LABOUR BRIEFING
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40p

"TIN MAN" LEARNS FROM "IRON LADY"

GIVE THEM A WORKERS' ANSWER!

By Piotr Ikonowicz and Jan Sylwestrowicz
International Department, Polish Socialist Party
Writing from Poland

Mrs Thatcher arrived in Poland in a blaze of publicity usually reserved for the bosses in the Kremlin; on a visit taken as proof that Jaruzelski's regime is gaining acceptance in the West.

For a fortnight the media had been heaping praise on the "Iron Lady" (as they always call her): "one of the most distinguished statesmen of the century". More significantly, they had spent the last *year* holding up Thatcher's Britain as a model for Poland in the current "economic reforms".

Thatcher's economic achievements, they told us, show the correctness of agreeing to short-term economic restraint and hardship, in return for the promise that economic restructuring will yield long term growth.

A well known political commentator stated recently on the TV news (half cynically) "We can learn a lot from Mrs Thatcher. She's had the courage to force through unpopular economic decisions even against the opposition of the unions. Jaruzelski learns fast."

We have already witnessed the first example of Polish Thatcherism: the closure of the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk. With its workforce of 11,000, including Lech Walesa, the Lenin Shipyarad has come to be synonymous with Solidarnosc. At the time of writing, Solidarnosc leaders have pledged strike action to save it.

The threatened closure seems set to wreck the already delayed round-table meeting between the government and Solidarnosc leaders. This can only mean that the government is changing its approach — clearly frightened by the re-emergence of Solidarnosc as a mass force with renewed self-confidence.

Since the August strikes, Solidarnosc factory branches have begun operating quite openly, even holding open recruiting drives and demanding offices and equipment from the plant management.

Unrest continues in colleges, with many students boycotting compulsory military training and organising pickets.

Closing the shipyard, whilst an obvious way for the government to flex its muscles, entails an enormous risk. They are relying on the fact that many Solidarnosc leaders have been the most vociferous in calling for faster and deeper market reforms — here they are, then.

The Lenin Yard is such a symbol of Solidarnosc no one will believe its closure has anything to do with market reforms; but the fierce battle ahead will certainly raise the question of the market and Solidarnosc's attitude to it again.

Indeed, Lech Walesa, reacting to the closure, instinctively thought of workers' control and self-management. Echoing the growing shop floor consciousness, he declared that the workers would be prepared to take over the Yard and run it themselves.

Continued on back page



PHOTO: Jacek Wcislo

Polish workers: will they resist "market reforms"?

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Campaign round-up

NAC CONFERENCE

Going on the offensive

With the almost certain introduction of yet another Bill attacking abortion rights from Alton & Co. in the next session of Parliament, the recent conference of the National Abortion Campaign is promoting a campaign in and out of Parliament to allow women to make the abortion decision.

This includes a national event in April, to co-incide with the 21st anniversary of the operation of the 1967 Act.

NAC also endorsed any defensive campaign that might be necessary in the near future, based on a woman's right to choose, although also using defensive slogans, and built through existing pro-choice groups.

For the third time at a NAC conference, there was a discussion on the Warnock Report, this time looking at the proposals in the Government's White Paper.

By Leonora Lloyd, NAC

NAC agreed that the pre-embryo and embryo should have no status, but recognised the deep misgivings many women have about this matter, and felt that any licensing bodies — voluntary or statutory — should have a majority of lay members, and of women, on them.

In a long discussion about surrogacy, it was agreed that no woman should be criminalised for becoming pregnant on behalf of another woman. A working group was set up to look at the issues raised by Warnock and to bring back detailed proposals on what NAC's policies should be.

There was a lively discussion on current attacks around family planning, pregnancy testing and abortion facilities, all of which are easy targets for the overwhelmingly male health administrators.

More cheerfully, NAC's membership has doubled over the last year, including several new NAC groups and three new national trade unions.

However, this has not prevented a recurrence of a financial crisis which must be resolved rapidly so that a fulltime, properly funded worker can be employed.

