LABOUR BRIEFING
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- P&O: the Sealink sellout
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P&O Strikers stand firm

THEY MUST NOT FIGHT ALONE!

"We're not going to get any further in this dispute without solidarity," JASON GROOMBRIDGE of the P&O rank and file Strike Committee told *Briefing*.

"Solidarity means help from other workers — and under this government that means breaking the law."

NUS General Secretary Sam McCluskie's retreat in the face of legal and financial threats has left the Dover strikers back where they started — fighting Britain's biggest shipping employer without the backing they deserve from their own union and from the labour movement as a whole.

"We want the NUS to call a national strike, to defy the law and accept sequestration," said Jason. "I understand Sam McCluskie's predicament, but if you want to play the role of a union leader you've got to be prepared to stick it out. Liverpool NUS had the right idea when they called on McCluskie and the NEC to resign."

By MARK SEATON



Meanwhile, TGWU dockworkers continue to handle scab ships at Dover, and TGWU drivers cross the channel on them. But Ron Todd does nothing.

"TGWU members in transport ought to realise that they're in unsafe hands when they're on board those scab ships. 50% of the scabs have never worked on a ship in their life."

Dover strikers have been criss-crossing the country, hammering home the facts about the cruel and callous P&O management its indifference to public safety and appealing for moral, financial, and physical support.

"As a rank and file NUS member I want to see as much support as possible on our picket line in Dover," Jason explained. "For once I'd like to see the TUC keep the promises it made to miners and printworkers and do what it's supposed to do. They've got to step in and stop the government."

Over and over again the New Realism has failed to deliver the goods to grassroots trade union members. Over and over again the New Realist leaders have undermined solidarity action and left groups of workers to face the employers, the government, the media, and the courts alone.

Eric Hammond has been confident enough to make another pitch for "no strike" business unionism to be accepted by the TUC.

The best answer is for trade unionists and Labour Party members to take action to make sure the Dover strikers get the support they need. We need to build local support groups, raise desperately-needed cash, boycott P&O, and get down to Dover to join the picket line.

And we need to dump the leaders who have left us in the lurch time and again. That task starts with a vote for Tony Benn and Eric Heffer and against Kinnock and Hattersley.

Like the other Dover strikers, Jason Groombridge remains determined.

"We all knew that the courts were in the Tories' pockets. We all knew that we would have to fight not just management but the media, the government, and the courts. It's been an uphill battle from the start, and we never expected anything different."

For details on how you can show solidarity with the strikers and play your part in this battle with the Tory government see page 5.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Campaign Round-up

Middlesex Poly occupation

Cops move in — *students get angry*

At three in the morning on Friday May 13th, police in riot gear cleared occupying students out of three Middlesex Polytechnic sites in North London.

The student occupation, which had been maintained for over two weeks, was a protest against plans to close one of the Poly's sites in preparation for the future "corporate status" which the government has decreed for polytechnics.

Reactionary Polytechnic Director Ray Rickett had already brought the student union to court and had injunctions served against student union officers.

By MARK SEATON



PHOTO: Martine Stead

As students at Middlesex Poly are booted out of occupation, students at North London Poly went into occupation. Amongst other demands, they were protesting at the loss of student accommodation, as Hackney Council prefers to keep flats like those above empty rather than occupied.

In the days following the enforced end of the occupation some 5,000 students were locked out of the All Saints, Trent Park and Enfield sites. Private security guards are now patrolling the Polytechnic and a 7pm curfew has been imposed on all sites.

On Wednesday, May 18th a 600-strong student demonstration marched through Haringey. The mood of the students was militant and defiant.

Student union President Ross Walton and NUS London officers were booed because of their failure to mobilise support and stand by the occupation.

Re-occupation of some sites is being debated and selective, limited action is on the cards.

The action has mobilised hundreds of previously apathetic students and severely embarrassed Director Rickett, a Tory favourite. It received extensive publicity in London and placed the question of polytechnic cuts firmly on the agenda.

Two coachloads of Middlesex Poly students travelled down to the mass picket at Dover and P&O strikers have addressed student meetings.

The end of term promises no respite to the beleaguered Rickett.

Left On The Shelf

Football fans mobilise

A grass roots campaign against Tottenham Hotspur's plans to redevelop the White Hart Lane ground has blossomed in North London.

Spurs were seeking planning permission to replace the historic "Shelf" terrace with a line of "executive-style" boxes, thus reducing standing capacity by 12,000 and increasing average cost of admission.

The "Shelf" was designed in 1936 by Archibald Leitch, who also built famous stands at Goodison, Ibrox, Hampden, Roker and Fratton Parks.

By MARK SEATON

It currently offers an excellent view of the match at a relatively modest price. Enraged football supporters organised themselves in a campaigning body dubbed *Left On The Shelf* (LOTS) and turned up to lobby Haringey Council in large numbers.

A leading LOTS supporter is anti-cuts Councillor and *Briefing* supporter Craig Brewin, who trounced Spurs manager Terry Venables and Club Chair Irving Scholar at a public meeting attended by several hundred supporters.

"This is a chance for socialists to align themselves with popular outrage over a naked attempt to put profit before people," Craig told *Briefing*.

For more information on LOTS, contact Cllr Brewin, Civic Centre, High Road, London N22.



Craig Brewin

Fighting Deportations

Marion must stay!

Marion Gaima came to this country as a student in 1973. Her application for further leave to stay was refused by the Home Office in April 1978 — but Marion was never given notice of this refusal.

Having heard about political harassment of her family in Sierra Leone, Marion applied for asylum in 1984. Her application, which she had to prepare in Holloway prison (without legal advice, or help from her friends), was refused in October 1986.

As the Home Office didn't tell Marion about their 1978 decision, they have now been able to discount many factors which count in her favour under immigration law for not raising them at the correct time!

Marion's contribution to the community is deep-rooted and invaluable. It is recognised by all who know her or work or worship with her.

But her time is running out. The threat of deportation still looms over her. It is a threat which overshadows the whole community to which she would be a great loss.

We are appealing to you to express your concern now, before it is too late. Please write a letter to the Home Secretary asking him to use his discretion, show compassion and stop this deportation.

Every letter will count. Please write today.

Taken from NALGO broadsheet

Write to the Home Secretary, Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1 9AT, urging him to let Marion Gaima (ref. G192512) to remain.

Please send a copy of your letter to NALGO, 1 Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9AJ, from whom copies of a profile of Marion can be obtained.

Fighting Section 28

Trade Union campaign formed

Trades Unionists Against Section 28 is a group campaigning to fight for lesbians and gay men by linking up with the trade union movement.

Unity is strength.

We seek unity with other workers to defend our interests. We share a common interest in opposing discrimination and we link up with other sections of workers fighting the Tories.

We support the socialist aspirations of the trade union movement. The struggle for a better society represents the only means to tackling discrimination and guaranteeing an end to the nightmare of mass unemployment, poor housing and the arms race.

Section 28 forms part of the Tory attack on local jobs and services on which all working class people depend — Council housing, state education, Council recreation facilities, etc. Lesbians and gays are being used as a scapegoat to justify this attack.

Oppressed

Oppressed sections of society, because they are denied access to jobs and housing, are the ones who rely most on local services. Fighting for lesbian and gay units cannot be separated from the defence of local services generally.

Promoting lesbian and gay rights without defending local services is not sufficient. Gay books on library shelves are useless if the library is closed. Lesbian and gay units need to be properly staffed and resourced. We make common cause with other disputes and struggles and call for unity in the face of the Tory attacks.

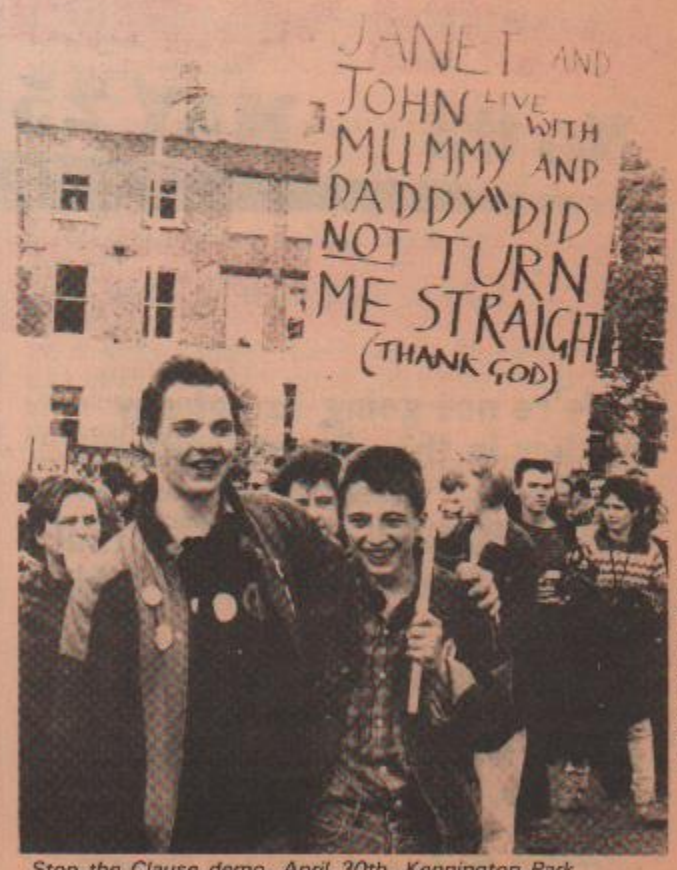


PHOTO: Martine Stead

Stop the Clause demo, April 30th, Kennington Park

Already one gay teacher has been sacked by the Local Education Authority in Bradford — and this was before the Clause became law! He was reinstated only after his local colleagues in the NUT threatened an all-out strike. Lesbians and gays need union rights to defend their interests, just as the seafarers need the NUS in order to tackle P&O.

It is vital to use the power of organised labour to make this law unworkable. Non-compliance and non-implementation are the only answer to this Tory attack. This means industrial action from the workers affected by the Section — Council workers, teachers and librarians.

We held a rally on May 24th, the day the Section became law, not only to demonstrate our total opposition to this queer-bashing charter but also to link up with other trade unionists in struggle and offer a way forward. The Stop the Clause demonstration of April 30th represented a tremendous indication of opposition to Section 28 which now needs to be turned into action.

Trades Unionists Against Section 28 meets every Friday at 7pm at the University of London Unio, Malet St, London WC1. For leaflets, badges, posters, donations and speakers, contact TUAS28, 7 Pickwick Court, London SE9 4SA.

Taken from TUAS28 leaflet

Women's Peace Weekend

Peace, justice, our lives, our direction

Women will gather in Manchester on the weekend of June 18th/19th to discuss issues of war and violence.

The meeting will be at Ducie High School, Daisy Bank Road, Victoria Park, Manchester 15, and will offer an opportunity to examine the different ways in which women are involved in war and violence and how it affects us.

Four main themes run through the weekend:

- *Women in war situations*
- *The military/industrial complex*
- *Male power/male violence*
- *Power, politics, hierarchy and oppression.*

The meeting will attempt to counterract the fragmentation and lack of direction felt by a lot of women working in these areas, in particular in the women's peace movement.

By providing a forum for discussion, constructive links between women can be made, developed, and improved.

The organising group includes women from Greenham Support Groups, CND, Quakers, CODIR, and anti-deportation campaigns.

For more information and registration details, please contact Mary at 11 Alexandra Road South, Whalley Range, Manchester M16 8GE, tel. 061 226 3947.

International Solidarity

AUCKLAND: A strike by 14 crew members on a British container ship has delayed its sailing for the US with NZ's giant America's Cup challenge yacht on board.

The yacht and 150 tonnes of accompanying equipment are on Discovery Bay, bound for Los Angeles, but crew members have refused to sail in protest at $NZ8 million dollars worth of assets being stripped from their union in England for illegal picketing.

Challenge spokesman David Richwhite said the strikes could cause problems if it goes for any length of time. But the challenge has contingencies for this kind of holdup and in any big exercise there will always be hiccups.

Reported in TNT, 16.5.88

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Heading for Chesterfield — again!

The first Chesterfield Conference last autumn emerged from a widespread feeling of isolation, fragmentation, and frustration on the left. Yes, we all got fed up with the fractiousness, the sectarian pomposity, the sheer chaos of it all. But is was nonetheless plain evidence of a genuine, shared hunger for unity and for a bold, new, socialist initiative.

Events since then have only confirmed the necessity of some kind of body to draw together the disparate struggles in which working class and oppressed people are engaged — and to unite them under the banner of socialism.

The second Chesterfield Conference (June 11/12th) will be even more important than the first. We need to find ways of giving form and substance to our many good intentions. We need to find ways to link practical solidarity with the development of socialist policies. We need to find ways to work together while respecting political differences.

The Benn-Heffer challenge has posed the alternatives facing the labour movement in stark terms — necessarily so.

It is a response to the same desire for a unifying platform which gave birth to Chesterfield. It is a necessary complement to Chesterfield — not a distraction from it.

Chesterfield is a challenge to all socialists. Everyone will have reservations on some aspect or other of its profile or policies. But no one has been able to argue that this kind of initiative is not necessary.

Briefing supporters will be working hard to make the Chesterfield dream of a united, open, democratic socialist movement a reality.

Join us on June 11th and 12th!

P&O; and the struggle for Leadership

For a brief time it looked as if the NUS was prepared to fight. But Sam McCluskie's bold declarations about defying the law and spreading the strike came to nothing.

Despite a hostile reaction from many delegates at the NUS Conference in Hull, the union ordered an end to secondary action and began to purge its contempt.

The new strategy? Why, it's our old friend from Wapping days, a consumer boycott of the offending employer! We can sail on Sealink with a clear conscience...

Once again workers in struggle have been left to fight alone, abandoned by their own union Leadership and by the TUC — in its official capacity.

Once again, the judges have implemented the Tories' trade union laws for them, to strip a powerful workers' organisation of its single effective weapon: co-ordinated national strike action.

Briefing has always argued that the Tory anti-union laws only are there to prevent working people from defending their organisations, their jobs and their standards of living. In that sense they are *class laws* — and we must organise a class response of mass defiance of those laws.

What we glimpsed for a moment in the P&O dispute was the chance to do just that. Secondary action was there, taking place, well supported. *If* McCluskie had stood firm, as he had promised NUS rank and file members he would; *if* the Courts had been told to go to hell... the whole employers' offensive would have been knocked on its heels.

These *ifs* are not mere wishful thinking. They are about the vital role of Leadership — and the necessity of campaigning for and capturing that Leadership.

McCluskie, Willis, Kinnock... they can carry out their very real acts of treason because they have the power, the authority and the sanction of Leadership. The isolation in which the Dover strikers now find themselves, like so many before them, can only be fully broken when that Leadership is scrapped and a new one takes its place. If these Leaders won't stand firm they should stand *aside* and make way for those of us who will.

The Benn-Heffer challenge is therefore not merely symbolic, not merely a showcase for socialist ideas — necessary as that is. It raises in concrete form the question at the heart of the labour movement's crisis — *the question of Leadership.*

Where next on Section 28?

For a united campaign to make Councils stand firm

As of May 25th what has become known as *The Clause* will become law as Section 28 of the Local Government (No. 2) Act 1987.

The *Stop the Clause* Campaign has been defeated — *but this does not signal the end of the fight*.

It is necessary to be clear on the success of the *Stop the Clause* campaign, amply shown by the scale of mobilisations.

By April 30th *Stop the Clause* had achieved a mobilisation of 50,000 in a "march on London" — the biggest demonstration for lesbian and gay rights ever in Europe.

Witnessed

We also witnessed the increasing involvement of the labour movement and in particular the trade unions. On April 30th there was an impressive show of trade union banners. The TUC, NUM, NUPE, NUT, NATFHE and Women against Pit Closures sent messages of support; and COHSE and NALGO sent speakers.

It must be stressed that this mobilisation was acheived by a campaign led autonomously by lesbians and gay men. This principle of autonomy, which led not to the separatist isolation of the struggle (as our comrades on the ultra-left predicted) but to broad based mass support, is a principle which must be defended.

By Tom Loucas
LCLGR
Islington North CLP

How the support so far gathered can be maintained and utilised to take the campaign forward depends on what we see as the likely outcomes of the legislation.

There is the possibility of legal challenge, which could take two forms:

- the auditor deciding that a Local Authority is spending money illegally;
- an individual taking private action.

The latter is likely to face us soon: in Haringey, already, the right wing organisation *The Parents Rights Group* has re-emerged from its sewer, with money from the scab UDM, to attack the Council's lesbian and gay equality work.

We are likely to see a growing incidence of self-censorship. Councils fearing legal challenge may water down or even drop policies and stop funding events, projects, etc.

At present the position of the labour bureaucracy is being determined by the ALA, whose position is roughly that current equality work with self-identified lesbians and gay men is likely to be safe. The implication is that work in youth and education services is not.

Strategy

This must be our strategy: to maintain and strengthen the broadest possible united front against this legislation; to hold Local Authorities to the ALA position; and to draw them towards an uncompromising reaffirmation of all aspects of lesbian and gay equality work.

It will mean working in local govenment with people whom we, as *Briefing* supporters, are bitterly opposed to. Working together will expose their contradictions, not ours.

Successful

These tactics have already proven successful in Haringey, where a united front stretching from the RCP to cuts Councillors (and even the SLD) defeated a motion from the far right of the Tory group. The Lesbian and Gay Unit was saved from closure.

