LABOUR BRIEFING

No. 67/99 SUMMER SPECIAL 1988 50p

"Don't look now, President Evren — there's one of those frightful *Briefing* readers waving their socialist propaganda at us... "It's the Summer Special - New Realism in the Unions, Chesterfield, Benn and Heffer, the Black Agenda, Women for Socialism *and* for Benn and Heffer, Tatchell on Europe, END, Labour in Scotland, Alpha Piper, Bash on *Briefing*, Letter from Militant supporters, Child Abuse, Fat is a feminist issue, Speculum, Football, Music, Reviews, Periscope, Microscope, Letters, Soviet Congress, Ireland, El Salvador, Mexico, and Malta; and as for that back page, well...



HM Elizabeth's attention is drawn by one of the few protestors to escape police pens for lefties as Turkey's President Evren gets a lift to the Palace for the start of his summer state visit to Britain. *PHOTO: Leesa Herbert*

LABOUR – TAKE THE POWER!

EDITORIAL

For your *Summer Special*, *Briefing* has departed from its usual format (tabloid in style, not in substance). We hope regular *Briefing* readers, busy as you are in a multitude of labour movement bodies and campaigns, will find the time to take a breather to enjoy the articles and discussions in the pages that follow.

But while some of us manage to fit in hard-earned summer hols, the class struggle continues. At the time of going to press, Rover has announced plant closures in Cowley and Llanelli — an early and easily predictable result of its sale to British Aerospace. The trade unions are up in arms, but will they mobilise any industrial action against the job losses? Will the TUC treat the carworkers to the same kind of "support" it lavished on the seafarers?

Meanwhle, interest rates leap up (along with inflation) and tax-cut pigeons are coming home tro roost. The British economy is suddenly a fragile bubble -– and in the City investors are getting out while the going is good. In the not-too-distant future, Thatcher's "British miracle" will be seen as the mirage it always was. The labour movement had better be ready — with real answers to the questions working-class people will be increasingly asking about the economy; and a real programme behind which to mobilise the mass anti-Tory anger which is bound to surface.

The Benn-Heffer challenge has already placed these concerns at the heart of its message to the rank and file. This challenge will dominate much of our activity throughout the summer and will reach its climax in the Party and trade union ballots and meetings to be held in September and the electoral college in Blackpool in October. Already, the unexpectedly high number of nominations for Benn and Heffer show its potential resonance. This campaign represents a unique opportunity for the left to raise the arguments for socialism — and for honest socialist Leadership — and to spread them far and wide. We must not waste it. Comrades, this is not just another matter for your local left caucus. It is not like some worthy Conference resolution, dutifully moved and seconded at Branch or GC. Despite the obstacles and the lack of resources, this is a chance to mount a counter-offensive — against Kinnock and Hattersley, the LCC, the New Realists, and ultimately the Tories themselves.

This counter-offensive is now taking place,however hesitantly, on many fronts. A glance at our table of contents reveals the scope and scale of current activity and debate — and of *Briefing's* continuing coverage. Our *Summer Special* brings you reports from Piper Alpha in the North Sea to the Channel port of Dover, from Central America to the Soviet Union. Uniquely, *Briefing* mixes wide-ranging socialist discussion with grass roots reports from the labour movement at local and regional level.

At our AGM, Graham Bash (whose speech on The Tradition of *Briefing* is printed here) reminded us that *Briefing* wasn't only about the hard (but essential) graft of organising in the Party and trade unions. It also has a history of raising a host of disquieting personal and cultural issues. Our features on women and tranquillisers, on child abuse, on fat oppression, our new "Microscope" column, our coverage of football and music and our list of recommended summer reading extend that tradition into new ground.

One of *Briefing's* main themes this year has been the building of what we call a non-sectarian, united, democratic left. This has been reflected in our support for and coverage of the Chesterfield Movement Women for Socialism, the Benn-Heffer challenge, the Solidarity Network, and innumerable local, single-issue, and international campaigns.

But *Briefing* isn't just a fortnightly newspaper produced by ill-paid drones in an airless Brixton office. *Briefing* is about an interchange between the paper and the local *Briefing* groups and the informal networks of supporters and activists who buy and sell the paper. It's *your* paper — and there's space in it for you to tell the left about your struggles and raise the questions you think need to be debated. As our letters page in this issue demonstrates, we are more than willing to take the flak for whatever we publish.

We'll be back in early September with a special broadsheet — "Arguments for Benn and Heffer" — and then resume normal fortnightly publication on September 14th. We welcome suggestions for future coverage. One thing, however, is certain. *Briefing's* tradition of making itself offensive to bureaucrats, time-servers, and Tories-in-disguise within our movement — and of unstinting solidarity with all those in struggle — will be honourably upheld.

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Labour Movement Against Section 28

Stop the Clause was set up as a broad-based, single isue campaign against what is now section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Stop the Clause and its Labour Movement Group are autonomous and self-organising for lesbians and gay men. Autonomy is self-government — not separatism. Section 28 is a massive attack on our right to equality and it is crucial that we have the political space to decide the campaign's strategy.

Stop the Clause has always prioritised building opposition to Section 28 in the labour movement — both the trade unions and the Labour Party. This support for lesbian and gay equality is seen as essential for our continuing success.

The outrage and anger of lesbians and gay men built a mass campaign against the Clause in a matter of weeks, The strength of this campaign forced the Labour Party front bench to drop initial support for the Clause and declare its total opposition.

April 30th saw the largest lesbian and gay rights demonstration ever in Europe. The Labour Party pledged itself to repeal of Section 28 and the TUC, TGWU, NUJ, NALGO, COHSE, NUPE, NUM, NATFHE, Association of Blind and Partially Sighted Teachers and Students, Dover Ferry Strikers, and Women Against Pit Closures all sent solidarity messages to the demonstration.

Stop the Clause is now working with the NCCL, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, and a number of MPs to organise a private member's bill to repeal Section 28. Building support for this outside Parliament, especially in the labour movement, will be part of the Labour Movement Group's future work.

All local Councils will be encouraged to reaffirm, strengthen and develop their lesbian and gay equality work, regardless of government or judidical intimidation. Mass action by lesbians and gay men and our supporters will challenge any Local Authority which backtracks. Any backdown in the face of the intimidation of Section 28 is discrimination against lesbians and gay men.

The Labour Movement Group meets every two weeks on Mondays at 7pm in the University of London Union (ULU) in Malet St, London WC1 (Aug. 1st, etc.).

ULU is fully accessible and we welcome children. The group is open to all lesbians and gay men. We can provide speakers and information material for labour movement meetings, including lesbian speakers for women only meetings.

Contact LMAS c/o Rebecca, NUS London, Malet St, London WC1E 7HY, 01 637 1181.

Fighting Deportations

Flying start for Manchester Campaign

On the morning of May 3rd, Moji and Francis Okanlami's Manchester home was raided by two Immigration Officials and six police officers.

After living for seven years in Britain, they are now charged with "overstaying", and are being told to leave the country.

An anti-deportation campaign has now been launched with the full support of Francis's trade union (NALGO).

A friend of Moji and Francis, Kwame, was staying in the same house and arrested along with Francis — simply because he is black. Kwame was arrested on suspicion of "overstaying". Had he been a white man, it is unlikely he would have ended up in a police cell on such a suspicion.

Steve Cohen, a lawyer from South Manchester Law Centre, claims the arrest of Kwame was "unlawful" and has lodged a complaint with Greater Manchester Police.

Manchester NALGO branch seized the initiative and launched a broad anti-deportation campaign for Francis and Moji. The NALGO NEC has decided to throw its resources behind the campaign.

The City Council (for which Francis works) is allowing Francis to use all this time for his campaign without loss of wages. All the City Council trade unions have also given suport, as has the Manchester City Labour Party.

But moral support will not be enough. Legally, Francis and Moji do not have a strong case. Only mass mobilisations can put effective pressure on the Home Office. Support from Council workers in Manchester could be decisive, as in Joyce Roucou's anti-deportation campaign, where 1,500 Council workers took industrial action and demonstrated in the streets.

By Finn Jensen
Manchester

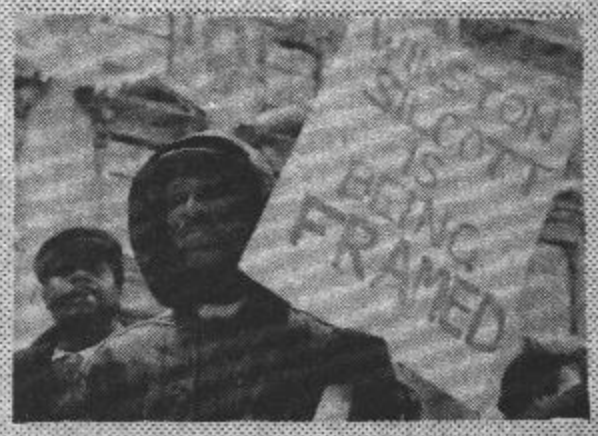
In order to build up support, Francis is touring workplaces, speaking to labour movement meetings, and the campaign has been arranging public meetings. The next meeting is on July 29th, 12.30, Great Hall, Manchester Town Hall, Albert Square, Manchester. A demonstration has been called for Friday October 14th, 12.30, Albert Square, Manchester.

Materials from the campaign, including petition sheets, can be obtained from NALGO Manchester Branch, Elliot House, 3 Jacksons Row, Manchester M2 5NJ; phone 061 834 6564 (Rena Wood). The campaign meets every Thursday, 12.30pm, at the NALGO office.

National Black Caucus
2nd Residential Conference
2nd-4th September 1988
Liverpool University
"Black People: Pushing Back the Boundaries"

International, national, local speakers
Workshops, exhibitions, social events

Information from NCVO, Inner Cities Unit, 26 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HU



Release the Tottenham Three!

Picket of Wormwood Scrubs Prison
Friday August 5th
6.30-9.30pm

Engin Raghip and Winston Silcott, framed with Mark Braithwaite for the murder of PC Blakelock during the Broadwater Farm Uprising, are now serving their sentences in the Scrubs.

Show them we haven't forgotten!

Picket called by Families of Braithwaite, Raghip and Silcott Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign

Strip search cases in the courts

Two important strip search cases have recently come before the courts.

On July 4th, the Appeal Court in London turned down an application for a judcial review of a prison governor's right to strip search prisoners.

Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer — two Irish republican women serving life sentences in Durham Prison's H-wing — originally brought the action in May 1986, to stop the governor of Brixton Prison assaulting them by strip searching.

During 11 months on remand they endured over 800 strip searches.

Their lawyers will now try a different tack by issuing a claim for damages against the governor, Joy Kinnersly, and the Secretary of State. They will also seek a declaration that the strip searches were unlawful.

On July 5th, at Newbury, lawyers for Stella Mann-Cairns, who was strip searched by Ministry of Defence Police at Greenham Common in December 1988 restarted her claim for damages. The first hearing, in December 1987, was interrupted because the judge died.

This time, the MOD's counsel capitulated and offered a settlement of £2,000. The judge also ordered the MOD to pay all the costs of the case — about £15,000.

This important victory — the first time damages have been awarded for a strip search — has set a precedent.

Stella, an active member of the United Campaign Against Strip Searching (set up this February), commented:

"It is now important to get other cases to court to cover all areas where strip searching occurs.

"Our campaign, while recognising that Irish women are especially at risk, both in prison and under the PTA, is anxious to offer support to anybody who has suffered a strip search. Black people are frequently picked on by the authorities, as are women political activists like myself."

For further information on the UCASS Campaign, contact Patrick Sikorski, Secretary, c/o Association of London Authorities, 36 Old Queen Street, London SW1.

Contributors on these pages include:
Graham Bash, Andrea Campbell, Jenny Fisher, Andrew Kennedy, Mike Marqusee, Jim Thain.

No HATS here!

At the end of July, in advance of the Housing Bill becoming law, Housing Minister William Waldegrave announced the targetted areas for the first batch of Housing Action Trusts (HATs).

Eighteen Council Housing estates, in six inner city boroughs, will be taken over by Government-appointed quangos, which will run them in secret. Affected areas are: Tower Hamlets, Southwark, Lambeth (London), Sunderland, Sandwell and Leeds.

HATs will receive government money to do up the estates — but not for the benefit of existing tenants. The HATs will use the renovation they acomplish to sell off the properties — for owner occupation, to private landlords for private letting, or to Housing Associations (whose tenants are also going to lose rights under the legislation).

There is a provision for petitioning against the HATs to gain a public inquiry. Information on this process can be obtained from the Docklands Consultative Committee Support Unit at Unit 4 (third floor), Stratford Office Village, 4 Romford Road, London E15 4EA, tel. 519 5485.

Outraged affected tenants are already organising to defend their homes. Angell Ward Labour Party, Norwood CLP, is preparing a programme of events to campaign against the designation of Angell and Loughborough estates in Lambeth.

Opposition in Tower Hamlets has been spectacular, with one banner being hoisted up at the entrance to Boundary estate proclaiming "No Hats Here" within 24 hours of the announcement.

Tenants meetings on the five estates affected culminated in a 1,000-strong joint meeting of angry and defiant tenants, who agreed to campaign vigorously against the HATs through tenants organisations in Tower Hamlets, and to link up with other affected tenants. Estates in Tower Hamlets have clearly been chosen for "hatting" because of their location in prime areas for property speculation, not because they are the most run down.

But will the SLD ever learn? The "mixed salad" Group delegated Cllr Jeremy Shaw to negotiate with the DOE — he of racist evictions of homeless Bangladeshis fame. Shaw appeared at the tenants meeting and denied any conspiracy with the government. Labour Group Leader Phil Maxwell then read out minutes of a meeting between William Waldegrave and Cllr Shaw proving that Shaw had engaged in detailed discussion about which estates to target!

Labour Party Conference
Conference Greetings in *Labour Briefing*

Labour Party Conference is the time to get your message heard in the movement. And *Labour Briefing* is the paper to make it heard *loud and clear!*

Got a message for Conference delegates? Want to put your case across?

Want to tell the world your view on the Labour Leadership contest? (Special high rates for Prescott, Kinnock and Hattersley ads).

Got a mesage for delegates, visitors and labour movement organisations? Want to remind them your campaign still exists?

Whatever your needs, raise the issue in your Labour Party, trade union or campaigning organisation, and contact *Briefing* with your message.

Send the text of your message, a note of the space you wish to book, and a cheque made payable to *Labour Briefing* to *Labour Briefing*, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ. Deadline for receipt of copy and cheques is September 20th — but remember that last year space was at a premium, so early booking is advised.

Rates:
£5: 2 column inches; £7: 3 column inches
£10: SPECIAL OFFER 5 column inches
£25: Eighth page; £50: Quarter page
£100: half page

Trade Union Briefing

Don't forget the Seafarers this summer!

For well over six months, some 1,000 seafarers have been on strike in Dover, defying management, the courts, the cops, the government, the media — and their own union, the NUS, which has now officially withdrawn all support for the port-side pickets.

This dispute is about the right to travel in safety. Life is getting more dangerous every year (see our health and safety feaure on page 17). Perhaps P&O bosses don't use RORO ferries; perhaps they jet-set to Europe. For those of us who do sail across the Channel, the P&O strikers are waging a vital battle.

The strike is also a challenge to the employers' offensive. P&O management wanted the seafarers to accept 500 job losses, 24-hour shift working,a pay cut of up to £25 per week, no payment for extra hours worked, 28 days extra work per year with no additional pay.

There will be many other employers watching this dispute keenly, to see if P&O can get away with it — all too ready to follow suit if they do.

Sackings and sequestration have been used to intimidate the Union and the strikers. Again, standing firm against these measures is a start in rolling back the Tory attacks on working class organisations.

P&O management are putting a brave face on (and some terrible TV ads) trying to pretend the strike isn't hurting. But at the same time, it is clear that they are desperate for the hassle to stop.

The key for labour movement solidarity now is to sustain the strikers, so they can continue to hassle P&O the working class way — with pickets, demos and touring the country. Send donations to any or all of the Women's Support Groups listed here.

Don't send money to the official funds — we don't know where their money *is* going, but we know it's not getting through to the strikers. Why not twin your organisation with one of the WSGs, like in the miners' strike?

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.

Closure and redundancies at Cowley

The media has talked about "4,000 redundancies" at Cowley by the "early 1990s".

In fact the measures revealed in the Austin Rover Group Corporate Plan — as a result of remarks made by the European Commissioner over the BAe takover — is more far-reaching than that.

It would mean the biggest plant closure in the car industry since the early 80s, and a further major boost to the Tories' privatisation schedule.

In the Plan, both volume production models currently produced in Cowley — the Maestro and Montego — would be discontinued by the end of 1990, resulting in the closure of the 5,000 cars per week South Works of the Cowley Assembly Plant (only 16 years old) and more than half of the ultra-modern Body Plant, which produces body-shells for those models.

This would close at least two thirds of the Cowley Complex, leaving a small plant with only 4,000 cars per week maximum capacity — earmarked under the Plan for low volume up-market cars.

It is unlikely that such a small plant — or the reduced Austin Rover Group itself — could survive for long in today's international car industry conditions.

By Alan Thornett
Trade Union Briefing

Militants in Cowley calculate the number of job losses at over 6,000. Management have announced that they will pay "enhanced" redundancy money, providing there is no resistance to the closure and that there is a signed agreement to that effect.

They have also made it clear that compulsory redundancies, when they come, will be based on "the requirements of production" (i.e. management) rather than "first in last out".

The mood in the plant is one of hostility to the closure, but the Leadership is now right wing. The Leyland Action Committee, a grouping of militants in the Oxford plants, has called for a one-day stoppage with a march through the city to kick off the campaign and an occupation of the plant the moment compulsory redundancies are announced.

Something which makes a fightback more difficult is the attitude at the top of the trade unions. The only union which has anounced outright opposition is MSF. The TGWU and Ron Todd, currently presenting a left face in the trade union movement, has had nothing to say — nor has the AEU.

Solidarity Network Conference

Saturday November 5th
Leeds Trades Council Club
Saville Mount, Leeds

The Solidarity Network was set up at a conference held in Leeds last year. It seeks to build on the support movement organised for the miners and for the print workers at Wapping. Since then, the Network has met on a regular basis, and organised support and publicity for a number of disputes. This year the Network has been working to support the Dover Seafarers. Previously strikers have been left to fight alone and have been defeated.This must not happen to the seafarers. The Network has worked with the Chesterfield Socialist Conference, holding a joint rally in London in support of those in struggle. The recent Chesterfield Conference decided to strengthen the links already formed with the Solidarity Network.

Credentials: £2 waged, £1 unwaged, strikers free. Creche facilities and accommodation for Friday or Saturday nights can be arranged if requested at least a week in advance.

For agenda, registration, publicity material, etc., contact Janet Seymour, 3 Hill Street, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancs. Tel. 0282 812864.

August 6th — National Mobilisation in Dover
Support the Seafarers!
Contact 0304 367840 for details

TRADE UNION COMMENTARY

A closer look at "New Realism"



Many people approach "New Realism" with the simple phrase "it's just reformism" and "reformists always betray".

This means you never have to deal with specific situations and forces; just denounce and say "join the revolutionary party," etc.

This is, of course, the sectarian who never follows the historical movement of the working class. The sectarians are nearly always right, because betrayal is nearly always the result. But they never get anywhere because the working class lives in this movement. It looks to Leaders and trends and, of course, is helped in this by the media.

But more important, it lives in the movement through the process of its own exploitation, in the realities of the workplace.

The working class is not anarchistic. It looks seriously to all its different levels of Leadership; the politics is therefore lived via sell-outs, speed-ups, victimisations, closures, etc.

It doesn't just live this via the miners' strike, Wapping, P&O, Silentnight, etc., but by everything that happens to it in the workplace, on the housing estates, etc.

Another left approach to "New Realism" (and come to that, "Thatcherism") is that it is something completley new and all-consuming. All the lessons and knowledge of the past have to be forgotten. We have to make it up as we go along.

This means that you adapt to movements in the Leadership of the working class with no consistency. It means that you accept the terrain of the "New Realists" themselves.

We need to see where New Realism comes from, historically, and what is really new about it.

The first thing that should be said is that there is virtually nothing new about the "New Realists" argument. Everything they say has been said before. It is the old argument of class collaboration.

The General Strike, sparked by miners' wage cuts, was sold out by this argument. During the 1930s, trade union Leaders collaborated with the creation of mass unemployment. During the War, they opposed strikes, and formed Joint Production Committees.

After the War, miners' Leaders allowed mass closures. For years, the AEU was controlled by Bill Carron, who was such a dictator that the term "Carron's Law" came into being. The TGWU expelled dockers' leaders under a similar right wing Leadership.

What is specific abut New Realism is the period in which it arises and to which it is a response.

By TONY RICHARDS

The starting point is current predicament of the working class — a situation which the New Realists both helped create and are a part of. They help create it by their betrayals and in the process they systematised their ideas.

Over the last 20 or so years, British capitalism has tried to break a strong working class movement, one whose strength was mainly at local level.

These attempts were mainly unsuccessful, despite the co-operation of most of the trade union Leadership. The Labour government of 64-70 introduced anti-trade union legislation which was defeated, as was Heath's. The Wilson, Callaghan, and coalition governments up to 1979 were no more successful.

There were defeats, of course, from the seafarers in 1966 through to Grunwicks in the late 70s, but the general trend was not what capitalism required.

Then came Thatcher, and a well-prepared, determined attack on the working class. The purpose of this attack was to change the relationship of forces between the working and the capitalist classes, and then to press home ideological attacks and physical changes, such as privatisation, the selling of Council homes, etc.

Much of the groundwork for this was done by closures, and industrial "rationalisation", and the difficulty of fighting them.

Each defeat, from the steelworkers to Warrington, the miners, and Wapping, has led to a weakening of the working class, both at local and national level, and a continuing loss of confidence.

This has created an almost all-consuming defeatism regarding the anti-union laws and the government, throughout every layer of working class Leadership.

This is the ground in which the "New Realists" grow. Some may only share some of the ideas, but they generally still carry out the betrayals.

In the Labour Party, it is reflected in a loss of confidence in struggle against the government and an increasing reliance on the electoral politics of Kinnock. In this, Kinnock has a real base, as do the New Realists in the trade unions.

But a major problem remains for the "New Realists". For the working class none of what capitalism is doing is abstract.

The media may promote ideas and catchphrases like "legality" or "can't fight the government", etc., and these may be strong in the working class (re-enforced as they are in every speech by trade union Leaders). But the reality is in conflict with these ideas. The working class is forced to struggle: five weeks

Trade Union Briefing

at Vickers, six months at P&O, over two years at Keetons, etc.

So however "legal" the P&O pickets try to make themselves, they can't please a judge. They find they have to break the law, simply in order to defend jobs and safety.

Sam McCluskie, a Labour Party witch-hunter, ridiculer of Scargill, was at one point openly calling for defiance of the law.

This reflects a basic reality. The employers want increased exploitation, and need to break the unions in order to get it. Opposition to this is inevitable, and even some union Leaders are forced to reflect it.

Thus, the ultimate "New Realists" of the EETPU are forced to split form people like Ron Todd, who himself helped sell out the Ford strike. We need to exploit this situation as much as we can.

The EETPU is the real face of "New Realism". No-strike clauses, workers forced to join trade unions of the employers' liking. It is the end of real trade unionism.

Every move by a "left" or right trade union Leader that goes along with the employers' plans should be shown up as a step towards this EETPU-style, business unionism, "New Realism". "Left" Leaders should not be protected from criticism when they accept job losses, privatisation, or productivity deals. "New Realism" is the logical conclusion of these moves.



For the working class, in its real world, there is a choice: accept all that the employer is forcing through, such as lower wages, speed-up, unemployment, homelessness, etc; or refuse to accept it and struggle, resist. This resistance must be systematised, and that means a battle with the "New Realists" and those who go with them.

The ideas of resistance must be systematised and a new Leadership developed around the struggle for these ideas.

These ideas will form part of a programme based on the premise that the working class must not pay for this crisis. Workers in struggle shuld be supported and every attempt made to break their isolation. This can only be done by a willingness to break the anti-union laws, a willingness which is vital for the survival of the working class.