The highlight of the Conference was the international session. Delegates heard about the experiences of a medical student who spent a year counselling in a feminist abortion clinic in America — a real inspiration to work towards the same kind of service here.

In complete contrast, Ruth Riddick, at the start of her British tour, talked about the problems facing Irish women in even trying to get basic information about abortion — media censorship, court injunctions against the counselling services and attacks on student unions giving out information.

NAC faces the coming period strong and determined to fight for the law and facilities we want and need, and to strengthen our international links.

NAC-SPONSORED TOUR

Irish pregnancy counsellor in Britain

Despite the Irish Supreme Court ruling that giving information about abortion services in England is now illegal, Ruth Riddick continues to maintain a phone service.

She will challenge the ruling in the European Court. As part of this campaign, Ruth is touring Britain to publicise the ruling and to raise support. The tour is also sponsored by NUS, LWI and the Irish Women's Abortion Support Group.

Dates remaining (listed below) are in November, the first venue being the daytime meeting, the second one being in the evening. For further details contact NAC: 01 405 4801.

10th: York, Leeds. 11th: Sheffield, Sheffield. 14th: Nottingham, Nottingham. 15th: Leicester, Norwich. 16th: Cambridge, Essex University. 17th: Brighton, London. 18th: London, London.

TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND!

The Troops Out Movement (TOM) is organising the "Year of Action on Ireland" campaign in an attempt to build local and widespread support for British withdrawal from Ireland based on our two demands of "Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole!" and "Troops Out Now!".

Bernadette (Devlin) McAliskey has been touring Britain speaking at public meetings organised by TOM. Remaining dates are:

SHEFFIELD: Nov. 9th, Memorial Hall, behind City Hall.

LIVERPOOL: Nov. 10th.

LONDON: Nov. 11th, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1.

Housing Action Trusts



PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

Brixton and Tower Hamlets tenants "visit" the offices of PIC Ltd., the consultants with the shady line on HATs.

Leaked document spills the beans!

As the Housing Bill makes its way through Parliament, a vigorous campaign of opposition has been built by tenants threatened by Housing Action Trusts.
Last month, as reported in *Briefing*, tenants occupied the offices of consultants hired by the government to "independently" examine the case for HATs.
Now copies of a joint tendering letter from the consultants to the DoE have fallen into tenants' hands, exposing the consultants' real aim.
As Dora Boatemah, Chair of the Angell Town Tenants Association, says, "the documents show the government is hell-bent on privatising our homes, and the consultants are conniving with them to give a spurious legitimacy to their plan."
Below Lambeth Councillor GREG TUCKER looks at what the documents expose.

Officially, the consultants are asked to "provide the Secretary of State with more information about these areas (i.e. the suggested HAT areas) to assist him in reaching a final decision as to whether to seek HAT designation for them."

But the first page gives the game away: the consultants ask the DoE to recognise "our single minded focus on the results which the Department needs, i.e. a fast, sure-footed and successful implementation of the HATs programme."

And if that wasn't clear, a snappy little chart points to **"THE GOAL — Successful transfer to the private sector."**

Having redefined their objectives, the consultants are aware that some people may object to being HATted. So:

"the report will also provide an assessment as to the political and social opposition to establishment of an HAT... Procuring support for a potential HAT is an important element of the work of the Project Director."

Information will be demanded of local Councils. But if it is not forthcoming? First, a threat — **"Total lack of cooperation... is itself however an indication to justify designation."**

Then, a promise that **"Statutory Powers will be invoked to procure delivery of a set of data which will include... tenant name, rent level, housing benefit paid, arrears, legal proceedings."**

Other means of snooping on local people will be employed: **"In order to obtain information on local unemployed people we will seek the cooperation of Local Employment Service managers for the Restart Programme. Over, say, a six week period, about one quarter of people in the HAT area who are six months or longer unemployed should attend a Restart interview. During the interview they could be asked a small number of questions..."**

And when they have the information? The exercise doesn't stop then. They propose:

"to design an organisation structure for the HATs" the aim of which will be to run all six areas (and more?) across the country as *one management unit.*

They propose **"to set up management information systems immediately — systems which are compatible across the HATs.**

Above all, however, systems which can be (and will be) set up and operated *independently of the Local Authorities* (their emphasis). **The benefit of this to the Department does not need further articulation."**

They will **"advise on the level of staffing, remuneration, performance appraisal and conditions of employment."**

And in case you were worried that this could mean loss of jobs, take heart! The manager responsible for this exercise is the ex-Deputy Chief Executive of the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Above all, the object will be "designing structures for the HAT which will facilitate eventual transfer to the private sector."