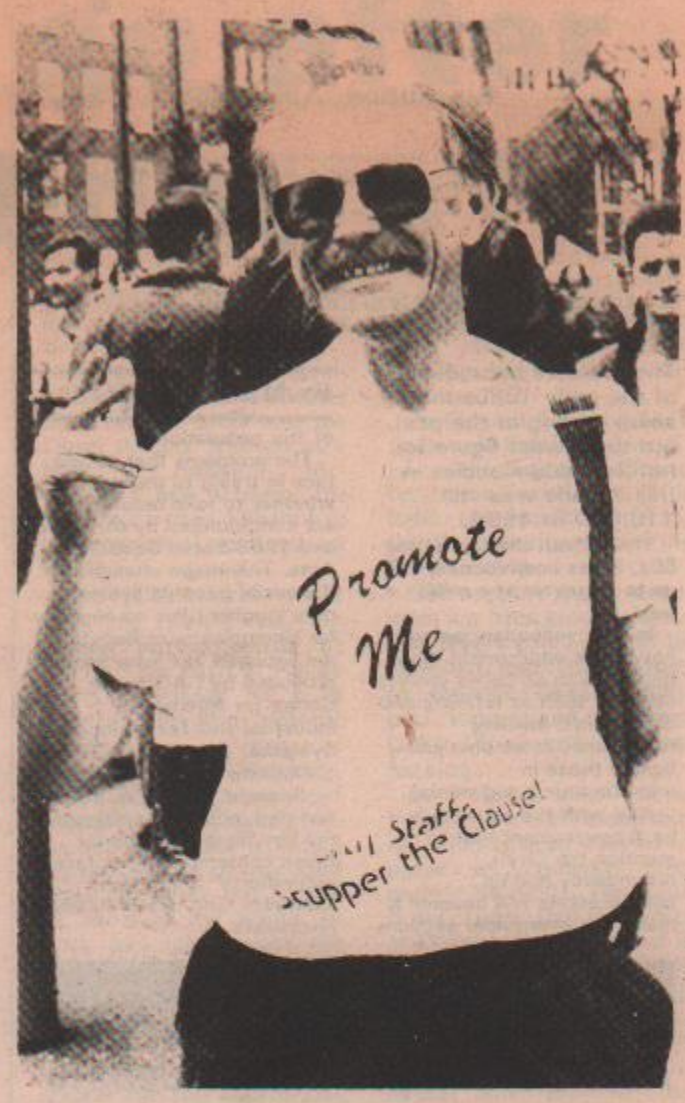
Within the united campaign against the Section there are a number of demands we can raise whose logic involves confrontation with the legislation, but without posing it in such a way that would scare off possible allies:

- a repeal campaign must be started;
- workers victimised as a result of Section 28 must be defended;
- Local Authorities must make public statements which reaffirm, strengthen and develop lesbian and gay equality work;
- policies on lesbian and gay equality must be defended in the courts.

Our call is for Labour Councils to stand firm and not fall into the pit of self-censorship. This call must be backed with our ability to mobilise in defence of Councils that take a principled stand.

This is particularly important on the issue of positive images — one of the main targets of the legislation and one on which the bureaucrats are fudging.

Ultimatley, only mass pressure will defend these policies. We have shown we can deliver this; if we keep up these tactics in this campaign, we can win!



Stop the Clause Demo, April 30th, Kennington Park

Trade Union Periscope

News that hang-glider enthusiast Judy Leden had recently ascended to 5,000 ft — suspended under a hot air balloon — has sent shivers down the spine of P&O Chair Jeffrey Sterling.

Why? Sterling is aware that Judy intends to be hoisted to 18,000ft later this year in an attempt to cross the channel by hang-glider.

Sterling is reported to have said: "This is the sort of competition we ferry operators are up against. It is clear that we will have to reduce our wages bill by another 50% if we are to compete."

Reports that NUS General Secretary, Sam McCluskie, was considering emulating Judy's aerobatic feat in an attempt to spirit the NUS's assets across the channel have been shot down in flames by informed sources.

Greg Basset

BOOK REVIEW

Redundancy: not as easy as it seems!

THINKING OF TAKING REDUNDANCY?

BEWARE!

4th Edition, April 1988

CAITS Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems Polytechnic of North London, Holloway Road, London N7 8DB 01-607 7079

Available from CAITS, Polytechnic of North London, Holloway Road, London N7 8DB
Send cheques, etc., payable to CAITS. 95p per single copy; 80 each for 10 or more; 70p each for 50 or more.

The massive redundancies of the early 1980s may seem a thing of the past, but the lowest figure for notified redundancies in this decade was still 110,000 in 1986.

Throughout the rest of the 80s, it has been running at up to *a quarter of a million a year.*

In fact, redundancies are now more widespread than before, with so-called growth sectors, such as retailing and distribution, yielding redundancy rates only just behind those in manufacturing and mining.

And with the squeeze in local government (not to mention the City!), redundancy and its complications will become a reality for ever wider sections of the population.

By MARK SEATON

The problems that people face in trying to decide whether to take redundancy are compounded by the 1986 and 1988 Social Security Acts. This major change in the social benefits system, plus tougher rules on eligibilty for Unemployment Benefit are explored in a new booklet produced by CAITS, the Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems.

Thinking of Redundancy? — Beware!, now in its fourth, updated, edition, explains all the key financial facts for those contemplating or facing redundancy. It includes examples, and useful Ready Reckoners.

Yorks miners

Rushed vote pre-empts debate on Benn-Heffer challenge

The dismal prospect of Neil Kinnock's re-election as Party Leader moved a step nearer reality with increasing certainty of backing from the National Union of Mineworkers. This backing is starting to take on solid form despite the efforts of Arthur Scargill to galvanise support from his rank and file for Tony Benn. Yorkshire Area NUM, the biggest remaining area, holds a third of the union's votes. It is now mandated to cast its card votes for Kinnock. At the last area council meeting, the delegates cast their own card vote as follows:
Kinnock 412, Benn 269
Prescott 329, Hattersley 201, Heffer 71.

NUT

From "dented shield" to the protection of... a glossy logo!

NUT members, representing over 70 union branches throughout the country, met at Coventry on May 7th.

We were there to develop a strategy to defeat the National Executive's plans to attack the left and curtail union democracy.

By Ronnie Held
STA Women's Convenor

The gathering represented the largest meeting of the left and its periphery in the union for a long time.

At this year's Easter Conference, the NUT Executive suffered a defeat when they tried to steamroller the passage of proposals to deal with what they claim is the union's "financial crisis".

They argue that a fall in membership is the cause and that, therefore, the prime objective must be to "recruit members". What they fail to point out is that at two points in the union's history, when national action was at its peak, the membership *increased*! On the other hand, since the union caved in and sold out over Baker, membership has *fallen*.

The Executive document, which will be put to a full recall national conference on June 18th (demanded and fought for by the STA) aims to "reorganise the union" for "recruitment purposes" — a smokescreen for smashing the left and centralising the bureaucracy by:

- abandoning annual conference in favour of a biennial one;
- ending local branch control of local membership subscriptions;
- ending the existence of the national post of Women's Officer and merging the national Equal Opportunities Department with other departments;

The new NUT logo. What are they doing? Waving "goodbye" to defence of our education?

- ending the independent existence of the union's International Relations Department, i.e. end solidarity with the international teacher trade unions. (Rule 8 prevents solidarity with anyone but teachers, hence the recent statement deploring Israeli occupying forces' action against West Bank Palestinians — in their schools!)

If the left overcomes sectarian differences, it should be able to defeat this right wing manoeuvre. If we fail to bury our differences at the recall Conference we will pay a heavy price.

Democracy *is* an important issue to the rank and file. A principled and concerted attack on the right's proposals will impress union members, and convince them that the left has the correct arguments, and is the real defender of union democracy.

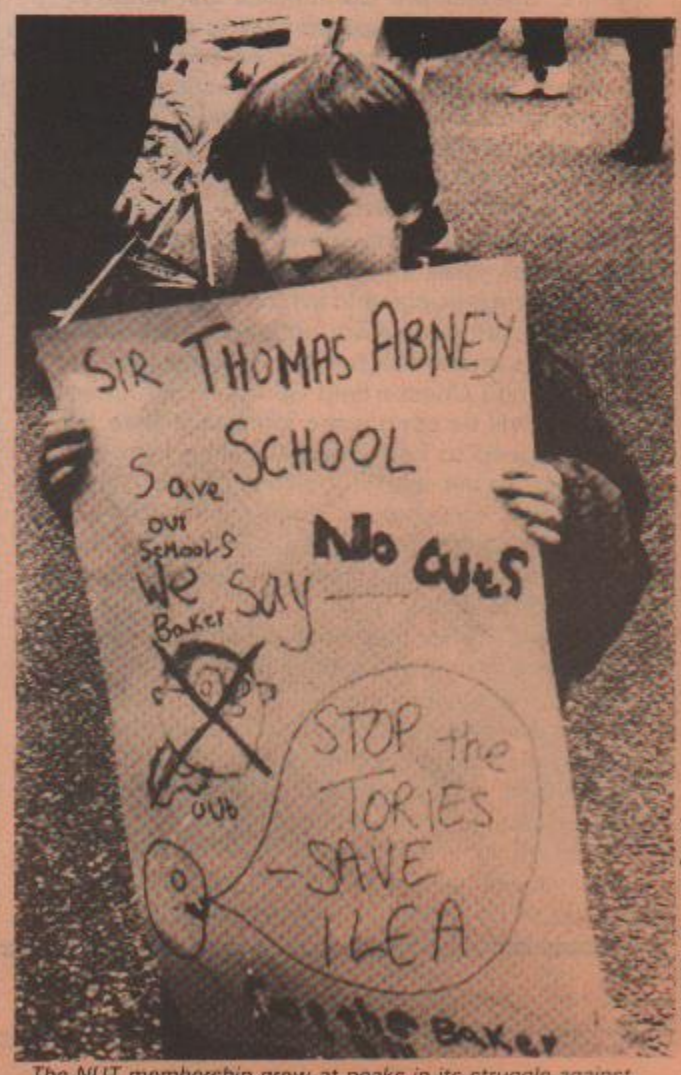


PHOTO: Martine Stead

The NUT membership grew at peaks in its struggle against Baker's GERBill. Opponents of Baker marched in London on March 8th (above).

CPSA Conference

Right wing saddled with left policies

By any objective measurement the outcome of this year's CPSA Conference does not look good.

The Broad Left was wiped entirely from the NEC; its majority on the DHSS Section Executive Committee has been overturned after 14 years in power; the 1988 pay campaign is effectively at an end (some would say it never began); and, worse, it is likely that the new Leadership will negotiate a long-term pay deal with the Tories which accepts merit and regional pay.

Yet the conference was not the disaster it appeared from the outside. Despite sweeping to power, the right and their Kinnockite allies did not succeed in taking the Conference with them on the key policy issues.

Time and time again during the course of debate delegates polarised around those who said there can be no compromise with Tory plans for the Civil Service and those who said that we should get the best deal going.

By Alastair Wallace
CPSA Broad Left

On almost every occasion the Conference backed the no-compromise Broad Left position. The problem of course is whether with such a virulently right wing Leadership (members of whom are in the Tory Party) it all means anything.

The answer has got to be that it does, but that the left is going to have to fight for every policy from the bottom up.

The possibilities are shown clearly in the current Hither Green dispute where DHSS members have been on strike for nearly two months against the employment of a leading fascist.

Following pressure from the Conference the new Executive have been forced to back a one-day strike of all CPSA members across London in support of Hither Green.

The irony is that it was on issues similar to this that the outgoing Broad Left Leadership was found lacking. These have undoubtedly contributed to its downfall.

While it is not true to say, as the SWP have done, that the Broad Left is responsible for everything from the defeat of the 1987 pay campaign to the excess winter rainfall the Broad Left simply did not get to grips with power.

They were continually wrongfooted and outmanoeuvred by the union's full-time machinery. It is their ability to assimilate this lesson which will determine whether the Broad Left returns to power quickly.

The forthcoming year will be pivotal in the future of the Civil Service. The government are planning a major breakup involving the use of YTS, casualisation, flexible pay and ultimately privatisation.

CPSA has the policies to take on these attacks but we don't have the Leadership. This will have to come from the rank and file; and it will do the Broad Left no harm to get back to its roots and start organising the fightback.

Seafarers' strike

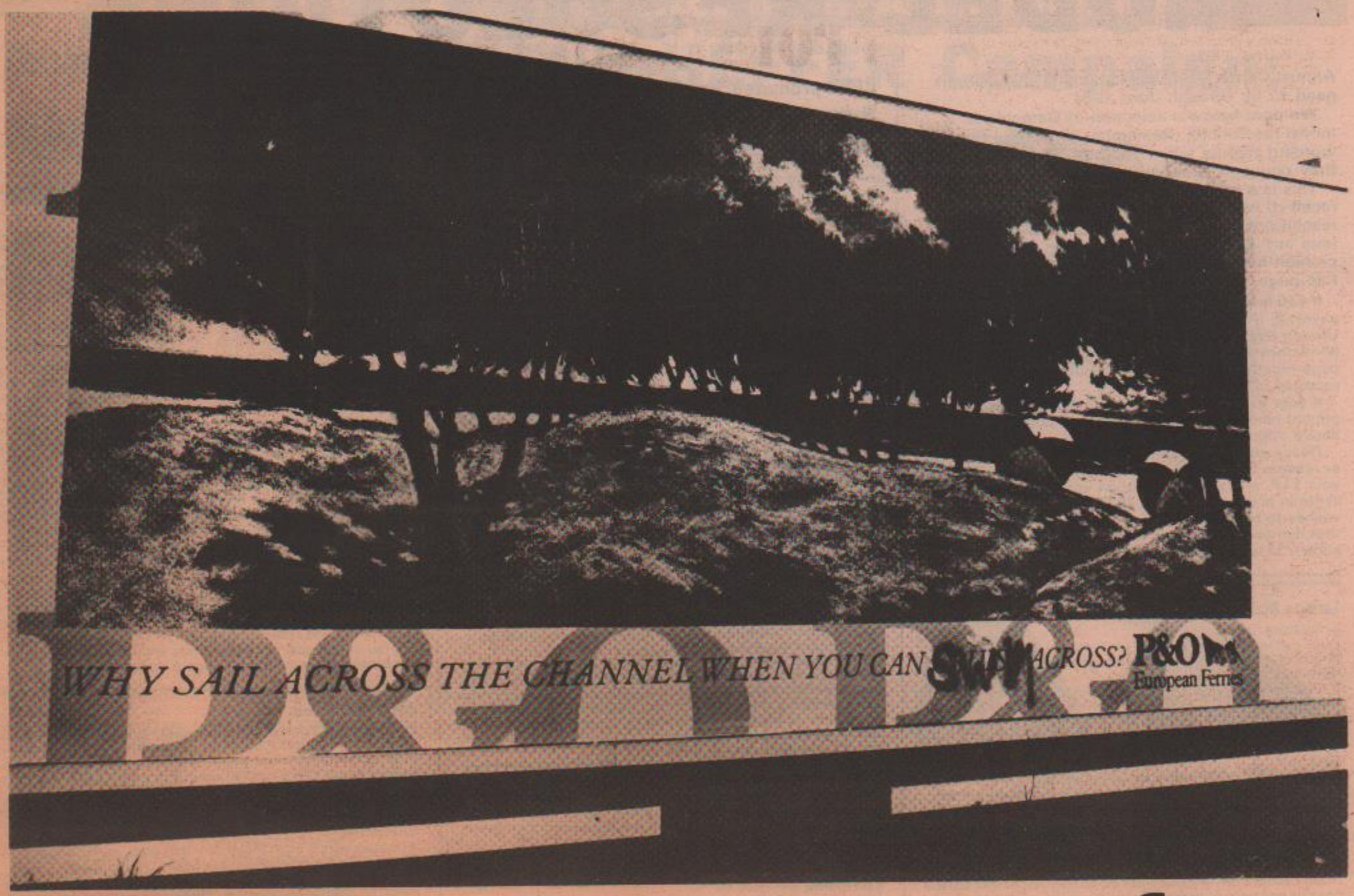


Photo: Nick Hazelwood

Solidarity Rally

Three thousand people took part in a solidarity rally and demonstration in Dover on May 21st.

It had been organised by the P&O Seafarers Support Groups.

The rally was addressed by Dennis Skinner and Jeremy Corbyn from the Campaign Group of Labour MPs; Betty Heathfield of Women Against Pit Closures; John McCreadie of CPSA; and Marek Gaistecki, on behalf of Polish Solidarnosc.

By Ken Stratford
Thames Poly NALGO

Seafarers speakers included a representative of NUS members from Aberdeen who service the North Sea oil rigs, sacked for taking secondary action in support of the P&O strike; and a representative from Harwich.

Notably absent from the platform were Sam McCluskie or any representative of the Port Committee who, the rally was told, felt unable to speak lest they fell foul of accusations of engaging in secondary action.

The march to Dover Western Docks was headed by a large contingent of seafarers and their families. They were followed by several hundred people from the mining communities, including large groups form Durham and Yorkshire, and a contingent of sacked Notts miners.