The P&O workers have been isolated, as were the miners and the News International strikers. A judge says they do not have the right to picket. And the NUS Leadership concurs.

Here is our front-line in the battle against the physical meaning of the policies of "New Realism".

Equal Pay Victory

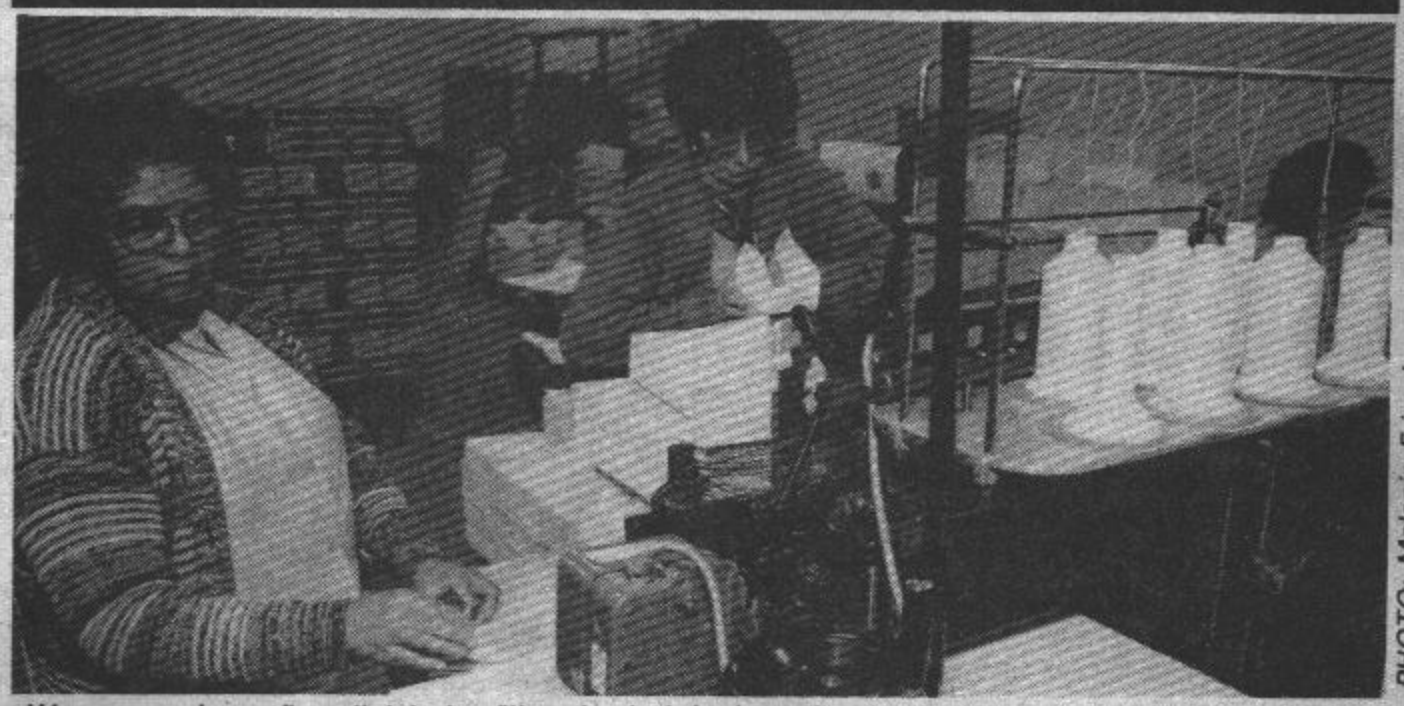


PHOTO: Melanie Friend

Women workers often stick to traditional or isolated employment.

When a "token man" is no defence...

Two recent victories for women on equal pay for work of equal value have thrown the bosses into crisis.

By Gill Lee
Labour Briefing Women

In May Julie Hayward, an assistant cook at the Cammell Laird shipyard, won a ruling from the Law Lords that she is entitled to equal pay with painters, joiners and engineers in the same firm.

The company had alleged that although her wages were £25-a-week less, this was offset by a sick pay scheme!

The decision of the Law Lords came after four and a half years of legal battles, including earlier decisions of the Employment Appeal Tribunal and the Court of Appeal in favour of Cammell Laird.

The Confederation of British Industries warned that the judgement could result in "substantial disruption to pay structures" and prove damaging to "competitiveness and job opportunities". In other words it could lead to a substantial rise in women's pay and an end to woman being exploited as a cheap workforce!

On June 30th Rene Pickstone and four other women warehouse operatives employed by Freeman's mail order company won equal pay for work of equal value with male checker warehouse operators. Freeman's had argued that there was at least one man doing the same job as the women for the same pay.

The Law Lords unanimously dismissed Freeman's case — ruling that employers could not counter a woman's equal value claim by employing a "token man" on the same job as the woman.

Both these cases are based on a 1983 Amendment to the Equal Pay Act forced on the British Government by the European Court of Justice.

Despite the 1970 Equal Pay Act women's wages are still only about 70% of men's — largely because women do different jobs from men. The 1983 amendment and the recent legal victories could radically change that by allowing women to have their jobs compared with those of men working for the same company in — men with jobs which were different, but which required similar levels of skill.

The *Financial Times* has warned that if fully implemented this legislation could put 20-30% on to wage bills.

Since 1983 over 400 test cases for equal pay for work of equal value have been taken out, but the legal road is costly and time consuming. And at the end of the day, employers can all too easily slip off the legal hook. Cammell Laird can contract out the catering, so closing off Julie Hawyward's claim to equal pay with the joiners.

The battle for equal pay must be fought through the mobilisation of the whole workforce. While legal victories can help convince workers there is a case to answer, lasting equal pay victories can only be won if they are backed up by industrial action.

Benn-Heffer Campaign

Benn exposes historical humbug

On July 7th, 19 left Labour MPs refused to join Kinnock in supporting the "bipartisan" motion in the House of Commons expressing "our great pleasure in celebrating the tercentenary of the historic events of 1688 and 1689 that established those constitutional freedoms under the law which Your Majesty's Parliament andpeople have continued to enjoy for 300 years."

Tony Benn urged MPs "not to make the House of Commons look a fool by endorsing" the motion"so that at least we do not have to tell children that democracy had nothignto dow ith the franchise; it was all because William of Orange had to give an assurance to justify the fact thathe landed an army in Torbay and took over in order to repress ther Catholics and the Irish."

Instead, Benn moved an amendment which debunked the historical double-talk surrounding the "Glorious Revolution" and included the following (modest) proposals:

•That all Crown Prerogatives be replaced by Statute Law and their exercise be subject to the authority of the House of Commons;

•The the House of Lords be abolished...;

•The the people of Britain be permitteed to know and understand the decisions that are taken in their name by the Government, through the full release of official information...;

•That all powers now exercised by the European Commission, Council of Ministers, Assembly and Court, be made subject to the approval of the House of Commons...;

•That all people be granted equality of treatment under just laws from from all discrimination based upon class, sex, race, lifestyle or beliefs and that the rights of conscience be recognised where unjust laws are imposed that run counter to the deepeest moral convictions of those to whom such laws apply;

•That the right be granted of free speech and assembly, the entrenchment of civil liberties and human rights and the right to organise voluntary associations and free trade unions for the purpose of protecting the improving the prospects for those who belong to them, and in particular the right to withdraw labour as a means of securing justice;

•That all the armed forces of foreign powers now, or in the future, stationed in the United Kingdom be made subject to the approval of the House of Commons...;

•That the constitutional anomaly under which the Church of England is established by law and its Archbishops and Bishops are appointed by the Prime Minister using the Crown Prerogative, and Church measures require the approval of Parliament, be ended by the disestablishment of that Church...;

•That the Oaths taken by the Crown on the occasion of the Coronation, by Privy Councillors on appointment, and by Members of Parliament, Judges, and all officials in the civil and military service, be redrafted to include a clear pledge that all the holders of those various offices will uphold the ancient rights and democratic liberties of the people of Britain.

•That Britain makes a solemn declaration that the jurisdiction of the British Parliament over Northern Ireland will be terminated within a fixed period;

•That the common land, as of right belonging to the people of Great Britain which was wrongly confiscated, sequestrated and removed from their ownership by various Acts of enclosure be restored to its former status as common land... .

Trade Unions

Summary of trade union decisions on the Leadership contest.

COHSE. Nomination: none. Decision-making method: Block branch votes (voting by August 27th).
GMB. Nom: Kinnock/Hattersley. D-MM: National Executive. Outcome: Kinnock/Hatterslely.
MSF. Nom: None. D-MM: Show of hands at branches in September.
APEX. D-MM: Membership ballot.
NCU. Nom: none. D-MM: None yet.
NUPE. Nom: none. D-MM: Block branch voting August-September.
TGWU. Nom: none. D-MM: NEC/LP delegation, September.
NUR. Nom: none. D-MM: Conference., July. Outcome: Kinnock/Hattersley.
SOGAT. Nom: none. D-MM: Membership ballot.
UCATT. Nom: Kinnock/Hattersley. D-MM: LP delegation.
ASLEF. Nom: Kinnock/Prescott. D-MM: Conference, July. Outcome: Kinnock/Prescott.
NUM. Nom: Kinnock/Prescott. D-MM: Conference, July. Outome: Kinnock/Prescott.
FTAT. Nom: Benn/Prescott. D-MM:Conference. Outcome: Benn/Prescott.
EETPU. Nom: none. D-MM: National Executive. Outcome: Kinnock/Hattersley.
AEU. Nom: none. D-MM: NEC.

A London-wide Benn-Heffer leaflet for trade unionists is now in preparation. Copies available from Pete Cooper (01-228 7000) or Joan Twelves (01-582 2955).

Campaign Diary

August
23 Dumfries (Benn)
24 Dundee (Benn)
25 Fife (Benn)
26 Glasgow (Benn, Heffer)
27 Dumbarton (Benn, Heffer)
30 S. 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 N. Wales (Heffer)
14 St Helens (Heffer)
15 Rochdale (Heffer)
16 Manchester (Skinner)
19 Sheffield (Benn, Heffer)?
21 Bury (Heffer)
23 Central London (Benn, Heffer)
October 1st - Eve of Conference Rally, Blackpool

Forward to Socialism!
A new pamphlet by Eric Heffer,MP

50 pence; available from Eric Heffer, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

A collection of articles and speeches published to coincide with the Deputy Leadership Campaign.

Book this date!
September 17th
Exeter
Mobilisation against Loyalist/Fascist March
See next issue for details, or contact:
Campaign Against Loyalist/Fascist Parades, PO Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

Labour Party

Leadership nominations

July 8th was the deadline for nominations for Leader and Deputy Leader. Here is a selection of nominations received.

Tony Benn
Trade Unions: FTAT
MPs: Abbott, Banks, Barnes, Bermingham, Campbell, Clay, Cohen, Corbyn, Cryer, Fields, Fyfe, Heffer, Gordon, Grant, Hughes, Lamond, Livingstone, Loyden, Mahon, Michie, Nellist, Parry, Primarolo, Sedgemore, Skinner, Wise, Wall, Wray.
CLPs: 101

Eric Heffer
MPs: Abbott, Barnes, Benn, Bermingham, Bidwell, Campbell, Canavan, Clay, Cohen, Corbyn, Cryer, Fields, Gordon, Grant, Heffer, Hughes, Lamond, Livingstone, Loyden, Mahon, Michie, Nellist, Parry, Primarolo, Sedgemore, Skinner, Wise, Wall, Wareing.
CLPs: 75

Neil Kinnock
Trade Unions: ASLEF, Bakers' Union, ISTC, Musicians' Union, NUFLAT, NUM, NUS, NUTGW, PLCW&TWU, TSSA, UCATT, UCW, USDAW.
MPs: Adams, Allen, Anderson, Archer, Armstrong, Ashely, Ashton, Barron, Beckett, Bell, Bidwell, Blair, Blunkett, Boothroyd, Boateng, Boyes, Bray, G. Brown, N. Brown, Buckley, Caborn, Campbell-Savours, Clark, Clarke, Clelland, Clwyd, Coleman, Cook, Corbett, Cox, Crowther, Cummings, Cunningham, Cunliffe, Darling, D. Davies, R. Davies, Dewar, Dobson, Duffy, Dunnachie, Dunwoody, Eadie, Eastham, Evans, Fatchett, Faulds, Field, Fisher, Flynn, Foot, Foster, Foulkes, Galbraith, J. Garrett, T. Garrett, George, Godman, Golding, Gould, N. Griffiths, W. Griffiths, Grocott, Hardy, Harman, Hattersley, Haynes, Healey, Henderson, Hogg, Holland, Hood, Howarth, Howell, Hoyle, R. Hughes, Roy Hughes, S. Hughes, Illsley, Ingram, Janner, Jones, Kaufman, Leadbitter, Lestor, Lewis, Lofthouse, MacDonald, Marek, Marshall, Martin, Martlew, Maxton, McAllion, McAvoy, McCartney, McKay, McLeish, McKelvey, McNamara, McTaggert, McWilliam, Meacher, Michael, Millan, Mitchell, Moonie, Morgan, Morley, A. Morris, J. Morris, Mowlam, Murphy, Oakes, O'Brien, O'Neill, Orme, Pendry, Pike, Powell, Prescott, Quin, Radice, Randall, Rees, Reid, Richardson, Roberts, J. Robertson, G. Robertson, Robinson, Rogers, Ross, Rowlands, Sheerman, Sheldon, A. Smith, C. Smith, J. Smith, Snape, Stott, Straw, Taylor, Thompson, Turner, Wardell, Williams, WynneWilliams, Wilson, Worthington, Young.
CLPs: 110

Roy Hattersley
Trade Unions: 9
MPs: 106
CLPs: 52

John Prescott
Trade Unions: ASLEF, FTAT, NUM, NUS.
MPs: 37; **CLPs:** 76

Chesterfield comes to — *EVERYWHERE!*

The Chesterfield movement plans a major series of events and projects to follow up June's successful recall conference.

The movement is strengthening its links with activists around the country campaigning on a range of vital issues.

There are at least eight regional conferences planned for the autumn or winter: in East Anglia, the North East, Leicester and the East Midlands, the North West, Wales, Southern and Home Counties, the West Midlands, and the South West.

In most of these areas Regional Organising Committees are being set up (see box for contacts). These conferences follow on from successful events already held in Sheffield, North London, Coventry, and South London.

By Davy Jones, Islington North CLP

A range of campaigning and policy conferences are also planned for the next six months. Plans are underway for a national event to discuss resistance to the Poll Tax, and for an international conference to discuss a socialist foreign policy and to make links with socialists and labour and anti-imperialist movements abroad. In the New Year there will be a recalled Green and Socialist Conference.

Other Socialist Conference Policy Groups are planning events; including conferences on the future of local government and on socialist philosophy, and a meeting of "Irish in Britain" activists.

The Chesterfield movement will also be co-ordinating campaigning work with the Trade Union Solidarity Network (whose conference in on November 5-6th), Black Sections, and Women for Socialism. The Chesterfield movement proivdes a unique opportunity for socialists inside and outside the Labour Party to jointly organise solidarity and discussion on key policy issues. Become a signed-up supporter and affiliate your organisation as soon as possible. Everyone who came to the national events should join now. Just complete the form!

Socialist Conference Regional Contacts

Scotland: Margaret Stewart, 36 Queen St (Top Flat), Stirling, FK8 1HN.
Wales: Colin Sweet, Tanybryn Commins Llanrhaeady-Ym-Mochnant via Oswestry, Clwyd SY10 0BZ
North East: Derek Cattell, 2 The Close, Middridge, Newton Aycliffe, Co Durham DL5 7JP
North West: c/o John Parkinson, 83 Wellington Street, Preston PR1 8IQ
West Midlands: Pauline Purnell, 25 Worlds End Ave, Quinton, Birmingham B32 1JF
Coventry: Colin Lindsay, Trades Council, Unit 15, The Arches, Spon End, Coventry, CV1 3JQ
East Midlands: Paul Barry, 28 Tunstall Green, Walton, Chesterfield S40 2DY
Yorkshire: Annette Taberner, 8 St Ronans Road, Sheffield S7 1DX
East Anglia: Hugh Kerr, Baytree Cottage, London Road, Potter St, Harlow
Southern & Home Counties: Steve Kendall, Eastfields, Elmwood, Turvey, Beds MK43 8DP
North London: Mandy Mudd, 11 Springfield Road, London N15
South London: Greg Tucker, 3 Blades House, Kennington Oval, London SE11 5TW

Affiliation Form

Send to: The Socialist Conference: 9 Poland Street, London W1V3DG

Name.....

Address.....

..... Telephone No. .....

Enclosed with this form is the affiliation fee for 1988 (£12 for organisations; £6 for individuals, £3 unwaged). In conformity with the requirements of the Data Protection Act, I hereby agree to the Socialist Conference keeping the above information on file.

Signed.....Date.....

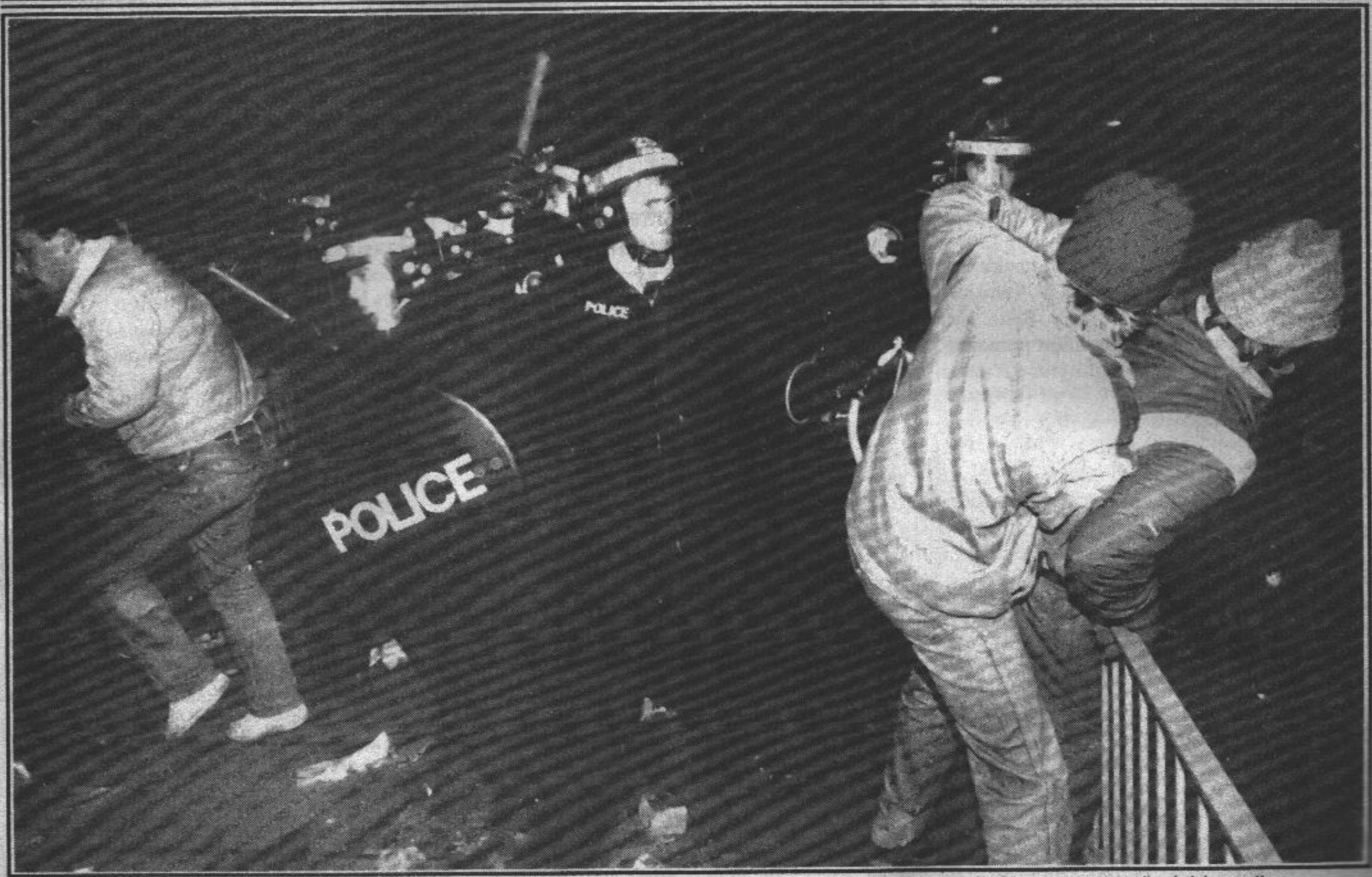


PHOTO: Andrew Wiard (Report)

Police attack demonstrators on Wapping anniversary demonstration. The Tories knew where to start their attack on democratic rights: on the organised bodies of the labour movement — the trade unions. With the craven capitulation of those labour movement Leaders, it is up to socialists to stand up and lead the fight to defend our organisations and extend our rights.

A proposal for the Socialist Conference

The Tory attack on Democratic Rights — a socialist response

A catalogue of recent attacks on democratic rights, abuses of state power, and assaults on civil liberties would fill this *Briefing Summer Special* twice over.

Deportations, assassinations, censorship, political prosecutions, legislated discrimination, High Court injunctions... every day the list grows longer.

The scale and speed of the onslaught has forced us, as socialists, to recognise the issue of democracy as a terrain on which we must fight. More important, it has enlarged our understanding of the dimensions of that terrain.

But to enter this terrain boldly and effectively, we need a Marxist compass — an understanding of the link between capitalism's economic offensive and increasing state authoritarianism, between class struggle and the struggle for democratic rights.

Under Thatcher, the front-lines of these two battles have become ever more intertwined.

By Mike Marqusee and Dave Palmer
Haringey Labour Briefing

•Parliament strips trade unions of a host of legal rights and employers in both public and private sectors are now driving home their advantage.

•Increased police powers are used not only to break strikes, but to harass black people, youth, lesbians and gays, and others on the street and in the courts — neatly complementing the regime's attack on the living standards of many of these same people (through cuts in benefits and services, and the growth of low-paid, casual, non-union labour).

•Women's legal abortion rights remain under threat — at the same time as their economic independence is being savagely undercut, and an ideological drive to force them back into traditional roles gains ground.

•In Scotland, economic devastation has been built upon — and has entrenched — a denial of national self-determination (and has fed the demand for a Scottish Assembly).

•In local government, the step-by-step eroison of democratic control and local power has been accompanied (as intended) by reductions in jobs and services.

•In intellectual and cultural life, Section 28, direct and indirect attacks on the traditional (and relative) independence of the media, and threats to academic tenure and autonomy have all combined with education and library cuts, reduced student grants, and growing concentration of ownership in publishing (and, in the near future, in broadcasting) to restrict the parameters of public discussion.

What we are witnessing might be termed,

loosely, a "permanent revolution in reverse": the growing-over of a capitalist offensive against the working class into a reactionary attack on democratic rights in general.

It is impossible to understand one without the other. And it will be impossible to mount a counter-offensive — to defend, restore, expand democratic rights — without this understanding.

So far, the response to these attacks has been hesitant, piecemeal, sectional — and largely ineffective. Though Tony Benn has made democracy one of his main personal-themes for years (and has highlighted it in his challenge to Kinnock), the Labour Party and the trade unions have traditionally consigned the whole question to the political fringe. The vested interest of the Parliamentary Labour Party in the constitutional *status quo* and the trade union bureaucracy's long-standing dependence on and collusion with the state (not to mention the appalling record of past Labour governments) has hamstrung the movement as a whole.

Black communities, in campaigns up and down the country, have raised potent challenges, as have workers in the coalfields and at Wapping, but these struggles have remained isolated — and most have gone down to defeat.

Groups campaigning for Irish self-determination have highlighted appalling abuses — strip searches, no-jury trials, shoot-to-kill, and more — but endemic hostility to the Irish question (in the labour movement and beyond) has confined these issues to a political ghetto, despite occasional blazes of publicity.

Single issue campaigns — such as FAB and Stop the Clause — have enjoyed varying degrees of success, but have usually faded away, leaving little behind.