It is clear from the document that all sides know that HATs will not be popular, that tenants are bound to object.

HATs now stand exposed as nothing more than an attempt to privatise housing estates, in the knowledge that the other provisions of the Housing Bill for tenants' ballots may not produce the results the government wants (even though they have rigged the voting procedure).

HATs tenants will not be allowed to vote. The Lords added in this right, but the Tories are committed to removing it in the Commons.

The tenants under threat are building a strong campaign. The occupation of the consultants' office brought together tenants from Lambeth and Tower Hamlets. Other affected areas are in contact.

But there is only so much the tenants can do. Local Labour Councils have been slow in giving support.

All socialists must see this as a priority campaigning issue. Whether you live in an affected area or not, the leaked documents make one thing clear — this is only the beginning.

If they succeed here, who knows what will be next?

STOP PRESS: We have just heard that the Tories have made a major concession, and will allow the Lords' amendment (that tenants must vote on whether they want a HAT) to pass.

Keep up the pressure!

British Justice?

No Justice!

"British Justice — No Justice" proclaimed some 200 demonstrators in Manchester on Saturday 29th October.

They were protesting at the continued imprisonment of six men in the aftermath of the Birmingham pub bombs.

The meeting which followed stood for a minute's silence in solidarity with the three people sentenced to 25 years gaol at Winchester Crown Court for alleged consiracy to kill Tom King.

By Tony Maguire Leeds Central CLP

Fr Joe Taafe described the atmosphere of his meeting with their relatives as funereal — the difference being they were "burying the living not the dead".

John McDonnell (Chair of LCI and a member of the Guildford Four Campaign) greeted the assembly on behalf of Patrick Hill of the Guildford Four.

The report of the police inquiry into the case of the four is now with the Home Secretary, but they anticipated the same outcome as that of the Birmingham Six.

For the IBRG, Dr. Maire O'Shea denounced the PTA as institutionalised anti-Irish racism.

John Clark, representing the local committee, reported that a lobby of Parliament planned for later in the week was to present a petition of 20,000 plus signatures on behalf of the Six.

Kathleen McIlhenny, the daughter of one of the convicted men, conveyed the greetings of the Six to the meeting.

After a brief discussion, Fr. Taafe summed up the mood of the meeting with two slogans: "Thatcher — Let our people go!"; "Haughey — Don't let our people go!"

RALLY AGAINST RACISM AND FASCISM

Assemble Trafalgar Square 12.30pm Saturday 13th November

Once again the fascists are planning ot use Rememberance Sunday as an excuse for a show of force. Anti-Fascist Action is determined to maintain the momentum of opposition to the fascists built up over successive Rememberance Sundays since 1985.

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Labour Party Democracy: Revolution and Counter-Revolution?

From 1979 to 1981 major democratic reforms were won within the Labour Party, including mandatory reselection and election of Leader and Deputy Leader by the electoral college. It was described as a Labour Party revolution — but it was an unfinished revolution.

Since then, the counter-revolution has gathered momentum, all too often cloaked in the stolen mantle of Party democracy. Power has been centralised, policy has been created by diktat, and the witch-hunters have been let loose.

A radical extension of Party democracy is an essential ingredient in any recipe for future success. It is also part and parcel of the left's socialist aspirations for the party. Indeed, only the left will tackle the question seriously.

The agenda is a long one.

Starting with the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) and the Shadow Cabinet, we have to secure authentic accountability of all Party representatives (and of the full-time bureaucracy squatting in Walworth Road and in the Regions).

