LABOUR BRIEFING

40p FORTNIGHTLY

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Solidarity with the seafarers!

UNITE TO DEFY TORY ANTI-UNION LAWS!



THE DOVER P&O SEAMEN APOLOGISE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE CAUSED TO PASSENGERS DURING OUR DISPUTE WITH P&O FERRIES.

WE WANT TO TAKE YOU ACROSS THE CHANNEL BUT NOT UNDER MANAGEMENTS UNSAFE AND UNSOCIABLE CONDITIONS.

PLEASE SUPPORT US WITH OUR FIGHT



PHOTO: Nick Hanelwood

NUS Information at Dover

At last a national union has been prepared to break the law and spread industrial action throughout a whole industry! That is, quite rightly, the first reaction of many militant trade unionists to the National Union of Seamen's decision to defy the law and call an all-out strike in defence of the union.

Since the first time the Tory laws were used against the NUM it has been clear that the only effective response is to defy the law, spread the action, and call on the labour movement for support. This was the main problem in the Wapping dispute, where the print unions refused to break the law or spread the action to Fleet Street brought isolation and defeat.

The use of the Tory laws is now the central issue for the trade union movement in Britain. Over the past three years the courts have intervened systematically on the side of the employers. Up till now, every trade union, with the exception of the NUM, has backed down. For the first time since the miners' strike the NUS have created an opportunity to mount a serious challenge to these laws.

The calls for solidarity made at May Day rallies must be heeded. As striker Susan Haynes told the Chesterfield rally: "All trade unionists must now make a stand and not allow this government to defeat us. We are in a struggle equal to that of the miners and the printworkers. We must defend our union and all that it represents. As rank and file members we call on all our fellow seafarers to defy Tory laws and support us."

The seafarers dispute puts the trade union movement right on the line. If they are defeated it will not just be a major victory for the employers, opening the door for an onslaught on wages and conditions in yet another industry, but it will be used by the new realists to "prove" once again that the employers and the laws cannot be beaten.

By ALAN THORNETT

The movement therefore needs to respond.

- Demands must be placed in the individual unions and through them to the TUC for widespread industrial action in support of the NUS. If Sam McCluskie can be forced into action so can the TUC. The mood in the factories after the sequestration is such that if the TUC made the call, as they did over GCHQ, they would get a response.
- Scab ships must be boycotted. T&G dockers at Dover had a policy at the start of the dispute of "handling any ship, with union or non-union labour, providing the labour is *British*".
- General, practical support is crucial. The NUS has no means of support other than that organised by the labour movement. Support Committees need to be set up on the scale of the miners' strike, with existing committees and WAPC geared to support the P&O strikers.
- Full support is needed on the Dover picket line, the central focus of the dispute. The main picket is 7am each day.

Inside: P&O dispute coverage, page 5

Mass Rally
In Support of P&O strikers
Saturday, May 21st
12 noon, Dover

● National Speakers ● ● Bring Banners ●
March to the Dock Gates

TONY BENN and ERIC HEFFER went to Dover to stand with the seafarers on the picket line. Kinnock and Hattersley kept far away. Below, Eric Heffer explains why he and Tony Benn are giving full backing to the seafarers.

"We went to Dover because we felt it was essential to declare our support for the workers in dispute with P&O and for the National Union of Seamen in general.

They are fighting a battle for the entire trade union and labour movement. It is the responsibility of every one of us to give full financial and political support to these workers, who are in the front line of our struggle against unjust Tory laws.

We believe the labour movement as a whole should rally behind the seafarers. I have tabled an early day motion in support of the NUS which has been backed by 147 Labour MPs. The NEC and the front bench have assured us of their support. We believe our efforts and our candidacies have helped consolidate support for the NUS throughout the labour movement.

The P&O workers are now fighting the state apparatus and a blatantly unjust capitalist law, which is clearly being used on the side of capital against labour.

In order to survive, our whole movement must throw itself into the fight against this law.

They can strip us of all our assets, but our movement began with nothing and was built not on money or legal briefs but on the basis of our own solidarity and determination. And on that basis, we can win this dispute."

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Campaign Round-up

Briefing AGM

Start planning now!

On May Day, the *Labour Briefing* National Steering Committee, in a detailed discussion of this year's *Briefing* supporters' AGM, agreed that the development of the Socialist Conference movement and the Benn-Heffer campaign, along with the increasing number of trade union disputes, presents us with a great opportunity to build *Briefing* both as a newspaper and as an organising forum within the labour movement.

The AGM will focus on building local groups and special commissions. In the run up to the AGM the Steering Committee will prepare a major feature for the paper, outlining our proposals for the coming year. If your local group has any proposals please bring them along to the next Steering Committee — June 5th.

Start planning now: make a list of all *Briefing* supporters who can come to the AGM and think about other local activists who might be interested. Plan transport arrangements.

Supporters cards will be sent out soon to everyone in the 500 Club. If you aren't in it, take out a standing order now! (see p. 12).

Supporters cards are also available for those not in the 500 Club: send £10 (waged) or £3 (unwaged) to *Labour Briefing*, PO Box 457, London SW2 2UZ, with cheques payable to Labour Briefing. (If you can't send a cheque, don't pay the extra for a postal order — send us stamps, but keep to £1 as the highest denomination, please).

Briefing AGM
July 2nd
10.30-5.30
London

A message from Viraj Mendis

Mobilise for May 28th

The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign is calling a national Demonstration in Manchester on May 28th.

It is now clear that the Home Office intend to raid the sanctuary if my appeal goes against me.

Preparation for a raid has already begun, including attacks in the press to create a climate of prejudice, and increased police harassment.

Eight members of VMDC were violently arrested on one of our recent weekly Friday marches — the first arrests since the marches began seven months ago.

I have now spent 500 days and nights in sanctuary, in the Church of the Ascension — effectively a prisoner of the Home Office.

Since the signing of the Indo-Sri Lankan "peace accord", more and more Sinhalese have been assassinated by fascist death squads for alleged sympathy with the Tamil people.

Those killed include 265 members of the ruling United National Party, Communist Party members, and a prominent Sinhala film star and presidential candidate. For me, the situation in Sri Lanka is more dangerous than ever.

We must ensure that this danger is kept in the public eye during my appeal. To achieve this we are circulating a pledge to prominent individuals, trade unions, churches, and other organisations (see box).

The signatories will be published in a national newspaper on the day of my appeal.

Inspired by our sanctuary, Rajwinder Singh, Renouka Lakhani, Salema Begum, and most recently a Nigerian family in Birmingham and two boys in Brent have all taken sanctuary. Renouka and Salema have won, and victory for Rajwinder is imminent.

The new Immigration Bill which removes the right to appeal against the threat of deportation will force more black people to take sanctuary. A victory for us will be a victory for all those who take that step and of course will be a massive defeat for the Home Office and the Thatcher government.

On May 28th you will be marching to stop the murderous plans of the Home Office and providing a force on the streets that will prevent the police from smashing the sanctuary. You will be marching for all those facing deportation.

Viraj Mendis will stay!
DEMONSTRATE!
Sat May 28th
Assemble 12 noon, Albert Square, Manchester

The demonstration will assemble at 12 noon, Albert Square, Manchester and will march to the sanctuary. For further details contact VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Manchester M15 5AL, tel. 061 234 3168.



Viraj Mendis

Petition Text

We the undersigned note with exteme concern that the Home Office is still attempting to deport Viraj Mendis to Sri Lanka. We believe that now, more than ever before, his life would be in great danger should the deportation order be enforced. The situation in Sri Lanka has deteriorated drastically since the July 1987 Indo-Sri Lankan agreement. Since then the murder of Sinhalese who allegedly sympathise with the Tamil people has become an everyday event.

Viraj Mendis, a Sinhalese known for his open support for the Tamil people, will undoubtedly be in mortal danger if deported. We note that this danger has been recognised by Amnesty International and the World Council of Churches.

We therefore call on the Home Office to immediately lift the deportation order against Viraj Mendis.

Chapeltown protests as Police Superintendent Ellis says:

If you're black, you're a criminal

A march was held in Leeds on April 9th to demonstrate against Police Superintendent Ellis's racist statements.

The 150-strong demonstration proceded to Chapeltown Police Station, where it demanded Ellis's removal.

The march was called by the Chapeltown Action Group, who at a packed meeting held on March 28th heard a statement read out by solicitor Alan Craig.

The statement said that tests by an independent forensic scientist on the tape recording of Ellis's racist remarks had not been tampered with.

It added that it *"represents an accurate record"* of the conversation that took place between a local activist and Superintendent Ellis, in which Ellis said that 15,000 West Indians in Chapeltown are very difficult to police because they create all sorts of problems, including drugs, prostitution, brothels, and violence.

By Dave Walker
Leeds NE CLP

Ellis had claimed the tape was *"clearly"* edited and asked that it be submitted to the police for an "independent" forensic test.

It was announced at the Police Forum that a team from Manchester Police Force would be conducting an investigation into the remarks made by Ellis (and we all know what the result will be!).

Protestors

Among demonstrators outside the police station, feelings were running high, especially as police were using a video camera and taking still pictures of the protesters.

The Chapeltown Action Group will be intensifying its campaign to have Ellis removed from Chapeltown, with the next focus being a Day of Action on May 14th.

Labour CND Dayschool
"Nuclear Disarmament: Labour must stand firm"
July 9th, Manchester Town Hall. All day from 10.30am, £3 waged, 50p unwaged
Accommodation and creche available. Contact Anne Tucker, 3 Birch Polygon, Rusholme, Manchester M14
Speakers invited: Ken Livingstone, Ron Todd, Marjorie Thompson, Jeremy Corbyn
Workshops include: Resisting Cruise & Trident, Nuclear Free Europe, NATO & Non-alignment.

Single badge	35p
20 badges	£6.00
50 badges	£13.00
100 badges	£23.00
200+ badges	£40.00

- **Send your name, address and order to B. Griffiths, 11 Fremont St, London E9 cheque or postal order made payable to Labour Briefing**

Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine AGM

21st May, Caxton House, St John's Way (Archway tube), London, 10.30am
Observers welcome: £2 waged, £1 unwaged
Access not very good
Phone Anna, 0865 723450, for further details
Morning: Political Implications of the Palestinian Uprising
Chair: Jeremy Corbyn
Speakers: Meirav Dvir (Matzpen, Isreali Socialist Organisation); Samia (Palestine Medical Relief Committees); Wayne Farrer (NALGO Black Members Co-ordinating Committee — invited)

A Day for Palestine

Show your solidarity with the Palestinians:
DEMONSTRATE!
May 15th
Assemble Thames Embankment, London, 1.30pm (Embankment tube).
Called by the Interim Joint Committee for Palestine, c/o 21 Collingham Road, London SW5 0NU

'68  **'88**

TWENTY YEARS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM

● Rally Friday 27 May with: ●

● DANIEL BENSAID ●
Ligue Communiste Revolutionaire
a well-known leader of the 1968 student revolt in France

● TARIQ ALI ●
Leader of the 1968 student movement in Britain, author and broadcaster

● TESSA VAN GELDEREN ●
Eye-witness to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968

● MICHAEL FARRELL ●
A leader of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland

7.30pm
Caxton House

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

129 St John's Way
London N19
(Archway tube)

ADMISSION £2/£1 UNWAGED

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

P&O: Defy the law, spread the strike

The decision of the NUS to defy the law, face sequestration, and spread the strike beyond Dover is the most important development in the trade unions since the end of the Miners' Strike.

Sam McCluskie and the NUS Executive, faced with the prospect of a non-unionised shipping industry, have accepted the logic of the left's argument about Tory laws. Over and over again we have said the only way to overcome the obstacles created by Tory anti-trade union laws is to confront and defy them.

Wapping was lost because the unions wouldn't defy the laws and wouldn't spread the strike throughout the industry. The NUS has seen the futility of that policy and has moved to break out of the isolation which has plagued dispute after dispute in recent years.

This is no longer a struggle confined to Dover or even the NUS as a whole. It is now the domain of the whole movement. We need to reactivate the Miners' Support Groups — and go beyond that, to mobilise solidarity up and down the country — *and abroad*.

Following sequestration, the NUS has no source of income. The seafarers are in our hands and we cannot let them down.

We must organise supporters' groups, raise funds, attend the mass pickets at Dover, and above all find ways of spreading the strike beyond the shipping industry.

What is at stake is not only the jobs and conditions of seafarers and the continued existence of the NUS — vital as these are — but the future strength and unity of the whole labour movement.

Poland: uncomfortable parallels

Polish workers have once again taken direct action to challenge the economic and political dispensation which governs their country.

Transport workers moved first, demanding and winning wage rises that may seem substantial but will only go a little way toward meeting the ever-escalating costs of living in the Stalinist People's Republic. Their success gave a spur to steelworkers at Nova Huta and shipyard workers in Gdansk.

At the time of going to press, the steelworkers' occupation has been brutally broken by Jaruzelski's riot police, but the Gdansk militants remain adamant.

The apparently simple wage demands raised by these workers are, in the context of Polish politics, profoundly political. The intolerable injustices which they have highlighted can only be redressed by a transformation of Polish society — and both the workers themselves and their opponents in the regime know it.

So once again the much-maligned, allegedly anachronistic industrial working class has placed itself in the front line of the struggle. Interestingly, the western media are less enthusiastic about their efforts this time around than they were in 1980-81. This no doubt reflects the emerging consensus among capitalists that "social stability" is necessary in Eastern Europe — not least to protect the immediate financial interests of western banks and governments.

It also reflects an uneasy fear on their part that too many people may start to draw parallels between the struggles of Polish workers and those of seafarers, healthworkers, carworkers, and others closer to home.

The Polish workers are rebelling against the consequences of Jaruzelski's version of *"perestroika"* — economic restructuring. There is no question of Gorbachev doing anything but backing his Polish allies in the bureaucracy. Those who have been tempted to look favourably at Gorbachev should note this carefully. A proponent of real "glasnost" would support the Polish workers.

Making Racism Respectable

Menacing noises from Norman Tebbit have brought into the open something we on the left have known for some time. For British capitalism, the promulgation of racism at home and the maintenance of apartheid abroad are inextricably linked.

The struggle of the black masses in Southern Africa has won friends in nearly every walk of life. Nelson Mandela and the Anti-Apartheid Movement have acquired an odour of sanctity which galls the Tories. Something had to be done about it. Into the breach strode Norman Tebbit — but not alone. Trotting silently alongside is Zola Budd, Pretoria's very special ambassador to the world of athletics.

The recent furore over Budd's participation in the Olympic Games — and the tabloid campaign to make her a hero and martyr — perfectly complements Tebbit's ideological offensive. Budd's mission — now as always — is to make apartheid acceptable, to return it to the realm of "politics", i.e. parliament, the UN, the international conference table.

The reality is that Budd runs for white South Africa under a British flag of convenience. She is the advance guard in a concerted effort to break the highly successful sporting boycott of South Africa.

The artificial outrage whipped up by the press over Budd's case is part of the same initiative which led Tebbit to denounce anti-apartheid activists as "stinking hypocrites". Its purpose is to make racism respectable — in both Britain and South Africa.

The Tory assault on the media

Thatcher takes on the press

The apparent freedom of sections of the British press has for decades been a useful device for the capitalist class.

The right wing tabloids respond to their masters' voices, frothing and foaming with mindless knee-jerk reactionary venom on each and every issue.

The studied "liberal" detachment of some heavyweight papers helps to spice the regular diet of conformism.

By HARRY SLOAN

Even in the columns of the *Times* and *Telegraph* occasional maverick voices of dissent can be found, while the television and radio networks carry their sprinkling of radical documentaries and even occasionally left wing drama.

These exceptions lend a greater authority to the rule of rehashed government and employers' press releases, and anti-union and chauvinist bias that colours the vast majority of news coverage.

However, the steadily more authoritarian shift of the Thatcher government has made it increasingly intolerant of these token gestures; although it has often proved incapable of defending its actions under any serious scrutiny.

The rows surrounding ITV and BBC programmes on the Gibraltar shootings show both sides of the situation. The Thatcher Cabinet is now incensed that neither the IBA nor BBC buckled under their public pressure to withdraw *Death on the Rock* and the *Spotlight* programme made for Northern Ireland.

Yet these belated investigations took place only weeks after both BBC and IBA networks had themselves uncritically retailed the British government's version of events in many prime time news broadcasts. Sir Geoffrey Howe's own lying account of the brutal killings has been echoed in all of the media and even now is still the reference point for the right wing tabloids.

The question is not so much whether the BBC and IBA should now broadcast more serious investigations of those events but why there was no serious investigation before the first stories were released.

Roy Hattersley may now praise the BBC for standing firm, but it was left to Eric Heffer to break ranks and take the lead in condemning the Gibraltar shootings even while the press was filled with government lies about the events.

Kinnock's stand was worse: he actually argued that if Thatcher was serious in suppressing *Death on the Rock* she should seek an injuction against the IBA!

Thatcher and her ministers brand the investigations as "trial by television": but they were quite happy for the initial "trial" to produce an apparent justification for the killing of the three unarmed IRA activists by SAS gunmen.

Indeed, they were sitting back comfortably waiting for the rigged Gibraltar inquest to deliver prearranged absolution: no wonder they're annoyed now!

Crackdown

This latest crackdown on the media, however, should not be seen in isolation. In the last 18 months we have seen:

- the banning of Spycatcher and muzzling of the papers that printed extracts;
- attempts to ban the Radio 4 series *Your Country, right or wrong?*;
- the Special Branch raid on the BBC in Glasgow aimed at halting the Zircon Spy Satellite film;
- a Special Branch raid on NUJ member Duncan Campbell's home;
- increasing moves to seize unpublished photographs and untransmitted TV film, beginning with coverage of battles at Wapping in January 1987, but including coverage of events in inner city confrontations and funerals in Belfast. Such moves seek to turn photographers into unwitting agents of the state, endangering them and inhibiting free press coverage.

Behind the scenes or more openly, other political pressures have been brought to beár on the BBC and IBA, to suppress hard hitting dramatic series such as BBC's *Casualty*, and *The Monocled Mutineer*, and even programmes which offend Thatcherite prudish Victorian morality such as *The Singing Detective*.

Even this is simply the visible tip of a growing iceberg of censorship and self-censorship. Ousted BBC Chief Alasdair Milne has now spoken openly about the Tory domination of the BBC's Board of Governors: the same story applies to the IBA.

The pressures for restraint include the Official Secrets Act, and its special constables on the D-notice committee. This has no legal powers, but rests on the sense of "responsibility" among newspaper and broadcasting chiefs, operating all the time behind the scenes.

Responsible

Its secretary, Rear Admiral William Higgins, told the *Independent* last December:

"By and large I think the media is very responsible. I managed to convince them by argument that some detail is best removed. Usually my advice is heeded. Seldom is it necessary to stop the whole story."

Add to this state intervention, the inherent pro-capitalist, anti-union, anti-socialist bias of the big media corporations and institutions, and the racist, sexist, homophobic bias of the type of journalist who pleases top mangement enough to climb into a senior editorial chair, and we see how the great "free" British press can — with occasional honourable exceptions — churn out the kind of rubbish that so aggravates the labour movement.

Programmes

It is still possible that Thatcher will go after the BBC and IBA seeking powers to prevent broadcast of programmes on grounds of "security" (or the ludicrous pretence of sub judice as used in the Gibraltar case).

The labour movement however has no common policy on which to base a fightback. This year's NUJ conference backed calls from the Campaign and Broadcasting Freedom for:

- freedom of information legislation;
- repeal of the Official Secrets Act;
- repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act;
- reform of the Contempt of Court Act;
- an end to security vetting of broadcasting staff;
- abolition of the D-notice and Parliamentary Lobby systems;
- election of IBA and BBC Boards of Governors and the creation of accountable regional media Councils to allocate TV radio, cable and satellite franchises;

Democracy

- industrial democracy to give media workers a direct say in editorial and managerial decision making.

These would all be useful moves to liberate the press from obvious external restrictions: but there will not be genuine freedom of the press so long as ownership is concentrated in the hands of large profit-making organisations, reactionary individuals, and institutions of the capitalist state.

