LABOUR BRIEFING
40p FORTNIGHTLY
No 65 JUNE 22 - JULY 5 1988

Labour Briefing

AGM
July 2nd
Kingsway Princeton College
Details: see page 12, page 6
Debate, Discuss – and Organise!

Tony Benn demands socialist regeneration

SAVE OUR PARTY!

by Tony Benn

Millions of people in Britain are beginning to notice that parliamentary politics in this country have become stagnant and that the inter-party arguments have gone completely stale.

This is because a new Front Bench Consensus about policy has been quietly developing, partially obscured by ritual exchanges of personal abuse across the floor of the House of Commons, and carefully concealed beneath clever advertising techniques designed to keep up the pretence that fundamental differences remain.

This bipartisanship is creeping into many key policy areas. The list grows longer every day, and already covers shared front bench attitudes towards:

- NATO and its nuclear umbrella
- US bases in Britain
- The present high level of arms expenditure
- The Common Market, moving towards a federal Europe
- The British occupation of Northern Ireland
- The irreversibility of privatisation
- The entrenchment of market forces
- Legislation to control trade unions
- The continuation of the House of Lords.

And to that list we must now add:

- The retention, by Britain, of nuclear weapons, which Labour apparently is to be asked to support.

Given such wide areas of all-party agreement, it is no wonder that so many people have become cynical about politics.

This cynicism encourages apathy, defeatism, and despair, and effectively disenfranchises all those millions who want to see a fairer society in this country.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Tony Benn addresses the Second Socialist Conference

A major new realignment in British politics has begun to take shape. This could lead to a complete transformation of the Labour Party as we have known it, in which its trade union base and socialist perspectives are virtually abandoned.

Since the Party was first formed, by the trade unions and others, and adopted a socialist programme, the British Establishment has always supported the right wing within it.

But in the early 80s, the Establishment changed its emphasis by backing the SDP-Liberal Alliance, in the hope of destroying Labour altogether, and replacing it with a new Conservative party which would provide a safe alternative to the Tories.

However, when the Alliance collapsed, and splintered, the Establishment shifted its attention back to the Labour Party. It is now actively supporting the present attempts to ditch socialist policies and hand the Party over to Labour's front bench — attempts which are backed up by the block votes of the trade union General Secretaries, with trade union members having little say.

It is obvious why the Establishment wants this to happen. There would then be no threat to their power or their privileges. Even if the electors did put a Labour government into office in the future it would be quite safe and harmless — from their point of view.

This is the reason why so many Tory commentators (who will never vote Labour) are now praising the Labour Leadership, and demanding even tougher measures against those who want a democratic Party where the membership choose the Leader and decide policy.

Without a Leadership election this year, the authoritarianism which we are now witnessing would have gone unchallenged, and the Labour Party, as we have always known it, could have been changed out of all recognition, without Party members being offered any opportunities to give their views on the matter.

No wonder the Leadership wants the rules changed to block future elections.

At the second Chesterfield Conference we discussed how to put socialist ideas back on the agenda of British politics at a time when the injustices perpetrated by the present government need to be challenged much more strongly than they have been by the Labour Leadership over the last five years.

If we do not mount a successful challenge soon democracy itself could be destroyed in Britain.

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Campaign Round-up

Another week in the Irish War

Another week in the Irish war began on Sunday June 12th, when Billy Tottem, a Catholic from West Belfast, was killed by a Loyalist death squads.

By Geoff Bell
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

Neither Margaret Thatcher nor any government Minister commented upon his death; nor did any member of Labour's front bench.

On Monday June 13th, Justice Ruane ruled that the Irish government had presented a "fatally flawed" case when it and the British government demanded that political prisoner Patrick McVeigh should be handed over to the British.

One of the arguments used by McVeigh's lawyers was that among the offences listed in the warrant for his extradition were ones committed when he was in prison.

Mrs Thatcher and her Attorney General angrily denounced the freeing of McVeigh. So did Labour's Shadow Attorney General and its Northern Ireland Spokesperson Kevin McNamara.

All have great faith in the British judicial system for dealing with Irish political prisoners. There are those, such as the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four, who do not.

Next, on June 15th, six British soldiers were blown up by the IRA in the garrison town of Lisburn. This led to an unusual development: Labour's Leader, Neil Kinnock, mentioned Ireland in the House of Commons.

He had not done so when Billy Tottem had been killed, when three other Catholics had been killed by Loyalists in the Avenue Bar massacre on May 15th, or when the SAS had gunned down three unarmed IRA volunteers in Gibraltar.

But on this occasion Kinnock voiced his agreement with Thatcher and deplored the killings of the soldiers — as did Kevin McNamara.

The following day, the British government announced that it would use force to extract genetic fingerprinting in Northern Ireland. This will mean forcing uncharged suspects to open their mouths and ramming tweezers or a similar implement into their mouths and extracting samples of saliva.

Kevin McNamara in the House of Commons supported this move. It was later denounced by the British Medical Association as "against medical ethics".

The same day the father of one of the soldiers killed on June 15th said it was time all British soldiers were "brought home" from Ireland. Thatcher, Kinnock and McNamara are united in their opposition to this.

So ended another week in the Irish war. End Tory-Labour bipartisanship! Troops out now!

Huge Mandela march in Glasgow

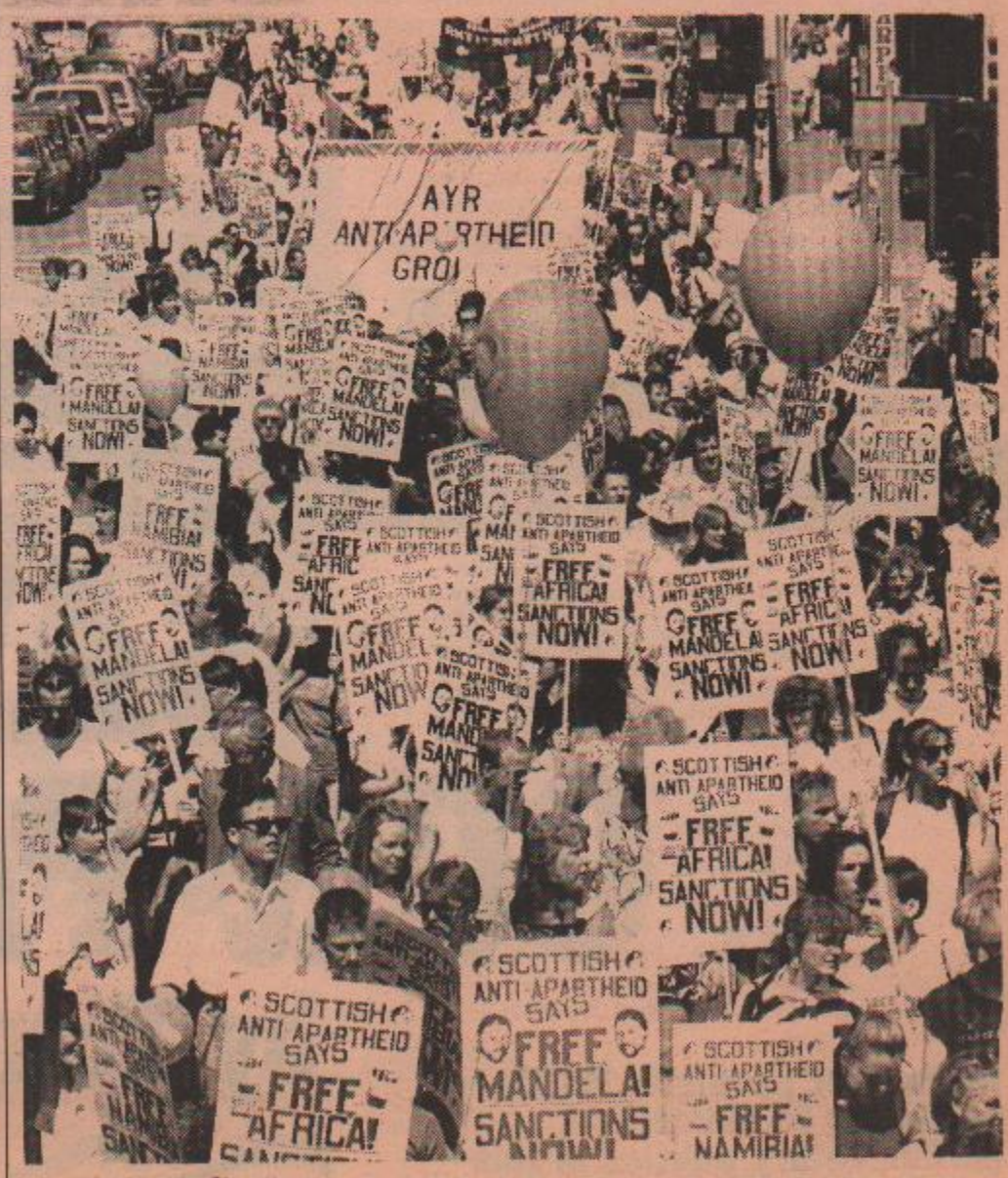


PHOTO: Alan Wylie

Marching in Glasgow

"Freedom at 70!"

June 12th saw one of Scotland's biggest demonstrations for years.

20-30,000 marched through Glasgow to a mass Anti-Apartheid Rally to launch the Glasgow-London Nelson Mandela Freedom March.

By Allan Green
Maryhill CLP

The demonstration was swelled by publicity surrounding the "Free Mandela" concert at Wembley.

But Socttish A-AM had been building the march for months, and its work was reflected in large numbers of trade union and Labour Party banners.

The growth of the Women's Committees of the A-AM in Glasgow was also evident. Having recently staged a benefit for SWAPO women which attracted 250 women, they gathered a large, lively and vocal contingent around their banner.

The speakers at the rally included Susan Baird (Glasgow's Lord Provost), Oliver Tambo (ANC President), Janey Buchan (Labour MEP for Glasgow), Dr Allan Boesak, Trevor Huddleston (A-AM President) and A. Touro Ja Touro (Secretary General of SWAPO).

Susan Baird pointed out that Glasgow was the first municipality to award Nelson Mandela "Freedom of the City" and has changed the street address of the South African Consulate in Glasgow to "Nelson Mandela Place". Glasgow's City Chambers flew the ANC flag throughout the day.

In an emotional speech, Allan Boesak contrasted Glasgow's support with the actions of the British government. On the State of Emergency in South Africa, he said:

"The black people of South Africa can take on Pretoria but they cannot take on Pretoria and Bonn and London and Washington and Tokyo. What else needs to happen in my country for Reagan and Thatcher and Kohl to do what is right? How many more children must die?"

Oliver Tambo defended the ANC from Tory attacks, and pointed to the terrorist nature of the South African regime, saying: "If fighting for your rights makes you a criminal, then I'm a bloody criminal as well."

The rally drew to a close with a tremendous send-off for the 25 Glasgow to London marchers.

Viraj Mendis

High Court sides with Home Office

The High Court has turned down Viraj Mendis's appeal to stay in this country.

They have backed the Home office decision to deport Viraj back to Sri Lanka — where, as a supporter of Tamil rights, he would be in great danger.

The High Court also refused leave to appeal to the House of Lords. However, Viraj will be petitioning the House of Lords directly, asking them to hear his appeal.

Graciously

Home Secretary Douglas Hurd has graciously announced that he will not be sending police into the church where Viraj has been in sanctuary while this process, expected to take between one and two months, is underway.

By FINN JENSEN

Waited

Hurd felt, however, that the Home Office had "waited long enough" and that it was time Viraj gave in. Viraj won't! Not only is his own life in danger, but many more black people under threat of deportation are looking to the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign as an inspiration in their own cases.

The announcement of the appeal decision was followed by a rally at the church, and a meeting of the VMDC, at which future plans were made.

Push

Viraj has called for a further push to broaden out the Defence Campaign to include as many activists as possible. Contact the VMDC to find out details of latest plans:

c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL; tel. 061 234 3168.

Gulf War demo



Over 500 people marched past the Iranian and Iraqi embassies on May 28th, condemning both governments for continuing the Gulf War.

The demonstration called for all navies to be removed from the Gulf and an arms embargo against Iran.

The demonstration was organised by Iranian socialist, women's and refugee groups, and Iraqi groups.

Banners showed the support of many sections of the British left and organisations such as the Haringey Refugees Forum. However, official banners from Labour Parties and trade unions were largely absent, indicating that the Gulf War needs to be taken into these bodies by the left.

CARI, the Campaign Against Repression in Iran, will have a new bulletin out in early July, which can be ordered now. They are also preparing a factsheet for the trade union movement.

Ellis leaves Chapeltown!

15,000 West Indians remove laughing policeman

Sensational news broke over the Bank Holiday in Chapeltown, Leeds.

By Dave Walker
Leeds N.E. CLP

Police Superintendent Ellis has been removed from his post and sent to Wakefield!

The "Ellis must go" campaign immediately claimed the surprise development as a victory.

Promotion

But the promotion to Chief Superintendent which accompanied the transfer is a confirmation that racist behaviour is not only tolerated but positively endorsed in the police force.

West Yorkshire Chief Constable Colin Sampson has pledged his total support for the man at the centre of what has become known as the "tape row".

Investigation

A ten month investigation by Greater Manchester Police has now been shelved by the Police Complaints Authority, ostensibly because it was refused access to vital evidence, i.e. the tape recording of Ellis saying that 15,000 West Indians are very difficult to police and that they create all sorts of problems, including drugs and prostitution.

Mr Omparkash Sharma, the man who recorded Ellis's remarks, and President of the Asian United Organisation, said "I have not co-operated in submitting the tape to the investigation because I do not believe that it has been independent. It has been a total whitewash."

The Manchester police only took statements from Ellis supporters. They never spoke to any members of the Chapeltown Action Group. No wonder community activists have so little faith in official procedures that they never lodged a formal complaint.

Attempts

As one person with personal experience commented, "All you get is a really pretty little letter back saying there is not enough evidence to prosecute."

The last CAG public meeting, held at the Mandela Centre, announced the result of forensic examination of the tape recording. The Manchester Investigating Team was invited, but they refused to come.

Inquiry

Now the Ellis inquiry has been dropped at least for a while we can look forward to some peace in Chapeltown, and not some cop who thinks making racist remarks is a way of life.

Ellis is the second top cop to be put out to grass from Chapeltown. At the time the Police Complaints Authority statement and promotion announcement were issued, Supt. Ellis suddenly went on an unexpected holiday, and had no comment to offer.

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

The Emperor of Walworth Road has no clothes

Events in the Labour Leadership contest are developing rapidly.

Following his endorsement of the rule of market forces, Kinnock went on television to renounce unilateral nuclear disarmament (as predicted in *Labour Briefing* long ago), then got the NEC's Organisation Sub-Committee to move the goal posts to obstruct future Leadership challenges (and for good measure to stop Mandy Mudd standing as the democratically selected candidate in a Haringey Council by-election).

Kinnock's strategy is to raise the stakes in the Leadership contest — so that he can claim a mandate for a sweeping right wing transformation of the Party after the October Conference.

But things haven't gone to plan. First, the TGWU Executive refused to endorse the present Leadership. Then Denzil Davies made his late-night foray into the headlines. Ron Todd made his first public criticism of Kinnock since the end of the miners' strike. And to top it off, David Martin, Kinnock's favourite, was dumped by the Labour Group in the European Parliament.

The widespread discontent with Kinnock's autocratic opportunism (and dismal failure to dent the Tories' opinion poll lead) has come to the surface — provoked by the socialist challenge of Tony Benn and Eric Heffer.

Already, their decision to stand against Labour's quisling misleaders has been vindicated. Already, their campaign has scored victories. They have shaken the tree, and it doesn't matter that in the short-term others may gather the fruit (notably John "I support Neil Kinnock" Prescott).

As Tony Benn points out (see front page), momentous issues are involved in this Leadership contest: nothing less than the entire future of the labour movement.

The Benn-Heffer campaign may have got off to a late and faltering start, but in recent weeks it has entered a new, dynamic phase.

Local and regional Benn-Heffer campaigns need to step up their activity, raise their profiles, and make sure these crucial opportunities are not wasted.

We now have a chance to hammer home our socialist message to a wide audience — and there's still three full months before Party Conference.

Yesterday's Men?

John Edmonds' cheap jibe about Benn and Heffer being "geriatric" was not only offensive to millions of working class pensioners; it was also based on an amazing distortion of historical realities.

If a commitment to anti-trade union laws, the free market, NATO, nuclear weapons, and the British occupation of Northern Ireland is innovative and modern, then Max Bygraves ought to be top of the pops.

Marx's adage about history repeating itself — the first time as tragedy, the second as farce — springs to mind as soon as the names of Gaitskell and Kinnock are coupled.

Has Edmonds forgotten *In Place of Strife*? Has he not even read about the National Government of 1931?

A Policy Review in which government co-operation with the CBI appears as a novel proposal, and from which such questions as nuclear power and acid rain, local government reform and police accountability are absent can hardly be described as pointing the way into the 1990s.

What counts, of course, is not chronology, but ideas and actions. The rights of women, black people, lesbians and gays, and other oppressed groups — anathema to Kinnock, Hattersley, and for that matter Prescott — are built into the Benn-Heffer platform, as is a radical and long-overdue critique of Britain's undemocratic state.

The idea that Labour's supporters are passive consumers, not productive (or potentially productive) workers, capable of playing an active part in the collective transformation of society, is the same old hat which turns up every time the movement suffers severe defeat — and its leaders look for easy options. This is the old, outdated approach — one which Benn and Heffer utterly reject.

The Benn-Heffer challenge has generated grass roots enthusiasm up and down the country. People are exited by the chance it offers to protest against everything that is rotten in our world, and even more by its positive and unapolgetic vision of a society built on democracy and equality. The demand for a *socialist* society is the only answer Labour can give to Thatcher; and it is the only answer that can win popular support.