The right to make policy, choose representatives, and adopt tactics must belong to the members at the base — and should not be usurped by Policy Review Committees, "rolling" policy-making methods, or Shadow Cabinet *ad libs*. The stitched-up, stage-managed Conference must be broken open.

The witch-hunt must end and all Party members must be guaranteed the right to dissent and to organise with others in support of dissenting views.

We have to enfranchise and empower black people and women — and build a youth organisation in which young people themselves call the shots.

We have to transform the Party's local organisation, drawing a much wider circle of members into participation in debate and decision-making.

The link with the unions is Labour's lifeblood. But it must be renewed by radical reconstruction.

The weight of the trade union block vote at Conference should not only be reduced, it should be radically democratised. It must cease to be at the disposal of tiny official cliques and become the property of an active, democratic rank and file.

These are some of the principles which should guide the debate around the various proposals for reform which are now emerging.

In this issue we carry articles by Tony Benn and Keith Veness examining the question of Labour Party democracy and offering specific suggestions.

We invite readers to contribute to this debate — and ensure that it serves the interests of the Party and trade union rank and file — and not the narrow sectarianism of Kinnock and his LCC boot boys and girls.

Thatcher and Jaruzelski: Eye to Eye

Mrs Thatcher's visit to Poland was preceded by the announcement of the closure of Gdansk's Lenin shipyard and loud praise for Thatcher from Polish industry minister Mieczyslaw Wilczek.

Wilczek is a millionaire businessman who admires the way Thatcher dealt with the British miners, and who hopes that Thatcher will tell Lech Walesa that unions shouldn't try to run the country.

The Lenin shipyard is the birthplace of Solidarnosc. The reasoning behind the decision to close it down will be ominously familiar to British socialists: it is an "unprofitable" industry, which just happens to be a key centre of opposition to the regime.

Thatcher has reason to be grateful to the Polish regime, which poured coal into Britain to keep the power stations going during the miners' strike. Jaruzelski and his crew knew instinctively that their narrow interests were not those of British workers.

What is sadly ironic is that so many in the British labour movement persist in seeing Polish Solidarnosc as a reactionary, anti-socialist enemy.

When Jaruzelski sent coal to British power stations, Solidarnosc sent support to British miners. Last month, the co-ordinating committee of Solidarnosc added its voice to the protests against the sacking of the GCHQ trade unionists and reminded Thatcher that this action fitted ill with her alleged support for Solidarnosc.

Of course, Thatcher's Tories don't give a monkey's about Polish workers; and Thatcher will snatch those precious photo-opportunities with Lech Walesa with tongue firmly stuck in cheek.

Despite all the differences, and despite the Cold War, the rulers of Poland and Britain know they have more in common with each other than with the workers of either of their respective countries.

Arthur Scargill recently admitted, "I think I owe Solidarnosc an apology." But it's not only Arthur who owes the Polish workers an apology — it is dozens of people in the British labour movement who think a few priests and prayers alter the basic character of Solidarnosc as a mass workers' opposition to Stalinist bureaucracy.

Economic Notebook

Lawson's Autumn Statement:

Now you see it...

Hot on the heels of Paul Daniels' Hallowe'en TV Special came Nigel Lawson's rather less convincing Autumn Economic Statement.

By JOHN LISTER

While Daniels left viewers baffled, the ears of hidden rabbits and clips of concealed cards could easily be seen protruding from Lawson's pockets and sleeves.

He has tried the same tricks too often for many (other than his adoring Tory tabloid press) to be fooled.

Lawson's economic "miracle" has consisted of squandering nine years of oil revenues, an unparallelled and unrepeatable sequence of asset-stripping privatisation exercises, and the shameless creation of a credit-based consumer boom (consumer spending grew 10% last year as public spending fell).

Link this "loadsamoney" approach with a vicious crackdown on social security, housing, health, education, and other public spending, and you have the main, unsurprising features of today's economy.

The credit boom has created a £13 billion balance of payments deficit as punters buy imported goods no longer manufactured here: this deficit has in turn led Lawson to defend the pound by raising interest rates — thus forcing millions of mortgage payers further into the red.