At workplace and community level there remains a crying need for material support for the seafarers in dispute. Ad hoc collections and one-off donations are good, but these should be turned into a sustained and regular flow. That requires *you* taking an initiative in your workplace or union. *Do it today!*

Where do we go after the NUS climbdown?

The P&O strikers at Dover have been betrayed by the right wing Leadership of the National Union of Seamen (NUS).

On Thursday May 12th the NUS National Executive Committee ordered an end to all solidarity action and a return to normal work.

The Dover strikers, who have voted to continue their strike, are now dangerously isolated in their major struggle with Britain's biggest shipping employer.

In the preceding weeks, the situation had looked more promising.

On May 3rd Sealink, whose entire fleet was at a standstill through supporting action, obtained an injunction in the High Court requiring an immediate return to work.

To the profound surprise of union militants, Sam McCluskie publicly announced the union's intention to defy the law, accept the consequences (sequestration) and extend the action.

"The NUS is not bricks and mortar, typewriters and desks," McCluskie declared. *"It is the men and women who go to sea and stand together to defend their right to work and to fight for justice. If forced to chose between protecting the property of the union or standing by my members I will always choose the latter."*

The High Court fined the NUS £150,000 and ordered the sequestration of all its assets, involving the seizure of £2,800,000 in union funds, the closure of national and local offices, the freezing of staff wages, the suspension of its pension fund, the impounding of union cars, and the cutting off of telephones.

The labour movement responded with a massive fund-raising drive. Even the Labour Shadow Cabinet and the NEC called for financial support.

By Alan Thornett
Trade Union Briefing

McCluskie went to the TUC (which offered nothing in the way of supportive action) and from there to James Sherwood, Sealink Chairman.

After several days of harried negotiations, a deal was stitched up whereby the NUS would exempt Sealink from strike action and in return Sealink would put extra ships on P&O's strike-bound routes — to be crewed by 450 of the sacked P&O strikers.

The jobs would be temporary, ceasing to exist when the strike came to an end.

Norman Willis was so keen on this rotten deal that he even said the TUC would pay the wages of the rest of the strikers, for a period, if they would accept it!

McCluskie fought hard to make the deal stick but it was rejected at a meeting of representatives from all the ports, who demanded an additional 300 jobs from Sealink.

Lorry drivers became involved when a backlog built up on each side of the channel. Drivers blocked the ports in an attempt to force the two sides to a settlement.

Although some of the drivers directed their criticism at P&O intransigence, they were almost all non-union, and many of them were anti-union owner/drivers who simply wanted the strike ended on any basis.

On May 11th, after a week of NUS defiance, the High Court made its next move. The union was fined another £150,000 and warned that bigger fines would follow if contempt of court continued. The same day Sealink threatened to sack all crew members who remained on strike.

This was the final straw for the NUS Leadership. The following day, May 13th, it ordered all those taking supporting action back to work.

McCluskie argued that the odds were now too great and that the strike was crumbling. In fact, the strike was holding remarkably well, given that it was being offered no direction by the union Leadership other than deals with a rival employer.

The Dover strikers met after the rest had returned and voted — with only one against — to continue their strike.

The return to work decision is nonetheless a disaster both for the NUS and the Dover strikers, who are now back in isolation. McCluskie's new strategy for the strike is to join Sealink in a "commercial war" against P&O!

The NUS, he said, would urge the public to use Sealink ferries instead of P&O, on the basis of P&O's safety standards. It is a rerun of the print unions' disastrous "consumer boycott" tactic at Wapping.

The TUC had clearly put pressure on McCluskie, telling the NUS that it would get no support of any kind whilst the strike was illegal. As soon as the return to work had taken place the TUC announced a new £1m fund appeal to help the NUS!

The Dover strikers are continuing their struggle and deserve the full and unstinting support of the labour movement. The central task for them is still to break out of their isolation.

NUS policy must be reversed, even though the NUS Conference, meeting just after the return to work, endorsed McCluskie's action (not without acrimony and bitter accusations).

Other unions have a responsibility as well. P&O scab ships are still being handled by TGWU dockers in Dover. Hull dockers have called for a national port shop stewards committee meeting to tackle this problem.

In the past few days CGT dockers in Calais have worked on the first scab ship to berth in a French port. It is hard to demand international solidarity whilst the TGWU scabs.

The support group movement has been growing in recent weeks and needs to be extended and strengthened to generate financial support, support and the Dover picket line, and political backing.

A week after their betrayal, the NUS leadership has still not been allowed to purge its contempt and recover its funds. The court is now saying that the picket at Dover is illegal since it is more than six-strong and is intimidating to those who want to go to work.

The more we comply with the courts, the more they interpret the law to the employers' advantage.

The anti-union legislation has been strengthened by the betrayal by the NUS Leadership. It is a serious blow to the Dover strikers and a disaster for trade unionism in the shipping industry.

Even more important, it was another lost opportunity — an opportunity to challenge the laws which are the biggest single problem facing the trade union movement in Britain today.

Labour Party

MODEL RESOLUTIONS

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

We print below a selection of Campaigns' model resolutions. Remember to change the wording slightly when you use them, so that they count as a seperate resolution.

This is a full set of the model resolutions received by *Briefing*. If we receive any more resolutions, we will print them in the next issue (due out June 8th). Unfortunately, space will prohibit our reprinting these resolutions, so keep this page.

If you lose the page, send a stamped addressed envelope (A5 size) to Labour Briefing, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ, and 30p in stamps to cover photocopying costs, and we'll send you a copy of this page together with any other model resolutions received in this office to date.

If your campaign has a model resolution which isn't printed here, send it in as quickly as possible to the above address.

***Please also let us know details if Briefing* supporters or readers have been elected Conference delegates in your CLP, and which resolution you have passed. Write in or phone 01 733 7016. If any campaign wishes to track the success of their resolution, phone that number and we will tell you of progress made known to us so far.**

Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine

Recognising:
1. the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and the justice of their revolt against the conditions of squalor and repression;
2. that between December 9th and May 1988 more than 200 Palestinians were killed, hundreds more maimed, thousands detained and 24 hour curfews imposed by the Israeli military authorities;
3. that these territories were illegally occupied by Israel 21 years ago;
4. that the Palestinian people are protesting against the Israeli occupation and demanding the right to decide their own future;
5. that the UN and non-aligned movement have both called for Israeli withdrawal to its pre-'67 borders;

Conference condemns the violence used by the State of Israel in its attempt to suppress the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories and elsewhere; it particularly condemns the stance of the Israeli Labour Party whose leaders are directly responsible for this brutality and resolves to break links with the Israeli Labour Party.

Conference calls for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the Occupied Territories.

Further, Conference supports the struggle of the Palestinian people for a democratic secular state.

Conference recognises the PLO as the chosen representatives of the Palestinian people and calls on the NEC to give public effect to its views by inviting the Chair of the Executive of the PLO to address the 1989 Labour Party Conference.

Anti-union laws

Conference notes the continued use of the Tory anti-trade union laws to rob working people of the basic means of defending, and improving, their pay and conditions at work and, as in the case of the P&O seafarers, defending the safety of the services they provide. These laws are being systematically applied, extended and refined by the courts to the advantage of the employers; removing the rights working people have fought for decades to win.

With this in mind, Conference takes the view that the only effective approach to the Tory anti-union offensive is to defy the courts, extend the action and call on the movement for support.

Conference pledges full support to any union taking such action in defence of our basic, hard-won democratic rights.

Labour CND

Unilateralism/Party policy

(a) Conference believes that ridding the world of all nuclear weapons is of overriding importance to the survival of the human race and that Labour's pledge to remove unconditionally all nuclear weapons and nuclear bases from British soil and waters in the first parliament of the next Labour government is one of the Party's most important policy gains and a vital step towards nuclear disarmament worldwide.

We therefore reaffirm our determination to publicly campaign to get this message widely understood and accepted and to win a clear majority for ridding Britain of all nuclear weapons and nuclear bases.

Jobs Not Bombs

(b) Conference notes that Labour's policy of abandoning all nuclear weapons will release much-needed resources for welfare services and job creation. Conference therefore resolves that all the money spent on nuclear weapons will be redirected to this end and that the national party will include this commitment as part of its public campaigning to win support for nuclear disarmament.

Labour CND

NATO and bases

(c) Conference notes that NATO has been used in 1988 to hamper and reverse progress towards disarmament and remains committed to the use of nuclear weapons. Conference also notes that Labour's existing pblicy of removing all nuclear bases from this country does not prevent the United States from launching a conventional attack from bases in Britain, nor does it prevent the United States from pursuing its nuclear policies through the use of facilities in this country.

Conference therefore resolves that the next Labour government will remove all United States bases, including conventional and communications bases form British soil and British waters and will leave the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

CLPD-promoted resolutions

Women on the Shortlist Enabling Motion

This Conference recognises that positive action in favour of women and other disadvantaged groups within society in general as well as within the party can make an important contribution towards ensuring social equality.

In 1986 Conference gave overwhelming support to the principle that at least one woman should be included on every parliamentary shortlist (where a woman has been nominated). It instructed the NEC to bring the appropriate constitutional changes to the 1987 Conference.

Conference notes that the NEC failed to comply with this instruction.

Conference therefore reaffirms the principle that there should be at least one woman nominee on every parliamentary shortlist and believes that the issue is of immediate importance.

Parliamentary Selection

Conference notes that the new parliamentary selection procedure makes no provision for the accountability of Labour MPs. Conference believes that the practice of giving those responsible for their reselection the opportunity to hear from and debate with their MPs should continue. Conference therefore calls on CLPs in Labour-held seats to hold monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly meetings of the local electoral college so that MPs can report and be questioned on their work and that of the Parliamentary Labour Party, written reports to be sent to all Labour Party members and affiliated organisations.

CLP vote at Conference

This Conference believes that constituency parties should have a larger proportion of the total vote at Annual Conference, commensurate with their political, organisational and financial contribution to the party.

It notes that in 1984/5 and 1985/6 the NEC undertook consultation exercises on this issue which led to a range of suggestions being submitted by affiliated organisations.

Conference therefore instructs the NEC to present to the 1989 Annual Conference a number of options (in the form of constitutional amendments) based on these suggestions but subject to the unions retaining at least 60% of the total vote in the majority of the options. Conference will then be able to have a wide and informed debate and finally choose the option which can command the widest support.

Public Ownership

This conference believes that a major extension of public ownership is essential for our overriding priorities of full employment and a planned modernisation of the British economy.

To boost employment, restructure British industry on a large scale and help promote working class unity the next Labour government will have to:

i. develop an economic recovery programme which will bring together unused resources and unmet needs in national, regional and local planning efforts;

ii. take into public ownership at least one major company in each of the principal sectors of the economy under 'the best obtainable system of popular administration and control'. Combined with the existing public sector, these new companies would form the cutting edge of planned economic development;

iii. bring major financial institutions into public ownership to underpin economic restructuring and expansion;

iv. negotiate planning agreements, backed up by statutory powers, with the remaining large private companies, and establish training institutions for the rapid development of planning skills; and

v. introduce exchange and selective import controls to help prevent international market pressures from blowing the economic expansion programme off course.

Labour Common Market Safeguards Committee

Conference notes that the huge deterioration in the balance of trade with the EEC, amounting to £16 billion in the years 1970-1987, has resulted in the loss of one million jobs in manufacturing industry. Furthermore, noting that the Treaty of Rome prohibits any form of government intervention which would directly or indirectly help British industry compete at home or abroad, Conference instructs the next Labour government to repeal Section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972, thus restoring power to the Parliament of the United Kingdom and enabling Labour's programme for economic recovery to be fulfilled.

Conference, recognising that the next Labour government will be unable to implement its programme within the framework of the Treaty of Rome, resolves that upon taking power, such a government shall free the United Kingdom from those restraints, by repealing Section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972 or by formal withdrawal, whichever may be the more expedient at the time.

Conference, affirming that no future Labour government will achieve success in its economic policy unless it can remove the huge burden which the Common Agricultural Policy has laid on the UK balance of payments, on manufactured industry and on living standards, calls for the termination of the CAP and the determination of our own national agricultural programme, on the lines of the successful deficiency payments policy followed from 1948 to 1972, which guaranteed UK farmers' incomes but allowed consumers to buy freely from the most efficient food producers anywhere in the world.

Conference, recognising that the EEC's programme for the harmonisation of economic policies will inevitably lead to a completely free market situation, concludes that Common Market membership is incompatible with the programme which a future Labour government must undertake, in order to alleviate the major social and economic problems facing our country.

Conference, observing the increasing extent to which legislation and Court Decisions of the Common Market are supplanting the rights and liberties of the British people and Parliament to determine our own legislation and taxation; calls upon Labour Government to safeguard those democratic rights by giving due notice that it intends to amend the European Communities Act 1972 so as to achieve these objectives, which it regards as fundamental to the practice of parliamentary democracy as practised in the United Kingdom.

Labour Committee on Ireland

1. Withdrawal

The Labour Party is committed to support peace, reconciliation and justice in Ireland. This Conference believes that the next Labour government should be committed to withdrawal of British rule in Northern Ireland within the lifetime of that government.

2. Discrimination

Conference expresses its concern at the level of religious discrimination in employment in Northern Ireland. Government statistics acknowledge that, as a result, the rate of male Catholic unemployment is two and a half that of male Protestants; the rate of female Catholic unemployment is one and a half times that of female Protestants.

Whilst the government has, under pressure, agreed to bring forward legislative proposals on Fair Employment, we note that:

a) Recommendations made by the Northern Ireland Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR) for the government to adopt a performance indicator against which to measure achievements have not been incorporated.

b) The government does not intend to incorporate guidelines to employers on affirmative action programmes designed to give under-represented groups better access to employment and training programmes within its primary legislation.

c) In its proposed legislation, the Government has not yet accepted that the tribunals which will hear individual complaints of discrimination should be part of the industrial tribunal system.

Conference opposes all forms of employment discrimination whether on grounds of age, race, gender, sexuality, disability or religion.

Conference believes:

1) That a just approach towards providing equality of opportunity must be based on the twin objectives of increasing employment and reducing inequality of opportunity,

2) The incorporation of clear goals and timetables is an indispensable component of adequate legislation.

Black Sections

Conference welcomes the increased representation of Black people in the Labour Party. This progress has been greatest in those constituencies which have active Black Sections. Conference recognises that the Labour Party must take the lead in the fight to eradicate the institutionalised racism inherent in British society. It notes however that Black people are still under-represented in key positions in the Party. Conference agrees that:

i) positive action must make sure that Black members become active and take positions at every level of the Party;

ii) Black members must have the support of the labour movement in organising together autonomously in Constituency Labour Parties and trade unions for effective participation and representation.

Furthermore, Conference recognises that it is vital that Black people are in the forefront of the struggle against racism and the formulation of anti-racist policies. It notes that the Trades Union Congress in 1984 supported the setting up of Black members groups in all its affiliated trade unions.

Conference gives its support for the right of Black members of the Labour Party to organise in Black Sections. It therefore calls upon the National Executive Committee to act upon recommendations of its working party in favour of Black Sections.

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.

Lesbian and Gay Rights

1. Conference notes

i. the clear commitment made by the Annual Conference in 1985 and 1986 to full equality for lesbians and gay men, including support for the work of Labour Local Authorities in promoting this equality;

ii. section 28 of the Local Government Act 1987 which intends to outlaw the work of Local Authorities in combatting discrimination, bigotry and popular prejudice;

iii. the commitment made by the Party front bench spokesperson to repeal of this legislation by a Labour government. ("I make it absolutely clear that a future Labour government would not allow the implications and provisions of the clause to remain on the Statute Book", 9.3.88).

2. Conference believes that the ending of discrimination against lesbians and gay men requires:

i. the recognition that lesbian and gay relationships are not "pretended" relationships, and in particular, that lesbians must have the right to bring up their children equally in law;

ii. that the totally negative images of lesbians and gay men which are prevalent throughout society are responsible for the perpetuation of the discrimination, oppression (including internalised self-hatred), violence, and the belief that lesbians and gay men are inferior to heterosexuals;

iii. that the only way to counter such images is by the presentation of lesbians and gay men and lesbian and gay relationships in a positive way, including and particularly in education.

3. Conference resolves therefore:

i. to reaffirm the commitment of existing party policy on lesbian and gay rights;

ii. to affirm that Section 28 will be repealed, and that the Party will support and encourage any attempt to do this at the earliest opportunity, incuding by private members' bills;

iii. to support any person victimised as a result of Section 28;

iv. to encourage and assist Labour Local Authorities to strengthen and reaffirm their commitment to party policy, including where necessary defending this policy in the courts;

v. to encourage and assist Labour Local Authorities which have not yet implemented party policy to do so.

Cardiff witch-hunt

New campaign wins wide support

A Fight the Witch-hunt Campaign has been launched in Cardiff Central CLP.

It is a response to an instruction given in February 1988 by the Labour Party Wales Regional Organiser, and supported by Constituency right wingers, to suspend one ward party — Plasnewydd.

An inquiry is to be held into the activities of the Ward following an allegation that they invited an expelled member of the Party to their AGM.

This "offence" is not denied by the Ward, but their officers have a strong defence, including the fact that they were never officially informed by the Party of the expulsion.

Suspension

What lies behind the suspension is an attempt to exclude an active, campaigning Ward from the Constituency AGM in order to give the right wing a clear majority. The Ward has consistently opposed a number of policies of the Labour Country Council, notably the proposal to close the local comprehensive school, Howardian High.