Second Socialist Conference in Chesterfield

Building from the base up!

The second Socialist Conference at Chesterfield was a chaotic success. As 2,000 people jostled through too narrow corridors, good-naturedly struggled to find and get to their workshops, battled through the usual barrage of sectarian cant, and queued interminably for cups of appalling coffee, a movement was, unmistakably and inexorably, coming to life and taking shape.

By Paula Watson
Westminster South CLP

The new format — based on workshops, with plenaries confined to the opening and closing sessions — was a considerable improvement, enabling wider participation and more detailed discussion.

Inevitably the quality of the workshops varied, but almost all came up with some positive suggestions for future work and continuing discussion.

Arising from the debates, plans now on foot include a number of single issue conferences on the Poll Tax, local government and the structure of the British state, internationalism and democratic rights.

Campaigning priority will be given to the Poll Tax with calls from the trade union workshop for it to be based on a policy of non-compliance.

The economic workshops were, perhaps predictably, the least positive, but even here suggestions emerged.

Policy groups are to consider and produce pamphlets on the need for public ownership (this may become a *Briefing* initiative), possible structures for workers' control, the multinationals and strategies for international co-operation.

Immediate campaigning demands should concentrate on a takeover of the City and the financial institutions, the diversion of arms expenditure to production for need, building and extending the infrastructure, a shorter working week and life and the needs of women in the labour market.

The future shape of the movement is thus beginning to emerge as a continuing series of workshops, policy groups and conferences to produce a socialist alternative to Kinnockite neo-Thatcherism and to formulate demands and issues around which campaigns can be built.

The movement will be based firmly on local and national struggles, so that the issues on which struggles take place and the experience so gained can be absorbed into the policy discussions. The demands and ideas emanating from the workshops will feed into and enrich the fight on the ground.

The interlinking processes of policy formulation and struggle will nourish each other and help to push forward the bounds of socialist demands. The third leg will be the regional organisations evolved in the wake of local conferences.

Even in the less hopeful arena of traditional theoretical conflict, light is beginning to break through — more than justifying the Conference's usefulness as a forum for socialist debate.

In this the sects are, perhaps unconsciously, acting as catalysts. Their reiterated, intransigent positions are helping the more thoughtful majority to understand that the classic dichotomies between international and national struggle, macro and micro-economics, autonomy and class struggle are largely unreal.

The different strategies are not mutually exclusive but complementary. National struggle can only succeed in the context of international struggle. Micro-economics in a capitalist state must lead to ever-increasing demands, and struggles for, a restructuring of the macro-economy. Autonomy, by motivating and giving self-confidence to the oppressed, will lead them into the class struggle — which in turn provides the only context in which their fight can succeed.

In all this *Briefing* played an outstanding role. Easily one of the largest, if not the largest, group present, our ubiquity was noticed by friend and foe alike.

In contrast to last year our presence and contributions to all the policy workshops and plenaries were well organised and co-ordinated. The fringe meeting, although held in one of the more inaccessible parts of the campus, was packed and overflowed into the corridor.

Our cast, John Wilton on Benn-Heffer, Mandy Mudd on the witch-hunt, Martha Osamor on self-organisation of the oppressed, and Mike Marqusee on *Briefing* itself, proved a gratifyingly successful draw.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Participants in the Socialist Conference

However, since nothing is perfect in an imperfect world, here are a few conference gripes.

The trade union representation was well down on last year. This is an important failure which must be rectified.

The treatment of women's issues was, as usual, unsatisfactory. Too often the women's workshops were held at the same time as the other policy groups, preventing many women from contributing to the general debates.

The organisation was better than last year but could still bear some improvement. It was often extremely difficult to find out where particular workshops were being held and even more difficult to get there.

What of the future? Mandy Mudd showed the way in her words to the final plenary session:

"We have to ensure that the Socialist Conference works to sustain and support workers' struggles by forging links between the regional organisations, the policy groups and the fight on the ground. We must build from the base up."

We must ensure that the emerging structures are open, democratic and accountable. At national level greater flexibility is needed to enable groups like *Briefing* and parties like the Socialist Workers to affiliate. Both have worked extemely hard for the success of the conference and this should be recognised.

Trade Union Briefing

N.H.E.

National meeting for Health Campaigners



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

The next National Health Emergency meting will be held on Saturday, July 2nd from 1.30-4pm at the Polytechnic of Central London, 35 Marylebone Road in Room 326, opposite Baker Stret tube station.

We hope to produce a National Health Emergency bulletin to coincide with the 40th anniversary on July 5th.

Please send any contributions to the London Health Emergency offices, 335 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 before June 23rd.

Please affiliate: we need some money! Rates: £10 local bodies, £30 regional bodies, £50 national bodies, £5 for individual sub. Send money to LHE at above address.

Manchester

Refuse strike ends





PHOTOS: Finn Jensen

For three weeks mountains of stinking rubbish filled the streets of Machester as 650 TGWU and GMB refuse collectors went on strike, demanding proper staffing levels.

The strike was 100% solid, and solidarity was spreading to other trade unions, when NUPE and GMB organised a joint meeting for all Council workers.

By a 2-1 vote the strikers decided to return to work, despite the City Council's refusal to meet their demands.

If the strikers had won it would make it more difficult for the City Council to impose staff cuts in other departments. But more strikes are likely when the cuts really begin to hurt.

From Socialist Action Manchester Bulletin

MSF Conference

"New Wave" union beached by lawyers

In a postal ballot last November, a clear majority of the members of both ASTMS and TASS voted to merge the two unions.

The new union — MSF (Manufacturing, Scientific and Finance Union) — held its first annual conference in Bournemouth on June 11-15th.

It was a special Rules Conference, intended to construct the MSF rulebook.

This was always going to be a difficult task. ASTMS (known as Division 1 of MSF) always had a relatively democratic tradition, with branch-based conferences of over 1,000 delegates, independent funding for branches and regions, and a high level of mistrust of the National Executive Council (NEC) by branch activists.

By Glenn Sutherland MSF Conference Observer, Charing Cross Branch

In contrast, TASS (known as Division A of MSF — there's parity for you) had been ruled for years by a Stalinist clique led by Ken Gill. This clique organised, and continues to organise, its base through an inaccurately named "Broad Left".

Branches and regions had to apply for NEC approval of each item of expenditure. The Executive had the right to make up rules as it went along, by issuing "regulations" with the force of rule.

TASS Annual Conference was comprised of 160 delegates elected from regional and national conferences of the different industrial sectors of the union, with motions also being submitted on a regional basis.

Not surprisingly, criticism of the TASS Executive by the 160 delegates was rather limited by the fact that almost all of them were, in reality, selected by the Broad Left organisation.



And it's hello from Ken, and it's good-bye from Clive

In the event the rule book proposed by the MSF NEC — now politically, if not numerically, controlled by the "Broad Left" — avoided the knotty problem of integrating the two traditions while still remaining in control of MSF — by keeping most of the former rules of ASTMS and TASS intact.

The NEC claimed that the timetable imposed by the Certification Officer was too short fully to integrate the new rule book.

Predictably, the proposed rules attracted a record 2,200 amendments. 2,000 of these were from ex-ASTMS (Division 1) branches and mostly sought to bring the whole of MSF in line with the democratic structures and procedures of Division 1.

Expectation

My expectation — in common with many Divison 1 activists — was that the 400 Division A (TASS) delegates would vote in a solid block for whatever the NEC proposed, while the 400 Div. 1 (ASTMS) delegates — in the best traditions of ASTMS conferences — would be organising and voting 400 different ways!

In the event, much to the concern of Ken Gill, and his newly-converted accolyte Clive Jenkins, things worked out rather differently.

Some of the Craft (blue collar) sections of Div A had become fed up with their rights being trampled on by the Staff Sector-dominated TASS Executive over many years, and were willing to vote for some Division 1 amendments.

msf

Early in the proceedings, Conference voted for regions to have their own independent finance with the support of some Craft Sector delegates (mostly metal mechanics).

In spite of the "Broad Left" attempting to whip their forces into line outside Conference, this was followed by a vote for 10% of subs to be held independently by branches.

An amendment removing the right of the NEC to issue regulations with the force of rule was only lost by a handful of votes.

The scene was set for a series of crucial votes on rules 16, 17, and 18 which deal with the composition and structure of Annual Conference. Imagine the relief of the NEC when, after "legal advice", all amendments proposing an integrated branch-based conference were ruled out of order!

The MSF "independent" solicitors, showing an unerring sense of dramatic timing, had had some three months to consider the proposed rule, and at least a month for the amendments. However, the advice was only given (or taken?) when some of the amendments looked like being carried!

After having the most important debate of Conference ruled out of order, the mood of delegates changed to resigned quiescence. No other important votes went against the NEC.

In spite of some victories at this Conference, MSF has to wait (at least) one more year before debating a unified structure. No doubt the NEC (and the "Broad Left") will be preparing for 1989 with some care.

Members of *all* sections of MSF who care about democracy in the "new wave union" will now have to start their own preparations for 1989. Alliances *must* be built across the two divisions in order to impose the members' will on the unrepresentative clique which leads the union.

NALGO Conference

NALGO NEC contains militant delegates

This year's NALGO Conference will not launch the militant campaigns that are needed to fight back against the Tory government's attacks on health and local government.

In the Local Government Group meeting, the NEC made it clear that it wanted to drop the union's anti-cuts strategy of industrial action against cuts in jobs and services.

The group also adopted a strategy against privatisation which has no bottom line. This means that branches will give in one by one to in-house tendering, and branches like Westminster will be defeated through isolation.

The campaign against the Poll Tax endorsed by Conference will leave it up to individuals to return their registration forms. The mass action by local government unions to make the Tax unworkable will not be built.

By Fred Leplat ILEA NALGO Conference delegate

The NEC is pushing NALGO towards damage limitation and the very dented sheld of "new realism". Industrial action, the traditional and effective way of defending jobs, pay and conditions, is slowly being dropped in favour of lobbying and better insurance and travel offers for the membership.

But there is a mood of defiance and anger amongst the delegates. At the Universities Group meeting, the platform was defeated on a major aspect of the pay award. In the Local Government Group meeting, a motion for industrial action against cuts won 40% support.

Against the advice of the NEC, Conference lobbied John Moore, who was addressing a conference in an adjoining hotel. 1,500 went on the lobby, and Conference started 30 minutes late on Wednesday morning.

A 24 hour general strike in defence of the NHS was voted down; but the debate revealed a strong mood for militant action.

The mood of anger of these sections of the Conference must be turned into action. Unfortunately it will have to be up to delegates and branch activists to stop the retreat in their own branches and districts.

nalgo

The NEC is not pushing forward for a national campaign which includes industrial action on the key attacks from the Tories. It is leaving it up to each branch to fight on its own. This will lead to further defeat and demoralisation as branches go down one by one.

It is possible to turn the situation around and fight back on every issue. Organising solidarity for P&O strikers and action in defence of the NHS, and to gain small victories will build the confidence of the membership.

On the Railways

Unions sell out guards jobs

British Rail is proposing to do away with the guards' job in its present form.

This is in preparation for the introduction of Driver Only Operation throughout the country.

Management has tried to sell the package to its employees through letters and leaflets over the last 18 months. But very few guards will be better off, and many will be worse off.

By NUR *Briefing* supporters

Other staff will be threatened with redundancies as guards begin to take on a wide variety of duties. BR is dividing the workforce and making proposals that could seriously undermine safety on trains.

Until recently, the National Executive of the National Union of Railwaymen had rejected the proposals. Suddenly, the union has called for a ballot of all guards — and called on members to accept BR's offer.

The unions agree that nothing has changed, that the proposals do not protect the grade of guard (and therefore our jobs), but they think the membership is not prepared to fight.

Proposals

So rather than openly oppose the proposals and campaign for a *no* vote, the union executive is trying to have its cake and eat it. A yes vote would endorse their call; a *no* vote will be seen as a futile protest against both management and the union.

What lies behind BR's proposals (and the many other changes in the industry over the last decade) is preparation for privatisation. British Rail is no longer a "service" or even "the railway industry", it is *The Business*.

The NUR and the drivers' union, ASLEF, have allowed management to play one section of the workforce off against another. Every time there are proposals to take some form of industrial action, only a section of the workforce is involved.

They allowed the train drivers to be blackmailed into submission by the TUC in 1982. The workshops have closed one after another with no call for support from the rest of the workforce.

Sealink and Travellers Fare have been hived off. And all the time the workforce has declined.

Giving in to management's proposals now, without a fight, will not halt this decline. Just the opposite: it will allow British Rail to push ahead with its drive to make the industry "profitable".

In most other countries railways are subsidised by the state, yet British Rail insists on handing back public money while it puts up fares and keeps wages down.

As we go to press, the NUR's AGM has just started. The ballot result will be announced there. It will be no surprise to activists if there is a majority to accept the proposals (although, with a proper campaign and appropriate Leadership, a "no" vote was a real possibility).

The AGM will then vote to accept the deal and once again the membership will be blamed for not being prepared to fight.

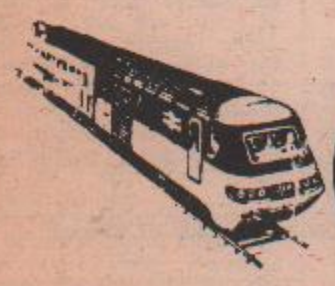
Whatever the result, activists will continue to fight management and the union Leadership wherever necessary. It's *our* jobs that are on the line.

Footnote: British Rail has introduced two new statutes into the Rule Book (which every employee has to sign) without any discussion with the unions.

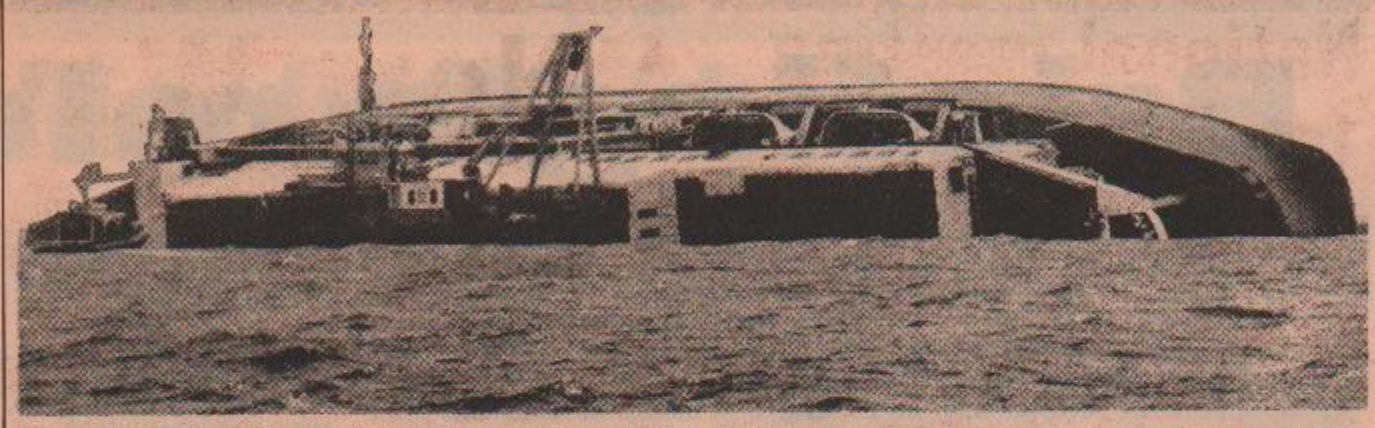
The effect of these new rules is to "gag" staff. One states that "an employee must not... make or issue any statement likely to be made public and which may damage the Board's business."

The second rule states that "an employee must not do any act nor take part in any action which might lead to a disruption of work or damage the Board's business."

Both rules have serious implications for activists. You will understand why we have omitted our names from this article.



Support P&O strikers!



London Demonstration

in support of sacked P&O seafarers

Wednesday June 29th

Assemble 12 noon Hyde Park corner

We will march to P&O's headquarters in Pall Mall and Picket

March called by London Support Groups

All Briefing readers are urged to attend, and to publicise this demonstration in labour movement bodies and campaigns

NUS members in Glasgow and Aberdeen sacked for taking solidarity action with the Dover P&O strikers temporarily occupied their union offices, sequestrated by the High Court.

These members were sacked by Sealink and other operators as a result of the week long national stoppage.

They were left high and dry when the General Secretary Sam McCluskie called off the action in the vain hope of purging the union's contempt.

McCluskie, speaking at NALGO Conference, stated that the picketing will continue despite his declared aim of pursuing this dispute within the law.

This is undoubtedly due to to impressive solidarity of the pickets and the depth of support for them within the union nationally. Over 400 pickets continue to turn out daily.

In early June a party of

By Pete Cooper
Trade Union Briefing

Hull NUS members posing as a Rugby Club travelling on the *Pride of Kent* found that the most elementary safety procedures are not being adhered to by the scab crews.

Exits to emergency stations were blocked, and many crew members said that they had had no lifeboat drills.

Asked what he would do in an emergency, one crew member said that they had been told to report to the information desk! The *Herald of Free Enterprise* took three minutes to go over...

The TUC has actually published a leaflet in support of the strike! But don't get too excited at this "revolutionary" event.

On it a cartoon depicts a Sealink ferry full of happy passengers and crew passing an empty P&O vessel piloted by a dejected Geoffrey Sterling. It is entirely within the ridiculous "commercial war" strategy being pursued by the NUS Leadership.

Furthermore, money from the fund set up by the TUC is not getting through to the support groups whom it is supposed to benefit. The strikers have only just received a payment from this source.

It is therefore important that money for the strikers and their dependents is sent directly to *all* the support groups.

