LABOUR BRIEFING

40p FORTNIGHTLY

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40p

AFTER LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE:

BUILD FROM THE GRASS ROOTS!

By Greg Tucker
Lambeth Councillor, Waterloo NUR
(personal capacity)

The Policy Review and the re-election of the "nightmare ticket" isn't just bad news for the left. It's bad news for millions suffering under Thatcher.

By accepting Thatcher's premises, this year's Labour Party Conference has failed to pose a real alternative to the inhumanity and chaos of market forces.

Kinnock attacked those speaking in favour of Party policy on disarmament and told them to "shut up". His contribution is to put forward defeated policies and rhetoric borrowed from David Owen.

Despite the overwhelming victory for the right in the leadership election, Ron Todd's *Tribune* speech and the votes reconfirming unilateralism and against ET show that within the trade union bureaucracy doubts remain about the speed of Kinnock's rush to embrace Tory politics and "market forces".

The hue and cry which followed Todd's speech shows that the right is aiming for an all-out, total transformation of the Party — and they have no intention of compromising.

It is now impossible to sit on the fence any longer. Kinnock is banking on the union bureaucracy coming down on his side (as they did in the leadership elections). Todd's criticism of Kinnock was not merely an expression of his personal views. It represents his own response to pressure from the rank and file.

Our task now is to mobilise that grass-roots discontent. Disguised by the vagaries of the Electoral College was a large minority for Benn and Heffer in the unions (for instance, in MSF Benn polled 40%).

Despite the mistakes, the lack of proper organisation, the lateness of the decision to stand, etc., this year's contest did reach out to ordinary working people. It must be renewed next year.

Kinnock's agenda is clear: forcing through the remaining Policy changes, notably finishing with unilateralism once and for all, and stepping up the witch-hunt to kill off the left.

Our agenda is broader. The Campaign Group are rightly backing a twin-track strategy. We must campaign *inside* the Party for socialist policies and leaders, and *outside*, through the Socialist Conference, to develop those policies and to link up with a wide range of struggles.

The leadership campaign has built rudimentary regional networks. We need to extend this organisation and deepen its roots, using it to raise questions on the Policy Review and to build real campaigns against the Tories.

In the unions the left has too often failed to sustain and broaden good initiatives. Too often it has been easier to look to leading lights. This time we cannot afford to ignore *the hard graft of building bases*. We have to link up with the fightback in the NHS, at Dagenham, with the Dover seafarers or the UCW upsurge — working where possible with existing Broad Lefts.

We have to use the Conference resolutions which were passed — for a 35 hour week, a £135 minimum wage (with support for those fighting for them now) , and a boycott of ET — to build *across* the unions. We have to take the fight for socialist policies onto the shop floor, opening up the Policy Review debate on our own terms.

Kinnock may believe that the working class shares Thatcher's beliefs. We must show this to be the lie it is — by demonstrating the relevance of socialism to the daily experience of working people.We have to support all those fighting — whether it is against the Housing Bill, against the Poll Tax, for abortion rights, against health cuts, or against Section 28.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

"SHUT UP!"

In the year ahead the left must raise the real political questions, organise united action against the Tories and employers, and build our challenge from the bottom up.

The "Campaign for Socialism" initiative, launched jointly at Conference by the Campaign Group and the Socialist Conference, allied with the Solidarity Network and the Action Conference Against the Poll Tax, represents a step forward. We will be working hard to turn these initiatives into realities.

Neil "Leader for Life" Kinnock thinks he has the whip hand. But economic crises loom, and the masses at home and abroad refuse to lie down. Class struggle *will* continue. Don't mourn — organise!

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Campaign round-up

Dewsbury

Mobilise for October 29th!

Twenty six white Dewsbury parents have won their court battle not to send their children to an "Asian-dominated" school.

Powerful right-wing forces have launched an assault on integrated education and even the mildest forms of anti-racist policy.

The opting-out clause of the Education Act will be used to promote racial segregation, and Tory spokespersons have not bothered to deny it. We are under threat from a much broader, more sophisticated alliance than the old "fascist" right.

The court case brought on behalf of the Dewsbury parents by the right-wing pressure group PACE (Parental Alliance for Choice in Education) was only feebly contested by Labour-held Kirklees Council.

Predictably, there has been little opposition to the "new racists" from the local Labour Party and trade unions. Only one Labour Councillor (who is black) in the Kirklees Labour Group supported keeping up the fight against the racist parents in the courts.

In Kirklees schools, only 0.8% of teachers are black (at least 8% of the population is black). Teachers and other Local Authority and voluntary sector workers who have begun to organise against the racists have had their jobs and funding threatened.

By Dave Palmer Haringey Labour Briefing

The Labour Group are not supporting the demonstration called by Kirklees Black Workers Group on Saturday, 29th October, in support of the slogan: "No to Racial Segregation, Yes to Education Against Racism".

Ann Taylor, local Labour MP, is "too busy" to speak at the march and has refused to sponsor it.

The police have attempted to ban the march on the grounds that it had been organised by "outsiders". The police's own figures show racially-motivated attacks in the area have risen this year by 30-40%.

North Kirklees Community Relations Council, which is mainly white, has called for the march to be banned in the "interests of racial harmony".

The NUT has given formal support and Black Sections are making the march a top priority.

It is vital now to get NALGO to support and mobilise for the march. *Briefing* supporters should aim to build the maximum turn-out.

A new era of anti-racist struggles is upon us. Be in Dewsbury on 29th October. Too much time has already been wasted. We must stand firm now!

BRENT FIGHTBACK
Come to a public meeting Organised to resist the cuts in Brent
Thursday October 20th, 7.30pm
Learie Constantine Centre, Dudden Hill Lane, London NW10 (near Dollis Hill tube)
Speakers from various occupations, including Crawford Avenue Respite Home
Plus:
speakers from home helps, tenants rent strike, teachers, and social workers
Plus invited speakers:
Dennis Skinner MP, Mandy Mudd, Martha Osamor, Ted Knight
Chair: Helga Gladbaum

VIRAJ MENDIS DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

Reopen the Viraj Mendis Case!

The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign has launched a campaign to get the Home Office to reopen Viraj Mendis' case.

The Home Office and most of the press have tried to give the impression that Viraj Mendis has had extensive and fair hearings in all the appeal courts.

But as Viraj's lawyer, David Burgess, explained at a press conference in the sanctuary on September 8th, the appeal courts have refused to take into consideration the strongest aspect of Viraj's case: his fear of prosecution if returned to Sri Lanka.

At Viraj's initial appeal in 1985 the Home Office Adjudicator, M Patey, rejected the application for asylum on the grounds that Sri Lanka was "inherently a democracy" where "the rule of law applies".



Viraj Mendis

By Finn Jensen Manchester Labour Briefing

The Judicial Review, the Appeal Court hearing and the appeal to the House of Lords are all based on this original assertion. Since the material evidence concerning Sri Lanka was inadmissible in the courts, no challenge could be made to the validity of Patey's central argument.

Since 1985 thousands have been killed in Sri Lanka, including many leading politicians. Amnesty International has produced documnented evidence showing widespread use of torture, detention without trial and the lack of accountability of enforcement agencies.

Viraj has lived in Britain for 15 years. Under the Immigration rules the Home Office must take into account both Viraj's length of residence and role within the community in deciding whether or not to deport him. People who have live in Britain for more than ten years are generally allowed to stay.

Viraj's roots in the community are well known to the people of Manchester. He has campaigned for years on Black peoples' right to stay in this country. That's the reason why the Home Office wants to get rid of him!

If the House of Lords refuses to take the case it will be appealed to the European Commission of Civil Rights. But that might not stop the Home Office from deporting Viraj.

Father John Methuen, rector of the Church of Ascension said the church will continue to give sanctuary to Viraj whatever happens. Councillor John Clegg from Manchester City Council also gave an unconditional pledge that the council will continue its support.

The weekend of September 24/25th was a watershed for the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign. A conference was organised in the Church of the Ascension in Hulme, Manchester where Viraj has been in sanctuary since December 1986.

The Conference brought home the reality of the situation in this — probably the most remarkable deportation case in British legal history.

The date of October 15th 1988 has a particular significance for Viraj and his campaign, as this is the deadline for the final appeal to the House of Lords.

The Home Office has stated that this appeal brings to a conclusion the so-called "legal process", and has threatened to enter the sanctuary by force at any time after that final appeal.

The campaign, despite its faults over the past three years, has been of historic significance for all those fighting against racist immigration laws, unjust deportation and the division of families.

More significant than this, however, is the law courts' blatant and uninhibited dismissal of the prospects facing Viraj should he be deported to Sri Lanka. A British government that would deport an individual of 15 years' residence, possibly to his death, marks a new low in British post war political and legal history.

The Conference resolved to launch a vigorous campaign to re-open the case. The time has now come for all labour movement activists and human rights campaigners to make this campaign a national priority.

A groundswell of support from the labour movement for Viraj and a mass expression of indignation towards the intransigence of the Home Office and courts at this time could have a decisive effect on the outcome of his case.

The left has a particular responsibility. The issue must be raised once again in all Labour Party wards and CLPs and as widely as possible in the labour movement generally. Resolutions must be passed condemning the Home Office and demanding a re-opening of the case.

All differences of socialist emphasis must be put aside regarding this issue in coming months. Different labour movement bodies must be involved in the campaign and participate in the 24 hour rota at the sanctuary which defends Viraj.

In addition, if any action is taken against the sanctuary the Government must be made to pay the price — it must be condemned as a crime against humanity, another one of which this government would be found guilty.

The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign has produced a special dossier entitled "Viraj Mendis, life or death?" which contains all the evidence supporting a full review of the case.

At the back of the dossier is a petition demanding the re-opening of the case, specifically for organisations and highly placed individuals. The aim is to collect 500 plus signatures of this type over the next few weeks.

For further information, donations and literature please write to VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Manchester M15 5AL or telephone 061-234 3168

SECTION 28

Euro-tour hits the road!

Anger against Section 28 has not been confined to Britain.

All over the world lesbians and gay men have protested against this vicious attack on our rights.

In Holland, where the lesbian and gay movement is strong, Dutch lesbians and gay men have come together to organise a Euro-tour against the Section, bussing through eleven European countries starting in Amsterdam on October 14th.

Terry Conway, Islington North CLP and Stop the Clause

In each city there will be events including demonstrations, political discussion, theatre and music.

The tour arrives in England on November 26th. From London, the bus goes to Manchester on the 27th, to Edinburgh and then to Birmingham on December 3rd.

These events offer the opportunity for lesbians and gay men to come together and assess lessons from the campaign against the Section and develop stronger international links.

They should also deepen support for and understanding of lesbian and gay rights across the whole labour movement. We are seeking labour movement sponsorship for the tour and hope labour movement activists will come to one of these events.

When Australian lesbians and gay men protested against the Section, the media asked the Stop the Clause campaign if we were responsible.

Truthfully, we replied that we were not. But after the Euro-tour, hopefully links will be cemented which will make such co-ordination possible in the future.

For further information contact Rebecca Fleming, c/o ULU, Malet Street, London WC1

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Kinnock's Conference?

"Shut up!" was Kinnock's crude post-Conference message to the left: a typical attempt to substitute arrogance for confidence, autocracy for real leadership.

Conference week started off well for the right, with the nightmare ticket returned with a depressingly large majority and *Aims & Values* endorsed.

But despite NEC stitch-ups — and stage managing the Tories might envy — fissures kept opening on the Conference floor. The leadership suffered setbacks on repeal of anti-trade union laws, a 35 hour week and minimum wage, boycotting ET, one woman on every shortlist, and above all on unilateralism.

Year after year Kinnock has worked assiduously to drive the Party to the right, using double talk, bluster and blunderbuss authoritarianism. But the bourgeoisie keep changing the goalposts.

This year, he presided over a shotgun marriage of "socialism" and market forces still not good enough for the ruling class and its media parasites. Kinnock's Conference they claimed, was a flop — and Neil rushed to agree with them.

The problem is that they will not be satisfied until Labour is a safe alternative to the Tories (which means, as a minimum, dumping unilateralism).

At this point Labour becomes virtually unelectable. Without offering a decisive alternative to the Tories, and without a leadership committed to that alternative, Labour is just another raggedy rump of office-seekers.

The dismal performance of SDP/SLD shows that an already passive and cynical electorate will not be set alight. But the nakedness of Kinnock's "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" approach to the Tories is troubling many, not least previously staunch supporters in the unions like Ron Todd.

As the vacuum left by the leadership expands, more and more people — in the Party, the unions, and outside — will look for an alternative. We have to pose that alternative as sharply as possible: in every area of policy, and through another direct challenge to Kinnock & Hattersley next year.

This time we must start much earlier, from an organised rank and file base, and spread our campaign into all affiliated unions as well as into communities currently outside the labour movement.

Sorry, Neil, but we have no intention of "shutting up".

Tribune's Left Turn

Ron Todd's speech at the Tribune meeting in Blackpool was a welcome antidote to the "market socialism" of the Policy Review and the fudging of our unilateralist commitment.

In late October, *Tribune* will host a Conference entitled "Hard Labour", which will extend *Tribune*'s platform leftwards to include Ken Livingstone, the Socialist Conference, and Black Sections.

This comes in marked contrast with the narrow witch-hunting opportunism of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, now dominated by the ex-student activists of Clause IV. They have dumped Livingstone, driven out Peter Hain, and reduced the LCC to little more than a careerists' sect, *Marxism Today*'s entryist faction in the Labour Party.

Labour Briefing welcomes the *Tribune* Conference. However, any serious debate must be accompanied by clear opposition to expulsions. The precondition for discussion amongst comrades is agreement that we all have a right to take part.

As long as *Tribune* supports kicking supporters of *Militant* out of the Party, or fudges on the Mandy Mudd case, or simply keeps silent when Party members are intimidated or attacked by the leadership, it will be hard to find common ground.

Tribune and Ron Todd must ask themselves whether they can defend unilateralism and common ownership whilst backing Kinnock and voting for the right in Shadow Cabinet elections.

This contradiction — between support for socialist policies and support for a leadership opposed to them — weakens the emerging dissidence on the "soft left".

Briefing supported the Benn-Heffer challenge because it was the best way to defend common ownership, unilateralism, and other socialist policies. We believe that the question of leadership cannot be circumvented. Nonetheless, we welcome *Tribune*'s left turn, and look forward to the debate at the "Hard Labour" Conference.

Filling the Poll Tax Vacuum

Over the next months *Labour Briefing* will be devoting its back page to the Poll Tax. We believe a mass campaign against the Tax can help rebuild the left — and begin to turn the tide against Thatcher.

The Tories have put Labour Councils in a vice. Local Authorities which fail to collect the Tax will be liable to surcharge. Those which comply will have to choose between a high Poll Tax and cuts in services, and will be discredited by turning themselves into agents for collecting the hated Tax.