To make matters worse, the cuts in the housing budget have pushed house prices ever higher, and forced more families to borrow even more.

"Credit" for those in work is of course the equivalent of debt for the unemployed and social security claimants, who have faced another year of vicious cutbacks.

Social security spending fell £1 billion last year through a combination of pressgang "Restart" and other measures to force more unemployed into low paid and part-time work, and Norman Fowler's package of cuts and cash limiting of benefits for millions of the poorest families.

Now unemployed youth are to lose benefits if they fail or refuse to find a place on a phony "training scheme".

The housing budget is being virtually halved over two years — Lawson's statement included a 21% cut next year, and cuts for the next three years: the effects are only concealed by continual sales of existing Council houses.

Of course, the biggest fanfare was reserved for the increases in health spending — up by a total of £2 billion. Yet despite Lawson's patter and the glamorous posturing of his lovely assistant Kenneth Clarke, it was hard to hide a much more dismal reality.

Once inflation is taken into account, and the increase is broken down into its component parts, the hospital services can expect at best a mere £350m increase — 2.8% — after six years of cuts brought a funding shortfall of almost £2 billion.

In fact the £350 million is itself an over-estimate:

- It assumes inflation will fall to 5%, from the present 7% — though NHS inflation rates are *higher* than the retail price index. Every extra 1% of inflation would reduce this "increase" by £120 million.
- It assumes therefore that health workers will accept a pay increase next year *less* than the current rate of inflation.
- It ignores the fact that the NHS is admitted to need an extra 2% in resources each year simply to keep pace with the needs of a growing elderly population and new medical technology.
- It conceals the fact that £280 million of the £350 million is to come from an accountancy fiddle that reduces the NHS pensions bill; a further £150 million is to come from "cost improvement programmes" (cuts!); another £150 million from Kenneth Clarke's new charges for dental and eye checks; and £25 million from "income generation" schemes.



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

Hey presto! No patients!

Behind the razzamatazz and drum rolls, the fact is that the NHS is actually to get *less* rather than *more* government support!

As the news focus moves on to further government moves to restrict social security spending, and more revelations of the scale of poverty among the elderly, disabled, and other sections of the dispossessed, the task for the labour movement is to channel the unvoiced resentment into anger and mass action.

Yes, Nigel still has a lot to learn from Paul Daniels. If all else fails, he can take heart — and lessons — from a new recruit to the ranks of would-be Tory MPs: champion runner, Seb Coe. The labour movement has the strength to make Lawson turn round and run.

Trade Union Briefing

Tories announce new "Code of Practice"

Free trade unions: but not in Britain!

By Mike Phipps, Woolwich CLP

"It has no legal standing, but its provisions are admissable in any court proceedings." With this predictable doublespeak, the Tories introduced their new "Code of Practice" on industrial relations. The Code lays bare the Tories' real intent behind their rhetoric about "handing unions back to their members". This has been the government's refrain each time they have introduced anti-union legislation.

Previous Acts introduced compulsory balloting for industrial action. The Code of Practice, motivated by a frustration at the way some unions have used balloting to their advantage in the negotiating process, advises when ballots might be "inappropriate". So much for the Tories' self-proclaimed concern for union democracy!

The Code says, "It is a misuse of the balloting process, confusing to voters, and potentially damaging to good industrial relations practice if a ballot on industrial action takes place where there is no need for it."

Given that the Code is legally admissable as evidence, the "need" for industrial action or not may presumably be determined by the capitalist courts. Also, once the Code has been incorporated into a court decision, it can be quoted as a legal precedent. The law will be established without a parliamentary vote.

According to press reports, some of the Code is modelled on the actual pre-polling process of the EETPU. The Code says that workers should not be asked whether they support industrial action in the same question as that asking whether they are prepared to take part in it.

It even prints an example of a model voting paper, and says that material putting the employer's case should accompany the voting slip!

Most menacing of all is the Code's provision that, whilst only a simple majority is legally required for industrial action, unions should not feel justified in actually calling action unless the number of those voting is at least 70% of those eligible.