Pressure groups like the NCCL, for all their valuable work, are restricted by a narrow and legalistic approach, and have rarely mobilised broad support.

Movement

Co-ordinated action has been rare. Despite attempts to create a wide forum — notably the Broadwater Farm Civil Rights Movement — there remains a crying need for a nation-wide movement that can bring together the diverse campaigns, pool resources and experiences, and take the arguments about democratic rights from the fringes into the mainstream.

The key here is winning widespread working class support and participation. It's hard to see how this can be achieved without making the links between the "democratic" and "economic" issues.

Note: this does *not* mean a return to class reductionism, nor an insistence that *only* those with a fully-fledged socialist perspective have anything to offer. What it does mean is an effort to embrace and mobilise a wide variety of constituencies behind a campaign for democratic rights, coupled with an expanded definition of those rights, and a determined effort to take them into new areas of social and economic life.

It also means transcending the liberal, "purist" approach to democratic rights, which would divorce them from any kind of socialist agenda. This approach (currently winning some friends in the aggrieved sections of the mainstream media) can produce little more than a constitutional republicanism, whose appeal (undeniable as it is) will be confined to small circles among the intelligentsia.

The Socialist Conference is well-placed to take the initiative here. No other body has either the ideology or the authority to do it.

The Policy Group papers so far produced raise a number of important issues, but the discussion needs to move beyond abstraction to proposals for action — defensive and offensive.

Indeed, we would propose that the thorny policy questions (electoral reform, the role of the state, decentralisation) will only be resolved in and through actual social struggles against the Tory attacks and for democratic rights and controls.

We will only renew identification of socialism with democracy when we, as socialists, are seen to be deeply engaged in a wide range of such struggles.

Convention

The Socialist Conference should organise a weekend convention on democratic rights, similar to planned events around internationalism and green politics. A big effort needs to be made to incorporate all those existing groups which represent, in however partial a manner, the many constituencies which we would want to mobilise in a struggle for democracy:

Black Sections, Broadwater Farm Civil Rights Movement, Race Today, Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign, local community campaigns, LCI, LWI, Troops Out, IBRG, LCLGR, OLGA, Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, Anti-Fascist Action, the Haldane Society, the NCCL, NAC, WAC, disability groups, trade union activists (including the Solidarity Network, Victimised Miners, Women's Support Groups, GCHQ trade unionists, NUJ, NALGO, civil service and teaching unions), student groups, and of course left groups of all shapes and sizes.

A convention sumoning all these forces would have its work cut out, but a few practical tasks present themselves:

•**Organisational.** Pooling experience, information, and resources to halt the isolation which has bedeveilled so many local or single issue campaigns and struggles; the creation of a network of activists which can spring into action when new attacks are made and which will provide a natural focus for launching national initiatives in response to new legislation, sudden state interventions, etc.

•**Ideological.** To advance and expand the work of the "Democracy and the State" Policy Group, by drawing on the experiences of those involved in struggles for democratic rights.

Ultimately, we should be working toward a *socialist* definition of democratic rights — and promote real mass involvement in it.

The drafting of a **Bill of Rights** has been mooted, and would certainly help concentrate at least some attention on these often neglected issues. But in itself, a Bill of Rights is only another piece of proposed legislation (similar to some of the excellent Bills introduced in Parliament by the Campaign Group).

Experience in other countries (notably the USA) shows that, even if passed in radical form, such legislative guarantees in themselve protect nobody. What's needed is a militant determination by a social majority — by the working class and its organisations — to defend and extend democratic rights in every corner (especially "unpopular" ones).

Perhaps a more useful campaigning tool at this time would be a new **Charter**, whichmight include legislative proposals for a Bill of Rights, but would be a broader, more participatory assertion of democratic demands and principles.

This would be a document — accessible, readable, dramatic — which we could take into the trade unions, the community campaigns, the streets, in a drive to secure signatures of support from individuals and groups.

The Charter would act as a catalyst for debate, a rallying call for action, and a symbol of defiant solidarity in the face of escalating state repression.

Drafting such a document so that it can win maximum public backing will be difficult, to say the least. But as a start, we offer as suggestions some broad themes: democratisation of state institutions, including police, judiciary, prisons (and end racism within them); freedom of information and accountability of military and security services; the right of individuals to enjoy full, practical control over their own bodies and their own sexuality; trade union rights and independence from state intervention.

Anyone who's been involved in campaigns on these issues will know just how daunting are the tasks we face. But we have already paid a heavy price for the absence of a coherent resistance to Tory attacks on democratic rights. Such a resistance will not emerge spontaneously from the welter of existing groups. The Socialist Conference should act now to begin the work of creating it.

Time for action on the Poll Tax

At June's Socialist Conference, there was wide agreement on the urgent necessity of building a mass campaign against the Poll Tax.

Proposals are being drawn up now for "an action conference against the Poll Tax".

Contact Gary Kent, 60b St George's Road, London SE1 6ET.

Labour Party

The Black Agenda reviewed

Black Sections on new terrain

The Black Agenda **is a detailed document produced by Labour Party Black Sections.**

F mally unveiled in June at the C. .field Socialist Conference, its inten.ion is to ouline future areas of policy and campaigning for Black Sections.

The document provides a good overview of the nature and development of racism, especially since the Second World War. At the centre of its analysis is the question of immigration controls, introduced by both Labour and Conservative governments in order to appease racism; even more important, the document argues that the state has fostered an identification of black communities, as a "problem" to be contained.

The main focus of the Agenda is state racism in its various aspects. Short chapters look at racism in areas as diverse as policing, inner cities, employment, education, and health.

Its references to past and existing black liberation struggles are particularly valuable. It does not ignore, like other Labour Party documents, the role of small groups of people campaigning to fight inequalities and to democratise services such as education, health, and local government. It also shows demands such as these are unevenly incorporated within the labour movement, leaving considerable areas of work still to be done.



Labour Party Black Sections: out of the meeting room and onto the inner city streets?

Reminder

I found this extensive coverage and its accessibility in a single document very useful, if only as a reminder that the fight against racism occurs on a broad level, and cannot be reduced to single issues. The introduction and the chapter on inner cities needs to be read by all Labour Party activists who need to become aware of the implications of Thatcher's policies in urban areas.

The large bulk of black communities are located in the metropolitan areas. They also comprise a comparatively large part of the working class and the poor. It is therefore not surprising that they will be hit hard by Thatcher's attacks upon the poor and local democracy.

The Agenda seeks to alert people to the systematic and co–ordinated nature of this attack (e.g. undermining local government, privatising national and local services, Poll Tax, Great Education Reform Bill, Housing Bill, etc.). This warning needs to be taken much more seriously by the Labour left than it is at the moment.

It is a pity, however, that the "recommendations" at the end of many of the chapters simply reproduce the surfeit of policy papers that used to be passed around at the end of each committee meeting at the height of municipal socialism.

The immediate problem for the left is not so much what we do when we come to power as what are we going to do now in the fight against the Tories? How do we develop a united front that not only defends black communities but can also develop a socialist vision beyond Thatcher?

By Shahid Tilly
Haringey Labour Briefing

The Agenda ends on the strategy for achieving recognition of Black Sections (and its interesting response to Bill Morris's short-lived proposal on affiliation). It also takes credit, quite correctly at one level, for getting black parliamentary candidates selected in winnable constituencies.

But one feels that maybe the ball game has changed somewhat over the past couple of years. We have a much more aggressive and hostile Labour Party Leadership which will not hesitate to implement racist measures (Sharon Atkin's removal) or give voice to racist ideas (Hattersley's attitudes to "his" black constituents). In fact, Kinnock and his PA, Patricia Hewitt, probably believe that these kinds of activities are electorally advantageous and popular!

Running in tandem with this New Realism is a reaction in many local Labour Authorities against what are portrayed as the "gross excesses" of the GLC, and other left Authorities. Cuts in expenditure and staff are having a severe effect upon black communities, and retreat on a range of issues vital to that community can be seen nearly everywhere.

Black Sections are operating on a new political terrain, one which is much harsher than before. An example is Ben Bosquet's failure to win selection in Kensington, even though he was quite critical of Black Sections from a rightist perspective. In an environment in which the left has been weakened, maybe the Agenda should have cast an eye beyond the Party, with a view to developing specific campaigns in the community (both black and white) around issues such as Poll Tax and attacks on local democracy.

Black Sections have lots of potential and a core of socialist comrades who can contribute considerable skills and experience in such campaigning. This document, the Black Agenda, pinpoints quite clearly issues that need to be taken up in the defence of the black working class and in any broader attempt to reverse Thatcher's neo-liberal crusade. Her drive to eliminate socialism from Britain will have severe repercussions for black communities.



Delegates voting at 1987 National Labour Women's Conference. Whose vote are they casting?

Women for Socialism:

The Future

Women for Socialism, which gathered new support at June's National Labour Women's Conference, is now the largest women's organisation in and around the Labour Party.

The two fringe meetings were packed. The platforms addressed the issues women want to consider: what will socialism mean for us? How can it be achieved? What stands in its way? How can we get organised?

Women for Socialism is supporting Tony Benn and Eric Heffer because they will promote polices that will empower women and allow their ideas to be heard.

Both men know it's not just a case of "listening to women"; it's the necessity of hearing what women say. Women know that macho Kinnock policies will not benefit them — or get rid of nuclear weapons or unite Ireland.

The women who launched Women for Socialism saw the need for a style of organisation that suited women and could be flexible enough to meet their varied needs.

Many women who had experienced the top-heavy hierarchy of the Labour Women's Action Committee were convinced that women could be more successful in fulfilling their aims if they adopted a feminist approach to seeking power for women, and not simply adhere to the roads and rules laid down by men.

The WAC proposals adopted by Women's Conference have set an agenda for Women for Socialism. With trade union delegations now carrying 45% of the vote at Conference it will take a lot of work amongst Constituency women and sympathetic sisters in unions to prevent the proposed five resolutions from Women's Conference to Party Conference being no different from the rest of the right wing trade union resolutions to Annual Conference.

By PAULINE PURNELL

Women's Conference is controlled by men. Men set the budget (after deciding whether the Conference can take place), carry out the administration, and take the minutes.

Women trade union delegates are mandated by men and minded by men; men were seen watching their flocks from the balconies. One delegation even wore matching scarves to make it easy for their minders to recognise them from behind!

Women for Socialism must work within their own unions, putting forward new ideas and restating socialist principles long forgotten by union Leaders.

We must speak up against the hypocrisy of unions which vote *for* solidarity against P&O — and do nothing more than refuse to buy a ferry ticket — and which vote *against* taking a stand to prevent implementation of the Poll Tax.

Women trade unionists from the tobacco and nuclear industries must be exposed to the socialist argument of alternative production and shown that alternative jobs can be found. No woman should need to depend on earning a living by making a product harmful to her sisters.

Women for Socialism will not just concentrate on women's issues but offer a women's perspective on all social issues. In getting this perspective understood and accepted, Women for Socialism will have to take a firm stand against male comrades, and unite and organise to win 50% of debate and policy-making influence.

The aim of Women for Socialism is to respond to the needs of women, wherever they are and whatever they need.

Resolutions

Proposals for resolutions will be circulated before Regional and National Conferences. Women for Socialism must now start to compile suggested resolutions or ideas for resolutions for future Conferences.

Plans must be made to give help at Conferences to support and encourage delegates and demystify the whole procedure.

Discussion papers should be circulated within Regional Groups. A national newssheet should be circulated to link members and prevent women feeling so isolated in their

CLPs or trade unions.

Betty Heathfield has suggested that Women for Socialism compile a **Bill for Women**; this document would define the needs of women and how they will be met in a socialist society.

A Women for Socialism Steering Group has been set up, consisting of volunteers from women already in the organisation and new members recruited at Chesterfield in June. This group should aim to form an easily workable and accessible structure.

The dilemma for *Briefing Women* in Women for Socialism is that while many politically active and aware women will wish to launch a positive, visible organisation within the Labour Party with a set agenda and a defined structure throughout the country, others will want to accommodate the needs of women on the periphery of socialist politics who still need to explore and discuss their ideas and views, need support and encouragement to put these views on paper, and may not wish or be able to attend meetings.



Betty Heathfield: suggested a "Bill for Women"
PHOTOS: Leesa Herbert

Women for Socialism must also be careful to work around the Chesterfield network and not become London-orientated.

Women for Socialism will be strong if it responds to all socialist women; it is that response that will make it different. It will therefore take time to sort its roots out; it's not worth rushing if rushing means losing strength.

Briefing Women have found their political platform. Many other women have not yet found theirs. *Briefing Women* can help set the agenda, share their experiences, and enable other women to join them. If women are working for socialism, they are Women for Socialism. Encourage them. Offer them our knowledge. Include them in groups. Listen to their ideas. Together, we will win the power for women to bring about the necessary changes in society.

Women for Socialism Statement

Why Women should back Benn and Heffer

Women for Socialism are giving their support to the Leadership challenge of Tony Benn and Eric Heffer because many women in the Party share the same concern that the present Leadership and the Policy Review process are not offering a serious, socialist challenge to Thatcher in her third term.

Neither are they responsive to the needs and aspirations of the millions of working women now facing cuts in employment rights and conditions, benefits, local government services,and personal freedoms.

Despite the fact that women, because of discriminatory practices at work, are usually employed on a vulnerable, part-time and low-paid basis, have consistently lost jobs through privatisation of public services, and stand to lose many more, the present Leadership choose to portray women only as mothers, users of the National Health Service,and potential victims of rape and assault.

Despite the fact that women still have primary responsibility for the care of most children and other adult dependents, the present Leadership has not given strong support to Local Authorities who are struggling to keep open the nurseries, pensioners clubs, and women's centres which provide real community care, not leave women to pick up the responsibilities.

Despite the debates of the past two decades, which have developed an explanation of women's oppression which goes beyond the biological fact that they bear children, or the economic fact that wages were often designed to provide a family wage, the present Leadership has chosen to characterise such concerns as being irrelevant to "working class" women. Commitment to abortion rights, protection from sexual abuse (whether as an adult or a child), the rights of lesbians to express their own sexuality, to oppose degrading and often pornographic imagery of women are all ignored or given little attention.

It is left to Jo Richardson and a handful of predominantly women Labour MPs to lead the fight against the Alton Bill, Section 28, pornography, and other issues that concern every woman, and most certainly concern working class women, who by the very nature of their class, race, or poverty stand to be particularly vulnerable to abuse and attack.

Tony Benn and Eric Heffer are amongst this minority of Labour MPs who have responded to the demands and experiences of feminists and have enlarged their view of women's needs and concerns.

They support:

•The right of women to play a strong part in policy making in the Party through a reorganised relationship between National Women's Conference and the Party's Annual Decision-Making Conference as agreed at this year's Labour Women's Conference.

•The right of women to choose to have an abortion.

•The need for the Party to present women in a positive light as equals in every sector of life, not just in traditional caring roles.

•The rights of lesbians to be open and honest about their own sexuality.

•The right of women to full employment rights despite working part-time or taking time off to have children.

•The need for a statutory minimum wage, training opportunities, increased child and maternity benefits, adequate childcare provision, improve the welfare benefit system, including pensions, housing benefits, etc.

•The repeal of the racist immigration laws, which have discriminated against thousands of black women living in this country or trying to obtain entrance.

•The need for a more accountable police force under the control of locally elected committees, which would treat domestic violence, rape, and racist attacks in a more serious and sensitive manner.

Tony Benn and Eric Heffer also share with women in the Party a belief that:

•Britain should recognise the right of the Irish people to self-determination and withdraw politically and militarily from Ireland.

•Not only nuclear weapons, but also nuclear power should be phased out at the first opportunity.

•There should be no witch-hunts within the Party; but that differences should be dealt with through the political structures of the Party.

•The Party needs to have a socialist foreign policy, recognising the effect that colonialism and imperialism have had on many countries world-wide, and the particularly adverse conditions now faced by many women in the developing countries.

•The Party needs to listen to its members and supporters, both women and men, not media pundits and selected guests, if it wants to build on the years of struggle and debate that have enriched the labour movement and construct a platform of policies and ideas that can challenge the "loadsamoney" philosophy of the Tories and win people to a future offering collective support for all, not individual riches for some.

Debate: a strategy for Europe

A European Union of the left?

The question now facing the Left is not whether Britain should withdraw from the European Community, but how we can win Europe to a socialist agenda.

For the last two decades, however, the British Left has turned its back on the European working classes and abandoned our continental socialist allies. We have wallowed in a wholly negative British-centredness which has allowed the development of Europe to be determined by the parties of the Right.

It is now long overdue that the Left was committed to European socialist solidarity and to a far more radical and internationalist vision of what Europe could and ought to be — united, green, and socialist.

A United Europe

Greater European co-operation, leading to the eventual unification of Europe, is now both a progressive and necessary demand in the light of the following historical trends:

The nations of Europe are increasingly inter-dependent and face common problems requiring common solutions. Joint strategies are essential to deal with trans-European issues such as environmental degradation, resource depletion, the arms race, the system of military blocs, and the domination of Europe by the unaccountable power of international financial institutions and multi-national corporations.

These have played off workers in one country against those in another and, as we have witnessed in Mitterrand's France, deflected individual socialist governments from their chosen political strategies. It is only through co-ordinated strategies by the European states that we can solve our shared problems and reorient Europe in a socialist direction.

Under the aegis of the European Community and trans-national capital, the existence of distinctive national capitalisms, based on individual nation-states, has begun to give way to the emergence of a unified European capitalist empire. This Europeanisation of capital has shifted the terrain of class struggle from the nation-state to the wider European theatre. The only conceivable road to socialism is a European one in which we pit the collective power of European labour against that of European capital.

We can no longer depend on the Americans to defend European interests nor should we wish them to, given that the price of dependence is Washington's political, economic and military hegemony over Western Europe. US isolationism and the increasing conflict of interests between Europe and America mean that the people of Europe need to be more self-reliant and to positively assert their European identity and independence.

By PETER TATCHELL

The Gorbachev reforms in the USSR open up new possibilities for breaking down the bloc system and overcoming the divisions of Europe through vastly increased East-West co-operation. This will inevitably encourage a growing recognition that we share a sense of being European and have common interests which extend beyond national boundaries and over-ride the East-West divide.

A United European Left

The only truly effective way to challenge the power of an increasingly unified and homogenous European capitalism is through the creation of a correspondingly strong and united European Labour and Trade Union Movement which can fight on a European-wide front.

For this purpose, we need a European Union of the Left embracing socialist, green, Euro-communist, independent Left and radical nationalist parties in the West, and the autonomous political groups and social movements in the East.

These links and alliances are already, to some extent, being forged between the Left parties in the European Parliament, and between the green and peace movements in the different European countries.

To develop this nascent European-wide left-wing unity into a coherent and effective political bloc - which would almost certainly command an overall majority in the European Parliament if it was properly organised - requires a European Convention of the Left to draw up common strategies and joint policies with a view to reorienting the European Community, and other European institutions, in the direction of a European Socialist Union.

A European Socialist Union

For too long, the development of Europe has been dictated by the Right and benefited the interests of big business. The future of Europe must now be reclaimed by the Left through a radical agenda for a People's Europe which defends the European working classes, protects the European environment, encourages European peace and disarmament, and promotes European reunification.

A European Socialist Union is necessary to solve common problems, assert European independence from the US, bridge the East-West divide, and amass the collective strength needed to break free from the diktat of the international financial institutions and the domination of the world capitalist economy.



Peter Tatchell, speaking at the founding Socialist Conference in Chesterfield

Laying the foundations for a European Socialist Union does not take place in the abstract. We have to engage with existing European institutions and seek to transform them. Our first objective must be the radical democratisation of the European Community: the abolition of the unelected Council of Ministers and the transfer of full and exclusive legislative powers to the directly elected and publicly accountable European Parliament out of which a European federal government could be formed.

Our second objective must be the expansion of the European Community to include more states in the West and to gradually develop closer links with the countries in the East leading, ultimately, to a full European Socialist Union combining all the nations of Europe from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The creation of this European Socialist Union would be tantamount to A European Declaration of Independence. For the first time in modern history, it would give the nations of Europe the collective strength to determine their own independent and non-aligned future and, in the process, enable them to influence all of humanity in a socialist direction.



PHOTO: Andrew Wiard (Report)

A new chapter opens in the peace movement

This year's European Nuclear Disarmament (END) Convention, a gathering of 1,000 European and world peace activists, was held in Lund, Southern Sweden; 48 hours hitch-hike away from Coventry, where the last one was held.

Sweden is one of the last remaining neutral countries in Europe and, unlike the other countries I crossed, is not crawling with police and troops. Instead, they run a peaceful, profitable arms business.

Lund itself is an old quiet town, home of one of Europe's oldest universities.

Proceedings

Convention proceedings reflected the peace movement's post-INF crisis and the steady decline in mass activity following the imposition of Cruise and Pershing in 1983. Much of the "Leadership" (especially the Stalinists and their fellow travellers) now advocates dialogue with politicians and officials around "feasible" plans for disarmament. The rest, the political peace activists, arrived in Lund to make links and to learn.

These two strands collide over Eastern Europe and especially invitations to official peace movements. Last year, the Polish Freedom and Peace movement (WiP) delegation were denied passports to attend the meeting in Coventry. This year, the Moscow Trust Group asked the Liaison Committee to issue a statement saying that invitations to the Russian official peace movement would be withdrawn if the independents were not allowed to attend as well.

By Matthew Jones
Coventry Labour Briefing

The Liaison Committee refused; the Trust Group was absent. The Trust Group accused the Liaison Committee (not unreasonably) of wanting to talk to the bureaucracy and the KGB rather than the independents. This trend also expressed itself in the number of official spokespersons on show, from the Swedish government, the French Socialist Party, German SPD, Italian Communist Party, Yugoslav CP, etc.

Rhetoric

For those of us not interested in official rhetoric, there was a wide range of discussions, both formal and informal, with certainly the largest number of East European independent peace activists ever to come to an END Convention, including 28 from Hungary alone, a number of Poles from WiP, some Yugoslavs, and others.

Jacek Kuron, a critic of Polish regimes for over 20 years, was allowed out of Poland for the first time to attend the Covention.

There was also a strong delegation from the Eritrean Poeple's Liberation Front, fresh from their shattering defeat of the Ethiopian Army a few months ago and now on the verge of outright victory.

The Convention was an eye–opener for me. I realised just how bad things are in Britain, at least in comprison to the rest of Western Europe.

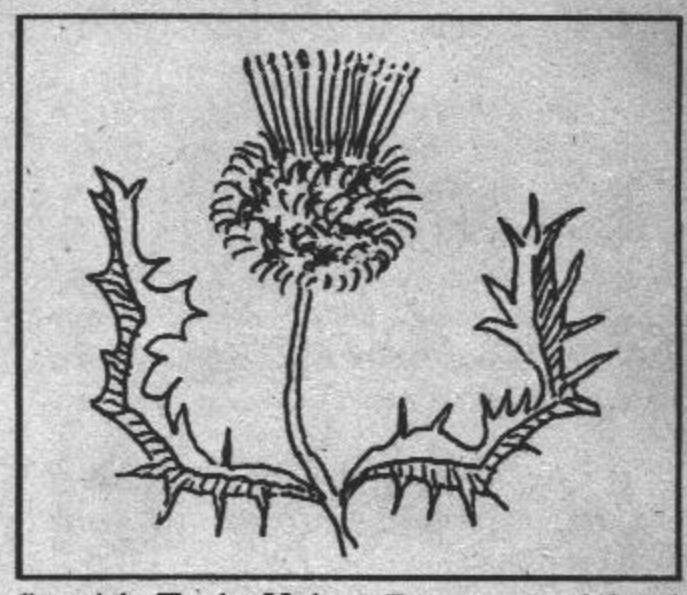
As Jacek Kuron said, in Eastern Europe we have totalitarianism with a movement towards democracy, and in the West we have some democracy and a movement towards totalitarianism.

Two young Swedes, after listening to my tales of massive handouts to the rich, repression of the unions, hammering of the unemployed, etc., asked "Why do people put up with it? When's the revolution?"

The peace movement, with its development of East-West links between activists, may yet open the way for Europe-wide social revolution.