A mass campaign for non-payment must and can be built. In Scotland tens of thousands of people have refused to register and now face fines. Neil Kinnock may have won the vote for a "legal" campaign at Party Conference, but activists will find thousands willing to defy the Tax.

Indeed, many poorer workers will have no choice but to defy it, simply because they can't afford it. Local Councils must defy the legislation. Trade unionists must refuse to co-operate.

A fight against the Poll Tax has the potential to unite the whole working class. Anger and fear is already widespread. We have to turn them into organised defiance. Our leaders have already abandoned the struggle. The left in the unions, the Party, and outside must fill the vacuum. In this way, we can rebuild the left and stride forward in our battle for socialist policies and leadership.

The Economy

Dinosaurs bite back!

The debate at Party Conference over *A Productive and Competitive Economy* was a poor affair,

***Briefing* readers are already familiar with the Policy Review's "Social Marketism" now beloved by right wing Social Democrats and Euro-communists throughout Europe.**

By Dave Palmer
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

Market forces are accepted as the basic economic allocator. Government intervention must be limited to correcting "distortions" and to fostering overall "economic efficiency".

The social relations dictated by these market forces are not addressed. Economic collectivism is out. Social ownership is reduced to "municipal enterprises, small co-operatives, and collective share ownership schemes, responsive" — in Gouldspeak — to "the consumer, workforce, and national interests."

The publicists of this New Realist hogwash (which is about as new as Tony Crossland, who is, after all, dead) in the Communist Party claim that a post-industrial utopia called "Post-Fordism" has been built to fit the bill.

As approvingly summed up by the *Economist*, the CP aims to ensure that "the worker-socialism that thrives in a society dominated by large-scale production is reverently laid to rest."

This is because we have entered "a new era characteriesd by consumers who make more complicated demands on the markets and methods of production, which put a premium on "flexibility."

Like Friedman, Hayek, Reagan, and Thatcher, *Marxism Today* sees democracy and the market as synonymous. There are only two options: individualism or an "alternative vision" based on "popular alliances" which gradually extend democracy.

In this topsy-turvy world the cautious passivity of New Realism becomes radical, and the "workers' socialism" of the left becomes conservative. Workers' struggles against restructuring (miners, printers, seafarers, postal workers) are doomed; the dinosaur's last gasps. The Conference debate reflected this false dichotomy.

John Edmonds backed the Big Lie with a breathtaking rewrite of history. He set up two camps: in one, an unspecified group "terrified of public ownership"; in the other, "the prehistoric tendency" committed to "old-style Morrisonian nationalisation."

Whatever its considerable flaws, the left has always been committed to some form of workers' control and public accountability, and has been critical of the state sector monsters.

It was right wing Labour governments, supported by the likes of Edmonds, who ensured that state industries were run along strictly capitalist lines, and that social provision was administered through an oppressive bureaucracy.

Michael Edwardes, the pioneer of Thatcher's attacks on the state sector, was appointed to run BL by the last *Labour* government. Edmonds' slur is part of a drive to knock out of court any Labour commitment to any form of renationalisation.

Insignificant

Co-operatives and share ownership schemes are economically insignificant forms of social ownership, constituting no threat whatsoever to the existing order.

There is one, appallingly misrepresented, kernel of truth in the right's attack on the left. This was to do with the defensive nature of nearly all recent working class struggles, both nationally and internationally.

These struggles all arise from atempts to maintain whatever negative rights workers have gained over the years in the face of the onslaught of capitalist restructuring.

The way forward is to generalise new demands which transcend the *status quo* within the immediate struggles against the restructuring. The Benn-Heffer challenge was mounted to fly the flag against the new market fetishism.

However, further steps need to be taken rapidly. The old Bennite *Alternative Economic Strategy* (AES) of the 70s was a counter-programme to the practice of the Wilson-Callaghan governments. Though a useful focus for debate, the AES's protectionist nationalist Keynesianism was wrong at the time and is now irrelevant.

The left needs to develop democratically an entirely new alternative economic progamme. The main instrument to hand is the Socialist Conference. By next year's Party Conference, at least the outlines of a full economic counter-programme must be in place. Among the questions which need to be answered:

- What does a national-based socialist strategy mean in an era in which capital, commodities and production all circulate globally?
- How do we flesh out our ideas for a planned economy under workers' control?
- What is the role of the state in social ownership?
- How does information technology affect the planning process?
- How can we realise the potential of the working class collectively to organise production and distribution?

These and many other questions need thorough discussion if the possibility of the transition from capitalism to socialism is to be taken seriously.

We therefore aim to extend *Briefing*'s economic coverage. *Briefing* supporters are welcome to become involved. Let's show *Marxism Today* that the "worker socialists" still have the best ideas — and, more importantly, are going to put them into practice.

GCHQ

TUC won't face up to the crunch

The last 18 trade unionists from the original 300 at the government Spy Centre at Cheltenham are facing the sack as we go to press.

By Alan Thornett
Trade Union Briefing

October 14th was the date given for the workers to renounce their union cards or be sacked.

The TUC General Council has watered down plans for a repeat of the national one day strike called when the ban was first announced five years ago. They are now calling for "various activity" in support of planned strike action on November 7th by Civil Servant Unions.

The reality is that the TUC can do nothing within the law, since solidarity action is illegal. Given past TUC policy — to avoid breaking the law at all costs — this limits their actions.

The Civil Service Unions are not helping much in this. They are stressing that their action is legal and at the same time calling on others to take action in their support, which would be illegal.

The 18 workers have lobbied Tory Party Conference in the hope that they could demonstrate the outrageous nature of the action against them.

Mila Grundy, the leader of the 18, has called for massive support for the day of protest from the whole of the labour movement.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

T&G delegates vote for the Policy Review documents at Labour Party Conference. Is this as much as they can do to defend trade union rights and protect jobs?

ROYAL ORDINANCE

Workers strike to defend jobs

Workers at the Royal Ordinance armaments factories at Salford Nr Manchester and Renfrew in Scotland are on strike.

They walked out when their new asset-stripping employer, British Aerospace (BAe), announced 2,000 redundances to be introduced across two plants over the next two years.

BAe had previosly announced the sell-off of the small arms factory at Enfield and Walham Abby plant in London.

BAe's acquisition of the Ordinace factories mirrored their acquisition of Austin Rover, accompanied by a huge Government sweetener. Both are part of Tory plans for the privatisation of industry.

At Austin Rover's Cowley and Llanelli plants over 6,000 redundancies have been announced over a similar two year period, which were also a part of the privatisation deal with BAe.

The immediate walk-outs at Salford and Renfrew are in sharp contrast to the response at Austin Rover where right-wing convenors have repeatedly blocked any action. The result of this has been that the closures have gone out of the news and are not being mentioned by trade union or labour leaders at national level.

The strike action at Salford and Renfrew created a very different situation, triggering condemnations of management action from all levels of the movement.

Jack Dromey, Trade Group National Secretary of the TGWU, said:

"Ministers have used BAe as a willing agent to rationalise the factories without having to accept political responsibility for their actions. And the reward for BAe is the killing that it will make out of the redevelopment and sale of the closure factories".

Ron Todd, who has still made no public statement on Austin Rover, said that:

"This latest shocking announcement confirms for all to see that privatisation is bad for business, bad for jobs and bad for Britain. Privatisation of the Royal Ordinance factories had already resulted in massive asset stripping at the vital Enfield small arms plant".

Shop stewards at Ordinance factories have also responded pleding a nation-wide boycott of any work moved into their plants. Renfrew District Council has pledged full support to defend the jobs.

EETPU

Why electricians should leave the EETPU

***Socialist Worker*, *Socialist Organiser* and *Militant* all argue that militants should stay in the EETPU following Hammond's belated expulsion from the TUC over breaches of the Bridlington agreement.**

By Alan Thornett
Trade Union Briefing

They reject the line taken by the main electricians' left grouping *Flashlight*, which calls for militants to leave the EETPU and join other TUC affiliated unions, as a stepping stone to the formation of a new TUC-affiliated electricians' organisation — the Electrical and Plumbing Industries Union.

A *Socialist Worker* pamphlet urges a fight within the EETPU to take it back within the TUC. But there is no principle in being inside or outside the TUC. The point is that the EETPU is a hardened business union.

The Hammond leadership, and Frank Chapple before him, has set out to educate the membership in the principles of business unionism. The result of the recent ballot was not just a vote to leave the TUC, but an endorsement of this process.

It is true that the ballot paper was confusing and that Hammond had a monopoly of propaganda — but he won 83% of the vote just the same. This was a vote for business unionism.

Opposition to this procees has been crushed and the EETPU has been stripped of any vestiges of democratic structure.

Wapping was a water-shed. The actions of Hammond & Co. there have still not been matched by any other union: joining with employers to break other unions; replacing printers with electricians; useing their offices to recruit scabs for Murdoch; and using their own centre to train scabs to do the jobs of strikers.

They thus established a relationship with employers qualitatively different to that of any other trade union — even the right-wing AEU under Bill Jordon and Gavin Laird. The union is comparable only with scab organisations like the UDM or the new union formed by the scabs at P&O.

Hammond's plans are not yet completed. His aim is to recruit and build amongst scab layers and extend the principle of business unionism. We must not treat these scab organisations as we do legitimate right-wing unions.

In a right-wing trade union we fight from the inside. With the business unions our aim should be to break them as soon as possible. The whole of the left has called, with some success, for miners to leave the UDM and join a proper union — and we should have the same position with the EETPU.



Eric Hammond: don't give him the credibility of staying in the EETPU.

Hammond's main problem is that expulsion from the TUC puts his union outside the Bridlington agreement and therefore vulnerable to recruiting drives. Other unions should take full advantage of this and do as much damage to the EETPU as possible.

The most effective way to give Hammond credibility is for the militants to stay in the union after they have the opportunity to join other recognised unions in their industry. We should not give him that.

EETPU militants should join either the appropriate union with negotiating rights in their industry or the Electrical and Plumbing Industries Union. The EPIU will have difficulty in getting recognition from employers, most of whom will be loyal to Hammond and his aims, but they are seeking recognition from a number of Local Authorities.

EETPU members may also join holding sections set up by other unions.

At Ford Dagenham 90% of the electricians have left the EETPU, taken out membership of the EPIU, and joined the holding section set up by the MSF who will continue to negotiate on their behalf.

EETPU branches in Liverpool, Manchester, and parts of Scotland have joined the EPIU en block, and electricians working for the channel tunnel have approached the EPIU for discussions.

Solidarity Network Conference

Supported by

the Chesterfield Socialist Conference

Saturday 5th November, 9.00-6.00

Leeds Trades Council Club, Saville Mount, Leeds

The Solidarity Network, set up at a Conference in Leeds last year, seeks to build on the support network organised for the miners and for the printworkers at Wapping. The Network meets regularly and has organised support and publicity for a number of disputes including, this year, 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. This conference has been called to extend and develop this work.

Credentials: 2 (waged), 1 (unwaged), strikers free. Creche facilities and overnight accommodation for Friday/Saturday night can be arranged if requested at least a week in advance.

Contact: Janet Seymour, 3 Hill Street, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancs, tel. 0282-812864.

Solidarity Network Meeting

The Solidarity Network seeks to link and unite disputes and campaigns. We have been active since the miners' strike and Wapping dispute.

On October 25th we will be holding a public meeting on supporting workers in struggle at:

The Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road N7, at 7.30pm

Speakers include:

P&O striker from Dover; Vickers worker from Barrow; Austin Rover worker from Oxford; Marion Gaima (threatened with deportation); Terry French (Justice for Mineworkers Campaign); United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets

Strikers must not fight alone!

NHS CUTS IN LEEDS



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

A Wakefield picket line during the healthworkers' stoppages in September 1987. Yorkshire healthworkers were active around the issues of pay and saving the NHS during the national actions; now they must rally round to help save Chapel Allerton Hospital.

Action on Hospital Closure

On October 3rd, the Chapel Allerton Hospital Action Group and Chapel Allerton Labour Party held a public meeting to protest at the hospital's threatened closure.

The meeting, which drew an audience of 120, was also attended by representatives of the Western District Health Committee.

By Cllr. Garth Frankland Chapel Allerton Labour Party

Maureen Idle, a nurse and COHSE member, from the Chapel Allerton Hospital Action Group explained how the campaign against closure came about.

Previous proposals had included a new 500 bed hospital in the Western District. Unions and patients, although liking Chapel Allerton Hospital, felt that they could not oppose such a development.

However, the present proposals for closure make no mention of a new hospital. Instead there is to be greater centralisation in the already too large Leeds General Infirmary (LGI) along with some extra beds in Otley on the outskirts of the city.

There would be an overall loss of 48 beds, the equivalent of two wards. The Elderly people would not be getting the new wards that would be opened at the LGI. They would be out of sight in the Victorian basements.

Chapel Allerton Hospital is surrounded by lawns and trees. The whole environment contributes to the patients' recovery. The LGI site is overcrowded and surrounded by traffic.

The corridors are full of filing cabinets, the place is a mess. There is no parking space for visitors and it is off the main bus routes. The bus service to Otley is even worse.

Maureen presented 18,000 signatures calling for the hospital to be kept open. These were in addition to 6,000 presented to the Area Health Authority.

The Western District has some of the largest waiting lists in the country and any closure would make the situation worse.

A patient who had survived cancer due to the efforts of staff at Chapel Allerton was anxious that private hospitals might move on to the site while NHS patients had to make do with city centre sites.

Mike Davis from Chapel Allerton Labour Party pointed out that improvements in patient care could not be achieved by closing the hospital.

Labour Briefing supporters, exposed the internal contradictions of the Health Authority's report. We should not be in the business of saving the Tory government any money. More needed to be spent not less. There would be no increase in efficiency with this plan.

Other speakers made many more points on why the Hospital should be kept open:

- surgical waiting lists were two weeks at Chapel Allerton, two months at the LGI;
- more GPs and consultants could use the hospital to relieve pressure on the LGI;
- it was the patients' favourite;
- over £20,000 each year was raised by the League of Friends;
- it was a centre for hip replacements and the LGI's waiting lists would just grow longer;
- for mammography women demand a fast diagnosis and rapid treatment;
- it enjoyed excellent patient/staff relationships;
- the hospital serves local as well as city needs.

Euro MP Mike McGowan called for a wide based campaign to defend and improve the hospital. *Briefing* supporters will campaign vigorously on this issue.



PHOTO: Garth Frankland

Maureen Idle, COHSE, Chapel Allerton Hospital

"Positive Rights at Work"

The Birmingham City Council Case

Labour's policy review "People at Work" avoids any clear commitment to repeal Tory anti-union legislation. However, the implementation of many of the recommendations in "Positive Rights at Work" would involve an advance in the employment rights of workers in Britain.

