Independent*:

"The three involved were described by their own organisation to be on active service. I don't think anybody can afford to be squeamish."

Days later, following the lead given by David Owen (whose initial reaction to the killings was critical) Gerald Kaufman, Robertson's senior, at least tabled a number of Parliamentary questions about the assassinations. But there is little doubt that Robertson's "congratulations" had been sanctioned in advance by the Parliamentary leadership, and that for them too concern about summary executions carried out by agents of the British state in foreign parts is "squeamish".

This is characteristic not just of the Kinnock clique's timid moderation in general, but also of their attitude to Ireland in particular.

The one time Kinnock has acted seriously on Ireland was after the Enniskillen tragedy when, on Thatcher's behalf, he flew to Dublin to demand that the Irish government agree to the extradition of political prisoners to Britain.

The only other time in recent memory Kinnock has made his presence felt over Ireland was when he voted for the suspension of Ken Livingstone from the House of Commons for calling the government "accomplices to murder" over the Stalker affair.



PHOTO: Martina Stead

Bloody Sunday demo, January 1988. Activists are left by the labour movement leadership to march alone in favour of Irish self-determination.

Stalker is another illustration of the Labour Leadership's willingness to collaborate with the Tories over Ireland. Certainly, there were criticisms form the front bench over the government's reaction to the report. Even this criticism was limited.

The Party demanded a judicial inquiry into the events investigated by Stalker. The right wing *Economist* went much further and called for the publication of the Stalker report. As for the Party's demand for a judicial inquiry, it was particularly ridiculous as it was made in the same week that the Birmingham Six verdict was announced, which showed just how much justice Irish people can expect from the British judiciary.

The Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four are yet further examples of the Leadership's inaction on Ireland. On these issues, it has been left to backbenchers, including Tories, to criticise the courts and police. When the Birmingham appeal was rejected in a transparently criminal exercise Kinnock's reaction was "no comment".

The Labour left needs to appreciate the extent of the Leadership's complicity in the Tories' policies of shoot-to-kill, assassinations, and frame-ups. It is naive to look at some successes by Irish campaigners in the Party in the last four or five years and conclude that there has been some qualitative break from the past.

It's true that Kevin MacNamara, the Party's spokesperson on Ireland, is much more willing to call for reforms in the North of Ireland than were most of his predecessors. But, when the crunch comes, over Gibraltar, Enniskillen, the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Birmingham Six, Stalker, or the Guildford Four, Labour remains the most loyal — or indeed "loyalist" — official opposition.

The Party leadership is an integral and unashamed part of Ireland's British problem.

International Women's Day

Durham prison picket

"Prisoners out of gaol! Troops out of Ireland!"

This was one of many calls from 400 people gathered outside Durham Gaol on International Women's Day, Sunday March 13th.

Women from the Irish POW Campaign in Britain and from the Newcastle Women and Ireland Group played a major role in organising the picket.

Solidarity messages from Women's Groups in Australia, New Zealand, Britain and Ireland indicated the widespread support for the two Irish prisoners of war kept in H-wing in Durham — Ella O'Dwyer/Ni Dhuibhir and Martina Anderson/Nic Aindreasa.

Ella and Martina have been held at Durham Prison since being sentenced to life for conspiracy at the Brighton bomb show trial in July 1986. While on remand at Brixton Prison, they endured horrendous treatment: sleep deprivation, constant body and cell searches, and a staggering 691 strip searches.

By Chris Corrin
Leeds Women and Ireland Group

Irish prisoners of war from many British gaols, including Albany — Isle of Wight, Gartree, Leicester, Maidstone, and Wakefield, sent messages of support and encouragement.

Noreen Anderson read out a letter from her sister Martina describing the terrible conditions inside H-wing. Women on the wing spend up to 12 hours locked in their cells with their own buckets of waste, and one morning they queued for breakfast alongside them.

On several occasions the sluices have overflowed whilst women are eating and the prison authorities have forced women to clean up using floor cloths (without disinfectant) as only one mop is available.