Expropriation

The case for expropriation of the media monopolies and the formation of independent trusts to run the media under the management of workers' committees must be developed and argued in the labour movement as our answer to the Murdochs, Maxwells and the attempted suppression of *Death on the Rock*.

Trade Union Briefing

NURSES' PAY AWARD
NHS Staff: neither divided nor ruled

Weeks after the apparently generous 15.3% nurses pay award, few nursing staff yet know how much extra cash they will actually get.

The complications of new grading structures leave a great deal of latitude in the hands of local health management, while the announcement that Special Duty Payments will not apply to nursing salaries in excess of £12,500 could result in loss of pay for some ward sisters working unsocial hours.

By HARRY SLOAN

At the lower end of the scale, the 4% basic increase will do little to revive morale in a chronically understaffed profession. Indeed, the total increases look big in percentage terms *largely because nurses' pay was so low to begin with.*

Few believe that the crisis conditions of short-staffing will be seriously tackled by rates of pay which still leave most trained NHS nurses earning less than skilled secretaries in the private sector.

Worse still is the plight of other NHS staff, left high and dry by Thatcher's transparent "divide and rule" manoeuvre, a crude attempt to buy off some nurses and separate them from the general NHS struggle.

Physiotherapists, Radiographers, and other professions allied to medicine received an average increase just over half that awarded to nurses — despite serious shortages in hospitals across the country.

Far from drawing recruits into the NHS workforce, the new pay structure will simply reshuffle the crisis, moving a few young women into nursing from other NHS professions.



PHOTO: Grame Cookson

Nurses demand more pay on the TUC NHS demo, March 5th. Again, the government hopes to get away with cosmetic "improvements" and hopes to divide the workforce in the process.

To others — medical secretaries and clerical staff, laboratory and other technicians, and the declining numbers of overworked and low-paid ancillary staff, who have rejected a 4.8% pay rise — the Tories have offered no serious concessions.

Indeed, the government has refused even to pledge it will fully fund the pay settlements awarded to these half million workers. This has been the first year since 1980 that the Thatcher government has fully funded its pay award to nurses. Last year, Health Authorities were forced to find over £95m to meet the shortfall.

Despite all these drawbacks, the larger pay increase to nurses should be seen as an important, if partial, victory, a response to the wave of strikes led by nursing staff in February and March. Thatcher hopes a personal bribe will placate some of the more embarrassingly vocal critics of her policies.

She could yet be proved wrong. Few of the nurses who took action in February were fighting primarily for more pay. Most were fighting for increased funds for the NHS.

Few of them will be overjoyed at a slightly larger pay packet when they witness the continuing round of ward closures, bed losses, cuts, and now redundancies sweeping through hospitals across the country.

The new financial year has begun with West Lambeth District Health Authority (DHA) pushing through the biggest single cuts package in the history of the NHS, and dire financial crisis in Birmingham, Manchester and elsewhere. A new summer and autumn of closures is already on the cards.

The challenge before militant nurses and the health unions is to rekindle the militancy of February and focus it upon action to stop local cuts and closures.

The time for abstract national sloganeering has gone, but serious local resistance linking health unions and community organisations can still force concessions and defend services.

Now that Lawson's budget has stuck up two fingers to polite requests for more spending, it is time to take up the challenge, strike to stop the cuts, and where possible link up local struggles into regional and national level campaigns.

King's Cross victimisation
A threat to all trade union activists

It is now two months since Steve Forey, Chair of the ASLEF Shop Stewards Committee at King's Cross, was sacked for his part in the branch's decision to take action in solidarity with the health workers.

In that time Steve has had two preliminary hearings at the Industrial Relations Tribunal to apply for what is called "interim relief".

By a railway trade union activist

Success at the Tribunal would mean the reinstatement of Steve's contract of employment and weekly payment of his wages by BR. In effect he would become a suspended employee of BR pending a full hearing of the Tribunal.

In reality, his chances are slim. Management may make a cash offer to forestall a full tribunal. The issue of his sacking and the circumstances surrounding it could then be quietly buried, which would please BR and the ASLEF Leadership.

Steve would come under increasing pressure from the ASLEF EC to accept a "pre-emptive" settlement, allowing the bureuacracy to wash their hands of his case — something they have wanted to do from the beginning.

However, the most disturbing aspect of the "interim relief" hearing concerns the concerted effort of BR solicitors to use Steve's case to establish a legal precedent with regard to employment law.

The BR barrister has argued that the trade union activity for which Steve was sacked (distributing a newsletter which set out the case for strike action in support of health workers on March 14th) was outside the protection afforded by the Employment Protection Act of 1978.

At the Tribunal, BR argued that distributing a newsletter which contained "crosswords" and "details of trade union meetings" was permissible, but not any mention of strikes or industrial action.

If the Tribunal, at this stage, accepts that argument then Steve will clearly not get his "interim relief".

Even more alarming are the implications of a formal acceptance of the BR position by the Tribunal. Any trade union activist distributing a bulletin which calls for action of any kind would then be outside the law and open to victimisation. The Tribunal may be reluctant to establish case law on this matter, but their ruling could set a major precedent.

Meanwhile, the ASLEF Leadership continue to play a treacherous role. Their reluctance to assist Steve has been confirmed by three new developments.

- General Secretary Neil Milligan has refused to accept an emergency resolution to this year's conference from King's Cross branch calling on the EC to give full support to Steve and demanding national action to obtain his reinstatement. Milligan has done this on the grounds that Steve's sacking is not an issue of union policy and therefore not a matter for the conference.
- Milligan has also written a lengthy and detailed report to all EC members purporting to demonstrate how much the Leadership has done for Steve Forey. The report does not square with the experience of King's Cross members who have encountered a marked reluctance on the part of the General Secretary to confront the issue of the sacking at all.

A delegation of King's Cross branch members who went to the union Head Office found the General Secretary more eager to discuss the "illegal" strike in support of NHS workers, which was by then a dead letter than the victimisation of an ASLEF activist.

Milligan's report is clearly designed to brief EC memebrs for the backlash from the membership and to scratch any campaign around the King's Cross events.

- The EC have equivocated over Steve's status within ASLEF. The union rules are clear. A sacked member cannot hold trade union office at any level. However, the fact that Steve was sacked *for* trade union activity, a fact officially acknowledged by the EC, and not for any disciplinary offence, makes the application of the rule questionable in this instance.

The EC are well aware that he is King's Cross branch's delegate to this year's conference and will stand in the way of their attempts to steamroller acceptance of new working practices. Therefore, they have spread their bets. If he wins "interim relief" the Tribunal will have acknowledged that he is a victimised trade unionist and the ASLEF EC can hardly do otherwise.

If, however, he loses, the EC have ruled that he can no longer be Assistant Secretary and his Conference credentials go to the runner up.

At rank and file level, the response to Steve's sacking has been strong, in spite of organisational difficulties. Donations have been coming in to the King's Cross branch to offset legal costs and give Steve some financial support. Already, 13 ASLEF branches have sent in emergency Conference resolutions on Steve's sacking.

The "King's Cross Six Campaign" has been set up to highlight not only Steve's case, but the position of five other branch officers still under a High Court gagging injunction which represents a sinister threat to all trade unionists.

The King's Cross Six Campaign meets every Tuesday, upstairs at the Railway Tavern, York Way, next to King's Cross Station, at 7.30pm.
All trade union branches are welcome to send representatives and to contribute to the discussion.
Donations and messages of support may be sent to the King's Cross Six Campaign, c/o Camden Trade Union Support Unit, 213 Eversholt St, London NW1.

ACTT Conference
Collapse in face of crisis

The Association of Cinematograph, Television, and Allied Technicians (ACTT) met on April 16-17th at a time of crisis for workers in the film and television industry.

Two issues were dominant.

By a London Freelance Shop Member

First was whether to amalgamate with the Broadcasting Entertainment Trades Alliance (BETA). Second was what to do about the sacking of 234 ACTT members at TV-am.

These two issues saw the most heated debates, with delegates packed into an otherwise half empty conference hall.

Amalgamation with BETA saw an unholy alliance between traditional "left" and "right" factions — with a particular twist in the tail!

Both Alan Sapper, union General Secretary and prominent "left", and Tudor Gates, newly elected union President and arch right winger, argued for amalgamation. Their grounds were cost efficiency, ending damaging inter-union competition, circumventing secondary picketing laws, and "sending a signal" to the employers that a newly formed, 60,000 strong super-union was "serious".

The right, at least, was honest enough to admit that amalgamation would help ACTT keep its head down and "avoid another Wapping", as Gates put it.

The twist was the reaction of some of the ITV company shops. Their arguments against amalgamation betrayed their particular craft-guild background, hostile to the whole idea of a "general" union. Several could be heard threatening to join the EETPU.

The irony is that the bosses' offensive against strict demarcation, in favour of multi-skilling, will probably finish off such a possibility before this section of workers, who for years have been a backward influence within the ACTT, can make a move.

This episode illustrated the deep divisions within the union, based on sectional interests. More importantly, it signalled that the traditional "left" had succombed to "new realism".

On the issue of TV-am, one delegate put the question bluntly. Speaking to a wordy resolution on defending public service broadcasting, which was passed unanimously, he said:

"Voting for this type of resolution is like asking everyone to vote against sin. The question is, what are we going to do about TV-am?"

He was told it would be discussed under the appropriate agenda item.

On Sunday morning the appropriate item was finally reached. Activists from the TV-am dispute argued the national officials' line, against any form of industrial action to support TV-am members.

The speeches form these activists could have been seen as pernicious — had they not been so naive. Harsh words, perhaps, but the dividing lines were clearly drawn: *for* or *against* a campaign to win industrial action to defend the union.

The emergency resolution from the London TV Freelance Shop, which itemised the attacks and called for general meetings of all media unions to *"campaign for joint industrial action with these unions to defend their very existence in this industry"*, was defeated by 177-100.

A more strongly-worded resolution from the SWP-influenced Pullman shop got just 13 votes, with 260 against.

In the weeks leading up to the Conference, national agreements between ACTT and ITV companies were being undermined at Tyne-Tees and LWT. On Monday April 18th, ITN announced 142 redundancies, the introduction of one-person operated Electronic News Gathering (ENG) cameras, flexible rostering, and a host of other changes.

Just over a weeek later, Thames followed suit. Only nationally co-ordinated action can throw back this offensive.

At the time of writing, there is no evidence that the ACTT leadership has any intention of working for such action. And without national leadership, union members will rapidly adapt to the cuts in wages and conditions — without a struggle.

The post-war consensus on the social function and operation of the film and TV industry is being demolished by the employers' offensive, fully backed by Thatcher and the Tories.

Neither traditional "right" nor "left" has any effective answer to this threat. A new leadership will have to be built in the new, more difficult, but also more volatile conditions of the 1990s.

The weekend's one bright spot was a resolution passed on troop withdrawal from Ireland, pushed by Belfast and Derry video workshops, as well as the East Midlands Freelance shop.

The resolution represents the type of polities that will be needed by unions such as the ACTT in the years to come: a clear and forthright stance on "political" issues, such as the British presence in Ireland, and in defence of basic trade union rights and conditions.

Women are organising

In Kent the sacked miners have worked with the seafarers from the beginning of the dispute. The result is marked similarities between the two strikes — not least the role of women. STEVE POTTER talked to KATRINA WESTON about the development of the Women's Group and their work.

Katrina is both a striker's wife and a P&O shore worker herself. She didn't mind admitting that she was suspcious of the support group to start with.

"I was very proud at first and wasn't going to accept help from anyone. A lot of the wives thought like that. But then I got actively involved."

There are six kitchens: in Dover, Deal, Folkestone, Thanet, Aylesham and Canterbury. Deal is the largest, providing support to nearly 400 families — 1,200 meals a week!

In contrast to the Miners' strike, the men do the cooking, since many were cooks on the ships.

Necessities

Food and necessities are given out in parcels every week. The average shopping bill is £2-3,000. Katrina says that baby foods, nappies, and tampax are all welcome, *"but we have a problem with places to store it, so money is best."*

Each town has its own fund. But the strikers are well aware of potential problems, and when one fund is running low the treasurers meet to equalise the money.

In Deal the strike committee meets in the miners' office, Magnus House, and meals are served in the Miners' Welfare. *"I'm full of praise for the miners,"* says Katrina. *"we've learnt so many lessons from them and they passed on to us their contacts. People like Liz and Terry French and other sacked miners have helped us enormously."*

Headquarters

The women meet at strike headquarters. Wives and stewardesses got together to make sure that the children were fed. *"Now we meet every other Thursday,"* says Liz. *"The meetings have between 12-20 women at them. We discuss fund-raising and generally have a good chat about things.*

"One of our big successes was when a girl, a stewardess, who had gone back to work came to us in a real state. We discussed with her and now she's rejoined the strike.

"My attitude to the scabs generally is that I wouldn't speak to them. They have spoilt my husband's chances of every going back to sea. Deal is a very close knit community. We got even closer when the ***Herald*** *went down. The strike is about safety, and we lost too many good friends to allow another disaster."*

All cheques should be made out to Deal Women's Support Group (do not put any mention on the cheque of the NUS or seafarers dispute). Send to Magnus House, Mill Hill, Deal, Kent.

Solidarity with the seafarers!

Behind the P&O dispute

The right wing leadership of the NUS are unlikely people to defy the law, having spent weeks trying to end the Dover strike on any terms available.

But they had little option.

The strike was spread after P&O management announced measures which would mean the end of the NUS as an effective trade union in the shipping industry.

P&O sacked all those on strike, ended all agreements established over many years, decrecognised the NUS as a negotiating union, and said they would begin employing scab crews to operate the strikebound ships.

The courts were quickly involved when nearly all ferries around Britain in 19 ports were strikebound within three days. The other major ferry operator, Sea Link, obtained an injunction instructing strikes on their ships to return to work immediately.

The NUS Executive responded by calling out all NUS members, including those on deep-sea ships. Telegrammes were sent calling on all crews to join the strike at the next port.

The NUS was consequently fined £150,000 and the whole of its money and assets were sequestrated.

McCluskie announced that the strike would go on. The union would continue to defy the court and, if necessary, he was prepared to *"run the strike from a tent on Clapham Common"*. The NUS, he said, was not buildings, desks and typewriters but the membership — the opposite position to that usually taken by top trade union officials!

By Alan Thornett
Trade Union Briefing

The sequestration strengthened the resolve of the NUS rank and file. Five thousand of the 5,200 members working for various companies on ferries all around Britain were on strike the following day. In addition, French unions too the decision not to handle scab ships in French ports.

A situation of such confrontation cannot remain unchanged for long. The dispute must be expanded beyond the seafaring industry by the trade union movement as a whole, or it will be gradually isolated and battered by the employers.

P&O made the first moves — the scabbing operation sailing from Dover to Belgium; followed by the police eviction of striking crews from oil rig supply ships in Aberdeen, and their replacement by scab crews.

At the time of writing, however, there are major dangers for the dispute. Sam McCluskie has stood against the sequestration, but that is mainly on the matter of the recognition of the union. He has not shown the same concern for wages and working conditions, or over victimisation.

It is this attitude which has opened the door to a deal with Sea Link.

As a strike-breaking move it has some remarkable features. The NUS is not in dispute with Sea Link, yet McCluskie is negotiating with them and proposing that they form a "united front" against P&O. Sea Link would put on extra services on the prime routes, in competition with P&O, and would take on some of the sacked P&O strikers to work them!

This is agreed in principle, but as we go to press Sea Link are offering 450 jobs and the NUS are demanding 750. The Dover Port committee has rejected an offer of 450.

A deal along these lines, however, remains a serious threat to the dispute. Accepting it would lead to a major victory for the shipping employers and the full-scale introduction of the new conditions they want in every fleet — including Sea Link.

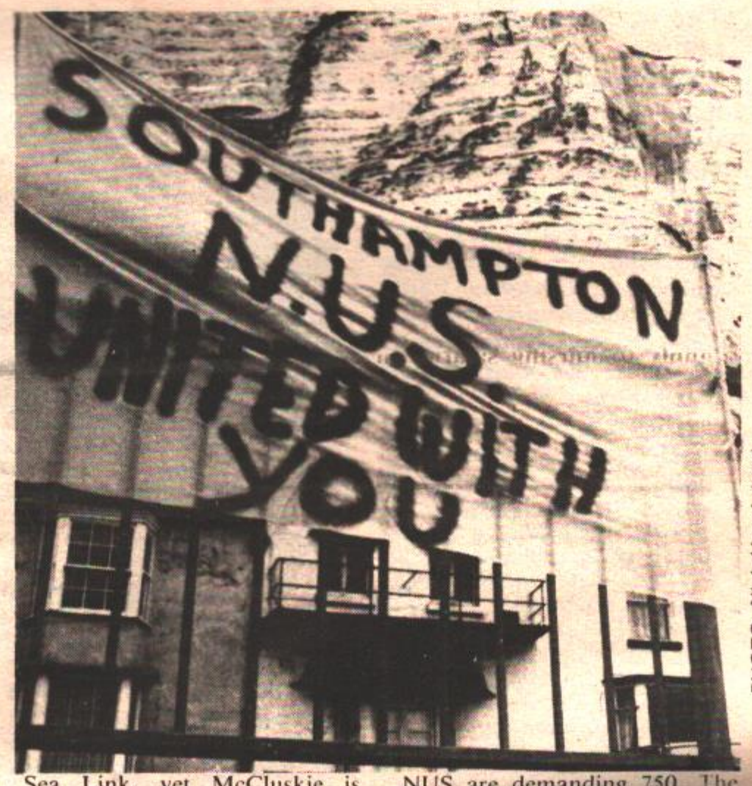


PHOTO: Nick Hazelwood

Terry French - class fighter!

Terry French, the sacked and gaoled Kent miner, has been attacked by the media dogs as a *"mindless thug"* and his presence on the Dover P&O picket line has been vehemently denounced.

Terry was an active member of Kent NUM before and during the miners' strike of 1984/5. He was arrested on the picket line, charged with an assault which he has always denied, and sentenced to five years imprisonment.

Fiercely resisting the demoralising, dehumanising prison regimen, Terry kept up his political activity throughout his time in gaol. When he was released for a single weekend on parole he went to the TUC Conference to address a fringe meeting about sacked and gaoled miners.

Meanwhile, Liz French, an activist in Women Against Pit Closures, campaigned tirelessly for her husband's freedom.

Since his release, Terry has been busy campaigning in defence of fellow miners still victimised for their part in the great strike. Last year, impatient with the NUM's inactivity, he organised picketing in Yorkshire which led to the first major action since 1985, despite the hostility of the Yorks Area NUM Leadership.

Terry has been working flat out building support for the Dover strikers in the labour movement, drawing on the experience gained during the miners' strike.

In other words, Terry French is a selfless fighter not only for his fellow miners but for his whole class.

No wonder the media hate him so much!

By Pete Cooper
Trade Union Briefing

HULL

Strikers occupy ferry

Southern ferry strikers have been getting a good reception in Hull.

Nowhere has this been better than on board the ferries Norsea and Norland, owned by North Sea Ferries, which is in turn 50% owned by P&O.

Feelings have been running high among Hull crews for months. Earlier this year an occupation of the Norland only ended after a High Court injunction was obtained by management.

The Hull crew know full well that the kind of working practices which P&O are trying to force on NUS members in the South will soon be imposed up here.

Tuesday, April 6th: at a meeting following a visit from Dover strikers the 80-strong crew of the Norsea decided to take 48-hour strike action in support of the Dover crews. NSF management — taken by surprise — immediately sacked the entire crew.

The crew knew just what management tactics were likely to be, and had the experience of the Norland occupation to build on. They met the management challenge head on — by occupying the ship after 400 passengers and freight had been loaded. The passengers were then transferred to a Dutch-crewed NFS ship, but the freight is still there!

By occupying the Ferry while it was at berth, the crew tied down the Norland in Amsterdam, as the sister ships use the same berths at either end of the crossing.

Wednesday, April 27th: With support for the action solid amongst the crew — and Hull dockers voting to support the action — NFS management backed down on the sacking threat. At this point the crew voted to return to work the next day, allowing a crew change.

Thursday, April 28th: With the crew change complete, the relief crew occupied the Norsea. NSF management — by this time better prepared — immediately cut off all power and supplies to the vessel. The ship was sealed off by a private security firm, and a minimum police presence was established around the ship.