It is stated: "Workers engaged in a legal strike or industrial action must have protection against unfair dismissal by their employer".

The statement does not seem to have influenced Dick Knowles, Labour leader of Britain's largest local authority. On 14th September a letter was issued by the Chief Education Officer, with the approval of Dick Knowles, threatening 15 striking NALGO members with the sack. The letter said unambiguously that their employment would be terminated if they did not return to work by the 19th.

By Birmingham Labour Briefing supporters

Worse was to follow. Knowles issued another letter, viciously attacking the officers of the City Council NALGO branch. They had campaigned for a one day protest strike against City Council cuts. He asserted that "they were more interested in the provision of condoms for prisoners in Winson Green than defending the interests of members of NALGO."

Included in Dick's letter was another threat to suspend all NALGO members (up to 2000) who struck for one day on the 20th September and refused to sign a humiliating declaration.

It states: "Following my strike action on 20th September, I hereby give an undertaking that I intend to work normally, (including cover for vacant posts) in accordance with the terms and conditions of my contract, and to support the use of proper procedures for the settlement of disputes".

What next? No-strike agreements for Council workers?

The Leadership Challenge: An Assesment

OVERALL ELECTORAL COLLEGE RESULT

(All figures given as percentages of the total vote. TUs provide 40%; Constituency Labour Parties and the Parliamentary Labour Party 30% each)

Benn: 11.270
00.340 TU
05.872 CLP
05.158 PLP

Kinnock: 88.8
39.660 TU
24.128 CLP
24.842 PLP

Heffer: 9.483
00.007 TU
04.046 CLP
05.430 PLP

Hattersley: 66.823
31.339 TU
18.109 CLP
17.376 PLP

Prescott: 23.694
08.654 TU
07.845 CLP
7.7195 PLP

Trade Unions

Some results in the leadership contest:

AEU (membership ballot)
Kinnock: 108,000 (58%)
Benn: 19,000 (15%)
Hattersley: 93,000 (73%)
Prescott: 26,000 (20%)
Heffer: 7,000 (6%)

GMB (branch ballot: voting by "tickets" only)
Kinnock-Hattersley: 83%
Kinnock-Prescott: 15%
Benn-Heffer: 1%

COHSE (branch ballot)
Kinnock: 75%
Benn: 25%

NUPE (branch ballot)
Kinnock: 335,000
Benn: 39,000
Prescott: 235,000
Hattersley: 117,000
Heffer: 18,000

NCU (branch ballot)
Kinnock: 28,000 (72%)
Benn: 10,800 (28%)
Heffer: 6,400
Hattersley: 11,000
Prescott: 20,000

MSF (branch ballot)
Benn: 40%
Kinnock: 60%

In the trade union/affiliate societies section of the electoral college the following voted for Tony Benn: FTAT, BETA, Christian Socialist Movement, and Socialist Health Association (only the last voted for Heffer).

Martha Osamor, in her first tilt at the NEC Women's Section came a respectable ninth (top five take the seats). She was supported by 177 CLPs (more than Dunwoody, Renee Short, Anni Marjoram, Anne Davis, or Kate Hoey). She was also backed by the Bakers, BETA, ACTT, NCU, FTAT, and the NUM. A strong showing.

On the other hand, John Spellar of the EETPU, was backed for the NEC trade union section by AEU, NUFLAT, ISTC, the Musicians' Unoin, and the TSSA as well, of course, as the EETPU itself. He lost, but what a disgrace that someone who's just been booted out of the TUC should get any votes in an election to Labour's NEC.

Start next year's leadership challenge now!

Our heavy defeat in the electoral college at the beginning of Conference week was set in context by ensuing events.

The left showing in the NEC elections, slightly up on last year, and the cracks opening up in the Kinnockite monolith confirmed the wisdom of this year's leadership challenge — and the necessity of renewing it next year.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Stand up to Kinnock! Sharon Atkin and Martha Osamor try to get past the stage-management of Conference to speak up for Black Sections.

Long before Conference, the Benn-Heffer challenge had scored notable successes:

- large turn-outs in meetings up and down the country (though these tapered off after the summer);
- a limited but valuable mobilisation of dormant left members;
- the founding (or re-founding) of local left caucuses;
- raising the heat on the Policy Review;
- flushing Kinnock out on unilateralism.

Above all, the campaign gave a voice to those in the movement and outside currently excluded by what Tony Benn labelled the "bipartisan front bench consensus".

Tony and Eric performed admirably throughout. They were everywhere, tackling the difficult issues, saying what had to be said.

But support from the rest of the Campaign Group MPs was (with a few exceptions) derisory. The campaign as a whole suffered a pitiful dearth of resources for which no amount of enthusiastic individual effort could compensate.

This weakness can partly be traced to the delayed launch of the campaign. But it is also linked to the *ad hoc* and often undemocratic basis on which it was organised.

In some areas, the "franchise" was granted (on what grounds?) to individuals who had initially opposed the leadership bid, and subsequently showed little eagerness to build it.

Others defined the contest so narrowly that they were unable to mobilise effectively for it. Too many on the left saw the leadership challenge as just another worthy model resolution, dutifully proposed and seconded at branch GC.

By Mike Marqusee, Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

The failure to make it a *campaigning priority* meant that votes at GCs and in CLPs holding ballots were sometimes lost when, with some effort, they might have been won.

But this hesitancy at the grass-roots reflected weakness at the centre. It was difficult for local campaigns to find a focus for their activity.

Opposition to the Policy Review and injunctions to "Vote Benn and Heffer" were not enough to keep up a head of steam over four months. What was needed was something that could provide a link between the struggle for leadership and policy *inside* the Party with the immediate struggles being waged *outside* the Party.

Some local groups worked with seafarers and with local campaigns, but on a national level there was a gap. Next time, please, let's have less caution about treading on bureaucrats' toes, more *direct intervention* (e.g. the postal dispute).

Where trade unions consulted their members, our results were better than we had any right to expect, given the absence of systematic appeal to union members. As a minimum, a leaflet with a message from Benn and Heffer should have gone out to all TGWU members.

It was no surprise that the media subjected the campaign to a conspiracy of silence. CLPD welcomed this, because of its hostility to any debate taking place outside "normal" Party channels.

But after Party Conference, it is clearer than ever that "normal" Party channels are blocked.

In many areas, members can only have access to debate by going outside these channels. Dealing with the media (whether local or national) is a minefield, but there are opportunities here that need to be exploited.

Again, bold, dramatic initiatives on a national level are required. With increased resources, a full-time publicity/press officer could have an impact.

The Guide to the Policy Review was invaluable, and local groups produced a range of useful propaganda, but much more — and much better — is needed (including posters, leaflets aimed at various groups and issues, fact sheets).

Tony and Eric made some superb speeches, but local groups didn't know about them. A regular information bulletin with useful quotes and facts and figures needs to be distributed to local groups.

Next year (and whatever the odds, there *must* be a challenge to Kinnock), we should start earlier, from an organised rank and file base, with a democratically chosen, accountable campaign structure, including a national campaign committee.

This is not simply a question of socialist ethics — it is the key to realising our potential, maximising our resources, and increasing our vote.

The absence of constructive input from Labour Left Liaison, and its failure to act as a genuine co-ordinator and mobiliser of the *whole* left, shows that it is a body with little to offer, and should be quietly laid to rest.

Next year, we should make a centre-piece of our demand for democracy that *all* trade unions consult their members. While insisting that GCs remain the proper body for CLP decisions, we should meet the "OMOV" bridgade head-on by demanding that time be set aside by all branches and affiliated bodies to debate and vote on the leadership and that all GC delegates should be mandated accordingly.

We should promote the next leadership contest as a major democratic exercise spanning the whole movement, and put to shame the "too expensive", "too divisive" autocrats.

Over the next six months, the Socialist Conference's policy groups will begin producing substantial documents. These can form the basis of a much more detailed and persuasive challenge to Kinnock's Policy Review.

Those who try to counterpose the Socialist Conference to the "internal" Labour Party struggle (on either side) may object, but without linking the two, we will get nowhere.

The next leadership campaign must reach out — beyond the GCs and branches, and beyond Town Hall meetings — to the millions whose daily lives are a struggle against Thatcher, the employers, the state.

It must fill the vacuum left by New Realism. What's needed for that is *resources, organisation,* and *imagination*!

THAMES VALLEY

Left continues after Benn-Heffer challenge

A high profile Benn-Heffer campaign in the Thames Valley has helped to strengthen the left and counter the isolation of activists in some areas.

Several hundred people attended Benn-Heffer meetings or sponsored the leadership challenge in Berkshire, North Hampshire, Oxford, Swindon and elsewhere.

Local Campaign Groups were started in East Berkshire and Slough, expanded in Reading, and revived in Swindon. A network of support for the campaign was built in towns such as Windsor, Wokingham, Maidenhead, Henley, Wantage, and Newbury.

The final meeting of the Berkshire Benn-Heffer Campaign decided to form a Thames Valley Campaign Group to build on these links and also to hold a Conference.

The after-conference Conference

THAMES VALLEY SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

SATURDAY 12 NOVEMBER

Oxford Road Primary School — Reading
Sponsored by
Thames Valley Campaign Group, Solidarity Network, supporters of the Chesterfield Socialist Conference.

An opportunity for an open debate on the prospects for the left after the Labour Party conference. Most of the day will be for discussion and contributions, although priority will be given for practical activity which can help to strengthen and unite the left.

The Conference will be open to all socialists and trade unionists seeking ways to build a united democratic left, campaigning around the policies and actions needed to defeat Thatcher and challenge the "new realists" who hold back that fight.

For details contact: D Warren, 90 Royal Avenue, Calcot, Reading Tel. Reading 423746 or 422621.

IRELAND

Hypocrisy

"The cause of Labour is the cause of Ireland. The cause of Ireland is the cause of Labour."

Thus spake James Connolly.

But, since Partition in 1921, the Labour Party's attitude to the Irish people has been hypocritical and treacherous.

Atlee and Brook legislated for the Loyalist veto in the 1949 Ireland Act; Wilson and Callaghan sent the troops in to defeat the Bogsiders.

Add to this the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA); the 1977 Labour-Unionist Pact; and bi-partisanship on every issue from internment to Gibraltar. McNamara's recent paper *strengthens* the Loyalist veto.

This, then, was the context for Conference's "debate".

By Jim Thain
East London Irish Year of Action Committee

The left did gain a small but important victory on employment discrimination. This helps ensure that Ireland will remain on the agenda next year.

On the real issue, however — the withdrawal of British troops — we were, as usual, hammered.

A resolution on the Birmingham Six and the PTA fell off the agenda. Shamefully, the NEC had recommended remission, despite the forensic evidence in the Six case being totally discredited and their confessions obtained by torture.

This case and the Guildford Four's are not just about the framing-up of innocent people. They are also about the taking of political hostages by the British state.

There is much work to be done if we are to win the Party to withdrawal, particulary in the unions. Only the ACTT and the NCU are likely to have supported it — there was no card vote.

We must increase pressure on the NUM, MUR and FBU, and begin to tackle the major unions. There will be resistance — many of the bureaucracies have Unionist connections.

CLPs must flood next year's conference with resolutions for withdrawal, Irish self-determination, on strip-searching and for the release of the 1500 political prisoners held in British goals.

What we must do, above all, is build the Year of Action commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the introduction of troops. A "Time to Go" rally at Conference was very sucessful. The Action Committees will develop this initiative much further.

We must ensure that the campaign is not depoliticised and reduced to organising a carnival. *Briefing* supporters must be actively involved and strengthen links with the Troops Out Movement and the IBRG.

This is essential solidarity work: the duty of the working class of an oppressor nation towards that of an oppressed nation.

Given the current military strategy — no other armed uprising in Ireland has lasted so long — the British Government (aided and abetted by the Labour Front Bench) will be keen to impose ever more repressive measures. They too understand the significance of anniversaries.

ON THE FRINGE

Labour's Other Conference

If you sat at home watching Kinnock force through the Policy Review and the "democracy costs too much" rule changes you must have had a depressing week.

But there was more to Conference than this.

Benn and Heffer stood to ensure that socialism was placed at the centre of debate. The Conference fringe showed that, for Labour's rank and file, it can't be anywhere else.

With the exception of Ron Todd's timely defence of unilateralism at the *Tribune* meeting, the media ignored the fringe.

Bryn Griffiths
Tottenham CLP

And when Ron Todd was reported, it was only to give him what Billy Etherington (Durham NUM Mechanics) called the "NUM treatment".

If the media had reported the Conference fringe it would have had to talk about a diverse left, with a wide range of interests, more than capable of mapping out a coherent and comprehensive alternative to New Realism.

I've been attending Conference since Tony Benn stood for Deputy in '81. This year's fringe was the best I've seen.

It was encouraging to see traditional speeches complemented by music and comedians, turning some fringe meetings (such as the Irish social) into cultural events.

Prize of the week must go to Rochdale Women's Section who provided us with "Not the Red Rose" at the Saturday night Campaign Group Rally. They satirised everyone from Kinnock and Owen to Benn and Heffer — a great start to a difficult week.

Unfortunately not all fringe meetings were so effective. The sheer number of speakers on their platforms left some delegates under the misapprehension that the "Committee of 100" was a Campaign Group front.

The worst offenders of the week must have been Labour Left Liason, who provided delegates with a lunch-time meeting of nine speakers and two chairs! Not the most participatory style of democracy, comrades.

Sunday gave us the traditional CLPD and *Labour Briefing* rallies.

At the CLPD meeting, Pete Willsman (as ever) gave us an invaluable insight into the manoeuverings on the Conference Arrangements Committee: still a *must* for unravelling what's really happening at Conference.

Labour Briefing's rally took place on the Sunday night directly after the leadership election. Over 300 comrades packed the meeting to hear Benn and Heffer raise spirits and affirm their determination to fight on.

The highlight of the meeting was a contribution from Errol Smalley of the Guildford Four Relatives Campaign.

On Thursday, *Briefing* held a more adventurous, if smaller open forum for Conference delegates. This meeting drew up a Conference balance sheet and mapped out a way forward.

Opposing Gould's proposals for breaking the trade union link, Pat Waylett (Lewisham East delegate) argued for the democratisation of the block vote and the development of a socialist current in every union.

Dani Ahrens urged the left to look *outside* the Party when building alliances, citing the Socialist Conference and Women for Socialism.



PHOTO: Leesa Hanbert

Deserved applause for all backers of the leadership challenge at Briefing's Sunday fringe meeting.

From the floor comrades promoted Wallasey's attempt to bring together left CLPs. Others described the difficulties of bringing trade union militants into the Party.

The left's most successful campaigns — the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) and Black Sections — both held large fringe meetings.

The Black Sections meeting illustrated the broadening of the Black Sections movement with speakers on Broadwater Farm, the Poll Tax, housing etc.