Support is building for the June 29th demonstration called by the London Support Groups and coaches of strikers and their supporters will be coming from Dover. *Be there!*

Women's Support Groups

Money is needed urgently by *all* the Women's Support Groups working with the sacked seafarers and their families. Contact these groups.

Aylesham WSG
61 Castle Drive, Whitfield, Dover
0304 820543

Canterbury WSG
75 Tenterden Drive, Canterbury
0227 66768

Deal WSG
Magness House, Mill Hill, Deal
0304 367840

Dover WSG
210, London Road, Dover

Thanet WSG
147 High Street, Ramsgate
0843 587990

Folkestone WSG
7 Tennyson Place, Folkestone
0303 51997

Swindon P&O Support Group

Solidarity work threatens bureaucrats' comfort

In its first initiative since the days of Noah and his Ark, Swindon Trades Council set up a Committee to organise soldiarity activity with the P&O workers.

The officials weren't very keen on this but couldn't find any arguments against it. Within a month more than £500 had been raised.

Faced with the threat of successful activity which might breathe life into this moribund body, the officials did their best to warn everybody else against repeating it.

However, the work of the committee continues, with collections every two weeks in the town centre. P&O workers must be taken round the local labour movement, and the politics of the dispute discussed, not least the role of McCluskie and the union bureaucracy. But Stalinist Chair Ted Poole tried to shut up a delegate when he spoke about the role of McCluskie, saying that such an attack was "sectarian and divisive".

By Swindon Briefing Supporters

The unusually acrimonious atmosphere of the meeting indicates that such activity as that around the P&O dispute is a threat to the small coterie of demoralised, cynical, anti-working class time-servers who have managed to drive away people and turn our Trades Council into a political morgue.

We believe that Swindon Trades Council should be an active organiser, addressing the problems which the local labour movement faces, such as the need for a unionisation campaign to halt the trend towards the growth of non-union firms.

The Benn-Heffer campaign in particular could be used to develop new contacts in the unions who could organise to transform the Trades Council into an active force.

The P&O Support Committee can be contacted on 46816, 46581 or 613592.

Briefing AGM paper

The year ahead: Briefing's role

***Labour Briefing's* 1988 AGM takes place on July 2nd. Details of the event are printed on page 12 of this issue of *Labour Briefing*.**

Here we print the main document which will be discussed at the AGM. It is the culmination of much collective discussion. However, we have tried to keep the document short and concise, addressing the broad thrust of our politics rather than drawing up "the perfect shopping list"!

Amendments are welcome, and will be debated — though we would ask you to bear in mind the nature of the document! Please try to send in to the office in advance, or bring along on the day, 250 copies of any amendments you may have.

By the outgoing *Labour Briefing* National Steering Committee

The Tories

In her ninth year in power, Thatcher's ambitions are clearer than ever: to dismantle the Welfare State, break up the public sector, and restructure the British economy in the interests of capitalism.

In pursuit of these aims, the Tories will continue to attack democratic rights (notably trade union rights), and the rights of black people (through increased use of immigration law and police powers), lesbians and gay men, women, and other oppressed sections of society.

They will place institutions which previously enjoyed relative independence (for example, education, local government, broadcasting) under ever firmer central government control.

This is the Tory response to a prolonged crisis of British capitalism: to overturn the post-war settlement and fundamentally revise relations between the classes — in favour of the ruling class.

The Fightback

Third-term Tory attacks have led to an outbreak of defensive struggles. Seafarers, carworkers, NHS workers, textile workers, local government workers have taken action.

Mass campaigns have emerged in response to Alton and Section 28. The Poll Tax and social security cuts have provoked mass indignation, sparking backbench Tory revolts.

New Realism

But resistance has remained isolated, fragmented, and uneven. The contrast of the intransigent, confident employers and government with the vacillating, timid labour movement leadership could not be clearer.

So-called "New Realism" has strengthened its grip within the trade unions. Its failure to confront the employers' offensive, to provide solidarity with those in struggle, and above all to organise action to force the employers to retreat is underlined by its compromises with the scab "business unionism" of the EETPU.

Kinnock's Failure

After Thatcher's third election victory the Labour Party Leadership has continued to toy with glossy repackaging; launched a major drive against basic socialist policies — and indeed against any policies which challenge Thatcher's "counter-revolution"; attacked the link with the unions; further concentrated power with the Walworth Road bureaucracy; and intensified the witch-hunt. At all levels, the rights of Party members to speak and act as socialists are being curtailed.

Kinnock and his supporters have wasted opportunity after opportunity. Counter Thatcher with a coherent socialist vision? Encourage, support, or sustain workers or the oppressed in struggle? Knock Thatcher from her perch? They have failed on each count.

Throughout, they have been aiding and abetting the plans of the right wing trade union bureaucracy; and have, in turn, been aided and abetted themselves by the dead hand of the LCC in the constituencies.

The Left's Response

The decision of the Campaign Group to challenge Kinnock and Hattersley marks a new stage in what has been, until now, a limited fightback by the left. The Benn-Heffer Campaign draws a necessary, fundamental dividing line throughout the labour movement.

It is part and parcel of the attempt to revitalise and unite the left through the Socialist Conference — the first serious attempt to create a national left-wing movement in many years.

Briefing's Role

Labour Briefing — as a newspaper and as a current in the labour movement — aims to help unify left forces inside and outside the Labour Party, in the trade unions, and in campaigns.

We seek to build this unity around consistent class struggle politics, from which all the struggles of the oppressed — in Britain and around the world — are inseparable. We aim to build mass resistance to the Tories; to challenge and ultimately displace the Kinnockite/New Realist misleadership.

Building the Left

Briefing supporters work for a non-sectarian, united, democratic left in the labour movement. Such a left cannot be built by top-down edicts or caucus-room deals. It must find its strength in the grass roots of the labour movement and be democratically accountable to its supporters. It requires a combination of political principle with organisational flexibility; open democratic debate in conjunction with unity in action.

Forging the Links

To be an individual activist in the Labour Party or trade unions is not enough. The isolation and fragmentation which have bedevilled not only the left but local and national struggles of all kinds can only be remedied by a collective effort to forge links between struggles — and build a broad current which can make unity in action a reality.

Self-Organisation

Briefing encourages self-organisation of all oppressed groups — particularly within the labour movement, and among *Briefing* supporters themselves.

Local *Briefing* Groups

Local *Briefing* Groups are the heart of *Labour Briefing*. They should be non-sectarian, flexible, and imaginative. Existing *Briefing* groups should seek to widen their influence. Where groups do not exist, *Briefing* readers should attempt to set them up, taking into account existing left bodies, such as Campaign Groups. They should make every effort to work within the largest possible circle.

A local *Briefing* Group should act as:

- **a forum for discussion.** Given the failure of the Labour Party to offer political education and the increasing restriction of debate within its structure, this function is vital.
- **an organisational vehicle** — to bring together activists from different spheres, to build solidarity with trade union struggles and other campaigns, and to co-ordinate left initiatives within CLPs.
- **a source of information** — through the publication of a local bulletin and selling (and contributing to) *Labour Briefing*.

In short, local *Briefing* groups exist to *forge the links!*



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Mandy Mudd, selling Briefing and distributing leaflets at the Socialist Conference in Chesterfield

Briefing in the Unions

Briefing aims to build widespread political and practial solidarity with all workers in struggle. We support the work of the Trade Union Solidarity Network.

In individual unions *Briefing* supporters work to build democratic, active, open left currents that can challenge the New Realists organisationally and politically.

The Paper

The fortnightly national paper is a non-sectarian platform for all those in struggle. It is a forum for socialist debate — particularly important in developing alternatives to Kinnock's Policy Review.

The paper is a news bulletin for the left as a whole. People should be able to turn to *Briefing* to find out what is going on in the class struggle — something they cannot find in either the bourgeois press or the sectarian "party line" publications.

The paper also helps organise interventions by *Briefing* groups and supporters.

Above all, the paper champions clear, consistent socialist politics. It places itself unequivocally on the side of all those in struggle against the ruling class.

Difficult Challenges

Briefing needs urgently to expand its range of contributors. In particular, it needs to increase contributions from outside London, from women, and from trade unionists.

We need improved links with and coverage of a number of international solidarity campaigns. We need improved distribution (outside London, in bookshops, at public events, and through participation in campaigns).

We need to continue to improve production, readability, and presentation. Links between the paper and local *Briefing* groups need strengthening.

Briefing needs a major increase in income if it is to achieve these goals. Sales, advertising, standing orders must all be increased.

Your Paper

These tasks belong to *all Briefing* supporters — not just the Editorial Board or the office staff. *Briefing* readers should see the paper as their own property and make demands and contributions accordingly.

Benn and Heffer

Briefing was a leading advocate of a Labour Leadership contest, and has been a consistent, constructive supporter of the Benn-Heffer Campaign.

Briefing supporters should seize the opportunities offered by this challenge to Labour's misleadership to argue for socialist polices, to activate the left at local level, and to forge links between struggles and between activists.

Chesterfield

Briefing has taken the Socialist Conference seriously from the beginning. Through coverage in the paper, participation by local groups, support for regional events, *Briefing* will continue to nurture the seeds of a socialist movement sewn in Chesterfield.

Chesterfield offers *Briefing* supporters a chance to participate in socialist policy-making and solidarity activities, and, above all, *to link the two.*

We want to help the Socialist Conference develop in a flexible but democratic manner, so that it can sustain a wide range of socialist initiatives.

Briefing Commissions

The *Briefing* Commissions on trade unions, women, youth, etc., need to be revived. Supporters interested in a particular commission need to meet to discuss and organise activities and make regular contributions to the paper.

The Steering Committee

The National Steering Committee guides *Briefing's* political interventions. It needs to be strengthened so that decisions it takes can be put into effect.

It needs to improve links with local groups and commissions, and raise *Briefing's* public profile (by organising publicity, events, fringe meetings, etc.).

It must become an active body which represents and assists local *Briefing* Groups. It too must *forge the links!*

Benn and Heffer Badges and Cards

Send this coupon to B. Griffiths, 11 Fremont St, London E9, or bring it to the *Briefing* AGM, enclosing/bringing payment. Cheques/postal orders are payable to Labour Briefing; orders for a single badge can be paid in stamps. *Please send separate cheques or postal orders for badges and cards.*

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Please send me:

..... *badges for* £.....
single badge: 35p; 20 badges: £6; 50 badges: £13; 100 badges: £23; 200 badges: £40

..... *postcard packs for* £.....
Pack of 10: £2 each; 10 or more packs: £1.50 each

Total money enclosed: ..... £.....

All prices include postage and packing.
★Note: We are planning a further print run of badges. Please make sure you put in your bulk order for summer sales now.

Heffer v Prescott

Instant mythology exposed!



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

John Prescott

"As Deputy Leader, I would give my full support to Neil Kinnock as Party Leader."

If anyone is thinking of voting for John Prescott for Deputy Leader, that statement should be enough to make him or her think again.

Unfortunately, there are some left comrades who think Prescott has a chance of unseating Hattersley, and are therefore supporting him.

But Prescott isn't standing against Hattersley. He's standing against Eric Heffer and the socialist policies of the Benn-Heffer platform.

By Joan Twelves
London Campaign for Socialism

If Prescott was seriously standing against Hattersley, he would have refused to stand down earlier this year. He only changed his mind about standing when Tony Benn and Eric Heffer declared their candidacy and opened a real Leadership battle.

That incident should be remembered when Prescott talks about democracy and socialism on television over the next few months. If he were elected Deputy Leader, he would be no more than Kinnock's errand boy.

Not that he will get elected. The people who count in the electoral college — the trade unions — know (as Kinnock knows) that the real battle isn't between Hattersley and Prescott, but between Benn-Heffer and Kinnock-Hattersley-Prescott — between left and right.

It's an illusion to believe that Kinnock is being held hostage by Hattersley and his chums. It's an illusion to believe that Prescott will push Kinnock to the left.

While Kinnock has witch-hunted socialists — from Liverpool to Sharon Atkin and Mandy Mudd — Prescott has kept silent. As Kinnock presides over the greatest attempted revision of Labour's policies since Gaitskell, Prescott refuses to criticise him.

And as Kinnock joins the Atlanticist establishment, ready to trade missile for missile, rather than force an end to the nuclear terror, Prescott still promises the Leader "full support".

Hattersley hasn't needed to pull any strings. Kinnock (with the backing of his friends in the LCC) has done it all without his help.

So far, Prescott has had little to say on policy other than that more Party members should be involved in the Policy Review. He goes along with Kinnock's *Aims and Values* document.

He says he wants to build a "mass, campaigning Party" — or, as it was put by one speaker at Chesterfield, to "organise a better piss-up in the brewery".

But, in the end, most people vote for or join a Party because of its policies, not because it has the slickest advertising campaign.

This Leadership campaign is about policies, not personalities, and the ability of individual comrades to provide Leadership for the movement has to be judged in the context of their political record.

Prescott's record over the past few months is damning. Standing by his sponsor, Sam McCluskie, he has been party to the sell-out of the NUS strikers.

In contrast, Eric Heffer has a long history of class struggle solidarity — giving wholehearted support in recent years to miners, printworkers, nurses, seafarers, and Liverpool's surcharged and witch-hunted Councillors.

Our Campaign for Socialism will go on after this October's Party Conference. It is a campaign for socialist policies — not a beauty contest. It is certainly not about finding middle-aged white men preferrable to "old" white men.

Of course, it would have been good if there had been women and/or black comrades of sufficient standing contesting the Leadership or Deputy Leadership. And they *were* asked. But comrades are not yet ready to face that challenge — institutionalised sexism and racism do not disappear overnight. And nor, it is apparent, does ageism.

A vote for Prescott is a vote for Kinnock, for a continuation of class collaboration and opinion poll politics — politics which don't even win elections.

A vote for Tony Benn and Eric Heffer is a vote for socialism and an end to Tory rule.

Haringey Witch-hunt

Mandy Mudd removed; right wing hack imposed

The struggle against the cuts in Haringey in North London continues — and the local Labour right grow more intolerant, undemocratic, and power-obsessed by the day.

Mandy Mudd, *Briefing* supporter and anti-cuts activist, was selected by Party members in Bruce Grove branch in Tottenham to fight the by-election caused by MP Bernie Grant's resignation from his old Council seat.

Mandy had been nominated by her Women's Section, approved in secret ballots at Tottenham GC and Haringey LGC, and had already seen off one attempt to get her removed from the by-election panel.

By Mike Marqusee
Haringey Labour Briefing

Despite the trumped up charges pending against her at the NCC and a barrage of sexist media attacks, Bruce Grove branch selected her by a convincing majority.

Mandy received 12 votes, another local Party member received three, and the single fiercely pro-cuts, right wing candidate (one of Mandy's accusers at the NCC kangaroo court) received *one vote only*.

Obviously, Bruce Grove members felt Mandy would make an able colleague of sitting anti-cuts Councillors Martha Osamor and Vince Gillespie. They had no doubt she would easily defend Bernie Grant's substantial majority. The CLP agent duly filed Mandy's nomination papers and plans for the campaign were drafted.

The prospect of Mandy winning a seat in a by-election that would inevitably have been seen as a referendum on the Labour right's cuts strategy (one third off all services expenditure and over 2,000 jobs gone in less than nine months) terrified the local LCC — the organised backbone of the Haringey right.

Having failed to get their way through the Party's democratic procedures, there was only one hope left for Mandy's opponents: would the NEC step in?

Mandy had been selected on June 1st. On June 6th, the NEC's Organisation Sub-committee voted to instruct the Haringey LGC Executive (which just happened to be meeting that night) not to endorse Mandy, because she was "under investigation". Of those present at the Sub-commitee, only Dennis Skinner voted against.

The LGC Executive has been the bulwark of the local right, meeting regularly with the Council Leadership to carve up local jobs and services — and to ensure the Party and the public remain as ill-informed as possible.

It is not the normal business of the Organisation Sub-committee to discuss or even take note of local Council by-elections, no less meetings of LGC Executives.

Of course, the whole affair was a blatant stitch-up. The Party's full-time London regional officers are nothing but paid agents of one Party faction, and behaved accordingly. They issued an "instruction" to the LGC Executive, and the majority of the Executive obeyed with alacrity. They refused to endorse Mandy.

Next, they had to find a candidate to impose on the rebellious anti-cuts Branch. This was more difficult. Forward stepped Ian "no job too dirty" Willmore, member of neighbouring Hornsey & Wood Green CLP, TGWU Research Officer, pro-cuts fanatic, and ace witch-hunter.

He immediately filed his nomination as the "official" Labur Party candidate. He was, however, unable to find ten local Party members to sign for him, and had to secure backing from non-members resident in the ward.

This move was denounced by the Tottenham Constituency EC; which called an emergency GC.

In the meantime, Mandy, after consultation with the local left and the *Briefing* National Steering Committee, sought legal advice. After some delay, solicitors and barristers urged her to apply for an injunction against the LGC Executive in the High Court.

Judge Vinelott refused to grant the injunction — and his ruling has ominous implications for Labour Party democracy.

He acknowledged that Mandy was properly selected under the rules of the Labour Party, but said that the rules could not be taken "in isolation", and that "as a national Party" it (represented by officials) had the right to abrogate those rules and to impose a candidate if this was felt to be in the interests of the national Party.

He said the charges against Mandy were "serious" (though she has as yet had no opportunity to answer them, and indeed totally denies them) and gave grounds for the national Party's action.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Mandy Mudd addresses the Briefing fringe meeting at the second Socialist Conference in Chesterfield

Earlier in the proceedings, when Mandy's barrister referred to her nomination by the Women's Section, Vinelott asked why there wasn't a "men's section" and commented that it might be "discriminatory". This choice witticism was greeted by deferential laughter from the members of the LGC Executive. Shame on them for colluding with such sexist tripe!