The right wing want the Ward silenced and are using the suspension for this purpose.

But they are not having it all their own way. The CLP has twice attempted to hold its AGM without Plasnewydd delegates. On each occasion, strong opposition from other delegates prevented the CLP from completing its AGM or electing new officers.

The whole matter has been referred to the Labour Party's national headquarters. In the meantime the Constituency is in effect suspended.

Launched

The Fight the Witch-hunt Campaign has been launched by a group of local socialists opposed to these anti-democratic manoeuvres. It is arguing vigorously for the reinstatement of the Ward and for the right of all socialists to participate in the party.

In a few short weeks the campaign has already gained the support of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Tony Benn, and a number of CLPs, Wards, and trade union branches. A fringe meeting is planned for the Labour Party Wales Annual Conference.

Contact the Campaign through Martin Barclay, Secretary, 22 Norwood Court, Elm Street, Roath, Cardiff CF2 3RG, tel 0222 462582.

Taken from FWHCC press release

Model Resolution

This ..... opposes the suspension of Plasnewydd Ward by Cardiff Central CLP in conjunction with Labour Party Wales. We believe that Plasnewydd comrades have not been treated fairly, consistently nor in accordance with natural justice and the Labour Party Rule Book. We believe this represents a further stepping up of the witch-hunt against socialists in the Labour Party.

This ..... calls upon Cardiff Central CLP and Labour Party Wales to reinstate Plasnewydd Ward and allow their delegates to take part fully in the Constituency AGM.

Send copies to:
K. Palmer, Secretary Cardiff Central CLP, 7 Westminster Drive, Cyncoed, Cardiff.
A. Gale, Regional Organiser Labour Party Wales, Transport House, 1 Cathedral Road, Cardiff.
Labour Party NEC: L Whitty, General Secretary, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.
M. Barclay, Secretary, Fight the Witch-hunt in Cardiff Central, 22 Norwood Court, Elm Street, Roath, Cardiff.

Youth in Black Sections

By Black Section Youth, Birmingham

The autonomous organisation of Black people is absolutely necessary in the struggle against racism. Black youth have a major role to play in this, by working within the Black community and mobilising at grassroots level.

We must expose the increasing level of police barbarity shown in the cases of Cherry Groce, Cynthia Jarrett, Muhammed Parkitt, Trevor Monnerville, and Clinton McCurbin.

But the victimisation does not end there. For years Black youth have been exploited on programmes like the Youth Training Scheme. Basic rights to decent jobs and housing and education have been denied us. Brothers and sisters have been separated from their families and deported from Britain without justification.

We are now experiencing a new onslaught. The Immigration Bill will result in more racism. The Education Reform Bill will result in greater divisions within the education system. The changes in social security and the Poll Tax will push Black people further and further into the poverty trap.

Now is the time for the grassroots mobilisation of Black youth. Now is the time for a strong united front so that we can take our rightful place in the struggle to defeat the capitalist exploitation and the racist oppression of the people.

Public Meeting
Sunday 29th May, 2pm
At TURC, 7 Frederick St, Hockley, Birmingham 1
Open to all Black Youth
For more details contact
Steve Jomoa on 01 577 5057

Interview: Jon Lansman

BENN-HEFFER Campaign: A catalyst for the left

JON LANSMAN has been appointed national organiser for the Benn-Heffer campaign. *Briefing* supporter MIKE MARQUSEE interviewed Jon in his cramped campaign headquarters in the shadows of Westminster.

Can you tell us about your new job?
We've had a flood of requests for speakers at all kinds of meetings and it's a mammoth task just co-ordinating those. We've already organised fringe meetings at many union conferences, and a series of regional rallies (see back page).

Getting activists together to work out how to raise the issues locally is our most important job. We've established a network of regional contacts (see back page) to assist that process.

We're producing a main election leaflet which we hope to distribute throughout the Party and a leaflet for women written by women members of the Campaign Group in consultation with groups of women outside Parliament.

There are plans for a fringe meeting at Chesterfield in June and an eve of poll rally in Blackpool in October.

We'll also be producing leaflets for particular unions, especially where there are ballots.

In which unions do you expect a big push for Benn and Heffer?
There'll be a big push for Benn and Heffer in every union!

We're not in the game of sitting down with pocket calculators and predicting the eventual score. We'll leave that to journalists who have nothing better to do.

For us the Leadership election is a way of provoking serious debate on the direction of the Party. Opposition to the Policy Review and the Aims and Values statement is widespread, especially in the trade unions.

According to Neil Kinnock, there seems to be no role for the unions at all — except when it comes to cash contributions and votes in the Leadership election.

On economic policy, there's a lot of talk in the Review about working with business and with Chambers of Commerce, but not a word about working with unions.

What would you say to activists in affiliated unions who are waiting in their branches to hear something from above about how they are to be consulted on the Leadership election? What should they be doing?
If you support Benn and Heffer you should never wait to hear anything from above.

Ensure you have a discussion at your branch or whtever structure exists in your unions. Make sure the decision is not left to the union Leadership meeting behind closed doors.

Each union will have to find the best way to involve its membership, but what's important is that the rank and file has a mechanism to influence the way the union is going to vote.

How do you see the role of the Regional Organisers?
They're not taking decisions or power away from local campaigns — they're actually taking power away from me! They are mainly a means of communication between the centre and local groups.

What do you want local Benn-Heffer campaigns to do?
The most important thing is to make sure there are dicussions at every level of the labour movement. We have to take the debate to people who may not be convinced, who may not be on our side at the moment. Activists have to get together and work out the best way to raise the issues in every constituency.

Nationally we see the campaign as a catalyst for all sorts of debates. At local level, it will be a catalyst for getting debate going about all sorts of local issues.

I am concerned that support for Benn and Heffer is as broad as possible. Obviously that means there will be some tensions among those who support the campaign, but it should enable us to bring people together.

What about involving people in struggle who are not currently in the Labour Party — but who may want to work for Benn and Heffer in their own way?
I want the Leadership contest to be used by as many people on the left as possible to build all sorts of things. One of the things we hope it will do is to draw people into the Labour Party and into political activity in general.



Jon Lansman, National Organiser for the Benn Heffer campaign

You were very involved in the 1981 campaign. How would you compare it to 1988?
It's much more difficult this time around. There aren't millions of people rushing around with utopian expectations. There's not the exhilaration that there was then, when a lot of people thought that everything could be achieved in a short space of time.

This time it's much more realistic. People are aware of the difficult struggle we face. Nevertheless, people also realise that this contest is necessary and will push the Party in the right direction.

Will there be some counter-proposals to the Policy Review in the form of a manifesto or policy statement?
We plan to respond to the Policy Review and the Aims and Values statement in a serious and constructive fashion. We're hamstrung by the fact that at the moment hardly anyone's actually got copies of the Policy Review papers.

There will have to be some priorities — peace and disarmament, economic planning and public ownership, defence of trade union rights, and some aspects of social policy.

For example, Tony Benn moved at the NEC that there should be a commitment to write off debts to the social fund, a clear way of redistributing wealth in favour of the poorest in society. That was rejected amidst mumblings about impracticality. In fact it would be easy to organise.

What do you say to those who deride Benn and Heffer as "yesterday's men" and claim that the "new ideas" belong to others?
The ideas in the Policy Review are the same ones that David Owen's been coming up with for the last few years, so they're hardly new.

The inference that we're all men could not be more wrong. We would have preferred to have a woman as one of our two candidates but in the end it wasn't possible — because of the wider problems of the shortage of women not only in the Campaign Group but in Parliament as a whole.

But on the WAC demands, on the Alton Bill, and on many other issues, the actual records of Tony and Eric speak for themselves and are far superior to those of the present leadership.

We've had some bad publicity about some women leaving the Campaign Group over the Leadership contest. Now two of them have said it was a tactical difference and that they would like to return.

I'm afraid that one of the others did use the event to manufacture as much bad publicity for us as possible, which we regret. But to say that the Tribune Group has a better record on women's issues is quite outrageous.

The insinuation that the Campaign Group pushed through the decision on the Leadership contest in a macho way is also not tenable. In fact, the Campaign Group conducted lengthy and innumerable discussions over many months before the decision was made. In contrast, the Tribune Group had a one hour dicsussion after which they simply decided there should be no contest at all.

Another major constituency for the Campaign is the black community. What plans do you have to campaign there?
We're working closely with Black Sections. We've agreed to organise a series of public meetings with them, the first of which is the one that's taking place in Newham on July 5th.

Benn and Heffer have supported the rights of Black Sections within the Party and given priority to drawing black people into the Party and making the party articulate black people's needs and demands.

Should one of the main thrusts of the campaign be to champion workers in struggle?
That is absolutely essential. One of the first achievements of the campaign is the greater extent to which the Party has supported the seafarers in comparison with the printers at Wapping or the miners.

The left declared it was going to make a stand on this and it has dragged the Leadership with it.

At the NEC there was a serious debate about the precise form of words the Party would issue and the draft that came out in the end was substantially different from the one initially proposed by Kinnock. This is a undoubtedly the first victory for the Benn-Heffer campaign.

Leeds Leadership

Down but not out

A Campaign Group ticket for the Leadership of the Leeds Labour Group was defeated at a Group meeting held shortly after the recent local elections.

Cllr Garth Frankland, a *Briefing* supporter, received just eight votes to incumbent George Mudie's 46.

The rest of the ticket — Cllr Pat Winn (11 votes), Cllr Ray Mitchell (15), and Cllr Keith Nathan (7) — fared little better.

The District Party had also rejected the ticket. The meeting refused to listen to the nominations, and delegates therefore voted without receiving the many grassroots nominations from branches and unions supporting the Campaign slate.

By Leeds *Labour Briefing* supporters

The slate had been decided after two large meetings of the Campaign Group and after 100 Campaign Group members and supporting organisations had been circulated.

Supported

The Mudie slate, supported by some self-designated lefts, was put together without any democratic discussion of its political aims or composition.

The widespread support among the grassroots for the left slate gives some hope for a future socialist transformation of the political scene in Leeds.

Fascism in Europe...



Jean-Marie Le Pen rallies fascist sentiment in France

The rise and rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen

In the first round of France's recent presidential elections, 4.4 million French people voted for Jean-Marie Le Pen of the Front National.

To some commentators, this suggested an unprecedented advance for fascism in France, with 14% of the electorate about to don jackboots and swastikas.

Le Pen's big vote *doesn't* mean that, but it does represent a dangerous development in French politics for both left and right.

The high vote for Le Pen was clearly a positive vote by those traditional supporters of fascist movements, small shopkeepers and the self-employed; but it was also a *protest* vote by the shop workers and the unemployed (one in five of whom voted for Le Pen, according to *Le Monde*).

Following the virtual break-up of the Communist Party (CP), widespread disillusionment with Mitterrand's reactionary policies, and the "cohabitation" of the right wing Prime Minister Chirac and the "socialist" president", this section of the working class turned to Le Pen in the first round.

Followers of Le Pen include all sorts of people from among the disenchanted and the confused: those who want an end to EEC farming quotas and those for whom North African immigrants are an obvious scapegoat for the country's problems. With his nationalist oratory, Le Pen poses as their saviour: there is simply no alternative on offer.

The election result showed that the right cannot gain a majority without Le Pen. His price for helping Chirac's Gaullists win power in the forthcoming Assembly elections could well be a cabinet place in a future right wing coalition government.

The Socialist Party's nationalism and the open racism of sections of the Communist Party (remember the Communist mayor who bulldozed an immigrant hostel a few years ago?) have allowed Le Pen, and to a lesser extent Chirac, to make racism respectable.

The failure of the Socialist Party to confront Le Pen and his anti-immigrant, anti-semitic ideas opened the gates for the Front National, and the voters streamed in.

The switch by sections of the working class from the CP to Le Pen was not as unexpected as some commentators felt. The Communists' history of opposition to immigration and their attempts to divide and disperse migrant communities had already helped to legitimate racism in the eyes of many of their followers. With the split and collapse of the CP, Le Pen seemed to offer these people a logical and radical alternative.

The Front National enjoys real strength on the ground. It has filled football stadia in Marseilles that were formerly reserved for the Communist Party.

By DAN CARTER

In the search for a scapegoat for economic problems, it has turned large numbers of French workers against immigrants. It has forced both Chirac's Guallists and Barre's Liberals into electoral pacts at local levels.

In the Presidential election, for the first time, Le Pen received high votes in rural areas and in areas of low immigrant population and low unemployment. Not a nationwide force to be reckoned with, the FN will seize the 1989 Euro Elections as a chance to demonstrate their strength and increase their number of MEPs from the ten elected at the then-presumed height of FN popularity in 1984.

In the European parliament, Le Pen's fascist grouping (the European Right) has made a pact with Italian and Greek MEPs, and has now been joined by an Ulster Unionist MEP.

Instead of ignoring the fascists, anti-racists in the Parliament, often spearheaded by the British Labour Group (rather than French Socialists), have exposed the dangers of allowing Le Pen to become respectable with a series of debates and demonstrations condemning the European Right's policies.

The French election results vindicated the decision of the growing European anti-fascist network to hold a European Day of Action against Racism and Fascism on April 23rd. It also revealed the mistaken strategy of the French *SOS Racisme*, who have avoided direct confrontation with the Front National and who refuse to see Le Pen as a fascist at all.

But Le Pen's true colours are beginning to show through his banner of "simple patriotism". His comment that the gas chambers were "a detail of the history of the Second World War", his arrest in the USA for illegal possession of a .75 Magnum, and the increasing number of violent attacks following FN meetings have begun to raise doubts.

One FN MEP has already deserted the Party and up to ten Assembly MPs were recently considering their future. His party is volatile and only electoral success appears to be keeping it together.

Opposition in France and in the colonies is growing. FASTI, the French immigrant workers group, joined the recent European Day of Action march organised by Anti-Fascist Action in London. In Guadaloupe and Martinique, Le Pen was unable to disembark from his plane because of public protests at the airports.

Mitterrand has yet to respond or to join the wave of protest. As the *African Times* pointed out in a recent editorial, Mitterrand's failure to set a socialist agenda has given Le Pen plenty of room for manoeuvre and many grievances to exploit.

There are lessons to be learnt for a future Labour government (and for present-day Labour Councils) that fails to solve unemployment, refuses to confront prejudice, and plays the patriotic card too readily.

The rise of Le Pen is not a matter that can be safely consigned to the vagaries of French politics. The labour movement in Britain should sit up and take notice.



Marching against Le Pen in France

THE HI DANGE FASCIS BECOM OFFICI

The spectre of Jean-Marie Le Pen is ha the march once again? Who let loose the tracks? In Britain, official William o Labour Councils, have been seized on by clear is that the fascists are becoming m left must develop strategies for a ma trespread focusses on some aspects of th by the left to meet it head on.

Loyalists cel

Chesterfield Orange Dru

This year's 300th anniversary William of Orange celebrations are providing opportunities aplenty for extreme right wing groups to promote their obnoxious politics.

***Briefing* has already reported the disgraceful actions of Exeter Labour Council in giving a platform to both Loyalists and fascists.**

Now it appears Chesterfield will host the first Loyalist public parade, organised by the Sheffield Orange Lodge, and once again funded by a Labour Council.

By MARK SEATON (with information from AFA press release)

Anti-Fascist Action is calling on all anti-fascists to support a protest march in Chesterfield on June 18th, organised by the Trades Council and Chesterfield LCI. The Orange parade will undoubtedly attract fascists from all over Britain, as well as hosts of Loyalist bigots.

In November 1986, loyalists and fascists joined forces in Bridgwater to protest against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. That march led to violent attacks and largescale intimidation in a small, usually quiet, Somerset town.

June 18th in Chesterfield threatens to be a repeat performance. The difference this time is that it is taking place against the backdrop of the William and Mary tercentenary celebrations, supported by Labour-controlled Chesterfield Council.

"The Orange Order are trying to hijack the official celebrations," warns AFA, "and use them as part of the Loyalist campaign against the Anglo-Irish Agreement — a campaign that has the open support of Britain's fascist groups."

For years, British fascist groups have been building links with loyalist paramilitary groups, such as the UVF and UDA. Recently, fascist music



The Loy

- May 27-30
- June 18
- July
- July 20
- September 17
- September 19-23
- September
- November 5

...a new lease of life?

DDEN RS OF SM ING AL

...nting the European left. Is fascism on monster — and can it be stopped in its ...f Orange celebrations, sponsored by fascists and bigots of all kinds. What is ...re sophisticated in their alliances. The ...jor counter-offensive. *Briefing's* cen... ...e right's resurgence and reports efforts

...ebrate 1688 ...l bangs the ...m

events have been held in Britain to raise money for UDA prisoners.

The use and abuse of these celebrations was predicted by Exeter Anti-Fascist Action (and reported in *Briefing*) over 18 months ago. In a recent letter to the *Guardian* ten Labour MPs re-emphasised the dangers posed by these celebrations:

"The Orange Order, Northern Ireland's oldest sectarian organisation (for whom William of Orange is the most powerful symbol and rallying point), has already joined forces with the National Front in order to turn the "celebrations" in Exeter and Chesterfield to political advantage.

"This ill-conceived tourist project will become the focus not only for a mass protest against the Anglo-Irish Agreement but a ready-made publicity platform for vicious anti-Catholic prejudice and racist bigotry."