The LCLGR (under the title "We're not pretending — Labour promotes lesbian and gay equality") hosted a meeting of 200 people in opposition to Section 28.

It is testimony to the determined campaigning of these comrades that the issue of lesbian and gay rights now commands a healthy majority on Conference floor — even if public performance between Conferences still lags behind paper policy.

Women, faced with a fight to defend their organisation in the Conference hall, had a big presence on the fringe.

Women for Socialism's meeting was strenghthened by Elean Thomas (from the Workers Party of Jamaica) who transfixed the meeting with her account of black women's struggles against sexism and for socialism.

Less encouraging was the presence of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child who managed to collect 28 bigots (predominantly men) in a hotel room. They were faced by an angry picket of pro-choice campaigners.

Other important events included meetings run by the Labour Campaign for Travellers Rights, Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, Justic for the Miners, and many more.

I hope this report has illustrated the strength and diversity of the Labour left and encourged more *Briefing* readers to attend next year's Conference.

Apologies to those whose events I've missed and thanks to the 30 plus comrades who contributed to the *Briefing* daily bulletin — and made this report possible!

RULES REVOLUTION

Walworth Road takes new powers

The Labour Party Rule Book was totally rewritten at Conference — but neither delegates nor their organisations were told that Blackpool was going to host a "Rules Revision" Conference.

Objections that delegates had only received the 103-paged Agenda II (the "hidden" agenda) *two days before Conference* were ignored.

All the rule changes were bulldozed through by huge majorities. Block votes were being put into ballot boxes *before* debates had even begun.

The main effect is to centralise control, taking power away from CLPs (particularly GCs) and putting it into the hands of Walworth Road, and clearing the way for the witch-hunting.

By Joan Twelves
Greater London Labour Party Executive
(personal capacity)

Membership

The new centralised membership system represents the greatest shift. From January 1st, 1989 there will be a double system with people joining local branches and CLPs (as now), or through regional offices or Walworth Road.

They will immediately become provisional members and CLPs will have just eight weeks to object. After January 1st 1991 joining nationally will be the *only* way into the Party... There will be no point in branches or CLPs holding membership campaigns. GCs will lose the right to ratify new members.

Members of affiliated trade unions will be able to join at a reduced rate for the next three years. Nothing stops unscrupulous unions (the EEPTU springs to mind) signing up members en bloc just before a reselection, and making sure they're unavailable for eight weeks should the CLP wish to check them out.

Members paying by instalments will be lapsed if they're more than three months in arrears. Lists of new members will have to be sent to Walworth Road every month and affiliation fees will now have to be paid 24 weeks before Conference (instead of 7) if CLPs are to be represented.

It all adds up to a tighter system, requiring great efficiency at local level (no bad thing but difficult without both a computer and brilliant ward organisation), and reliable, accountable, unbiased administration at Walworth Road.

It allows CLPs to be packed by passive members whose only activity will be filling in postal ballot forms sent directly from Walworth Road. They won't even have to put up a poster at election time.

GCs

Trade union GC delegations will be restricted to *five per branch*. GCs lose their right to vet candidates for the Council elections. And the NEC has given itself the *legal right* to impose candidates at by-elections, to rescind endorsement of Parliamentary candidates, and to decide on readmittance to Party membership — regardless of the views of the local Party.

Witch-hunt

The NEC also has powers to suspend anyone *accused* of breaking the rules — before an investigation has been held. Malicious, unsubstantiated gossip will be enough to stop someone standing as a Party officer, delegate or candidate.

Expulsions take time, so the National Constitutional Committee will now be able to hear cases *collectively*. The requirement for "balanced" NCC panels has been watered down.

Youth

The LPYS has been completely dismantled. NOLS, Red Wedge and "young representatives of affiliated trade unions" (who? how chosen?) will now dominate the election of the NEC "youth" representative.

Women

Changes to the rules of the Women's Organisation only partially reflected the consultation exercise. In other words, the NEC chose the bits that suited it. Surprise, surprise — women's demands to elect their own NEC representatives and put resolutions to Conference did *not* appear on the agenda.

Regions

To stop regions campaigning on "national" or "international" issues, (unilateralism, anti-apartheid, black sections, women, lesbian and gay rights, Ireland, Poll Tax), Regional Conferences will be restricted to "regional" matters only.

Labour Groups

Pressure from trade unions forced the withdrawal of one rule change, which would have stopped Council workers from being observers to Labour Groups. But they've still agreed to bar Councillors who've had the Whip withdrawn from standing as candidates.

One of the few positive changes occurred here: establishing a Register of Interests for Councillors.

Leadership Challenges

The icing on the cake was the new rule virtually blocking future leadership challenges. "Democracy is expensive", we were told, so future challengers will need to be nominated by 20% of Labour MPs, thus giving the PLP veto power.

CLPs will be asked to mandate on the basis of "one member one vote" in future (nothing about MPs or trade unions consulting *their* base).

The constitutional amendments will aid the right and the "middle class tendency", who have made it plain they intend to spend the next year working to overturn Conference decisions on unilateralism, trade union rights, ET, public ownership, and women on shortlists.

The witch-hunt will focus on anyone who is seen as an obstacle to their aim of proving they can manage capitalism better than the Tories.

Centre Page Debate

FINN JENSEN

A united Europe — for labour or capital?

Like the TUC and the Socialist Society Peter Tatchell argues that the labour movement in Britain should not demand British withdrawal from the European Community but rather win Europe for a socialist agenda.

Rather than weaken the EC by leaving it, Peter wants to strengthen it by getting the European left to change it from within. "We have to engage with existing European institutions and seek to transform them."

Peter's article lacks an analysis of why the EC was set up in the first place. He will probably agree that the purpose of the EC was and is to strengthen European capital in international competition.

Strength

That requires the ruling classes in Europe to undermine the strength of the European working class. The EC is an essential part of that strategy.

Peter blames the British left with its "wholly negative British-centredness" for allowing "the development of Europe to be determined by parties of the Right."

But no radical Labour government would have had any chance of changing the basic character of the EC as an instrument for promoting European capital against other capitals and against the European and international working class.

Together

But, Peter argues, if the whole left in Europe gets together it will be able to change this character and transform the EC into an instrument for European socialism. All we need is to democratise the EC.

Such a strategy is as reformist and unworkable as a strategy to create socialism in Britain through the British Parliament. Why not change NATO from within, also by democratising it? (Europe can always expel the USA from NATO if the US objects to NATO becoming an instrument for European socialism!)

Peter confuses the need for the European working class (in alliance with the ecology movement, the peace movement, etc.) to "pit the collective power of European labour against European capital" with unification of Europe and co-ordinated strategies for European states. The Western European states are all capitalist states, even if some of them have governments led by "socialist" parties.

A unification of capitalist states will take place if and when the ruling classes in these states want it. The EC is their instrument, and we must maintain our independence from it.

Which forces from the European left are to carry out Peter's strategy? He seems to include all the socialist, social democratic, and Euro-communist parties "which would almost certainly command an overall majority in the European Parliament."

Does Peter really think that the socialist parties in France, Spain and Greece, the social democratic parties in West Germany and Scandinavia, or the Euro-communists in Italy and Britain really want to abolish capitalism? If you look at their party programmes you might say "yes". But if you look at their practice since the Second World War, the answer can only be "no".

Withdraw

All socialists in Europe should demand that their own countries withdraw form the EC in order to *weaken* European capital. Socialists should also oppose new countries like Turkey joining the EC.

At the same time, socialists should build up their own European and international institutions to combat capital. In Britain, the National Union of Mineworkers has already begun this.

Peter wants us to reform the EC in order to solve problems like the arms race, environmental degradation, resource depletion, etc. These problems are not strictly European but international problems.

Peter's strategy is too Euro-centred! He is absolutely right to point out the need for the labour movement to organise *across boundaries*. ("Workers of the world — unite!" as someone wrote in 1848). How this can be done in 1988 and the future is the question.

Links

Building stronger links between trade union activists in multinational companies is part of the answer. Building an international for revolutionary socialists is another part of the answer. Building a European and international peace movement, ecology movement, etc., are a third part of the answer.

All of these components should make demands and put pressure on the EC. But they should keep their political and organisational independence from EC institutions.



The EC: the ruling class must co-operate "to undermine the working class".

A STRA FOR EU

In *Briefing*'s Summer Special, PETER TATCHE Europe". Here, Peter develops his ideas, and FIN points made in the Summer Special. Send your c PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ by the end of Oc

PETER TA

AN ALTERN SOCIALIST STRATEGY FOR EUROP

The 1989 European elections are less than a year away. If Labour is to win those elections and contribute to the victory of the socialist Left in Europe, we need a radical and inspiring *Alternative Socialist Strategy for Europe* which can address the three great historic issues crucial to the future of our continent: economic democracy, ecological sustainability, and de-militarisation. The central themes of the *Alternative Socialist Strategy* for 1989 must be:

•A European Charter for Economic Democracy to remedy class inequalities and social injustice which deeply divide Europe and condemn millions of working class people to unemployment, low wages and deprivation.

Ever since the bourgeois revolutions, there has been a disjunction between political democracy and economic dictatorship.

The political systems of the West European states are governed by the principle of *one person one vote* but their economic systems are based on the massive disenfranchisement of labour by capital.

Empowerment

To tackle class power and establish economic democracy — the empowerment of the working class — requires the extension of the "economic vote" from managers and directors to the whole workforce.

This should be done through radical forms of industrial democracy, trade union control of pension funds, employee freedom of access to corporate records and accounts, and the transfer of share ownership into Swedish-style Worker's Share Funds.

The **Charter** must also include commitments to a **European Minimum Wage** equivalent to two-thirds of the average industrial earnings in each country, a 35-hour week, equal pay for work of equal value, positive action for women and black people, and the universal provision of day nurseries and pre-school education.

•A Green Programme for Ecological Sustainability to halt the ecological crisis which threatens Europe with the twin catastrophies of environmental ruination and resource scarcity.

Continent

The peoples of our continent face many shared ecological problems, such as acid rain, the poisoning of the underground water table with fertiliser nitrates, nuclear radiation leaks, the destruction of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect and global warming, soil erosion and denutrification, and the contamination of food with pesticide and hormone residues.

In the long term, these ecological problems could result in possibly irreversible climatic and genetic changes — including a massive growth in human cancers and allergies, the wholesale flooding of low-lying European regions, and the desertification of much of southern and central Europe.

Of equal concern, Europe's finite stocks of natural resources are beginning to run out. If this rapid exhaustion is replicated on a global scale the world could be plunged into a series of ruthless inter-imperialist wars for the control of diminishing resources.

ATEGY
UROPE

LL put forward a "socialist agenda for
N JENSEN and JIM THAIN take up the
ontributions to the debate to *Labour Briefing*,
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TCHELL

IATIVE

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To avert this ecological exter-
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•**A Non-Provocative**
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To guarantee mutual security
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defence based on:

1) The renunciation of nuclear weapons and a commitment to the creation of a **European Nuclear-Free Zone.**

2) A pledge of **"no first use of force"** in international relations.

3) The withdrawal of the armed forces of the European states from their far-flung global deployments and remnants of empire and their reorganisation around an exclusively home-based and self-defensive role.

4) Greater emphasis on **"in depth"** guerrilla-based territorial defence — along the lines of the Swedish and Yugoslav models — which spreads the defending forces thinly over a wide area in wholly defensive formations which are non-belligerent and offer no easy targets for enemy attack, while simultaneously maintaining an ability to conduct a debilitating war of attrition against an invading army.

5) The incorporation of non-violent civilian resistence — through strikes, sabotage and tax refusals — as an auxilary component of defence policy to render the people of Europe ungovernable by an aggressor (and unsuppressable by military coup or right-wing dictatorship).

6) A switch to defensive — and cheaper — weapon systems based on anti-tank, anti-ship and anti-aircraft capabilties.

In contrast to the insipid and uninspiring Euro-reformism of the Labour leadership, this radical **Alternative Socialist Strategy for Europe** offers the possibility of uniting and motivating the four great European-wide popular movements — the trade union, socialist, green and peace movements. If mobilised effectively, they have the collective and creative power to change the course of European history.

JIM THAIN



PHOTO: Jim Thain and Martine Stead

Ford picket line: workers demand, and receive, Europe-wide solidarity

For a socialist Europe: reform or revolution?

Peter Tatchell's aim in setting out a *Programme for building a European Socialist Union* is admirable, but I feel he places too much faith in the benevolence of remote bureaucracies.

Indeed, he goes so far as to say that Europe can only be turned towards socialism "through co-ordinated strategies by the European *states*" (my emphasis).

Peter's scenario involves a vaguely defined "European Convention of the Left", which draws up "a radical agenda for a People's Europe which defends the European working classes..."

But what action does Peter envisage *by the masses themselves*?

His arguments — political, economic, and cultural — are flawed by idealism.

Wonderful

It would be wonderful to "pit the collective power of European labour against that of European capital", but Peter is forgetting what he himself wrote in *Tribune*: "the European Community member states have different economic bases and are at different levels of economic development."

This unevenness produces an international division of labour. Indeed, a key function of the EC is to *exploit* differences in production costs between member states. So combined action is problematic, particularly in light of the worldwide crisis of working class leadership.

Despite the uneven development of European states, Peter is obsessed with the idea of European identity. This lures him into dangerously broad statements like: "The nations of Europe have broadly similar histories and cultures." (*Tribune*)

This tendency to overgeneralise permeates Peter's economic analysis. Because capital increasingly relies on transnational financial institutions, Peter believes a "unified European capitalist empire" will emerge.

Circulation

Yet increased capital circulation does not in itself dissolve inter-capitalist competition. There is no all-embracing conscious collective management of capital. Rather, transnational institutions provide for temporary marriages of convenience between rival capitalisms which, though interdependent, remain discrete.

Peter's recipe for combatting this putative empire is to "engage with existing European institutions". Apparently, progress towards socialism is to be achieved through the left gaining control of the European Parliament. The Treaty of Rome could then "be radically rewritten, ignored or abolished." (*Tribune*)

In other words, the Treaty is useless. Why then bother with it? This is a tortuous and draining path to socialism; and capitalism will not permit itself to be overturned with such fastidious ease.

The source of Peter's utopianism is openly stated in *Tribune*: "In this process, reform is the linchpin."

But you can't reform capitalism, and the EC is above all a *capitalist* institution. You can't gradually introduce a set of production relations which is in complete conflict with the existing system.

Peter draws an analogy between the EC and the House of Commons (*Tribune*). If both are capitalist clubs, why does the left advocate abstention from one and not the other?

Analogy

This analogy is purely formal. Participation in Parliament is a strategy, not an absolute principle. In certain circumstances sections of the Labour left *would* abstain from parliamentarism. Currently, however, participation plays a positive (mainly consciousness raising) role in the class struggle.