The official reason given for this problem is that sanitary towels block the pipes; yet much evidence detailing similar conditions in men's prisons shows this to be yet another fabrication, and that the poor sanitation is designed to humiliate and intimidate the women prisoners.

Conditions in H-wing are inhuman, with maximum surveillance and sensory deprivation. Although closely watched, Ella and Martina continue to endure regular body and strip searches.

As Ella stated: "How long will this psychological torture continue? We've been sentenced to life imprisonment. Does that mean a life sentence of sexual torture?"

One woman who knew a great deal about the deprivation and inhumane treatment in British prisons, having spent ten years in Armagh and Maghaberry, is Mairead Farrell, who went on hunger strike in December 1980 when she was Officer Commanding the sentenced women prisoners.

She fought throughout her imprisonment for recognition of political status. As soon as she got out of prison in September 1986 Mairead started working on the Stop the Strip Searches Campaign, speaking at meetings all over Ireland, including the International Women's Day picket of Maghabery Prison in March 1987.

Her murder in Gibraltar, along with those of the other two volunteers, Dan McCann and Sean Savage, is being seen for what it is — summary execution by the SAS.

Despite privation and hardship, Ella and Martina's prison messages are of strength and dedication to the causes for which they have sacrificed their liberty. As long as they remain imprisoned, women in Britain (and worldwide) will express solidarity with these two sisters on International Women's Day.

As the old saying goes, "National liberation that does not include the liberation of women is only half a liberation!" — women and men in the struggle for Irish self-determination are beginning to fight with this in mind, and so *Tiocfaidh ar la!*

US Presidential Primaries

'Jackson Action' wins white workers

For over 60 years, the US left has waited, worked, hoped, and prayed for the emergence of political unity between black and white workers in the southern states.

In the 20s, the Communist Party tried to build "revolutionary unions" as an alternative to the racist Jim Crow craft unions of the American Federation of Labor.

Then the Congress of Industrial Organisations launched its "southern strategy" in the 30s and 40s, with the aim of conquering this bastion of anti-unionism once and for all.

Neither strategy was able — or, in the case of the CIO, willing — to challenge the racism institutionalised in Jim Crow, the US equivalent of apartheid.

The result was the persistance of a vast non-unionised US hinterland — and the phenomenon known as "factory flight".

Beginning in the 50s, industries decamped to the South from union strongholds in the north and Midwest attracted by military contracts and a cheap and racially divided workforce.

When the black-led Civil Rights Movement finally smashed Jim Crow in the 60s, the union movement, with a few honourable exceptions, kept its distance. Its leadership, loyal to US imperialism abroad, and wedded to corporatist collusion with capital at home, saw the emerging militancy of the black working class as a threat; it did

By Mike Marqusee
Haringey Labour Briefing

nothing to challenge the chauvinist backlash amongst northern white workers which became visible in the early 70s.

The historic failure to confront racism in the South (and elsewhere) profoundly weakened the US working class and granted huge ideological and economic advantages to capital.

In the light of this depressing history, Jesse Jackson's showing in the Presidential primaries represents a major breakthrough.

In the southern states of Texas, South Carolina, Tenessee, and Mississippi, Jackson won a sizeable minority of the white vote to go with his near total domination of the black electorate.

This white vote is no longer merely the middle class liberal conscience vote Jackson received in 1984. A significant portion of it is coming from white workers who are voting not for their conscience, but their class.

The same phenomenon has been seen in the northern states of Minnesota, Iowa, Maine, and New Hampshire. Many small farmers and industrial workers, hit hard by Reaganomics, are disenchanted with mainstream politics and attracted by Jackson's record and message.

In 1984 the appeal of Jackson's quixotic, impoverished, amateur campaign, under heavy fire from liberals, union leaders, and some black politicians, was largely confined to the white left and the black community — where it sparked off a revival of the mass enthusiasm of the Civil Rights years.

Since then, Jackson has spent time on picket lines, demonstrations, and at meetings of unions and community, farmers' and women's organisations.