The letter was signed by Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, Alice Mahon, Bernie Grant, Ken Livingstone, Harry Cohen, John Hughes, Bob Clay, Pat Wall and Audrey Wise.

Our worst fears are now coming to pass. Using the official tercentenary calender, the Loyalists and fascists are creating their own diary of events (see list). Chesterfield will be the first of these public celebrations of bigotry and violence. *Briefing* urges all its readers to join Anti-Fascist Action in opposing these events.

...alist/Fascist Diary

...Loyalist/nationalist camp" in Devon (venue ...known), organised by the National Front

...hesterfield Orange Parade, organised by Sheffield ...range Lodge

...xtra-large Orange parades in Liverpool and Glasgow, ...ganised by local Orange Lodges

...ational Front intend to join the official re-enactment ... William's landing at Brixham, Devon

...xeter Orange Parade, organised by Orange Lodges

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...Conference of the Grand Orange Lodge of England at ...xeter University's Crossmead Centre

...ational Front intend to go to Brixham, Devon, for ...00th anniversary of William's landing.

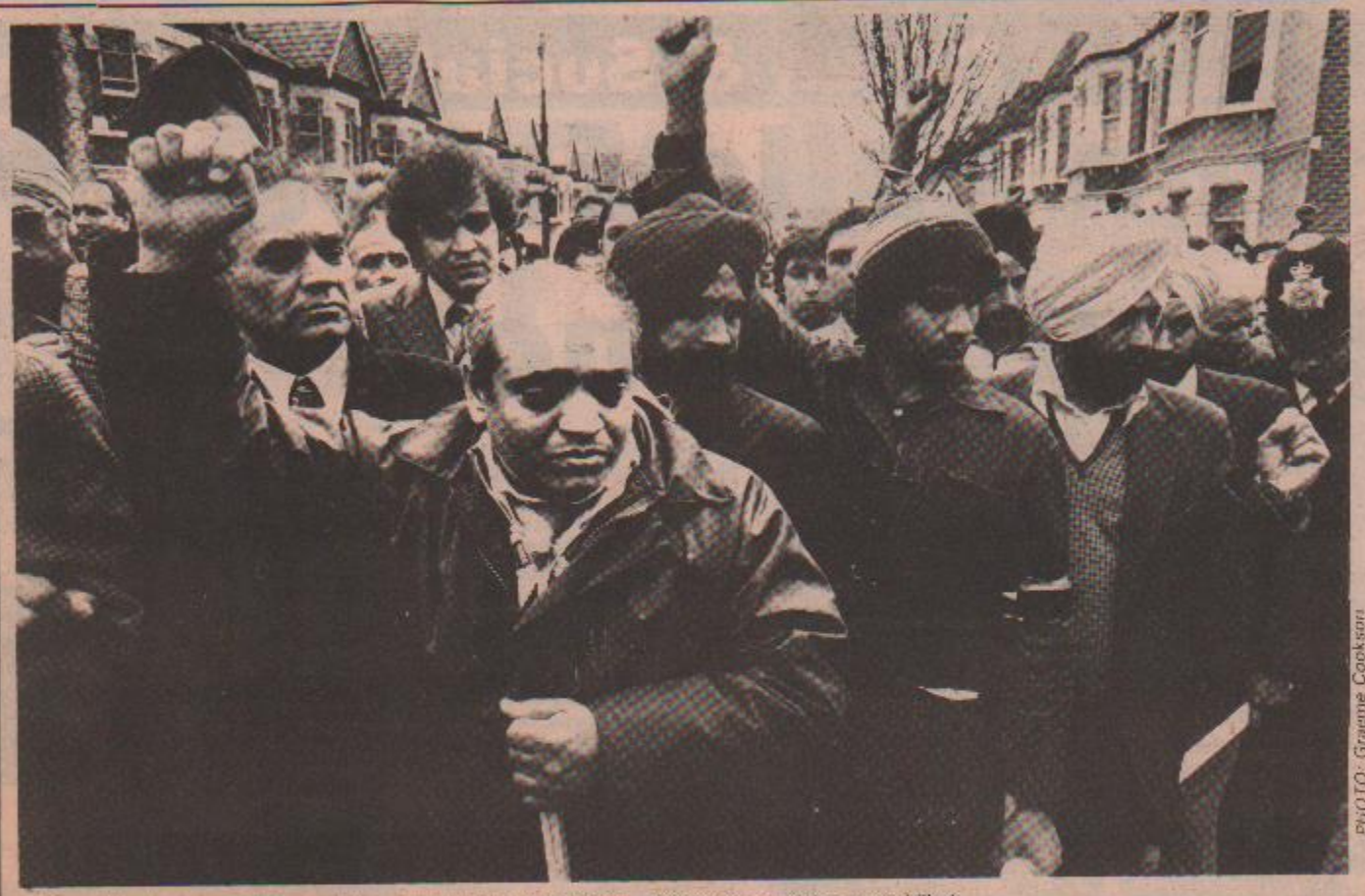


PHOTO: Graeme Cocksom

Memorial demo marches past the spot where Blair Peach, anti-fascist activist, was killed

Anti-Fascist Action

Co-ordinating action on all fronts

Founded in 1985, Anti-Fascist Action is a united front made up of local AFA groups and affiliated organisations.

Fascist and racist activity has changed since the heyday of the National Front in the late 1970s.

Racism has assumed an important role in the ideology and practice of the orthodox right, as demonstrated by Thatcher's notorious "swamping" speech and more recently by Tebbit's outburst on South Africa.

Against a background of continuing state racism, most visible in the areas of immigration control and police harassment, black communities face the daily experience of racist violence.

Often this is simply the worst of mindless thugs. But sometimes it is directly linked to the organised extreme right.

The general climate of racism, in the context of economic crisis and mass unemployment, continues to provide a fertile field for fascist activity and the recruitment of small numbers of violent activists.

With the Tories seducing most of their potential voters, the fascists have found it impossible to rebuild the sort of mass base they had in the 1970s. As a result, they have turned in other directions.

The "official" National Front has adopted the so-called "Third Position" ("neither capitalism nor communism but nationalist revolution"), modelled on certain Italian fascists.

Along with this "radical" fascist ideology they have promoted the cult of the "political soldier" and forged direct links with terrorist elements abroad.

By Richard Kirkwood
Anti-Fascist Action

All the divided groups that make up the extreme right have now developed significant links with the most extreme trends in Ulster Loyalism — at both political and paramilitary levels.

An additional priority for the fascist grouplets has been their attempts, in line with their populist orientation, to gain influence in local grass roots organisations, such as trade unions, tenants and residents associations, and, most recently, animal rights groups.

Meanwhile they have also cultivated their ties with the more extreme elements of the orthodox Tory right through a variety of organisations, such as WISE (Welsh, Irish, Scottish, English) and some of the more obscure pseudo-intellectual symposia.

The fascists are working to create a base on which they can build when an opportunity for mass activity arises. For anti-fascists, this points to several pressing tasks.

We have to mobilise support for black communities fighting back against harassment. We have to take direct action against major fascist mobilisations and in defence of any communities under threat.

We have to organise to prevent the fascists gaining a foothold in working class communities, particularly among young people.

Two key areas for activity are football, where anti-fascists in Leeds and Newcastle have begun to score real successes, and music, where Cable St Beat are beginning to create an organisation which can counter fascist music groups such as White Noise and Blood and Honour.

Gathering information is an important part of halting fascist infiltration of working class organisations, but it needs to be backed up by activity. The joint work by AFA and CPSA activists over fascist Malcolm Skeggs in Hither Green DHSS is an inspiration for all of us.

AFA has placed a high priority on its work in the trade union movement. We have won the support of the South East Region TUC (SERTUC) and affiliations from many trade union branches and Trades Councils.

Different types of anti-fascist work will take priority in different areas. AFA doesn't seek to lay down a party line. We hope to co-ordinate local initiatives and publicise examples of local successes.

We have also organised national demonstrations — most recently to mark the Euoprean Day of Action — which aim to publicise the continuing racist and fascist threat.

Join Anti-Fascist Action

I would like to join AFA. Please send me details of membership, affiliation and more information on AFA's work.

I would like to make a donation to AFA's fighting fund. I enclose £...../Please send me a bankers' order form.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Send to: AFA, PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7.

STOP PRESS

The Labour Committee on Ireland, Troops Out Movement, and Anti-Fascist Action have now established a Campaign Against Loyalist and Fascist Parades which can be contacted at PO Box 353, London NW5 4NH, tel. 01 609 1743. Coaches will be leaving London for the Chesterfield demo at 7am, from Kings Cross station. Book seats now from the above telephone number.



Jean-Marie Le Pen and the Return of European Fascism
Broadsheet, including detailed profile of Le Pen, available from AFA, PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7; 10p each, plus postage.

Features: Red and Green Conference

Green & Socialist Conference

Benn calls for red-green alliance



***"Greens and socialists have got to get together with others who share the same objectives to form a wide progressive alliance to change the agenda of British politics,"* argued Tony Benn at the historic Green and Socialist Conference held in London on May 14-15th.**

"No serious socialist can doubt the deadly threat faced by the human race if the present despoilation of the planet and its resources goes on unchecked," **Benn said.**

Attended by over 400 people — twice the expected turnout — the Green and Socialist Conference saw some of the most constructive, challenging, and comradely discussion for many years.

Remarkably free from dogma and sectarianism, it

By PETER TATCHELL

was an optimistic and uplifting event which buzzed with new ideas and energy.

There was a widespread feeling that the left, by opening up to the greens, could grow in strength and vision, renew its base of popular support, and once again bid for power within the Labour Party and throughout the country.

According to Steve Rooney, a member of the Association of Socialist Greens, the Conference was *"more a meeting of minds than a rattling of swords."*

A spokesperson from the Socialist Environment and Resources Association described it as *"beginning the process of realigning British politics in a green and socialist direction."*

Speaking at the final plenary session, Ann Darnborough, a member and former co-chair of the Green Party, declared that she was proud to call herself a "socialist green" and urged her Green Movement colleagues to give a higher prirority to questions of *"political power, the class system, and social justice."*

She called on the left to *"reasert socialist values interwoven with new green policies and ideas."*

Frieder Otto Wolf, a leading theoretician from the West German Green Party, (interviewed in *Briefing* no. 62) suggested that it was necessary to distinguish between *"destructive and productive growth"* and that this implied a necessary rejection of the *"capitalist ethos of accumulation"*.

His Belgian colleague, Paul Staes MEP, confessed that he was a *"watermelon — green on the outside and red on the inside."*

In the closing session, I argued that a commitment to green politics could *"reinspire and reinvigorate the left, give socialism greater contemporary relevance and popular appeal, and lead to the emergence of a larger and broader-based left-wing movement."*

The Conference concluded with a general consensus that the immediate priority was to *"green the left"* by giving ecology a higher profile at the forthcoming Chesterfield Socialist Conference and to develop stronger links and joint action by socialists, green, and trade unionists to defend the environment.

Contact the Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA): 26 Underwood Street, London N1
Tel.: 01 436 0988/9

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A vital issue for reds and greens to take on: the issue of peace. The impetus of the greens to share the world's resources equitably could link up with socialist involvement in anti-imperialist and nationalist struggles. CND demo, April 25th 1987 — a photographic impression by Ann Flowers.



Speculum: a midwife's musings

Breast is best — and why

I'm biased on this subject, but as a midwife and mother, not to mention a breastfeeding counsellor, I'm deply concerned about the low percentage of women who breastfeed their babies.

75% of women who start breastfeeding have completley abandoned it by the time their baby is six weeks old.

A staggering 90% of infants will have received at least one bottle (and probably a lot more than one) by the age of one month.

So what's going wrong? For a start, midwives themsleves are not being taught the basics about breastfeeding.

For example, in the 70s, when bottle-feeding was all the rage, we were taught that babies fed every four hours, and slept in between. Well, they probably did, if they were bottle fed, because it takes a baby ages to digest cow's milk.

However, breastfeeding doesn't work like that. Babies need to go to the breast *on demand*, even if the last feed was only an hour ago.

By Tess Kewley SRN, SCM

But midwives in hospitals (where the majority of babies are born) are still preaching the four-hour doctrine, and telling mothers that they don't have enought milk if the baby wants to nurse more frequently than this.

To a new mother, this is devastating news. Not enough milk! Disaster! I've failed my baby! What's wrong with my body?

Educating

There is now a swing back to breastfeeding, and women are educating themselves about it. Some enlightened hospitals are allowing breastfeeding counsellors into the wards to help women nursing their babies.

The Royal College of Midwives has just completed a document about breastfeeding which will soon be incorporated into all student midwives' training. The RCM even invited several breastfeeding mothers and counsellors to contribute. So maybe we'll see a change.

The incidence of breastfeeding varies enormosly depending on social class: much as I dislike the sociological grouping of women into "classes", the evidence shows that social classes 1 and 2 are the most likely to start breastfeeding, and indeed to persevere and succeed.

Sadly, Classes 3, 4 and 5 are more likely to bottle-feed.

This situation is not helped by papers like the *Sun*, which happily shows women's breasts on Page Three, and doesn't seem to realise that breasts were placed on women's bodies in order to nourish infants, not to titilate men.

There are also regional variations: the further south you live, the more likely you are to breastfeed. Women in Scotland are particularly keen bottle-feeders.

I'm sure that this is partly because a great many women in Scotland live in remote areas, and have little access to advice or local support groups, whereas their sisters in the south, especially in London, have a huge range of groups to which they can go for help and encouragement.

The Le Leche League, the National Childbirth Trust and the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers are all based in London, although all three have counsellors throughout the country.

But *why* is breastfeeding best for babies? First, the milk is obviously designed for human infants. Farmers would laugh if it was suggested that they fed their calves on human milk — and yet humans willingly feed babies on cow's milk!

Actually, a lot of women don't realise that formula milk *is* cow's milk. One woman said to me ony a few weeks ago that she thought it was "made from chemicals".

Reasons

Other good reasons for breastfeeding include:

- The milk contains valuable antibodies which help your baby fight infections. Formula contains nothing of the kind.
- The milk is always there, conveniently available at the opening of a bra. It is always the right temperature.
- Breastmilk changes throughout the day; the baby sometimes wants a drink, a snack, or a three course meal. Your body knows what the baby wants and produces the right kind of milk accordingly.
- You don't have to worry about sterilising bottles and mixing feeds correctly. Babies have died because milk powder was mixed wrongly. You very rarely see breastfed babies with gastro-enteritis — which can be a killer to the newborn.
- There is strong evidence to suggest that breastfed babies are far less likely to suffer Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (cot death).
- Breastfeeding helps you develop a unique relationship with your baby — responding to her/his needs. You can continue breastfeeding as long as you wish. There are actually *more* antibodies in toddler breastmilk than in the milk you produce when the baby is newborn.
- It has recently been proved that women who nurse their infants into the second year of life, or beyond, are in the lowest risk category for developing breast cancer.

I don't want to make any woman feel guilty if she decides to bottle feed. There may be many reasons why that choice is best for you. It may well be necessary once you return to work, for example.

Whenever possible, I strongly urge women to breastfeed, even if it's only for a few weeks or months. But if anyone reading this has found that bottle feeding was a better option for them, why not write in and tell us about your reasons?

I'm still nursing Jimmy, who's well over two, and I've never had any strange looks from people in public places.

Also, I'm in a unique position to help mothers in hospital with their feeding problems — and to offer advice to my colleagues who haven't breastfed. This includes 90% of all midwives; our pay is so awful that most midwives don't return to work once they've had children — they can't afford childminding fees!

□□□□□□□□□□□□

If you need breastfeeding advice, day or night, call 01-778 4769 for a recorded announcement giving the telephone number of your nearest counsellor. (If you live in London, the number is my own: 340 0470.)

Don't hesitate to ring if you need help on any aspect of breastfeeding — be it mastitis, engorged breasts, baby not gaining weight — *anything*.

More about breastfeeding problems and solutions next time.

ALTON'S DEFEAT: It's a victory for women!

Friday May 13th turned out to be a good day for women.

We finally saw off David Alton's anti-abortion bill, despite his last ditch attempt to tag it onto other legislation.

The previous week had seen celebrations by FAB groups up and down the country, jubilant that months of campaigning had paid off.

Alton had rashly promised that if his Bill failed he would retire to a monastery. He was presumably too exasperated to reply when MP Dave Nellist, at the end of the debate on May 6th, asked if *"the Church's loss was indeed to become our gain."*

Eight months ago we hardly expected victory over Alton. It is vital that we now recognise our victory and proclaim it as such.

Mass campaigning tactics *can* win, even in the current political climate. Fainthearts in the labour movement should remember that!

Alton's campaign was the most determined yet to destroy the 1967 Act. He deliberately chose a one-line Bill, avoiding his predecessors' mistake of making amendments too complicated.

He was aided and abetted by a massive media campaign and an initially sympathetic response from government. The issue of time limits was a more difficult one for the pro-choice movement to tackle, because of debates around viability, new technology, and so on.

Within the pro-choice movement things did not look hopeful. The National Abortion Campaign ws still active and in fact helped to establish FAB as a single issue campaign, but there

By JUDITH ARKWRIGHT

was a great deal of apathy and some of the old arguments had been forgotten.