This classic example of Tory democracy will allow right wing minorities who promote non-participation and abstention rather than a "no" vote, to have a disproportionate say in the outcome of any ballot for action.

TUC Leader Norman Willis has already contrasted Margaret Thatcher's transparent support for Solidarnosc in Poland to her increasing clampdown on unions in Britain. The question for trade unionists is: will Willis and the TUC adopt Solidarnosc's methods of mass mobilisation and industrial action to defend the dwindling rights of workers here?



PHOTO: Andrea Campbell

As the Hangers' strikers discovered, the judges are there to back the bosses, not the workers.

GCHQ

Trade Unionists show support

MIKE GRINDLEY, one of the GCHQ workers sacked for belonging to a trade union, was looking forward to a strong showing on November 7th's Day of Action when he spoke to *Briefing* just before we went to press.

News had come in of more than fifty rallies being held around the country, with Neil Kinnock pledged to address the main rally at Central Hall, Westminster.

Messages of support were flooding in from as far afield as Ireland, Malaysia and Australia, as smaller unions, such as the Scottish Prison Officers, joined CPSA and NUCPS in voting for strike action.

Indeed, our interview with Mike Grindley was interrupted by a phone call from the Philadelphia Anti-Ku Klux Klan seeing if their message of support had arrived!

Votes had been lost only narrowly in Inland Revenue and ICPS, who also work for the Crown.

Other workers, faced with the choice of taking "illegal" strike action in solidarity with workers in dispute with another employer, have not generally planned for official action. However, it was likely that a few spontaneous walk-outs would be taking place.

As Mike Grindley pointed out, railworkers, nurses, teachers, and all trade unionists wanted to vent their fury at an arrogant Tory leader who could support free trade unions in Poland, but not at home. If GCHQ trade unionists are left alone by the movement, who will be next for the chop?

The sackings at GCHQ will continue, as further workers face kangaroo "disciplinary" courts.

Action will continue too. November 18th sees a Day of Action based on the Oakley site of GCHQ, as the workers are given their cards. November 30th sees a mass lobby of Parliament.

On January 28th, there will be a major rally. That will be the fifth anniversary of the banning. Perhaps then the Tories will begin to get the message: trade unionists won't go away!

Send messages of support and donations (cheques payable to GCHQ Trade Unions) to: GCHQ Trade Union Office, 22 Clarence Street, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.

Education

Labour turns on London teachers

With the Baker proposals now well-established, teachers are faced with a further onslaught from the Education Reform Bill and from cash-strapped Local Education Authorities. How are teachers responding? MARTIN ALLEN, Ealing NUT, assesses the situation in London.

Any prospects of united front action between London teachers and Labour Authorities against Kenneth Baker's offensive have disintegrated over recent months.

It became clear almost immediately Baker's legislation on teachers' conditions of service had started its parliamentary progress that Labour Education Authorities had no intention of refusing to implement his proposals.

In only a very few cases were they even prepared to negotiate improvements with the unions on the package that included obligations to cover for absent teachers, and attend after-school parents evenings.

In fact, the LEAs have eagerly introduced Baker's five extra training days which the legislation states are optional.

Where teachers continued unofficial action by refusing to cover, Labour Councils have often colluded with the NUT leadership in attempting to have teachers disciplined or fined.

The NUT bureaucracy has seen this as an ideal attempt to destroy the strongest groups of militants around the Socialist Teachers Alliance that has given a prominent lead to the NUT in London.

The second offensive teachers have faced has come in the rate-capped Authorities. In Brent, Haringey and ILEA (the Inner London Education Authority), cuts have devastated teachers' conditions of service. In Ealing and Waltham Forest the situation remains uncertain.

ILEA, who had recently concluded a cover agreement with inner London teachers, are attempting to sack large numbers of their daily supply teachers — making such a deal unworkable.

They have also dismissed long-time NUT activist Dick North from his post. Dick was the main architect behind the ILEA/ILTA agreement.