The same cannot be said of the EC, though we should exploit its "international" character to raise socialist demands.

Abstention

The left is correct to advocate abstention, but for the foreseeable future Britain will remain in the EC. Therefore, we do need to elaborate a set of consciousness raising demands which counterpose a labour strategy to the capitalist one:

- for European-wide planning of social needs;
- for freedom of information;
- for social ownership of the means of production;
- for industrial democracy;
- for a 35-hour working week;
- for a European-wide minimum wage;
- against the regionalisation of pay levels;
- against unemployment;
- against the centralisation of power.

We can use debates around EC elections to raise these ideas, but we cannot rely on EC institutions to forge the links between workers needed to win them.

People in struggle must make these connections themselves, as in the Miners' Strike and the Ford and P&O disputes. Only through the realisation that we all share common needs can international socialism be achieved.

(All quotes not otherwise attributed are from *Briefing*'s Summer Special)

WORLD BANK/IMF IN BERLIN

Smash the creditors' cartel!

Last month in Berlin, a week-long protest greeted a Conference of the banks and their state backers — the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Finance Ministers.

The official World Bank/IMF annual meetings took place from September 26-29th, and were, as usual, a bankers' junket.

There were 12,000 private bankers in Berlin and even larger numbers of bodyguards and police, adorned with a startling array of weaponry.

Schools were warned that Kreuzberg, an area in which most Turkish immigrants and many of the left live, might be *sealed off* during the meetings to keep the inhabitants out of the City centre.

On the preceding Friday and Saturday,a counter-conference took place, organised by the German Green Party and a coalition of "non-government organisations". Four thousand attended.

Its final declaration called for an across the board cancellation of Third World countries' debt, without conditions.

From Monday to Thursday, coinciding with the official meetings, the Permanent People's Tribunal met, heard testimonies form Third World "victims", indicted the World Bank/IMF for abuse of human rights, and made various proposals for reform.

On Sunday about 80,000 people marched through the centre of Berlin. They carried effigies of bankers. One demonstrator dressed up as a policeman with a placard saying

By TERESA HAYTER

"I am looking for my mother."

On Thursday another big demonstration, organised by the autonomous left and demanding the abolition of the IMF/World Bank, was cordoned off and kept away from the centre. Germans expected the police to vent their anger where they wouldn't be observed.

Every night there were smaller, drum-beating demonstrations. Limousines were burnt.

On Wednesday, barricades kept bankers from the Conference Centre for half an hour. At other times the protesters in their old cars snarled the bankers' up in traffic jams, and stuck dollar bills through their windows.

The World Bank/IMF have been a part of a creditors' cartel of a type that never confronted European and US debtors in the past. The cartel includes the governments of creditor countries, the Bank/Fund, the private banks themselves, and many Third World governments seeking to identify themselves with the capitalist world market.

The lenders' cartel has been so successful that not only are the banks now relatively secure against Third World default, but transfers of capital from the Third World to industrialised countries have been rising steadily. By 1987 net transfers had reached an estimated $39 billion.

The World Bank and the IMF have themselves been beneficiaries of this enforced generosity. Since 1984 both institutions have been net *borrowers* from the Third World; the annual flow of capital to the IMF has been on average about $3 billion and to the World Bank about $1.9 billion.

The Third World's gifts of capital have been mainly gifts to the United States. They helped to make possible net capital inflows to the United States of about $154 billion in 1987.

They also help to finance Britain's trade deficit, probably around $12 billion in 1988, and thus enable Lawson (for the time being) not to reverse his tax handouts to the rich.

The World Bank/IMF have devised "adjustment programmes", imposed only on Third World governments, which raise money to service debt through cuts in social spending, investment and imports.

Recession

But the cause of Third World debt is not to be found within the Third World countries themselves, but — in the recession within the major capitalist powers. Since 1979, high interest rates have added billions to debt-servicing charges and the collapse of commodity prices has chopped billions from export receipts.

In return for submission to IMF/World Bank conditions, Third World governments receive smallish loans, postponement of repayment, and some new loans from private banks — to cover part of their interest payments to these very same banks. Since 1982, their total debt burden has doubled.

Only in the last year or two have the IMF/World Bank shifted to some consideration of partial "debt forgiveness". They insist that any debt reduction must still be applied on a "case by case" basis, and only if governments comply with IMF demands.

In addition, "debt swaps" enable banks to gain control of profitable assets in the Third World, and assist the World Bank in its longstanding drive for Thatcherite privatisation.

The debt crisis has made it easier for the World Bank and the IMF to force what they call a "market-orientated direction" on previously recalcitrant Third World governments.

They clung to one simple, ideologically-determined model. It includes cuts in subsidies (for example, on food), wage cuts, privatisation, and import liberalisation. Its costs are borne mainly by the poor, another reason for the complicity of many Third World governments with the creditors' cartel.

The word "poverty", after an absence of around five years, has re-entered the vocabulary of the IMF/World Bank, together with a good deal of rhetoric about the environment. This is a public relations exercise.

It is also a recognition that the "adjustment process" may be threatened by the rebellious peoples in the Third World. So far there have been IMF/World Bank riots in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Zambia.

It is time the Labour Party lost its illusions about these institutions. We should join the people of Berlin in demanding their abolition. Labour policy should include a commitment to withdraw from them.



The IMF philosophy is that of international capitalism: the rich move in for a quick, speculative kill; while the working class pay.

Consgold Takeover Battle

Dissecting the Transnational Octopus

While we minnows splash about in our tiny pool, worrying about the Poll Tax and ILEA abolition, above our heads a huge power struggle rages among giant transnational corporations.

The object of the struggle is Consolidated Goldfields (Consgold) the London-based international mining and industrial group.

Consgold is the second largest gold producer outside the Eastern bloc. It has big South African interests (a 38% holding in Gold Fields of South Africa) and a 49% stake in Newmont Mining, a US gold and coal producer.

The predator is a company called Minorco, an offshore-based investment house with holdings in Engelhard Corporation (US metals group) and a 36% share in Charter Consolidated of the UK, which in turn owns 38% of Johnson Matthey (remember them?).

Minorco, headed by Sir Michael Edwardes, once of

By Paula Watson
Westminster South CLP

British Leyland, already has 29% of Consgold and has now launched a £2.9 billion bid to take over the lot. £2.9 billion would be enough to put the NHS straight.

Minorco is 60% owned by two South African based companies — Anglo-American and De Beers. Both are part of the empire built up by Harry Oppenheimer, who put together the largest mining conglomerate in the world, founded on gold and diamonds and cheap black African labour. Oppenheimer's group spans six continents and controls more than 100 companies.

Because of the South African involvement there has been a move to refer the bid to the Monopolies Commission. Even the leadership of the Labour Party has raised a few feeble squawks.

It seems unlikely that the Thatcher government will intervene directly on the South African issue, but they may be forced to set up an inquiry into the allegations of insider dealing.

Some £25 million has already been made by speculators, who, before the takeover was launched, bought options on Consgold's shares through a London-based broking house, the Swiss-owned Savory Milln. Savory Milln's parent company, Swiss Bank, is helping to *fund* the takeover bid.

It is also rumoured that Anglo-American and De Beers conspired to depress the gold price to help the bid. The price of gold is low at present, unusual in a time of rising inflation.

Put simply, the story so far is of a vast South African-based mining empire trying to take over one of the world's biggest gold producers, enabling a pack of speculators to make a lot of unearned money in the process.

But that's not the end of it. Minorco's bid is what the City calls a "hostile" attack. There is the possibility of a "White Knight" (a friendly merger offer). Rio Tinto Zinc Corporation has been mentioned as has the Hanson Group, although Consgold will consider them raiders rather than "White Knights".

Another possibility is that Consgold could be rescued by Newmont Gold, which is 90% owned by Newmont mining. Last year, Consgold acquired its 49% stake in Newmont Mining when it rescued the company from a hostile takeover bid by Mr. T. Boone Pickens.

The most likely scenario is that Newmont Gold would bid for *both* its parent company (which acquired heavy debts) *and* Consgold, forming an Anglo-American corporation based in the US, which would then dump its South African interests.

The strength of Newmont Gold is that it holds a dominant position in the Nevada goldfields, which are developing into the most important outside South Africa and the USSR.

Oppenheimer must be worried at the possible emergence of a rival American-based mining giant. Minorco has made it clear that if its bid is successful it would pull Consgold out of Newmont.

A battle between South African and American capital could well develop.

All of this is part of a process whereby control of more and more of the world's resources is garnered by fewer and fewer giant transnational corporations. Its importance for socialists cannot be overstated.

There is a fashionable school of thought which suggests that the power and complexity of these transnationals is so great that *no* socialist economic strategy can tackle them. All we can do is work to socialise small-scale or local industries.

Another line, even more defeatist, argues that the internationalising of capital precludes *any* radical economic strategy.

But no socialist plan can work without tackling the transnationals. In Britain a large slice of service and manufacturing industry is controlled by them. Consgold itself is a major producer of construction and building materials through its subsidiary ARC.

How can we put part of the economy under common ownership and workers' control, while leaving the rest to be run by capitalist giants in Johannesburg or New York?

The manoeuvrings over Consgold show the urgency of the situation. The transnationals straddle the world like giant octopi with tentacles in every corner of the globe. Through takeovers and mergers, corporations are growing larger and more powerful.

We need to do three things quickly.

- We must *understand* our enemy by analysing and learning what transnational capitalism is and how it works.
- We must *forge international links* with workers' movements elsewhere to plan and organise the fight against these monsters.
- We need to produce a *strategy for dismantling these corporations* and taking them into common ownership.

SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

1989 is action year!

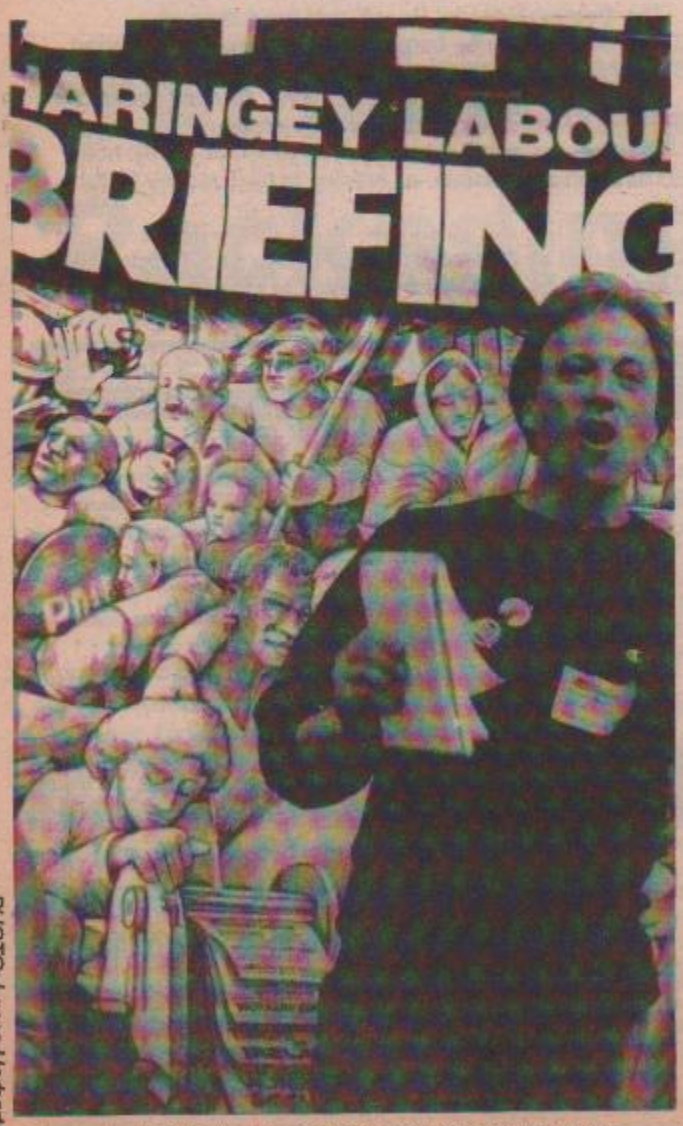


PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Discussing initiatives at the 1988 Socialist Conference: Mike Marqusee speaks at the Labour Briefing fringe meeting.

By REG RACE

The *Socialist Conference* is sponsored by the Campaign Group, the Socialist Society, and the Conference of Socialist Economists.

We are undertaking a major programme of activity in 1989. There will be:

•A Campaign for Socialism, concentrating on reinforcing the case for socialism in Britain;

•A Socialist Policy Review, which will show that the Left has many forward-looking ideas on how Britain can move to socialism in the 1990s;

•The publication of major analyses of economic strategy and other policy issues;

•A large number of Conferences on major political issues, including: •the Poll Tax; •Trade Union Solidarity; •Socialist Philosophy; •Gorbachev, *Glasnost* and the European Left; •Women for Socialism Annual Conference; •Aid, Trade, and Third World Debt; •Housing Policy; •Democratic Rights; •Green Politics and Socialism; •Non-alignment and withdrawal from NATO (organised by the CNA);

•A recall Socialist Conference in Sheffield in June 1989;

•A large number of regional and local conferences in every part of Britain.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Supporting autonomous groups in struggle: Black Sections Chair Narendra Makanji speaking about the Black Agenda.

The Socialist Conference believes, in common with the Campaign Group, that we must show determined moral and political leadership to fill the vacuum in the movement, which is widely perceived in the electorate.

On the Policy Review, the Campaign Group will seek to ensure:

•That Policy Review statements in 1989 are subject to amendment by Conference;

•That the Party adopts an economic policy based on planning and public ownership, to provide full employment, eliminate poverty and redistribute wealth;

•The retention of the policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament and restore the commitment to cut defence spending;

•A commitment to remove all legal constraints on trade unionism.

The debate will be taken to trade union conferences and a series of pamphlets and briefings produced.

The Campaign Group will establish a network in every Labour Party region to pursue the objectives of the Campaign for Socialism within CLPs and trade unions in their areas; and convene national meetings of representatives of the regional networks, trade union Broad Lefts and national campaigns.

For further information contact Reg Race on 0246-851143.

COVENTRY POLYTECHNIC

Students go on rent strike

All the Halls of Residence in Coventry Poly are now on rent strike.

The strike started with the 60 students in Raglan Hall, all of whom thought the rent was too high: £36 a week, for which they get a damp room and ten minutes walk to meals.

Residents at Raglan eat at Priory (550 residents) which was the next Hall to go on strike, not just over the rent (£38.65) but also over the inedible food.

The other two Halls — Caradoc and River House — soon joined the rent strike.

Caradoc Hall residents (180) include families and single parents. The rent is too high and the Hall is also four miles away from the campus and the city centre. No transport is provided; an impossible strain on women and single parents.