The Judge awarded costs against Mandy, on the extraordinary grounds that as both Parties in the hearing were "fraternal members of the Labour Party" they could sort it out among themselves.

We are waiting to receive the LGC Executive's bill. Help will certainly be needed — send cheques to Haringey Against the Witch-hunt, c/o 23 Earlsmead Road, London N15 4DA.

The legal action was always conceived as one part of a wider political campaign against the witch-hunt. The purpose of the High Court application was to give the local Party a choice — Mandy or Ian Willmore.

The Tottenham GC met in emergency session on Tuesday June 14th, following the High Court ruling, and voted overwhelmingly to condemn the process by which Willmore had become a candidate. It asked him to withdraw and allow Mandy to stand as the democratic choice of the local Party.

With the smug arrogance which is his trademark, Willmore refused to bow to the Party's wishes, made no attempt to excuse his behaviour, and issued fresh threats of disciplinary action against anyone who disrupted his campaign.

Mandy, to save the local Party from suspension, withdrew her nomination the following day.

"If we do not have democracy within our own Party," she asked, "how can we expect to build a more democratic order in society as a whole?"

She then called on local voters to support the Labour candidate in the Bruce Grove by-election which will be held on July 7th.

Birmingham Labour Group

Rear-gunners needed!

On June 6th I went to a meeting of Birmingham Labour Group as a Party observer.

Strange how life pans out.

On June 6th 24 years ago I was landing in Normandy. And I'm still not sure who the real enemy is, after years of so-called socialists named Gaitskell, Prentiss, Rogers, and Owen.

At the Group meeting it was proposed to put a three line whip on Labour Councillors to vote down a Liberal resolution to keep open Martineau House, a holiday home for disabled children, in Bognor.

Richard Evans, Bournville's newly elected Councillor, said he couldn't vote to support this closure. After hardly any debate, a three-line whip was approved.

By Len Mason
Hall Green CLP

The next day I sat in the public gallery and watched 20 Labour Councillors abstain on the Liberal motion, which won by only one vote. Straight away, every Councillor received a slip saying there would be a special Group meeting.

I went along and heard Councillor Sir Stan Yapp call for the suspension of the 20. 31 comrades spoke for and against. Brian Bird said he had had a bellyful of idealists.

Chris Kirk asked why Group officers put pressure on certain Councillors yet only chastised one Councillor who had physically assaulted him. Richard Evans said he saluted the 20 who abstained and that the most important thing was that Martineau was saved for the kids.

Teresa Stewart, Trudy Livingstone, and Lin Jones took a lot of personal abuse from the right. Teresa said that it seemed the Group officers' main aim was to stifle debate.

As the meeting wore on the Group officers seemed to be getting less confident, but when the vote was taken the 20 were suspended.

I'm beginning to think it's not observers that are needed but rear-gunners to protect the backs of comrades who are prepared to make a stand for socialism.

New Campaign Group

The Exeter and East Devon Campaign Group has been formed to cover the Exeter, Honiton, and Tiverton Constituencies.

The forces involved are:

- *Labour Briefing*, which has all its supporters in Exeter and dominates the Exeter left;
- a small *Militant* group;
- the numerically largest grouping, the CLPD-inspired Bennite left, based in the Honiton and Tiverton Labour Parties.

The main tension is between *Briefing* and *Militant* on the one hand, who favour class politics, and the majority left-reformist and "bureaucracy-orientated" CLPD grouping on the other hand.

The immediate task of the newly formed Campaign Group is to support the Benn-Heffer challenge to the Kinnock Leadership of the Labour Party. It is clear that in doing so and by supporting the struggles of oppressed groups and by backing left policies, the Campaign Group will come into conflict with the right wing Leadership of Exeter Labour Party.

Peter Bowing, Devon Labour Briefing

Message from Black Sections

You may be aware of the manoeuvres of the Labour Leadership against National Black Section. Due to these manoeuvres, the Black Section will be hard pushed to get a debate at this year's Labour Party Conference.

If the Black Section fails to get a debate, this would easily be interpreted as a victory for the right wing Leadership of the Party. The National Black Section urges all the organisations that support us to give priority, at Ward and GC levels, to Black Sections resolutions. A defeat for the Black Section would only mean a defeat for the left.

Kingsley Abrams, National Secretary LPBS

Feature on Lesbian and Gay Politics

The question of the family

Recognise the oppressor — to break the isolation

For most of the straight left, the question of the family is pretty much a non-issue.

Many acknowledge that the patriarchal family will be dispensed with in a classless society, along with the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state.

However, there is little attempt to address the question of how this will be brought about.

The prevalent line of thought, even amongst socialist feminists, is that under capitalism there is no alternative to the family, and that any attempt to create alternative social relations under capitalism is doomed to failure.

It follows that those who make this attmept can be dismissed for "indulging in lifestyle politics". The implication is that the struggle for liberation is to be waged through political and economic demands.

For out lesbians and gays, and many others in society, this question is not academic. For many of us, the possibility of living in a family, or something that remotely resembles a family, is not an option.

For us, "indulging in lifestyle politics" is central to our psychologial survival. Without families, many of those who are not able to create the alternative social relations necessary to meet a bare minimum of emotional need begin to disintegrate psychologically.

By TOBIE GLENNY

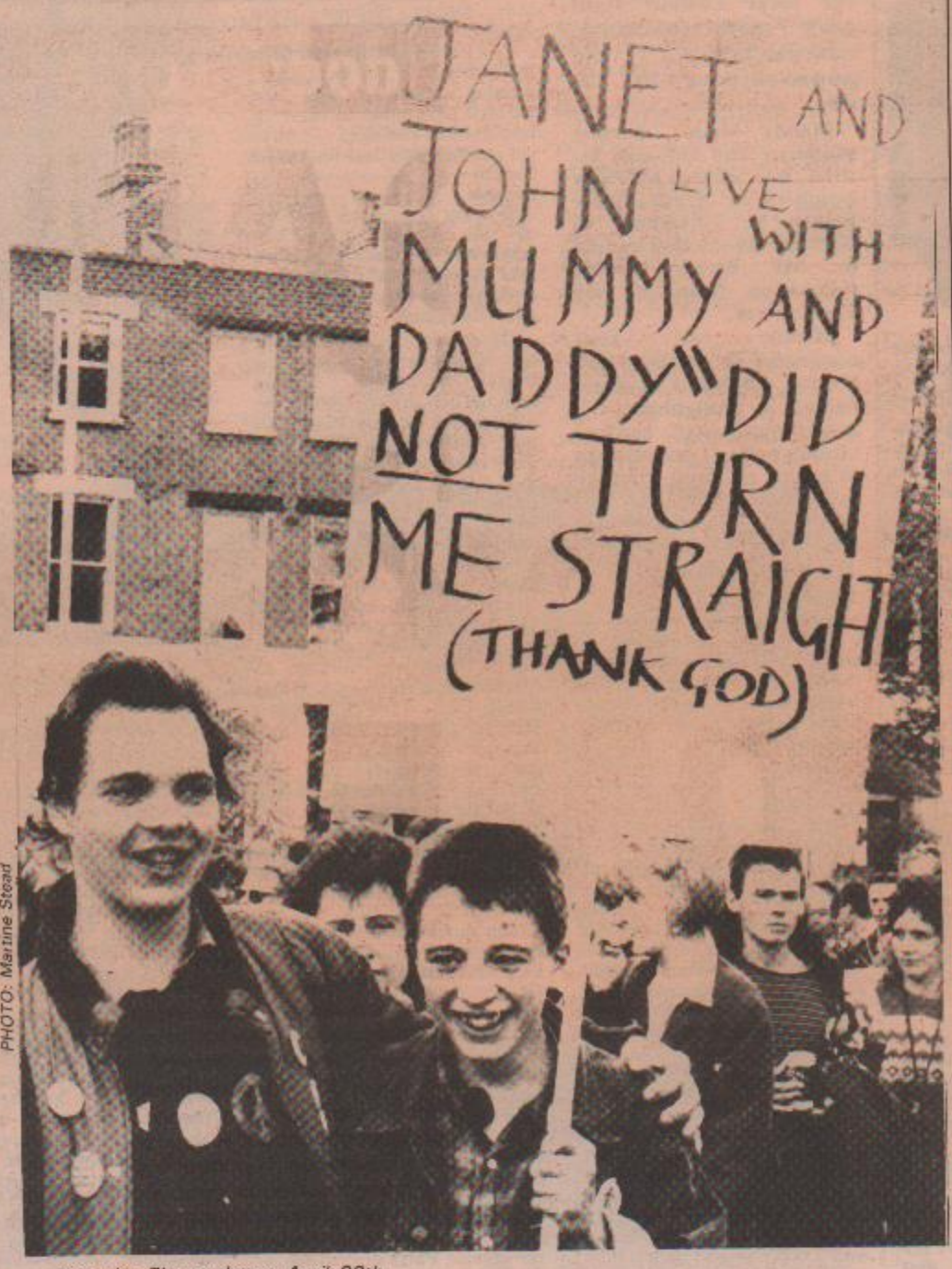


PHOTO: Martine Stead

Stop the Clause demo, April 30th

Because of this, "building community" has always been central to lesbian and gay politics. In fact, the struggle to build alternative social relations has tended to be prioritised over political and economic demands.

Those of us involved in taking lesbian and gay politics into the workplace and into political parties have always been in a minority amongst the politically active sections of the lesbian and gay communities.

For most activists the primary focus has been setting up centres, phone lines, meeting places, refuges, support groups, social groups, collective households, AIDS support networks, etc.

The process of "coming out" remains the central dynamic of the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation. Coming out is the means through which we become consciously aware of our oppression.

It is the means through which we begin to act on that awareness — by asserting our sexual identities. In this context coming out is an ongoing process — not just an initial phase.

The means through which we come out is through the collectivisation of our emotions. Talking, exchanging experiences, sharing our pleasure and our pain.

The question of pain is crucial. Prior to coming out, many of us thought of our emotions as warped, disgusting, and horrible. This is what we had been taught by our parents, teachers, and friends. We learnt to hide our emotions, suppress our desires, and bury our accumulated pain.

Only by swapping notes on our painful pasts are we able to become conscious of the fact that the reason we suffer is not because we as individuals are inadequate, but because we live in a society which is organised on the basis of maintaining our oppression.

Collectivising our emotions gives us the consciousness that enables us to struggle for our liberation. That struggle, in turn, gives others the confidence to begin coming out.

The process of coming out involves transforming emotions of self-hatred into emotions of anger. Instead of oppressing ourselves, we begin to experience society as the oppressor, and we begin to express our feelings at this realisation.

Learning to bridle our anger and use it creatively is often a difficult task; but it is the driving force of our struggle.

The question of dealing with anger is much more difficult for lesbians than it is for gays, because the source of their pain runs so much deeper. In the process of collectivising their emotions, lesbians unbury stuff around gender as well as sexuality. Some of it is incredibly hot — stuff around rape, incest, violence in the home.

These have become big issues recently not becasue of Esther Rantzen, but because of those groups of women, mainly lesbians, who have been willing to break the taboos and collectivise their emotions, and have then begun organising on the basis of this collective experience.

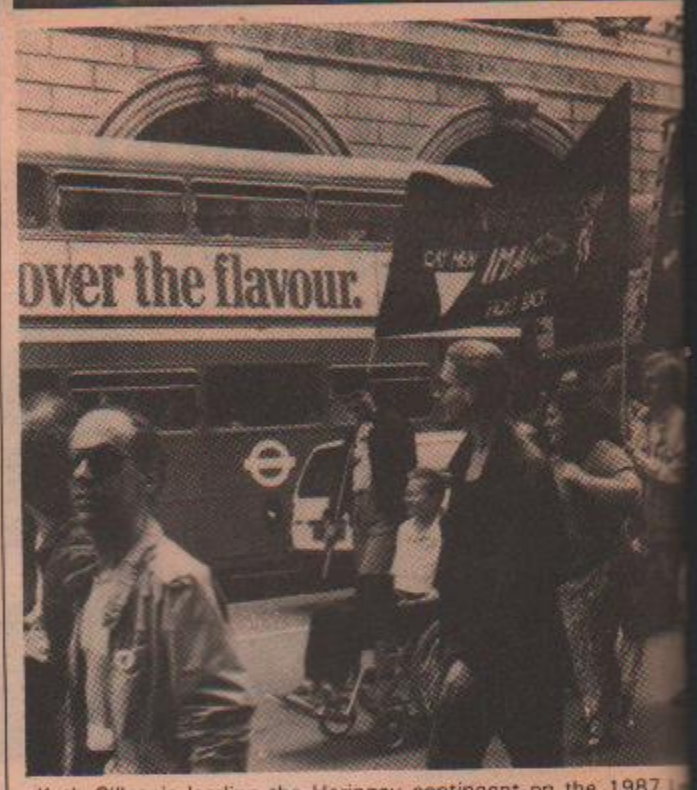
The problem with the left, including the socialist feminist left, is the degree to which it has consistently failed to engage seriously with any of these questions. You may get the odd article on the family, rape, or whatever — but when it comes down to questions of organisation, then the left would rather make demands of the state or the bourgeoisie than confront the family directly.

When socialist feminists (mainly heterosexual) condemn radical feminists (mainly lesbian) because of their ideas, they fail to understand that the basis of these ideas is not "ideology" but "material reality" — i.e. struggles around social relations. Until the left begins to take these issues seriously, lesbians and gays will be left to organise in isolation.

labour campaign for lesbian and gay rights

Join LCLGR!
Read *Lesbian and Gay Socialist!*
PO Box 306, London N5 2SY

The Histor



Kath Gillespie leading the Haringey contingent on the 1987 L

STAND U BE PROU

The issue of lesbian and gay rights was first raised long before the current movements began to take shape in 1969. But to begin with, it was done in an closeted and reformist manner. The few writers who took it up hid behind heterosexual covers. Everything else was heavily supressed.

In June 1969 everything changed. Under the influence of May 68, the Stonewall Riot exploded in New York in response to incessant police raids. Several days of struggle succeeded in beating back the police. From then on, a movement grew rapidly. The first Gay Pride March was held in commemoration on the first anniversary of the Riot in New York, and it has been an annual event ever since.

In Britain, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was founded in the autumn of 1970. The first march was in August 1971, and London's first Gay Pride March was held in June 1972. The GLF grew rapidly, and groups sprang up in most major cities. At the same time, similar movements started in other countries.

The GLF had a very different standpoint from the previous highly discreet movements. It believed that Lesbian and Gay sexualities were inherently good, and was founded on the idea of autonomy — liberation of the oppressed by their own efforts — inspired by the women's and black movements. Many of the ideas also reflected Maoist notions of self-criticism and "consciousness raising".

There were, however, huge weaknesses. The movement soon split along sex lines; its male-dominated nature made it uninhabitable for lesbians, who preferred work in the women's movement.In spite of the heterosexism lesbians en-

L



Lobby of Haringey Council, April 25th

...y of Pride



...sbian and Gay Pride demo

...UP, ...UD!

countered there, they played a big part in its mobilisations and conferences.

Throughout the movement divisions soon developed over relationships to the struggles of the working class. Various early attempts to build a class-based approach (such as the Gay Working Peoples Campaign) largely failed. Meanwhile, organisations such as the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) took forward the struggle around the trial of *Gay News* in the late 1970s, which was the theme of the Gay Pride marches of the time. In 1979, the size of the march reached 10,000.

The early 1980s saw the emergence of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, along with campaigns in NALGO and other white collar unions. Left Labour-led Local Authoriites, notably the GLC, began to support lesbian and gay organisations, and included "sexual orientation" (a bit weak this) in equal opportunities policies. GLC-funding made possible the setting up of the London Lesbian and Gay Centre and various other projects.

Solidarity movements such as Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, the actitivies of LCLGR, and the support of the Labour Left, led to policy decisions at the Labour Party and TUC Conferences in 1985 and 86.

Every year since 1972 there has been a lesbian and Gay Pride March. Although increasingly commercialised and "non-political", it has reflected the issues of the time — the *Gay News* trial, the police raids on the Gemini Club, solidarity with the miners. This year Section 28 will be a major focus.

Despite wrangling amongst the organisers, Lesbian Strength, and Lesbian and Gay Pride remain essential dates for activists.

MARK FINDLAY

Challenging invisibility

L-E-S-B-I-A-N spells *Lesbian*!

Queen Victoria, so the story goes, did not believe lesbians existed.

We were therefore left out of the 1885 Criminal Law (Amendment) Act.

And when in 1921 the Commons tried to rectify this glaring omission they met with complete opposition from the Lords, who considered that to make lesbian sexual relationships an offence would risk spreading the knowledge of lesbianism and thus encourage its practice.