Friday, April 29th: Following a request from the crew for urgent supplies — cigarettes and sanitary towels — Hull Dock Shop Stewards approached the private security firm to allow supplies on board. They met a hostile reply and a dockers' representative was surrounded by police and security men.

At this point dockers in the immediate area began to walk off the job — and surrounded the police. This action provoked a rapid change of heart on the part of the police, who insisted that supplies should be allowed on board!

Later in the day dockers said that unless power and supplies were restored the Dutch-crewed ferry would not be allowed to berth. NSF quickly agreed.

The occupation continues — with about 30 of the second crew on board. The local Trades Council has tuned its Disputes Committee into a Seafarers' Support Committee for the duration of the strike, and is continuing to build financial support from workplaces in the area.

Getting out information on the strike and the local occupation is the committee's first task, in order to prepare the ground for sympathy action.

By Hull *Labour Briefing* supporters

NUJ Conference

'Open Left' has major task

The first NUJ Conference for over ten years to take place without an ongoing industrial dispute was forced to grapple with some grim realities in Sheffield last month.

On the eve of the Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM) the union's long-running battle for recognition and reinstatement of victimised members at the Advertiser North London Group of newspapers had been settled.

However, the dispute ended with the NUJ Chapel conceding defeat and accepting cash compensation.

A key factor had been the way solidarity action and even publicity for the union case had been hamstrung by anti-union legislation.

Perhaps even worse news came from the Broadcasting Sector, with tales of the continued scabbing role of the NUJ's TV-am Chapel, daily crossing ACTT picket lines in a grim echo of the Wapping fiasco.

But other employers — notably Tyne Tees TV, Grenada, and other ITV companies — have detected this weakness and begun to follow the TV-am example, tearing up house agreements with the NUJ as well as ACTT.

Facing tough going on the industrial front, the NUJ remains deep in crisis with its own financial affairs running at a huge deficit — even after panic measures including drastic cuts last year in national level committee meetings.

By HARRY SLOAN

Pleas for increased subscriptions to help alleviate this crisis were undermined by the admission from Treasurer Alan Pike that another £18,000 had vanished without trace from the union's Acorn House HQ — following over £20,000 last year.

Police are investigating: but delegates were in no mood to vote through a relatively modest 6% increase in subs.

Also voted down, for various reasons, were almost all of the economy measures proposed by the NEC. Surprisingly, however, the most desperate gamble of all — staking everything on the establishment of a new, centralised, computerised system of collecting subscriptions — was passed, with only a few in opposition.

In place of economies, a mood of relative political radicalism pushed through demands for a ballot for a political fund, which could cost £50,000 to run, and other potentially costly proposals.

Strong policies were also adopted, calling for a TUC one-day strike against the new anti-union laws, opposition to NHS cuts, and defence of press freedom against a rising tide of censorship.

The NUJ also voted £5,000 to the P&O dispute and consolidated its internationalist commitment with a strengthened resolution on South Africa and Namibia. (This brought a humiliating rebuff for the small but disproportionately influential group of Stalinist *Morning Star* supporters, who tried to end NUJ support for Moses Mayekiso, and restrict solidarity to support for the ANC, SACTU, and SWAPO.)

The leftish trend of many resolutions was slightly unreal, however, coming in the absence of serious right wing opposition (the right wing hardly bothers to attend ADM any more, preferring to sulk, or sabotage activity at branch and chapel level) and against a background of retreat from industrial action.

The forces of the left, relatively small in numbers, and divided in loyalties, were weaker this year at ADM, though the final evening of the Conference saw a fresh attempt to build an anti-sectarian Open Left in the aftermath of the collapse of the previous *Militant*-dominated Broad Left.

The victory of left candidate Tim Gopsill in the ballot for a new editor of the union's paper *The Journalist* was secured with less than 10% of the membership voting, and in the shadow of a new, more right wing NEC, already discussing a recalled Special Delegate Meeting to push through the financial measures it failed to win at Sheffield.

There is much basic work for the left to do in the NUJ, as the media unions look towards a new federation and possible amalgamations as a response to the employers' offensive, and new battles loom against derecognition on every front.

The Open Left meeting in London on May 22nd will hopefully offer some practical steps towards a rank and file newsletter and a serious attempt at joint work to confront these problems.

Labour Party

CLPD on the Leadership Challenge:

Mass campaign vs. mass media circus

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) has issued a statement welcoming the Benn-Heffer campaign for the Party Leadership.

The CLPD statement criticises Kinnock's policies and internal Party regime and argues that we need a new Leadership to promote an alternative programme.

It also calls for annual Leadership contests.

The statement also calls on the Campaign Group to *"restrict campaigning to normal Party channels"* and *"not to participate in the mass media coverage of the contest"*.

It argues that a *"media-orientated"* campaign will *"harm the Party, the policies the Left is promoting, and the future use of the electoral college"*.



PHOTO: Jane Connor

As the campaign against Alton's Bill brings pro-choicers out to lobby Parliament (21.1.88): The Leadership campaign offers us the chance to conduct a mass campaign for socialism amongst activists involved in anti-Tory campaigns

By Mike Marqusee Haringey Labour Briefing

In posing the choice facing the Benn-Heffer Campaign as one between *"normal Party channels"* and the *"mass media"*, CLPD appears to have eliminated a third option, one that most *Briefing* supporters would like to see put into practice.

What we need is not a mass media campaign but *a mass campaign for socialism* that reaches out to Party members who don't attend branch meetings, to rank and file trade unionists in both affiliated and unaffiliated unions, to hundreds of thousands of people involved in struggles against NHS and local government cuts, against immigration laws, against Alton's Bill, against Clause 28, etc.

The majority of these people are not Labour Party members. The Benn-Heffer challenge provides a reason for them to join — and an essential means of building the left in the Party.

If we restrict our campaigning in the way CLPD suggests, we give up any hope of reaching these people, and guarantee continued defeat for both socialist policies and socialist leadership.

CLPD's strictures on the mass media are well taken. Clearly, we will not be able to make our appeal through the pages of the tabloids or on the television screen. But in many cases the local press can and should be used to publicise the existence and activities of local Benn-Heffer campaigns.

Mass leafletting, public meetings, demonstrations, workplace meetings, the entire battery of mass campaigning techniques should be deployed in the Benn-Heffer campaign — without apology. If we do not use this campaign to reach beyond the confines of GCs and trade union executives, we will have wasted an historic opportunity.

CLPD claims that public campaigning will damage the Party and discredit the left. It is true of course that our opponents wil seek to smear us as splitters and accuse us of promoting disunity and discord.

But we must answer these charges with a clear, confident assertion of our right to campaign for socialism anywhere anytime. We must also contrast *our* promotion of socialist ideas with *their* highly publicised witch-hunt of individual Party members, *our* record of solidarity and unity in action with *their's* of betrayal and division.

The sad fact is that the rot is so deep that it can only be removed by a major upheaval in the Party. The notion that such an upheaval could take place without an almighty and highly public ruck is a fantasy. If such a ruck is to take place, our objective should be to make sure it does so on our terms.

"Normal Party channels" are increasingly sclerotic. In a year or two the electoral college may well be abandoned completely — not because it is divisive and embarrassing to the Party as a whole, but because it can be used to call an ineffective Leadership to account. Let's make the most of it while we can.

Backing Benn & Heffer

What kind of voting do we want?

As the nominations deadline of July 8th approaches, the Labour Leadership battle is beginning to warm up.

Not surprisingly, supporters of the Kinnock-Hattersley ticket want to avoid subjecting the New Realist ideas of the Leadership to open debate within the Party.

By Bryn Griffiths Hackney South CLP

Kinnock's more neanderthal supporters, backed up by moribund right wing General Committees, are trying to nominate the existing Leadership at GCs without any debate in the branches.

The last thing a right wing constituency baron wants is to expose ordinary Party members to a debate about Labour's abandonment of socialist policies!

More sophisticated Kinnock supporters are canvassing for a secret postal ballot. More than one General Committee will have been subjected to a "realigned Bennite" explaining how we fought for the right to elect our Leaders and it is now the left's duty to give as many members as possible the right to vote.

Neanderthal

Despite its apparent subtlety, this amounts to the same thing as the neanderthal right's blatantly undemocratic approach. It would pre-empt a full debate about the issues throughout the membership.

The left should advocate the fullest possible discussion in every ward, trade union branch, and affiliated organisation. After these discussions, delegates to the General Committee should be mandated on which candidates to vote for and the decision should then be made at the General Committee.

That is the system of "one member, one vote" which the Labour Party has always operated: a system, moreover, which allows affiliated members and the oppressed their weighted say.

The Labour Party is not the US Democratic Party or a collection of like-minded individuals. It is a political Party, which socialists should seek to build into a mass party based on active participation by all its members.

Collective

To adopt the model of the US Democratic Party of one member (or, in the case of US primaries, one supporter) one vote would be to abandon the collective and participatory tenets of socialist politics.

The use of one member, one vote would also be a step back for the self-organisation of the oppressed within the Party.

We support the setting up of sections for Women, Youth and Black people in order to empower them within a largely middle-aged, white, male Labour party. The oppressed gain strength when they organise themselves.

To atomise them in an individual postal ballot is to deny their common experience and undermine their ability to campaign for candidates who support their demands.

The Leadership campaign is an opportunity to recruit people to the Party. Through the Benn-Heffer campaign we can show there is a force in the Party, including groups such as *Briefing* and those involved in the broader Socialist Conference Movement, that supports workers involved in the current wave of disputes and campaigns alongside such groups as FAB and Stop the Clause.

Any attempt to squash debate through manoeuvres at the General Committee or postal balloting undermines our opportunity to launch a campaign for socialist values and should be resisted.



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

Eric Heffer, challenger for the Deputy Leadership of the Labour Party, attends a COHSE lobby of the House of Commons in defence of NHS services and conditions last year.

- **No postal ballot**
- **Full discussion in every branch, trade union, and affiliated organisation**
- **Mandation of all General Committee delegates.**

Obituary

Fenner Brockway

Fenner Brockway, who died a few months before his 100th birthday, was a man of controversy, hope and vision.

He was converted to socialism by Keir Hardie and a stalwart of the old ILP, rejoining the Labour Party after World War 2.

By Walter Wolfgang Vice Chair Labour CND (personal capacity)

From the World War to the Vietnam war and beyond he was a passionate advocate of colonial freedom or what is now called third world liberation. He did this at a time when it was not fahionable and when most of the labour establishment adhered to a form of paternalism.

But for Fenner political independence was never enough without economic emancipation. He was always controversial and never a seeker of key popularity.

He was a terrific worker for peace, and in later years for nuclear disarmament. The advance of CND, and in particular its revival since 1980, he saw both as an inspiration and a challenge.

In spite of all the disappointments, he believed in the ultimate triumph of international socialism in the full sense of economic emancipation for all.

He never temporised. He never sold out. His inspiration lives on.

Benn-Heffer: CLP Checklist

Are you ready?

Don't be caught on the hop. Get organised now to win your CLP for Benn and Heffer — and use the campaign to argue for socialist politics in your local Labour Party... and beyond!

- Deadline for **nominations** for Leader and Deputy Leader is **July 8th**. Try to get your General Committee (GC) to nominate Benn and Heffer. The more nominations, the stronger the campaign.
- Elect **Conference Delegates** supporting Benn and Heffer at your **July** or **August** GC.
- Even if you don't succeed in either of the above, the key vote in most GCs will be (or should be) in **September**, when the GCs will (or should) **mandate its Conference delegate(s)** to vote one way or another in the Leadership, Deputy Leadership and NEC contests.
- Therefore, organise well-advertised **meetings** of your branch, section, trade union, or other affiliated organisation to **debate** the Leadership elections and then **mandate** GC delegates to vote in accordance with the majority at the branch, section, etc., meeting.
- Ensure the final decision is made at the GC by **democratically-mandated** delegates, not by postal ballots or the personal whim of individual delegates.
- Make sure your treasurer has paid **last year's affiliation fees**. Failure to do so will result in your CLP being disqualified from participation in the election.
- Set up **Benn-Heffer Campaigns** in your CLP, Borough or Region.
- Use the Campaign to spread the Benn-Heffer message throughout the local CLPs and into **local trade unions and community-based campaigns**.
- Place a bulk order now for the **Benn-Heffer Badge**.
- Organise a **public meeting** and local leafletting for Benn-Heffer in your area.
- Keep the **national campaign** informed of local developments (write to Jeremy Corbyn MP, Campaign Group, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA).
- Rush articles to ***Briefing*** telling us how the Campaign is going in your area, with a contact number so readers in your area can get in touch.

Mark Seaton

Labour Listens

It's one step to the right in Birmingham

I went to *Labour Listens* with high hopes that I would see signs of strong Leadership and possibly a return to some sort of socialist ideas.

I'm afraid I didn't see or hear anything to make me optimistic for the future.

At the Grand Hotel in Birmingham, Kinnock was his usual self. He talked a lot and said nothing.

When asked about the left, and what he was going to do about it, he made his now famous Churchillian speech:

"If it means wearing a tie, if it means cleaning your shoes, if it means getting a haircut, if it means wearing a suit, if it means going on TV — by god, we'll do it."

This really confused me. I thought he was talking about Derek Hatton.

I came away convinced that he and the rest of the Leadership are obsessed with appearing respectable and are scared to death of the press.

By Len Mason Birmingham

Not so many years ago I used to go and heckle the local Liberal Party. Now I find at least three of these Liberals are leading activists in the Labour Party which they were once dedicated to overthrow.

When my comrades and I walked out of one of the local policy meetings (because we objected to one of the organisers), we were followed out by one of these born-again Liberals who told us to go and form our own party. *"Yes,"* I thought, *"you're obviously forming yours."*

Perhaps this is the reason people like me who have been Labour all our lives are now suddenly considered dangerous lefties.

English local elections

A boost for Labour and the left

The local Council elections held on May 5th saw a general improvement for Labour on its 1984 position — which was already regarded as something of a high-water-mark for Labour in local government. As always, local anomalies and regional trends make generaliations dangerous. *Briefing* supporters have filed these reports from their home bases.

● **Birmingham** Labour increased its majority from 13 to 17 with an 8.3% swing from the Tories. The Tory vote dropped by nearly 20% and the SLD/SDP (Mixed Salad) vote was down by 50%. Far from being the "vote of confidence" in the current Labour Group claimed by right wing Leader Dick Knowles, this result reflected general discontent with the Tories over the NHS, Poll Tax, and especially the new Housing Bill, around which left candidates organised meetings. Both soft left and hard left have strengthened their positions on the Group, and a number of soft-left Councillors will contest key positions in the next Group AGM.

In Bourneville, Richard Evans, a longstanding *Militant* supporter, won an impressive victory on an unequivocal no-cuts campaign, turning a 2,000 Tory majority into a Labour majority of 216. Left winger Margaret Wells scored a big victory in Spockland Green, and Phil Murphy — witch-hunted, smeared, and suspended from the Labour Group — increased his majority to 811.

Labour gained four seats in the Selly Oak constituency, threatening the parliamentary career of sitting Tory MP Anthony Beaumont-Dark.

● **Brighton** Labour victories mean Labour will no longer have to rely on the Mayor's casting vote and have strengthened the left minority on the Group.

Mark Thompson, a *Briefing* supporter, scored a major upset in Seven Dials ward, destroying a former Alliance stronghold and winning the seat for Labour for the first time ever.

Richard Stanton, victim of a media witch-hunt over his refusal to condemn the Brighton bombing, was returned with a healthy majority and reiterated his support for Irish freedom in his victory speech after the count.

Left winger Andy Winter won back Regency Ward for Labour and called for defiance of Clause 28 in his victory speech.

The Stanton witch-hunt campaign featured references to *Labour Briefing's* coverage of the Gibraltar assassinations and he distribution of cuttings from the *Sunday Express* attack on *Briefing* and Chris Knight.

● **Leeds** As the Mixed Salad vote collapsed, Labour retained control, winning one extra seat from a renegade Liberal turned "Independent". *Briefing* supporter Garth Frankland scored the highest ever Labour vote in Chapel Allerton (3,800, 65% of the total) after a vigorous campaign in which 8,000 copies of a clear political statement had been distributed — including a defence of abortion rights and a pledge to defy Clause 28. Tory attempts to target Chapel Allerton for a smear campaign based on a public meeting with Peter Tatchell on "positive images" organised by the local Labour Party made no impact.

Another *Briefing* supporter, Keith Nathan, won election in Headingly ward, seeing off an SLD challenge.

These victories and others have strengthened the left on the Labour Group, which will be standing a Campaign Group ticket, with Garth Frankland challenging for the Leadership, in conjunction with the Benn/Heffer campaign, at the Labour Group AGM. Tony Benn himself will be speaking at a meeting in Leeds called by Campaign Groups in Leeds, Barnsley, Bradford, Huddersfield and Rotherham.

● **London** *Briefing* supporter and anti-cuts candidate Mary Helsden won 56% of the vote and a seat on **Camden** Council in a by-election in St. Pancras ward. The local Labour right boycotted the campaign, but the left worked hard, overcoming a Tory smear campaign which sought to use *Briefing's* Irish coverage and the left's defence of lesbian and gay rights against the Labour candidate. The smear tactics included an eve-of-poll leaflet reproducing *Briefing's* recent front page on the Gibraltar assassinations (yes, you did read something similar earlier on in this column).

In **Brent**, a by-election created by the resignation of former Leader Merle Amory was lost by anti-cuts candidate Moore Giwa, running in a right wing ward undergoing rapid gentrification and hampered by the current shambles on the Labour Group.

Conference resolutions

Annual Conference time is coming! Resolutions need to be through June GCs.

Remember to change the wording slightly of model resolutions when you use them, so that they count as a seperate resolution.

We'll print more resolutions in the next *Briefing*. If you can't wait, send a stamped addressed envelope (A5 size) to Labour Briefing, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ, and 50p in stamps to cover photocopying costs, and we'll send you copies of all model resolutions received in this office to date.

If your campaign has a model resolution, send it in to the same address.

Please also let us know details of election of delegates in your CLP, and which resolution you have passed.

Labour Against the Witch-hunt '86

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.

Chesterfield Recall Conference

Not a campaign, not a party, something in between...

***Briefing* supporter DAVY JONES interviewed RICHARD KUPER, one of the national organisers of the Socialist Conference, which will be meeting again at Chesterfield on June 11-12th.**

What are the main aims of the recall conference?
The aim of the Chesterfield Conference in general is to establish an independent socialist movement in this country.

At our second conference in June we have to do a number of inter-related things. First, the rethinking that has been going on in the various policy groups will be put to the Conference for discussion, development, acceptance, or rejection.

Secondly, through this conference we hope to move Chesterfield toward a campaigning movement, to identify a number of areas and issues which we want to prioritise for activity over the next six to 12 months.

Thirdly, we want to consolidate the development of a socialist network which was set in train by the first conference.

Already work is well advanced on production of a socialist directory of groups and organisations active on every conceivable issue of interest to socialists. We'd like to publish it within the next year (contact Di Parkin, Directory Co-ordinator, Socialist Conference, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG).

What's been happening with the policy groups and how can people get involved?
It's taken a while to get these off the ground, but there are now a dozen groups meeting regularly.

Every area of interest to socialists is either the subject of an existing policy group — or a policy group will be set up if anyone is willing to convene it (see box).

Each group is organising itself in ways which it feels most appropriate. For example, the Social Services group has split up into five sub-groups, many of which are concerned with immediate campaigning activity against Tory attacks. The economic policy group is holding three seminars between now and Chesterfield and they will produce a report for conference.

These groups must be ongoing. They are not intended to formulate a single policy statement which is put to conference and then the work is over.

Many of them open up questions on which the movement has sometimes preferred to remain silent or agnostic in the past. We must be willing to scrutinise *every* issue on which socialists can and should have a position.

Socialism has been marginalised over the last decade or so. The ideological high ground has been captured by the Tories. Neil Kinnock and the bulk of the Labour Party have been pulled along behind the Tory agenda.

Our project has got to be to make socialist ideas relevant, fresh, interesting and new in the 1990s.