The rent strike was linked with building for the "Beat the Blues" demo at Tory Party Conference in Brighton. Two coaches were sent by Poly students.

The demo was called over the proposed introduction of voluntary membership for student unions and the threat to replace student grants with loans, and as a general protest against government education policy.

Briefing supporters are active in all sections of the rent strike and on the union executive. In the summer our argument that the Union should call a rent strike for the start of term was unfortunately defeated. This meant that when residents themselves called a strike valuable time had been lost and about 30% had already paid their rent.

By Carl Taylor
External Affairs Officer Coventry Poly SU (personal capacity)

Despite this, the strike is solid and the union is giving 100% support. The question now is: how do we win? The union and the Residents Committees have correctly decided that we must spread the strike.

The rent strike is an isolated form of action. We also need actions that will involve people in collective activity. On October 21st there is a Board of Governors meeting — an opportunity for a mass demonstration and picket.

Students throughout higher education face problems with substandard housing and high rent. Other colleges should draw inspiration from the Coventry action and build similar campaigns.

Letters of support should be sent to Coventry Poly Students Union, Priory Street, Coventry CV1 5SJ. Colleges should discuss mobilising for October 21st.

MUSIC COMMENTARY

Marxists on Acid Scandal!

First things first. An apology: in my article in the Summer Special, "Race Groove" should have read "Rare Groove".

Anyone who regularly comes across a music paper or a tabloid (for whatever reason), or who might even venture for a night out at certain places, will have noticed that a musical phenomenon known as Acid House has been sweeping the trendier Biz-dominated discoes up and down the country.

Questions have even been asked in Parliament, and all-party condemnation of this latest threat to the morals of youth has poured forth.

What is Acid House? While I can't pretend to be the "finger on the pulse" expert here, I think I've heard enough to form an opinion.

Basically it seems excessively monotonous, electronically synthesised, slightly funked-up combination of US and Euro disco, the "new" elements being "heavy mixing" (use of electronic effects and much messing about with the different frequencies) and excessive use of samplers (electronic memories in which any sound can be stored and then reproduced through a keyboard).

By MAJOR UNREST

These new elements are supposedly acid-inspired, acid being a chemical stimulant, a hallucinogenic drug which for most people most of the time can be a pleasant experience, but which can also cause horrific hallucinations, loss of control and an overwhelming sense of paranoid dread, and doesn't do your body much good, either. In my opinion it's not to be taken regularly and certainly never in excessive quantities.

I'm being a bit hard on Acid House (I've heard some good grooves) partly as a result of the scorn that a friend, who (like me) used to be a punk, and now works in a trendy club, poured on my belief that Hip Hop and House music carry the seeds of the most positive youth musical sub-culture since punk.

She describes the average Acid House audience as pretty vacant and the Acid House dances as having almost fascistic overones.

I seem to remember reading somewhere that Adorno, a Marxist cultural critic in pre-World War II Germany, believed all strongly rhythmic music to be a potential tool for capitalism and fascism, encouraging a slavish identification with the "work rythm".

As a Marxist myself I would say we should look at music dialectically (recognising that everything is in a constant state of development, and that all cultural forms arise on the site of a continuous struggle of competing ideas).

I would argue that strongly rhythmic music, with its unifying pulse, encourages a feeling of community in an audience (especially when loud and enveloping) that can be either progressive or reactionary depending on the overall feel and message in the music and lyrics.

The purpose of analysing cultural forms from a Marxist standpoint should be to illuminate (without over-simplifying) their economic and social roots, their social function and their social psychology, the deep reasons for their existence and for people's identification with them.

All this is in order that we as socialists will be better able to contest and nurture resistance to capitalist ideas in all areas of everyday life.

Just where that leaves us with Acid House, I'm not sure. Stay tuned to find out more — in the next *Labour Briefing*.

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)

Tackling the fascists on the terraces

Dear *Briefing*,

As a keen football supporter, and a member of Anti-Fascist Action(AFA), who attended the European Championships this summer, I was interested to see the article in *Briefing* on the events which occured.

AFA is keen this season to begin to combat the influence of fascists at football grounds. Despite our relative small size we hope to take on the task of leafleting many Professional Football grounds at least once this season.

So far AFA in Leeds and Newcastle, in conjunction with other concerned groups and individuals, have been very successful in starting to isolate the fascists who have been active at these grounds.

It is certain that the fascists this season will re-double their efforts around football grounds. Football supporters in the main are white, male and working class. Many hold racist and even fascist views.

Very few, however, are members of fascist parties. Fascist groups will only be able to recruit working class football supporters to their organisations if we allow them to do so.



AFA is asking for the support of *Briefing* supporters in combating fascists in football. We would like to know if you would be willing to assist with leafleting of football grounds this season.

AFA is also seeking to obtain as much information as possible about fascists from fans who attend games. Any information would therefore be appreciated.

In addition do you have any members of the Football Supporters Association or are any of your supporters on the editorial boards of the different football fanzines around the country?

Please let us know if you would be willing to help in any way.

Yours in solidarity
Mark Metcalf,
Member of AFA and a keen Sunderland supporter
(well someone has to!)
[Write to Mark c/o Briefing, and we'll pass the letters on.]

Calcot tenants determined to fight Tory assault on housing

Dear *Briefing*,

Are other readers suffering under Tory Councils' not even waiting for the ink to dry on the government's new legislation as we are in Newbury?

On September 21st, over 70 tenants from the Calcot estate (near Reading) formed a Tenants Association in response to a proposal from the Tory Newbury Council to transfer its housing into a newly created Housing Association.

We were shocked to learn that the majority of the Board of this proposed Association would be people chosen from "outside bodies", and that a tenant has already been picked by the Council to sit on the Board as a token representative.

We agreed unanimously to fight any plans to remove our homes from Local Authority ownership.

We also discussed the condition of our homes. Our estate was built in the early 1950s, and has not been modernised since. About half the stock is system built concrete, which has been surveyed and inspected many times, without any proposal for repairs being made.

We also agreed to campaign for a modernisation programme to improve the condition of the housing.

There are about 300 homes on the estate, and many of the tenants have lived here for 30



years or more, making it a close, friendly community. This will be an advantage in our campaigns. Many tenants at the meeting said they would tell their friends about the TA, and get them to join.

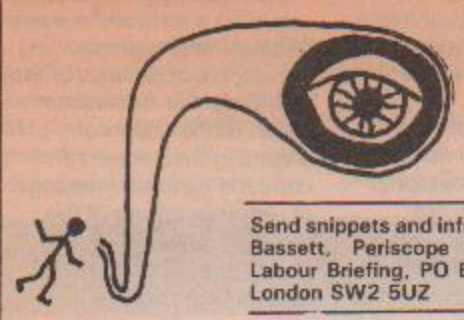
The newly elected, 5-strong Committee is now going to arrange a meeting with a local Tory Councillor, Chair of the Housing Committee, so they can find out where the estate is, and so that we can quiz them on their position.

The tenants are extremely angry that the Council has taken a major decision about our future without any consultation. The Chair of the TA meeting said our message to any new landlord would be "hands off our estate!"

Calcot tenants are determined to fight for their homes, and for improvements to the estate. If our determination was linked up with that of other tenants elsewhere in the country fighting to keep and improve their homes, the Tories wouldn't dare to take us on.

Yours,
Dave Warren,
Calcot Tenants Association Committee

Periscope



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

Farewell to the working class?

Lambeth Council has ruled out reference to "the working class".

Legal experts red-pencilled the offending words when consulted on the text of a Council report. They feared the Council could fall foul of the Local Government Act proscriptions on "political" publicity.

For some reason the *Mail* and the *Sun* have missed this latest outrage by censorious Town Hall busy-bodies.

Or perhaps this move is just part of the alliance being forged between Lambeth's pro-cuts leadership, the LCC, and the "post-Fordist" (post-socialist) *Marxism Today*.

They're not fooling

Workers' Power has called for a general strike on April 1st to mark the introduction of the Poll Tax process in England and Wales. Fine.

April 1st is, however, a *Saturday*.

Is this a new fetishisation of shift workers?

The fight against ET

The Leeds Labour Group recently considered a motion, put forward by *Labour Briefing* supporter Keith Nathan, that the Council not co-operate with ET, and support the Leeds Action Against Workfare scheme.

15 Labour Councillors voted for rejection. 20 ignored the decision of TUC Congress, and voted to accept ET.

Meanwhile, Leeds magistrates have just fined a local firm £1,500 for two health and safety offences which led to the death of YTS trainee Kevin Keating: £750 for each offence.

Council officers had already concluded that an unsafe working practice had been in operation.

Brian Smith, manager of the Wortley depot of the Peter J. Hopkinson Group, admitted failing to ensure the safety of an employee. Andrew Mayes, driver of the forklift truck from which 18 worktops fell on top of Kevin Keating, admitted failing to take reasonable care of a fellow colleague. Both were granted an absolute discharge.

Kevin Keating, of course, had already been sentenced — to death. Or, as last December's inquest put it: death by misadventure.

Briefing hits the Big Time

Of course we're used to the occasional scare story in the press labelling *Briefing* supporters "subversive", "loony", "very left wing" and all the other things guaranteed to make the bourgeoisie quake in their trainers.

Now, it seems, *Briefing* has made it big enough to be lumped indiscriminately together with the Anti-Apartheid Movement, CND, the Workers' Revolutionary Party, and the Communist Party (of Great Britain).

The Guardian of 24/9 informs the world that following the conference of the Campaign for Student Freedom, a new wing of the ill-named ultra right Freedom Association, a two page questionnaire has begun to circulate on college campuses.

The questionnaire asks for information about political groupings, citing, as examples, the august bodies listed above, including *Labour Briefing*.

It asks for the leaders of these "revolutionary organisations", their "year, course, and other personal information, e.g. age, where from, family background, personal habits (?), weaknesses (??), etc. (???)."

Let's just hope they don't add to the already rich controversy on the go amongst the left — by arousing any suspicion the information thus gathered could be held on computer.

Meanwhile, the next time you find a smartly dressed "fresher" asking you how often you change your socks, and whether you take sugar in your tea, mind you keep silent. Disclosing such vital information could obviously rock the very fabric of society as we know it.

Building Briefing

CONTACT BRIEFING

The *Briefing* Editorial Board, and the following Commissions, can be contacted at PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ, 01 733 7016:

Trade Union Briefing, Youth Briefing, Student Briefing, Briefing Women and International Briefing.

Deadline for articles: Issue no.71 (out Oct. 23rd): notify EB as soon as possible, all articles in by Tuesday October 18th.

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BOOK REVIEW

Old Ideas, New Packaging



The GLC: popular, but was it efficient?

***Socialism, Merit and Efficiency, Fabian Society* Pamphlet No.50, by Paul Corrigan, Trevor Jones, John Lloyd and Jock Young**

It would be easy to dismiss this pamphlet as ideological cover for Left Labour Councils in retreat. But its ideas are currently very influential.

It argues that a crisis in local government would have occurred even without the Tory attacks and consequent cuts. Like state-run industries, local government is bureaucratic and unresponsive.

The pamphlet calls for a new relationship between citizens and state institutions, founded on concepts of merit and efficiency. There is a small kernel of truth here.

Too often "defending jobs and sevices" has been seen as "defending the indefensible" — poor services and boring jobs. Too often we have not linked our fight to the improvement and extension of services. Too often those cutting services have been able to use cynical rhetoric about services' unpopularity or inadequacy.

"People should receive rewards on a measure which recognises what they put in to society," is the pamphlet's argument for "merit" as a central tenet of socialism.

Compare this to Marx: "*From* each according to his ability, *to* each according to his need". Two clearly opposed definitions.

By JOHN DAVIDSON

Despite tortuous attempts to qualify this notion of merit with talk of rewarding "achievable successes" (related to ability) the bald message remains: the more people put in to society, the more they should get out. These less able will have to set their sights on lower "achievable" goals, while the high-fliers reap the big rewards.

"Institutions should be judged according to their efficiency in carrying out agreed tasks," the authors argue. "Efficiency" is clearly a good thing, but efficiency for whom?

Many vicious anti-working class employers are clearly "efficient" at their job. So is the Tory Government at its "agreed task" (unlike many Labour Councils who have strayed far from the "agreed tasks" in their election manifestos).

The authors call for "an extension of citizen's rights and responsibilities" in assessing public sector performance. We agree.

We propose to unleash the huge untapped resources of the working class upon local government. Let local communities draw up plans with the Council workforce for defining and delivering the services they need.

Let's draw up democratic structures to ensure that their wishes are adhered to, and let's ensure that Labour Councils give them the power that members and officers jealously cling to.

No doubt that is just a little too radical and modern for the pamphlet's authors. Such a plan would immediately conflict with the government's cutbacks and laws.

It would sweep away the army of professional politicians, bureaucrats and ideologues currently fiddling while local government burns. It has nothing to do with "traditional" nationalisation or bureaucratic local goverment with which the authors attempt to saddle the Left.

In arguing that "we want to avoid industrial action especially in sectors like education and health", and "everything we propose for investment, for regional policy, for increasing worker participation should be submitted in the first instance to a test 'does it retain or extend current levels of efficiency?'," the authors are neither 'modern' nor 'realistic'.

These are old-fashioned clapped-out right wing social democratic ideas, which have been tried and failed countless times in the past.

BOOK REVIEW

Socialism and Trade Union Militancy

***Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, by John Kelly, *Verso* 1988, £9.95**

This book is a mess on just about every level, which is a pity because the initial idea looked promising.

John Kelly, emerging from Eurocommunist influence, subjects his mentors to withering criticism, based on first-hand investigation of the working class movement.

But there is all too little genuine investigation, leaving the sensible question which Kelly asks in his Introduction (about the relation between trade union struggles and class consciousness) totally answered.

Instead, there are a number of theoretical forays which reveal just how little Kelly understands of the ideas of Marx, Lenin, and other revolutionaries.

The section surveying the "big names" of socialist thought is slapdash. Marx's materialist conception of history is caricatured as "economic determinism" and a line of continuity is invented between Lenin's view of trade unions in the transitional society and the fraudulent state-controlled apparatuses in contemporary Eastern Europe.

By Mike Phipps, Woolwich CLP

Leon Trotsky gets a particular bashing, both for his general "one-sided catastrophist vision" and more particulary for his characterisation of the trade union bureaucracy as a distinct conservative layer with differnt material interests from the working class a whole.

Evidence for such a proposition, which Kelly doesn't really consider, is dismissed as "ad hoc, unsystematic and anecdotal, and for all these reasons unreliable".

Kelly prefers Gramsci's approach to trade unions and is particularly taken with the importance Gramsci attaches to factory councils. Trotsky's critical writings on factory councils are not even mentioned in this context, despite the list of a score of his relevant works in the index.

Kelly's theoretical superficiality and his reliance on the accepted wisdom of the Eurocommunists whose views he is trying to disprove weaken his attack.