Scottish Labour Briefing

Stark choice for Labour in Scotland



The latest Scottish opinion poll shows Labour winning 40% of the vote, Conservative 25%, and the Scottish National Party 23%.

Only the Scottish National Party shows any dramatic change of fortune. Up from 14% in the General Election, their 23% share makes them the main beneficiaries of the Alliance collapse. They are now able to challenge Labour's monopoly of the Scottish electorate.

In the late 60s and early 70s a similar SNP upsurge culminated in a 30% share of the Scottish vote at the General Election of October, 1974, in which Labour was reduced to 36% and the Conservatives 24%. At that time, the SNP were attacked by most of the left as "Tartan Tories", because of the right wing views of the majority of their representatives.

This year, the SNP fought the District Council elections on a platform of non-payment of the Poll Tax. They are the only major political party to advocate breaking the law in opposing the Poll Tax.

At the beginning of the summer, the Labour Party was being torn apart by Neil Kinnock's statements on nuclear policy. Contrast this vacillation to the platform on which the SNP fought the 1987 General Election:

> *"Removing all nuclear weapons and bases from Scottish soil and territorial waters...*
>
> *"The SNP opposes membership of any military alliance possessing nuclear weapons."*

The politics of Scottish Nationalism now has a radical bite to it. There is a growing left wing within the SNP. However, the old right wing is still in existence. SNP Leader Gordon Wilson was vocal in blaming Ron Todd and the TGWU for losing "Scottish jobs" in the Ford dispute at Dundee.

National identity remains strong in Scotland. For much of the electorate, the SNP is becoming an attractive choice. How should socialists respond?

The response of the Leadership of Scotland's Parliamentary Labour Group is depressingly clear:

"The only way to defeat the Poll Tax is to defeat the Tories at the next General Election," wrote pro–devolutionist MP, John Maxton.

In the same article in the *Glasgow Herald*, he stated:

> *"No one now realistically believes that a mass campaign of non-payment can stop the Poll Tax."*

Maxton was here merely restating the well-entrenched positions of Donald Dewar and Neil Kinnock. Disaffection with Leadership of this kind now runs deep within the Labour Party ranks in Scotland.

By Roland Sheret
Scottish Labour Briefing

Instead of seeing the SNP as merely an electoral challenge to Labour, socialists ought to reconise that rising support for Nationalism is a reflection of the disaffection of the Scottish people with mass unemployment and the deindustrialisation of their economy.

The Labour Party and the SNP represent over 60% of the Scottish electorate, with an overwhelming domination in Parliamentary and local government representation. Surely, together, they could lead a mass campaign of non–payment of the Poll Tax, especially if one adds the organisational resources of the Scottish Trade Union Congress and local trade unions. The SNP has, indeed, proposed just such a course of action at a meeting with the STUC.

A mass refusal to pay the Poll Tax means direct confrontation with the power of Westminster and a constitutional crisis. Winning a Socttish Assembly or Parliament would become a real possibility. It's not such a fantastic scenario as John Maxton would have us believe.

When we look at the choices facing Labour in Scotland, there is little room for manoeuvre. Abject capitulation to Tory policies and playing the Parliamentary game versus confrontation with Westminster and constitutional crisis. It is the starkness of this choice which has put the whole Labour Party in Scotland into a state of flux, and led to the collapse of the LCC.

Campaign Group (Scotland) Conference

Alternatives to the Policy Review

Saturday 27th August 10am-6pm
Denny Civic Theatre, Dumbarton

The outcome of the policy review has nothing to offer Labour in Scotland, and will make it more difficult to win a General Election.

Campaign Group Scotland is therefore hosting a Conference to discuss the alternatives to the Policy Review statements.

Speakers will include
Tony Benn MP - Eric Heffer MP - Ken Livingstone MP - Ann Pettifor Ann Henderson - Dennis Canavan MP - Gavin Strang MP

•The alternative to the Policy Review •Labour's Economic Policy • The case for unilateralism •Women in the Scottish labour movement •The fight for a Scottish Assembly; and the campaign against the Poll Tax •Scottish Labour and Ireland •Fighting racism •Defend the trade unions

Please register in advance. Discussion papers will be issued beforehand. Easy road and rail access — full directions available, and some financial assistance with fares where necessary. The venue has disabled access. Creche will be provided. Signing provision for the deaf. For more information contact Ann Henderson (Secretary, Campaign Group [Scotland]), 8 Annette Street, Govanhill, Glasgow G42 8XZ.

Emerging as the new-look youthful Bennites in the early 80s, the LCC built up a formidable machine within the Labour Party in Scotland. However, the temptation to link up with the Communist Party and their Broad Left organisation in the trade unions proved too much.

From here it was an easy step to support for "Dream Leader" Neil Kinnock, though support for the "Dream Deputy" Roy Hattersley, was a bit too much to swallow.

But the LCC's programme of replacing moribund right wing Labour Councillors and giving a new look to local government has come up against the reality of Tory spending cuts.

Unwilling to face the facts of capitalism in crisis, the LCC turned to witch-hunting and internal feuding.

The LCC has collapsed under the pressure of its own internal bankruptcy and not from any political challenge from a Campaign Group in Scotland. The Camapign Group has merely been a series of large meetings with Tony Benn. Interesting as these are, they are no substitute for an organised political tendency.

In the political vacuum created by the demise of the LCC, Scottish Labour Action has emerged. Supporting a mass campaign of non-payment of the Poll Tax and Scotland's right to self-determination, the SLA is a welcome addition to the Scottish political scene.

To date the SLA has not confronted the question of the Labour Leadership. How long can they maintain these political positions and ignore the hard facts of Dewar, Kinnock and Hattersley?

The Campaign Group should be posing these questions to Scottish Labour Action. **Tony Benn and Eric Heffer need to take a clear stand on the question of a Scottish Assembly and non–payment of the Poll Tax when they speak in Scotland at the end of the summer.**

On August 27th, the Campaign Group in Scotland is holding a Conference in Dumbarton. Every effort needs to be made to ensure a large turnout for this event. Dumbarton should see us begin to build the Campaign Group in Scotland as an open, grass-roots tendency fighting for socialist policies.

Benn-Heffer: Campaigning for Socialism in Scotland

August Meetings

Tues 23rd - Tony Benn - Dumfries (venue to be confirmed)

Weds 24th - Tony Benn - Dundee, Maryatt Hall, 7.30pm

Thurs 25th - Tony Benn - Central Region/Fife (details to be confirmed(

Fri 26th - Tony Benn & Eric Heffer - Glasgow, City Halls, 7.30pm



Grangemouth Refinery: onshore scene of an earlier explosion — but the warning went unheeded.

ALPHA PIPER DEATHS:

Workers sacrificed to capitalist profit

The week beginning July 4th 1988 saw three explosions in the UK sector of the North Sea.

The first was at Sullum Voe; the second on Shell/Esso's Brent Alpha terminal, and the third on Occidental Petroleum's Piper Alpha rig.

The health and safety of workers — whether they are crossing the Channel by ferry, crossing London by tube, attending a football match, or working on an oil rig — is now a major issue for the labour movement.

Although the incineration of Piper Alpha is the most dramatic development, it should be seen against a background of constant attrition on workers' lives. In the 20 years that oil has been extracted from the North Sea there have been 500 deaths and many more injuries. It is calculated that working on the rigs is eleven times more dangerous than working in the construction industry, and nine times more dangerous than mining.

Nor is the petro-chemical industry any safer on shore than off. Attentive readers of *Briefing* will recall my report last year of the massive explosion at BP's Grangemouth refinery. Fortunately for BP, this occurred on a Sunday, thus minimising fatalities, but the radioactive sensor that went missing at the time has never been traced.

The immediate cause of the Piper Alpha explosion seems to have been a build-up of gas in the compression chambers. This theory is supported by the fact that the other two incidents (at Brent Alpha and Sullum Voe) were similarly caused.

According to Paul Mack, Secretary of GMB Invergordon Branch, such an accident was "inevitable". Speaking on *Newsnight*, he highlighted the increasing use of sub-contractors in the industry, working 14-day contracts which lead to poor safety consciousness among staff and employment of cowboy operators.

By Dave Fowler
Asst. Secretary,
COHSE 929 Larbert
(personal capacity)

The list of fatalities in the *Scotsman* reveals that there were 22 different companies operating on Piper Alpha — all of whom lost personnel. Mack also emphasised that survival training courses had been privatised and now cost around £300. They used to be free to recruits.

Mack also implied that certificates of attendance at the course were available through unofficial channels.

Other labour movement spokespersons have noted that health and safety arrangements in the North Sea are unique in that safety inspections are carried out by the Department of Energy, rather than the Health and Safety Executive. This situation was condemned as long ago as 1980 by ASTMS (now MSF).

John Prescott MP (who has connec-



Grangemouth — radioactive sensor still lost.

tions with the NUS) and Roger Lyons (MSF) who represents workers on the rig have now added their voices to the call for an independent inspectorate.

Both Donald Dewar MP (Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland) and Peter Morrison MP, Energy Minister, have tried to claim that Occidental's safety standards were of the highest. But the *Scotsman* (July 9th) carried an "exclusive" headlined "Safety call ignored on blast rig". The paper referred to an account by Jack Donaldson, a retired Occidental employee and former safety officer, about a similar explosion in 1984, which he was called in to investigate.

He recommended replacing a highly combustible wooden accommodation module and fitting steel blast walls in the gas compression chambers. Neither of these suggestions was implemented (the rig would have had to be down for six weeks).

Donaldson's report was kept secret; four years later, an explosion in the gas compression chambers cremated scores of workers in their quarters, precisely as Donaldson forewarned.

Reacting to this claim, John Brading, Occidental's oil and gas president, tried to dismiss safety concerns by stating: "The module would have to have been up to a quarter of a mile away to have been safe." To the people working in the area, this might not seem such a crazy idea (as long as they don't use Chinooks to travel to the rig).

In the Scottish *Sunday Mail*, a front page article stated that 30 minutes prior to the blast, a welder on the rig, Craig Barclay (now dead), made a telephone call to his girlfriend in Dundee, and said that on Monday July 4th he had refused to carry out welding operations on the rig owing to the smell of gas. He said he had subsequently been threatened with disciplinary action.

Many lives, including Craig Barclay's, could have been saved. Speaking on ITV's *News at One*, Stig Otteson of Norway's state-owned *Statoil*, described fireproof emergency chutes to allow platform workers to slide rapidly and safely into the sea and specially designed lifeboats that are catapulted 100 feet away from the platform. These facilities were not available to Piper Alpha workers.

In the aftermath of the disaster several important suggestions have been put forward. Dr Colin Rayner, a plastic surgeon who treated victims of the Bradford fire, points out that there is still no centralisation of medical or paramedical resources to deal with disasters. Kinnock has renewed his call for no–fault compensation, a worthy enough claim. Heffer has linked it to anti-trade union laws and attacks on safety legislation.

Unfortunately, not one prominent figure has so far pointed out that this event occurred against a background of extensive privatisation. The government sold its stake in BP. British Gas was forced to sell out prior to denationalisation and Britoil has recently been sold off. Peter Morrison's claims that safety is the paramount concern in the North Sea will never be believed until the oil fields are taken into public ownership under workers' control — which alone would guarantee workers the protection of rigorous health and safety measures.

Construction Safety Campaign

Between 1981-85, 739 people were killed in construction accidents, and last year alone 152 died, part of an ever-increasing spiral of deaths and serious injuries in the construction industry.

These figures are an indictment of the total lack of concern for the safety of construction workers on the part of the employers.

In order to publicise and highlight these appalling facts in the labour movement and to educate, agitate, and organise building workers around the safety issue, a group of concerned construction trade unionists, labour movement people, and groups recently got together and formed the Construction Safety Campaign (CSC). Our major stated objective is "To work towards an end to death and serious injury in the construction industry, in private and public sectors."

Safety at work in general and safety in the construction industry are political issues and need to be raised as ones of major political concern and importance.

We ask the support of all labour movement parties and organisations for our campaign, including sponsorship.

For further details write to Tony O'Brien, Secretary, Construction Safety Campaign, 52 Ansdell Road, Peckham, London SE15.

Nine years on - and getting stronger!

This is an edited version of the introductory speech, given by GRAHAM BASH, to the Briefing AGM

by Graham Bash, Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

***London Labour Briefing* was born almost nine years ago.**

Today I want to look at our origins, traditions, and development, and see what in our past we can use and draw on in our present and future struggles.

Let me set the scene.

The Tories had won the 1979 election. The Labour Left, bitter at the betrayal of the Callaghan administration, was about to take off, assuming a strength and breadth greater than at any time since the early 70s - especially in the CLPs.

The Bennite challenge was beginning. On the ground, the left was organising to take control of Labour Authorities from the moribund right — in an attempt to use them as bulwarks of defence and struggle. In London, we were organising to take over the GLC.

At the start of 1980, London Labour Briefing first appeared in print with the headline Taking Over the GLC - by Ken Livingstone.

Our editorial proclaimed:

> *"Your initial reaction may be that the left needs another newspaper like it needs another Reg Prentice. However, this is a bulletin with a difference. It is not produced or controlled by any one tendency or group...*
>
> *"We have set ourselves the task of keeping active militants inside the Labour Party and the unions in touch with each other and up to date on what is happening in the various battles across the capital...*
>
> *"We are now at a crucial time for Labour. If a successful fight is to be mounted against the cuts and if this Tory government is to be removed, then we must prepare now for the enormous struggles ahead.*
>
> *"Organisation and information are the keys to success."*

What defined *Briefing*? I'll try to codify as simply as possible our basic principles and approach.

•One: a recognition that our struggle was, above all, practical. Everything else flowed from this concept. Borrowing from Marx we, in effect, proclaimed: "Previous journals have interpreted the world; our task is to change it."

From the beginning, we understood that socialist, revolutionary consciousness, could only be a consciousness of actual material strength. It was no use at all preaching revolutionary ideas from outside the movement, hoping they would stick. They wouldn't.

For these ideas to be experienced as relevant, the working class had to be strong. Our task was to unite all those forces in strug gle and to undermine the ability of the rightwing Leadership to betray, manoeuvre, and sectionalise.

Where the Leadership divided, our task was to unite; where they withheld information, our task was to provide it; and when they tried to keep apart the industrial and political wings of our movement, our task was to bind them more closely together.

But to change the consciousness of the movement, it was also necessary to do so from the positions of control occupied by the bankrupt Leaders themselves. From thebeginning, we were engaged quite consciously in a struggle for Leadership and power within the movement.

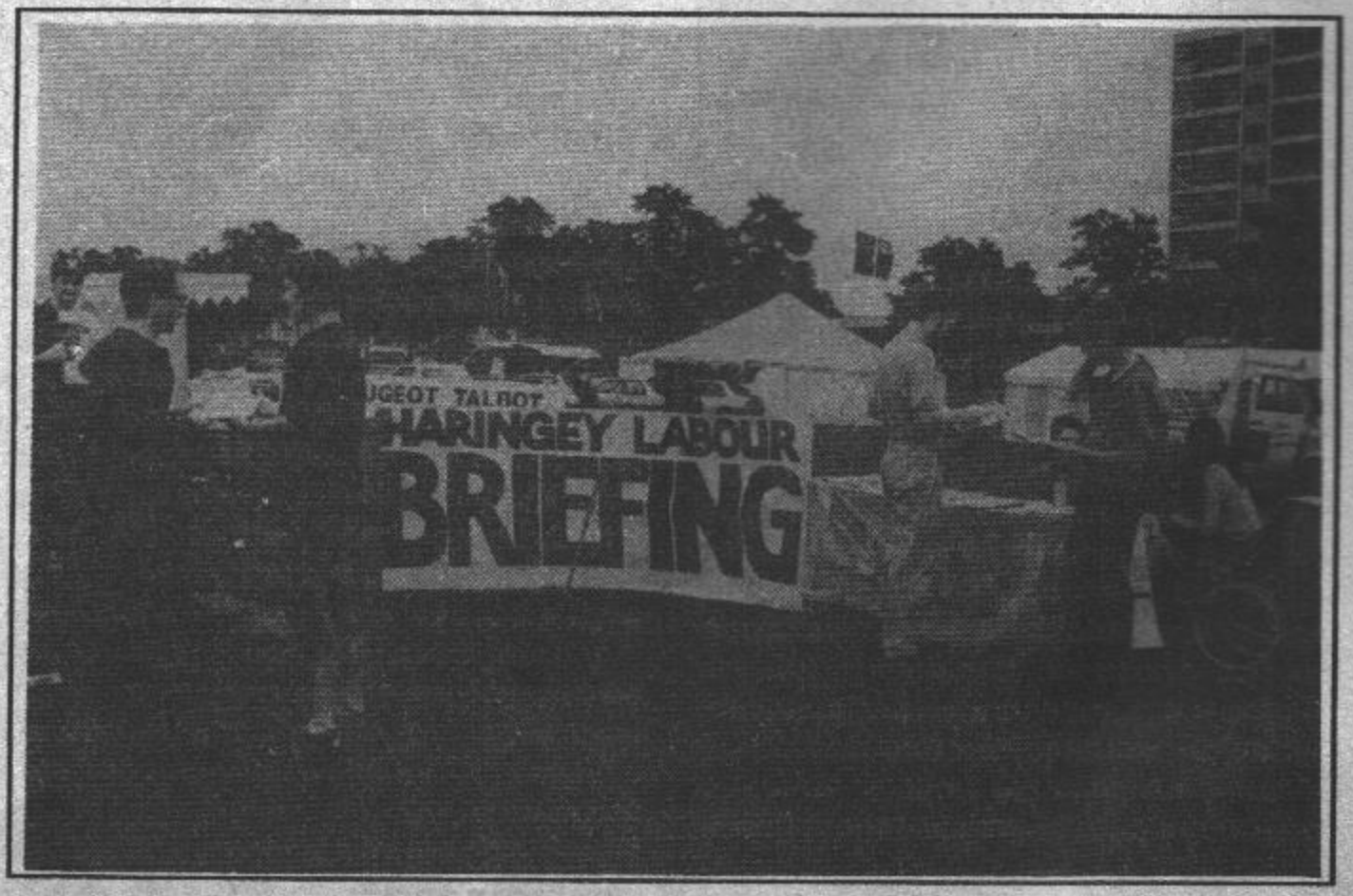
•Two: In this context, we recognised that information was power. To be strong, those in struggle had to be conscious, of their own strength and of the strength of others in struggle. We declared Briefing the noticeboard of the Left, providing information that could not easily be obtained elsewhere.

In our second issue, under the heading "ILEA Surrenders" (some things never change) we printed a list of how Labour ILEA members voted on cuts. To us, it was accountability. To the right, it was a "hitlist".

Nonetheless, we continued to publish our voting lists regularly, and we reported what labour movement representatives said at meetings.

This was not only politically important; it was also excellent for sales. Left-wingers had to buy *Briefing* to find out who to hold to account and who to deselect, if necessary; the right wingers had to buy it to see if their names were on our hitlist.

•Third: the local nature of the *Briefing* jour-



Struggle is practicall Haringey Labour Briefing run a local stall. PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Features: the traditions of Briefing


LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING
10p TRIAL ISSUE
TAKING OVER THE G.L.C.
LABOUR MUST WIN IN 1981
Editorial:

LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING 30p
No 20 JUNE 1982
Camden, Southwark, Hackney and Haringey- unite behind
FORTRESS ISLINGTON!

LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING 30p
No 31 JULY 1983
NO CONFIDENCE IN KINNOCK!
LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

A parade of famous front pages of London Labour Briefing

nal and the groups that developed from it. Bulletins were produced in a number of London Boroughs and then gradually in key areas throughout the country. *Briefing* was different because it was built on a non–sectarian basis from local to national, from bottom to top; not the other way round.

•Fourth: the united front character of *Briefing*. In our first editorial we stated that *Briefing* was not controlled by any one tendency or group. This has remained a fundamental principle.

The left was full of groups and tendencies. We welcomed that. Originally we were based primarily on non-aligned socialists. The groups were a little slow to recognise our importance and potential. But in time they came in, especially *Socialist Organiser* and *Socialist Action*.

I think it's a fair assessment that the structures and principles of *Briefing* imposed a discipline on these groups. Our breadth of support ensured that they played a constructive role - at least while they remained with us.

Our united front character had a deeper meaning, however. From our first issue we had declared war on the Leaderships of the Labour Party and the trade unions. But side by side with this, we had an understanding,commitment, and loyalty to the mass organisations of the labour movement.

We were not in the business of seeking to replace or compete with, the trade unions or the CLPs. Rather, we sought to transform them into organisations of struggle, build them, turn them out, take responsibility for them.

We sought too to break down all those divisions that hampered class unity and prevented us from realising our strength:

•the division between local and national politics (we quickly transcended our initially narrow local government focus, broadened our political attack and developed a rounded socialist programme);

•the division between national and international politics (we gradually acquired an international vision, starting with the struggle in Ireland, then organising the first demonstration in support of the Polish workers, and taking a principled defeatist line on the Malvinas war);

•the division between the Party and the unions (from our CLP base, we built support for the striking miners, and set up a solidarity network).

We also succeeded in breaking down down divisions within the left itself, uniting behind our banner the best, most consistent class fighters in the Bennite camp and the most sensible, least sectarian of the revolutionary left.

•Fifth: with all this politics of breaking down divisions and uniting struggles, it was a small step to recognise that oppression did not stop at the GC or trade union branch. We made the profound but simple discovery that we — local Councillors, Labour Party members, and trade unionists — were also women



Thinks... Graham Bash waits his turn to speak at on a Briefing Conference platform.

and men, mothers, fathers, single parents, lovers, children, lesbians, and gay men.

We had miscarriages, we were transvestites and transexuals, racially and sexually oppressed, rape victims, disabled, victims of mental institutions.

With this discovery the *Streetlife Supplement* was born. Here we wrote personally about our experiences of oppression, and wrote political conclusions from that experience. We upset and actually embarrassed much of the boring old straight left and built new alliances on a different political axis.

Some of those articles represented the best journalism I've ever read on the left; often outrageous, funny, sad. And most of our readers turned to the Streetlife Supplement first.

What always moved me was the by-line. After every article, however personal, came the writers' name and then, in brackets, his or her CLP or trade union branch. Nowhere else was our vision of a socialist future free of oppression so clearly stated.

We had an enormous impact. We played a major role in organising for the Livingstone-led GLC, and for the influx of the left onto Borough Councils in 1982. We were attacked regularly in the press - because we were effective and because we dared to raise issues of sexual politics.

There is room for lots of discussion as to the adequacy of *Briefing's* politics in this period. There are many here today who think that *Briefing's* programme was weak, or that we built our alliances too broad, or that our criticisms of the Livingstones were too little or too late.

I'm not sure I agree with those criticisms. There is a valid debate here. But there can be no doubt that by March 1985 *Briefing's* traditions, however suitable or not for the previous period, were no longer sufficient for the newand difficult period following the defeat of the miners' strike.

The working class was in serious retreat. Ken Livingstone had defected and the GLC ceased to be an organ of resistance. The rate-capping fight collapsed, and the realignmentf the left began. A whole segment went over from our ranks to Kinnock - the Livingstones, the Blunketts, the Nigel Williamsons, and along with them a layer of theo local government left previously associated with *Briefing*.

Features: the traditions of Briefing

Let me say it before anyone else does. In any balance sheet there is the undeniable fact that *Briefing* produced, or at least promoted, more traitors to the working class than any other paper or organisation has done for years! How much of this was due to politically inadequate foundations, and how much to the inevitable consequences of defeat? I'm not sure I know the answer.

But I remember one who did. At the first big demonstration after Ken defected, I remember being literally chased by John O'Mahoney of *Socialist Organiser*. "Told you so, told you so," he said. I've never seen a man happier than he was that day.

I was bitter. I remember my reply. "Yes, you were right. Life must be very simple for you. No need to build alliances; no need to build anything in practice; no need to take risks. Just sit on the sidelines, and prophesy defeat and betrayal. You may be useless, but I suppose — at least till the revolution — you'll always be right." I didn't convince him. I wasn't totally convinced myself.

By the time of our Conference three years ago the left coalition of which we had been a key component was at best splintering, at worst in shreds. We had two options. To continue as we were, straddling an ever-widening divide; at the cost of becoming the problem rather than the solution. Or to regain our political integrity, consolidate around us those forces still in struggle, and define ourselves much more sharply.