Some would say that policy work is all very well, but it needs to be linked to action and campaigning.
I couldn't agree more. It's essential that policy work goes hand in hand with campaigning.

At the same time, it's important to remember that not all the policy issues have been sorted out. We mustn't assume we have the correct positions on everything and all we need to do is implement them.

What Chesterfield has to do is identify a number of priority areas so that it is seen to be in the forefront of campaigns around them. A campaign against the Poll Tax is one initiative we must be involved in. Another is the defence of the health service.

Questions around education are likely to be of great social importance in the next six to 12 months. We must also develop our trade union solidarity network and lend support to workers in struggle.

Underlying all these areas is the central issue of the attack on civil liberties. It is crucial that socialists are in the forefront of the defence of civil liberties and that the connection between democracy and socialism is made again and again.

Many people on the left are confused about Chesterfield. It's not a campaign, not a party, but something in between. How will it develop? Will it become more organised and structured?
The Chesterfield movement is precisely that — a movement. It's an attempt to draw together people involved in a variety of issues and campaigns and to forge links between them.

At the same time it is much more flexible, open, and fluid than any party organisation we know.

The truth is that single issue campaigns remain isolated. The truth is also that party structures, as they've developed in Britain, have tended to restrict, limit, and narrow the initiative, enthusiasm, and promise which are present in so many struggles.

I would see Chesterfield developing a somewhat more co-ordinated structure in the future. At the moment it doesn't even have an office or a single full-time worker.

I think we will need a small apparatus, but above all we must remain flexible, able to respond to new campaigns and movements, able to encourage and initiate new struggles and new organisations in different localities.

What do you say to the busy Labour Party or trade union activist who's already rushing around in a hundred and one campaigns? Why should she or he be involved in Chesterfield?
It is the links *between* the individual campaigns which are crucial. I've seen so many campaigns in which people have put all their energies rise and fall without trace.

We can help link one campaign to another in terms of their contribution to the general struggle for socialism. And that general struggle will be both a theoretical struggle, which will inform the work of local activists, and a series of practical struggles.

People need to be able to move from one form of activity to another. They also need the knowledge that their immediate struggles are linked to all the other struggles against capitalism.

What connection is there between the Benn-Heffer Campaign and Chesterfield?
There is obviously an immense political overlap. Both are concerned with campaigning for socialism.

Many Labour Party members will no doubt wish to throw themselves into the Leadership campaign. The work they do there is part of the same struggle for socialism which Chesterfield itself is engaged in.

Others who don't wish to concentrate on the Leadership struggle will continue to be involved in a variety of other campaigns, *all* of which should be linked together so that one strengthens another, and work done in one area boosts work done in another.

We must see our different activities as interconnected, part of a single struggle to redefine the socialist arena in which we will be organising in the 1990s.

★ *What should the Chesterfield movement be doing? How can and should it develop? Please write in to Briefing and let us know what you think.*

THE SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

Policy Groups

Groups and Convenors

Political Democracy
Richard Kuper, 10 St George's Avenue, London N7 0HD. 01 607 1883.

The Economy and Industry
John Ure, Flat F, 47 St Paul's Road, London N1 2LT. 01 354 2241.

Trade Union Strategies
Sheila Cohen, 25b Elmore Road, London N1 3AW. 01 354 5723.
Jim Mortimer, 31 Charleston Street, London SE17 1RI.

Social Services
General Convenor Caroline Benn, 12 Holland Park Avenue, London W11. 01 229 0779.
a) Health Hugh Lowe, 4 St Dunstans Gardens, London W3 6QG. 01 992 5971.
b) Housing Bill Brown, 6 Jonathan Court, Windmill Road, London W4. 01 747 3208.
c) Education Jane Shallice, Flat 3, 17 Haslemere Road, London N8. 01 348 8370.
d) Training John Fairley, 7 Union Street, Edinburgh EH1. 031 556 8298.

International Relations
Jeremy Beale, 17 Holland Street, Brighton BN2 2WB

Ireland
Nadine Finch, 3 King Henry's Yard, Barrett's Grove London N16 8AP. 01 254 1280.

Media and Communiations
Tom McNally, Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG. 01 437 2795.

Green Politics and Socialism
Andy Porter, 111 Albion Hill, Brighton, 0273 673643.

Philosophy
Roy Bhaskar, 11 Balfern Street, London SW11 3EL. 01 228 8206.

Women and Socialism
Mandy Moore, Sutton Manor, Palterton Lane, Sutton Scarsdale, nr Chesterfield, Derbyshire S44 5ET. 0246 851143.

Gays and Lesbians
Jamie Gough, 89 Great Russell Street, London W1. 01 637 2249.
Sarah Roelofs. 01 281 4843.

The Black Agenda
Kingsley Abrams, 47 Queens Park Road, London SW19 8NP.

There is also interest in working groups on:
Issues of disability
Policies for pensioners and old age.
Any volunteers to act as convenors? Please contact Hilary Wainwright, Socialist Conference, 9 Poland Street, London W1.

Impressions of America

A new mood of hope

My own fascination with America, and especially with American labour, began in the 1940s when I was in my teens.

With the discovery of the novels and poetry of Jack London, Upton Sinclair, and Howard Fast, and the historical studies of Philip S. Foner, I deepened my awareness — an awareness shaped by many visits to the cinema! — of American society.

Later, when I became a labour historian, I always refused to separate reseach from contemporary life. During trips to America between 1976 I always sought out the handful of active socialists in the communities in which I was working.

When I visited San Francisco in 1984 it was clear that America, even before the introduction of the ugly word "yuppie", was beginning to undergo fundamental social changes as the economic crisis of capitalism deepened.

Alongside the aggressive emergence of luxurious condominiums for the very rich, soup kitchens for the unemployed, the poor, the dispossesed, and the vulnerable were beginning to appear.

I spent a week in New York this April, attending the Socialist Scholars' Conference at Manhattan Community College where I presented a paper on *"Racism in Britain between the two World Wars"*.

The week was spent meeting left wing intellectuals from many parts of the States. Speaking to Communist, Trotskyist, and independent socialists from the 1930s was a stimulating experience. More important, I had the discovered the real New York for the first time.

New York has changed fundamentally since 1984. In 1988 it is the New York of Jack London's *The Iron Heel* — a city with fantastic energy, aggression, art, imagination, incredible insensitivity, and spontaneous compassion and generosity.

Newspapers estimate that some 30,000 men and women are sleeping in the subways and streets (as distinct from the much larger number in the rat-infested "Hotels" around Times Square) without *any* assistance from the capitalist state.

Because I used the subway and the bus, I saw more of New York than I had done before. It was the America of late 20th century capitalism — a new New York, where the free play of market forces and the "invisible hand" are creating the "liberating" freedom of the Soup Kitchen, the Salvation Army shelter, and the paper coffee begging cup — the new symbol of Americn capitalism in crisis.

By JAMES D. YOUNG

Comparing the American novels of the 1930s with the existentialist experience of today, this symbol seems a much more serious threat to the *status quo* than the catchphrase of the 1930s — *"brother, can you spare a dime?"*

Although the language of the 1930s — the language of working class *community* — no longer exists today, a sceptical questioning of capitalist values is now evident.

This is very evident in New York in the spontaneous sympathy in the streets for those with begging cups. Furthermore, this spontaneous, generous sympathy is not shaped by creed, colour, or race, but by a deep awareness of how vulnerable most people are in "the terrible hell of the 20th century."

Although unemployment is a major reason for the thousands of dispossessed on the streets and subways of New York, it is not the only reason. Many homeless New Yorkers have had the rents of their cramped apartments trebled, in a move to clear the slums of New York of working people and build new office blocks and condominiums in their former neighbourhoods. In the midst of increasing poverty New York is enjoying a boom in property speculation.

It seems to me that a new feature of capitalism in crisis in New York today — and something that stands out sharply from the experience of the 1930s — is the growth of human solidarity.

In the face of the naked aggression found in any major city anywhere, human sympathy and solidarity are usually stifled — except at crucial turning points in historical development.

Although they may not be familiar with George Bernard Shaw's aphorism that the "rich and the poor were free to sleep under London Bridge", a growing number of Americans are becoming very critical of this sort of capitalist freedom.

Before the Socialist Scholars' Conference, I had formed an impression that a sea-change was underway in New York. The negative, hateful aspects of American capitalism were more obvious, but I felt a sense of hope.

This was confirmed throughout the Conference, which from the beginning was unwittingly dominated by the electoral successes of Jesse Jackson. Most of the American socialist scholars were inspired by the fact that white workers were increasingly voting for Jackson.

Although the major theme of the Conference was "Socialist Movements: National and International Memories and Lessons", Jackson's impact on the long-repressed American working class put the need for a Socialist Party back onto the agenda of American politics for the first time in a generation.

The Conference had 114 panels on many different themes. In contrast to the "economism" of the British left, the Americans gave a great deal of attention to the cinema, literature, and the arts.

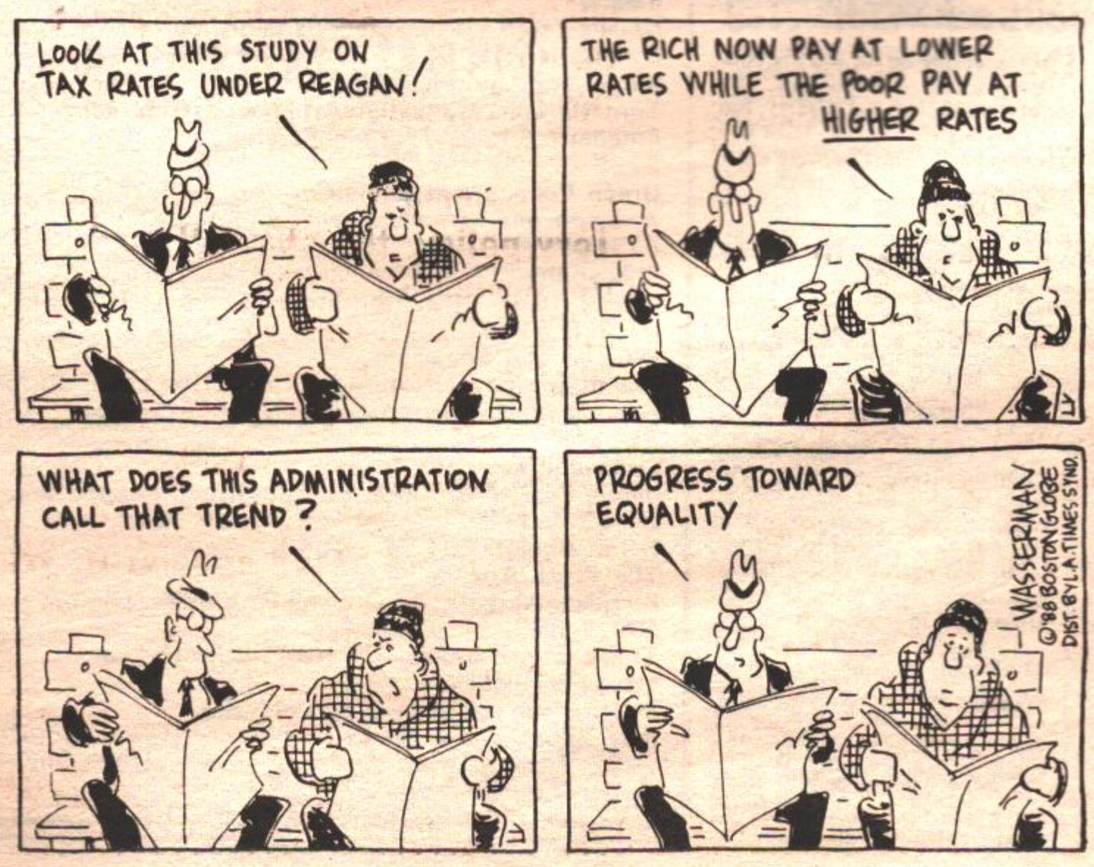
It struck me that American socialists now had the advantage of at least having fewer dogmas to discard than the tradition-bound British left.

There were, of course, "proletarian" sectarians who, in their rejection of the need for any transitional programme towards socialism, wanted an international workers' revolution now. But at least they displayed a better fighting spirit than the minority of socialist intellectuals, like Andre Gunder Frank, who insisted that socialists would be powerless to resist the coming capitalist economic crisis.

It was also encouraging to hear women and black people question the dogmas of the conservative bureaucrats who exist in every labour movement. But the overall view was optimistic about the left's growing constituency amongst working people and underprivileged groups; for the first time since the death of Gene Debs in the 1920s American labour now has an opportunity to come of age.

The most moving part of the conference was Michael Harrington's inspiring speech in the final session.

Clearly, he was moved by America's new capitalist crisis and prospects for putting socialism on the American and world map. Conscious that he is dying from cancer, he appealed to the several thousand-strong audience to remain true and begin to fulfil what Jack London once depicted as "the dream of Debs" — the dream of a classless, egalitarian society free of oppression, unemployment, and racism.



INTERVIEW

The Jackso phenomeno

***Briefing* supporter SHAHID TILLY interviewed ABDUL ALKALIMAT leading black scholar and activist from the United States at the annual World Radical Book Fair held in London.**

What is your overall view of the Jackson campaign?

The Jesse Jackson campaign is a new phenomenon in American politics. It is based on the fact that black people now constitute a large segment of the registered and voting age public and in the major cities — a sizeable 35-40% bloc.

It reflects the success of the Civil Rights movement, which in part was a fight to gain access to the state: the right to register people, the right to vote, the right to run for office and pass legislation.

This success first bore fruit in the election of black officials at local level. In Jesse Jackson we now have an intervention at the national level that does not organically grow out of local politics but is a creation of both the media and Jackson's own ability as a leader to project himself and negotiate a place in the leadership nationally, first, in the national leadership of the black community, and, secondly, in the national leadership of the Democratic Party.

This national leadership has been legitimated by what I would call the *politics of performance*, whereby Jackson has personally identified himself with the national mobilisations of the key single-issue movements, and thus created a progressive political symbol in national politics.

Jackson identified with a whole list of social questions including the gay movement, the ecology movement, the fight for women's equality, abortion rights, bilingual education, the question of immigration, of drugs.

The politics of performance means that you bring people from these movements to stand on the stage with you, to give them visibility like a spot on a TV programme. Or you go to their march and give a speech designed to speak to their constituency.

What is the significance of Jackson's huge black vote?

The black vote, at this stage of the game, has to be viewed in two respects. First, it is an anti-racist vote which takes the form of voting for a black candidate in opposition to a white candidate, because white candidates in the past have been a source of betrayal. So blacks vote as an anti-racist block.

Second, this anti-racism is the foundation of progressive politics. Therefore these other movements of which Jackson is the symbol are drawn to the black vote.

For a politics of power, as opposed to a politics of performance, to emerge, this anti-racist vote and the symbolic unification of these movements must be translated into organisational terms for the systematic mobilisation of political resources. This we have not seen as yet.

Aren't there contradictions in black participation in the US state?

The rise of the black middle class has become not only an expression of black people breaking open a racist state, by virtue of having a black presence within it, but also a means whereby the state co-opts black people to legitimate itself in the eyes of people who would othewise move in more radical ways.

This entry of the black middle class into political positions happens precisely at a time when budgets are contracting. Revenue is in decline, both because industry is moving out of the city and because Reaganomics has overseen a transfer of revenue away from federal and city budgets.



Abdul Alkalimat argues that Jesse Jackson's campaign can trace its Rights movement of the late 60s. That period was famous for stree the mass picket of Abbie Hoffman's trial in Chicago (above).

In the short run the black community has been forced to and is willing to accept *less* — by virtue of the symbolic success of a black leadership.

Clearly, this is not going to last forever. As long as the struggle is one against racism, and can be interpreted as such, then the black community is likely to support the black middle class.

However, when it is clear that the middle class is actually imposing great sacrifices on people in the cities in the form of cutbacks in services, or is associated with a fall in the quality of education or with incompetence, then we are likely to witness a revolt in the black community.

How will Jackson's campaign affect the Democratic Party?

Many black politicians inside government bureaucracy are likely to benefit from developments around Jackson. If the Democratic Party win the Presidency, there will be offices and positions to be distributed to supporters and allies.

But this does not mean that the Democratic Party is likely to be transformed dramatically.

The Jackson campaign is beginning to rejuvenate the left. But this needs to be viewed in conjunction with politics at the local level and whether a new leadership is really emerging which can bring new life into popular struggles and into the left itself.

Jackson's major political base remains in the Church, which is inherently a conservative body. In the south it plays a crucial role in fighting racism, but on other issues it is likely to play a rather different, less positive role.

Local elected officials who find their status in the Democratic Party enhanced by the Jackson campaign will also now have to face questions and demands about supporting local struggles.

What will happen at the Convention?

The convention is the arena where the Party's platform, candidate, and policies are decided upon. Over 4,000 delegates will gather, organised in state delegations.

In the primary elections each delegate is sworn to be either uncommitted or in most cases committed to a candidate on the first ballot. After that, if a majority is not won by a single candidate, then it becomes an open convention.

The wheeling and dealing starts. The state delegations will meet in hotels and caucus.

This, of course, is a hi-tech affair. Outside the convention centre each candidate has a trailer connecting organisers with candidates' headquarters and various delegations in hotel rooms. At this point appeals are made for votes and deals are offered on policy and potential office.

All the Democrats are aware that a bloody spectacle of bickering will endanger their chances of beating the Republicans. Therefore candidates will be asked to submerge their peronal political ambitions for the greater good of the Party.

Here is one very interesting point. Jesse represents the movement *outside* while at the same time he has to subordinate this movement to the interests of the Party. If he makes demands which are rejected by the leadership of the Democratic Party it is not yet clear what he will do.

It is here that the politics of performance confronts the politics of power.

The vote at the Presidential elections in November is turned out by local political machines. Therefore, those who have a lot to do with this level of turnout of the vote carry some influence.

Mayors, in particular, are expected to turn out the vote. We now have black mayors in

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ex-chair of SNCC,
ack and Third

lanta, Detroit, Chicago, Los
ngeles, and Philadelphia.
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Democrats need to win if
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nning the Presidency.
This adds a complicating
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protests like, for instance,

rty and to Jackson's cam-
ign. The question is likely to
whether black political
dership will *allow* Jackson to
main *the* national black
litical symbol.
There is an underlying am-
valence in the relationship bet-
en the national black leader-
ip of Jackson and the core of
local black leadership
bedded within the state and
rty machinery.
At the Convention he will
ve to deal with local delega-
ns headed by black political
ures such as Coleman Young
Michigan, Eugene Sawyer of
inois, Andrew Young of
eorgia, and Tom Bradley of
alifornia. How he will deal
th them remains to be seen.
The black electorate is ac-
stomed to voting for the
esser evil": Humphrey over
xon, Carter over Ford and
eagan, and Mondale over
eagan. Black elected officials
side the Democratic Party
ay still retain illusions about
e nature of the system, but
ack voters, who form a bloc
ten million in general elec-
ons, constitute a united front
imarily aimed against the
pressive agenda of the right.
For over a generation, this
oc has been the bulwark of an
corporatist national politics
d noninterventionist, pro-
essive foreign policy. Con-
rsely, the Jewish electorate
s become more conservative
foreign policy and less liberal
the economy, full employ-
ent, and social welfare.
The bulk of Jewish voters are
per middle class; Blacks as a
oup are predominantly work-
g people, and therefore back a
ore consistently progressive
genda. The calls to derail
ackson's campaign from the
ewish community indicate
ng-term political and
ciological divergences bet-
een these two groups.

Socialists & Jesse Jackson

The dead end of the "lesser evil" way

In both Britain and the USA socialists have been involved in sharp arguments about the Presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson.

The debate raises three main issues:

- the question of what Jackson's policies actually are, and what he represents politically;
- the issue of the character of the Rainbow Coalition which supports him and what attitude socialists should have towards it;
- the issue of what practical attitude socialists in the United States should have towards the Democratic Party.

By Phil Hearse
Islington North CLP

A major aspect of politics in the United States is the relative weakness of the labour movement – a product of successive historical defeats and prolonged prosperity (charted by Mike Davis in his book *Prisoners of the American Dream*, published by *Verso*).