One feels gratified to learn that the Leninist theory of the state "does have several very important strengths"; but when reading further on that "the Swedish labour movement has used the State to bring their economy to the brink of socialism," it becomes clear that, as far as fundamentals are concerned, reader and writer are not using the same language.

One useful chapter of the book offers a refutation of Hobsbawm's view that sectional economic militancy has a negative effect on the development of class consciousness. Elsewhere, Kelly is entirely locked into the Eurocommunist framework he wishes to criticise.

Serious activists who want to explore the relationship between union militancy and socialist consciousness would be far better off reading Alan Thornett's *From Militancy to Marxism*.

BOOK REVIEW

Revolutionary Fire — Still Relevant!

Revolution in Central Europe: 1918-1919, F.L. Carsten, Wildwood House, £9.95

It seems bizarre now that there was a time in Europe, in the aftermath of World War I, when communists rode on the crest of a wave of working class revolution.

It was the period when communists, like the Hungarian leader Bela Kun, passed measures to socialise *everything* "...down to personal jewellery and small savings".

They were years, in short, when our present-day Communist Party's project for "share-holding socialism" would not have been considered exactly ... radical.

Revolution in Central Europe, concentrating on the break-up of the German and Austrian monarchies, is a valuable guide to a key moment in that epoch.

In 1918, "what started as a naval mutiny within a few days overthrew a mighty empire which seemed to have been built for eternity". Workers' councils came into being.

The Hungarian and Czechoslovakian nations asserted their independence. Elected soldiers and wage-labourers supervised the administration, took over responsibility for basic law, and convened national assemblies.

By Andrew Coates Ipswich CLP

For the most militant, including the German Spartacists, Bela Kun's communists, and some of the German Independent Socialists, this was the start of total revolution.

Carsten's detailed research helps clarify our understanding of why the revolution failed. Like Rosa Luxemburg, he criticises those revolutionaries who indulged in *putchist* tactics, against the wishes of the reformist majority inside the working class.

Carsten paints a vivid picture of the problems faced by socialists only too aware of the immensity of their ambitions.

He is at his most severe with the "moderates" in the German and Austrian Social Democracy. The Germans, swept into power by the workers' movement, acted to paralyse it.

Noske's military command supported the "*Freikorps*" responsible for the deaths of Luxemburg and Liebknecht. Another leader, Ebert, "hated the revolution like sin".

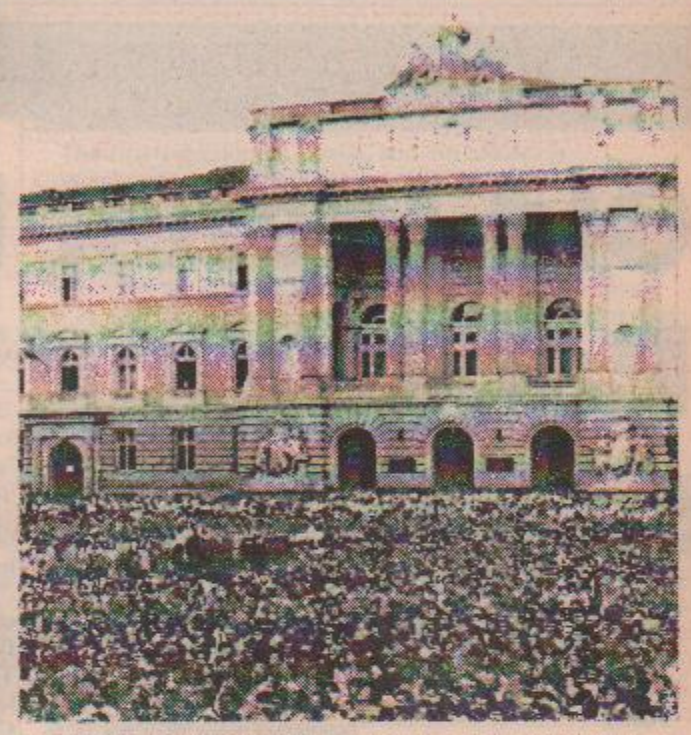
Carsten argues that such individuals failed to democratise their state and helped prepare the way for a new right ascendency, with far-reaching consequences.

Why is *Revolution in Central Europe*, originally published in 1972, still essential reading? It contains countless examples of the capacity of people *radically* to challenge their conditions.

The revolutionary fire of the period burns in it. We need to be reminded that this potential exists: otherwise we might as well join today's "Communist" Party and sign up for a package of B.P shares.

UKRAINE:

Ferment and confrontation



Demonstrators gather in Lviv

The following article by PATRICK KANE of the Ukrainian Peace Committee is an account of the break-up of a demonstration in the Western Ukrainian city of Lviv in August.

This event was one of a planned monthly series of mass meetings at the Ivan Franko monument in the centre of town. The July meeting attracted 20,000 people and led the authorities to ban the August follow-up.

Organised forces involved in these meetings include the Democratic Union, which has called for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Baltic Republics and Western Ukraine, and the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, which proposes the transformation of the USSR into "a confederation of independent states," placing stress on full rights for national minorities.

The July assembly saw the emergence of a broad based "Democratic Front to Support *Perestroika*", along the lines of similar movements in other parts of the USSR.

19% of the population of the USSR live in the Ukrainian SSR, which produces 25% of foodstuffs and vital industrial capacity. Chernobyl is also in the Ukraine.

Leon Trotsky remarked in 1939, "Nowhere did restrictions, purges, repressions, and in general all forms of bureaucratic hooliganism assume such murderous sweep as they did in the Ukraine in the struggle against the powerful, deeply rooted longings of the Ukrainian masses for greater freedom and independence."

The Ukrainian Peace Committee can provide detailed information on these and many other developments now taking place in the Ukraine: contact them at 168/10 King Street, London W6 0QU. Tel: (01)-221 0533.

According to a report from a leading member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union 30-40 people gathered near the Ivan Franko statue in the centre of Lviv on Thursday August 4th.

They were immediately descended upon by Militia from vans which had been waiting in a nearby street, and were told to disperse.

Within a few hours, however, the demonstration had grown to *3,000-strong*. The protesters began chanting "Free Ukraine! Free Ukraine!".

The report by the Helsinki Union states that "hardly had the people of Lviv tasted a hint of *glasnost*, the beginnings of a freer state, when a cold north wind blew."

The Special Patrol Group and Militia units went berserk. One unit "began to attack the crowd, dragging innocent people towards the Militia vans.

"One young woman who resisted strongly, had her head beaten against the van until she finally succumbed and was then thrown half-unconscious into the vehicle.

"Other women were dragged by their hair, or thrust around bleeding. One youth was carried by the hair and legs and yet another who had a camera was dragged away from his screaming mother."

As Army and Militia units attempted to drive away the crowds, a Colonel shouted to them "What do you need?"

To the reply, "A demonstration! A demonstration!" the Colonel shouted, "THere will be no demonstratoin!" and the crowd replied "Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!"

The riot squads attacked them again and attempted to encircle the crowd. "When the demonstrators began to sing the International, they again were attacked by the Special Unit. People were beaten, punched, and kicked."

A group of SPG Officers beat an old man until he was unconscious, then dragged him to the Militia van to cries of "Fascists! Fascists!" from the crowd.

The authorities wanted no record of the events. Jaroslav Fudko, one of the protesters, was followed home by three KGB who attacked him and confiscated his camera.

Twenty-five people were arrested by the authorities including Iryna Kalynets, who had addressed the 50,000 strong demonstration several weeks previously.

Ivan Makar, who also played a central role in last month's protests, was taken form his home by Militia and hasn't been seen since. He may be charged under article 187 which carries a possible sentence of three years for violation of social order.

Gorbachev's efforts to suppress the growing discontent in the Ukraine have not deterred the Democratic Front, which plans to continue the protests.

In a statement sent to Gorbachev, leading opposition activists from Lviv, Kiev and Odessa attacked what they describe as an "anti-democratic pogrom" and "methods used by the most reactionary of regimes."

In the Ukrainian capital Kiev there have been large protests by students despite efforts by the authorities to prevent them.

Gorbachev will be particularly worried if the protest spreads to the Ukraine's industrial Donbass region. It was in this region that the Free Trade Union tradition was born.

SOVIET UNION:

Gorbachev's Opponents

Kinnock's massive victory over the forces of darkness in the Labour Party came just after Gorbachev's coup against his rivals in the Politburo.

By Colin Meade
Surbiton CLP

Political commentators found the comparison irresistible.

Benn and Ligachev on the ropes; *perestroika* marches on, east and west.

Analogy

It would be a shame if anyone on the left took this analogy seriously, especially given what the opposition to Gorbachev, personified by Yegor Ligachev, really stands for.

Ligachev first rose to prominence under Yuri Andropov, who was associated with the drive against official corruption as well as a hard line against open opposition. Under Gorbachev, Ligachev at first appeared as a strong supporter of *perestroika*, and played a leading role in the anti-alcohol campaign.

Positions

However, in recent years he has marked out positions which appeal to sectors of the ruling establishment threatened by *glasnost*. He has accused the newly unleashed writers of showing only the bad side of the past, and in particular the denigration of the Stalin period.

He criticises those who "sometimes try to lessen the directing role of the State authorities in the cultural sphere...".

He has also condemned attempts to lay the Soviet Union open to world market forces, although he is by no means against new means of disciplining the workforce — as long as this does not threaten the interests of the bureaucracy.

He is an ardent supporter of the generalisation of the study of Russian throughout the Soviet Union and a critic of the "localist and regionalist" mentality in the non-Russian Republics.

Journals which oppose Gorbachev, such as *Sovetskaya Rossiya* and *Molodaya Gvardiya*, are known for their extreme Russian chauvinism.

Conspiracy

In the latter paper, one writer alleges a conspiracy between Zionists and Freemasons, described as the "living incarnation of Satan", bent on the destruction of the Russian family and the corruption of the Russian nation by sex, drugs, and alcohol.

Such is the moral philosophy of the Stalinist "socialism" defended by Ligachev.

Attitudes to the national question are fundamental in the developing power struggle in the CPSU. The "anti-Ligachev" Alexander Yakovlev came a cropper under Brezhnev for writing an article criticising Russian nationalism.

Shoes

One of the few remaining Brezhnevites in high office, Shcherbitsky, head of the Ukrainian party, stepped into the shoes of one Pyotr Shelest, who was caught out giving support to Ukrainian nationalism in 1972.

The most encouraging thing to come out of Gorbachev's reshuffle is that the new head of the KGB is no longer in the Party leadership. The previous secret police chief, Chebrikov, has been transferred to the task of turning the Soviet Union into a "state based on law".

Let us hope that the workers of the Soviet Union can use the weakened authority of the forces of repression to make a few practical suggestions about what these laws should be.

IRAN/IRAQ WAR

Hands off the refugees!

By Campaign Against Repression in Iran

The ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq War has coincided with an intensification of repression in both Iran and Iraq.

Both regimes, in order to cover up the futility of eight years of most barbaric and bloody warfare, have stepped up attacks against their opponents, especially workers and national minorities, notoriously, the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds.

But the repression is by no means confined to Iran and Iraq. Many thousands of political refugees from this reactionary war are now at the mercy of the Turkish and Pakistani governments who are handing them back to be imprisoned or executed.

Just two months ago, the Turkish authorities deported 52 Iranian refugees to Iran. They were summarily executed only a few yards from the border.

It is reported that the Turkish government has received $700 per head for this service to the Iranian Regime. Refugees were stabbed by agents of the Iranian Regime in Pakistan and the local authorities have so far refused even to consider any action.

On many occasions in the past few months, the Turkish police have not only handed back Iranian refugees but have been directly involved in their continuous harassment and have imprisoned them.

Turgot Ozal, the Turkish Prime Minister, visited Iran last year to negotiate a $3 billion trade deal. To please the Iranian authorities, the Turkish government is obliged to step up attacks against Iranian refugees.

According to the Turkish newspaper *Hurriyet*, 50 Iranian refugees who are now under the threat of extradition have organised a sit-in inside the headquarters of the Turkish Social Democratic Party. The lives of all Iranian and Iraqi refugees in Turkey are now in danger.

We strongly condemn these acts of repression and demand that the UN, whilst dealing with the ceasefire negotiations, should do all in its power to get the agreement of both regimes to give amnesty to all those still being harassed because of their opposition to this war.

- Free all political prisoners in Iran and Iraq!
- Stop the Executions!
- Condemn the continuing use of chemical weapons against the Kurds!
- End the harassment of political refugees in Pakistan and Turkey!

Contact CARI: BM Box CARI, London WC1N 3XX.

Two minutes in Gibraltar:

Twenty years on trial!

The conclusion of the Gibraltar inquest was predictable. The SAS and the British state were exonerated.

The inquest outcome was predictable because of the exclusion, from the outset, of any examination of the government's role in the affair.

By Piers Mostyn
Labour Committee on Ireland

Journalists and jurors were reduced to studying the mental state of the SAS men: a poor substitute for finding out whether they were issued prior instructions to kill — from London.

The irony is that everyone *knows* the government has a shoot-to-kill policy. Stalker exposed as much. The government admits as much in its heavily coded statements. So why the silence and Thatcher's uncharacteristically defensive insistence that the state only operates within the law?

Openly to admit that it operates a shoot-to-kill policy would risk rebellion from establishment liberals and soldiers getting locked up.

More importantly, it would involve an admission that Ireland is *not* a "law and order" problem and that *criminalisation*, the centrepiece of state policy since the mid-70s and the basis of Thatcher's proclaimed "victory" over the hunger-strikers, has failed.

This in turn would jeopardise Britain's standing in the international propaganda war. The political legitimacy of the struggle against imperialism would be recognised, revitalising the demand for political status for Republican prisoners. The Tories would suffer a major blow to their credibility.

The government has got away with murder and covered it up with hypocrisy — a testimony to the weakness of the supine "constitutional" opposition in Britain and Ireland. The opposition supports criminalisation and accepts the primacy of "security" considerations and the "law and order" solution.

Nonetheless, the long-standing consensus on security policy within establishment circles is weaker now than at any time since the early 1970s.

This isn't to suggest that any breaks in bi-partisanship are imminent. On the contrary, sections of the Tory press have been more forthright in their criticism than Labour.

Despite some "radical" doubletalk, the recent Labour policy document entrenches support for the Accord, the loyalist veto and, in practice, partition. Support for British imperialism in Ireland enjoys unshaken unanimity in ruling circles.

But Gibraltar has demonstrated that agreement on concrete measures to deal with Ireland is harder to come by. Leader writers cry in despair: "there is no solution!"

Thatcher has never before had to justify state action as within the rule of law — the RUC officers subject to Stalker's investigation were explained away as "bad apples" and therefore not products of state policy.