By Rebecca Fleming LCLGR

There was outrage that the House should even have to debate this *"most disgusting and polluting subject."* The Lord Chancellor himself declared:

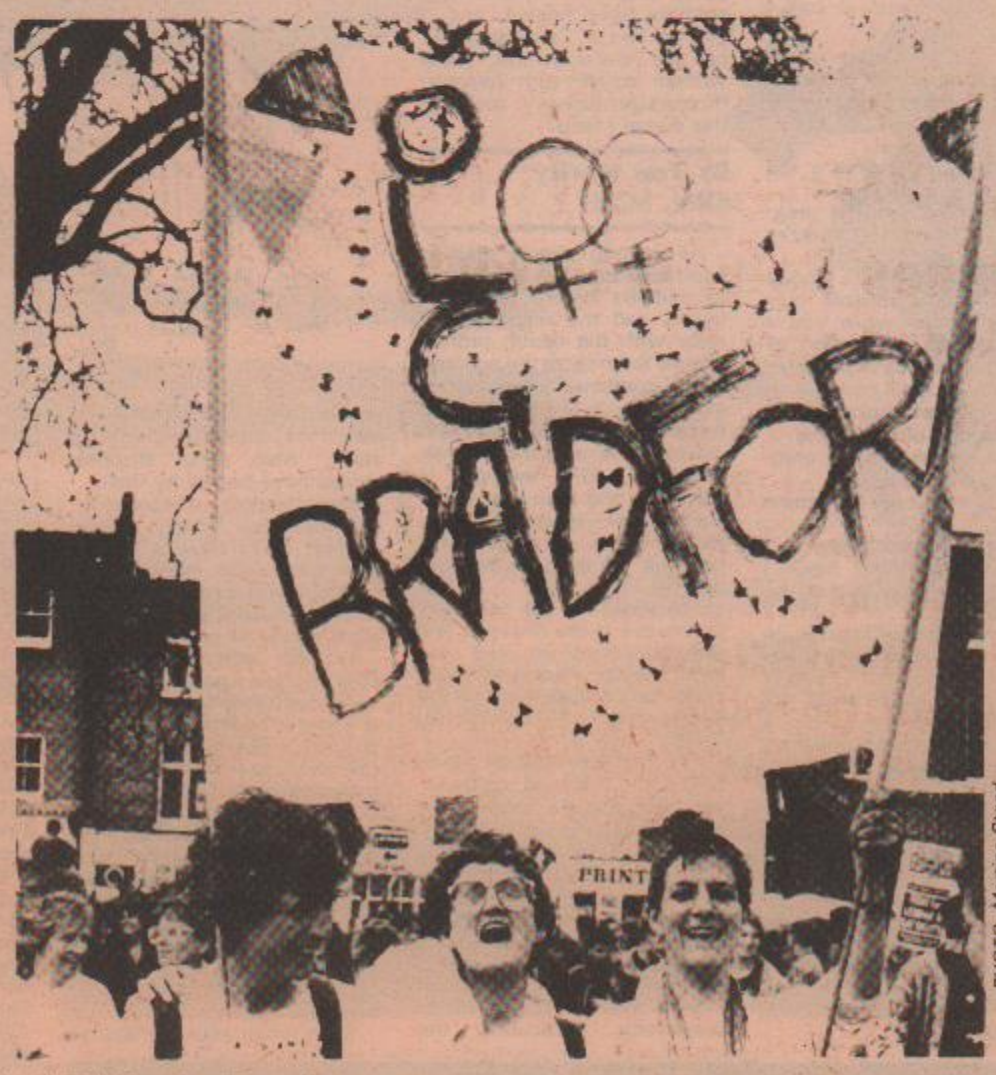
"If you accept a sophisticated society in a sophisticated city, I would be bold enough to say that of every 1,000 women, 999 have never even heard a whisper of these practices."

He thus displayed a level of ignorance and prejudice on the issue which has become traditional in the "Upper House".

This pretence of non-existence and the doctrine of invisibility is perpetuated today, even on the left. First, there is the question of language. Words *are* important. They are part of the way society oppresses us.

The words lesbian and gay are important. *Lesbian* comes first — because otherwise it gets forgotten. The term "gay" has traditionally been, and continues to be, exclusive not inclusive, like the word "man". Moreover, many people, indeed some whole groups of people, seem to have great difficulty even articulating the word *lesbian*.

Second, there is the way lesbians are seen as a kind of sub-group of gay men. This indiscriminate lumping together can be quite blatantly ludicrous, as in this statement from *Out, Proud and Fighting — A Socialist Workers' Party Pamphlet*:



April 30th Stop the Clause demo

"The majority of lesbians and gays are working class who are neither out or proud but in all likelihood married and at best try a bit of illicit gay sex in the local cottage."

How many lesbians have you met that cottaged?!

Marginalisation

Often, it is more subtle and insidious. It leads to the complete marginalisation and omission of lesbians, our issues and perspectives, from political discussions and strategies. It must be stressed that lesbian existence is locked into the reality of women's oppression and cannot somehow be perceived or understood via gay men.

This tendency to collapse lesbians into gay men is particularly significant in the wake of Section 28. The law is not going to affect all sections of the lesbian and gay community equally.

Those most dependent on the public sector are those from the most vulnerable sectors of the community: black and ethnic minority lesbians and gays, working class lesbians and gays, lesbians and gay men with disabilities, and lesbians in general — especially those with children.

Lesbian groups and projects will also be particularly susceptible as it is only gay men's projects that are perceived (erroneously) as doing work around AIDS and thus able to seek protection under sub-section 2 of the Section. AIDS work is, of course, considered to be directly beneficial to heterosexuals.

Autonomy

Lesbians need autonomy, both within the lesbian and gay movement and the women's movement. The lesbian and gay movement has only recently become that, and remains very much male-dominated.

The women's movement, though, perhaps the cradle of lesbian liberation, remains over-conscious of its image and all too often panders to prejudice. "Loony lefty lesbians" give the movement a bad name — and it seems easier to deny our existence (again) than deny the bad name.

The argument around political autonomy is getting to be like reinventing the wheel every six months, but the concept remains an essential one. The organisation of autonomous lesbian and women's groups in the campaign against the Clause/Section has encouraged maximum involvement and ensured that specific issues facing lesbians, such as child custody, are not forgotten. It has also produced some spectacular results.

Lesbians have hit the headlines with invasions of both the Lords and the BBC. Now we want to make similar inroads into the politics of the left!

...abour and Section 28

Speak out against the Section!

The massive campaign against Clause 28 has led to a change in the position adopted by the Labour Leadership.

Initially, Cunningham and Rooker colluded with the attack and undermined Party policy, won at Conference in 1985 and 1986 (largely through the work of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights).

But faced with a mobilisation that was ultimately to bring 50,000 to the streets of London on April 30th in the largest demonstration for lesbian and gay rights ever seen in Western Europe, they have been forced to turn tail, condemn the Section, and commit the Party to its repeal.

By Terry Conway Islington North CLP

It is vital that this year's Party Conference passes the motion against the Clause drafted by the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights by the most overwhelming vote possible.

Existing policy needs to be developed and strengthened. It needs to be taken into those areas of the labour movement that have remained untouched by the arguments.

The size and dynamic of the campaign against the Clause shows the potential for doing this. It is of course not the job of the *Stop the Section* campaign to demand new resources from Local Authorities, though many of the activists in that campaign are people who have gained confidence and strength from doing precisely this and will want to be involved in this type of activity as well. LCLGR can certainly draw in whole new layers of people through this process.

In the current climate of backlash we need urgently to reiterate that positive images are a vital part of the rights of lesbians and gay men. We should remind the labour movement that thousands of lesbians and gay men, deprived of such support, will never be able to be open about their sexuality.

We should remember those who commit suicide in isolation, deprived of any positive models to help them carry on. We should point out that within the labour movement itself homophobia still needs to be combatted.

Both the objective importance of the attack that Section 28 represents and the breadth of opposition to it should be sufficient to bring the issue to Party Conference. However, it would be foolish to be complacent.

Briefing readers should make every effort to get their CLPs and unions to consider submitting either the LCLGR motion or an amendment to it. This issue *must* be debated at this year's Conference.

The debates around the policy review will make it harder than usual to get motions from CLPs and trade unions debated.

PHOTO: Martine Stead

Fertility and weaning

I was going to write about Food Addititives this time, but I decided that I ought to conclude the Breastfeeding Saga with weaning.

It has also been suggested that I mention the return of fertility and suitability of contraceptives for breastfeeding women.

Perhaps I could illustrate the importance of this by mentioning a phone call I received recently:

—"Hello; is that the breastfeeding club?"

—"Yes, how can I help you?"

—"Well... (very hesitant) ...it's a bit personal."

—"Don't worry. What's the trouble?"

—"Well... can you get pregnant while you're breastfeeding?"

—"Yes, you can. It's important to use a reliable contraceptive even while you're breastfeeding, because although you're less likely to get pregnant, you still can."

Deep sigh of distress from the other end of the phone.

"Do you think you're pregnant, then?"

—"Well, I suppose I must be."

—"How old's your baby?"

—"A month. And I haven't had a period, so I must be pregnant..."

Long discussion follows on how long it takes for periods to return when you're breastfeeding. Woman is not convinced.

Tess is left wondering how much longer women will continue to be ignorant of the workings of their bodies — probably till "Speculum" gets a column in the daily *Briefing*.

I was also cross because this woman had clearly left hospital without being given any advice about contraception. This is essential when a woman has given birth. Probably no one had mentioned sex, either.

A lot of books about birth say that penetrative sex should be avoided during pregnancy. This is nonsense, unless you have suffered a miscarriage in the past, or if you go into premature labour.

Typical "missionary position" sex is uncomfortable in late pregnancy for obvious reasons, but couples can experiment! Some women don't feel like sex when they're pregnant anyway.

Sex after delivery is a matter of personal choice. It's probably wise to wait until any stitches have healed, and if you've had a Caesarean sex can be quite painful. Most women suffer with haemorrhoids after delivery, too, and this doesn't help.

By Tess Kewley SRN, SCM

All women should discuss contraception with the doctor or midwife before discharge home, and the responsibility rests with the health professionals to bring up the subject.

The **combined pill** is contra-indicated during breastfeeding, because it reduces the amount of milk produced. The **mini-pill** is suitable, and can be taken within five days of birth. Remember to use a sheath for the first 14 days of the first packet.

The **sheath** is the only safe alternative to the mini-pill. The **Cap** should not be used until after the six week post-natal check-up because it will be the wrong size, and should be refitted.

The **Coil** can also be used, but, again, it should not be fitted until the six week post-natal check. The Coil is less effective as a contraceptive once you've had a baby.

Post-partum **sterilisation** can be carried out. Yet again, you usually have to wait six weeks for this.

The reason for the six week wait is that all the organs of pregnancy, particularly the uterus, take six weeks to return to their pre-pregnant state. Also, any stitches should have healed by then.



Breastfeeding undoubtedly reduces your fertility. Many women don't have a period until they wean the baby. If you're bottle-feeding, you will probably have a period within eight weeks of giving birth.

Women who bottle feed should take particular care with contraception. It is not unknown for women to come to the six week post-natal check up, to find that they are pregnant again!! Horrors.

Remember that ovulation occurs before menstruation. If you are breastfeeding, and your periods haven't returned, you could easily ovulate and conceive without realising!

This is why good contraception is essential — unless, of course, you don't mind getting pregnant again.

Even when your periods do return (which may not be for a year or more), you may actually be having "anovulatory cycles" — in other words, your body is fooling you. You're not ovluating, despite the monthly expense of sanitary towels.

Even if you're taking your temperature to check whether you're ovulating, research has shown that entirely false readings are obtained in breastfeeding women.

I know this to be true from personal experience. I had lovely charts, showing supposed ovulation, but failed to conceive until I weaned Jo. Once she was weaned, I was pregnant within six weeks!

Weaning is a very important subject, and it can cause a lot of distress. Recently a woman phoned me because her Health Visitor had advised her to give her baby some baby rice, because the child weighed 14lbs. How old was the hapless baby? *Seven weeks!*

The mother was reluctant to introduce food so early. She saw the Health Visitor when the child was nine weeks old; and was scolded for not having started the rice. She was also told that the baby would get fat on breastmilk alone. Hmm.

Now for the facts:

- Breastmilk contains *all* a baby's nutritional requirements for the first *ten months* of life.
- Early introduction of solids leads to allergies, fat babies and can cause fatal choking if the baby is younger than six months.
- The first foods offered should be ordinary family food, liquidised. "Baby foods" are a waste of money, and entirely unnecessary. Read Anna Haycroft's *Natural Babyfood* for simple recipes.
- Rice is *not* a suitable weaning food. The first foods offered could be: mashed avocado pear, pureed fruit or vegetables, "finger foods" such as bread and butter with the crusts cut off.
- A suitable time for the introduction of food is about six months. Babies will be interested in food, and will be able to cope with chewing it. Younger babies have difficulty in eating anything other than very sloppy food.
- Babies cannot get fat on breastmilk. They may indeed be tubby, but as soon as they crawl and walk, they'll lose weight. You cannot overfeed a breastfed baby.
- Don't worry if the baby doesn't show a great deal of interest in food to start with. Milk will provide all the child's needs until s/he starts to discover new tastes. Be patient. If the baby doesn't want or like something, take it away quietly, and reintroduce it later.
- Breastfeeding can continue for as long as the baby wants.

Don't forget to ring 01 778 4769 for breastfeeding advice.

With England in Germany

Football becomes a convenient scapegoat

I hear all hell has broken loose in England.

I hear of calls for the England team to be withdrawn, calls for members-only schemes, calls for passport withdrawals. ***All irrelevant!***

We spent a few days in Stuttgart with 10,000 other England supporters. We saw very little violence — what violence we did see was not connected with the football itself: drunkenness and vandalism, a problem not peculiar to football fans.

Young, white English males are constantly causing trouble abroad. There are currently 272 English "holiday rioters" in Spanish prisons.

After the Eire vs. England game the Director of Police said there had been less trouble than at a normal League game.

The place is crawling with "news" reporters (besides the sports correspondents) from every national British newspaper. These people have got to come up with stories to justify their expenses.

By our Special Correspondent in Germany

There is, of course, a violent minority looking for fights — and finding them. The fascists are here, leafletting in the open, and engaging in racist attacks on black people. Nazi salutes are a common sight.

Official

What is clear is that the official attempts to control the problem don't work — first, because they are based on a misunderstanding of what it is, and second, because of sheer incompetence.

The violence is *not* specific to football. The ban on English clubs in Europe has only succeeded in distracting the authorities from developing relevant solutions. No one is addressing the real question: how to deal with "travelling" thugs and fascists.

The ticket allocation and vetting by the Authorities was inept and left several thousand fans going without tickets — and *decreased* crowd control.

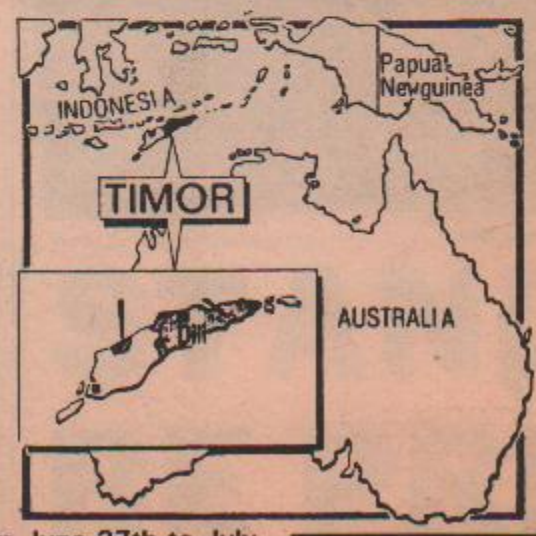
In the end, tickets were available on the day of the England vs. Eire game — which led to poor segregation.

The hype led to much of the violence. German papers played up the violent nature of the English fans for weeks before the competition — which encouraged many German and Dutch fans to come to Stuttgart and Düsseldorf for a fight. It wasn't hard to find.

The politicians call for "reports' and appeal to the fans to remember that they represent England. This, of course, is just what the fascists here think they are doing.

British Arms Equipment Exhibition

Britain colludes with invading Indonesians



From June 27th to July 1st this year, the British Army Equipment Exhibition (BAEE) is taking place in Aldershot.

This is the biennial arms bazaar to which military delegations from all over the world flock to take a look at the latest weaponry available from British manufacturers.

Many of the countries represented at this year's fair are run by vicious dictatorships with appalling human rights records.

The BAEE is always the focus for protest action by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade, but this time round CAAT is focusing on the dangerous practice of selling arms to human rights violators such as Chile, Turkey, and Indonesia.

Indonesia's trade with Britain's leading arms manufacturers has flourished, regardless of the fact that the Indonesian military dictatorship is currently engaged in two colonial wars. One is being waged against the people of West Papua (see Peter Tatchell in *Labour Briefing* no. 63).

The other is being waged against the people of East Timor, a tiny country which, until December 1975, was moving confidently towards independence afer centuries of Portuguese colonial rule.

On December 7th of that year, tens of thousand of Indonesian troops invaded. But Indonesia's hopes for a rapid victory were foiled by the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin) which has been leading the armed resistance ever since.

Indonesia's war has brought widespread tragedy, with the loss of some 200,000 lives, nearly a third of the pre-invasion population of about 700,000.

By Carmel Budiardjo TAPOL

There can be few countries anywhere which have suffered such devastation during 13 years of foreign aggression, and few liberation struggles so sealed off from contact with the outside world, and so bereft of material support.

Yet Fretilin, with perhaps little more than a thousand armed guerrillas, enjoys widespread popular support, and continues to hold down tens of thousands of Indonesian troops. Human rights violations are regularly being recorded and exposed by Amnesty International.

In July last year, a special unit of paracommandos was sent to East Timor with specific instructions to capture the guerrilla leader, Gusmao Xanana, dead or alive. Xanana eluded them, and four months later the unit was withdrawn, though the war continues unabated.

The British government has never regarded Indonesia's aggression against East Timor, or, for that matter, against West Papua, as sufficient reason to refuse to grant licences for the export of weapons to Indonesia's murderous regime.

British Aerospace has a lucrative trade with Indonesia worth about £340 million. It has already sold the regime twenty Hawk ground-attack aircraft, and is now supplying tens of millions of pounds' worth of Rapier missiles.

The Thatcher government bleats about human rights abuses in Eastern Europe, but remains silent about the atrocities committed by military dictatorships like Suharto's in Indonesia. It is high time that events like the BAEE became a focus for protest by the British labour movement.

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

Lesbian and gay rights in China

Liberalisation and repression

In the last two years, homosexuality has been acknowledged and discussed for the first time in the People's Republic of China.