The absence of a labour party, a party of the workers organisationally independent of the ruling class has also to be taken into account. Both the main parties, the Republicans and the Democrats, are millionaire capitalist parties.

The central strategic task of socialists in the United States, in the medium or long term, is the creation of a labour party, the essential step towards conquering working class political independence.

The basic block along the road to creating such a party is the fact that the trade union bureaucracy in the US is tied lock, stock and barrel to the Democratic Party and through that to the ruling class.

How can socialists go about breaking the stranglehold of the Democrats? It is of course difficult from this distance to give exact tactical prescriptions for what US socialists should do – and there are certainly differences among them as what is the best way to proceed.

But the statement by Ron Daniels, Executive Director of the Rainbow Coalition, quoted in *Briefing* no. 61 does not give grounds for believing that the Rainbow Coalition is the way forward. He says:

"The Rainbow... is not really locked into the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. It is an independent organisation... Historically the Democratic Party has been the party which has greater affinity for the kinds of issues that the Rainbow constituencies are raising.

"The struggle therefore is to more broadly define the nature of the Democratic Party, to open it up to political participation... That is the nature of the struggle at this stage. Obviously that will have to be evaluated over time..."

Statement

This statement is self-contradictory, but clear enough on the basics – and dead wrong. In what way has the Democratic Party had a "greater affinity" for the kinds of issues raised by the Rainbow?

The Democratic Party is one of the two main parties of the ruling class in the world's main imperialist power, the party which sent the troops to Vietnam, Santo Domingo, and a hundred other places, including places like Watts and other Black areas which are not a million miles away from the "constituency" of the Rainbow

Of course, the Democrats have traditionally relied on an electoral coalition which includes some of the most oppressed and exploited, including the vast majority of Blacks and Hispanics, whole swathes of the manual working class, and many other oppressed groups.

It is one of the main factors which keep US imperialism afloat that the Democratic Party is there to canalise and decapitate radical and working class political revolt.

Struggle

Daniels says that the struggle is to *"more broadly define"* the nature of the Democratic Party and to open it up to more participation. In that one little phrase he sums up everything that is wrong with the Rainbow and everything which is wrong with a strategy of reforming the Democrats, which has led generations of radicals in the US astray.

The Democrats cannot be reformed or metamorphosed into a labour party; the structure and ideology of the



Is the stark evidence of world capitalist crisis sufficient to make the Democratic Party side with the working class?

Democrats excludes such a possibility. The Rainbow will only have a future of a vehicle for progressive working class politics if it breaks with the Democratic Party. It must at the very least be doubtful that this will happen.

Politics

This brings us directly to Jackson himself and the politics which he represents. Jackson raises many progressive, democratic demands, against racism and sexism which all socialists can support.

He also raises demands in relation to workers rights which while not incompatible with the capitalist system – they all exist in Sweden for example – nonetheless will be resisted by most shades of US capitalist opinion.

There are other aspects of Jackson's campaign – for example his homilies to school kids on sexual morality and his statements on foreign policy – which are deeply reactionary and anti-communist.

In an attempt to garner more electoral support, Jackson has proclaimed his "deeply conservative instincts" on many questions. Jackson is by far the most radical candidate in the elections but he is not an *anti-capitalist* candidate.

Jackson has indeed shown that radical themes can gain support in the US working class, including the white working class. But he also shows how this radical support can be squandered.

Jackson will not be the Democratic candidate. That will be the dreadful Michael Dukakis, whom Jackson will tamely support. There is no indication that Jackson intends to do anything other than continue to lend support to the Democratic Party, and utilise his base to go as far as he can in his own political career.

Jackson plays a contradictory role because, on the one hand, he channels radical sentiment into the safe boundaries of a vote for the Democrats, but on the other hand articulates and focuses some radical demands on a national stage. But, in the end, he remains a capitalist politician tied to the Democratic Party, one of the most powerful capitalist political machines in the world.

Development

The basis for the creation of a labour party in the US must be major developments in the workers organisations – the trade unions. There is not going to be a popular capitalist politician like Jackson who rides over the brow of the hill on a white charger to set one up.

If Jackson were going in the direction of setting up a labour party – something he has never, ever mentioned – then he would have to call on the trade union leaders, and their membership, to break with the Democrats.

And there lies the rub. Jackson is what he is, and has the mass constituency that he has, because he operates within the framework of the Democratic Party. But he won't take his mass following forward because to do so means breaking with the Democrats, which means undermining his personal political ambitions.

Language

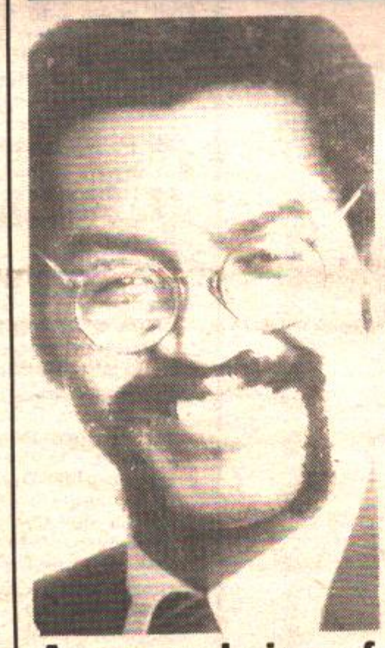
Jackson once said: *"The Democratic Party has a right wing and a left wing, and everyone knows you need two wings to fly."* This is not the language of class independence and a break with the Democratic Party!

There remains the question of tactics – how should socialists relate to the Rainbow Coalition? Without being on the ground it's impossible to give precise answers, but there is a question of principle involved – not being part of the Democratic Party or giving the impression it is a way forward.

In my view the most important thing in the US is to build around specific campaigns like non-intervention in Central America – a movement which involves hundreds of thousands of people – and to build in the labour unions. "Lesser evil" politics which drags people towards the Democrats builds nothing in the long run.

Along the Color Line

The Stop Jesse Movement



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

Dukakis's victory in the New York primary made the Massachusetts liberal the acknowledged front-runner for the Presidential nomination.

His subsequent victories in Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Ohio have seemed to confirm the notion that his nomination is all but "inevitable".

But, as results in the District of Columbia demonstrate, Dukakis cannot afford to alienate Jackson's core constituency.

If Dukakis is the nominee, he will require massive Black support to defeat Bush in November.

This is why Dukakis distanced himself from Gore's clumsy attacks on Jackson during the New York primary, and why he must now look for a vice presidential candidate who will help to create an electoral majority.

Jackson's chief supporters have already claimed that Jesse merits serious consideration as a vice-presidential choice. His victories over Dukakis in Vermont, Delaware, and Michigan, plus his continued ability to carry substantial numbers of white voters in other states illustrates that the Black challenger could actually help the Party's ticket.

Mainstream

But the mainstream white leaders of the Democratic Party remain convinced that Jackson is a major liability. "Race" is only a partial explanation for the "Stop Jackson" effort. Political ideology is also a crucial factor.

Jackson's message challenges some fundamental assumptions within the political economy of US capitalism and foreign policy. This partially explains the overwhelming rejection of Jackson by many traditionally liberal constituencies.

Division

The New York primary brought into focus, once again, the 20 year old division between two traditional liberal Democratic constituencies: Blacks and Jews.

The headlines harped on Jackson's record of "insensitivity" to Jewish concerns: his "Hymietown" slur, his former relationship with Louis Farrakhan, and his endorsement of Palestinian self-determination. But in truth Jackson's candidacy was largely a scapegoat for other concerns.

Some anti-Jackson Leaders in the Jewish community made several invalid claims to obscure their own agenda. First, they insisted that Jews did not engage in "bloc voting", and that Jackson's "anti-Semitic record" was exclusively responsible for the ovewhelming Jewish endorsement of Dukakis.

But in the 1980 Democratic primary, New York's Jewish voters supported Edward Kennedy over Jimmy Carter by a four to one margin. Four years later, the state's Jewish electorate gave Walter Mondale more than two thirds of the vote, compared with 27% for Gary Hart and barely 5% for Jackson.

It's obvious that *both* Jews and Black Americans generally have voted as blocs; to suggest otherwise denies political reality.

Features

INTERVIEW

Where are the German Greens going?

FRIEDER OTTO WOLF is a leader of the West German Green Party and one of seven Greens in the Europarliament. HAZEL SMITH, one of Lambeth's surcharged former Labour Councillors, interviewed Wolf in Brussels in April. We print Frieder's views as part of our ongoing debate about the relationship between red and green.

Could you tell *Briefing* readers some of the background to the German Greens and their role in the European Parliament?

I don't really think you can talk about the European Greens as a homogeneous phenomenon. They are quite different in different countries.

For instance, the British Greens are deeply marked by the British electoral system which doesn't allow any third party to gain parliamentary influence — and this of course has an effect on the kind of people who join it.

Whereas in the German Federal Republic, with its own electoral system, many people who were interested in a concrete political practice were quickly attracted to the Green party.

There is one general aspect of our growth which I will describe as the historical shortcomings of the socialist and Communist traditions of the labour movement.

To put it simply the socialist tradition of the labour movement, the Labourist tradition included, did not really succeed in overcoming the integration of social democratic parties and trade unions into a New Deal-type of reform capitalism after the Second World War. And the Communist tradition in the labour movement did not really succeed in overcoming its Stalinist deformation.

Precisely where do you think the social democratic, Labourist tradition has failed?

I think they got trapped into participating in the management of the capitalist boom in the 50s and 60s, and when the necessary capitalist recession came first in the late 60s and them massively in the 70s, they had no plausible political alternative: result, they got kicked out of office.

They offered Keynesian crisis management in their economic policies as a therapy for a capitalist structural crisis, and this couldn't work, and didn't work.

Where they had the chance to try it, in France under Mitterrand, and in Germany under Schmidt, they were forced into some type of neo-liberal policy. This is because they have no viable alternative to the type of policy that had worked fairly well in the period of expansion, but can't work now.

Do you think that's reflected in the way that they organise their parties or are you just talking about programmes and policies?

It's easiest to pinpoint it in their defence, economic, and energy policies, where they were intimately linked with the general project of European and capitalist expansion. But this also had implications for the way in which they organised as a party.

In Germany this began with the drive to expel all socialists in the late 50s and early 60s, and went on in a higher gear in the early 70s when the SPD prohibited any co-operation between its members and socialist and Communist groups and on a state level started the witch-hunt of the public sector professionals — the *Berufsverbot*.

Where would you place the Greens in relation to this failure of Labourism and the Communist Parties?

I think the Greens have a chance in the Federal Republic to develop into the political force which takes up the challenge of the double crisis of the Communist and the Social Democratic movements.

One example is the global fact of the current ecological crisis, which is developing at a fearful pace, and is showing a lot of the hidden costs of the capitalist boom of the 50s and 60s.

The North Sea, for instance, is due to die before the end of this century if nothing drastic is done, and parts of it have already died. The main rivers of Europe are so polluted that it is unwise to eat fish coming from them.

There is a growing problem with ground water in all European countries, especially the more industrialised ones. The neglect of this aspect of industrial progress in the social democratic as well as the Communist model of development left a political space, which the Greens entered.

The specific conditions in Germany was that we had Social Democrats in government conducting a right wing, almost neo-liberal politics and leaving a large space to their left.

The educational reforms of the 60s created a new category of educated people from the working classes as well as from the less radical fringes of the small bourgeoisie which in the past could not afford a comparable education.

This development resulted in the student movement, the first radically democratic and anti-fascist mass movement in the Federal Republic's history, parts of which were integrated by the early social democratic government of Willy Brandt but excluded under Helmudt Schmidt.

Are you saying the Green Party now sees itself as a socialist party?

No, but it does see itself as an anti-capitalist party, and there is a strong socialist sensibility within it, which has a possibility based on this widespread anti-capitalist sentiment, to win a majority in concrete strategic decisions.

One example is the composition of our Party presidency, where we have one ecosocialist, one radical ecologist, and one radical feminist.

What are the short-term and long-term objectives of the Green Party as an anti-capitalist party?

The Green Party came into existence about rather short-term objectives, to gain parliamentary existence for a new kind of political sensibility that had developed out of the student movement and the social mass movements of the 70s. Now the Greens are established as a parliamentary party and nobdy doubts that they will continue to be around for the next decade.

So the real cleavage within the Greens is not on general ideological matters, but on strategic questions: how to work for a Green transformation of society and the state within a parliamentary system which is dominated by more or less openly pro-capitalist parties.

Do you see yourselves working with the SPD on particular issues?

On ecological issues there is concrete co-operation, and also on the peace issue — which is the second social cleavage which found its expression in the Greens. Some people believe that in order to build up a credible alternative to the right wing government it is necessary even



in opposition to build up a Green-Red alternative bloc. This would presuppose a radical, drastic reduction in our demands.

For instance, instead of opting out of NATO and conducting an active non-aligned policy, because this is unacceptable to the SPD, we should accept the SPD line of reforming NATO and going for substantial conventional rearmament.

What forms of social ownership are you advocating?

Instead of arguing for classic nationalisation, which in many cases has worked to socialise the costs of capitalist bankruptcy, we should rather argue for handing the firms over to the people working there and integrating them into new forms of grass-roots popular planning. Instead of centralised state-isation we would argue for real social ownership with a strong grass-roots component.

How will these debates over the SPD be resolved within the Greens?

This will be the constant debate of the Party as long as it exists. I think there is no definitive answer.

I think that if the Social Democratic Party were prepared to give in on some major issue (NATO, social ownership, ecological conversion) then there would be the possibility of political co-operation on all levels, including participation in government. But the problem is that the Social Democratic Party is not prepared to do this, so it is all rather theoretical.

Can you tell us about the "Intergroup on Industrial Questions", which involves some people from the British left, that's been formed around the European parliament?

We had a rather interesting experience in the early days of this parliament at the time of the British Miners' strike. For evident ideological reasons international support was difficult to come by, especially on the Social Democratic or Euro-Communist part of the spectrum.

Then there developed this "Intergroup" among Greens, Labourites, Communists, some regionalists and independents, who were not inhibited by deference to social democratic global strategy or capitalist profitability.

We organised MEPs going to the picket lines, for striking miners' wives and miners to come over to the Parliament. We had reports on victimised miners. We had Scargill here to present his alternative energy coal-using plan.

We found that we could co-operate quite well on practically all questions of industrial policy and the necessary alternatives and resistance to it.

This year a group of striking shipyard workers from Bilbao in the Basque Country phoned us and asked for support. We revived the activity of the "intergroup".

I think we have a chance to organise collective solidarity with striking workers in different parts of Europe, who otherwise for party reasons (like in the Spanish case, where the PSOE is against the shipyard workers or in the case of steelworkers in Germany where there is limited support from the trade union movement and the SPD) would have no European voice.

You don't think there will be conflict between the political objectives of the socialist parties and the Greens?

In this field I don't think so, because we both think that the type of de-industrialisation going on in Euroep is economically, socially, and ecologically destructive, and that there are socially useful and ecologically defendable solutions for a reconversion of those industries.

What do you think about the British left's view about leaving the EEC?

I think it is basically a good idea, only I don't think the conditions for doing it exist. It would have been a good idea not to join it, but after having been in for a decade or more to get out is very costly indeed.

What I would rather recommend is considering renegotiating, which we would also be interested in.

Chris

Daily Mail, 8.4.88

A Labour paper praises 'courage' of IRA lynch mob

From yesterday's Daily Mail

Man who makes Militant look rational

By STEVE DOUGHTY

A NEW figure has emerged from the murky depths of Labour's far left to remind Neil Kinnock that his clean-up of the Party has a long way to go.

Today Mr Kinnock must be asking himself: Who will vote for Labour as long as it harbours people like Chris Knight? Mr Knight is the man who wrote in the Far Left Labour Briefing paper that the Belfast funeral mob who killed two soldiers acted 'with courage and justice'.

It was not the first time the 45-year-old doctor of anthropology has severely embarrassed a Labour leader. Michael Foot, too, suffered from the



Embarrassing: Chris Knight

works of a man who thinks Militant is Right-wing, and wants to abolish the family because 'child abuse is endemic in the system.'

At least one northern Labour MP has entertained colleagues with readings from a pamphlet by Mr Knight entitled My Sex Life.

He has been described by a Labour colleague as 'possibly the nuttiest member of the nuttiest constituency Labour party in London'.

Mr Knight writes regularly for Labour Briefing, set up by Ken Livingstone in the Seventies. It split acrimoniously with its founder when Mr Livingstone failed to defy the ratecapping laws three years ago. Briefing is a strong supporter of Left-wing homosexual campaigners and stridently opposes spending cuts by moderating Labour councils once known as Loony Left'.

Five years ago Mr Knight played a part in the bitter humiliation of Michael Foot over the disastrous Bermondsey by-election. He published an article confirmiing that loser Peter Tatchell favoured extra-parliamentary activity. Mr Foot squirmed.

A Labour colleague of Mr Knight's in Lewisham East constituency said: 'At one meeting he advocated abolishing the police.

Mr Knight's sex life with Ann Bliss, who was briefly a Labour councillor in Lewisham in South East London, became a talking point in 1982 after both published details in pamphlets. They have since split up.

Mr Knight has been named in Labour Briefing as being from the Department of Anthropology, University College, London. University records show a Christopher Dennis Knight who ceased to be registered as a student in 1980. The same C D Knight, however, was awarded a PhD by London University last autumn for work done externally.

Mr Kinnock is trying to expel from the Labour Party a number of Briefing supporters. He knows all too well the sort of thing Mr Knight is up to.

For once, Mr Knight declined to comment yesterday. But a Labour Briefing spokesman said at their office in Brixton, South London: 'The editorial board has no intention of retracting a single word of Chris Knight's article.'

Knight replies to the *Mail*

CHRIS KNIGHT'S front page article in *Briefing* no. 59 highlighted the tragedy of the British presence in Ireland and the hypocrisy of recent coverage of events there by the British media.

For writing this article in *Briefing*, Chris was personally pilloried in the *Daily Mail*. *Briefing* has offered space to Chris to reply

The *Mail's* attack on me is in fact directed at the Labour Party.

My words were carefully chosen, cautious — *and gave voice to a substantial body of Labour Party opinion, extending far beyond the influence of Briefing*.

That body of opinion did not welcome or revel in the two soldiers' deaths, but it felt that they were inevitable and understandable — if not to all of us in the Labour Party over here, then certainly in the eyes of Irish nationalists way beyond the reaches of the IRA.

That was how I put matters, and I stand by every word.

The Irish dimensions of the press coverage were dealt with editorially in *Briefing* no. 60; since then our stand on the Gibraltar killings has been vindicated by two authoritative television documentaries. Here, I will concentrate on some other issues touched on by *The Mail*.

In depicting me as a madman, *The Mail* has one simple aim: to "embarrass" Neil Kinnock and stampede him into launching a witch-hunt against *Briefing* and the Labour left.

An editorial in *The Sun* was explicit. It screamed that Kinnock had to expel us. This, of course, would cause unparalleled internal Labour Party strife, which is precisely why *The Sun* insists on it.

An onslaught on *Briefing* would involve gouging out the grass roots of much of the London Labour Party — not to mention other areas where *Briefing* has support.

We are not a fringe. We organised and in large measure won the campaign for a socialist GLC. We helped co-ordinate the alliance which began smashing the "whites-only", "men-only" and "heterosexuals-only" notices on the doors of Labour's ruling bodies.

We changed the face of Labour politics in London for a decade. We *are* the Labour Party — more so than fringe elements such as Hattersley, Evans and Co.

The Mail calls us extremists. I am supposed to be "even more" irrational than *Militant*. What hypocrisy! The people who now run *The Mail* and who also run Thatcher's Tory Party were themselves yesterday's "extremists".

They were accused by official Toryism of attempting to highjack the Tory Party for their own sinister ends.

Leadership

Fifteen years ago, when the Tory leadership was still "wet", they were organising ill tempered caucuses, fringe meetings, obscure theoretical journals, and conferences of the "loony right". They were ridiculed for their far fetched ideas about privatising everything, crushing the unions, destroying the welfare state, and "smashing socialism".

All I can say to them now is: Congratulations! How much more quickly than us you have achieved your goals! Whereas we in the Labour Party are still lumbered with the Butskellite politics of an age which has passed, you have entered the new age of capitalist crisis well prepared.