It also explains the big crackdown on the media that has accompanied the debate. In the past the main focus for "censorship" was media representation of the Republican viewpoint — interviews with Sinn Fein or footage of IRA volunteers.

This year, in addition, we have a wholescale offensive against any discussion or



PHOTO: Derek Spiers (IFL/Report)

"Law 'n' order" 's about!

scrutiny of *government policy* on Ireland.

The orchestrated campaign against "trial by television", coming soon after the withdrawal of TV reconstruction of the Birmingham Six appeal, is a new twist even in the context of decades of media bias on Ireland.

The issues at the core of the debate — the ideological justification for Britain's war and the right (or otherwise) of the public to discuss and criticise the state's policy — won't go away, regardless of the inquest verdict.

A socialist response must involve a broad but clear fight against criminalisation, repression, and death squads, and for withdrawal.

Days after the end of the inquest came the twentieth anniversary of the first major civil rights march in Derry. The *Independent* marked the occasion with a four page supplement entitled "20 years of undeclared war". Socialists must expose the obvious contradictions.

ALONG THE COLOUR LINE

Rainbow Coalition: build outside the Democratic Party

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

Since the Democratic Convention in Atlanta, Jesse Jackson has remained on the national political stage, albeit slightly outside the main spotlight.

At the urging of Mario Cuomo, he caucused with vitriolic New York Mayor Ed Koch in order to bridge shattered racial relations in that city.

Jackson expressed solidarity with Hispanic farm workers engaged in a strike, and has spoken eloquently on behalf of minority issues, women's rights, and organised labour.

In short, he has remained the essential leader of the left spectrum of US politics.

But what hasn't happened, and indeed may not happen, is a thorough critique of Jackson's 1988 Presidential campaign by those activists who took part in it.

Many Rainbow proponents were only reluctant converts to the Democratic Party, and remain sceptical at best on the long-term viability of the existing political party system to address fundamental economic, social, and political problems.

They supported Jesse *not* because he was the "best of bad alternatives". They viewed their participation within the Democratic Primaries as a means of *revolt* against the hegemony of the two-party system, a rebuke to Reaganism's reactionary agenda and an assault against the rightward drift among Democrats.

Within an electoral system which discriminates against Third Parties, building a democratic opposition to conservative and reactionary politics is exceedingly difficult.

If progressives select the more liberal of the two parties, they are



"Politics is... the struggle for power": in what kind of Party can the working class and oppressed best confront that question?

forced to work within a coalition which does not share their fundamental principles or objectives.

If they operate *outside* the liberal/centre party, they run the risk of being seen as utterly irrelevant and quixotic.

The basic dilemma is thus resolved by operating *simultaneously* inside the political party of reform, while also organising within communities and neighbourhoods in social protest movements.

But this strategy will fail unless the progressives build an autonomous organisation outside the mainstream party, an organisation which permits them the flexibility to mobilise their core constituencies in a dynamic manner.

Politics is not merely the process of elections; it is the struggle for power, and the realisation of every group's objective interests. Since most of the Democratic Party's leadership do not share common interests with low income people, Blacks, Hispanics, and others, their notions of "power" will be radically different from ours.

Jackson has said "it takes two wings to fly", a progressive and conservative wing within the Democratic Party, to achieve electoral victory. The analogy is perhaps better suited for the Rainbow itself.

Jackson's electoral mobilisations of 1984 and 1988 have formed two distinct constituencies — the progressive and left forces, which include community activists, trade unionists, women's groups, etc., and the more moderate liberal groups, represented by the traditional leaders of civil rights organisations, the majority of the Congressional Black Caucus, most Black elected officials, etc.

The latter group shows no inclination to split from the Democrats; it perceives Jackson's rise to political prominence as a lever with which to extract influence and position within the hierarchy.

The more progressive forces within the Rainbow Coalition, around National Director Ron Daniels and others to his left, view the situation differently. They are calling for a permanent and democratic structure for the Rainbow which transcends the politics of personality.

The Rainbow can only become effective if it takes concrete steps to develop an active programme *outside the Democratic Party*. As a minimum, this would include a national newspaper, a permanent national staff, dues structure, regional field organisers, and branches which take up local as well as national issues.

The next stage for the Rainbow is the development of a permanent nucleus of activists engaged in social justice issues on a national basis. If it fails to do this, the most important political opportunity of the decade will be lost.

Socialist Travellogue

In Cuba with the Jose Marti Brigade

IAN LUND, a *Briefing* supporter and NUR and Tottenham Labour Party member, returned last month from five weeks in Cuba with the Jose Marti Brigade.

The open-topped truck hesitated as it reached the brow of the hill; gears crashed and stomachs knotted in fear.

Looking back, the road snaked down in switchback curves through the green-cloaked mountain sides.

Then the moment of fear passed and the truck surged forward.

Not only were mental thanks made to the truck's Soviet manufacturers, but any momentary regrets at having embarked on such a crazy trip were shelved — at least until the steep descent began.

This had been the best day of the trip to Cuba: a three-hour coach journey from Bayamo to the foothills of the Sierra Maestra; and then an hour-long ascent by truck, followed by a five km trek on foot up rocky mountain paths to view the Commandancia General del Ejercito Rebelde at La Plata.

This was the guerilla HQ from which Fidel directed the war against Batista. The base consisted of a canteen, radio station, press briefing room, and Fidel's former living quarters, complete with bed and fridge.

Cameras were forbidden, for security reasons. This prompted speculation that in the event of a new US invasion (the 1961 assault on the Bay of Pigs was a complete fiasco), the camp could be utilised once more.

This isn't such a remote prospect following the election of the bellicose Reagan administration in 1980, the invasion of Grenada in 1983, and US support for the Contras in Nicaragua.

The unremitting hostility of the US since the triumph of the revolution in 1959 (above all, the total economic blockade) has arguably been the single most important factor informing the development of the revolutionary regime.

Unfortunately for die-hard sectarians and Marxist theoreticians, this article will not answer or even ask the question: "Is Cuba socialist?" Interested readers may decide for themselves by joining the Jose Marti Brigade, whose main purpose is to let people find out more about the Cuban revolution — at first hand.

The Jose Marti Brigade has been going to Cuba for 14 years. The participants work and travel together not as "tourists", but as "brigadistas". We spent three weeks in a camp near Havana working on construction and agriculture projects.

In the evenings, the Cubans organised meetings on a variety of topics, such as cultural policy, human rights, international policy and sex education. Representatives from liberation movements also came to speak (ANC, SWAPO, POLISARIO Front, URNG from Guatemala, FDR/FMLN, and representatives from the Nicaraguan Embassy).

We visited Havana's main psychiatric hospital, factories, museums, parks, and occasionally the beach! Delegations from the Brigade met with the FMC (the Cuban women's organisation), the CTC (trade union federation), the Pioneers, Association of Cuban Economists, and the Ministry of Education.

A lucky few were whisked by hydrofoil to the Isle of Youth (the former prison island where Fidel was incarcerated for two years after leading the abortive 1953 attack on the Moncada Barracks) to see the international schools where students from different Third World countries receive free education in their own language.

Finally, the Brigade left Havana for a 900km journey by train to the city of Bayamo for a week of sightseeing in Granma Province, where the revolutionary war began.

My lasting impressions of Cuba? On the down side, the policy of isolating AIDS sufferers and those tested HIV Positive. On the up side, Cuban internationalism and the emotional experience of visiting a camp for wounded El Salvadorean fighters.

Briefcase: for more information about Cuba or the Jose Marti Brigade, write to: The British-Cuba Resource Centre, Carila, 29 Islington Park Street, London N1. The cost this year was £560, including flight, camp fees etc.

LABOUR BRIEFING

Poll Tax National Action Conference

Organising Ideas and Action

The Conference called by the Socialist Conference on December 10th in Newcastle provides a unique opportunity to discuss strategies and bring together activists.

The fight against this iniquitous tax is already at an advanced stage in Scotland where collection starts from April 1st.

In England and Wales, groups are springing up all over the place but debate about strategy is barely beginning. Bringing together experiences from both Scotland and England and Wales should be useful.

What is clear from what has happened in Scotland is that the Labour leadership has no alternative strategy to the left's. They claim that Labour must at all costs uphold the rule of law.

As George Galloway pointed out at a Committee of 100 meeting at Party Conference, it's easier to

By Terry Conway
Chesterfield
Against the Poll Tax
(personal capacity)

support civil disobedience abroad than at home.

It's said we're encouraging people to get into debt by not paying the Tax. This ignores the reality of millions of working class people *already* living in great poverty (and debt) who will not have any choice about payment — they just don't have the money.

Parliamentary manoeuvres have been tried and failed. The *Stop It* Campaign in Scotland has raised the level of debate and has delayed the register but it has *not* stopped the Tax.

Waiting for a Labour government is contemptous of people's suffering in the here and now and utopian because if Labour fails to show a lead it will not gain electoral support.

The argument at the Scottish Recall Conference and at the Committee of 100 meeting at Blackpool was that even if 100,000 people didn't pay this would have less effect on local government services than fluctuation in interest rates.

Maria Fyfe explicitly said that non-payment on its own would not stop the Tax — then failed to say what else is necessary.

Culmination

But what she and others seem to ignore is that the Poll Tax is the culmination of Thatcher's attack on local government.It is conciously designed to make sure that Labour Local Authorities are unable to deliver the services working people need.

Local Authorities will take a further step on the road they started down by making cuts — that of doing the Tories' dirty work for them. And no amount of protest or manoeuvre will convince ordinary people that they should focus their anger on the Tories.

Labour Local Authorities must refuse to implement the Tax, Local Authority trade unionists must fight not to co-operate.

The Newcastle Conference will provide a forum for discussion of these and other questions in a constructive atmosphere.

We hope the Conference will agree a statement committing us to transforming the TUC commitment to a national demonstration in the Spring into reality, and setting up a national network to co-ordinate the campaign.

Disagreements over strategies and emphases will not be resolved by one Conference but we can all gain strength from sharing our various experiences and debating our differences.

NATIONAL
ACTION CONFERENCE
AGAINST THE POLL TAX

Sponsored by:

THE SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

DECEMBER 10
11.00 – 5.30
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
MEDICAL SCHOOL

The following platform has been adopted by the Socialist Conference Organising Committee and will provide the basis for the National Action Conference Against the Poll Tax:

"We believe that the Poll Tax is aggressively regressive, a major threat to our civil liberties and the trade union and further undermines the independence of local government. We recognise the need to examine alternatives to both the rates and the Poll Tax.

We believe that defeating the Poll Tax is essential for the defence of our liberties and we call for the broadest possible presence.

To this end we call on all those groups - local broad based anti-Poll Tax groups and unions, tenants, labour movement bodies and trade unions at every level, churches, political parties and groups, voluntary organisations - and all individuals opposed to the Poll Tax to join together and support the National Action Conference on the Poll Tax in Newcastle. We aim to gather together all these groups and individuals into a national network of resistance - to support each other, to exchange information and materials, to organise local and regional demonstrations and lobbies.

We aim to unify and co-ordinate the various tactics of resistance and civil disobedience, from delegation of the register and payment, including mass non-payment, to public, trade union and civic non-cooperation."

Other Sponsors include:

MPs
Maria Fyfe, John McAllion, George Galloway, Jeremy Corbyn, Diane Abbott, Harry Barnes, Mildred Gordon, Harry Cohen, Bob Clay, Eric Heffer, Tony Benn.
Trade Unionists
Geoff Revell (NUR), Alan Quinn, Tom Hart, Mike Gibbons (TGWU)
Councillors
Joan Twelves, Steve French, Greg Tucker (Lambeth); Pat Wyatt, Jon Lansman (Lewisham); Piers Corbyn (Southwark); Vince Gillespie (Haringey); Bill Dodds (Newcastle);
and
Rebecca Fleming (NUS London), Ernie Roberts, John McDonnell
[all sponsors in a personal capacity]

SMASH THE POLL TAX!

NATIONAL ACTION CONFERENCE
AGAINST THE POLL TAX
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE MEDICAL SCHOOL
DECEMBER 10

AGENDA

Introductory Plenary
Chaired by Harry Barnes MP
11 – 1
Speakers:
Alice Mahon MP
Gary Kent (London Against the Poll Tax)
Speaker from a Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Campaign
Susan McGregor (invited)
2 – 3.15
Workshops on:
Women, Black People, Poverty, Local Government, Trade Unions, Civil Liberties, Civil Disobedience, Youth and Students
3.15 – 3.30 Tea Break
3.30 – 5.30
Final Plenary
Reports from Workshops
Speakers:
Lorna Reid (LAPT)
Scottish speaker
Discussion from the floor + voting on statement prepared by Steering Group

Registration Form
I would like to register for the National Conference Against the Poll Tax on December 10.

Name.....
Address.....
.....
I enclose £10 delegates ..... I require use of a creche .....
£5 waged ..... No. of children .....
£3 unwaged .....
Cheques to National Action Conference Against the Poll Tax
Return to NACATPT c/o Terry Conway 16b Windsor Road London N7 6JG

POLL TAX DEBATE

Party Conference dodges the issue

The Conference debate on Poll Tax was highly predictable.

In a way, the *Militant* was set up.

The end vote, overwhelmingly in favour of burying our heads in the sand, hides the fact that deep division over how to fight the Poll Tax is simmering in the labour movement.

The question is how to bring it to the boil, without ending up with mere sloganising.

Unlike the special Scottish Conference, where the choice was total opposition or nothing, Blackpool delegates were given a choice between total opposition or no fight but support for anyone taking a personal stand.

Thus the LCC lefts in the Committee of 100 were given room to come in from the cold. The *Militant* posturing only helped them decide to

By Greg Tucker
Lambeth Against
the Poll Tax

take up the offer. Only Canavan and John Dunn (a surcharged councillor from Clay Cross) were able to put up arguments strong enough to advance the debate.

The *Militant* premise, that there will be spontaneous mass opposition to the Poll Tax with mass refusals to pay (out of necessity), is almost as crass as the right's, that we merely have to sit back and wait for everyone to vote Labour because they hate the Tax.

Neither will happen. Unless we channel the anger that will undoubtedly arise, organising it into a real opposition, it could well rebound.

At least *Militant* are trying to fly the flag for opposition, though they will never succeed if they fail to break out of their sectarian sloganising.

The right want no opposition at all. David Blunkett went as far as to say that we should work to ensure that the Tories do *not* stop the Poll Tax, in case we lose a vote-winner! What he could not answer was how we avoid Labour Councils getting the blame for enforcing the Tax.

As John Dunn put it, "if someone comes up to me and punches me in the face I don't ask who sent him, I fight back straight away."

A fightback against the Poll Tax can be built. Despite the way *Militant* moved it, Composite 34, drawing on lessons from Scotland, did point a way forward for such a campaign, based on organising collective active resistance. The debate is far from over.