The situation does not augur well for any serious campaign against the further attacks in the Education Reform Bill. At the moment the future is bleak for London teachers. Levels of morale amongst the rank and file need to be rebuilt.

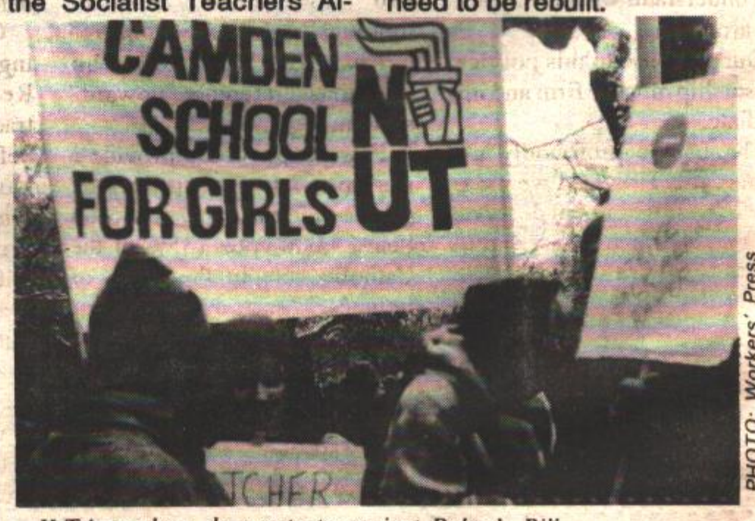


PHOTO: Workers' Press

ILTA teachers demonstrate against Baker's Bill

Leeds Update

ET

Despite a public campaign against it (see Briefing no. 71), Leeds District Labour Party voted by 80 votes to 49 to accept "Employment Training" on October 26th.

A bloc of the TGWU, GMB, NUPE and the right wing pushed through the resolution, claiming that the proposed scheme met the TUC's five conditions. In fact, the issue was steamrollered through before the Council Labour Group had even discussed the latest proposals.

Councillor Philippa Fitzpatrick spoke forcefully against the measure, pointing out that each additional payment made to ET trainees would be taken off their benefit. Leeds Labour Party's decision ignores the views of 4,000 unemployed people who signed a petition against ET.

By PHILLIP MASTERSON

Chapel Allerton

Leeds Eastern Area Community Health Council has voted against the closure of Chapel Allerton Hospital. Last month the Western Area CHC voted 6-5 for closure, provided certain guarantees could be met.

The Hospital Action Committee set up to fight closure is already showing how these guarantees are unfounded.

There is no approved plan for extra parking at the Leeds General Infirmary. The geriatric wards will be placed in the basement. Above all, the waiting lists will go through the roof. COHSE member and Action Committee Chair Maureen Idle told Briefing: "The fight will go on to victory."

Meanwhile, Chapel Allerton nurses are furious at the management's allocation of new pay grades. As well as many individual anomalies, the night shift are being given the lowest grades.

Now the campaign against closure plans to link the nurses' anger to the broader fight for more resources at Chapel Allerton.

Debate

Labour Briefing welcomes the chance to debate the structures of the Party, and how democratic improvements can be made.

We kick off our debate with two articles. One is by Tony Benn, the other a personal contribution from Keith Veness.

We hope Briefing readers will find the contributions thought-provoking — and will pick up their pens and join in the debate!

The case for Labour Party reform

We need to have a far more fundamental look at the constitution of the Labour Party than has ever yet been attempted.

The problems stem from our historical inheritance, the 1918 constitution which was devised in very different conditions from those today.

By TONY BENN MP



Then, the organisations of the working class were overwhelmingly dominated by men. Women had only just received the vote, and the culture of the population had not been enriched by the arrival of a mass of people from Asia, the West Indies, and Africa.

Anyone observing the sexual and racial composition of the Labour Party Conference, Labour Councils, or the PLP, is immediately struck by their unrepresentative nature.

To correct that basic defect we shall have to widen the whole basis of affiliation to the Party.

We need to include those organisations which have come into being to represent the more diverse interests of working people — on exactly the same basis as the trade unions are now affiliated.