You have re-armed Toryism with a class-conscious leader whose single-mindedness in fighting for your people is matched only by Neil Kinnock's cowardice and myopia in leading ours.

In his political wretchedness and obsequiousness, Kinnock thinks he can learn from you by adapting to your "realities". We learn from you a different lesson — a lesson in how to unite a mighty political party behind a leadership which will fight the class war to the end.

Anthropology

Turning now to more personal matters: yes, I am a "doctor of anthropology". Anthropology is the study of non-capitalist ways of being human, and I draw inspiration from that.

My view is that hunter-gatherer peoples in Australia, Africa, and the Americas have an understanding of human nature immeasurably superior to Margaret Thatcher's. For them, being human is about sharing, about accountability, about a sense of self-worth inseparable from the capacity to give.

Before their lifestyles were destroyed, their communities did not need a police force (I am accused of wanting to "abolish" ours!), because their communistic social systems were not riven by insoluble contradictions.

They did not need "the family" (I am accused of wanting to "abolish" that too!) because in their kinship-systems, parents looked after one another's children, with whole communities regarding themselves as "one family" in a manner which Thatcher couldn't begin to comprehend. Their "law" was not the violently imposed dictat of the rich over the poor, but a genuinely collective, sophisticated, and elaborate set of rules and rituals for weaving together the strands of life.

When the earliest Europeans arrived in Australia, southern Africa and America, the natives failed to see the advantages of "civilisation" at all. These white people who worked only for private gain, who gave nothing away without cash payment in return, and who spoke of God's love on Sundays whilst worshipping Mammon every other day of the week — these people seemed very strange to the Aborigines.

Did they not know of the Great Spirit who alone owns the earth's riches, land, and life? How could they appropriate the resources bestowed by the Supernatural Ancestors to satisfy personal, private greed?

Appropriate

Not until the "civilised" Europeans resorted to bullets were the natives impressed at all. Then, the rot began to set in. Using alcohol, disease, bribery, slavery, wage labour, prisons, policemen, and Christian religion, the whites corrupted the native cultures from without and from within.

Missionaries told the Aborigines to wear clothes, hide their bodies, hate sex, and abandon their extended kinship systems in favour of "the family". Troops stood by in case anyone disagreed. Where they had once roamed freely, the hunter gatherers were now shot at — quite often for sport.

Only by such terrorism, sustained over centuries, was the virtual destruction of humanity's rich heritage of communistic ways of life eventually achieved.

No ruling class in the world bears a heavier criminal responsibility for this destruction than the British, who began their colonial adventures in Ireland 800 years ago.

Personal

The Mail accused me of writing a pamphlet about my sex life. Well, yes, in the late 1970s a number of us in Labour Party politics became influenced by feminism, and found to our relief that the fulfilment and sufferings of personal life do not necessarily have to be experienced in isolation.

We were shown that there is another way that we can find emotional support from one another, that we can share in caring for one another's children, and that even sexual problems can be discussed in the company of supportive comrades, neighbours, and friends.

Divorce

When those close to us were experiencing divorce or marital breakdown, when sexual jealousy was tearing a family apart, when children were pleading with their parents not to separate but to keep loving each other, we did not say *"that's got nothing to do with politics"*.

We resolved to try putting our belief in sharing into daily practice, learning some lessons from other cultures whose kinship systems are more extended than ours. We found that supporting one another was possible and worthwhile.

My pamphlet was a part of that process. I don't disown a single one of the shared hopes and beliefs to which it gave expression.

□□□□□□□□□□

POWELL '68 — TEBBIT '88

The speech given by Norman Tebbit at the South African Club in the last week of April was an open attack on the rights of black people — in Britain and South Africa.



"There could be just a touch of hypocrisy on the part of those who talk of the white African tribes as outsiders," said Tebbit, *"as though they had arrived at Cape Town yesterday, when they themselves have hardly had time to complete the journey from Heathrow to Hounslow West before claiming British rights."*

By MARK SEATON

Tebbit then launched into a barefaced defence of apartheid. *"It (is) not unnatural that the white minority should look for security in the face of the growing black majority... many black Africans were voting with their feet to enjoy the higher material standards in South Africa, indeed in many cases the higher standards of administration of law and justice than those prevalent in other African states."*

National Black Sections Chair Narendra Makanji hit back:

"We have a message for Norman Tebbit: whether we have been here for five minutes, five years, or five hundred years, we will claim all our rights — and fight racism wherever we find it.

"We know what lies behind Tebbit's racist slanders. It is British capitalism, with its profound and extensive links with apartheid, from which it extracts massive profits, at a terrible cost to the daily lives and liberties of the black majority.

"Tebbit's speech was clearly made with Thatcher's full approval and demonstrates once again the racist cancer at the heart of the Tory Party."

A powerful editorial in *The Caribbean Times* linked Tebbit's speech to Enoch Powell's infamous 1968 "rivers of blood" speech:

"The former Tory Party Chairman's comments on the rising tide of protest against the murderous Pretoria regime were calculated, measured, and imbued with a cynical brutality that has become the trademark of this increasingly notorious 'fascist'. Freed from his somewhat restrictive former role, this right wing shock-trooper now turns his attention to all the areas about which diplomacy had previously dictated he shackle his vitriol... thei gave credence to the craven behaviour of thugs who plague our communities with violent attacks on our property, our physical wellbeing, and our lives."

Exeter Orange celebrations update

Mobilisation needed against the fascists

As Exeter and Torquay's William of Orange Tercentenary Celebrations loom nearer, two new developments confirm the unheeded warnings Exeter Anti-Fascist Action have issued the Labour-led City Council.

First, the Orange Order have now applied to march through Exeter on Saturday September 17th.

Bigots

Orangemen from all over the world will be attending their triannual conference at the city's Crossmead Centre on the 19th; the bigots will therefore be able to take to the streets in large numbers, followed, of course, by their friends in the National Front.

Local Labour leaders now appear to be worried about this march and are trying to get it banned. One Party branch has also put an emergency resolution to the GC calling on the labour movement to organise counter-demonstrations.

Councillors who chose to ignore facts presented by their own Party members are now having to deal with a monster of their own making.

Secondly, Mark Cotterill, the National Front's South West Regional Organiser, has announced that he will be holding a "Nationalist/Loyalist Camp" at a secret location near Newton Abbot on May 27-30th.

In a long article in the NF Paper *The Flag*, Cotterill gives his crude interpretation of the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 and declares that the Orange Celebrations *"can be used to mount an all-out campaign against the flagging Anglo-Irish Agreement."*

He also says: *"These Celebrations provide a once in a lifetime opportunity, so let's make the most of it. Let's bring the message of the people of Ulster to the people of Devon."* Exeter City Councillors are congratulated for having *"stuck to their guns"* and having *"told the Marxists where to go"*!

Hitler

The Orange Celebrations should start with a bang as the fascists descend on Devon. Last year an NF camp was halted when police discovered its location. They are being more careful this year.

As if the Orange Celebrations weren't enough to keep the bigots and fascists occupied, there is also an exhibition commemorating the birth of Hitler!

Based at the Torbay Aircraft Museum (near Collaton St Mary), *Hitler: the Centenary Exhibition* is an offensive display which chronicles the dictator's life and regime with no reference to the holocaust or other atrocities, and no attempt to deal with Nazi ideology or brutality.

The exhibition, which will act as a beacon to the far right, is being advertised by leaflets in tourist information centres all over the South West!

At least the Labour Group in Exeter City Council have now put through a motion not to stock the offending literature.

Mobilising

Exeter Anti-Fascist Action is continuing its picket of the City Council and organised a demonstration outside the Hitler exhibition on the recent European Day of Action.

Exeter Labour Party continues to receive letters of protest and resolutions opposing the Celebrations. Ken Livingstone spoke out against the Celebrations at a meeting in Exmouth. Exeter AFA have also persuaded Lord Gifford to lead a boycott of a "Bill of Rights" Conference organised by Exeter University's Law Department for September.

Our priority is *mobilisation* to make sure we outnumber the fascists this summer (see box). We will need your support to keep the fascists off our streets this summer — even if a Labour-led Council was stupid enough to invite them in the first place.

Further information about the Orange Celebrations and the Hitler Exhibition is available from Exeter Anti-Fascist Action, c/o Box no. 176, The Flying Post, 1 Parliament Street, Exeter, Devon.

Key Dates for mobilisations:

May 27-30th: Spring Bank Holiday, providing we can find the venue for the NF camp.
July 20th: when the re-enactment of William's landing will take place. (Exeter AFA members have already received letters from the Front saying *"see you there — it should be fun"*).
Sept. 17th: for the march through Exeter.
Nov. 5th: the true date of William's landing, which the NF want to celebrate.

Letters

A third current in NUS?

Dear *Briefing*,

The debate in *Briefing* around the issue of students and the future for the left in NUS seems to be a healthy and genuine one.

I must admit I find myself in agreement with Andy Gibbons' conclusion (*Briefing* no. 60) that a third force needs to be built in NUS. However, some points need to be hammered out. What forces would actually constitute a third current?

Over the past few years there has been no genuine attempt to construct an alternative to the "Democratic Left" (DL) Leadership. Certain groups have used this objective necessity to build a sectarian base for themselves within NUS. Therefore we should be careful about the SWP and *Militant*.

It would be impossible to coexist in a united organisation with forces which have repeatedly demonstrated their real intention — posing as the "real left" — then supporting the "official Labour candidates" at NUS Conference.

Andy is wrong to say we can't see "Socialist Students in NOLS" (SSiN) as a left alternative to the DL. The DL are Kinnock's people. If it was a choice between *Socialist Organiser*, *Militant*, or the SWP *against* Kinnock, it is a betrayal of socialism to support Kinnock and "new realism".

Militant, SWSS, and Campaign Student have all done precisely that because of their own sectarianism. However it does not follow that we should uncritically subordinate ourselves to SSiN, as Kempt and McLarty seem to think. SSiN is an *SO* front, and has adopted dangerous positions on major issues such as Palestine and Ireland.

We should recognise the need to build a third current in NUS in opposition to the class collaboration of the NOLS Leadership, coupled with a correct international programme. This current must be *democratic*. Democracy is the factor missing from all the other political currents in NUS and its absence drives many away from both SSiN and the DL.

Personally I believe all this work should have been started some time ago. But late is better than never, especially in view of the motion in Parliament for the compulsory break-up of NUS by voluntary membership, signed by over 200 MPs. This could transform the whole situation in NUS.

Steven Holmes
Marc Cutteridge
Manchester Polytechnic Labour Club

Why I think socialists should back Benn and *Prescott*

Dear *Briefing*,

I welcome the Leadership challenges of Tony Benn and Eric Heffer.

Ordinarily, I would be supporting these two. But now that John Prescott is also in the election, the contest takes on a whole new dimension.

The Benn-Heffer campaign is about setting a socialist agenda, about democracy inside the Party, and about inspiring the left both inside and outside the Party.

But comrades, we must be honest with ourselves. Their challenge is nothing more than a protest. Their chances of winning are very slim.

As I write this, I have just read that 30,000 Yorkshire miners are backing Neil Kinnock and not Tony Benn, although they will be backing John Prescott as Deputy.

John Prescott has a real chance of victory and all comrades on the left must admit they would rather see him as Deputy instead of Roy Hattersley.

The ideas of the Benn-Heffer Campaign can still be promoted if comrades support only Tony Benn for Leader and, instead of splitting the left vote, rally in support of John Prescott for the Deputy Leadership.

The left now has a great chance of not only opening a real debate about socialism and socialist policies in the Party, but also of unseating Roy Hattersley as Deputy Leader.

Yours comradely,
Martin O'Conner
London E1

WRITEBACK!

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

Red or Green: as seen in Exeter

Dear *Briefing*,

For Marxists, the whole question of the socialist response to the rise of green politics throughout Europe raises innumerable issues. The forthcoming red/green conference will, one hopes, provide some tentative answers.

The situation in Exeter is worthy of note. The Exeter Labour Party is nationally renowned for its reactionary prowess:

- It is right wing on all policy issues. Since 1984 it has run the City Council in coalition with the Liberals.
- Its record is dismal, and ranges from an attempt to criminalise squatting to financial backing for William of Orange celebrations.
- Internally, the CLP is authoritarian and undemocratic, and has been engaged in witch-hunting since 1984.

For five years *Devon Labour Briefing* has been at war with the CLP Leadership and the City Council Labour Group, who by now are standing jokes on account of their reactionary antics. The General Committee of Exeter CLP is not a place where socialist politics can be seriously discussed. The officially condoned sexism of a sizeable minority on the GC intimidates many.

To a large extent, Exeter's Labour right wing have been successful. Only the hard-skinned left remain active inside the Party. Exeter is littered with socialists who are repelled by the CLP or whose pain threshold is too low for continued active membership.

In the May District elections, Exeter's Green Party contested all twelve wards in the City. Our support for the right wing Labour candidates is total and unqualified vis-a-vis other parties, and support for the present Green Party, which is not a class party, would always be impossible.

Yet the irony is startling. A majority of local struggles, such as opposition to the William of Orange celebrations and opposition to NATO membership, find *Briefing* and the Greens on one side and the right wing CLP on the other. Moreover, Greens help push up *Briefing's* sales.

We reject, of course, the Greens' utopianism, their location of "wrong" in industrialism rather than in capitalism, their romantic notions of freedom which have a reactionary tinge. Taken together, these points represent a theoretical or philosophical difference, but they seldom affect the struggle of the hour.

I disagree with the editorial in *Briefing* no. 59 which states *"Down with the Green Party"* and I agree with Tim Brenan's criticism in *Briefing* no. 60 that such sloganising is sectarian. Only through collective struggle against capitalist society, which involves mutual education, can we convince serious Greens that our Marxist understanding of society is correct.

Peter Bowing,
Devon Labour Briefing

Another experience of watching Mitterrand

Dear *Briefing*,

The article by *"an experienced Mitterrand watcher"* (AEMW) in *Briefing* no. 60 seems to sum up much that is wrong with many on the left at present. The article called to mind a pamphlet by Lenin called *Left-wing Communism — an Infantile Disorder*, which holds some grains of truth even in the current political situation.

Lenin polemicises in particular against anarchism and sectarianism. Both of these currents were the result of lack of faith in leaders who held onto their positions at any price and lack of constant criticism by the "revolutionary left" of these leaders.

Interestingly enough, there has been a growth of anarchism in Britain recently. According to an article in *The Observer*, "Class War" claims sales of 20,000, almost as many as *The New Statesman*.

The Observer writer then goes on to say that this is a result of left wing Labour Councils making cuts in jobs and services and a failure of the rest of the left (noting the demise of the Communist Party and the Workers Revolutionary Party) to challenge the Tories.

In France, the failure of the Communist Party to take on Mitterrand while in alliance with the Socialist Party in the early 80s has now meant that the Communist Party is sectarian towards the Socialist Party. This is disastrous, particularly with the rise of Le Pen and the far right.

While one can welcome the developments in the Communist Party and Juquin's criticisms of it, surely the best strategy is to back Mitterrand against the right, and in particular the far right while reserving the right to criticise Mitterrand, e.g. the period of cohabitation with Chirac, the previous economic austerity programme, and other reactionary policies of the Socialist Party.

Juquin is only likely to get 2% of the vote, while Le Pen will get 10%. Mitterrand's support is much wider. Therefore the revolutionary left should be arguing for the whole left (CP, Juquin, et al) to support Mitterrand *against* the right to gain the confidence of the French working class.

Also, given the weakness of the revolutionary left in France, I would recommend that people enter the Socialist Party, which at least can make some claims to democracy.

Isn't AEMW being rather subjectivist when s/he says that Mitterrand has been the gravedigger of the left and has normalised the country? S/he doesn't explain how this has been allowed to happen and what was wrong with the policies of the left.

Surely if AEMW is a revolutionary (indicated by his/her desire for a revolutionary alternative in France), s/he would not only support the united front policy suggested above, but would also hold to the right of political independence? Sectarianism never respects other points of view.

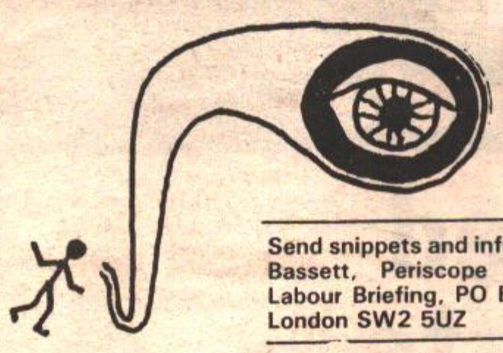
To compare Mitterrand with Husak or Jaruzelski is just idiotic simplicity and smacks of anarchism, i.e. "all leaders are the same". Mitterrrand is the leader of an advanced capitalist country. Husak and Jaruzelski are leaders of two bureaucratically repressive workers' states.

Coming back to Britian, this political independence means being not just critical of Kinnock but also Benn (for example, his failure to stand against Kinnock on the question of the Leadership's lack of support for the miners) and Scargill (e.g. the deal cooked up by Scargill and McGahey at the 1984 TUC Congress) while maintaining support for these Leaders on other questions.

AEMW! Why should one appeal to experience as an overriding factor? AEMW's last comment *"Would that Mitterrand were like the snows of yesteryear and would slowly melt away"* is just stupid. Surely one would want to *hasten* the political death of Mitterrand and I'm sorry to have to say, AEMW, you can't wish away your political opponents in the labour movement or anywhere else. This is just idealism.

Yours in comradeship,
Richard Derrington

Periscope



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

What about the other 600 of you?

Question: which revered body takes *Briefing* so seriously that it feels the need to order from a London Bookshop no fewer than 50 copies of the paper for its members' use?

Answer: The House of Commons!

It seems to be true. Amongst receipts from London bookshops received in the *Briefing* encampment this month was payment to one bookshop from the House of Commons for 50 copies of the paper.

Memo: Next time you want to do this HoC, ring 01 733 7016 and order your copies direct. That way the bookshop won't sell out, and our regular readers won't have to do the rounds of the London Bookshops to find their copies.

Or perhaps you'd like us to ring you the next time we do a front page on Ireland?

Right wing, tired, and emotional

Hackney Labour Party is being asked by one branch (Northfield) to consider convening its Local Government Borough Conference annually, rather than the more regular meetings that have been held since the Council started implementing Tory cuts.

The reason given is that the meetings have become an *"... emotional, physical, and financial strain upon the resources of the Party."*

This resolution to the Borough Conference is said to have something to do with Hackney North CLP's new anti-cuts position — and the fact that a resolution to Hackney South opposing library closures was defeated by a mere three votes.

Meanwhile, *Briefing* supporters are far from tired and emotional. They have the stamina to fight on and on, and on, and on...

They do, however, admit to being broke.

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Trade Union Briefing, Youth Briefing, Student Briefing, Lesbian & Gay Briefing, Briefing Women and International Briefing.

Briefing Steering Committee:
Next meeting: Sunday, June 5th, London.
Briefing Editorial Board:
Next meetings: Friday May 13th, Thursday May 19th.
Deadline for articles:
Issue no. 63 (out May 25th): notify EB as soon as possible, all articles in by Tuesday May 17th.
Issue no. 64 (out June 8th, EB planning May 19th): notify EB as soon as possible, all articles in by Tuesday May 31st.

BRIEFING 500 CLUB

It is very expensive to produce a socialist newspaper — despite our high sales up and down the country, we still need a subsidy to keep the paper fortnightly and keep up with all the activities we want to be part of. We have no rich backers, no hidden sources of income.
The *Briefing* 500 Club exists to offer our supporters the opportunity of making a small regular donation and enter a fortnightly draw for a £25 prize — this for just £1 per week, or £4 per month. Will you spare the cost of a pint of beer of less than a packet of cigarettes each week? We can't guarantee you'll win the prize — but we will guarantee that unless you enter, you won't!
500 Club supporters also receive a *Briefing* supporters card automatically. Just fill in the standing order form below, and return it to PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ.

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This week's winner

"Neville" (*Briefing's* random number generator which draws the 500 Club winners) is obviously on a nostalgia kick — drawing our most longstanding supporters. This week Neville's winner is no. 6 — Dan Carter of South London.