Temporarily, we would marginalise ourselves, leave the political centre stage, practically disengage - in order to effectively re-engage, as soon as possible. There was, in reality, no choice. We had to take the second option.

I remember moving this change of direction at our Conference. A brief review of the objective situation, an assessment of our options, a few quotes from Trotsky's *Against the Stream* and we were off.

After my contribution, a supporter of *Socialist Action*, one John Ross, came up to me. He said: "I agreed with every word of your analysis of the objective situation." For a moment, I was stunned — a split second of self–doubt. "But," he said, "your conclusions are absolutely wrong. In a period of downturn you move to the right, not to the left." As always, a master of the dialectic.omrades, our achievement over the past three difficult years is our answer. The move to the fortnightly paper has gone better than any of us really expected. We have retained and expanded our base, especially out of London, and we have broadened and sharpened our coverage. Now, in a new period - not yet one of mass struggle or resistance, but one that sees at least the beginnings of a fightback - we are well placed to give Leadership, clarity, and direction.C

I would today have been using this platform to argue for another change of direction, for a return to some of our best traditions, for us to re-engage, on a sharper level no doubt, at the heart of the labour movement. I would have been arguing for this - were it not for the fact that it has already occurred.

Almost everywhere there has been resistance (the NHS, the teachers, the Alton Bill, Clause 28, local government, Chesterfield, the Benn-Heffer Campaign) our supporters have been in the forefront. Everywhere, our comrades have been getting stuck in.

New local *Briefing* groups are springing up - recently in Nottingham and Huddersfield, and a *Briefing* group now reformed in Birmingham. Local bulletins are beginning to come out again - as they must.

All of this has been reflected in our paper. Recently, I've been able to look at *Briefing* from a viewpoint of relative detachment. Just as our comrades have been changing up a gear, I've been doing absolutely nothing - on leave of absence, no labour movement work, no *Briefing* work.

From this distance, I see so much in recent issues of the paper that is reminiscent of the combativity that characterised us in the past. This is personified by Mandy Mudd, who has given us all an object lesson in how to take the most terrible pressure, without yielding, and throw it back down their throats.

Her recent article in London Briefing brought tears to my eyes. "Some on the left say that the constraints on socialists in local government are so great that we should get out," she wrote, "This is rubbish." Well said!

We now have enormous opportunities, and responsibilities as well perhaps more than we have the resources to deal with. We need help; financial and human assistance. The conditions in which our staff have to operate are intolerable. Jenny Fisher used to work in the office through the night twice an issue to get the paper out - before we put our foot down and threatened to charge her rent. *Briefing's* achievement over the last two years belongs to Jenny more than anyone else.

Yes, we need resources. But with our unique position on the left, armed with our traditions, and developing them, we can play a critical role in building a Leadership for our whole movmement - a Leadership which will not flinch, which will seek office in Council Chambers and in Parliament, but which will rely in the end on the organised strength of our class in the struggle for real power.



Reading Briefing on the picket line. PHOTO: Martine Stead

Militant's politics

An open letter to supporters of Militant

We have left the Militant tendency within the Labour Party to become supporters of Labour Briefing.

Breaking with the Militant is not a step we have taken lightly.

It was done after careful reflection and in the realisation that it is not good enough to make carping criticism; it is necessary to propose an alternative political course of action.

The Militant grew as a tendency with some thousands of supporters through the 1970s, partly as a consequence of the vacuum left in the Labour Party by the abstention of other Marxists from intervention in the life of the Party, and also because of the long drawn-out crisis of the Stalinist movement in Britain.

For the last few years we have been supporters of the tendency. We joined because of the place it occupied in the mass movement and in the hope that it would help regroup thousands of youth and workers who want to organise a qualitatively new leadership of the working class which would be integral to the life experiences and struggles of the working class

The high points were the miners' strike and the defence of local government in Liverpool, as well as the BLOC Conference in Sheffield which, on the initiative of Militant, mobilised thousands of the best militants. We must contrast this with the present state of affairs.

First, most of the miners attracted to the tendency can now no longer be regarded as supporters. The defeat in Liverpool was mainly due to a failure to implement a united front approach with all those fighting for the defence of local government.

It is not enough to say that the Labour and trade union movement should defend the Council. A united front would have put more pressure on the Labour and trade union movement, whereas by simply appealing to their better nature, they were let off the hook.

This failure allowed Kinnock to seize the initiative and expel the Councillors from the Party. With no united front to contend with, Kinnock has continued with the expulsions and has even been able to abolish the LPYS Conference with consummate ease.

To make a bad situation worse, Militant has itself closed down BLOC. Instead of extending the school student strikes and demonstrations, they have been left to collapse. In the recent CPSA elections, all Militant supporters on the Executive lost their positions.

As the attacks continue within the Labour Party, the Editorial Board are denying that any real problem exists. The editors seem content with the ridiculous notion that all those now expelled will, on some unknown date in the future, be brought back into the Party with honour... Comrades, this is day-dreaming.

The Editorial Board's answer to Kinnock's attacks is the following: "At a certain stage it will be inevitable that there will be changes in

By Tom Lonergan, West London and John Havercroft, South London

the workers' organisations. Many of the trade unions will move to the left. There will be a crumbling away of support for Kinnock on the basis of events. Large sections of the active layers of the working class will move in the direction of Marxism." (Our emphasis)

Again, the analysis is simple and inevitable - just wait for the events, meanwhile ignoring the present problems. In fact, "the active layers of the workers will inevitably move in the direction of Marxism."

Comrades, this is religion. it suggests a preordained future which must happen and is inevitable... Where in Marx, Engels, Lenin or Trotsky do you find such a reliance on the inevitable?

...The notion that the tendency is the left of the Labour Party ... is a gross illusion. It is true that in the wake of the destruction of local government by Thatcher that another generation of left reformists have capitulated to Kinnock. This is not a new phenomenon of Labour but a permanent feature through its existence. It is made sharper, however, by the ferocity of the attack by the government, which leaves less room for the reformists to manoeuvre.

But, comrades, the left which wants to fight Kinnock may be on the defensive or weaker, but it has not disappeared. There are minorities up and down the country in Labour Parties and in Labour Councils who have refused to support the cuts; weak and under attack as they are, they still exist. Together they represent a far more substantial force than the Militant, but of course they are not organised.

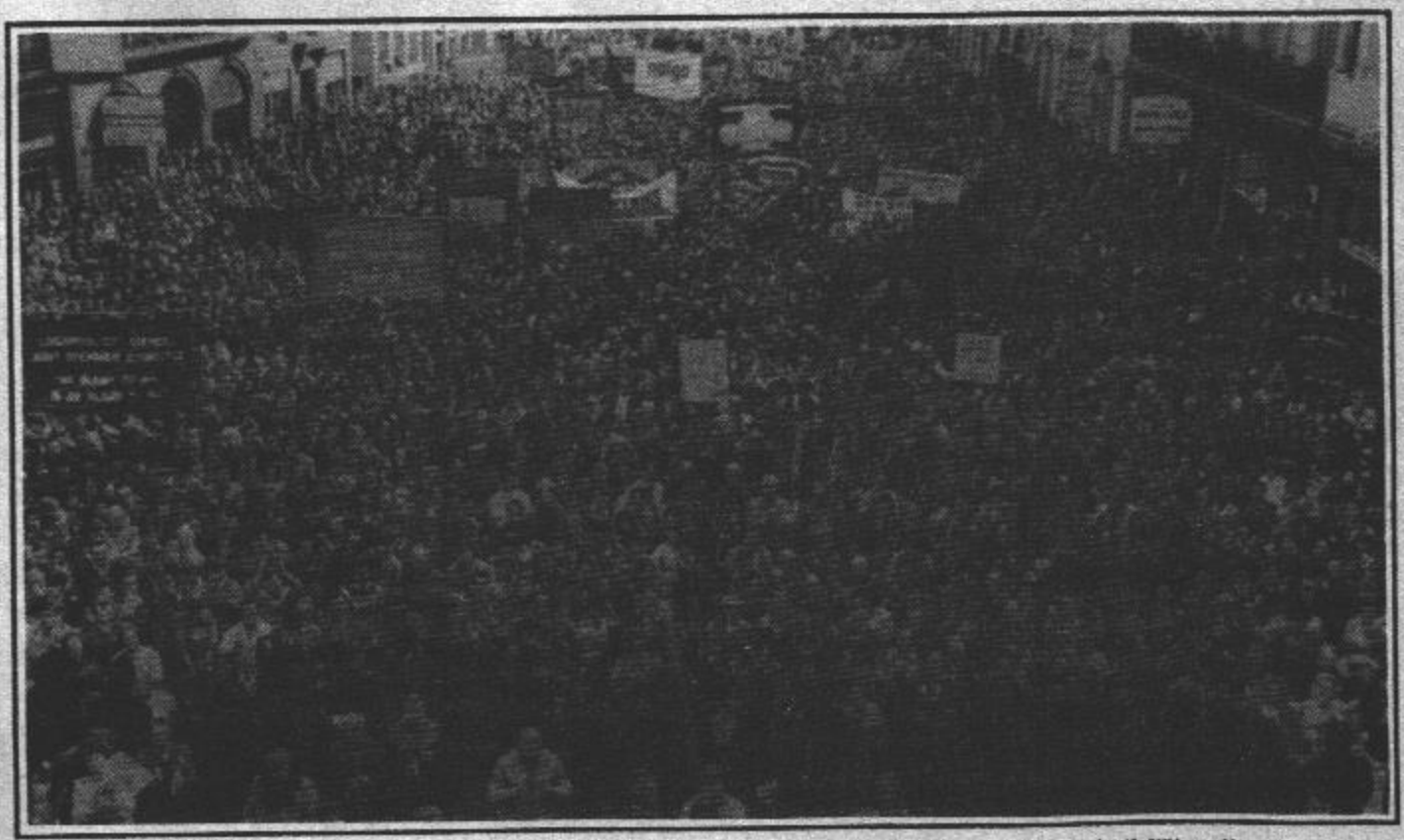
They correspond with tens of thousands of trade unionists who want to reject "New Realism" and sell-outs. At the parliamentary level, even if they are hesitant and weak, there exists a small number of Campaign Group MPs who are opposed to Kinnock's course.

The difficulty facing those who want to oppose Kinnock is that they have no axis on which to fight. And Militant has failed to provide such an axis, resting as it does on ideological declamations.

Today the chips are down. Benn and Heffer have issued an open challenge for the Leadership of the Party. Moreover, this challenge does not entertain the illusion that the block votes of trade unions can be secured, nor the votes of Parliamentary careerists, nor even that between now and the Autumn the predominance of "New Realists" in control of the CLPs can be overturned. The contest is thus a call to action, to get organised for an ongoing battle against the present Leadership.

How do we respond? By saying contemptuously that we are the real left whose ideas will inevitably triumph and by standing on the sidelines? Or by taking up our responsibilities as participants in the fight, side by side with others, engaging in a dialogue and an exchange of ideas in the course of common action?

The latter is the course that we propose to take, which is why we have become supporters of Labour Briefing and seek to build that paper as a vehicle for organisation, common action, and political discussion... We commend Labour Briefing as a publication and as a forum to the comrades of Militant who could, if they were to participate, strengthen it as a journal of the principled left.



Liverpool - a failure to implement a united front approach. PHOTO: D. Sinclair (Militant)

Playing "Happy Families"

One thing stands out in the Cleveland controversy: the freezing out of the important theoretical and practical work done by feminists in relation to all aspects of child sexual abuse.

An army of professionals and experts paraded before the Enquiry, but Rape Crisis Centres and Incest Support Groups (who over the preceding years had been dumped upon by these very same professionals and burdened out of all proportion to the funding they receive) were significant by their absence.

The national newspapers, who played as much a part in this controversy as anyone, could get no further in their search for grass roots counselling opinion than the NSPCC and Esther Rantzen's "Childline".

A feminist analysis of child sexual abuse would be just too explosive.

What Women's Groups who have dealt with these issues for so long know is that nine out of every ten sexually abused children are girls — and their abusers, in the vast majority of cases, are male family members. Recent figures suggest that at least one in four women have been sexually abused as children.

The Butler–Sloss Report on Cleveland did not even consider these findings. In her introduction, Butler–Sloss emphasises that child sexual abuse happens "to boys as well as girls." The Report then goes on to refer to the individual child as "he".

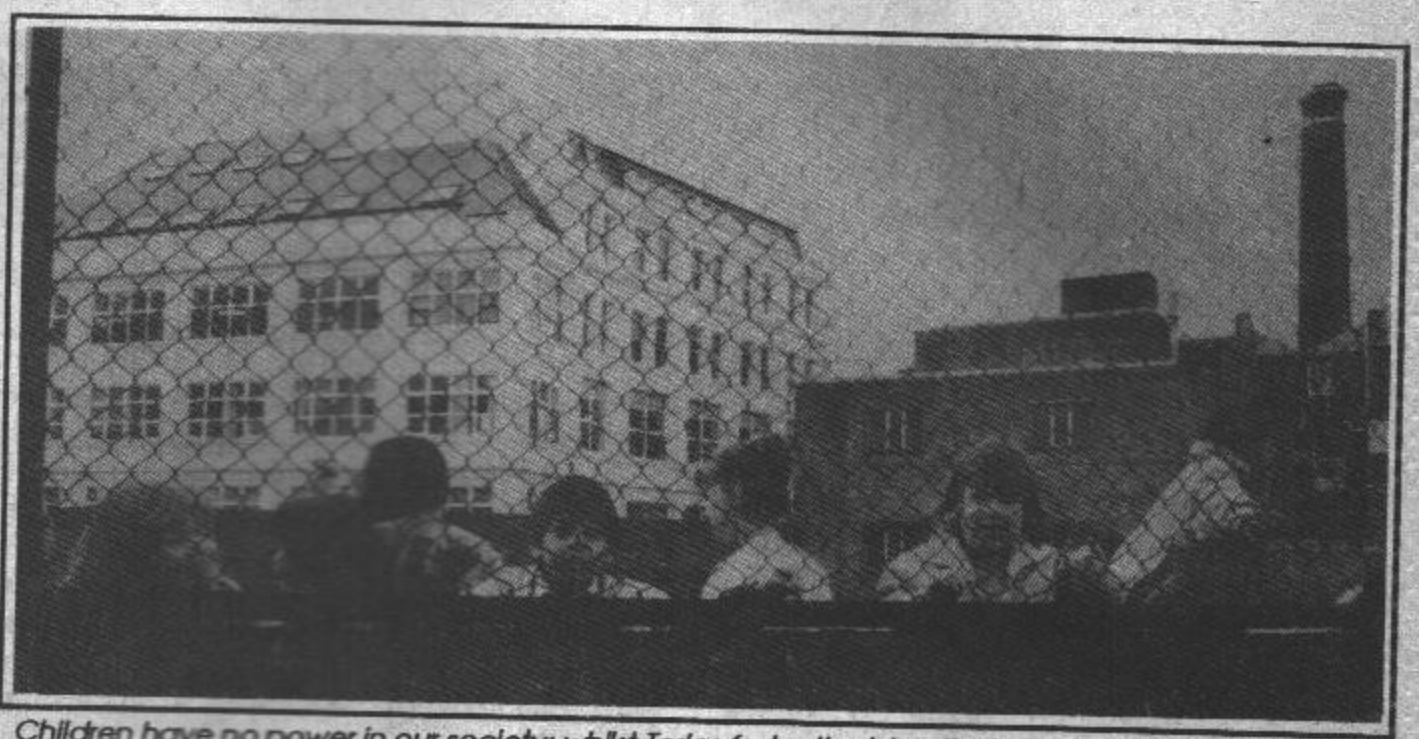
In effect, the Report gets the whole problem completely out of perspective. At no point in the Report are the figures of those children taken into care, or where diagnosis has proved to be correct, broken down in terms of gender. On the other hand, mothers' complicity and neglect in their children's sexual abuse has received extensive coverage.

The Independent (July 7th) reported:

> *"Sexual abuse by a woman was alleged in one case before the Enquiry. But several children who described abuse said mothers were present or knew what was going on... a parent with a sucession of male partners, violence, marital or sexual difficulties may be factors."*

The Report, while doing nothing to illuminate the real reasons for sexual abuse, has shifted blame from male and state attitudes to women themselves. It has become a trial of women's ability to be responsible parents.

While the Cleveland affair has finally put sexual abuse on the political agenda, the Butler-Sloss Enquiry and its conclusions has skirted round, rather than confronted, the contradictions and oppression endemic in that most partiarchal and capitalist of institutions



Children have no power in our society: whilst Tories foster the idea that children are the property of their parents, they spend most of their lives ordered to go to school. PHOTO: Nick Hazelwood

— the family.

Rather than challenging the myths surrounding sexual abuse, it has provided an important and successful test case for the family's right to rule; it offers a vindication of traditional and cohesive family values.

By VERONICA FULLER

In his report to parliament, Tony Newton, Minister for Health, said that support for proper action to protect children from sexual or other abuse was unanimous. But that must be achieved "in a way which does not trample on the rights of parents and inflict unnecessary distress on the very children we wish to be helped."

Rallying troops to the cause of The Family was not difficult, as Middlesborough's Labour MP Stuart Bell quickly discovered. The inquiry criticised him for "intemperate and inflammatory remarks which exacerbated an already sensitive and difficult situation..."

He responded "if the judge feels I am guilty of an emotional response, then I plead guilty." As we expected, the tabloids led the way with "Give us back our children" headlines.

This picture of innocent families struggling to preserve their privacy against the interventionist tactics of the state only serves to mask the serious difficulties that women and children, particularly girls, face within the patriarchal family. Sexual abuse of girls by fathers, uncles, brothers, etc., reflects the property status that females have within the family.

When I've talked to women who have been sexually abused as children, I've found that time and again their male relatives offered the same excuses. It seems that when sexual relations with wives or lovers cease, for whatever reason, (sometimes illness), many men feel justified in forcing sex on their daughters or nieces. Someone must service their "needs".

Another favourite tactic is the extension of the "provocative female" notion to girl children, which in the past judges have "taken into account" when sentencing in child sexual abuse cases.

As women might expect, their role as mothers has been accorded great importance, out of all proportion to their actual power within the family. The only way for a mother to feel entirely sure that her child is not sexually abused is to be with that child as much as possible.

Biological determinism and too much male unemployment go nicely together. (It's what Thatcher has been wanting for ages). The moral responsibility can be shifted away from men — or the state, and shifted onto women, whether as daughers or as mothers.

Sexual abuse cuts across all classes, although up till now the state has liked to think of it as a feature of the poor "dysfunctioning" family. But we on the left must understand that there is no excuse for working class men who suffer oppression outside the home meting it out to those inside the home.

The traditional left wing view of women in the home has seen them as conservative elements, strike breakers, condoners of state oppression. This view, far from being the truth, can only divide us.

The government has allocated all of £7m to fight the problem, none of which is going to Women's Aids and Rape Crisis Centres. Once again, their views are not being taken into account.

It is up to us — the left — to listen to women's groups, to what they have to say on this and other aspects of male violence, and to learn from it. But perhaps more importantly we will all have to accept that for many of us the family unit as it now stands can be a very dangerous place indeed.

Want to get cut down to size, sister? Or...

Shape up for a better world!



Mandy Mudd speaks out! PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Most people reading this article will either be worried because they are too fat or terrified of becoming fat and most will see body size as an area for individual responsibility and control.

These attitudes maintain prejudice against fat people and strengthen the oppression they experience.

Attitudes to fat are culturally and historically specific — inextricably bound up with the class and economic relationships in any society.

•In societies where food is scarce to be fat is a sign of wealth and thus a sign of status.

•In late capitalist society, where food is plentiful and easy to come by for the wealthy, they no longer need to maintain their fat supplies, and so slimness becomes the badge of status.

In such society fat people are assumed to be lower class, and less well educated, so they don't know what to eat, and are assumed not to have the economic power to selected and purchase high quality non-fattening food. This is the false stereotype played on by Tory Edwina Currie when talking about the North-South divide.

So in Britain today, to be slim is perceived as a sign of success, of upward class mobility despite the fact that one's body size doesn't change the material relationships of our class positions.

Attitudes to fat are also gender related. For both men and women, there is a range within which socially acceptable body sizes fall; and anyone — whther male or female — who is very thin or very fat will be subject to oppression and ridicule.

For women the range of socially acceptable body sizes is smaller — i.e. 10-14. In 80s Britain the ideal female figure is that of a pre-pubescent adolescent — small or non-existent breasts, narrow hips, no fat, hair-free... slender and vulnerable.

Every day thousands of women are forced into a daily battle with food in order to arrive at or maintain this totally unnatural female shape. Why do the advertising and fashion industries, mainly controlled by men, tell us we should look like children and deny our adulthood?

On one level this is tied in with the dominant construction of female sexuality as suppressed and passive; on the other it is simply about the amount of physical space women are allowed to occupy. It's much easier physically to bully and intimidate someone small; much easier to discount their contribution as slight and meaningless — much easier to oppress and exploit them.

As socialists we need to examine our attitudes and prejudices about fat so we can begin to recognise and challenge the way that fat people are oppressed.

By Mandy Mudd
Tottenham CLP

We also need to examine why women, even those who describe themselves as feminists, feel pressured into investing so much time and effort in attempting to control this area of their lives.

So great is the concern, that a multi-million pound diet industry has grown up despite the fact that 95% of all diets fail. Currently there are half a million people on diets of 600 calories or less.

To the human body there is no biochemical difference between a diet and starvation. It is perverse to think that in the West people are voluntarily starving themselves to appear fashionable, while in many Third World countries people are actually starving.

Contrary to popular belief, people are not fact because they eat too much. There is massive variation in individual metabolic rate. Some people do only need 400-600 calories to sustain a healthy weight.

In our society food plays a social as well as a life sustaining role. Everyone eats more food than they need to live — some people burn off the excesss more efficiently than others.

Why is it mainly women who go on diets? A woman's status and desirability is still mainly achieved through her appearance, and for many women body image and body size are the only areas of life over which they can exert control, so constrained are they by male power.

For others, the lie perpetrated by the media that we can all control our weight — and if we can't we are inadequate — is a powerful check. So are the punishments stored up for those who challenge the myths: public abuse and ridicule, poor employment prospects, lack of choice in clothing, poor health care and lack of free and comfortable access to public places and public transport are harsh facts of life for the above-average sized body.

It's not surprising that most people are terrified of being fat and in order to assert their slimness collude, either silently or otherwise, with the systematic oppression of fat people.

Modern medicine would have us believe that all fat people are unhealthy and at risk

from heart disease, hypertension, strokes and some cancers. Study after study is pulled out to link those diseases to fat.

All of these diseases are also related to stress, yet not one single study takes into account the stress of being fat in a fat-hating society. In cultures where to be fat is not shameful the incidence of these diseases is much less.

Because fat is perceived tobe unhealthy, many fat people get a raw deal from the medical profession. Every minor ailment is blamed on their weight. Women may feel unhappy about seeking preventative health care and contraception because visist to clinics invovle getting weighed.

Most seriously, fat people are frequently denied surgery — ostensibly becasue of the risk of the anaesthetic. Yet at the same time, plastic surgeons cut away women's intestines, staple their stomachs and cut off fat to make them conform to male ideals of female desirability.

A recent *News of theWorld* article championed a woman who had endured 17 unnecessary operations in order to be "Cut Down to Size" — the headline says it all!

Fat peopole are also stereotyped in all kinds of irrational ways. They are thought to be stupid and not as intelligent and are frequently thought to be greedy, lazy, and deceitful.

These views affect not only their personal relationships but also their employability. Many employers see fat as a form of disability an assume not only the negative characteristics but poor health and likely absence from work.

Add to this the appalling choice of clothes in an image conscious society, the size of seats in cinemas and theatres and on public transport, the ridicule heaped on you when you take exercise, and it can be seen that fat people suffer persistent and systematic persecution because of their size.

Neither the feminist or left press have really discussed through the issues raisd by the concept of fat oppression — though recently *Spare Rib* and *Trouble and Strife* have begun to carry articles.