He built a strong professional core for his campaign, which, however, is still grotesquely underfunded compared to any of his millionaire rivals.

Above all, he refined his message. At November's national rally for lesbian and gay rights, held in Washington DC, Jackson (the only Presidential candidate to endorse the rally) told the 500,000-strong crowd that they needed to build alliances if they were to achieve their aims.

At a meeting in Iowa called by the National Organisation of Women (which backed Mondale in 1984) he called on women to organise themselves and exercise their own power — as part of his alliance. During his Southern Campaign, he concentrated on speeches in union halls and walkabouts in black neighbourhoods.

His rhetoric may sound exotic to British ears but it packs a powerful populist punch in the US. His talk of "barracudas" and "little fish", his admonition that the barracudas eat the little fish whether they are black or white, and above all his attack on Gephardt's reactionary protectionism (he told US workers that US management was their enemy, not Korean workers) all adds up to a clear class message.



PHOTO: Dollars & Cents

US Presidential hopefuls; lining up for auditions!

On the other hand, he has called himself a "social conservative" and his campaign appears to be run on the ground by an uneasy coalition of black churchpeople and local leftists and union militants.

His foreign policy progrmme (cuts in military spending, sanctions against South Africa, an end to the economic war on Cuba and military intervention in Central America) may not have been recanted, but it has been downplayed.

Before dismissing Jackson as a bourgeois politician and the Rainbow coalition as a primitive popular front, British comrades need to understand a few basic facts about US democracy.

The primary system is riddled with anomalies and inconsistencies. Different rules pertain in different states (in many states, you can vote in the Democratic primary even if you are a registered Republican).

The popular vote is rarely reflected in the distribution of convention delegates and there can be little doubt that, as in 1984, Jackson's delegate tally will fall short of his performance at the polls. The Democratic Party itself cannot be compared to any European Party. It has no membership, no dues, no local branches, and no system by which people elected under its banner can be held accountable to the Party's programme (ill-defined as it is) or the voters.

The primary system is a wonderful boon for the US ruling class. It enables them to winnow the political field, assess politicians in action, and promote the illusion of a mass, national democratic exercise, in which, of course, only a minority of the adult population actually participates.

The irony is that the Democratic primaries are thus virtually open political platforms, informal referenda in which almost any kind of politics can be tested.

Of course, the crunch will come this summer, at the Democratic national convention in Atlanta. Jackson and his supporters will be pushed to the margin. He will be offered some kind of deal and, being what he is, may well accept it.

Will this destroy the movement built up during the primaries? Or will it be the signal to Jackson's constituents that the time has come to abandon the Democratic fold, and build something lasting and independent?

Jackson does not claim to be a socialist but his campaign offers an historic opportunity for socialists in the US. Jackson himself is by no means in control of all the forces he is mobilising and no one can say for sure which way his Rainbow Coalition will go.

At the very least, his campaign has demonstrated that a constituency exists which offers a mass base for a third national political party, independent of the US ruling class.

It was inevitable that the leadership of this campaign — and the seeds of this future development — should spring from the black community. Because of their history of oppression and of their long struggle against it, black people form the most politically conscious and experienced section of the US working class.

Their movement for Civil Rights entered into crisis after it had achieved major constitutional and social victories, when it came face to face with the reality of economic equality — a reality that could not be addressed by the tactics and ideology of the movement.

The Jackson campaign has broken out of that impasse. Its attempt to unite black and white workers, women, lesbians and gay men, and anti-militarists, behind a political programme, is one of immense importance for US socialists, and therefore for socialists everywhere.

Armenian protests

Crisis in the Caucusus

Hard facts about the recent unrest in the Caucasian Soviet Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan remain few and far between.

We can only hope that some of the more horrifying atrocity stories are merely rumours.

Nonetheless, it is clear that inter-communal killings have taken place, a turn of events which all socialists will find deeply disturbing, especially when it occurs in the Soviet Union, with its roots in the internationalist Bolshevik revolution.