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW

Cricket, politics, money

Slow Turn, by Mike Marqusee, *Sphere Books*, £2.95

"Keep politics out of sport" has been the South African battle cry, echoed by apartheid's many admirers in the cricketing establishment, as the sports boycott has constantly reminded white South Africans of their isolation.

Of course, under capitalism, sport and politics are intimately linked, at local, national, and international level.

When President Carter and Mrs Thatcher boycotted the Moscow Olympics, they knew full well, as does any serious commentator, that every entertainment, every mass spectacle has a political potential.

By Phil Hearse
Islington North CLP

And in the era of nation states, sport can act as a potent symbol of national pride.

In the 1980s cricket has gone through an upheaval as the result of several factors. First, there has been the constant row over cricketing links with South Africa. Second, big money has come into cricket as never before, partially transforming the game itself through one-day and day-night matches.

And last, but not least, in the 1980s nearly all the black teams are better than nearly all the white teams — an historical reversal which doubtless reflects major shifts in power between the semi-colonies and imperialism (and the nature of West Indian fast bowling, but that's another story).

Nowhere do cricket and politics so immediately interact as on the Asian sub-continent. When Pakistani captain Imran Khan wanted to retire from test cricket, Pakistani President, Zia-al-Huq, virtually *ordered* him not to. Too much national pride was at stake.

Mike Marqusee's book is a political thriller which follows a touring party of English cricketers in India. An umpire is murdered and the local star all-rounder disappears. Shady characters, linked with big money and South Africa are at work.

But what is *really* going on? The book is told through the eyes of one of the English tourists — Dave Stott, an ordinary county professional who never quite made it. He, like many of his compatriots in real life, is never sure who is pulling the strings in the background.

Mike Marqusee's book got a good reception when it was published in hardback, even from the Somerset captain Peter Roebuck, well known foe of I.T. Botham.

It would not surprise most cricket fans who buy a copy that Mike Marqusee is a keen Somerset supporter; but it probably would surprise them that he is an active socialist, on the editorial board of *Labour Briefing*, an American, and once clean bowled Bernie Grant! In the circumstances, therefore, you would expect comrade Marqusee to get a good write up in these pages.

Nepotism apart, Mike's book demonstrates a thorough knowledge of cricket as well as politics and life in India, gleaned through six months spent in that country. The cricketing people, as well as the local political characters, are utterly believable. Mike even has the courage to introduce a romantic sub-plot.

This is a book for cricket fans, those fascinated by the Asian sub-continent, and aficionados of political thrillers. But it is especially a book for *socialist* cricket fans.

Cricket was invented by the common people on the village green, appropriated by the bourgeoisie, and exported by British imperialism. It remains a bastion of privilege and rank despite the intrusion of sordid capitalism in the 70s and 80s. This has led many socialists to dismiss the game as "ruling class" or "bourgeois".

But comrades who dismiss cricket are missing out on a lot. It is without doubt the most graceful and subtle of sports. Its greatest writer is a Marxist — CLR James. The great mass of its keenest fans are super-exploited workers — in India, the West Indies, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

It merely needs to be liberated from the hands of the rich and privileged. What we need is a socialist Cricket Liberation Front. I'm waiting for Mike to draft the Manifesto.

BOOK REVIEW

Communism reasserted

The End of the State, by Andrew Levine, *Verso*, £9.95

Can a "step towards a defence of communism" be made with the help of Jean-Jacques Rousseau?

Andrew Levine believes that both Marx and Rousseau clarify how "states can cease to be necessary for co-ordinating individuals' behaviours".

He says we ought to think *philosophically* about the possibility of ending all coercive political structures.

The central motif in *The End of the State* is what Levine calls the *republic of ends*", an ideal of social co-operation governed by *"equal and absolute respect for the autonomy of each person"*.

Rousseau's theory of the *"General Will"* sets out the basis of a system in which individuals are treated as *"ends in themselves"*.

Yet, in what Althusser called one of Rousseau's *"discrepancies"*, Rousseau envisaged his republic in an a-historical society of small producers. Levine argues that Marx provided a real entry into history. *"After Marx we can see that the republic of ends is realisable provided that certain socio-economic conditions are met."*

Capitalism has sown the seeds for the germination of a socialist state, which could, in striving to eliminate inequalities of skill and organisational power, eventually inaugurate communism. The latter would be a *"republic"* only in a metaphorical sense. In fact, it would be stateless, and would reduce egotism through a realm of abundance. Autonomy would be guaranteed by the absence of economic coercion.

Levine's *"analytical Marxist"* complements discussion of political philosophy with an account of *"socio-economic conditions"*. But in analysing historical materialism he is less than clear.

By Andrew Coates
Ipswich CLP

He adopts the view that productive forces tend to develop because of a transhistorical human interest, but at the same time declares that modes of production are grounded upon historically limited circumstances. He fails to explain the relationship between the two.

He treats Marxism as a social theory and set of political techniques that can realise his own philosophical goals. But how these goals, such as the *"republic of ends"*, are justified is never explained. Instead, appeals are made to *"normative justice"*, *"autonomy"*, and the merits of equality.

Do we take Marx's aim of an *"association of independent producers"* or Rousseau's individual autonomy to be self-evidently good? Unreconstructed historical materialism at least has the virtue of stating that communism will come as part of the *"real movement of our society"*. Levine brings his conceptions down to earth only to leave us wondering where they come from.

Despite these reservations his book is an interesting study. Communism certainly needs defenders.

Making Trouble: Autobiographical Explorations and Socialism

By James D. Young

£3.50 per copy plus 50p postage
Send orders to J.D. Young
8 Tarbert Place, Polmont, FK2 0YX, Scotland

BOOK REVIEW



Chernobyl — still warm, and already being repaired.

Learning Chernobyl's lessons — or not?

The Chernobyl Disaster: the true story of a catastrophe — by Viktor Haynes and Marko Bojcun, *Hogarth Press*. £6.95

In the early hours of Saturday, April 26th 1986 the Number Four reactor at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power station in the northern Ukraine exploded, releasing radioactive substances into an unsuspecting world.

This book is published to coincide with the second anniversary of the accident.

Marko Bojcun is a specialist in contemporary Soviet politics, and Viktor Haynes is a trained scientist who has worked in the power industry.

They have written a book comprehensive in its research and absorbing in its analysis. It offers a readable balance between technical explanation and political commentary and provides fact rather than dogma on the nuclear debate.

By Jon Grantham
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

To explain fully the implications of what happened on that Saturday morning, the authors start with a haunting chronology of a series of errors which gathered uncontrollable momentum and led to the world's worst nuclear accident.

This is followed by detailed descriptions of the response of the emergency services, the extent of the fallout, the shambolic evacuation procedure, the effect on human health and the unquantifiable cost of "cleaning up".

All this is set in the context of an ailing Soviet economy which still bases its industrial recovery on a massive programme of nuclear power station construction, and its leaders' apparent disregard for the population and the environment.

What lifts this book above all previous analyses of the Chernobyl disaster is the use of contemporary Ukrainian scientific reports and first hand accounts from survivors and rescue workers. In most cases these are fiercely critical of official incompetence in dealing with the disaster and the insidious attempts to conceal the dangers from an ill-informed Soviet public.

However, on completion of the book one question inevitably remains. Why has the Soviet government not learnt the lesson and abandoned its nuclear power programme? Why hasn't the British government done likewise? Instead, propaganda of this sort is spewed out:

"... this country was one of the pioneers of safe commercial nuclear power... the safety record of nuclear power is excellent... nuclear power stations are a safe, sound investment... alternative forms of power, ranging from wind, tide and geothermal are unlikely to become a commercial possibility in meeting our electricity needs." (Extracts from the Central Electricity Generating Board's leaflet justifying the proposed Hinkley "C" Pressurised Water Reactor at Hinkley, Somerset, 1988).

International Briefing

Makram Khoury Machool: JOURNALIST IN GAZA

This isn't Rebellion, this is War



This hair-raising account of life in Gaza, written by KHOURY MACHOOL, created a storm in Israel when it appeared in the Tel Aviv weekly paper *Ha'ir*.

In the subsequent weeks the article became a media event, with both the army and *Ha'ir* launching investigations.

We thank the monthly magazine *New Outlook* for allowing us to reprint their translation of the original *Ha'ir* article.

It begins with a long wait at the Gaza taxi station in Jaffa.

For an hour not a single taxi arrives.

A Gazan driver who had gotten stuck with his taxi in Jaffa is in no rush to go.

And he continues to hesitate along the way: *"I don't know if I should return to Gaza today. Everyone knows one rule, that if the **Voice of Israel in Arabic** says the situation is quiet, it's a sign that the opposite is the case."*

I get out at Beit Hanun a little after 9.30am. I have over an hour before my meeting in the centre of the city of Gaza.

The streets are empty and desolate. After a few minutes I see three army jeeps at the side of the road; not far away stand more than ten soldiers, who open fire onto one of the side streets.

I continue walking south, in the direction of Gaza, avoiding the soldiers, when I suddenly find myself in a no man's land: on one side, hundreds of demonstrators hurling Molotov cocktails, stones, and sticks; behind me, Israeli soldiers firing at the demonstrators.

I see the soldiers fire, their weapons held close and aimed straight ahead. The bullets whiz by me. I hear their whistling.

I don't even have time to think about how to get out of there before I am covered with blood. I feel no blow or pain, only as though someone has poured a bottle of blood over my head.

I take a red and white *quffiya* out of my bag and bandage my head. In the meantime, I hurry to the side of the road and move away from the centre of the fighting. A passing taxi takes me to Shifa Hospital in Gaza. I hear gunfire all along the way.

About 30 doctors in white coats stand at the entrance to the hospital, waiting for the wounded. I am the first case.

They bring me into the operating room, and ten doctors, including surgeons, begin to treat me. One takes my blood pressure, another my temperature, a third examines my stomach, while another hooks me up to an EKG. I have been injured in the face, near the nose.

While they are stitching me up, under local anesthetic, a 17 year old boy who has been shot by the soldiers at the same confrontation at Beit Hanun is brought in. From a mirror in the operating room, I see the edge of a rifle moving on the other side of the window sill. The boy dies on the operating table, right beside me.

I go from the operating room directly to the hospital courtyard. Seven soldiers stand on the side, stopping youths who have come to inquire about their wounded friend. Someone is waiting for me, and brings me to the leader.

The condition of the meeting is that I do not know his name or other details, such as where he lives, or where or what he studied. Later on, I see him in action, giving orders, receiving reports, and bringing thousands of people out against the army. Twice I see IDF soldiers retreating.

He speaks fluent literary Arabic and good Hebrew as well. He is articulate and speaks openly, interspersing his words with figures and other information.

Every half hour he receives an update from his men about what is happening in Gaza. There are five men around him who continuously pass news on to him. I am with the man throughout the day, at different points in Gaza and in the Jebalya and Shati refugee camps.

He always stands straight, barely moving. Everywhere we go people come up to him, as if drawn towards a magnet. We speak as we walk in the alleys and passage ways beween the houses.

The Gazans who see me at his side ask what I am doing among them. They are used to seeing reporters — both foreign and Israeli — sitting at military headquarters or taking a few photographs and leaving, all the while surrounded by 20 jeeps.

The leader says: *"We've instructed all our men not to believe the foreign journalists' cards, because the settlers and occupying soldiers are using them to enter Gaza."* However, he also says: *"The progressive Jewish journalists are the best and brightest people there are in Israel."*

The bandage on my face breaks down some barriers of suspicion. As far as I can tell, he speaks to me freely and with a great degree of honesty.

Demonstrations

"These are not really demonstrations, and this is not a rebellion. This is a war that lasts 24 hours a day. We work in rotation, in shifts.

The order was for the youths to enter the breach, opposite the line of fire, and they didn't hesitate to do it. They're blocking the army's main road. This is the first time in history that such a thing is happening.

I roam around the entire Gaza Strip, giving orders in the camps. Not just the schoolkids, but everyone, from one to one hundred. Here is a 55-year-old woman who participated and received blows from the soldiers' sticks. They aren't deterred.

Ninety per cent of the people in Gaza belong to some political stream, they don't need orders from anyone. Furthermore, anyone living under occupation and oppression doesn't need someone else to incite him."

I ask him how the demonstrations are organised. *"At one time, in order to start a demonstraation, we would send children to heat things up. Today, everyone goes into the streets. And this isn't ten or twenty people, it's hundreds.*

We've already created a routine — waves going out at three in the morning, later in the morning, at noon, and in the late afternoon. At times, if the situation calls for it, we also go out at ten o'clock at night, because the army, for all intents and purposes, has no control over the streets at night. They don't know the exact topography of the place, so we're in control.

For example, yesterday, in the Jebalya refugee camp, the demonstrations went on all night long, and there wasn't a single soldier, despite the curfew. The soldiers just ran away, because thousands of people went out and formed something like a moving human wall. Against something like that nothing helps, neither an iron fist nor gunfire."

Forbidden

"Aren't you afraid?" I ask. *"It's forbidden,"* he replies, *"simply forbidden, to be afraid of anything. The occupation authorities think that if someone dies and they take the body and allow it to be buried only at night, there won't be any riots.*

But our thinking already goes beyond that. The new system is that we abduct the bodies from the hospitals and bury them, making a spontaneous demonstration out of it.

We have forbidden the doctors from handing the bodies over to the military authorities. Anyway, the doctors have no control over the matter because we have no problem in abducting the bodies.

For example, in the last few days we've abducted four bodies and arranged night funerals, which turned into demonstrations. Everyone in the whole area — yesterday it was Khan Yunis — went into the streets. Not a single person remained inside. Thirty-five thousand people participated in that funeral, and we injured seven soldiers.

The day before yesterday I moved around a lot, from Khan Unis to Rafiah, from Rafiah to al-Burej. There were tens of thousands of people, and at three o'clock in the morning the army, with all its forces, had still not succeeded in breaking through. Only 50 metres separated the Gazan border guards and the army, and the army simply didn't dare enter."

Someone approaches him from one of the side strets and tells him that a 17-year-old — the boy who had died beside me on the operating table an hour earlier — has just been killed in Beit Hanun. Reports reach him all the time, in minute detail — how each youth has been hit, on which part of the body, and where it happened.

The leader tells me that distributing leaflets of any organisation is prohibited, but if he wanted, he could see to the distribution of any leaflet, any time, without a problem.

"We already know how to identify their civilian intelligence. We feel their presence, especially in the mornings. We've arranged it so the government won't know who the inciters are. There are instructions, and everyone goes out in a spontaneous and decisive way. There are no isolated inciters."

When I ask him about his part in bringing out the masses, he attempts to be modest: *"No, it's not exactly being a leader. It's just giving out orders."* But the hours I spend with him show that his orders are fulfilled with an almost religous obedience.

This is how he sees things. *"Of the 650,000 inhabitants of Gaza, the occupation forces have, as of now, arrested 47,000. Every one of them is already a leader in the place where he lives. The arrest creates the leader. We are causing the politicisation of people, and they are enjoying it, because they need it.*

No fool should think that outside forces are directing what is happening. People belong to all kinds of organisations, which are really the political parties of the state-in-the-making. Even those who don't belong to any group identify with the general struggle."

For years a quiet resentment has been developing among Gazans toward their fellow nationals in the West Bank. They feel abandoned, even forgotten.

The journalists who report on the territories usually set out from Jerusalem. They reach Ramallah or Bethlehem easily, but few ever get to Gaza. The West Bank naturally gets the publicity. Even when much more important events are taking place in Gaza, they are not mentioned by the media.

Loyalty to what is called unity of the Palestinian line prevents Gaza residents from expressing their frustration, but many of them feel that the national leadership in the West Bank looks at them from above, as city people often relate to the inhabitants of remote provinces.

The leader is prepared to say only these few words about the differences: *"If the Gazans decide to do something, they do it all the way. The West Bank is a relative Garden of Eden compared to Gaza. Gaza inhabitants lack everything, even something as simple, but important, as a passport. Most of them have only a refugee certificate."*

Perhaps this is the reason why the Gaza Strip has always been known for its high degree of independent activity. In the late 1960s competing groups organised themselves under the umbrella of one of the Palestinian organisations, but contact with the leadership abroad, if made at all, was very difficult to maintain.

Decisions about activities were made in the Gaza Strip itself, and people usually acquired weapons and other destructive materials on their own.

In recent years a clear division has been maintained between armed cadres with firearms and activists considered "political". In no instance have demonstrators fired at the army, something that could lead to a bloodbath. Local leaders are responsible for the discipline.

"Every neighbournood has its own recognised leader, who is usually a prominent personality. He is known for his high political consciousness and charisma, and he doesn't need to persuade too much since the situation helps him. He only needs to give the sign.

Leaders

Every one of these leaders has already become a symbol. A large area has two or three leaders. Detainees are usually political people, who belong to some ideological stream rather than to a particular organisation. The leader creates an organised mass around him, which is able, at any moment, to go out en masse and do what must be done.

We, in fact, want the army. We won't demonstrate when it isn't there. We want it so that we can come into conflict with it, by any means.

Yesterday, 500 women went out to Beit Hanun with only five minutes notice. The mobilisation of all sectors of society is like a military operation.

When we want an operation that encompasses the whole Gaza Strip, our short experience has proven that we can block the main traffic artery leading out of Gaza within a few minutes. When the army says that it is opening the central artery, it is a lie, because the road is blocked by our barriers."

He is eager to emphasise. *"It is not true that the mosques are centres of inflammatory activity. We use their loudspeakers, that's all.*

The masses are now united in a single front. At this moment the organisations are irrelevant, in spite of the fact that it is known that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine is more revolutionary than Fatah. The Popular Front and Fatah are the fundamental presence in the area, although Fatah is numerically stronger."

Suddenly he disappears. I don't know where he has gone. I meet him again an hour later at Shifa Hospital, where his forces have been besieged for five hours.

A little after eleven o'clock I arrive at the Red Cross building, where 200 lawyers have barricaded themselves in since the morning. At a quarter to twelve they decide on a quiet march to the hospital, which has filled with casualties in the last two hours.

It is a bizarre march in the streets of Gaza: many hoary heads and dozens of men in suits, ties, and polished shoes marching quietly among the smoking tires.

The leader receives them in the hospital courtyard. *"Take off the ties and mix with everyone else,"* he orders. Some of the older lawyers are insulted. Five minutes later, all are busy throwing rocks at the



soldiers who have surrounded the area.

Attached to the hospital is a small mosque. The leader enters, stations some guards at the door, takes over the loudspeakers, and convenes his men. News of the death of the youth from Beit Hanun has begun to spread, and hundreds of people stream towards the hospital.

Within an hour 13 people wounded by rifle shots arrive. Among them are a girl with a bullet in her buttocks and a youth who has been shot in the arm.

All the hospital buildings are full. There are thousands of people. Many are seeking shelter from the gunfire in the streets, assuming that the army will not enter the hospital. It is difficult to move in the hallways.

Gunfire is heard again, this time close, very close. The leader begins to send out his men. The youths go first, the older men in a second line, and last of all the women. The leader orders them to bring stones from the back to the front. A chain is organised and a shower of stones hurled outward. After each salvo of stones, the leader orders everyone inside.

The soldiers begin to shoot at a young man stationed on the second-storey roof of the eastern building. He jumps into the courtyard to avoid the shots. Some soldiers enter the hospital area.

The young man tries to flee, and sees a soldier opposite him. He stops running, stands with his face toward the soldier, opens his shirt, bares his chest, and says: "*Shoot.*" The soldier aims his rifle at him, at a distance of 15 metres, and shoots.

This happened in front of my eyes, less than 20 metres away. The soldier's face is engraved in my memory.

Shouts are heard all around: "*A wounded, a wounded.*" The gunfire continues. The leader shouts: "*All the women outside. To the wounded.*" They go out, bring the body, and the doctors place him on a stretcher.

I enter the operating room. The doctor says that the bullet has cut a main artery. Immediately after it became known that the young man had died, youths — their faces covered — enter and take the body. The soldiers retreat some 300 metres to Omar al-Muchtar Street.

Ten youths march in a line with the corpse, and, within minutes, disappear from sight.

Whenever the wounded or dead are brought in, several hundred more people arrive. In the hospital, they begin to prepare Molotov cocktails.