In order to exploit more markets the mainstream media have finally woken up to the fact that many women are over size 16. On one hand this means some positive images and a broader choice of clothes — but all these images and choices are constructed within dominant notions of how woemn ought to be.

As socialists, and socialist feminists, we must develop an alterantive analysis that challenges both these individualistic approaches to fat and the ways in which women are portrayed.

This means we need collective solutions involving the end to discriminatory employment practice, equal access to health care, better access to public facilities and change in consciousness so that ridicule and harassment become things of the past.

Weclome to Microscope

At the *Briefing* AGM we discussed the idea of having a Women's "Periscope" to let off steam about men on the left — to be called "Microscope" (we only want a small space...).

Many women feel used and abused by men and need to know they are not alone. Men need to know how women feel when treated in certain ways — not least so that they can consider their response to this knowledge and examine their own actions and relationships.

When women are let down, hurt, or misunderstood by men who project themselves as socialists it is doubly painful. Often women assume that certain values and attittudes need not be discussed with left parners; they are presumed to be part of their whole political perspective. So maybe just to focus things a bit, we need to put the issues — and the people — under the "Microscope".

Send us your complaints, anecdotes, frustrations, indignations, etc.

Briefing for Benn and Heffer!

This is nearly your last chance to stock up on those vital Benn-Heffer "That's the Ticket" badges.

Thousands have been sold, and sitings of the badges have come in from far and wide. As we argue elsewhere in this magazine, the Summer is the time for a last big push on the Benn-Heffer campaign. September will also be a busy month, with new people arriving at hustings and mandating meetings; people who have been won to support the Campaign by the months of debate that have gone on.

So make sure you have the stocks to last!

Also on offer are our new postcard packs: the fun way to spread the word for Tony and Eric. Get your stocks in now; and start using these postcards for sending out notes and reminders. Not only will we win converts in the Post Office (where automatic sorting machines haven't been installed, that is!) — postcards are a useful way of reminding comrades the battle is on!

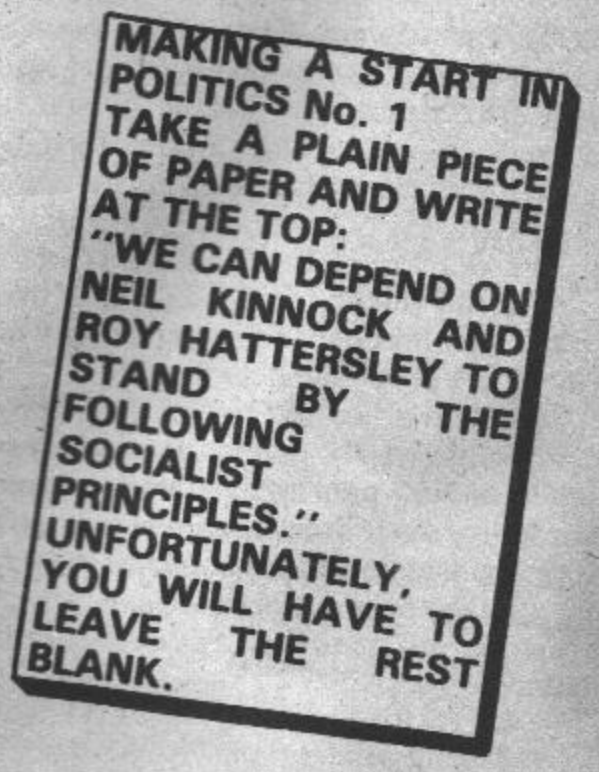
Both badges and postcards are available at bulk rates, so that you can make money for your local Benn-Heffer Campaign, *Briefing* Group or other Campaign. But also, through investing in this merchandise, you are doing your bit to help underpin the finances of *Labour Briefing* as a fortnightly newspaper!

Rates:

(All rates include postage and packing. Please send cheques/postal orders made payable to *Labour Briefing*. Please send separate payments for badges and cards. Payment for single badges can be made in stamps.)

Badges:
Single: 35p
20 Badges: £6
50 Badges: £13
100 Badges: £23
200 Badges: £40.

Postcards:
Pack of Ten: £2 each
10 or more packs: £1.50 each.





Please send your name, address, payment and your order to:
B. Griffiths, 11 Fremont Street, London E9.

Speculum: a midwife's musings

Women and Tranquilliser Addiction

Most people addicted to tranquillisers are women.

This is hardly surprising, considering the stress under which we are placed in our daily lives: combining paid work with childcare and housework, facing violence in the home and indeed out of it, not being able to walk the streets alone at night for fear of male attackers.

We are also often low-paid, likely to be unemployed or to have part-time jobs with appalling conditions of service.

Society expects women to "cope" with all the domestic problems which crop up in families: elderly relatives needing constant care, or handicapped children for whom there are few facilities.

In contrast, men may have more high-powered jobs and suffer more from heart disease, but they don't face the daily grind of monotony and subservience which women do. Men aren't stuck in high-rise blocks with a bunch of children morning, noon and night. They escape to the pub, or to work if they're lucky enough to be employed.

Women victims of domestic violence live in constant fear of attack, even if they take out an injunction against their attacker. The police see "domestic" crime as practically normal, and they don't respond quickly or appropriately when women call for help.

So where do we turn? Well, to cigarettes, booze, and drugs, mainly. And none of these are good for our health.

Prescriptions

In the first instance, women go to their doctors for help; but as we all know, the majority of GPs are hard-pressed for time, haven't any training in counselling skills, and so they tend to hand out prescriptions for tranquillisers.

There are lots of tranquillisers: major tranquillisers (used by professionals for what they recognise as "mental illnesses"), and minor tranquillisers (the benzodiazepines) to which so many people become addicted.

The trade names will be familiar: valium, mogadon, ativan. The generic names for these drugs all end in "–pam" (diazepam, lorazepam, nitrazepam, etc.). Temazepam is one of the drug companies' newest inventions, but it has no advantage over any of the others. Ativan is notorious because it causes terrible withdrawal symptoms.

The reason why women (and men) become addicted to the minor tranquillisers is because you need a constantly increasing dose for the drug to have the same effect as when you started taking it. Thus, you may be prescribed two milligrammes of valium three times a day, which indeed will induce a feeling of calmness and tranquillity. However, very rapidly, you will require five mg to have the same effect.

It is not unknown for addicts to be taking as much as 200mg per day. This is enough to kill people who aren't taking them, but addicts actually need this amount to stay calm and avoid withdrawal symptoms.

We tend to look to drugs for help with the crises of daily living – and doctors often prescribe a small dose of tranquilliser to (supposedly) help a patient over a bereavement, for example.

By TESS KEWLY
SRN, SCM

But once started on the drugs, most people find it very hard to cope without them. Doctors issue repeat prescriptions without seeing their patients – often for years on end. This, of course, means that they can avoid talking to the patient, confronting problems and discussing possible solutions.

There are other ways of coping with stress: seeking counselling, joining groups of women who share the same problems (e.g. miscarriage support groups, domestic violence support groups), and trying to solve the problem which caused the stress in the first place - leaving an awful job or partner (easier said than done!).

Herbal teas (camomile and peppermint tea at night is very calming) may be helpful.

For intractable insomnia, valerian tea is effective (although it smells awful!).

Rescue Remedy (from homeopathic pharmacies) is really invaluable as a quick "pick-me-up" in a sudden stressful situation. For nervous exhaustion and headaches, Kali. Phos. 6X is very useful – also obtainable from homeopaths or Health Food shops. If you are addicted to tranquillisers and want to come off, first, approach your GP. If s/he isn't helpful, change her/him. You need to reduce your daily dosage slowly, and it can take months to succeed. Indeed, with lorazepam (Ativan), addicts report that it can take over a year to get completely off the drug.

Support

Second, find out if there is a local Support Group in your area. Telephone Tranx, an organisation set up to help people get off tranquillisers (01 427 2065). They will offer support and tell you if there is a local group.

Many hospitals have drug dependency clinics - you can ask to be referred there for help and counselling, but they are often oversubscribed and under-resourced.

There are thousands and thousands more people addicted to tranquillisers than there are heroin addicts. Not enough is being done to help them. It will require a great deal of political change, particularly around women's issues, before we can say, "No, life's OK, I don't need valium."



Lesbians and Gays in Nicaragua

Sandinistas offer new hope

After years of repression under the US-backed Somoza dictatorship, attitudes towards lesbians and gay men in Nicaragua are beginning to change.

According to Lin Fielder, a lesbian student at the Polytechnic of North London recently returned to Britain after a year in Nicaragua, there is a new-found "sense of hope" amongst Nicaraguan lesbians and gays.

In recent years, several leading Nicaraguans have spoken out in support of homosexual rights.

Tomas Borge, one of the Leaders of the Sandinista revolution, now the Minister of the Interior, has gone on record opposing discrimination against lesbians and gay men.

At last year's International Women's Day rally in Managua, a leading member of the Nicaraguan women's movement, Heliette Ehlers, suggested that the existence of homosexuality needed to be more openly acknowledged and that it was an issue which the revolution needed to address more forthrightly.

"In the context of a Catholic country with a macho culture in the midst of a civil war, that was a brave thing to say," says Fielder. "It shows that there are people high up in the Nicaraguan Leadership who are open to lesbian and gay rights."

Indeed, the Minister of Culture, Ernesto Cardenal, has long been a critic of Cuba's oppression of gay people, having roundly condemned Castro's policies in his book *In Cuba*.

Nicaragua's Vice President, the novelist Sergio Ramirez, has also criticised the hounding of lesbians and gays. One of his short stories, *The Seige*, is about the victimisation and violence suffered by two gay lovers at the hands of their neighbours.

Fielder says that Nicaragua is "gradually moving in the right direction" — though she is the first to admit that the situation there is still far from ideal.

"There is no legislation against homosexuality, but there *is* social pressure against it. That's hardly surprising given that Nicaragua is an intensely Catholic country with a long history of Latin *machismo*.

"It's also particularly difficult to raise the question of lesbians and gays in a situation where the country is fighting for its survival against the murderous Contras and a devastating US trade embargo.

"In a poor country with insufficient housing few single people have their own homes. Lesbians and gays usually live with their families in overcrowded accommodation. That makes privacy and getting together sexually almost impossible."

Fielder confirms the existence of a "small and tightly-knit" lesbian and gay community in Nicaragua. "It's not like here. They don't have special bars, though in Managua some gays do meet in the ATC Jazz Club and in a little bar called Commodore Sarah's."

Otherwise, Fielder says, gay people meet at parties in the homes of *Internationalistas* — West European and North American students and workers who have come to help the Nicaraguan revolution and who often tend to be more liberal-minded about lesbian and gay sexuality.

By PETER TATCHELL

Fielder remains hopeful for the future. "Before the 1979 revolution, the atmosphere was so repressive. It was impossible to discuss issues like lesbian and gay rights publicly. The Sandinista revolution has at least opened up the opportunity for change. In a country where there has been no freedom for decades, it's impractical to expect that everything can change overnight."

Fielder refers to a television programme about homosexuality which was broadcast in June 1987.

"It was negative in many ways, though the fact that it was shown at all was a positive development that would never have happened under the Somoza regime. It broke the years of silence surrounding the public discussion of gayness in Nicaragua and that is a good thing."

Fielder concludes: "Despite the difficulties still faced by homosexuals in Nicaragua, at least they are not vilified as 'poofs' by the press, harassed by the police, or beaten up by 'queer-bashers'.

"In Britain, we've got the state against lesbians and gays," says Fielder. "In Nicaragua, they haven't. That's a difference worth defending."

Lesbians and gay men interested in supporting the Nicaraguan revolution can write to: Lin Fielder or Steve Anders, c/o Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 23 Bevenden Street, London N1 6BH.



Women's place in the macho society. Women agricultural workers (above); Market stalls in Managua (below), where 90% of stall holders are women.



Socialist Football Commentary

The People's Game:

Mangled by Market Forces

Traditionally the summer break has been hard on football fans.

Between May and August, committed supporters are recognisable by trembling hands, ashen faces, and vacant expressions.

This year, however, we have had even more important things to worry about than whether Paul Gascoigne is really worth £2 million.

First we heard that the government intended "to deal with" organised football violence by denying access to all 92 League Grounds to anyone not in possession of a national identity card, starting in 1989.

The first effect of this will be a drastic reduction in League attendances. No longer will casual fans be able to turn up for an occasional game.

Coming from a government which bemoans the lack of "family atmosphere" at football grounds, this is a strange move, to say the least. (I should note here that a "family atmosphere" is the last thing we need; there's enough violence already.)

The League Management Committee (made up of Football Club owners) has roundly condemned the proposal — because of the effect it will have on declining revenues.

Spectator

Clearly, anyone who cares about the future of football as a mass spectator sport will be worried about the financial impact of identity cards on the smaller Clubs, but there are other reasons for opposing the scheme.

For many years, football grounds and their surrounding areas have served as police training grounds. The use of horses, dogs, "snatch squads", video surveillance, and indiscriminate police violence has been widespread — not to mention the opportunities provided for learning frame-up techniques.

Often, such high-handed policing only serves to inflame and promote crowd trouble. We should stand firmly against the further erosion of democratic rights which a national identity card system represents. Once the machinery for such a system is in place for football fans, it will be that much easier to introduce it for the rest of the population. In any case, the scheme simply won't work.

Crowd trouble has been virtually eliminated inside stadiums in recent seasons. These days, organised "firms" prefer to attack each other on the streets well away from the grounds. Identity cards will have little effect.

Another blow to the future of the "people's game" is the threatened split by the ten richest League Clubs. The directors of the ten Clubs are negotiating their own deal for exclusive television coverage with ITV. Previously, the proceeds from televised matches (even though, last season, they all seemed to feature Liverpool) have been shared out between all 92 League clubs.

At the time of writing, the League has obtained an injunction to stop the ten Clubs from finding a separate deal. Whether the hogging of the ITV millions by the ten will lead to a split in the League (and consequent bankruptcy for many of the poorer Clubs) is not yet clear.

By Glenn Sutherland
Our Man in the Shed

What this episode does prove is that the men who run football (yes, they are all men) are motivated by a mixture of powermania and traditional capitalist greed.

If things look bleak in English and Welsh football (how about some views on the Scottish game?), they are not much better internationally. FIFA, football's international ruling body (made up - surprise, surprise - of similar types to our own League Management Committee) met recently to decide which country was to host the 1994 World Cup competition.

Where did the FIFA finger point? Brazil, with its magnificent history of football entertainment, and its football–hungry population? Morocco, which proved its ability to stage major competitions when it hosted the very successful African Nations Cup in March and, if selected, would provide such a boost for African football?

Powerhouses

No! The finger landed on the USA, which hasn't qualified for the competition in 38 years and has in recent years been knocked out by such powerhouses of international soccer as Costa Rica and Honduras, only just managing to squeeze past the Netherlands Antilles last time out.

The much–vaunted American soccer boom has proved ephemeral, with both the NASL and its smaller but older rival the American Soccer League folding through lack of profit.

The reason for such an apparently senseless decision? The US TV companies would only show (and pay for) the event if the USA was playing! How could such a guarantee be arrranged? By staging the competition in the USA itself — even to the detriment of world football!



Ruud Gullit, European footballer of the year

Thatcher's beloved "market forces", combined with a lust for status, continue to lead football from crisis to crisis. The only way in which football will be run in the supporters' interests is if supporters themselves fight for control over decision–making at club, national, and international levels.

The Biz tunes in to World Music

How did I end up as *Briefing* Music Correspondent?

I suppose I am a musician, but I hate writing.

It's a week since I was asked for this article on "world music" and pop — and I've got to get it done by tomorrow! Ah well, here goes.

By the way, if there's anybody out there who is moved to write anything on music for *Briefing*, please do so. There are many areas to be covered, and ideas and opinions to be expressed... I'll even try to be a bit provocative here to get you going — just like they do in the *NME!*

So "world music" (a bit of a catch–all marketing phrase, but useful in drawing together the roots musics from all over the world) and "race groove" (mainly Afro-American funk and R&B from the late 60s and early 70s) seem to be "in" at last with those hipsters who can afford to buy records and go to "gigs".

If you detect a note of protective vitriol in my words, you're right. It's a bit discomforting to see yuppies (trying to) groove to Northern Soul tracks that kept you going ten years or so ago, and shuffling their feet to Youssour N'Dour. And then the DJ goes and puts on "Dancing Queen" by Abba!

Platform Shoes

What's even worse is that the hippest of the (rich) hipsters buy a pair of those incredibly ridiculous platform shoes (like the ones your pressured your mother into buying for you if you were teenage in the 70s) for £100! It's not that I'm getting old and cynical (though I am) it's just that I wonder how come the capitalist music business (the Biz) is promoting real good dance music all of a sudden? Why it's that old chestnut *profit* again. Who would've guessed?

Basically, the Biz has picked up on the fact that increasing numbers of people, sick of the synthetic froth of most western pop and the grim angst of much of the "independent" alternatives, are tuning into deeper sounds, some contemporary and some revived, sounds made by musicians less alienated from their musics by virtue of the deep role music plays within their community.

As I have said in an earlier article (*Briefing* no. 61), the Biz has always been parasitical on the deep qualities of musics closer to folk roots, musics of black people in particular. Black music has, in my opinion, always been very innovatory (not without its slumps, of course, which I think reggae is going through at the moment).

This is because of its vital role in asserting cultural continuity and graceful protest in the face of racism and imperialism; and also because Black musicians have, to a certain extent, been able to get on with it without heavy pressure from the white Biz to compromise artistically.

BY MAJOR UNREST

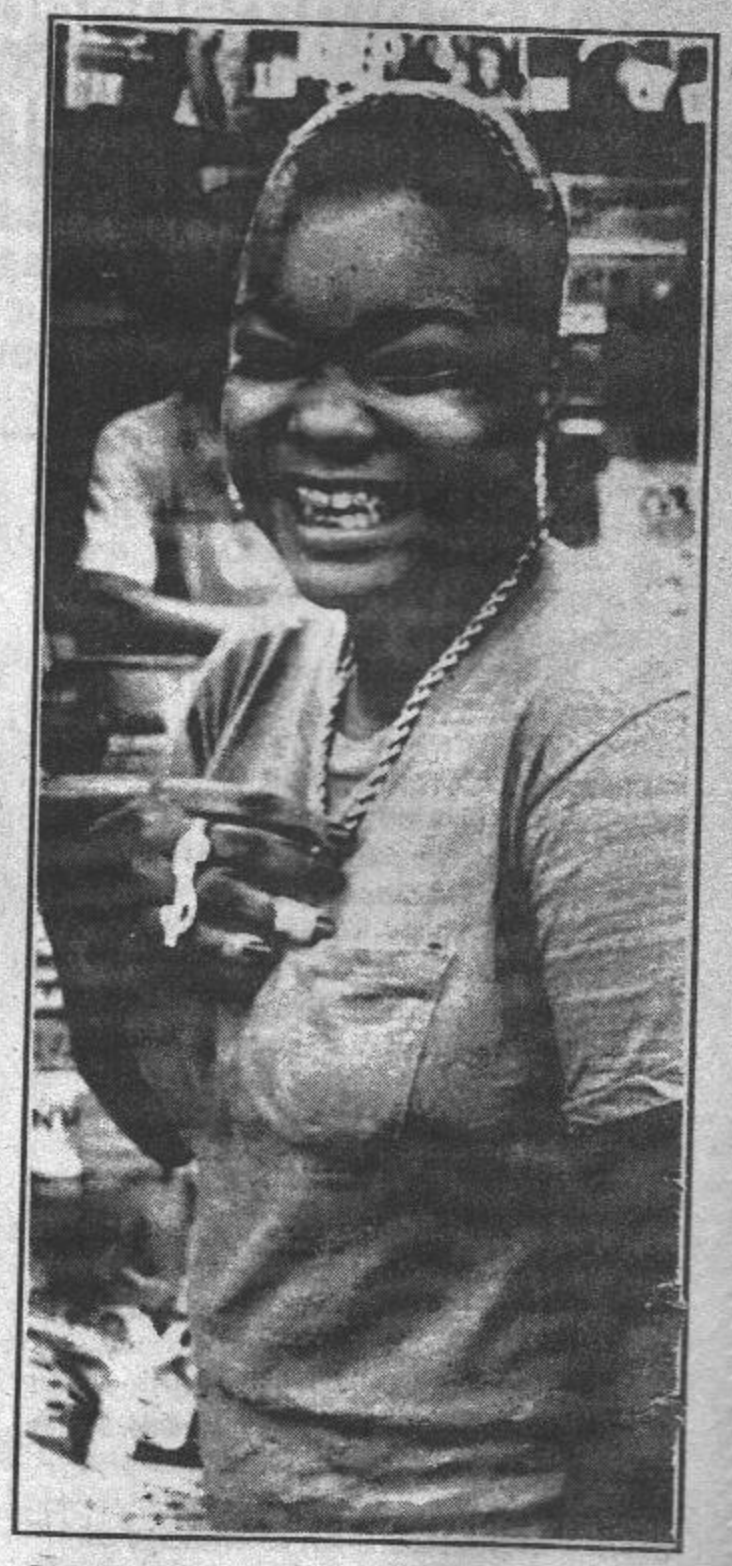
The Biz has only been interested in Black music when it can make big money from it, and until now it has been content to steal black musicians' ideas and give them to the latest package of pretty, sycophantic white boys (who don't give a fuck so long as they make a bit of cash).

Now, in these dispiriting times in privatised Britain, this clearly isn't enough. More people are after something with real feel to it. The ironic thing is that many musicians closer to their folk roots are now demanding (and getting) major contracts with the Biz, saying that independent set-ups (some of which are artistically sound and some not) cannot make enough money for them.

Fair enough that these musicians should demand recompense after years of having their music and that of their ancestors exploited, but I fear for their musics (and their values) if artistic integrity is submerged by profit.



George Michael — "Doesn't give a fuck"



Roxanne Shante — submerged by profit?

Ranting aside, of course it's brilliant that more and more people in the West are hearing these musics. It's especially good for those musicians and aspiring musicians who put innovation above fast money, and now have a world of influences at the touch of a radio dial. (Remember, even when the tide recedes, and Radio 1 stops playing so much world music, with a good radio set you should still be able to tune to sounds from faraway places, even if it's just the African pirates in Paris, or the better stations in not–so–far–away Ireland).

I'll go into some of the positive musical cross–fertilisations now taking place in a later article, and will also take up any points raised by the flood of letters and articles which I'm sure will follow from Briefing readers.

Stop Press:

Don't miss WOMAD, the world music and dance festival, this year at St Austell, Cornwall, Friday 26th to Sunday 28th August. I'm afraid I don't know where you can get tickets (which cost £20 for the weekend, £10 for one day) or who's on, but ads will be in the music press from now on.

Book Reviews

Recommended Reading for a Radical Summer Break

Here's a mixed bag of recomended summer reading for those who have managed to put some time aside from arid resolutions, policy reviews, leaflets, and even *Labour Briefing*.
Out of repect for our frugal and penurious readers, we list only paperbacks.

Out of the Gutter: A Survey of the Treatment of Homosexuality by the Press.
By Gary Armitage, Julienne Dickey, and Sue Shapiron, Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, £3.15.
Sure to need updating — all too soon.

Games with Shadows.
By Neal Acherson, Radius, £7.95.
Collected columns from Britain's last bourgeois radical — and the only remaining reason to buy the *Observer*.

Bluebeard's Egg.
By Margaret Atwood, Virago, £7.95.
Latest fiction from the Canadian feminist.

The Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories.
Ed. by Margaret Atwood and Robert Weaver, OUP, £7.95.
Delve and discover!

The Port of London Murders.
By Josephine Bell, Pandora.
Reprint of neglected classic thriller, set in the now vanished Docklands.

Storms of the Heart: An Anthology of Black Arts and Culture.
Camden Press, £12.95.
Provocative, uneven, but critical overview of today's Black British art and artists.

Radical Records: Thirty years of Lesbian and Gay History, 1957-1984.
Ed. by Bob Cant and Susan Hemmings, Routledge, £7.99.
First-hand testimony from a wide range of witnesses — and participants.

Fireworks.
By Angela Carter, Virago, £2.95.
Re-issued (and revised) early novel by the author of *Nights at the Circus*.