The crisis seems to have started when a protest in Yerevan (the capital of Armenia) aganist air pollution turned into a nationalist demonstration, fuelled by reports of the killing of Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of neighbouring Azerbaijan.

Demanded

The demonstrators demanded the return of the region (70-80% of whose population is Armenian) to Armenia, a demand reportedly supported by the local Soviet.

The demonstrations grew until by February 24/5th there were hundreds of thousands of people on the streets in Yerevan, many of whom had walked miles from the surrounding countryside.

Over the next few days this massive movement was demobilised — by what mix of political persuasion and repression it is hard to say. In the aftermath a pattern of tit-for-tat murders developed, the worst occurrences being in the Azerbaijani city of Sumga'it, where, according to official estimates, 32 people died.

By COLIN MEADE

This will not be the last we hear of this issue. There have been a number of powerful nationalist protests in non-Russian regions of the Soviet Union since the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev.

Attempts

His attempts to shake up the system have allowed long-suppressed grievances and resentments to come to the surface. To engage in a policy of Glasnost inevitably means exposing the fraudulent nature of the claims made by the centralist bureaucratic system to have solved national conflicts. But beyond the general question of relations between nations in the USSR, there are specific factors at work in Armenia.

The Armenian party leadership, headed by Brezhnev appointee Karen Demichyan, has been sharply attacked by Gorbachev supporters for its foot-dragging over perestroika. These criticisms were made in the context of reports of massive fraud and corruption in the Republic, organised from the very top of the Armenian establishment.

The local mafia in Yerevan would therefore have an interest in presenting the clean-up campaign as an example of Russian interference in Armenian affairs. Supporters of change in the Republic would have to counter this by presenting themselves as the true defenders of the national interest.

Different

Insofar as these different trends seek power through the existing system, which solemnly baptises the current national pecking order as "socialism", a predominantly nationalist policy and therefore outbreaks of national conflict are inevitable.

This is not to suggest that Armenians have no legitimate national grievances: quite the contrary. But these can only be resolved through the unity of democrats throughout the Caucusus on the basis of mutual respect and tolerance for cultural, language and religous differences and with a shared willingness to find a democratic solution to outstanding conflicts.

At the same time, the national demands cannot be separated from the general struggle for democratisation, free religious and cultural expression, and freedom of historical research and evaluation of the past.

Importance

Of particular importance in the Armenian context, given the fact that half of the Armenian population lives abroad, is the freedom to travel and emigrate. Such a demand would be a challenge to the whole set-up in the USSR, not least because Armenian national aspirations would complicate relations with Turkey, where a genocidal massacre of two million Armenians took place in 1915.

Nonetheless the test of all forces claiming to be in favour of a democratic transformation in the USSR must be their willingness to champion these ideas and demands.

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Sharpeville Six

One month to save six lives

The Pretoria Supreme Court has delayed the execution of the Sharpeville Six until April 18th, but they remain in deadly peril.

The little time gained must be used for international action by the workers' movement to save these six lives.

The month's delay came after a massive campaign against the hangings scheduled for Friday March 18th. Despite this worldwide protest President PW Botha rejected calls for clemency.

By Steve Potter
Norwood CLP

But the appeal judge (the grotesquely named Justice Human — the same judge who handed down the original sentence) heard evidence that one of the prosecution's witnesses, whose evidence had helped to convict Duma Khumalo and Francis Mokgesi, had perjured himself after being beaten by police.

The Six were accused of the murder of a black collaborationist Councillor in 1984. But the prosecution was unable to produce any evidence for this. The fact that they were part of a crowd present at the events was deemed sufficient to prove they had a "common purpose" with those who had actually killed the man.

However, the courts were not interested in either the facts or the legality of the case. The events in Sharpeville were part of a general wave of anger against the collaborationists imposed by the white racist regime on the townships.

The sentences on the Sharpeville Six were intended as a tough warning and deterrent to mass resistance to Apartheid's latest moves to protect itself. They are part and parcel of the same process as the banning order issued to prevent the UDF and other community based organisations fighting the government's plans, which reach a crucial stage in October with the black municipal elections.