I see a small boy take a bottle from the floor, pull out a plastic bottle with turpentine and a rag from his pocket, close it, light a match and throw it. Fire begins to rise from the tires encircling the courtyard. The leader tells me that in addition to stones and Molotov cocktails, they have gone back to using an ancient weapon: slingshots, like David.

At one of the confrontation points near the hospital, soldiers are trapped between burning tires, and hundreds of demonstrators begin to encircle them. The soldiers try to flee, but the demonstrators succeed in trapping one of them. His comrades all run away.

The prisoner is stripped of his clothes. His jacket, knapsack, and all his things are taken from him. No one lays a finger on him, and he is released wearing only torn pants. If they had wanted, to, they could have killed him.

They open his knapsack and clean it out, asking where the grenades are. Some of them begin to dance, holding a magazine rifle in one hand, making a victory sign with the other. They throw the soldier's jacket and shirt on the floor and all gather around to trample on them.

I ask why this happiness? "*This is the greatest degradation of the occupation,*" they responded.

The leader turns to me. "*At one time it was difficult just to organise a strike,*" he says. "*today, striking is easy. The army opens the stores, and they close. Rashid a Shawa — who has no influence today — says that what's happening in Gaza is an expression of despair. But people in despair don't fight, they raise their hands in surrender.*

We have no firearms to speak of, but even so, if the present situation continues we'll push the soldiers back not only to the entrance of Gaza, but as far as Tel Aviv."

Another casualty, shot in the head, is brought to the hospital gates. He dies a short while later. His body is abducted.

The soldiers again enter the hospital courtyard. The whizzing of bullets is heard inside the building. The echo adds to the noise and tumult.

People begin to barricade themselves inside. There are already a few casualties, but there has been no time to treat them. The leader shouts to the women to go out and see to the wounded, despite the danger.

Twenty people rush to donate blood. Twenty-eight wounded have arrived in a short space of time, among them three who are seriously injured. One of them dies that night.

Dozens of doctors work in the operating room, without a break. Close to 1pm, a ten-year-old boy is shot dead in the hospital courtyard before his mother's eyes. His body is wrapped in one of the hospital's green sheets and placed on a wooden plank decorated with two date palms.

I go up to the roof. At 3.15 the air attack begins: a helicopter lands 18 times tossing tear gas grenades. Everyone begins to cough. Whoever doesn't get hit with the gas from above gets it from below. The whizz of bullets is heard from the direction of the helicopter.

I hear the army loudspeaker announcing that the hospital area is a closed military zone. The area is surrounded on three sides, the iron gates are breached, and 45 minutes of gunfire begins. Forty Gazans are arrested. There are hordes of wounded. I see a man run away, dragging his leg.

I feel like a living target. It's a good thing that my tape recorder is working, I think, at least it will record how I was killed.

In the meantime, 30 jeeps have entered the hospital compound, and shots are heard from every direction. Wounded people jump over the hospital fence to a nearby orchard. Others flee into the alleys between nearby houses, where it is difficult for the army to go. I hear the fires of those who have been surrounded. They are hit with batons.

I enter one of the nearby houses. I dial the Defence Ministry. Busy. There are no lines available. I dial the Knesset. I'm told that not a single Knesset member is in the building. "*They're in the area, but they can't be reached.*"

The central switchboard locates Toufik Ziad. "*I'll raise it in the Knesset,*" he tells me. I also telephone the Red Cross. They say they'll come. They don't. I check my pulse — 120 per minute.

A demonstration of thousands of residents of the Shati refugee camp arrives at the hospital. They've heard about the killings. I meet a doctor who saw my wound in the morning. He suggests that I rest in his house, and offers me painkillers.

There is another doctor in his home, and the two examine me. They say that my lower jaw bone might be cracked.

At 4pm the curfew goes into effect. Evening begins to fall. The army stops the flow of electricity, and people sit in dark apartments and light candles. In the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem, Ariel Sharon lights the first Chanukah candle in his new home.

I go up to the roof of the doctor's house. people are gathering outside. Tires go up in flames. The soldiers have disappeared. Darkness, say the Gazans, is the best weapon against the occupying forces. Thousands of people are in the streets. So much for the curfew.

I telephone my newspaper, looking for a way to get out. Two Gazans check out the area and inform me that the main road is blocked. The doctor suggests that I sleep there for the night.

At nine o'clock the electricity comes back on. "*The stone controls the street now,*" they warn me. "*Whoever goes out alone is in danger.*" I decide to go out.

I walk through deserted streets for about a kilometre, to the police station. The gate is locked. The policemen draw their pistols and aim them at me. Only after they examine my papers do they allow me to come in.

When a military government vehicle arrives to take me to the Gaza checkpoint, several policemen go up to the roof to guard me for the ten metres I have to walk to the rescue vehicle.

At the checkpoint, less than ten kilometres from the centre of events, several reservists sit dozing. They ask me what is happening in Gaza and how I was injured.

I tell them that I had been invited as a basketball judge in a game between Maccabee Hebron and Hapoel Gaza. The crowd had hit me, I explain, and had said that the judge was the son of a whore. One of the reservists tells me he is a basket ball player, and asks about the level of the Arab players and who won the game.

French elections

Setback for the left

No socialist can be unmoved by the first round results in the French Presidential elections.

April 24th saw a dramatic decline in the Communist vote (down to 6.7% from 15.34% in 1981).

The Socialist incumbent, Francois Mitterrand, scored a relatively modest 34%.

Jacques Chirac received 19% and the other representative of the mainstream right, Raymond Barre, won only 16.53%.

On election night, French radio stations put Le Pen, on the extreme right, close to 18%. Later, this stabilised at 14.38%, but this failed to mitigate the shock. France now has the strongest neo-fascist party in Europe.

In contrast, the slight gains of parties to the left of the Socialists and Communists (3.77% for the Greens, 2.09% for Juquin, 1.99% for Lutte Ouvrière) appear disappointing.

The Parti Communiste Francais (PCF) has been plunged in deep crisis for some time. Since the 1978 break-up of the "platform of left unity" (with socialists and centrist radicals) it has been unable to develop any coherent strategy. It has swung from formal support for the Socialist Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy (from 1981 to 1984) to a sniping campaign at an increasingly moderate Mitterrand.

The PCF's base in depressed urban and northern parts of France has withered. Its lack of a dynamic perspective has led to a popular catchphrase, "ville communiste, ville triste" (a Communist town is a sad one). Forced to rely upon its links with the union federation, the CGT, the PCF has become more of a "party-trade-union" than a force for socialist change.

Its internal rigidity has driven out right wing eurocommunists who now work

By Andrew Coates
Ipswich CLP

with the Parti Socialiste — and take a line similar to the "realists" of Britain's *Marxism Today*.

The Party's left was also pushed out. Unfortunately, despite their radical perspectives, and willingness to collaborate with the once-abhorred Trotskyists and leftists, the ex-PCF people around Juquin failed to "take off" electorally.

The press have interpreted the success of Le Pen's Front National in a number of ways. Its backing, we should be clear, does *not* primarily come from ex-Communists. This fashionable but baseless idea, dear to those who like to see all "extremists" as one entity, does not stand up to inspection.

According to journalist Alain Rollat and the French anti-fascist journal *Article 31*, the Front National's bedrock support stems from two sources.

The first lies amongst the numerous "pieds noirs" who were resettled in France after the Alegerian war of the 50s. These ex-colonialists harbour a deep hatred for North African immigrants. They are numerous in precisely those areas where Le Pen's admirers tourned out in force (Marseille).

The second source of support can be seen among those groupings which took to the streets during Mitterrand's socialist governments. These range from small associations of artisans, businessmen, and peasants to the parents of Catholic schoolchildren.

The latter held a demonstration against school reforms that drew around 1,500,000 people in June 1984, including a strong Front National presence. These origins help to explain Le Pen's ideology, a mixture of traditional French fascistic admiration for the "soil and its dead" and consequent dislike for aliens, with populist appeals against bureaucracy and taxes.

Shunning the intellectual racism of the "New Right" GRECE, Le Pen's appeal is to "beaufs", France's answer to Alf Garnet. These are to be found in all classes of society. Le Pen has been able to mobilise them, cleverly avoiding the obvious trappings of National Socialism.

If, as expected, Mitterrand secures a second term of office, he will have to continue to deal with his strongest adversaries: the various parties of the right and Le Pen.

He may attempt to divide them (already opinion polls state that approximately 20% of Barre's vote will go to him), in which case a government of the centre, a French "grand alliance", may emerge. He will certainly not move to the left.

We can expect that SOS-Racisme, an anti-racist grouping with strong ties to the Parti Socialiste Leadership, will be more active. But its popularity amongst the young has failed to halt the rise of the extreme right.

As for the rest of the fragmented left, most will vote for Mitterrand on May 8th. Some, such as the ecologists of Antoine Waechter, who are so keen to distance themselves from the label "left" (stemming from their hostility to class struggle), will fade from sight as the elections recede. Others are already having to face the dramatic consequences of Le Pen's score. They will have to find new ways of mobilising against him.

The situation in New Caledonia, where Kanak anti-imperialists are in an armed confrontation with the French state and the local "muscular" right (which looks to the Front National as much as to Chirac for inspiration) will oblige the socialist left to act.

If the coalition around Juquin can be sustained (which is not, to be honest, a dead certainty) it will face a number of difficult tasks. The reconstruction of the French left has still to be accomplished.

Soviet Armenia

Gorbachev's dilemma

On March 21st the Soviet Communist Party daily *Pravda* announced the rejection of the demand for the transfer of the Nagorno-Karabakh district of Soviet Azerbaijan to the neighbouring Republic of Armenia.

The demand had been raised by the soviet in the disputed region and by a massive mobilisation in Armenia itself.

Pravda accused the Armenians of resorting to "*a democracy of the streets in which emotions and passions came to the fore.*"

It went on to express its dismay that "*the demand was raised for the dismissal and re-election of leaders and enterprises of party bodies, for recalling peoples' deputies and expelling them all from the party if they obstructed the formation of 'Karabakh base committees'.*"

Eight days later, plans for investment in the region were announced, as well as concessions on cultural questions. This was not enough to halt the powerful strike movement in the region's capital, Stepanakert, which continued until April 7th, while in Yerevan a stay-at-home protest was having a significant impact.

Moscow has started to wave the big stick at Armenians who reject the proposed solution. Large numbers of mainly Slav

By COLIN MEADE

troops have been moved into Yerevan, while a campaign has been launched to discredit the movement and isolate its more radical currents.

One figure in particular, Parour Airikian, has been singled out for special attention. Airikian, whom *Pravda* characterised as "*whipping up nationalist quarrels since his youth*", was arrested on March 25th for "*diffusion of false information defamatory to the Soviet government and social system*".

In Yerevan, a demonstration of some hundreds of people against his arrest was broken up by police.

Airikian explains his evolution as a development from "*anti-communist and anti-Marxist nationalism*" marked by "*phrase-mongering in the late 1960s*" to his present belief that Armenian independence can only come about "*when the majority are for independence*" through a referendum.

The demand for a referendum on separation from the USSR is being raised by nationalists from a number of the non-Russian Republics, and can easily be defended by reference to Lenin's writings on the national question. In a speech to the organising committee of the Armenian movement Airikian reminded people that:

"*Nagorno and Karabakh were not conquered by Azerbaijan. These territories of ours were transferred to Azerbaijan by the Red Army. Therefore we must not give way to anti-Azerbaijani, anti-Turkish, and above all to anti-Islamic moods. We must send our protests to the right address — Moscow.*"

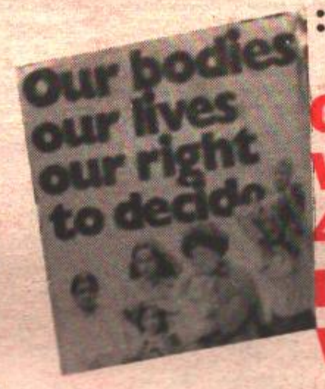
However, Airikian's group, the Union for National Self-determination, was not the guiding force in the recent movement. The organising committee appears to have been dominated by the social layer to which Gorbachev has made direct appeals, that is members of official cultural, technical, and scientific unions.

They expected to get action on longstanding grievances by appealing over the heads of the obstructive bureaucracy to Gorbachev himself. Such people could tend to be open to the argument that they must moderate their demands to avoid provoking a backlash.

Indeed the two Armenian writers, Zori Balayan and Silva Kaputikyan, who met Gorbachev at the height of the mass demonstrations, were said to have been amenable to limiting the scope of Armenian demands to economic and cultural reforms.

However, reports indicate that heavy policing, press attacks, and the absolute refusal to allow the Armenian national movement to explain its case directly to Soviet and world public opinion are leading many Armenians to wonder if *perestroika* and *glasnost* are really enough to meet their aspirations.

LABOUR
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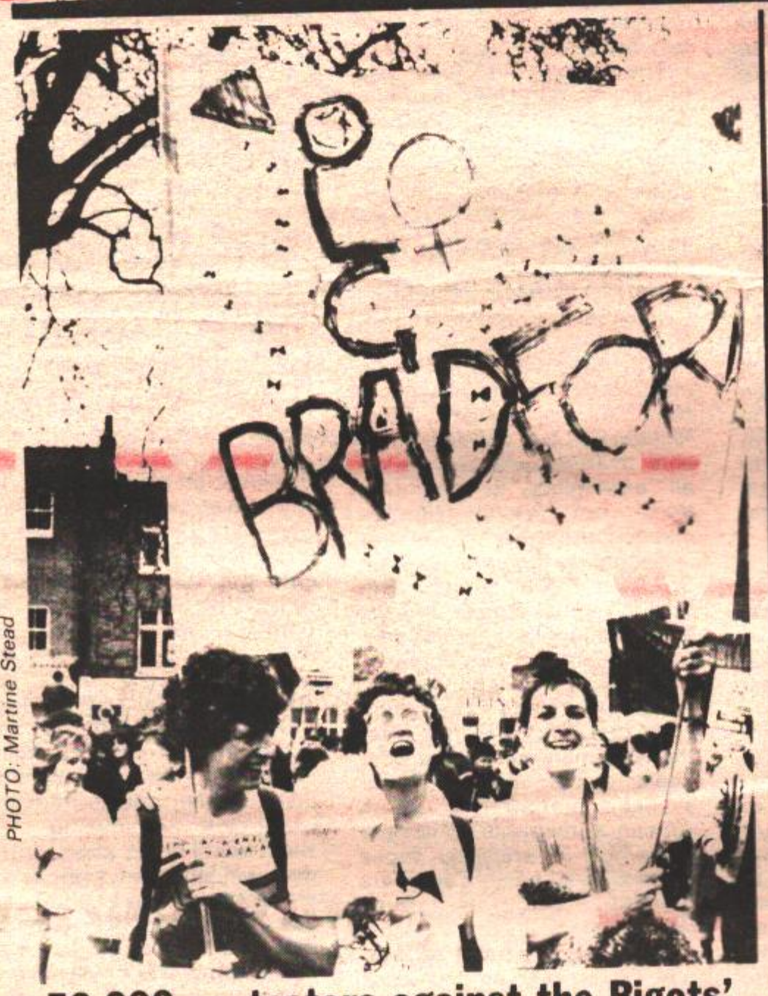


PHOTO: Martine Stead

50,000 protestors against the Bigots' Charter Clause 28 from all over Britain (and some from Europe!) marched from the Embankment to Kennington Park in London on April 30th.

The next step in the campaign will be for Labour Councils to DEFY THE LAW and refuse to hound lesbians and gay men as the Tories would have them do.

Already they're trying to close at least one bookshop (see below): *when will you start burning the books, Maggie?* Stop the Clause!

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AT LAST:
A victory for women!

A major victory has been won with the defeat on May 6th of the David Alton's Bill which attempted to restrict the time limit for legal abortions to 18 weeks.

Following a campaign of mass pressure by the Fight Alton's Bill Campaign (FAB) and the pressure on MPs maintained over many years by the National Abortion Campaign, the Bill has been talked out of Parliament.

The debate began with 45 minutes of procedural discussion made necessary by the Speaker's biased selection of amendments. Eleven petitions against the Bill were presented.

**By GILL LEE
Labour Briefing Women**

In the course of discussion it became clear that much of the media coverage of the "Carlyle baby case" — in which a foetus aborted on the grounds of abnormality was purported to have lived for some hours — was fabricated by Alton supporters. The evidence fabricated included the supposed interviews with the mother.

Against the anti-abortionists' argument that women would not be forced back to the back streets by a lowering of time limits, Jo Richardson gave evidence of the numbers of deaths from illegal abortions after 18 weeks which occurred before the '67 Act. Some self-induced abortions occurred as late as 27 weeks and women died as a result.

The defeat of the Bill represents a major setback for the right, and a setback for the ruling class's whole strategy of eroding the gains made by women in the 60s and 70s. *We should be under no illusions, however, that the defeat of Alton's Bill is the end of the story.*

The anti-abortionists have made it clear they will be back for more, either in the form of Parliamentary attacks, or through a US-type campaign of harassment and intimidation of women and doctors involved in abortions.

In the course of the campaign, however, it became clear that there is a great weakness in the labour movement around the issue of time limits, with even left wing MPs being prepared to capitulate if a 24 week amendment had been put to the vote. We must use the breathing space given us by the defeat of this Bill to build up our forces in defence of a woman's right to choose and against any future attack.

There must be a campaign in the Labour Party against the conscience vote and to deselect those MPs who voted the wrong way on the second reading.

We must campaign to show that abortion is as much a class issue as defence of the NHS or nationalisation, so that the Campaign Group, for example, will not find itself without a clear position on the conscience vote come the next attack on women's abortion rights.

FAB activists should now build the National Abortion Campaign as the best way of taking forward the struggle for a woman's right to choose.

The whole of the left must now go on the offensive. We must campaign for a law which will give women the right to choose on abortion. We need better sex education in schools, self referal of women for abortions, a fully resourced NHS. We need a society in which women really can choose about abortion, and in which we can control every other aspect of our own fertility — a socialist society.

Build for the FAB local groups meeting

May 21st, London
We need to discuss how to take the campaign forward
Contact FAB on 01 831 6838 for details

NEC Lobby

On April 27th some 40 pro-choice activists from Brent, Camden and South London picketed the Labour Party NEC, demanding Labour implement a three-line whip.

The picket, called by Lambeth Against Alton and Women for Socialism, was very militant, with placards demanding "Whip them into line" and shouts of "Your conscience, our bodies" as NEC members rushed past.

Dennis Skinner and Ken Livingstone stopped to chat while Roy Hattersley and Neil Kinnock chose the back door — afraid to face the accusing eyes of pro-choice women.

Parliamentary Lobby

On Tuesday April 26th several hundred people attended a lobby of Parliament to show their disgust at David Alton's Bill.

The lobby was organised by the Fight Alton's Bill (FAB) Campaign to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the implementation of the '67 Abortion Act.

The '67 Act did not give women free abortion on demand (as Alton's supporter claim), but did make three exceptions to the generally *illegal status* of abortion. In so doing, it gave thousands of women an option on unwanted pregnancy up to 28 weeks if they could find a sympathetic GP.

The Right to Read

On Monday April 25th, nationally known authors and local Councillors, parents, and teachers gathered at *Reading Matters* Bookshop in North London. They were voicing support for the *Right to Read* Campaign, organised to defend the Bookshop against Clause 28-inspired Tory attack.



PHOTO: Jean Fraser

Writers gather at Reading Matters: (left to right) Elean Thomas (standing), Terry Jones, Sue Townsend, Caryl Churchill, Sara Maitland,

"One of the things about Conservatives is they're really afraid of sex. I'm not sure why. It seems to involve whipping and tying up."
Sue Townsend (author of Adrian Mole)

"Any law that stops tolerance and understanding is evil."
Terry Jones, (of Monty Python fame)

"The Right to Read is also the right to write. Anyone who doesn't support this campaign is a philistine."
Sara Maitland (novelist)

"When the US-backed JLP government came to power in Jamaica they burnt hundreds of books. I was an editor then and I can see similar tendencies developing here. Citizens ought to recognise bigotry wherever it appears — and oppose it."
Elean Thomas
(Jamaican poet)