Nonetheless, by the end of the campaign, there were 66 local FAB groups, 23 unions were affiliated, and the Labour Party and TUC had been forced to back a national demonstration of 20,000 people.

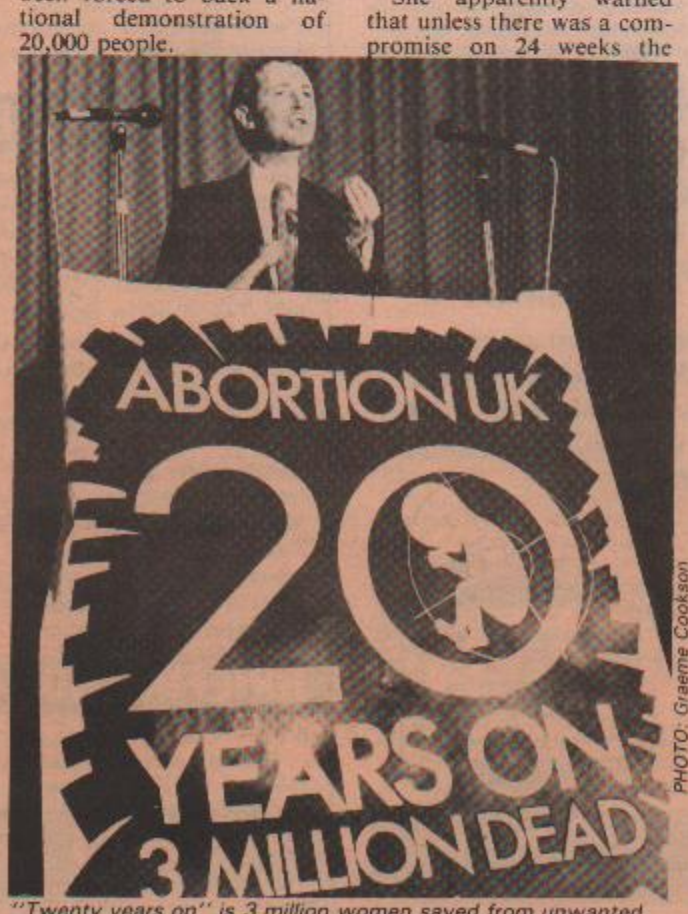


PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

"Twenty years on" is 3 million women saved from unwanted pregnancies and backstreet abortions. Alton chooses to align himself with emotive SPUC propaganda.

There were still many problems in the campaign and the victory was not unqualified. Alton failed to unite MPs around his crusade, but there now does appear to be strong feeling in parliament for a 24-week amendment to the 1967 Act, backed by representatives of the medical hierarchy.

Worse yet, Labour MPs have been directly involved in creating this consensus. Joan Ruddock, MP for Deptford, was reported in the *Guardian* as calling for a select committee to look into time limits!

She apparently warned that unless there was a compromise on 24 weeks the Commons faced an annual, time-wasting battle with "pro-life" MPs. On the eve of our victory over Alton, we had the spectacle of a Labour MP hastily conceding defeat in the next stage of the battle.

Activists in FAB and NAC are taking a different approach. They are holding a meeting on May 21st to discuss future activities and how to mount a campaign against a 24-week compromise.

If the time limit for abortions is to be moved at the whim of MPs and doctors then the whole principle of women's right to choose is under threat — never mind how much Parliamentary time is wasted!

A massive campaign should be launched within the Labour Party and the trade unions to reaffirm policy in defence of the '67 Act and to demand that Labour MPs have nothing to do with such compromises. In particular, resolutions to this effect should be organised immediately for Labour Women's Conference and the Annual Party Conference.

Parliamentary leaders need to be more accountable in future to the grassroots campaign which provides the clout for their procedural manoeuvres. On paper, trade union support was easy to attain; in practice, very little was done to mobilise union members at the base. (NALGO had more success than others in this regard.)

The TUC donated the grand sum of £100 to a demonstration which it was only too happy to put its name to. The success of the campaign, despite these failures, should go some way towards showing just how pathetic new realism is.

Surprisingly, some people on the campaign steering committee, notably the SWP representative, seemed reluctant to celebrate and keen to suggest that the Bill had not in fact been defeated through mass action but because of the wrong tactics adopted by Alton's supporters and the technicalities of Parliamentary procedure.

Compromise

Alton certainly shot himself in the foot by rejecting a 24-week compromise. Moreover, as with Corrie and the James White amendment, many of the anti-abortionists' tactics were exposed in the course of the campaign.

- The famous picture of a thumb-sucking 18-week foetus, supposedly lying snug in its mother's womb, was shown — in the *Daily Mail* of January 25th — to be the product of a *miscarriage* rearranged in a glass bowl by a Swedish photographer.
- The "Carlisle" baby whom Alton claimed was aborted for a "minor skin disorder" turned out to have Ehlers-Danlos syndrome — an extremely debilitating condition which can result in deformity of the limbs, ruptured aorta, and bruising and splits in the skin.

All this caused the government to become more and more reluctant to give Alton time for his Bill. In the end, the pro-choice MPs simply had to present enough amendments to keep the debate going for four hours on May 6th.

Campaign

This does *not* mean that the pro-choice campaign was won in parliament alone. Opinion polls showed a huge majority for a woman's right to choose. In one carried out for Marplan on April 22nd-26th, four out of five were in favour of abortion on request. This is the result of years of campaigning.

FAB's activities put pressure on pro-choice MPs who, as we have seen, showed every sign of wanting to compromise. Without this pressure, Alton would not have been exposed and his Bill would probably not have been defeated.

The victory over Alton is a fragile one. It is vital that we carry on our campaign in defence of a woman's right to choose. We should do this by stepping up affiliations to the National Abortion Campaign and continuing the activity of local groups.

A 24-week Bill is now a real prospect. The Houghton Bill, proposing a 24-week amendment, albeit with plenty of exceptions, is currently going through the House of Lords.

We have to ward off future attacks, highlight the effect of health service cuts on family planning facilities, expose racism in health provision, and build up a head of steam for a campaign to give women a *real choice* beyond the limitations of the '67 Act.

Campaign highlights

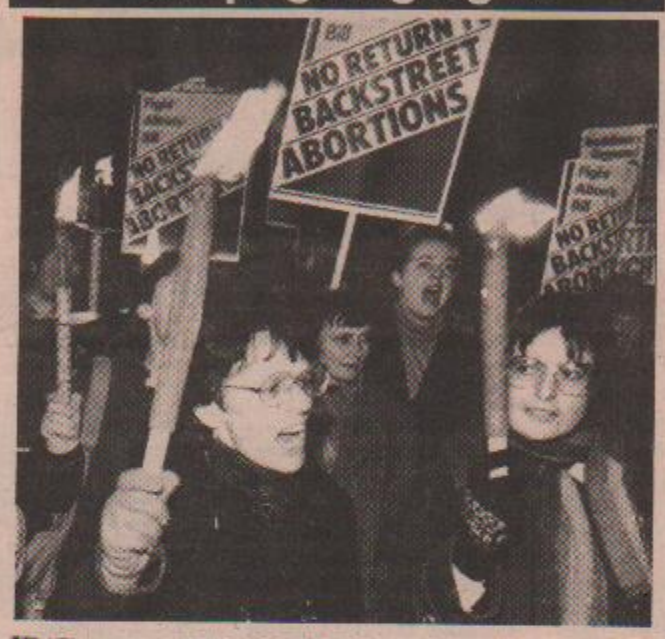


PHOTO: Graeme Cookson



PHOTO: Jane Cowl...

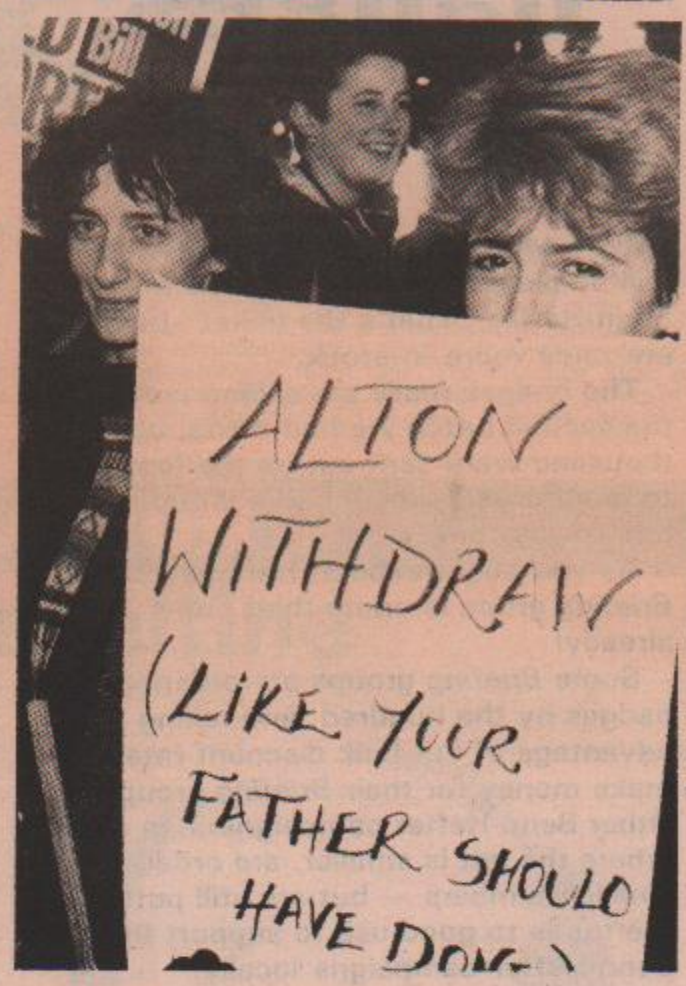


PHOTO: Graeme Cookson



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

From the top: torchlit demo, January 1988; lobby of Parliament, January 1988; placard on the January torchlit demo; London demonstration, March 1988.

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Letters

WRITEBACK!

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

ILP replies to Periscope

Dear *Briefing*,

Congratulations to the anonymous writer of the brief comment on the ILP (*Briefing*, no. 58). Seldom have I seen anyone get so much wrong in so short a space and with such obvious venom.

The statement surely tells us more about the writer — and the politics of those who publish such rubbish — than it does about the ILP.

At the risk of spoiling a tall story with some facts may I point out the following:

1. The ILP changed from being the Independent Labour Party to Independent Labour Publications in 1975. The fact that your writer can't even get our name right says a lot about his/her knowledge of the subject.

2. While it is true that the ILP welcomed the formation of the LCC in the late 1970s (which was then linked with Tony Benn), that has to be set within a political context. For years we had been arguing the need to go beyond the parliamentary politics of the Tribune Group and to rally the grass roots left against the Wilson/Callaghan Leadership.

The LCC of the period represented a partial break from Tribune's limited and ineffectual politics, providing a much-needed, broader-based forum for the left. It was quite a different political animal then to what it is today, as any comparison of its national executives over the years will show.

3. It is untrue to claim that ILP was rapidly disenchanted with the LCC. We were never enchanted! From its inception, we disagreed with its views (I speak from direct experience, having sat on its executive for several years), but while it was a relatively broad-based group we participated. We disengaged as the political character of the LCC began to narrow and shift to the right. There was nothing frantic about our actions.

4. Your writer is also wrong to claim that there is an ILP Group in parliament. As an MP, Harry Barnes is an associate member of the ILP. The ILP puts its emphasis on building an extra-parliamentary socialist rank-and-file, rather than on parliament or the Council chamber.

5. Your writer also mentions our support for one member, one vote without bothering to explain our political reasons (nor even the fact that for us it is conditional on a member attending at least three branch meetings in the previous year). Presumably, the mere mention of support for one member, one vote is sufficient reason to condemn us out of hand. If so, then this kind of attack does not amount to serious politics.

6. As for the ILP's *"habit of not so much sitting on the fence as jumping frenetically from side to side like a demented hurdler"*, this claim is inaccurate and unsubstantiated. We can appreciate that the ILP's perspectives may be too complex for "Periscope", but really *Briefing* would be wiser not to encourage such a display of ignorance in its columns.

It's not that we object to the use of humour when criticising the political views of individuals and groups in the movement. No one is above criticism. But when accusations are devoid of substance they are no more than cheap jibes. The Periscope piece does a disservice to the truth and to your readers. Is it really necessary to descend so low to raise a smile?

Should anyone wish to find out about the ILP's politics, we will be happy to supply further details. Whether you agree with our perspectives or not, we are confident you will see that it is "Periscope" who is suffering from optical illusions.

Barry Winter,
ILP

Bumper badges offer!

After a temporary gap in supplies, you will be pleased to hear that *Briefing's* Benn-Heffer "That's the ticket" badges are once more in stock.

The badges really are selling well. Of the second batch we had made, one thousand were sent out on the first day to meet orders which had built up in the gap of just one week!

As you might expect, Haringey *Labour Briefing* group is on its third order already!

Some *Briefing* groups are ordering badges by the hundred, and taking advantage of our bulk discount rates to make money for their *Briefing* groups. Other Benn-Heffer campaigners, in areas where the left is smaller, are ordering smaller numbers — but are still putting the funds to good use to support their Benn-Heffer campaigns locally.

Also, we are pleased to say, *Labour Briefing* is raising money from sale of the badges — much needed money to help keep our paper, and our presence at labour movement events, going.

Elsewhere in this issue of the paper you can read about how the Benn-Heffer campaign is going, and how it's galvanising support in wide circles. *Briefing* has been arguing for a Leadership challenge for some time, and there's no doubt that where activists are combining to spread the word, the fight for socialism is being strengthened. With *Briefing's* Benn-Heffer badges to give an added sense of unity, we can really strengthen the battle for socialism.

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This will be held on July 2nd, 10.30am-5.30 in London.

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Workshops include: Local Groups, The Paper, Trade Unions, International (including South Africa and Palestine.

Commission meetings include: Women, Youth and Student, Lesbian and Gay, Black people.

More details follow — see you there!

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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 27th, Thursday June 2nd.
Deadline for articles:
Issue no. 64 (out June 8th, EB planning May 19th): notify EB as soon as possible, all articles in by Tuesday May 31st.
Issue no. 65 (out June 22nd, EB planning June 2nd): notify EB as soon as possible, all articles in by Tuesday June 14th.

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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.
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This week's winner

"Neville's" nostalgia kick continues. The winner of our very first draw, with no. 42, has struck lucky again. Congratulations to LP Black Sections Chair, Cllr Narendra Makanji of Haringey.

BOOK REVIEW

1968: whose version?

The Fire Last Time, by Chris Harman, *Bookmarks*, £6.95

By David Shepherd Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

This is the best of the recent crop of books about 1968.

It sets out to examine the underlying causes of that year's momentous events, to analyse the political character of the forces involved, and to draw conclusions which will arm socialists for new battles.

It is a refreshing antidote to the trite commentaries with which the media have bombarded us in recent months.

A leader of the Socialist Workers Party, Harman brings a lively Marxist intelligence to his subject: the ending of the social peace of the long boom years in Europe and North America, the development of huge class battles in many European countries, the role of the traditional parties and organisations of the working class, and the growth of the revolutionary left and other social movements.

Impressively

His account moves easily and impressively from country to country and continent to continent, combining broad generalisations with detailed analysis.

Harman argues that it was contradictions inherent in the capitalism of the boom years which led to the explosions of 1968 and after.

He points to the immense changes in social structure in both Northern and Southern Europe during those years, in particular the huge growth of the working class relative to those who worked on the land.

The transformation of the character of higher education is also discussed. The key to the student radicalisation was that students were no longer simply a narrow layer of children of the bourgeoisie. Nor were they a new class or a force that could replace the working class as the central agency of social change.

Discussion

There is an interesting discussion of the role of "cold war" ideology in maintaining the relative social and political stability (both East and West) in the boom years.

It was the rising level of class struggle, the war in Vietnam, the emergence of the civil rights movement in the US, and the Prague spring which enabled the new generation to begin to break from the assumptions of the dominant ideologies in both East and West.

Harman's analyses of the May-June general strike in France, the strike movements in Italy, the fall of the colonels in Greece, the struggle against Franco, and the Portuguese revolution in 1974 are especially useful.

Rather than simply rail against the treachery of the established working class leaderships, both Stalinist and social democratic, he provides a materialist account of *why* these forces acted as they did to derail and demobilise struggles, ultimately channelling them into forms compatible with the continuation of the capitalist order.