For this reason the international campaign against the execution of the Six must not relent. Pretoria has too much at stake not to claim at least part of its blood price for the events in Sharpeville.

But some urgent meaures are required now. Given the failure of the Anti-Apartheid Movement to organise mass action (A-A has no plans for any national demonstration), the TUC and the Labour Party themselves should immediately call a mass demonstration to save the Six.

LABOUR BRIEFING



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Labour movement and women:

Marching to defeat the Alton Bill!



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

FAB demonstration in London, March 19th 1988.

Have you ever been a member of FAB?

Lesley Farrington, a *Briefing* supporter in Leigh, Lancashire, has been accused by her Labour Party ward, Hindley Green, of "bringing the Party into disrepute".

So what's new, you might ask?

What's new, and worrying, is that Lesley is being witch-hunted for her activities in her local FAB group. Now read on, and remembe, the Labour Party sponsors FAB, the NUM sponsors FAB, and the TUC sponsors FAB.

Defend

The NUM-sponsored MP for Leigh is Lawrence Cunliffe, who supports the Alton Bill. Lesley wrote to the NUM, on behalf of her local FAB group, and asked the NUM to ensure that Cunliffe followed Labour Party and NUM policy on abortion.

Details of this letter were published in the local press. Lesley's ward, with the tacit support of the Party's regional officer, laid charges against her.

The Regional Officer told Lesley that as a member of two organisations (FAB and the Labour Party!) she had to decide which one she would be loyal to; she was further informed that if she agrees *not* to discuss Cunliffe outside the confines of the Party, the charges would be dropped. Lesley, of course, has no intention of agreeing to such undemocratic stipulations.

FAB has actively encouraged women in the Labour Party to write to MPs and sponsoring unions to put pressure on the 54 Labour MPs who abstained on or voted for the Alton Bill at its second reading. Will they *all* be charged with bringing the Party into disrepute?

Challenge of the 'Champagne' Budget

Take up the gauntlet!

Chancellor Lawson's budget was the most openly class-biased budget for decades. The super-rich will get thousands; the poor will get nothing. Even those on average incomes will see no increase in real income.

The Tories remain implacable in the face of a chorus of demands for more money for the NHS. As the health service goes down the drain, social security is subject to the biggest cuts since the war.

The "social fund" brings Victorian values back with a vengeance. Thatcher and Lawson have defied days of action, NHS strikes, massive demonstrations, and a huge wave of public opinion, and they're smiling.

All this is possible only *because of the weakness of the opposition mounted by Kinnock and Willis.*

Both in the public sector and in industry across the land there is an increased willingness to fight. In Scotland, there is a gigantic potential for a mass movement which could defeat the hated poll tax. Thousands of workers who have never before been involved in industrial action are taking to the picket lines and the streets.

By PHIL HEARSE
Islington North CLP

But Thatcher and her cohorts remain smugly implacable because they know that the TUC and Labour Party leaderships are not interested in giving this movement any direction; indeed they wil do their utmost to undermine it.

Tony Benn has rightly denounced Kinnock's opposition to to the Tories as "weak". But it is more than weak; it is actually hostile to the current upsurge, and bent on sabotaging and demobilising it. Kinnock hasn't shown his face on a healthworkers picket line. He didn't even turn up for the gigantic March 5th TUC demonstration. His only loyalty is to his "respectable" and "moderate" image.

***Briefing* has argued that a leadership challenge inside the Party would galvanise support and create a much-needed focus for opposition. Whether or not a leadership challenge emerges, Kinnock and his supporters have to be challenged at every level. It is not *Briefing* and the rest of the left who are out of step with the healthworkers and others fighting back — it is Kinnock and the trade union "new realists".**

Over the past couple of months much has been achieved to shatter the idea that the working class is down and out, and that the left is finished. Thatcher and Lawson have thrown down the gauntlet. We must take it up. But to do that means pushing aside the new realists and the Kinnockite witch-hunters who stand in our way.