The Songlines.
By Bruce Chatwin, Picador, £3.99.
Gripping if ambiguous account of aboriginal culture and customs.

Writing Lives, Conversations between Women Writers.
Ed. by Mary Chamberlain, Virago, £7.95.
Angelou meets Guy, Keane meets Devlin, Russell meets Porter, West meets Warner in Virago's fifteenth anniversary celebration volume.

Anagrams.
By Lorrie Moore, Faber, £3.95.
New Fiction.

The Culture of Terrorism.
By Noam Chomsky, Pluto Press, £8.95.
Devastating critique of US imperial politics. Mass media hypocrisy stripped bare.

Corruptions of Empire: Life Studies and the Reagan Era.
By Alexander Cockburn, Verso, £12.95.
Brilliant polemic from America's best journalist — and the only reason to buy the other wise unreadable *New Statesman and Society*.

It's the Same Old Story: Immigration Controls against Jewish, Black and Asian people, with special reference to Manchester.
By Steve Cohen, Manchester City Council, £1.00.
Title says it all. Useful history for current struggles.

Reshaping the US Left, Popular Struggle in the 1980s.
(Volume III of The Year Left), Ed. by Mike Davis and Michael Sprinter, Verso, £9.95.
Indispensable collection, with fascinating accounts of rank and file moblisation in P-9 and Wattsonville strikes, comparisons between US and Canadian labour, and analysis of Central America solidarity and peace movements.

The Two Faces of January.
By Patricia Highsmith, Penguin, £2.95.
Re-issue of 1964 thriller by a cunning social and sexual critic.

Intercourse.
By Andrea Dworkin, Arrow Books, £3.50.
Why bother with penetration? Required reading for all men — who may find it full of surprises. Required reading for all women, to boost that flagging self-confidence after a year's political activity.

Day of Two Sons.
By Jane Dibblin, Virago, £6.95.
A committed, campaiging indictment of US nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands in the Pacific; popular resiliance and protest survive contamination and resettlement.

Stoner McTavish.
By Sarah Drehner, Pandora, £4.95.
Lesbian detective in warm and lively cliff-hanging mystery.

Poor Cow and Up the Junction
By Nell Dunn, Virago, £3.50 & £2.95.
Re-issue of realistic classics, holding up well over time.

The Beet Queen.
By Louise Edrich, Pavanne, £3.50.
Epic novel of US life (and agriculture!).

A Piece of My Heart
By Richard Ford, Flamingo, £3.95.
New novel by the author of *The Sportswriter*.

Lanark.
By Alasdair Gray, Paladin, £4.95.
Art and Politics, individual and collective, real and surreal meet and merge in left-wing Scottish master's brilliant 80s fiction.

The Eye of the Heart.
Edited by Barbara Howes, Allison & Bushby.
Short stories from Latin America.

The German Greens.
By Werner Hulsberg, Verso, £15.95.
In-depth but readable Marxist critique of social and political make-up of the German Greens.

Greyhound for Breakfast.
By James Kelman, Picador, £3.50.
Vernacular visions of 80s giro culture in Scotland.

Death of a Doll.
By Hilda Lawrence, Pandora.
Resident is found dead in 1930s New York Women's Hostel. Spooky, atmospheric.

Cutting the Lifeline — the fight for the NHS: a campaigner's handbook.
Ed. by John Lister of London Health Emergency, Journeymen Press, £3.
Invaluable summary of Tory attacks and resistance to them, featuring wide variety of contributors.

Gone to soldiers.
By Marge Piercy, Penguin, £4.95.
Women's experience inWorld War II fictionally reclaimed in cast-of-thousands epic.

The Ice is Singing
By Janie Rogers, Faber, £4.95.
More new fiction.

The Counterlife.
By Philip Roth, Penguin, £3.95.
Tragicomic stylist enters new and provocative waters —Zionist macho and Palestinian reality, British anti-semitism, death and disease, and more.

Blaming Others: Prejudice, Race, and Worldwide AIDS.
Ed. by Renee Sabatier, The Panos Institute, £4.95.
"Is blame undermining AIDS prevention?" An internationalist and anti-racist view.

Blaming the Victims.
By Edward Said, Christopher Hitchens, and others, Verso, £8.95.
"Spurious scholarship and the Palestinian question". Academic lies laid bare.

Assata Shakur, An Autobiography.
Zed, £7.95.
Life story of Black Panther woman.

The Engineer of Human Souls.
By Josef Skvorecky, Picador, £3.95.
Novel of recent Czech history.

Masculine Ending.
By Joan Smith, Pandora.
Excellent first thriller.

Recommedations from: Emma Dally, Anna de Lasparis, Mike Marqusee, Dave Palmer, Caroline Rault.

Periscope

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



Our Pic of the Queen — the inside story



Briefing staff photographer Leesa Herbert snapped that exclusive cover photo of Elizabeth Windsor and Turkey's President Evren at the recent "state reception" lavished by our "constitutional" monarch (and "her" government) on one of the most notorious murderers and torturers currently holding high office anywhere in the world.

Leesa arrived on the scene (outside London's Victoria Station) with *Briefing* journo-hack Mike Marqusee and together they joined the people idly milling around either side of the heavily guarded parade route to Buckingham Palace.

In the blink of an eyelid, they were surrounded by police, who told them their "motives" in being present were suspect ("to demonstrate") and ordered them to leave the victinity.Threats were issued and heavy hands were laid on shoulders and arms.

Meanwhile, thousands of oblivious tourists and hundreds of pro-regime Turks were allowed to line the route wihout hindrance. Clearly, a lapelsworth of Benn-Hefer badges and an armful of *Labour Briefing* now warrant instant attention from the men and women in blue.

Leesa and Mike beat a hasty, spineless retreat. A seller of the *US Militant* was not so lucky. Before he could leave the area, he was arrested by impatient coppers.

Leesa and Mike later returned — *sans* badges and *Briefings* — to witness the preposterous pomp of our anachronistic semi-feudal state wheeled out to celebrate the arrival of the detestable Evren and his blood-stained cohorts.

A retraction

Labour Briefing is happy to correct the details of our report in the last issue of Periscope concerning the antics of *Socialist Action* supporters in Birmingham,.

Just so there's no confusion: *five* (not nine, as we reported) *Socialist Action* comrades (in the guise of Birmingham Campaign Group supporters) voted *three times* (not once) to make the West Midlands Regional Socialist Conference a closed meeting — excluding all non-Labour Party members.,

We're never too big to admit we're wrong.

Give me those Old, Sterile Debates

(Or: how I learned to stop worrying and love the bomb)

Martin O'Neill MP — successor to Denzil Davies as Labour's Defence Spokesperson — has laid out some of his ideas in the latest *Labour Party News* ("the magazine for all Labour Party members").

Unilateralists seeking reassurance will be disappointed. Most of the article is a defence of Kinnock's "something for nothing" description of existing Party policy.

"Our longstanding commitment to nuclear disarmament stemmed from a moral and political aversion to nuclear weapons — but also from a feeling that something had to be done to break the nuclear logjam. Unilateralism in the past was an appropriate tactic to pursue in order to break the logjam and try to get progress for disarmament.

Now the logjam has been broken. The USA and USSR have begun the process of ridding the planet of nuclear weapons. We now have to consider how best to make our own contribution to accelerate this process of disaramament in Euorpe and worldwide."

Nor is that all. ONeill goes on to argue that since the "clapped out, obsolescent" Polaris will soon be replaced by Trident, "Britain will have nuclear weapons of much greater significance than we have at the moment. We therefore have to consider the international effect of our actions to rid Britain of nuclear weapons... British independent action cannot rid the world of the nuclear threat. Our policy will only be effective if it is of assistance to the much more significant international disarmament process."

Not surprisngly, O'Neill wants us to "get away from the old sterile debate about 'unilateral' vs. 'multilateral'."

Divorce, campaign-Group Syle

Those who follow the ever-shifting patterns of left-wing alignments and realignments, groupings and regroupings, will know of the peculiar but apparently durable political marriage between Ken Livingstone and John Ross, *Socialist Action* guru-in-chief.

But is divorce on the cards?

Ross and his supporters (see above) have recently mounted a spate of attacks on the Chesterfield Conference and the Socialist Society, denounced by *SA* as rightist and sectarian.

But now news comes that on July 18th Ken Livingstone himself became a paid-up member of the Socialist Society. Does this move herald a major split in the Livingstone-Ross mutual admiration society? Certainly, the nimble-footed Ken knows a sinking ship when he sees one, and HMS *Socialist Action* is leaking from stem to stern.

Cunningham: Brussels-bound?

Nuclear Jack Cunningham may yet find a happy home as an EC Commissioner in Brussels.

With Lord Cockfield's "departure", Thatcher's replacement — Leon Brittan — arrives as the junior Commissioner.

With tradition being that the two British seats on the EC Commission (the real power-house of the Community, making day to day budgetary decisions) are split between Tory and Labour, Labour's Stanley Clinton-Davies is left as the senior Commissioner — a situation completely unacceptable to Thatcher.

So what is to be done? The answer, rumour has it, is for an early Clinton-Davies retirement, followed by the appointment of a new (and therefore junior) Labour representative on the Commission — none other than the odious Cunningham, who seems tailor-made for the loadsamoney power that comes with the prestigious full-time job.

Remember, you read it first in *Labour Briefing!*

The following letter appeared in the *Glasgow Evening Times* on July 11th:

I was not surprised to hear Neil Kinnock refer to Disneyland politics, as he is an expert on Disney.

He "disney" know whether he's for or against nuclear weapons, he "disney" know how to beat Mrs Thatcher, he "disney" know whether he wants to keep his job or resign, he "disney" want to accept his Party Conferenc decisions and he "disney" think before he opens his big mouth.

In short he "disney" have a clue, and as far as his chances of ever becoming Prime Minister, he "disney" have a snowball's chance in Hell.

Knowing how sensitive he is to adverse criticism, I sincerely hope he "disney" take offence at this, but then again Neil, it "disney" matter to us whether you do or not.

Charles McKenna, Erskine, Renfrewshire.

Letters

WRITEBACK!

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

(Letters over 300 words may be cut for space reasons, unless you state your letter may be published in full or not at all.)

What kind of Withdrawal Movement does *Briefing* want to see?

Dear *Briefing*,

As the unnamed editor of *Labour and Ireland* criticised in an article by Stephanie Grant apparently representing Islington North CLP* (July 6th), let me make my views clear.

If, after three years of denying advances were being made for building a withdrawal movement (largely due to an obsession with the negative effects of the Anglo-Irish Accord) *Briefing* wishes to change its mind, that's all right by me. There's no point in expecting socialists to wear sack cloth and ashes.

However, such schematism shouldn't be replaced by fantasies. Your photo of the 100-strong IBRG march for justice earlier this year is captioned... "now the Year of Action gives *us* the opportunity to mobilise the British working class in support of the Irish nationalist struggle." (my emphasis)

To be frank, my obsession is not with celebrity support for the Time To Go Charter, but with how increased support for withdrawal can be harnessed into a powerful and effective movement. The National Union of Students which now supports British withdrawal from Ireland, is the largest youth organisation in Britain. Is this support invalid because it does not represent wholesale conversion to the aims of the Republican movement or because the national president who is a signatory and prominent organiser for the Charter was elected on a National Organisation of Labour Students slate opposed by *Labour Briefing*?

Likewise, support at the base of the trade union movement.

Socialists in Britain can play a vital role in aiding the Irish national struggle by undermining government policy and mobilising popular opposition to the occupation of the North. But if the only form of withdrawal movement you can countenance has to be headed up by Republicans and *Briefing*-style socialists, it will, despite its purity, be rather small and therefore ineffective.



I don't doubt that even a very large movement organised around the simple issue of withdrawal from Ireland will be buffeted by changes in government policy and confused on the issue of violence. But there is a greater possibility of avoiding this and keeping up the pressure on the Government if supporters of withdrawal work together. Otherwise, new support gets viewed as merely the expansion of the periphery of a socialist withdrawal movement whose loyalty is unbending.

The Labour Committee on Ireland, working with Labour Women for Ireland and the LP Irish Sections, is the main campaigning organisation inside the labour movement fighting to build a withdrawal movement with an open and non-sectarian outlook. It is somehow bypassed in Stephanie Grant's list of plans for *Briefing* supporters to work with "*Everyone* prepared to mobilise on the issue of withdrawal" (her emphasis). No doubt this is an oversight.

Martin Collins
Labour and Ireland

*Note: *Briefing's* policy has always been to print the Constituency Labour Party, trade union or campaign of which authors of articles are a member. We usually feel that as virtually every article is so signed, there should be no confusion possible with labour movement bodies submitting corporate statements — it would hardly be feasible to produce a fortnightly paper if we had to rely on CLPs, trade union branches, etc., to pass agreed articles on each subject we cover! As with all other contributions, Stephanie Grant's was signed as Stephanie Grant, who is a member of the CLP stated; the article was not signed as being *on behalf of* her CLP.

Disagreeing with Benn on Apartheid

Dear *Briefing*,

However vigorously we may support Tony Benn's campaign for the Leadership of the Party, there are times when his political positions cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. His article, Defeating Apartheid, (*Labour Briefing*, no. 66) is a case in point.

Socialists are obliged to campaign for sanctions against the apartheid rgime primarily in response to the demands of those directly involved in the struggle in South Africa. Their perception of both the development of their struggle and our tasks in facilitating that development are paramount and we must offer unconditional (although not necessarily uncritical) support.

Tony Benn's article, on the other hand, motivates sanctions on the basis of some perceived domestic advantages.

The inference that a boycott of Namibian uranium would somehow hinder deployment of Cruise missiles in this country is simply absurd.

More insidious is his suggestion that British workers should support disinvestment from apartheid in order to cut the dole queue here at the expense of jobs in South Africa. Socialists have no interest in promoting competition for jobs internationally any more than nationally. Such a position can but promote division and reinforce national chauvinism.

Of course, coming from a social democratic tradition that promotes import controls as a way of combatting unemployment (effectively, exporting unemployment) it is easy to see how he can make these potentially damaging mistakes. However, it is essential that the left makes a clear distinction between demands for sanctions in specific circumstances and divisive calls for generalised import controls.

Comradely greetings,
Tony Maguire,
Leeds

"Instant Mythology" misses the point



Dear *Briefing*,

In lumping Prescott and Hattersley together, Joan Twelves's article ("Heffer v. Prescott: Instant Mythology Exposed!", *Labour Briefing* no. 65) oversimplifies this crucial issue.

Though it's not between left and right, the Prescott/Hattersley battle is very real indeed. It has split the LCC and some trade unions *do* see Prescott as a left alternative to Hattersley. A victory for Prescott — who could win if there's a second ballot — whilst not being a victory for socialism, would be a devastating blow to Kinnock and the hard right.

Of course, it's "an illusion to believe that Prescott will push Kinnock to the left", but that doesn't mean to say that "a vote for Prescott is a vote for Kinnock".

Yours comradely,
John Turkie,
Hackney

Militant

Razzmattazz strikes a wrong note

Dear *Briefing*,

Despite rereading it several times, I am at a loss to work out precisely for whom the article "Razzamatazz Tendency" (*Briefing* no. 66) about the recent *Militant* rally, was intended. If I were a *Militant* supporter, I think I might take offence at being described as "rabble" by "our *Briefing* mole".

More staggering, however, is how the following passage, which is both anti-working class and sexist, got past the editors:

> *"(Trotsky's) great-granddaughter addressed the rally in person, evoking the kind of ecstasy in young women with bleached hair and snow-wash denims usually reserved for Madonna."*

Comrades, this is pathetic!

The whole article is smug and sneering in tone, redolent of the type of pointless sectarianism I thought *Briefing* at least had left far behind. You will not persuade serious socialists in *Militant* who read *Briefing* of the superiority of its approach by insulting them.

Yours,
Mike Phipps,
Woolwich

Militant

Razzamattazz strikes a chord

Dear *Briefing*,

I have just read the very well written article on the Ally Pally Rally.

The "mole" has captured the essence of the Tendency today, i.e. a religious belief in the power of ideas alone to change society. The only material force required is money.

Unfortunately, these rallies succeed in duping many comrades who actually want to fight. That is why they give their money.

John Havercroft and I are presently discussing with some of these comrades our views, expressed in an open letter.

Fraternally,
Tom Lonergan.

Note: see p. 22 for excerpts from the open letter to *Militant* supporters.

Militant

Briefing replies to *Searchlight*

In *Labour Briefing* no. 61 we printed extracts from a joint open letter to *Searchlight* issued by the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.
***Searchlight*, which has never printed the open letter, attacked *Labour Briefing* in its July issue, in an article entitled "Political Soldiers Ride Out", dealing with the links between Black and Muslim nationalism and Western fascism. Below, we print an extract from the *Searchlight* article, followed by *Briefing's* reply (in the form of a letter to the editors of *Searchlight*.**



"*Searchlight* is not alone in being concerned about National Front attempts to get involved in national liberation struggles. The PLO themselves have gone on record against such political manoeuvres on the NF's part, condemning their attempts to infiltrate pro-Palestinian campaigns. From the black community comes news of increasing disquiet on the part of black activists in the Labour and trade union movement in this country, who see the NF sullying the names of black heroes like Malcolm X in the pages of their publications, and completely rewriting chunks of black history to make it fit in with their ideas of racial separation.

"For those from the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, who attacked *Searchlight* in the form of an open letter in a recent issue of *Labour Briefing* for naming the regime in Libya and Iran as allies of the National Front and similar groups throughout the Western world, it would clearly be futile to engage in a prolonged polemical debate with people who have not even had the courtesy to read what *Searchlight* has written on the Middle East over the years. We hope that in future the editors of *Labour Briefing* will at least make some basic checks for factual accuracy before running such material."

***Searchlight* no. 157, July 1988**

"Dear *Searchlight*,

Thank you for sending us the latest issue of *Searchlight* with the comments on *Labour Briefing* on pages 10-11.

Labour Briefing will continue to publish open letters which it receives from legitimate labour movement and anti-imperialist organisations such as the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Indeed, both these organisations are affiliated to the Iterim Joint Commmittee for Palestine which the PLO recognises in the letter reproduced by *Searchlight* in its latest issue.

The interests of open, informed, and constructive debate amongst anti-fascists would have been best served by the publication of the open letter in *Searchlight* itself. Declaring from the outset that 'it would be futile to engage in prolonged polemical debate' (as *Searchlight* did in its last issue) is hardly likely to ensure this debate is conducted as it should be.

There is no space here to make a detailed reply to the points you make, nor does *Labour Briefing* have an editorial 'line' which it is bent on pursuing in this regard. However, it is worth reiterating some of the more general points made in the original letter from PSC and LMCP.

'The separatism of the oppressor and the separatism of the oppressed certainly have interests in common — we ourselves have made this point with reference to Zionism and anti-semitism on many occasions — however, this does not automatically make Zionists, Gadaffi, or Farrakhan fascists... exposing the unprincipled relations between these forces and fascism is a far cry from presenting them as a new world fascist axis...'

It must also be noted that the open letter makes a number of specific points regarding '*Searchlight's* treatment of Israel and the Arab world' which go unanswered in your recent article.

We hope you will print this letter in your next issue, along with the full, original text of the open letter from LMCP and PSC."

***Labour Briefing*, 13.7.88**

International Briefing

Gorbachev's good resolutions



"How to do the job better" was Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev's view of the task of the 19th Conference of the Soviet Communist Party at the end of June.

The Job is that of ensuring the internal and external securty of the Soviet state apparatus for the next few decades.

"Doing it better" requires a complete overhaul of the system and methods of economic management, which Gorbachev insists cannot occur without fundamental political (i.e. administrative) reform.

The Conference resolutions — drawn up by a commission elected at the Conference — speak bluntly of the "economic and socio-political crisis", with special emphasis on the crisis of agriculture and food supply.

To inspire the workers and collective farmers to do their job better Gorbachev intends to put an end to "any opportunity to lead an untroubled life while doing poor work" and to the practice of "wage levelling" which has "impressed itself much too strongly on our psychology and economic practices."

Enterprises and collective farms are to become self-financing and individual employees are to be paid by results. And people will need the money, because a reform of the system of subsidising the prices of basic products is in the pipeline.

The new problems which perestroika might present for the productive population was not a major subject of debate at the Conference. An exception was a contribution by Zoya Pukhova from the Soviet Women's Committee who pointed out that removal of restrictive practices tended to hit "the most unprotected part of the worker collective — women with children — hardest."

Administrators

To spur on the administrators there will be the pressure of the popular will, to be exerted through elections to the Leaderships of the Soviets at all levels.

While the Communist Party, as the only organised force, will still be able to control the main lines of development, the masses will, at least in theory, be able to remove especially incompetent and unpopular individuals.

At the same time Gorbachev wants to make room for some real discussion in the Soviets and other mass organisations through running down the parallel Party structure (like the "Broad Left" in the old TASS!) which currently strives to take all the decisions in advance.

These proposals would affect the prospects of any incompetent and unpopular individuals in the audience, and some worried delegates referred to "irresponsible criticism" of officials which has been appearing in a newly confident press. And amendment from the floor on elections to the Leaderships of the Soviets received 200 votes.

In science and art the heady air of creative freedom will, it is hoped, provide the means for the state to identify and solve burning technical and social problems. Special mention is made of the social sciences which are to "creatively elaborate present and future questions of the development of socialism."

By Colin Meade
Surbiton CLP

In order to inspire, but also control, popular involvement in the development of perestroika, there are indications that Gorbachev might support the formation of a non-party Movement for Restructuring.

The fate of this scheme is closely bound up with what happens in the troubled Caucasian Republics and the Baltic States, where intellectuals favourable to Gorbachev are battling to keep the Leadership of nationalist movements. Gorbachev seems to believe that the success of perestroika in forming an all-Union consensus committed to economic reform will be enough to take the steam out of the national question.

For some ambitious and energetic individuals the new system offers an exciting prospect of moving directly into the fast lane of Soviet political life. The populist ex-head of the Moscow Party, Boris Yeltsin, made a dramatic electioneering speech, provoking the wrath of Yegor Ligachev, widely presented in the Western press as Gorbachev's main hardline opponent, and the more measured criticism of Gorbachev himself.

Another delegate, Vladimir Milnikov, called for the removal of the remaining Brezhnevites cluttering up the Politburo.

Mutterings were also heard about the presence of delegates involved in corruption. This is no laughing matter; in the early 80s, associates of Brezhnev were shot, driven to suicide or otherwise punished for their part in the gross corruption of the previous decade. Gorbachev reassured the assembly that the planned purge of the Party would not be of that sort.

Some things are not up for discussion:

> *"anybody who tries to put in question the role and significance of the Party will get a decisive rebuff,"*

Gorbachev emphasised.

> *"The expansion of democracy and glasnost must proceed hand-in-hand with the reinforcement of legality and the inculcation of an absolute respect for the law."*

Among other things which will remain against the law are "redrawing boundaries" — a reference to the Armenian demand for the transfer of the Nagorno-Karabakh region from the neighbouring Republic of Azerbaijan — and setting up opposition parties.

Gorbachev's authority at the Conference was unchallenged. He draws his strength



Gorbachev "draws his strength from his position as mediator between the state apparatus and popular pressure for change."

from his position as mediator between the state apparatus and popular pressure for change. A projected Presidency would give formal constitutional expression to this mediating role.

If sections of the Party apparatus do move to oust him they will most likely start with a pseudo-democratic campaign for the separation of power between the President and Party Leader.

But for now Gorbachev is the boss, and his economic and political reform programme has the authority of the Party Conference behind it. A serious effort is therefore going to be made to put it into practice.

The ideologues who speak for Gorbachev appear confident that they are setting in motion a coherent set of measures for overcoming the crisis. Bulldozing the slime and filth of the Stalinist era out of their way, they hope to return to the period at the end of the 1920s when Lenin's New Economic Policy was still in force and the right-centre bloc of Stalin-Bukharin had seen off the "super-industrialisers" of the Left Opposition.

But they forget that Lenin defined the NEP as a retreat, pregnant with social and economic contradictions. as in the past, so in the present; what the Gorbachevites see as a stable organisational form will be riddled with social contradictions.