Criticism

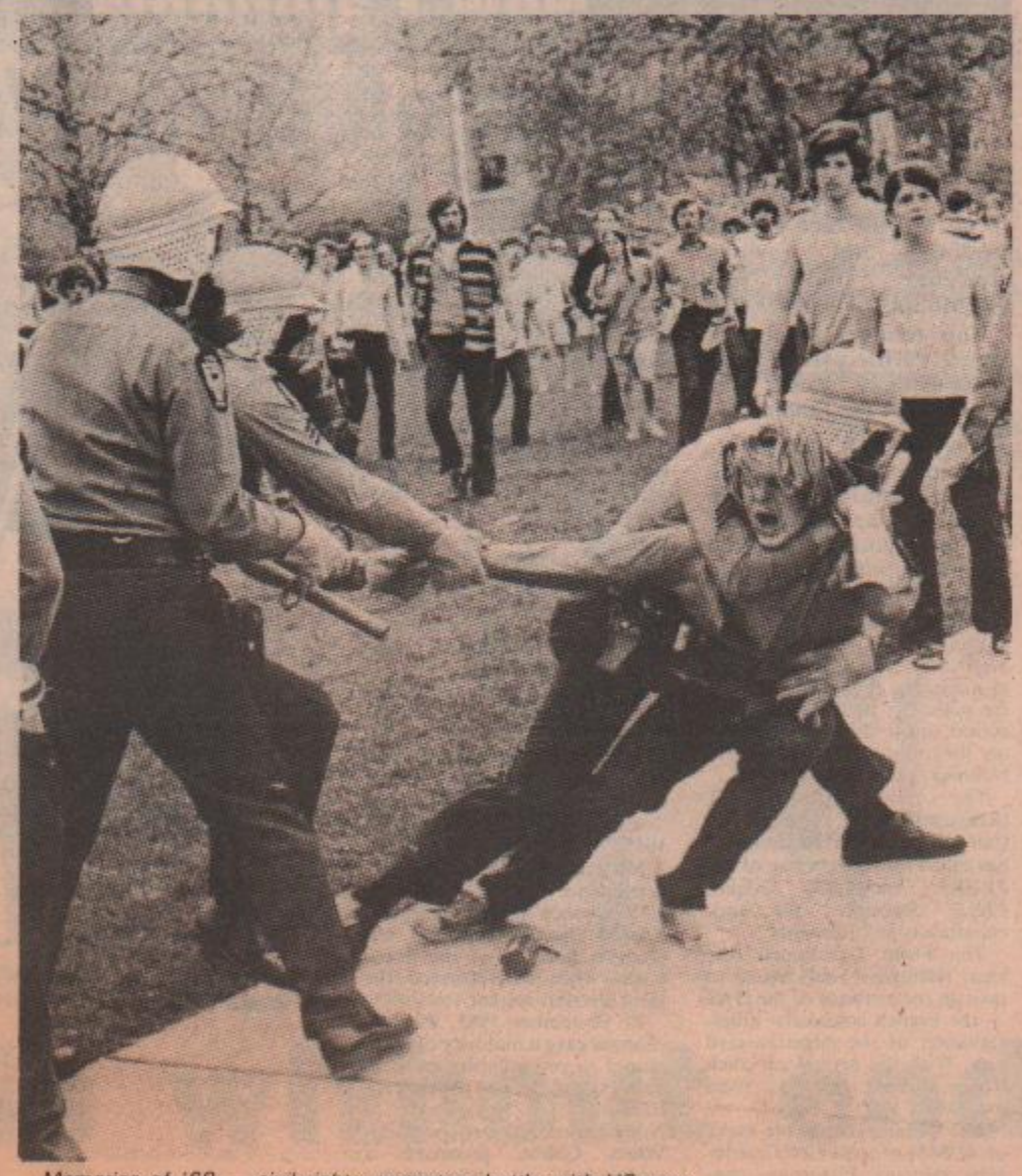
Nor do the various currents of the revolutionary left escape criticism. Harman's discussion of the political limitations and failings of the anarchists and the various Maoist and spontaneist groups contains much that is useful.

However, he does tend to fall into rather less rigorous methods — those of caricature and amalgam — when dealing with the positions of other revolutionary Marxists. The debate about Portugal is a case in point.

Experience

In a section criticising those who conclude from the Portuguese experience that "workers in the West will never move in the revolutionary direction expected by those whose ideas come from Lenin and Trotsky", he takes up Fernando Claudin, Ralph Miliband, and Perry Anderson (fair enough), but also Tariq Ali and Ernest Mandel — neither of whom, to my knowledge, has argued that the existence of bourgeois democracy in the West means that Leninism should be abandoned.

This sort of thing leaves a nasty taste in the mouth. Why can't Harman take on the positions of Ernest Mandel and the Fourth International as they really are, rather than dishonestly lumping them together with Eurocommunists and centrists?



Memories of '68 — civil rights protestors battle with US cops

The book is also marred by its superficial exmaination of the emergence of the modern women's liberation movement — surely one of the most important developments of 1968.

Harman makes some formally correct criticisms of "movementism", but demonstrates no understanding of the importance of self-organisation in the struggles of particularly oppressed layers of the working class.

As one would expect, many of the more controversial (and wacky) ideas associated with the SWP are reflected in this book, in particular the idea that the USSR is a capitalist country. But *The Fire Last Time* is nonetheless essential reading for socialists, especially those suffering from an overdose of Dany Cohn-Bendit.

Race and Class

Symbols of class

Race and Class (Spring issue), available from Institute of Race Relations, 2/6 Leeke St, London WC1X 9HS. £2.50

In a hostile climate it is tempting for socialists and progressives to cast envious glances at the right's hoard of national and patriotic symbols.

Some are even beginning to ask whether we should bother laboriously to construct alternative democratic visions when it is easier quietly to nibble away at the reactionary store, stealing some of the sugar-coated national populism for our own use.

By Shahid Tilley Haringey Labour Briefing

In this context, Labour-led Exeter Council has organised Wiliam of Orange Celebrations to commemorate the landing of the Dutch ruler near Exeter in 1688.

The article in *Race and Class* by AFA highlights the fact that this event is in danger of being usurped by Loyalists and Fascists. It castigates Labour Councillors for not only betraying their own understanding of what a socialist cultural festival should be, but also displaying an unpardonable ignorance of the embittered history of Ireland.

For William of Orange is, above all, the symbol of loyalist extremism and anti-catholic bigotry in Northern Ireland. AFA sketches the historical, religious, and political links between Orangeism, loyalism, and the Northern Ireland state, and how this collusion has engendered violence and unrest.

This issue of *Race and Class* also carries an article by David Edgar on "Festivals of the Oppressed". This piece tentatively explores the possible components and boundaries of more democratic, subversive, and participatory local festivals which might be *both* popular and liberating.

Edgar's ideas suggest the potential to resist incorporation of nationalist rhetoric or right wing populist opportunism, as well as offering a lesson to Labour Councillors about the politics of festivals and celebrations.

The issue also contains an extended review of Paul Gilroy's *There ain't no Black in the Union Jack* by Colin Prescod. Among the questions he takes up is the book's modern sociological analysis (post modernist?) of the relationship between culture, racsination, state, and social movements.

Both the review and the book touch upon an important debate which has developed on the left which *Briefing* hopes to address and explore in the future.

TELEVISION

Tebbit vs. Heseltine

In the wake of Thatcher's difficulties with the Poll Tax and social security "reforms", speculation has grown over the identity of her successor.

John Major, Douglas Hurd, Kenneth Baker, Michael Heseltine and Norman Tebbit have all been mentioned.

Recently, the last two met face to face on BBC1's *This Week, Next Week*.

"Caring capitalism" versus the "new Tory radicalism" was the theme. But in the end, interviewer Vivian White's attempts to demonstrate a deep divide between the two came to nothing.

Time and again the two Tory heavyweights stressed their points of agreement. Heseltine did seem marginally more eager to embrace Tebbit than vice versa. It would have been interesting to test their attitudes on specific policies, like the NHS, but White made no attempt to do this.

Heseltine stressed the British ruling class's paternalist traditions. *"Caring capitalism is about those who enjoy privileges seeing a wider role, for example, Pilkingtons, Rowntrees, Marks & Spencer."*

These days the ex-minister spends much of his time defending the green Belt from unfettered free enterprise. Tebbit's approach is more populist, aiming to build a solid constituency among the would-be-rich. The impact of Council house sales was stressed by both as the real starting point of recent Tory success with the "middle ground".

Tebbit's newly formed "Radical Society" has set itself the task of winning the "middle ground" by maintaining the Thatcherite "revolution" against the Macmillanite wets. Heseltine, in contrast, is keen on the role of a socially responsible aristocracy in preventing revolution in Britain.

By KEITH WHITE

In the months and years to come, the left should make a careful study of the Tory Party. Despite this programme's failure to establish a clear distinction between Heseltine and Tebbit, we should take seriously the traditions, different tendencies, and conflicting perspectives of the "open party of the ruling class", not least, perhaps, its ability to learn from the past.

Tebbit, it appears, had one golden rule for victory when he set out to develop anti-union legislation – he would not allow one trade unionist to go to prison and become a martyr and focus for mobilisation. He remembered too well the summer of 1972.

We should also seek to emulate the Tories' ability to plan for the future. Heseltine stressed the significance of the single European Market, whch comes into being in 1992. The left should prepare itself for their historic development now.

As Heseltine noted in the closing seconds of the programme, this party has ruled a single country longer than any other in the world. They certainly won't give it up without a fight.



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

Norman Tebbit... I'm psyching myself up quite a lot here really and pretty soon I'm going to differentiate myself slightly from Michael Heseltine.

FOCUS ON THE PACIFIC:

New Caledonia

The menace of Civil War

As President Mitterrand settles into his second term, he will face an immediate and serious challenge in New Caledonia.

This territory forms the largest Pacific part of what is sometimes called the "confetti of the Empire".

By Andrew Coates
Ipswich CLP

The FLNKS (Front de Liberation Nationale Kanak et Socialiste), which represents the majority of the indigenous Melanesian population, conducted an "active boycott" of the recent elections.

Demanding independence, FLNKS militants seized hostages on the Friday before the polls. Six people died in the action, most during an attack on the police headquarters in Noumea, the colony's capital.

The right wing RCPR (Reassemblement pour la Caledonie dans la Republique) has called for the banning of the FLNKS. Their ally Jacques Chirac denounced the anti-colonialists as "terrorists".

The Front Caledonien (the local National Front) wants to take up the methods of the OAS — the French colonialist killer-vigilantes of the Algerian civil war. With the arrival of crack troops, more deaths seem inevitable.

The Melanesian people make up 42.56% of total New Caledonian residents. Europeans constitute 37.12%, and the rest come from other Pacific islands and the far East.

Years of government encouragement have led to the resettling of French colonists from Algeria and Indonesia on the island. They now dominate the town of Noumea.

Farmers of European origin also dominate agriculture. 1,500 white farmers (who include a number of relatively poor "broussards") possess more hectares than 35,000 Kanak peasants.

All other aspects of life in New Caledonia reflect this inequality — revenues, education, access to basic services.

Prisoners from the Paris Commune were deported to New Caledonia in 1872. A Kanak revolt in 1878 was ferociously repressed. It was only after the Second World War that the Kanaks received full political rights and "tribal reserves" were abolished.

The FLNKS, an alliance formed in 1984, has drawn upon this background, demanding land reforms and cultural promotion; its most radical factions have also demanded anti-capitalist measures.

Nonetheless, the issue of independence and constitutional change dominates their fight. Elections in November 1984 saw armed confrontations. A Kanak leader, Eloi Machoro, was "neutralised" by gendarmes in 1985.

Mitterrand offered independence "with association with France". His delegate, Edgard Pisani, faced the implacable hostility of the Europeans when he reformed the local election system.

In September 1985, Pisani's changes gave a majority of communes to pro-independent candidates, and showed the concentration of "loyalists" in Noumea and its surroundings. When Chirac proposed a referendum on independence last year, his aim was to eliminate the FLNKS.

The Kanaks largely boycotted the manoeuvre. The current actions of the FLNKS are as much aimed against the new electoral map, designed to weaken their undoubted geographical strength, as against the French state as such.

New Caledonia has been described as a kind of "aircraft carrier" in the Pacific. To the French military this geo-political role is more important than its — limited — natural resources (nickle, agriculture).

The protests of New Zealand and Australia at the brutality of the French police are mainly designed to assert their own role in the Pacific.

The FLNKS represents a real anti-imperialist force in the region. Its goal of "a Kanak people constituting a plurality of ethnic groups in a national community" deserves our backing. Socialists may not agree with many aspects of their programme, but solidarity comes first.



Kanaks paint the tricolour red. The political point of this graphic cartoon (printed in Rouge, the paper of the French LCR) was clearer in the colour original — but the challenge to French rule remains the same!

West Papua

25 years after Indonesian colonisation: Melanesians fights on

It is now 25 years since the United Nations began the process of handing over what was known as the colony of Dutch New Guinea to independent Indonesia.

In one of the most shameful episodes in its history, the UN collaborated with the recolonisation of the western half of New Guinea — against the wishes of the indigenous Melanesian people.

By PETER TATCHELL

Despite this betrayal, one of the world's longest and most ignored national liberation struggles continues unabated.

In the jungles of what the Indonesians now call Irian Jaya, the **Organisasi Papua Merdeka** (Free Papua Movement) has proclaimed the Republic of West Papua and is fighting a fierce guerrilla war to win independence from Jakarta.

From remote mountain hideouts, the leaders of the OPM command a 20,000-strong village based militia. Though poorly armed, the OPM's hit and run ambush tactics have inflicted heavy losses on the Indonesian army of occupation.

The Indonesians have responded with savage and indiscriminate reprisals such as the notorious massacre at Merauke where 122 suspected OPM sympathisers were tied in weighted copra sacks and dumped in the sea to drown.

Over the last quarter of a century, 10% of the entire West Papuan population — 120,000 people — have been killed and tens of thousands have fled to neighbouring Papua New Guinea as refugees.

TAPOL

is an organisation campaigning for human rights in West Papua, East Timor, and Indonesia
Contact TAPOL at 111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR4 8HW
01 771 2904

Looking back at Portugal Pt.2

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

The colonial wars of independence began with an attack on Luanda jail by the Movimento Popular de Angola (MPLA) in 1961.

As the wars dragged on, the political and economic burdens began to tell.

By Jim Thain
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

By 1968 defence and security comprised 44% of public expenditure. Conscription and emigration reduced the mainland workforce, leading to demands for higher wages.

Caetano tried to release some of the pressure by introducing "liberal" labour legislation, but after the resultant strike wave, the reforms were rescinded.

Taxes were increased, and the standard of living fell further. But the balance of payments remained in deficit.

Abroad, massacres of Angolan civilians aroused international disapprobation. In 1970 the Vatican withdrew its support.

To escalate the industrial action, the **Partido Comunista Portugues** (PCP) revived the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers, or **Intersyndical**. But, even after the liberals resigned from the National Assembly in 1973, the Intersyndical was in no position to co-ordinate a national uprising.

The engine of revolution was built on working-class oppression. But its driving force, at first, was to be neither purely political nor purely economic. Nor was it a sudden ideological reaction amongst bourgeois intellectuals.

Though influenced by the world student movement, middle class Portuguese youth were more likely to be radicalised by the prospect of postgraduate conscription than by the idea of solidarity with the workers who toiled for their parents. Few sympathised with the indigenous populations of Angola, Mozambique, or Guinea-Bissau.

Instead, once the movement towards African self-determination became militarised, the contradictions inherent in the Portuguese model of semi-fascist subcolonialism (see part one) expressed themsleves in strains on the lives of bourgeois army officers.

The people forming the arm of the state which actually prosecuted Portugal's imperialist policies (and who were thus inextricably bound up with the condition of the mainland working class) began to find their own working conditions unacceptable.

The state had weakened the army's professional independence. Constant preferment of mediocre personnel for political reasons angered authentic career officers, and the government's revision of the career structure in 1973 favoured conscripts over regular soldiers. Moreover, the army was enmeshed in, and frustrated by, a war it had long known it could not win.

The military thus experienced threats to their social status as individuals and to their prestige as a corporate entity. Unlike the working class, who had suffered worse, they were armed.

December 1973 saw the founding of what became the **Movimento das Forcas Armadas** (MFA), headed by General Spinola.

When Spinola published a call for a political solution to the colonial wars, Caetano offered his resignation, perhaps hoping to limit the damage by forming an alliance with the general. The offer was refused, and the many and disparate groups which constituted the Portuguese left awaited events.

In March 1974, a planned coup was called off. Nonetheless, an infantry regiment went ahead, hoping to attract spontaneous support. The putsch failed, but propelled the government into crisis.

An all-out attack on the rebel officers would be extremely risky in view of their likely support. Anything less would be tantamount to complacency. As Caetano hesitated, the MFA launched a full coup.

When Caetano was besieged, the civilian populace responded by joining the army on the streets. Motivated by its own sectional interests, the military had become potential agents of revolution. Working class solidarity opened up the possibility of a transitional dual-power state leading, subject to favourable developments, to a properly socialist one. In an attempt to derail the revolutionary engine, the conservative Spinola distanced himself from the MFA.



PHOTO: Stan Thain

Portuguese peasants, c. 1954

A heterogeneous provisional government attempted to contain the situation but workers' mobilisation pushed progressive elements in the army leftwards.

The rank and file, especially conscripts, increasingly saw themselves as "workers in uniform" and participated in nationwide demonstrations with their civilian counterparts: direct experience of the struggle giving them a deeper understanding of its class nature than that enjoyed by those international theoreticians who criticised the army's actions.

Workers demanded the purging of facists from positions of political and financial power. They occupied factories and land, demanding better pay and conditions and agrarian reform. Lisbon was brought to a standstill by a peasants' tractor march and urban strikes.

Workers and militia were not identical or homogeneous groups. Northern peasants, for example, remained reactionary. But increasingly, soldiers, peasants, and workers pursued common socialist goals.

When the **Inter-Empresas**, a confederation of Workers' Commissions (fledgling soviets) demonstrate against a visit of NATO troops, they were joined by radical artillery.

When the reformist newspaper *Republica* was taken over by its staff, the workers were defended by COPCON (Mainland Operational Command) troops. Agricultural workers in dispute with obstructive landowners sought COPCON's help regularly, further radicalising the troops, who began to develop democratic structures.