This new public visibility of *tongxinglian* — same-sex love — has occurred in the more liberal and democratic atmosphere following the post-Mao reforms.

The position of lesbians and gays in the People's Republic still, however, remains ambiguous and precarious.

AIDS, which the authorities have largely attributed to homosexuality, has helped make homosexuality a legitimate subject of conversation. But anxiety has also fostered traditional anti-gay views, which have tended to undermine the first signs of official enlightenment.

By PETER TATCHELL



"Though official attitudes are confused and contradictory, the atmosphere in China is generally becoming more relaxed and tolerant for lesbians and gays, and homosexuals themselves are becoming more aware of issues like lesbian and gay rights."
"Qin Zhong", Chinese Student

"Homosexuality is much more widespread than the authorities admit. With the social pressure to remain unmarried till after completing college, there's quite a lot of homosexual experimentation among students."
"Qin Zhong", Chinese Student

Outline of China and mass rally in Tien An Men Square, Beijing

Nevertheless, to some Chinese gays even a negative acknowledgement is preferrable to the decades of official silence when gayness was dismissed as "non-existent", "a bourgeois vice", and "the foreigners' disease".

"Qin Zhong", a 26 year old gay student from Beijing, currently studying in Britain, confirms that Chinese attitudes are beginning to change:

"There is still a lot of misunderstanding and prejudice, but it's increasingly recognised that gay people exist and the subject is no longer so sensitive and taboo. That's a big step forward after so many years.

"The first signs of a new tolerance came in late 1985. The semi-official monthly magazine for students and young people, *Qingnian Zhiyou* (Friends to Youth), published a letter from a teenager seeking advice about his homosexuality.

"This provoked a flood of correspondence, including letters from other gay people, which continued unabated for four months. Some of the heterosexual correspondents were hostile to gays, but others were very sympathetic.

"The publication of these letters was quite a breakthrough."

Journal

Around the same time, another Chinese journal popular with young people, *Duzhe Wenzhai*, ran a major feature on homosexuality, and Chinese TV broadcast the Hong Kong serial *Wu Zetian* about the life of the Tang Dynasty empress, complete with its tales of homosexual affairs within the imperial court.

Qin Zhong also points to the new *Sex Education Manual* published in 1986:

"It takes quite a progressive and broad-minded view. All the main theories and facts about homosexuality, such as the Kinsey Report, are summarised in a fairly objective and non-moralising manner. It states that homosexuality cannot be eradicated by suppression or homophobia."

With all publishing overseen by the state, it is highly unlikely that this view of homosexuality is unacceptable to the authorities.

Less positively, Chinese Health Minister Chen Minzhang was reported in *Beijing Review* on August 10th 1987 saying that AIDS will not be a problem for China becaue "homosexuality and casual sexual relations are both against the law and contrary to Chinese morality."

This view was reiterated by the Chinese delegation to the World Health Ministers' Summit on AIDS in January thisyear.

Even worse, in October 1986, the *Korean Times* reported the newly-appointed head of China's AIDS Risk Prevention Bureau, Dr Cao Qing, as stating that "Chinese homosexuals will be exposed to increased repression" to stop the spread of AIDS.

The paper also referred to attacks in the official Chinese press on "sexual freedom in capitalist countries" and advocation of the "elimination" of homosexuality, promiscuity, prostitution and drugs to defeat the AIDS epidemic.

What is it like to be lesbian and gay in China? "Though things are slowly getting better," says Qin Zhong, "it's still repressive compared to the West.

"The problem is not just homophobia, but also conservative social attitudes towards sex in general. This makes it difficult to have a concept of heterosexuality, let alone of homosexuality.

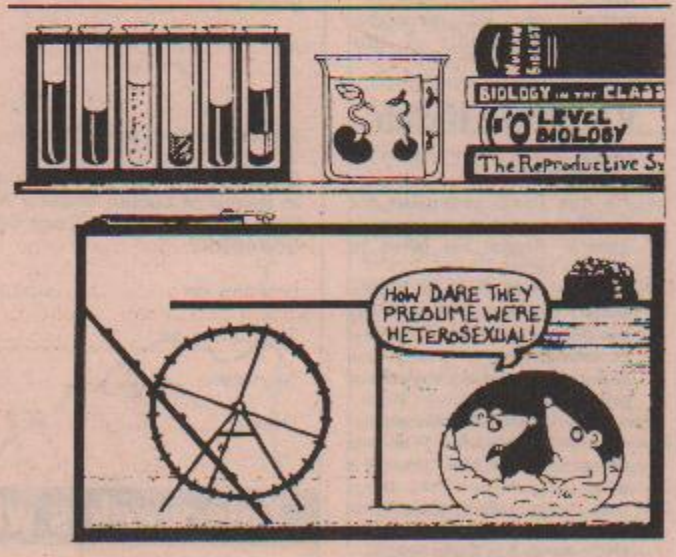
"Another source of difficulties is the strong social pressure to marry and live in large extended families.

Opinions

"Positive opinions of gayness are almost non-existent. No public figures are openly gay. Homosexuality is rarely mentioned in the media. There are no gay bars, newspapers, or counselling agencies.

"This makes it very difficult to develop a gay identity, especially a positive one. Many gays don't accept their homosexuality and some are driven to suicide by a sense of shame and isolation.

"Even those who accept their gayness face lots of problems. Gay couples are rarely able to live together.



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

"The housing shortage means that people have to share with extended families of parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters. It's impossible to sleep with your lover if you are living in a room with two or three other people.

"Most gays live very discreet lives. Few are open to their families or friends. I only know one person who is out. His co-workers tolerate his lifestyle, but don't really accept it.

"During my first long term relationship, which lasted for eight years, we never knew a single other gay person."

Absence

In the absence of gay bars, the only meeting places are parks, toilets, and increasingly, with the advent of foreign tourism, the big international hotels. These places are referred to in Chinese slang as "Palaces of Culture".

"In Beijing," according to Qin Zhong, "Tian An Men Square, formerly the site of the great mass rallies of the Cultural Revolution, is now a favourite gay cruising area.

"As with illicit heterosexual activity, there are periodic police round-ups of gays found loitering or having sex in public places. Sometimes they are beaten by the police, especially if they don't confess to cruising or having sex. Those who readily confess are usually released after a stern warning, though a second offence could result in prison.

"In theory, homosexuality is not against the law and most homosexual acts are not crimes. Only sexual intercourse between two men is illegal — punishable by several years in gaol.

"However, in practice the authorities have unofficial ways of dealing with homosexuality. A first offence may be reported to a person's work unit or neighbourhood committee. Further offences could mean public criticism or imprisonment.



Chinese students

"I know of a gay person employed by the Ministry of Culture who was given an official reprimand by his head of department. His homosexuality was recorded on his work dossier, which is referred to whenever a person applies for a job or housing."

Struggle

The struggle for lesbian and gay rights in China is barely in its infancy. "We are still concerned with getting the government and the media to acknowledge our existence," says Qin Zhong. "A gay consciousness and community is only just emerging."

Nevertheless, in the last couple of years a few informal groups of friends have come together in the main Chinese cities to discuss gay issues and organise discreet social events in people's homes.

According to *The South China Morning Post*, August 1986: "In Beijing and Shanghai, many Chinese sources confirm large lesbian and homosexual communities existing among intellectuals and the sons and daughters of high-ranking officials.

"One lesbian community in Beijing is said to have almost 70 members... These women have founded a society of members through which they meet, find partners and socialise."

Building Briefing

Raise your morale at the...

Labour Briefing AGM

a chance to debate, discuss — and organise!

The Briefing AGM: to build a non-sectarian, united, democratic left

Saturday, July 2nd.

Kingsway Princeton College, Sidmouth Street (off Grays Inn Road), London. Near King's Cross Station.

Details of Arrangements:

Creche: Available on advance booking only (we want the creche participants to enjoy themselves as much as the AGM-goers, so we want to plan for the exact numbers). Phone Paula Watson on 638 5308.

Refreshments: will be on sale all day (tea, coffee, snacks)

Pooled fare: we will operate a pooled fare, so that comrades from outside London are encouraged to attend!

Bookstall available at the meeting

Signer: We have *not* booked a signer as we have had no requests for one. If you would like to attend and a signer would be helpful, please ring 01 733 7016 as soon as possible and we will see if this is still possible.

Access: The Venue is groundfloor, and easily wheelchair accessible. There is adjacent car-parking which we can reserve for you with notice. We have not yet been able to carry out a detailed site inspection, so for further details please ring 01 733 7016.

10.00am Registration
£5 waged, £2 unwaged (payable on the day). Anyone interested in *Labour Briefing* is welcome to come along, listen and participate. Voting is open to *Briefing* Supporters. Supporters cards for 500 Club members will be available for collection on the day. 1988 Supporters Cards can also be purchased on the day (£10 waged, £3 unwaged).

10.30am Introduction
The Tradition of Briefing — Graham Bash

11.00-12.30 The Year Ahead: Briefing's Role
Open discussion. The paper which will be discussed here is published in this issue of *Briefing* (see page 6). It will be introduced by Jane Kelly and Mike Marqusee. Amendments to the paper are *welcome* and will be fully debated. They can be submitted beforehand or on the day — but please try to submit or bring 250 copies!

12.30-1.30 Caucuses
A chance for women, lesbian and gay, youth and student, and black Briefing supporters to meet together and discuss ideas and activities.

1.30-2.30 Lunch

2.30-3.30 Workshops
Local Briefing Groups
How and why to start up or build a local group. A chance to share frustrations, ideas, gimmicks, etc.

The Paper
How is the paper put together? How can you contribute to it? How can we strengthen links between the paper and local groups? A chance to complain about the paper, make suggestions, and get involved.

International
A session with Briefing activists in various international campaigns. How can Briefing improve its coverage of and participation in international solidarity movements? How can local groups get involved in these movements?

Trade Unions
A chance for Briefing supporters in various trade unions to discuss what they're doing. Building the Solidarity Network — and building Briefing and/or left currents in individual unions.

The Labour Party
How can activists deal with the LCC, the New Realism, the Rampant Right, etc. How to *survive* in Kinnock's Party — and to what end? A chance to air a list of grievances — and share practical remedies.

3.30-4.00 Reports
From Caucuses, and workshops. Voting on resolutions. Election of Steering Committee for next year. Interested in standing? Don't be Bashful (except Graham). Find out more in the next issue of Briefing.

4.00-4.30 Tea Break

4.30-5.30 Rally for Benn-Heffer
With Jeremy Corbyn, Martha Osamor, Sharon Atkin, Mandy Mudd (invited).

Periscope



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

M1 Diesel Disaster

German Green MEP Frieder Wolff must rue the day he met the comrades from *Haringey Labour Briefing*.

Comrade Wolff, one of the keynote speakers at the closing session of the Socialist Conference, needed a lift from Chesterfield to London (where he had to catch a 10.30pm flight to Brussels) and the Haringey gang were pleased to offer him a seat in their van.

A quick stop for petrol and they were off. Only the petrol wasn't petrol — it was diesel (anyone can be *that* stupid, at least once) and the van conked out mid-motorway.

Frieder, a veteran of 1968 and many struggles since, took the mishap with good humour and, to while away the wait for the AA, joined in a vigorous but uncompetitive session of *Who Am I?*

Luckily, another section of the Haringey delegation stopped by in a car and picked up the stranded MEP.

Unluckily, the traffic was so bad he missed his plane anyway.

As he left the Haringey comrades waiting patiently on the hard shoulder of the M1, Frieder observed:

"Sometimes, when one is being collective, mistakes can happen."

This was accepted meekly by the Haringey gang. However, the discussion on who was responsible for wasting £10 worth of good diesel on a petrol-driven engine goes on.

Not-Very-New *Statesman*

The second issue of the newly-launched *New Statesman and Society* contains a nasty and rather mindless attack on the recent Chesterfield Conference by Stephen Howe, who singles out *Labour Briefing's* fringe meeting for an extra dose of vitriol.

Howe claims our meeting did nothing but attack "the enemy within".

Amazing! Mandy Mudd spoke about how *she* had been labelled the "enemy within" *by the Labour right* — and how she refused to be silenced by the ensuing witch-hunt.

Martha Osamor spoke about self-organisation and the "Black Agenda", recently published by Black Sections. John Wilton put the positive case for Benn and Heffer.

Of course, there were attacks on Kinnock & Co. (This was a *Briefing* fringe meeting!) But one must assume that *NSS* journo Howe either slept through the rest of the meeting — or is simply priming himself for a place on the *Sun*.

Less than Perfect Spies

Kinnock's fan club, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, has confirmed that it stores personal information on computer files. But according to LCC Secretary Paul Convery this data includes details regarding their own supporters.

Which raises a little question. What is the Labour Careerists Committee doing with the information they are collecting from their supporters about other Party members?

Earlier this year the LCC asked its supporters to supply the name, address, and phone number of their local CLP Youth and Student Officer and whether the YSO is "LCC - Other democratic left - Militant - Other ultra-left (please specify) - right wing - other (please specify).

Perhaps such information, once received, is instantly discarded. Surely Convery is not lying. After all, he would not supply false information to the Data Protection Registrar!

The difficulty is that Kinnock's little darlings won't say how they are storing the titbits and slanders they collect on the likes of us. Maybe they use a plain old card index, like the Economic League, which supplies bosses with lists of militants.

Information kept manually is not covered by the Data Protection Act. The little darlings should therefore at least own up and admit that they disagree with their former secretary, Michael Meacher, who has called for manual indexes to be brought within the remit of the Act.

Vladimir Ilyich Reagan?

In his new found enthusiasm for Gorbachev and things Soviet in general, Reagan has taken to quoting Lenin.

Apparently, the Pres (a professional red-baiter from way back) discovered Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) and some juicy bits about the role of private enterprise.

The ever-vigilent US press pounced on the ill-briefed Pres. His defence: Gorbachev "actually is advocating some of the things that Lenin talked about that were not as restrictive and single-minded as Stalin was."

A free copy of our *Briefing* summer special for the best *genuine* quote from Lenin answering Reagan's lately-discovered enthusiasm.

SUBSCRIBE TO BRIEFING

Make sure of your copy of the fortnightly Labour Briefing. Annual subscriptions are £12 (individuals), £24 (institutions). Write to Labour Briefing, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ (cheques, etc., payable to Labour Briefing).

Name .....

Address .....

.....

SELL LABOUR BRIEFING

If you're a regular reader, you obviously feel the need to read each issue of *Briefing*. But why keep the good news to yourself?
Bulk orders are available on sale or return for you to sell to your friends; or join with the many other *Briefing* readers who take this easily saleable paper to their Labour Party, trade union and campaign meetings. Join the resistance! Just send the form to PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Please send me ..... (min. order 5) copies of *Labour Briefing* on sale or return, starting with issue no. ..... .

CONTACT BRIEFING

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

Briefing Steering Committee:
Next meeting: Briefing AGM, July 2nd!
Briefing Editorial Board:
Next meetings: Friday June 24th, Thursday June 30th.
Deadline for articles:
Issue no. 66 (out July 6th, EB planning June 23rd): notify EB as soon as possible, all articles in by Tuesday June 28th.
Issue no. 67 will be a summer special designed for sale over summer break. Contact EB/office for details.

BRIEFING 500 CLUB

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

Bankers order form for Labour Briefing 500 Club

Bankers Order

To: .....

..... (bank name, sort code)

At: .....

..... (address)

From: ..... (your name)

At: .....

..... (your address)

My account number is: .....

Please debit from my account each month the sum of £4, in favour of Labour Briefing No. 2 account, Co-operative Bank, Stratford E15, Code 08-90-76, Account no. 50349957.

Starting on ..... (date)

Thereafter on ..... (date) of each month

Signature .....

Dated .....

This week's winner

This week's lucky number is 267. Congratulations to Jane Smith of South Wimbledon.

Pamphlet Review

Nissan in the North-East

***Nissan and the Single Trade Union Agreements: the road forward or a dead end?, Tyne & Wear CATC.* £1.00. Available from Tyne & Wear CATC, c/o 4 The Cloth Market, Newcastle on Tyne, NE1 1EA.**

This pamphlet examines the origins and implications of the agreement between Nissan and the AEU covering the Washington plant in the North East.

It shows how the agreement fits into changes in production methods introduced by Nissan.

Traditionally, car manufacturers have operated a system of working called *Just in Case*, where there is intensive specialisation of labour and where large stocks of components are carried "just in case" they are needed — because of any breakdown or disruption to supplies.

By Brian Elkington Hull

Nissan introduced the *Just in Time* (JIT) method, where there are small stocks of components and parts are delivered when they are needed — "just in time".

The workforce is treated in a similar manner, moved to the point and assigned to the job where and when needed. A "core" workforce is added to by the hire of temporary, casual or agency workers — again "just in time" — if needed.

JIT should mean that workers are more skilled, more knowledgeable, and have less repetitive, boring jobs, but it is a contradiction of capitalist methods of production that a method which seems to give more "job satisfaction" can only be realised in conditions of increased exploitation.

Workers have to be prepared to move from job to job and not to use their knowledge of the production process to defend themselves by disrupting it. The deal with the AEU is designed to provide this flexibility and prevent disruption.

Nissan and other Japanese firms have introduced JIT in other plants either by running open shops, or by using company unions. Washington was a problem because it would be in an area of traditional trade union strength, in an industry with a history of trade union struggle.

The deal was a way around this. Recognition was in effect put out to tender to any union prepared to accept the firm's basic condition — maintenance of the JIT system.

Though the AEU won, it is worth remembering that they were not the only union to tender. As a further guarantee the agreement allows for non-union workers representatives, in effect, elements of an open shop.