In denying this they make a whole series of dubious assumptions: that the pressure of imperialism will tend to lessen in the coming years; that the "people" is a single entity, which can easily agree on fundamental priorities; that given self-expression the mass of the people will choose to continue to put up with the total political monopoly of the Communist Party; that the peoples of Eastern Europe will wish to stay within the Soviet bloc; and that the working class will passively accept attacks on its basic security.

Anyone who thinks such scepticism unduly cynical should look at Yugoslavia. Here all of Gorbachev's reforms and many more besides have already been tried out.

Gorbachevites routinely refer to Yugoslavia as an acceptable alternative model to traditional Soviet Stalinism. In reality Yugoslavia has experienced sharpening social and national conflicts over the last few years fuelled by an economic crisis which includes a Latin American size foreign debt.

On Thursday July 7th, *The Guradian* tells us, 5,000 striking workers from Croatia

> *"returned home from Belgrade after an extraordinary 48 hours of street protest which climaxed in the storming of the federal Parliament."*

The workers, supported by others across the country demanded double wages and

> *"publicly sacked the entire management of their leather and shoe industry ... as well as local government and Communist Party officials."*

Since their demands have not been granted these workers have "called for united action by the whole Yugoslav working class ... all over the country on July 28th."

The evolution of Yugoslavia suggests that the light at the end of Gorbachev's tunnel is not a new model of socialism, but a pre-revolutionary situation.



International Briefing

Where is Ireland marching?

Diane Abbott, in a letter published in the *Independent* on July 11th, called for the anti-discrimination proposals in the North of Ireland to be extended to cover racial discrimination in Britain.

She concluded:

"Or are we waiting for racial violence in Britain to reach the levels of religious violence in Northern Ireland?"

There is something rather depressing in an MP as left as Diane Abbott allegedly is, representing a CLP as good on Ireland as Hackney North, coming out with a reactionary banality like "religious violence in Northern Irealnd".

And yet, there are no doubt others on the left who will be ready to subscribe to this *Sun* readers' guide to Irish politics as their televisions show Orange marchers one week, and Republican demonstrations the next. It is the North of Ireland's "marching season", when, more than ever, the British government and its troops do their "stuck in the middle, trying to keep the mad Irish apart" act.

Tom King, Thatcher's man in the North of Ireland, recently announced he was going to stay in his job for another year. He was thus going to be Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for longer than is usual, and he made this decision, he said, because he saw a chance of "overcoming sectarianism".

By Geoff Bell
Hackney North &
Stoke Newington CLP

King's optimism is part of the government mood at the moment. Either directly or indirectly, through a compliant media, all sorts of stories are going the rounds which suggest the "religious wars" may be coming to an end.

We are told that the Republican movement is deeply split. The moderate Gerry Adams wants to take his seat at Westminster (according to the *Sunday Telegraph*) and wants the IRA to put away its guns.

The Unionists, we are told, have been bitten by the New Realism bug, and are straining to sit down at the negotiating table. We are even led to believe that the people of West Belfast are about to be given millions of pounds and dollars of economic aid to wean them away from past savagery.

All this is nonsense, and best ignored, except in so far as the telling of these tall stories signifies a good deal about those who are doing the telling.



Platform at Sinn Fein Ard Fheis.

But what is the reality? There is a debate underway amongst Republicans chiefly concerned witht the need to "popularise opposition to British rule and to extend that opposition into some form of broad, anti-imperialist campaign."

This quote is from a key-note speech given by Donegal Republican Pat Doherty at the recent Wolfe Tone commemoration demonstration at Bodenstown, Co. Kildare. This occasion is the most important in the Republican calendar and Doherty's words can be taken as representing the thoughts of the Republican Leadership.

There were a number of themes in his speech. One was an appeal to Loyalists:

> *"Your future lies with the Irish people as we strive to secure our self-determination... You should remember that governments, especially the British government, do not have permanent friends — they only have permanent interests, and they are no longer interested in you, only in using you."*

Doherty went on to scotch rumours of an IRA ceasefire:

> *"there will be no ceasefire while the British occupation of part of the national territory continues."*

He ended his speech with an answer to those who have accused Sinn Fein of moving rightwards:

> *"We are a socialist republican movement... In all of Western Europe there is not a revolutionary socialist organisation that enjoys as much popular support as we do... we are out to establish a society in which no one is oppressed or exploited, where women are freed from their traditional oppression, where young people have hope... We want a society free from multinational profiteering... a society that is truly non-aligned... socialist Ireland is a threat to Britain only in so far as our success may spur radicals in England, Scotland, and Wales to press more actively for political and social changes in their own countries."*

None of this suggests that the IRA is about to lay down their guns, or that, as some socialists in Britain and Ireland have claimed, that Sinn Fein's willingness to talk with the constitutional nationalists of the SDLP indicates a shift to the right.

Those already way out on the right, the Loyalists, still occupy their traditional ground. Their two leaders, James Molyneaux and Ian Paisley, continue to have "talks about talks" with Tom King, and have even played fast and loose with Irish Premier Charles Haughey.

But this is mere public relations. Their tenor and temper remain unaltered.

A recent example was an exchange between King and Molyneaux and Paisley in the House of Commons, following the killing of six British soliders by the IRA in Lisburn in mid-June.

In answer to questions, King said that while he did not rule out the possibility of internment he was "reluctant" to introduce it. Molyneaux then called for internment and made his ritual attack on the failure of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

When King replied, criticising Molyneaux's "endless repetition of the same old thing", Paisley intervened to say, "We live there. You don't live there. Shut your mouth."

Little indication, then, of a new mood of reconciliation from the Unionists, though their anger at the failure of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to see off the IRA is understandable. IRA attacks on British security forces have increased since the signing of the deal and the very fact that the SDLP has felt obliged to talk with Sinn Fein indicates that the major promise of the supporters of the Agreement — the political eclipse of Sinn Fein — is as far away as ever.

So if Tom King's hint about an imminent political breakthrough is all hogwash, why has he decided to stay on another year? It just may be that the reason is more to do with splits and divisions within the British camp than imagined ones within Republicanism or Loyalism.

For, over the last few months, there have been indications that tactical differences over Ireland within British state structures are re-emerging.

Geoffrey Howe, who speaks for the Foreign Office, where the keenest British supporters of the Anglo-Irish deal reside, recently took the extraordinary step of apologising to the Irish government for any "offence" caused by British policy decisions.

Howe was worried that the Stalker Afair and the Birmingham Six appeal result could be forcing the Irish government seriously to reconsider the Agreement. Howe was then rounded on by Thatcher, who actually disassociate herself from her Foreign Secretary's remarks.

Thatcher was never the biggest fan of the Agreement. Given its failure to defeat Republicanism, she may now be hankering after a more military "solution", particularly one centred on internment. This is the last thing the Foreign Office wets want, although they too must be disappointed that the initial good press the Agreement received has been negated by Stalker, the Birmingham Six, Gibraltar, and the recent Amnesty International Report, listing 32 suspected "shoot-to-kill" murders by the security forces.

Perhaps Tom King is staying because the search for a successor could expose and intensify these policy differences. After all, it may be the Tory cabinet which is looking over its collective shoulder during this year's "marching season".



"Returning the empties" — Republican resistance continues

Rough justice in prison

Defend the rights of Judith Ward

Judith Ward is serving the 15th year of a life sentence for bombing a soldiers' coach in Yorkshire in 1974 — a crime she has consistently denied.

Part of the conviction was based on evidence from Dr Frank Skuse, whose controversial forensic tests were questioned in the Birmingham Six case.

Ward is the longest serving woman prisoner associated with the Irish "troubles". Now, in an extraordinary incident, her long-awaited transfer out of a maximum security prison has been blocked by the action of a single prison officer.

Last year Judith Ward was removed from the list of "Category A" top-security prisoners and was promised a transfer from the strict maximum security wing of Durham prison to Cookham Wood, a semi-open prison near London.

This transfer has been stopped by the intervention of a woman prison officer at Cookham Wood. She objected to the transfer because she claimed she was in the Women's Section of the British Army with Ward in 1971.

By Cecilia Tredget
Haringey Labour Briefing

The transfer was blocked by the prison officer's MP, who made representations to the Home Office.

It is over a year since Ward was decategorised, and she is now the only non-category prisoner in Durham prison.

Like many other prisoners serving sentences for crimes associated with events in the North of Ireland, Ward has not only been denied a fair trial but is also being denied basic civil liberties extended to other prisoners. This treatment is symptomatic of the hysteria that surrounds prisoners labelled as terrorists in the British courts.

Attention

The case of Judith Ward must be brought to public attention as yet another example of the rough justice given Irish prisoners and sympathisers in British jails.

Ask your Women's Section, Labour Party, or trade union branch to ask your MP to make representations to the Home Office on Judith Ward's behalf.

International Briefing

For international unity of the working class

We ask for your solidarity!

Workers are on the move in El Salvador. On May 1st the Salvadorean trade union federation, the UNTS, mobilised 60,000 workers and peasants on the streets of San Salvador in conditions of severe repression. The day before, the hated US-backed regime of Jose Napoleon Duarte planted a bomb in the UNTS headquarters which partially destroyed it. GARETH MOSTYN spoke to JUAN FLORES of the organising commission of the UNTS about the spectacular emergence of the trade unon movement in El Salvador and the conditions under which it is pursuing its struggle.



President Duarte deflates!

By Gareth Mostyn
Hackney North &
Stoke Newington CLP

President Duarte's Christian Democratic Party (PDC) still enjoys the support of the United States government. What is the UNTS attitude to this?

The PDC has clearly linked itself to the interests of the US government and not with the interests of the Salvadorean people. There is direct intervention by the US government in our country and the PDC is the instrument for representing their interests.

The PDC has therefore lost all credibility in the eyes of the people. Lately, it has been seen to be even more involved in promoting the war against the people.

In economic terms it has also waged war against the people through the tax package which has inflated the crisis faced by everyone.

The reality is that Duarte never governed our country, because orders have always been coming through, on a daily basis, from the office of Ronald Reagan.

The right-wing ARENA (National Republican Alliance) has scored some successes in the legislative elections. Does this mean that there is growing support for fascism and the death squads? What does ARENA represent politically?

No. THe ARENA Party definitely does not have support. Its leader, Roberto D'Abuison, is a man recognised for his involvement with the death squads. He is one of those who publicly threatened Monsignor Oscar Anulfo Romero, for which he was taken to court. There was no justice, unfortunately, as there were other political forces and interests at work.

Sharpened

The general situation has sharpened recently, following the reappearance of the death squads in San Salvador. Each day this fact becomes more visible.

For example, in the last week of May, 64 corpses appeared in the city centre. This is a result of the work of the death squads, which are made up from the military within our country.

ARENA's results were a product of electoral fraud. The fact that only 32% of those eligible voted signified a total rejection of the war policies of Ronald Reagan. And so we maintain our position that while there is foreign intervention, while there are assassinations, and while there are death squads, we are not going to participate in the elections, whatever the level of repression, and we, as workers, will continue with our actions and responses to all these activities.

What relationship is there between the UNTS and the FMLN?

We quite definitely have no relationship with the FMLN. Some of our ideas coincide with their ideas. For example, the UNTS has declared itself in favour of negotiations about the armed conflict, through the formation of a government of broad participation.

The UNTS has its own principles about political issues, such as a halt to the violation of human rights, solutions to the labour conflicts, an end to the indiscriminate bombings of our people, also that the university be given decent funding and financial loans to the peasants in order that they can sow their seeds. These are all demands of the UNTS. The FMLN demands the same, but they also put forward further demands.

We for our part think that the FMLN really signifies a new people's army, which stands with the people. We are not trying to suggest that we are part of the FMLN; no, we are saying that there are points of similarity in our demands.

The UNTS has always been very clear about this given that the government has tried to link us and call us a front for the FMLN, which we have denied in press conferences.

We are a political/labour organisation and the FMLN is a political/military organisation. If demanding our rights is being members of the FMLN, then so be it. But this is not what interests us; what we want is for our problems to be solved within a global perspective.

Who does the UNTS represent now?

The UNTS is made up of different social sectors within our country. At the moment we have the Confederation of Co-operative Associations of El Salvador (COACES), the Co-ordinating Council of Municipal and State Workers (CCTM), the Co-ordination of Workers Solidarity (CST), the Federation of Agrarian Reform Co-operatives (FECORAO), the Association of Indigenous Salvadoreans (ANIS), the University Unity (UU) which consists of three further education organisations, and we also have the refugees and those displaced by the war in CRIPDES.

Regions

The UNTS is divided into three principal regions which are: the Co-ordinating Council of Workers from the East, the Committee of Workers from the Centre, and the Committee for Workers from the West.

The work we are carrying out with these three regional centres is about the consolidation and organisation of workers in different sectors.

We can also mention the organisations that we

have formed recently, such as the Union of Salvadorean Communities (UCES) which fights for the defence and the reconstruction of homes following the earthquake.

We also have the Association of Salvadorean Kids, which is a very good organisation, with a lot of potential to grow. We have FEMOFAN, an organisation of committees of mothers and families of political prisoners, and we have the comrades in COPROUMSA which is the Committee for the Unification of Salvadorean Women.

These organisations are in the process of consolidating and developing themselves, and in the future will form part of the UNTS

How many members of the UNTS are there?
Within the Organisation Commission that I am part of, we have statistics of 250,000 comrades, but as I have said earlier, our level of organisation has grown and it is not possible to count the number of members. The organisations are large and we have proved in practice, through our marches and through our daily actions, that we are the majority.

We believe that this is one of the advantages that we have over the power of the oligarchy at present. They have had to witness all this power of the people and they see that the people are convinced that the solution is to be found in organisation and mobilisation behind a permanent and combative struggle.

What form of government will be necessary in order to have free and fair elections? How will this government come about and who will participate in it?
We have clearly stated that we need a government of broad participation, which will be made up of all the active forces in our country. We will participate if it incorporates the industrial workers, the peasants, the professional sector, private industry, all of which have organisations who act in their own interests.

On the other hand, if Duarte maintains a negative attitude to the demands that we make, then we say that we will deepen the struggle.

What does the UNTS ask of the British people?
We ask for real moral and economic solidarity. We would like to say that we are in solidarity with the just strikes which are going on over here, like with the miners' union and the seafarers' union.

We are part of one and the same class, the working class, and we should work in the context of the unity of the whole world, through active and consistent participation in favour of the interests of all peoples.

We ask the British workers to give us the support of real solidarity. I would also like to say to them that our struggle is their struggle and that their struggle is our struggle.



Mexican Elections

Crisis splits the ruling class



Mexican students protesting

The Mexican political system has been thrown into crisis by the results of the recent Presidential elections.

For 59 years Mexico has been a one-party state, with the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) traditionally claiming (partly through fraud) 90% of the vote, and never conceeding a single seat in the Senate.

Now the whole system is breaking up. Cauhtemoc Cardenas, the candidate of the opposition National Democratic Front (FDN), Which split last year from the PRI, was the most probable winner of the Presidency. But the PRI, through extensive ballot-rigging, is maintaining that it has won, despite mass demonstrations alleging electoral fraud.

By Gill Lee
Dulwich CLP

The official results were delayed while the PRI bargained for power, trying to convince Cardenas to concede defeat on the Presidency in return for a substantial number of seats in the Congress, and no doubt jobs for his boys in the new administration.

Cardenas has shown his willingness to bargain by refusing to back major demonstrations against the ballot-rigging and telling his supporters to stay away. Demonstrations against the fraud have been called by all the other oppositon parties — notably, the FDN, the right-wing PAN (National Action Party), and the Trotskyist PRT (Revolutionary Workers' Party).

The mass anger at yet another example of massive corruption of the PRI will be hard to contain. On July 16th, 300,000 demonstrated in Mexico City, which had voted overwhelmingly for the FDN.

While international attention has been focussed on fraud at the polls, the election debacle represents a deep crisis for the Mexican bourgeoisie: how to maintain stability and profitability in a country with a foreign debt of $110 billion, inflation running at up to [illegible] per year, a 2,000 mile long border with the United States, and growing resistance from the working class.

This crisis for the ruling class can no longer be resolved within a one-party system where the incoming President, and therefore the political programme for the next six years, is selected by the outgoing President.

Austerity

The incoming President, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the official PRI candidate, was the architect of his predecessor's austerity measures, which included a reduced state role in industry, radical import liberalisation, and a huge budget reductions.

These measures resulted in cuts in workers' living standards, a massive increase in foreign, particularly US, investment, and severe cuts in the health service, education, and housing. Salinas's political programme is to continue to force the Mexican working class to pay for the debt.

In October 1987 Cauhtemoc Cardenas led a split from the PRI and announced he would be standing as an opposition Presidential candidate. His call for a debt moratorium, massively increased wages, and a return to a more closed, more 'independent', economy, was backed by a significant section of the bourgeoisie anxious about US interference in Mexico's economic affairs, and worried that further austerity measures would promote more labour unrest.

The present crisis over votes represents a deeper rift in the ruling class on how to resolve their economic and political crisis in the face of a growing mass movement against austerity.

International Briefing

Maltese workers see off British warships

On July 3rd the Malta Labour Party (MLP) newspaper *Sunday Chronicle* called on Nationalist (Tory) Prime Minister Eddie Fenech Adami to "explain or resign" after revelations arising from a monitored radio conversation between the Captain of HMS Ark Royal, a British nuclear warship, and a representative of the Maltese government.

Adami had apparently requested that the British captain inform journalists that four visiting warships, which had been rerouted to an isolated bay after massive workers' protests, strikes, and a direct action brought to a halt all docking facilities at the Grand Harbour in Valletta, had not previously planned to enter the harbour, the country's main docks.

The British commander, Captain MGA Harris, who allegedly threatened to cancel the visit if the Maltese security forces could not control the demonstrating trade unionists and Labour Party supporters, was reluctant to agree to these "untruths", but seems to have been persuaded that the proposal had the consent of the British High Commission in Malta.

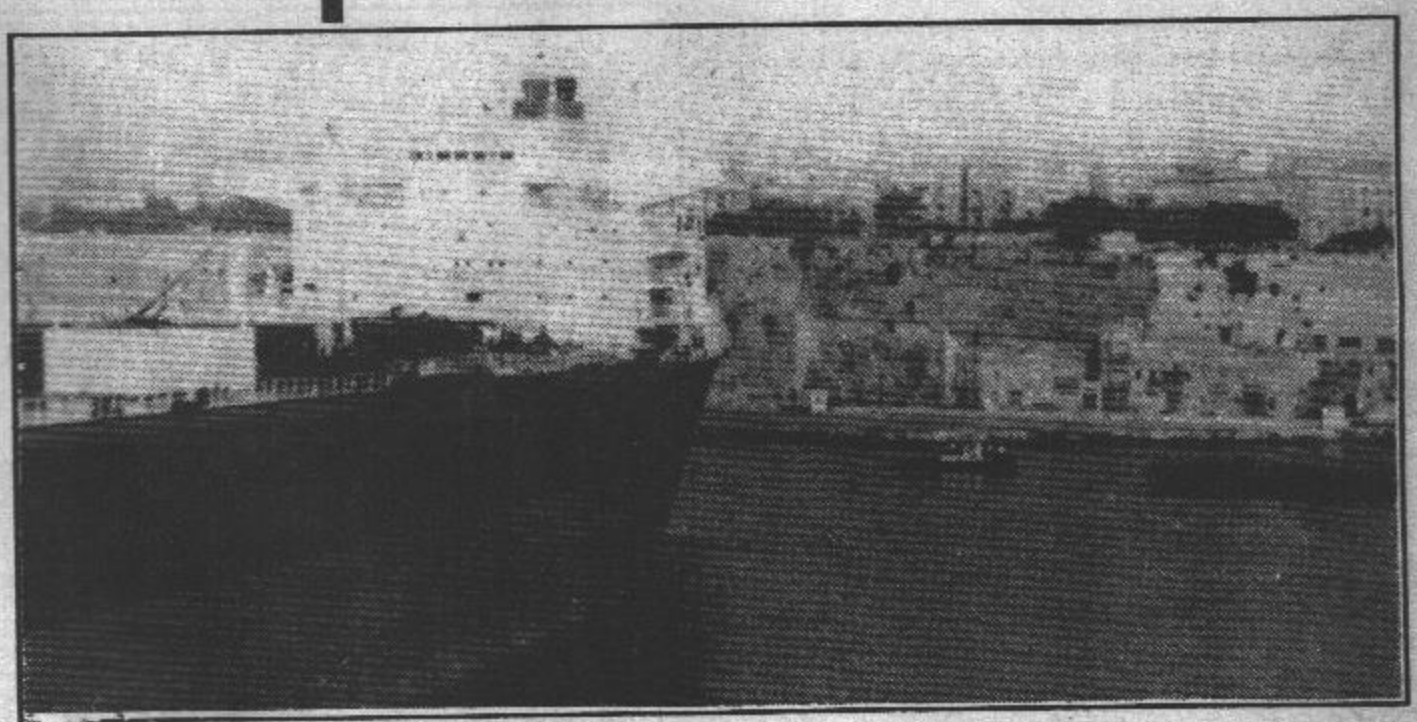
Brian Hitch, the British High Commissioner, refused to make any statement on "this confidential matter".

These events came after weeks of activity by the MLP and the powerful General Workers union (GWU).

Malta and Gozo, a tiny two-island state of just 250,000 people, became nominally independent in 1964, but it was not until the MLP's Dom Mintoff became Prime Minister in 1971 that Malta began to establish itself as an independent, non-aligned, socialist state.

The banks were nationalised; social welfare schemes and a minimum wage were introduced. Trade and aid patterns were diversified and the MLP introduced laws prohibiting foreign loans with an interest rate of over 3%. Neutrality was written into the constitution, as was an undertaking that Malta should never again be host to a substantial military presence.

Although the Nationalists won the 87 election (with a majority of one) they have not been able to turn back the clock; Malta has remained a "nuclear free zone", has supported, if mutedly, the PLO, and proceeded with caution in opening up the island to renewed foreign domination.



"Olympic Rainbow" being towed across entrance to Grand Harbour

The Nationalists want to enter the European Community, where they would become very junior partners in the international alliance of capital, of which they are the political representatives in Malta. Ironically, this success would be to the detriment of their own local supporters: shopkeepers, small businesses, and those engaged in the tourist industry. At the moment, these sections are protected by the country's high exchange rate, legislative and financial inducements, and the control of foreign investment.

By SANDRA HOLMES

The MLP and the GWU have embarked on a political and economic campaign to defend the gains of the previous Labour governments, and are opposing these Nationalist policies which threaten to bring back poverty and colonial dependence.

The visit of the four British warships was part of a British government plan to involve Malta in a network of NATO exercises in the Mediterranean and the Gulf. The MLP, led by "Karmenu" Mipsud Bonnici, demonstrated outside the British High Commission here in June, and called on the British government to cancel the proposed visit which "constitutes a threat to the status of Maltese neutrality and non–alignment, as well as a peril to the Maltese environment."

When both the British and Nationalist governments insisted on proceeding with the visit, the GWU organised a total stoppage at the ports, and — to rule out any question of the warships entering the Grand Harbour — blockaded the entrance with a massive tanker. Tugs commandeered by the striking trade unionists sprayed water on the security forces' patrol boats, which were assaulted with shouts of "Assassins! Assassins!"

Newspapers were headlined: "We licked 'em!" and, quoted the MLP Leader, "They entered the Falklands, but not Grand Harbour." Bonnici continued:

> *"...the British Premier is known as the Iron Lady. Now the Maltese workers will be hailed as the Workers of Steel, the world over. She tried to divide and humiliate British mineworkers... today she has been humiliated by Maltese workers."*

The Nationalists have reacted to the workers' victory by threatening to introduce legislation curbing trade union freedoms, and to prosecute Labour newspapers which have printed the monitored radio conversation.

The MLP and the trade union movement are now gearing up for another major battle over the government's proposals to build a power station in the tiny fishing village of Marsaxlokk. Given the vigour and success of what some are calling "tanker diplomacy", the Nationalists will find it difficult to introduce the kind of domestic and foreign measures necessary to reintegrate Malta as a dependent state within the international free market economy.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

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