When Spinola, dismissed in September 1974 for criticising the MFA's "excessive radicalism", attempted a counter-revolutionary coup in March 1975, he was routed by workers and soldiers while peasants' tractors blocked the roads.

The engine of social revolution appeared unstoppable. So what went wrong?

East German Lesbians & Gays

Still a long way to go

One of the most popular state-run clubs in the East German city of Dresden now hosts regular meetings for lesbians and gay men.

This surprising development was revealed in the lastest issue of the East German government publication *GDR Review*.

By PETER TATCHELL

Written in a positive and matter-of-fact style, the article about Dresden's *Gerede Club* is further evidence of growing official support for homosexuals by the East German state.

The *GDR Review* describes the meetings as places where lesbians and gay men can *"chat, get to know each other, and perhaps find a partner."* It says this is *"very important"* to enable homosexuals to *"cope much earlier and better with coming out."*

The meetings also have a gay cultural dimension and attract heterosexuals as well. On the night the article's author visited the *Gerede Club*,the guest speaker was the eminent Berlin writer, Jurgen Lemke, who talked about his forthcoming book on homosexuality, *Quite Normally Different*, which is being published with official approval early next year.

Future events include a lecture entitled "Eroticism and Sexuality in the Visual Arts", a discussion on "Sex at School?", and a musical programme called *"Sing if You're Glad to be Gay"*.

Referring to the place of homosexuals in East German society, the *GDR Review* reports: *"For over two decades now in our country homosexual relations have no longer been considered a punishable offence and the media, too, especially in recent years, have made obvious progress in their treatment of this subject."*

In a candid admission that the situation for lesbians and gays in East Germany is still far from perfect, the author confides: *"There is still a long way to go before all taboos and prejudices completely disappear."*

However, the writer notes with satisfaction: *"Young people are more open,. not so rigid in their views."* As a result, prejudice is being *"broken down generation by generation"*.

Perhaps most remarkably of all for an official state publication, the *GDR Review* implies that heterosexual attitudes are the problem and that the burden of ensuring homosexual *"integration instead of isolation"* falls on heterosexuals as much as homosexuals.

Gay people will only find true acceptance, the article says, *"when the heterosexual world meets them halfway."*



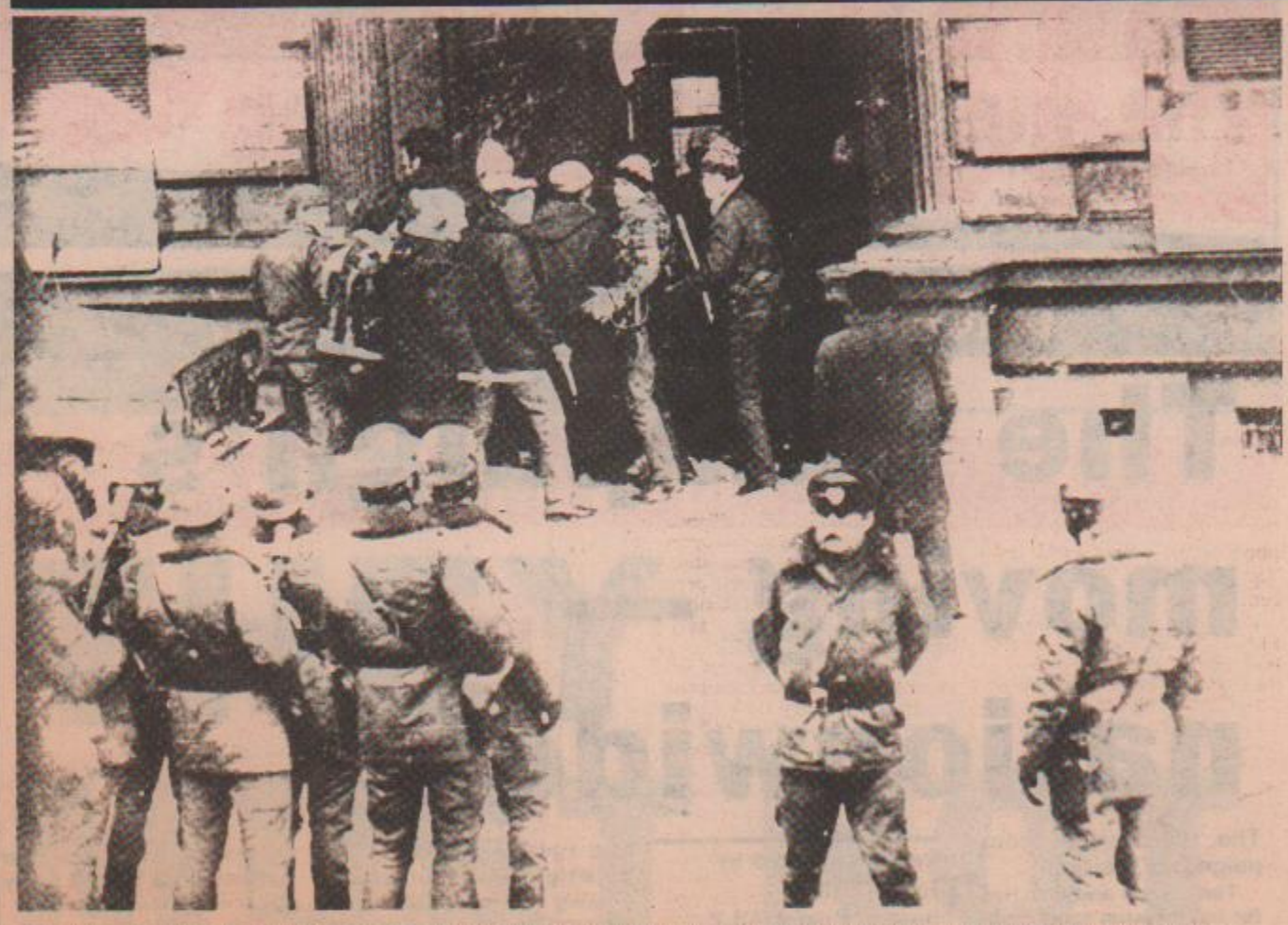
Berlin wall

Colombia

Angelino Garzon, General Secretary of the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT — United Workers Congress) called for a boycott of Colombian imports to Great Britain on a recent visit to Britain.
He also called for trade union support for the International Week of Solidarity with the Struggle for Democracy in Colombia
between
May 30th and June 4th 1988
Contact:
Colombia Solidarity Committee, Latin American House, Kingsgate Place, London NW6
Tel.: 01 372 6662

DEMONSTRATE
Against the Iran/Iraq War
Saturday, May 28th, 12 noon
Assemble Marble Arch, Speakers' Corner
Demonstration called by Iranian & Iraqi refugee, women's and socialist groups
Supported by Labour Briefing

Poland



Martial law in Poland, 1981. Recent events have been the most militant resistance to occur in Poland since the Solidarnosc movement was stopped in its tracks by the regime's military crackdown.

Crisis without end

The strikes and occupations which have challenged the Polish authorities since the end of April appear to have fizzled out — for the time being.

Although in some cases wage increases were granted, the political demand for the legalisation of the independent Solidarnosc trade union movement has been flatly rejected.

By Colin Meade
Surbiton CLP

While the occupation of the Nowa Huta steelworks near Krakow was ended by police assault, the absence of a predicted wave of support from wider sections of the Polish working class led the workers occupying the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk to end the action of their own accord, without winning any concessions from the authorities.

Since the introduction of a programme of price rises for basic commodities in February, there has been a growing wave of industrial protest. This first captured international attention when transport workers in Bydgoszcz went on strike on April 25th to demand parity wages with workers in Warsaw — a rise of 100%.

Although there is no evidence of support from the official state-controlled unions, the leader of the strike committee in Bydgoszcz, Krzysztof Wojt, was both a member of the ruling Polish United Workers' Party (the ruling Communist Party) and chair of the local branch of the state union.

Nowa Huta

In the case of Nowa Huta, on the other hand, there was direct conflict between the official unions and the elected strike committee.

Although the demand for recognition of Solidarnosc was raised, these strikes were not launched on the initiative of the authoritative bodies of the banned movement.

Leading opposition lights such as Jacek Kuron have been arguing in recent months that direct confrontation with the state over economic questions should be replaced by an attempt to use all available official channels to create a democractic space.

The justificaiton of this change of direction is the existence of the reformist Gorbachev leadership in the Soviet Union. According to Bronislaw Geremek, a close personal adviser to Lech Walesa:

"Gorbachev's policy in a sense depends on the Polish situation... If the reforms fail here, it would be a sign to Ligachev and other opponents that, you see, the result is anarchy, no production, it can't work. Anarchy in Poland could be the coup de grace for Gorbachev."

Walesa himself was at pains to explain that he had not started the strike in Gdansk. His high spirits when the occupation was abandoned suggest his satisfaction at being able to demonstrate his ability to resolve peacefully what the authorities might have resolved by force.

It seems unlikely that people like Walesa, Kuron, or Michnik really believe that their proposals for a dialogue with the authorities will be accepted — unless they are prepared for a massive climbdown on matters of democratic principle.

In an official journal in February, Geremek asserted that the "economic collapse" and the "hopelessness, even frustration" of the Polish people made "an anti-crisis pact" between the authorities and society as a whole "more feasible now than in 1981."

The previous month, however, in the prestigious, and supposedly "reformist" party journal *Polityka*, Zygmunt Szeliger explained that if they wanted to become worthy partners of the authorities, Solidarnosc adherents would have to "face facts". Trade union pluralism was one demand which "cannot be fulfilled and certainly will not be."

Izvestiya

Meanwhile, the Soviet daily *Izvestiya* described the Polish events as the work of "hooligans, posing as strikers", while *Pravda* pointed the finger at "official circles in the West" and denounced their role in "this campaign of incitement and disinformation".

The basic theme in the Polish media was that the strikes hindered prospects for economic recovery and political reform. As Moscow Radio's Warsaw correspondent put it:

"The Polish working people realise that attempts to cause chaos and disrupt the economy above all hit the vital interests of the entire people, undermine confidence in Poland as a partner on the foreign market and lead to a retardation of economic reforms."

Despite pervasive popular discontent, the domination of nationalism and pro-Western illusions within the movements for social change in Poland make it difficult for them effectively to counter this line of argument and mount resistance to austerity.

Western socialists should not forget their own contribution to the crisis of leadership in Poland.

Even today leading figures on the left such as Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn often respond to the militant expression of the needs of people in the so-called socialist countries as if they were disruptive of the high interests of the struggle against imperialism. Over the years such attitudes have helped to convince many Polish workers that the phrase "workers of the world unite" is not meant to apply to them.

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LABOUR BRIEFING

Backing Benn and Heffer!

The Campaign's moving — nationwide!

The Leadership campaign has started!

Tony Benn and Eric Heffer have begun touring the country, speaking at meetings, putting the case for socialism, and winning support.

Benn-Heffer campaign groups are getting into swing, and planning their own activities to argue for socialism and for the Benn-Heffer ticket to back up the Campaign being directed from the House of Commons.

This is a round-up of activities reported to *Briefing* in the last weeks.

● LEEDS At one of the first meetings of the Campaign, Tony Benn spelt out his manifesto for the Labour Leadership election, when he addressed a meeting at the Civic Centre on Saturday May 7th, reports *Leeds Other Paper*.

In a brief speech Councillor Garth Frankland linked Tony Benn's challenge of "the current right-wing consensus with its ideas, institutions and values," with his own challenge to the Leadership of Leeds City Council.

Other speakers were Bill Wright of the National Union of Seamen, Norma Hutchinson, health worker at Meanwood Hospital

Report compiled by
Jenny Fisher
Bow & Poplar CLP

speaking about staff shortages, a speaker against Clause 28, and John Ingham of *Militant*.

The main focus of the meeting was on the NUS strike, which Tony Benn described as being more important than the Miners' strike in the sense that the government is now "trying to destroy trade unionism altogether."

The NUS strike, he said, has once again made clear that "big business, the security services and the media are on the side of the government."

Unmuffled

"It's time Labour spoke in a clear and unmuffled voice," he said.

● He lashed out against "American - dominated nuclear NATO that has taken away our freedom of action," saying we must question the basic assumptions that lie behind our foreign and defence policies.

● He lashed out at the position of women in society. "The TUC and the Labour Party," he said, "are frozen in a time warp of 1918."

● He lashed out at existing policies on everything from Chile to Nicaragua, to "the abuse of the planet", to "narrow nationalism", the Common Market, Northern Ireland, privatisation, "the undemocratic institutions of the state; the Lords, the Courts and the Security Services", and "the dangerous prejudices which are being encouraged against the black community and lesbians and gays."

"Our Campaign for Socialism," he said, "is designed to challenge the labour movement itself to abandon its own bureaucratic and intolerant practices, which have led to attempts to force its members to conform to the line laid down by the top."

Over 400 people attended the meeting. The Leeds Campaign Group has established links with similar groups in Hull, Huddersfield, Bradford, South Yorkshire and Wakefield. A preliminary organising meeting has already been held, and Benn-Heffer meetings are to be held in most Yorkshire towns.

Interview

In **● Manchester**, the May edition of Manchester *Socialist Action* has carried a long interview with Tony Benn. A rally with Tony Benn on Friday June 10 will start at 7.30pm in the Town Hall. Audrey Wise and Dianne Abbott have been invited to speak.

In **● Southampton**, the Benn-Heffer Campaign has been started and led by the local *Briefing* group, who initiated publicity and meetings in support of the Campaign.

The meetings have been advertised widely, and it has been made plain that they would be open to anyone who supported the Campaign.

This has led to increased interest recently, and support from other groups and invididuals in the local labour movement. As a result, a broad based Benn-Heffer Committee was launched on May 24th, with representatives from *Militant*, Fareham Campaign Group, and Basingstoke *Socialist Organiser*, as well as many other individuals, invited.

The first focus of the Campaign will be a public meeting with Eric Heffer on Friday July 15th. Supporters are looking forward to this being the largest labour movement event in Hampshire this year!

Maximum

In the meantime, campaigners are pushing to ensure the maximum discussion and debate within the Labour Party and trade union branches. It is also hoped to use the impetus of the Benn-Heffer Campaign to launch a Chesterfield network in the South Hampshire area.

● **Berkshire** is being treated to a big campaign for Benn and Heffer. The third edition of *Berkshire Campaign Group News* (incorporating Reading *Campaign Bulletin*) has a front page arguing for the Leadership challenge.

The centrespread carries a list of over sixty prominent individuals in the labour movement, endorsing Benn and Heffer; and seven local contact numbers.

There is also a form for individual and organisations' sponsorship, and offers of help. The Campaign can be contacted at 90 Royal Avenue, Calcot, Reading.

In London, **● Hackney For Benn and Heffer** has also issues a letter to labour movement contacts inviting affiliates to the Campaign. This costs £5 for organisations and £2 individuals.

Hackney for Benn and Heffer can be contacted via Jim Thain, 4 Heathland Road, London N16 5NL.

Let us know what you're doing in your area! Through the pages of *Briefing* you can reach extra contacts in your immediate area and the surrounding areas who may be interested in your campaign. Also, news of events can encourage other Campaigns, and give them ideas of what to plan.

And don't forget to order your supply of *Briefing's* Benn-Heffer "That's the ticket" badges — see inside, p. 12, for details.

Benn/Heffer Campaign

London Area Contacts

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Greenwich Alan Freeman 858 5865
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South East London Andrew Yunge-Gordon 854 9521
South West London Pete Cooper 228 7000
Westminster/Kensington Paula Watson 638 5308

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Tony Benn in South East London

June 21st, 7.30pm, Woolwich Town Hall, SE18. Public meeting with Tony Benn, Diane Abbott, Audrey Wise, and NUS speaker.

South East London Benn-Heffer campaign: contact Andrew Yunge-Gordon, 204 Elmley St, Plumstead, SE18 7NL, 854 9521 (evenings).

No access details provided — we'll try to print them in the next issue (which will be made easier for us if someone sends them in!!!)

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Jon Lansman
c/o Jeremy Corbyn MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA 219 6173

Campaign Diary

Tony Benn and/or Eric Heffer will be speaking at the following rallies or fringe meetings in coming months. Some of the dates are subject to confirmation. Additional rallies are to be arranged in Leicester, Derby, Walsall, Stoke, Croydon, and South West London, as well as fringe meetings at certain additional trade union and other conferences.

May
27 Edinburgh, Livingstone
28 Leith
31 Doncaster

June
5 Preston
5 NCU & Bakes, Blackpool
6 GMB, Bournemouth
7 West London
10 Manchester
11 Socialist
12 Conference
13 MSF, Bournemouth
15 NALGO, Brighton
16 UCATT & ASLEF, Blackpool
21 South East London
24 Teeside
25 Newcastle
26 NUM, Gt Yarmouth
27 NUR, Swansea
29 CSEU, Llandudno

July
5 East London
8 Nottingham
10 North London
15 Southampton
15 Bradford
22 Oxford
29 Coventry

August
24 Dundee
26 Glasgow
30 South Wales
31 Bristol

September
1 Exeter & Plymouth
2 Birmingham
5 TUC, Bournemouth
9 Wirral
14 St Helens
15 Rochdale

October 1 Blackpool (Eve of Conference)