The pamphlet estimates that between 10% and 25% of the workers are members of the AEU; and other unions do not organise the 75-90% of non-AEU members.

Representation

The need for representation is shown by the story of an agency worker who was eventually fired by Nissan because his face didn't fit. There were no specific charges against him; no disciplinary procedures. No one had asked him to join the union. No one talked about it.

Although the pamphlet puts the agreement into perspective it does not give any answers to the problems raised. In some ways this is fair enough, since no one else has tried to tackle the issue, but it does show up some things which should be addressed.

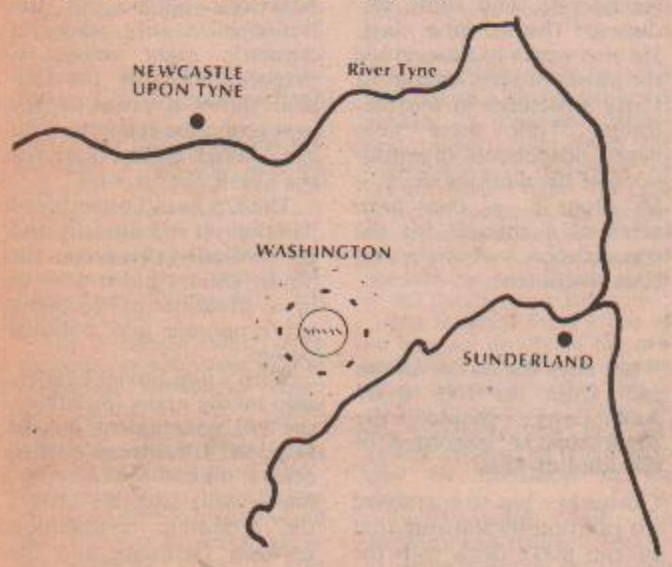
Example

For example, it is clear that the deal only exists because the AEU is able to hide behind the Bridlington Agreement and because the other unions are prepared to stand by and do nothing.

If the other unions are so concerned about the company union role which the AEU has taken on, they should give their backing to any attempt to organise workers in these firms and argue clearly the need for real trade unionism.

But of course, since so many of these very unions are caught up with similar deals elsewhere, or also hide behind Bridlington, they remain silent.

The issue has to be taken up. And the starting point is to look at the sort of organisation the working class needs. Otherwise, the criticism of the AEU must be simply that its tender was too low.



Music Review

Artists Against Apartheid

***Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Concert*, BBC2 TV, Saturday June 11th.**

A big success, I think.

Yes, the politics were fairly muted, from what I saw (I didn't catch all of it for reasons I'll explain later).

Yes, a lot of the 80,000 people were there just for the music.

But it was still a big morale booster for anti-apartheid activists.

By our music correspondent MAJOR UNREST

Some of the artists pulled no punches in their condemnation of apartheid and its multinational backers; but some did, and I wonder how much self-censorship resulted from the Tories' shameless attempt to gag participants.

In particular, where was the profile of the Anti-Apartheid Movement? I may be wrong, but from asking several people who saw most of the event, it seems there was no A-AM speaker on stage to stress the need for organised active campaigning against apartheid.

Realise

I realise that A-AM wasn't organising the event, so it may not have been up to them, and I'm sure literature was distributed to the crowd. Let's hope they will be able to build upon the interest generated, especially amongst young people.

One thing for which the organisers should be particularly commended was the many black artists they booked, both from Africa and the Diaspora. I was lucky enough to catch Salif Seita (from Mali) and Youssour N'Dour (from Senegal) backed by those hardest of hardened Riddim sections Sly 'n' Robbie (from Jamaica), followed by an uncompromising musical statement from Brinsley Forde of Aswad.

Later, I also caught the Mahotella Queens and Mahlatini from Soweto itself, who overcame a bit of initial stagefright to get the dancers in the crowd really moving.



Oliver Tambo

I missed almost everything else as I was making some music with a friend at his parents' house. His parents, it turns out, are Christian Scientists.

Mandela

So what? Well, during lunch I asked my friend which bits of the Mandela Concert he wanted to see so we could plan our music-making around them, at which point his father said he thought the Tories and the South African government were right to condemn the BBC for promoting terrorism!

Terrorism

Fine people to be talking about terrorism, I said, and asked him whether he didn't think oppressed people had the right to take up arms against their oppressors. No, he said, he believes all violence to be immoral.

Lengthy debate ensued. He was arguing the pacifist position of turning the other cheek, even to the extent of giving up your land, a people's basic means of subsistence, to an aggressor rather than defending yourself.

Try telling that to the South African masses, I said. I was arguing the revolutionary Marxist perspective, that no ruling class gives up power without a fight.

Ah, he said, it's all very well arguing that when the fight's thousands of miles away. Well, I said, when the fight comes here, as it inevitably must, if it's in my lifetime, I'll be there — even though I hate violence and go queasy at the sight of blood. The better we prepare for it, the less bloodshed and the less pain for all.

The upshot of all this was the TV didn't go on until he went out. I thought about taking out the (imaginary) Rapidfire Handgun I always carry with me, demanding that the TV be turned on and saying "stick that in your peace pipe and smoke it!" But I decided that the joke wouldn't go down too well.



Nelson Mandela



Pamphlet Review

New pamphlets from LCI

***Ireland and the Case for British Disengagement*, by Conor Foley, *Labour Committee on Ireland and National Organisation of Labour Students*, A5 pamphlet, £0.50.**

***Temporary Provisions: The Case Against the Prevention of Terrorism Act*, Introduction by Kevin Macnamara MP, *Labour Committee on Ireland*, 24pp, A5, £0.60.**

Twenty years ago, Catholics in the North marched for civil rights and justice. Today a Catholic is still twice as likely to be unemployed as a Protestant.

On the streets, a repressive version of law and order is enforced by an occupying army, police, and loyalist paramilitaries.

From LCI press release

Justice is dispensed with plastic bullets, assassination squads, arbitrary arrests, and no-jury courts. Women prisoners are routinely sexually harrassed through the strip search.

Seeing sectarianism built into the very instututions of the Northern state, the poor and oppressed look to a new Ireland in which they can live in peace.

Conor Foley's pamphlet looks at the effects of partition and its maintenance by violence — effects felt throughout Ireland and Britain.

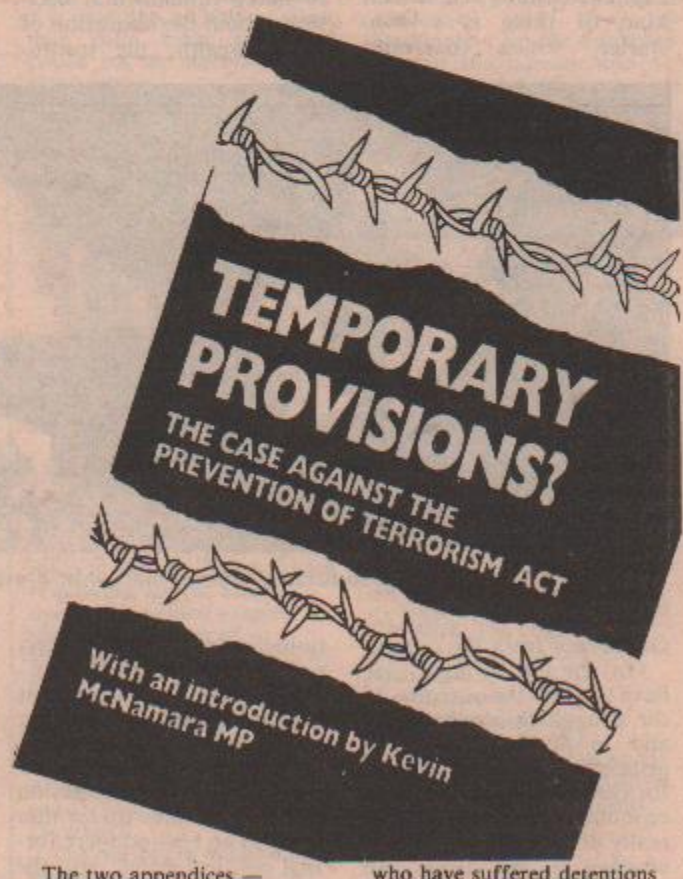
The only prospect for a lasting peace, he argues, is through British withdrawal and a united, independent Ireland.

Emergency

The PTA was brought in by a Labour government as an emergency response to the IRA's 1974 bombing campaign. Its passage ushered in a new era of repressive police powers, surveillance of the Irish community, denial of civil liberties and criminalisation of dissent.

In 1988, these temporary provision have been made permanent.

This pamphlet — the Labour Committee on Ireland's submission to Viscount Colville's recent review of the Act — dissects the legislation and shows how it has been used to attack the Irish community and stifle legitimate opposition to the British presence in Ireland.



The two appendices — written statements to the National Council of Civil Liberties made by LCI officers who have suffered detentions under the PTA — provide a graphic account of how the Act works in practice.

International Briefing

As Soviet Party Congress gathers:

Where is Gorbachev going?

The forthcoming 19th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) will be decisive for the future of Glasnost and Perestroika. To find out where Gorbachev is going, PHIL HEARSE spoke to OLIVER MACDONALD, one of the editors of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*.

What is Gorbachev's programme for the 19th Congress?

News is coming out in bits and pieces. It appears to comprise a new system of accountability inside the CP, some element of autonomy for the Soviets, and some element of the "Yugoslav" system of decentralised control of economic decisions, with the local Party apparatus taking a much more "back seat" role in economic administration.

My guess is that such reforms would make little difference to the political life of ordinary people in the Soviet Union, but would appeal greatly to the intelligensia and technocrats.

This "liberalisation" would still not anchor political decisions in any form of popular sovereignty. It will create big problems for the Leadership in the medium term, because it tends to destroy the myth of Party infallibility, without at the same time giving the masses the power to make their own decisions.

Can the Gorbachev liberalisation work in the long run?

It is not merely a question of what goes on in the Soviet Union, but of the whole Gorbachevite international project. Gorbachev needs international political space to enable his economic project to succeed.

He is saying that the world's major problems don't run down the divide between capitalist and non-capitalist states, or between the working class and the ruling classes of the world, and that therefore we can have a new era of co-operation, what you can call an "historic compromise on a world scale".

Will the international bourgeoisie accept this? Hogwash! For the world's capitalist ruling elites this kind of thing is a non-starter, which constrains Gorbachev from the outset.

On the other hand, we have to await the outcome of the struggle inside the Party and in Soviet society. In principle, it is not impossible for Gorbachev to score some economic successes. The really decisive thing for us is whether a *left wing* will emerge in this process.

Socialists in Britain should do everything possible to encourage this development, bearing in mind that the prospects for democracy and economic advance in the Soviet Union also depend on political events in the capitalist world.

If the Reagan-Thatcher offensive continues in the ascendant, the chance of there being political and economic space for Gorbachev's international project are slim, and this will rebound on his economic plans at home.

If, on the other hand, the capitalist right wing are pushed back internationally, then Gorbachevism could be more fully tested out, which could well lead to a crisis of the system at a later date, but with a more favourable balance of forces between the working class and the bureaucracy.

Some people are saying that Gorbachevism vindicates Isaac Deutscher's view that the Soviet system can be reformed, and that revolutionary change is not needed.

Isaac Deutscher's writings are vital for understanding the Soviet Union, but they don't lead to the conclusion that Gorbachev has the answers. One thing Deutscher stresses is that you have to understand the Soviet Union in terms of fundamental social forces and not take a sort of "Kremlinological" view.

I would counterpose Deutscher's political prognosis to Lukacs' view, just before his death, that only a *qualitative break with the past* will provide a solution.

For Marxists, "democracy" does not mean liberalism — formal democratic rights — although these are important. It means the rights of the mass or ordinary people to make fundamental decisions about the allocation of social wealth, the institutionalisation of mass popular power.

Economic liberalism always ends up undermining the economic wellbeing of the masses. But, paradoxically, its political expression always generates forces that want to go beyond mere formal political rights, into the economic sphere.

That's what happened in Europe, in the 1848 revolutions, which led Marx to develop his notion of "permanent revolution".

How does the Party bureaucracy respond to Gorbachev's plans?

There is a big divide. Some fear that liberalisation will create a dynamic for radical democratisation — or give rise to forces that favour it.

There are many bureaucrats who fear for their own positions and others who fear for the survival of Party institutions.

In confronting the Gorbachevites, the old Brezhnevites have the advantage of not wanting to attack the social gains of the working class. But we simply don't know the strength of the contending factions.

The Ligachev wing retains a strong base of support in the Party factory organisations. But this is not universal.

For example, when Yeltsin was overthrown there was a flood of protest in Sverdlosk in the Urals, where Yeltsin comes from. They had to close the post office because the flood of letters was so great.

How important is the national question in the Soviet Union?

Very important, because there are a number of unresolved national problems in the Soviet Unions, and because the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe directly poses the national question.

The one thing the bureaucracy will never accept is any move out of the Soviet orbit by any nationality or Eastern European country. If it looked as if that was going to happen as a result of Glasnost, Gorbachev would be in serious trouble.

In light of recent events in the USSR, Poland, and Hungary, is there now a generalised crisis of the Eastern European system?

Yes, there's an historic crisis of the whole set-up. The social mechanisms of the Kruschev and Brezhnev period have fallen into decay. They gave the working class basic welfare and social security rights but with an absolute prohibition of any independent working class politics.

In the end, these mechanisms failed to deliver the goods economically. To get the economy going again, Gorbachev's wing of the bureaucracy has decided to introduce more freedom in intellectual life, market mechanisms, and more economic "rigour".

This means undermining some of the basic rights of the working class — for example, subsidised food, housing, transport, and above all guaranteed employment.

It also means a turn away from the seige economy first instituted by Stalin, towards more trade and co-operation with the advanced capitalist countries.

What does this mean in the international sphere?

Gorbachev and his team are trying to create a *political* balance of forces which will force the capitalist world to trade and co-operate on a reasonable basis. The problem for the Soviet leadership is that they have taken a series of actions (Hungary 56 and Czechoslovakia 68) which have done immense damage to the Soviet Union's support in working class movements.

So they must look elsewhere for support, and that means a deepening of a "popular frontist" international policy, a continuation of a policy started in the 1930s of developing relations with ruling class political forces.

Of course that doesn't mean that they will necessarily end all support for third world revolutions, which enable them to put pressure on imperialism. But if they find it convenient, they are quite capable, for example, of abandoning Nicaragua to its fate.

What are the internal tactics of the Gorbachev group?

Gorbachev's tactic is to try to create popular support for a trade off — more freedom (although within definite limits) in exchange for economic austerity.

This is reminiscent of the Dubcekites in Czechoslovakia. Gorbachev is trying to create a bloc of the intelligensia, the technocrats, and some sections of the working class. He also wants to downgrade the power of the Communist Party structures in the factories. While these were never independent organisations of the working class — far from it — they have acted as a channel for the transmission of working class discontent.

What does the Soviet Union gain from the INF deal? And why should the Americans be interested in this kind of deal?

Gorbachev has strengthened his position by showing that he can make deals with the US. As a symbol of the USSR's world role, the deal is politically useful both internally and externally.

The Soviet military regards the removal of Pershing missiles as a big victory. The numbers of missiles removed from each side is not the key; the key is the quality of the missiles.

Pershing missiles could hit Soviet targets in a few minutes and give the Soviet Leadership no time for a calculated response. So removing them is a big plus.

The INF deal has opened up a new political process with the West, notably new relations with West Germany.

Finally, the fact that the American Senate, in defiance of a very powerful domestic right wing, is prepared to ratify the INF deal shows a potential for new economic relations with the United States, and for the USSR that is vital.

The US hasn't abandoned its attempts to militarily and economically pressurise the Soviet Union, but it does so in a situation of declining US economic and political power.

With a new Soviet Leadership taking many initiatives, the US government has to respond. If it doesn't, then others, like the West Germans, will, and this affects the economic competition between Germany and the US.



All politicians can kiss babies!



Reagan and Gorbachev: sharing more than a glass of wine!

South Africa

Workers move towards unity in struggle

By Dave Lee
Azania-Namibia Forum

The biggest stayaway in South African history involved over three million workers in protest against Botha's Labour Relations Amendment Bill.

It followed a joint call from COSATU and NACTU, the country's largest trade union federations.

Figures released by the Labour Monitoring Group show that manufacturing was hardest hit by the strike, with nearly 80% of workers staying away over the three days. Retail was also hit hard.

The strike cost South African industry over R500 million and led Manpower (sic) Minister du Plessis to hint that the Labour Relations Amendment Bill might be changed and that the COSATU leadership might be invited for talks.

The strike was centred on the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Verenniging triangle. The scale of mobilisation in the black working class surprised many, since Botha's recent clampdown on many trade union leaders.

The strike exhibited a high degree of co-operation and unity between the two trade union federations. This follows important developments at both the recent special COSATU conference and the unprecedented meeting in Harare between the ANC and NACTU.

The COSATU Conference passed a motion to invite all organisations fighting apartheid to its next Conference, including NACTU and organisations like the Pan-Africanist Congress and the Azanian Peoples Organisation.

Following the meeting in Harare, ANC National Executive member John Nkadimeny said: "Certain people think it is a prerequisite that anyone who wants to join a new united front must support the Freedom Charter. We say that this is incorrect."

This is an important change in ANC policy and allows the Black Consciousness and Freedom Charter wings of the liberation movement to work more closely in the future.



These moves should be supported by all Anti-Apartheid activists and trade unionists in this country. At its November Conference, the Anti-Apartheid Movement should therefore adopt a policy of solidarity with *all* forces fighting apartheid, rather than just one current in the liberation movement.

CPSU Congress discusses:

Gorbachev's stagnant revolution

"There is a real danger of a gulf opening up between words and deeds," writes Andrei Nuykin, a leading intellectual supporter of Mikhail Gorbachev's reform programme.

While Muscovite trendies can now eat fast food and buy their clothes from Benettons, daily life for most ordinary citizens has deteriorated in the three years of Gorbachev's new age.

According to the *Theses* to be submitted to the forthcoming Party Congress (which opens on June 28th):

"The failures to meet targets for the preferential growth of consumer goods production are particularly intolerable. Difficulties remain in the population's food supply. The targets for increasing the production and improving the quality of consumer goods and increasing commodity turnover have not been fulfilled."



Gorbachev brings "market" reforms!

By COLIN MEADE

Meanwhile, nationalist demonstrations in the Caucasian Republics have hinted at a future in which a volcano of long-suppressed conflicts could blow Soviet society apart.

Gorbachev's answer to the growing crisis is a united Party which can lead and control the processes of economic and political liberalisation. His first obstacle is the faction of diehards which believes that the only thing to do is to nail the lid back on.

Although the Western press constantly presents the "conservatives" as a powerful organised force opposing the new leader, in reality Gorbachev can assert his own position by pointing out that screwing the lid back on means first of all uniting behind him and his programme.

The purely individual discomfort of particular bureaucrats cannot be placed above the general interest of protecting the system as a whole.

More serious is the danger from people who take rhetoric about a democratic revolution seriously, and will not for ever accept the gulf between words and deeds. Here Gorbachev is dealing with the first tender shoots of massive social discontent, not the self-interest of a few.

To some extent he can threaten the democrats with the danger of "after me, Ligachev". But if he becomes too like Ligachev himself, this approach loses its impact.

The method therefore is to attempt to integrate the bulk of democratic activists, while isolating, and if necessary smashing, the most strident and unruly.

"While supporting diversity of opinions," the *Theses* state, "the CPSU Central Committee stresses that debates are fruitful (only) when conducted on the basis and in the name of socialism."

Remember, in Stalinist idelogy "socialism" is identified with the fusion of Party and state.

On the economic front, free enterprise will act as an "antidote to monopolism, stagnation, and conservatism", while office holders will have to face re-election every ten years.

This will, it is hoped, reverse a situation whree "a section of leading workers came to perceive their posts as posts for life, became accustomed to considering themselves infallible, abused power and were inattentive towards ordinary Party members and working people."

Mass pressure on the Party has been a feature of the delegate selection process for the Party Congress, and in some areas — such as the Far Eastern island of Sakhalin — may have led to changes in the compositon of the delegation.

Further indications of struggle around the Conference are the interview given to the Western media by Borris Yeltsin and the letter sent to *Izvestiya* by a number of leading reform intellectuals calling for the postponement of the Congress.

However, Gorbachev sharply distanced himself from Yeltsin's remarks, and the letter did not get published.

Meanwhile, an attempt to set up an opposition organisation, the "Democratic Union", in Moscow in early May got short shrift. The meeting, attended by a wide range of political and social groups, called for "economic and spiritual pluralism, a multiparty system, a free press and free trade unions."

Since it took place just before the arrival of Ronald Reagan, the meeting was allowed to go ahead, but its proceedings were disrupted by police intervention and the official Soviet news agency TASS accused the DU of engaging in "slanderous, anti-socialist activities."

In a nasty article in the supposedly radical reformist *Moscow News*, one Yury Bandura described how he spoke to one of the organisers of the meeting, who had told him that "Western society is becoming an orientation point for many of those present in a considerable number of areas and for some of us — in absolutely all of them."

Bandura then compares the Democratic Union to those whom Lenin denouncd in 1921 as people who "have clearly turned 'democracy' and 'freedom' into slogans leading up to the overthrow of Soviet power."

Furthermore, Bandura explains, the DU are objectively in alliance with the conservatives. "For those who took cover under the wing of Nina Andreeva," he says, referring to a well-known opponent of glasnost, "the appearance of long-awaited 'enemies of the people' — not imaginary and openly admitting this — is a timely one indeed."

For their part, Western governments work hard at turning opponents of the bureaucratic system in the East into a clientele which can be used to put pressure on the Soviet Union.

Breakdowns in relations can be explained on the basis of continuing denials of human rights by the Soviets, while the switch-over to open collaboration can be justified when the Soviets make a few spectacular liberalising gestures, such as letting Zionist Jews emigrate or granting concessions to organised religion, especially dear to the heart of Ronald Reagan.

For the soviet bureaucracy, it is useful to be able to claim that their most persistent critics are the agents of outside powers.

Socialists in today's world must expose and undermine the diplomatic abuses of the lack of democratic rights in the Soviet Union. Neither ideological confusions on the part of Soviet demcrats nor the democratic rhetoric of Mikhail Gorbachev should divert us from expressing our unequivocal support for real, unfettered democratic rights in the Soviet Union.

Western Marxists also have a specific contribution to make to the process of socialist renewal in the Soviet bloc: analysing the real trends within Soviet society and exposing the real contradictions of the bureaucratic self-reform, and refusing to support the construction of a "self-limiting" consensus around the new leader.

One theme remains notably absent from the reform ideology, and that is any criticism of the notion of "socialism in one country", which, promoted by both Stalin and his victim Nikolai Bukharin, was the key justification for the consolidation of the bureaucratic dictatorship and its terroristic practices.

French elections

Now beat the fascists on the streets!

The second round of the legislative elections in France produced a major upset for the Socialist Party.

They had been expecting a majority of 100 seats.

In fact, the snap parliamentary elections left the Socialists a dozen seats short of an overall majority.

Political pundits were quick to ascribe the record number of abstentions to "election fatigue" or else "overconfidence" by the Socialist Party (PS).

It is true that Mitterrand had said that a landslide Socialist majority would be bad for French politics, and called for an opening out to the "centre". In reality, a large Socialist majority would have caused problems on Mitterrand's left within the PS.

The Socialists relied on a patriotic campaign appealing to traditional Republican values and calling for a "United France".

The improved performance of the Communist Party, defying commentators' predictions that it would be virtually wiped out, is a sign of opposition in the working class to the rightward drift of the Socialists.

Although the right wing parties are in open disarray, their share of the vote remained high. They gained few seats, because of the electoral system and discussion on electoral pacts with the fascists.

By Mike Phipps
Woolwich CLP

For the first time, the UDF has more seats than the Gaullists, but now faces fragmentation, with its Social Democratic Centre component poised to give conditional support to the Socialist government.

A government led by right wing Socialist Michel Rocard is unlikely to command permanent support from either the Communists or any part of France's centre right. The lack of a clear parliamentary majority indicates an unstable period of government and increased pressure for institutional reform of the Gaullist state structure.

The National Front's loss of all but one deputy in the new parliament was due to changes in the electoral system, not a decline in support. Silenced in the Assembly, Le Pen has already declared his intention to take his movement to the streets.

The principle task for socialists and militant workers in France is now the preparation of the broadest united front to defeat the fascists and defend workers' and democratic rights.

TURKEY

Stop Evren's visit!

General Evren, President of Turkey, has been invited to the UK for a state visit in July.

We are organising a campaign to prevent this visit.

General Evren, who has been in power since the military coup in 1980, has been responsible for the arrest of over half a million people, thousands of cases of systematic torture, and hundreds of deaths.

As part of our campaign to highlight these violations of basic human rights we are organising a labour movement delegation to visit military prisons in Metris, Mamak, and Diyarbakir.

The delegation will also meet human rights activists. It will consist of Jeremy Corbyn MP, Bernie Grant MP, and Louise Christian, lawyer.

We need money to cover the expenses of the visit. We believe this visit is central to our campaign, so we require your immediate support.

Please send messages of support and donations to the Organising Committee, at Liberty Hall, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8; cheques payable to "Organising Committee to Prevent General Evren's Visit to UK".

We can be telephoned on 01 249 6930. The Organising Committee áre: Anatolian Cultural Center, ATIF, Revolutionary Left, Revolutionary Path, International, Turkish Community Centre (Halkevi), Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain, Turkish Students Federation in the UK, Kurdistan Workers Association, Rizgari, Left Unity, Sosyalist Icci, Turkey Solidarity Campaign (TSC), TKKKÖ Sympathisers, Vatan Party, TDKP.

LABOUR BRIEFING

Benn-Heffer Campaign round-up



PHOTOS: Leesa Herbert



"Labour's future, Eric? It's written on the wall behind you!"

The Campaign spreads a socialist message!

As Tony Benn and Eric Heffer get round the country, reports are coming in of large meetings enthusiastically welcoming both them and the policies they are putting forward.

Here is a selection of brief reports. Why not write in and let us know what your Benn-Heffer campaign is up to?

Report compiled by MARK SEATON

● **NALGO.** On June 15th over 1,000 people packed the biggest fringe meting ever held at a NALGO Conference to hear Tony Benn.

He was joined on the platform by Carolyn Sikorski (Newham NALGO and Labour Briefing), Paul Holmes (Broad Left NEC member), and Tony Chater (editor of the *Morning Star*).

● **Chesterfield.** As one of the guiding spirits of the Socialist Conference, Tony Benn was ubiquitous at the second Chesterfield Conference.

Besides speaking at the opening and closing plenaries, Benn joined Eric Heffer, Alice Mahon, Martha Osamor, and Jeremy Corbyn for a triumphant rally on the Saturday night of the two day Conference.

The confidence and campaigning spirit engendered by the Benn-Heffer challenge was evident, as was the *Briefing* Benn-Heffer badge, sported by many at the Conference.

● **MSF.** About 150 delegates to the MSF Conference (out of a total of 800) packed a Benn-Heffer fringe meeting in Bournemouth on June 13th.

Tony Benn outlined his programme and answered questions from the floor: on nationalisation ("under workers' control"), on lesbian and gay rights, on anti-union laws, and working class independence.

He received a standing ovation — then hurried away to vote against the Tory Housing Bill.

The MSF will be holding a ballot of its members on the Leadership contest.

● **Manchester and the North-West.** Over 400 people packed Manchester Council Chamber on June 16th to hear NUS speakers, Alice Mahon, Audrey Wise, Eric Heffer and Tony Benn.

Alice urged the Party to keep to its policies and be prepared to go out and campaign on them, as she had done to win her Halifax seat from the Tories.

Audrey read Neil Kinnock's TV statement on unilateralism, whilst an astounded audience tried to understand this piece of "plain speaking" from the Leader of our Party.

Eric called for going beyond our present policies, coming out of NATO, abolishing the House of Lords, renationalising public industries, and supporting those who have carried out socialist policy in local government.

Tony finished by saying that a vote for him and Eric was only a first step. We should all carry out socialism in our daily lives and campaign outside Parliament and not leave it to our "Leaders".

Marilyn Taylor, Chair of Manchester District Party, said "the only unilateralism Neil Kinnock supports is the unilateral dismantling of Party policy" — and a financial appeal was made by John Nicholson, North West Contact for the Campaign Group, who said "the support is there for socialist policy. It's the Leadership we need now, to turn the Party into a campaigning Party, fit for socialists to be in."

Future North-West meetings with Campaign Group MPs and speakers include:
Birkenhead CLP: June 24th
Manchester Withington CLP: July 1st
Oldham West, Oldham Central & Royston, Littleborough & Saddleworth CLPs: July 22nd
Stretford, Altrincham & Sale, Daryhulme CLPs: Sept. 7th (with Eric Heffer).

The venues are not know yet, so we cannot print access details!

● **Preston.** At a public meeting in the Students Union on June 5th, Tony Benn said:

"The tasks facing Britain in the nineties will be formidable, as the oil — which has financed our economy for a decade — runs out, and people wake up to discover that our industry and infrastructure, on which we shall then depend, have been deliberately allowed to decay in the pursuit of short-term profit."

● **UCATT.** An emergency resolution, calling on the UCATT delegation to Labour Party Conference to back Benn and Heffer, was moved at the union's annual Conference by the Brixton branch and defeated on a show of hands by roughly two to one.

Seconding the resolution, Kevin MacDermott of Hornsey Branch urged the conference to "look at the policies of *our* union and decide who are the candidates most likely to pursue our policies once elected into office."

He cited UCATT policy on renationalising privatised industries and nationalising the construction industry.

"We must not hide away our dreams and aspirations," said Kevin. "We must stand up as a real alternative to the Tories — and campaign unashamedly. To start this campaign I urge you to support Tony Benn and Eric Heffer, who over the years have fought for the miners and supported local democracy against central government."

Kinnock's CLP

Ealing Southall Labour Party, in which Labour Leader Neil Kinnock has his home, has given overwhelming backing to Tony Benn and Eric Heffer.

Following discussion in all the Party's branches, the General Committee voted to nominate Tony Benn for Leader by a majority of nearly threc-to-one over Neil Kinnock.

In the vote for the nomination for Deputy Leader, Eric Heffer defeated both Roy Hattersley and John Prescott with support of more than four fifths of the delegates.

"The Ealing Southall Party believes that the Party should be campaigning vigorously against Tory government policies on the economy, on defence, on trade union rights, on the rights of women, of black people and of lesbians and gay men. On all these issues, Tony Benn and Eric Heffer advance firm socialist policies," said a CLP spokesperson.

"On the other hand, Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley are abandoning policies agreed by Party Conference and leading a shift to the right. They are increasingly aligning themselves with Tory policies.

"They have dropped the goal of full employment, they will not reverse privatisation or the anti-union laws, they are now abandoning unilateral nuclear disarament, and they oppose giving women and black people their due and proper representation in the Party."

The last Leadership contest?

Kinnock's proposals to amend the rules for future Labour Leadership elections have been slammed by Jeremy Corbyn, Secretary of the Campaign Group, who said in a letter to Larry Whitty that the proposal "reeks of authoritarianism" and is "absurdly restrictive".

Under the proposal, the minimum number of MPs required to nominate a valid candidate would rise to 20%, irrespective of the level of support from CLPs and trade unions, which together comprise 70% of the electoral college.

Had the proposal been in force in 1983 during the last Leadership election, there would have been *no* valid nomination for Leader other than that of Neil Kinnock, who would therefore have been elected unopposed. There would have been *no* valid nomination *at all* for Deputy Leader.

In 1983 the nominations for Leader were as follows (out of 209 members of the PLP):
Kinnock: 49 (23.4%)
Hattersley: 37 (17.7%)
Heffer: 23 (11%)
Shore: 14 (6.7%)

Those on the left who, unlike *Labour Briefing*, did not favour a Leadership challenge this year, and advised the Campaign Group to postpone it until a more "favourable" time have been proved comprehensively wrong.

Campaign diary

June
24 Gateshead, 7pm, Leisure Centre (Benn, Clay)
25 Teeside, 10.30am, Polytechnic (Benn, Clay)
26 NUM, Great Yarmouth
27 COHSE, Blackpool
29 CSEU, Llandudno

July
5 East London, 7.30pm, East Ham Town Hall (Benn, Heffer, Banks)
6 South West London, 7.30pm, Battersea Town Hall (Benn, Heffer)
8 Nottingham, 7.30pm, Rainbow Rooms (Benn) Medway (Heffer)
11 Watford
15 Southampton, 7.30pm, Central Hall (Heffer) Bradford, 7.30pm, Westbrook Hall (Benn)
18 Croydon, 7.30pm, Ruskin House (Benn, Heffer)
20 Reading (Heffer)
22 Oxford (Heffer, Wise)
29 Coventry (Benn)

August
23 Dumfries (Benn)
24 Dundee (Benn)
25 Fife (Benn)
26 Glasgow (Benn, Heffer)
27 Dumbarton (Benn, Heffer)
30 South Wales, Bridgend (Benn, Heffer)
31 Bristol (Benn, Heffer)

September
1 Exeter (Benn) Plymouth (Heffer) Stoke (Skinner)
2 Birmingham (Benn, Heffer)
5 TUC, Bournemouth (Benn, Heffer)
7 Trafford (Heffer)
9 Wirral (Heffer)
13 North Wales (Heffer)
14 St Helens (Heffer)
15 Rochdale (Heffer)
16 Manchester (Skinner)
19 Sheffield (Benn, Heffer)?
21 Bury (Heffer)
23 Central London (Benn, Heffer)

OCOTBER 1st
Blackpool — eve of Conference

Local Contacts

Scotland
Alex Falconer
23 Church St, Inverkeithing, Fife KY11 1LH
0383 419330, 0383 418617
Ann Henderson
8 Annette St, Govan Hill, Glasgow G42 041 424 3727

North West
John Nicholson
33 Birchall Lane, Longsight, Manchester M13
061 225 5356

Northern
Bill Dodds
12 Norwood Avenue, Heaton, Newcastle NE6 5EA 091 265 6971

Yorkshire (South)
Annette Taberner
St Ronan's Road, Sheffield S7 1DX 0742 583502

Yorkshire (West, North & Humberside)
Jim Wilson
8 Heathfield Place, Halifax, HX3 0BX 0422 66898

West Midlands (Birmingham & West)
Phil Paxton
26 Antrobus Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B21 9NZ 021 551 4969, 021 507 0850

West Midlands (Coventry & East)
Pete McNally
51 Ashby Close, Coventry CV3 2LN 0203 28884, 0203 454338

East Midlands
Tom Vallins
c/o Labour Club, Saltergate, Chesterfield, Derbyshire 0246 39077

Wales
Gareth Howells
15 Garnwen Terrace, Nantyffyllan, Maesteg, Mid Glam CF34 0ET 0656 730457

South West
Meg Crack
43 Paulton Road, Windmill Hill, Bristol 3 0272 661672

London
Joan Twelves
3 Blades House, Kennington Oval, London SE11
01 582 2955

Southern
Geoff Cutting
6 St George's Cres, Cippenham, Slough SL1 5PA 06286 62926

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

Published by Labour Briefing, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ
Printed by East West Graphic (TU), London