In this way, Conference could and should become a genuine people's parliament. Only in such a framework can the demands of women for equal representation and of black people for their own organisational forms be seriously addressed.

Similarly we should extend the range of socialist societies eligible to affiliate far beyond the present narrow class of Fabians, Labour Clubs, and some other small groups.

Women's groups, black groups, environmental, peace, and community groups should be able to affiliate. So should all the socialist groups which now publish their own papers and argue sincerely and resolutely for their own perspectives.

But such a proposal could not be isolated from the central question of how such a new and extended Labour Party should make its decisions, and what voting weight should be attached to each constituent part.

The Labour Party was established primarily by the trade unions. The union link must remain central, otherwise Labour would decay into some new Liberal or Democratic party on the American model, bereft of purpose or power.

But the present arrangement, where the trade unions cast 92% of the vote at Annual Conference against 8% for the constituencies, cannot be justified.

The tensions of this system explain many of the problems the Party now experiences, not least because totally different constituencies reach different political decisions and then different groups of people — on the NEC, in Parliament — carry them out.

I can see a case for establishing a common franchise at Conference, in which the trade unions, the constituencies, and Labour MPs each have one third of the vote — to be recorded.

This common franchise would decide Party policy, elect the Leader, the National Executive and the Shadow Cabinet, or the Cabinet when Labour is in power. It could do more than anything else to weld us together.

The precise form of franchise within each section of the Party would also need to be considered. It would be possible to have a much more decentralised basis of representation for the unions (as well as other affiliated bodies) so that the balance of opinion could be more precisely reflected. Trade union delegations could even be chosen on a regional basis.

These are only some of the issues we need to considere to re-equip the Labour Party to represent working people and their wide interests and concerns in the next century.

Time to open a new front

Kinnock and the "new realists" now claim to be in favour of widening decision-making and involving a mass membership.

By Keith Veness
Islington North CLP

They draw a scare picture of small bands of zealots passing resolutions aimed at losing elections, and deselecting honest MPs and Councillors, over the heads of "ordinary" members.

Such is Kinnock's travesty of a CLP. The left must relaunch an offensive to bring our Party under our control. We demand a socialist leadership — accountable to us, and not to the press barons and big business.

There are two campaigning priorities.

•How should CLPs make decisions and involve their members?

Socialists always argue for active, participatory democracy. In trade unions, we stand for ballots at the workplace, after full discussion of the issues. We oppose postal ballots that go to members long dead or moved away and where discussion, such as it is, is decided by the Daily Mail and the Sun.

Workplace ballots and debate enabled us to win decisive victories in many unions in the 1985 political fund votes. In the Labour Party, the same principle should apply. Nominations, selections and major policy votes should involve organised discussion of what we require from anyone selected or from any decision made.

An aggregated vote from all members at a ward meeting, with provisions for people to vote who have work or caring commitments, would involve more active participation and greater interest — and could only aid the left in gaining accountability and socialist policies.

We proved this in Islington North, where this method produced a 72% vote for Tony Benn, the biggest margin in any CLP!

•We must support change at Party Conference. The annual ritual of policies being hatcheted by the Party leadership and four or five General Secretaries must be changed.

The battle to get the "40:30:30" system for Leader and Deputy Leader elections should be extended to all policy votes and to all other elections.

Doesn't this give MPs a direct vote? Yes, but it would sharply raise the case for MPs voting according to the CLP's mandate. It would both weaken the system of Leadership patronage that so disfigures parliamentary politics and give CLPs incentives to elect representatives.

The NEC could then be restructured into eight union places, six MPs and six non-parliamentarian CLP delegates (as well as the Women's Section, etc.).

It is hard to see how such a move could be opposed by those union leaders such as Ron Todd, who have already welcomed changes to the block vote. This would strengthen the hand of rank and file activists seeking a genuine "parliament of labour", and not the travesty we have at present.

Kinnock and the LCC have opened a Pandora's Box by suggesting reform. Balloting an active membership, reforming Conference and breaking down the block vote are in our interest, but only if we stand for active involvement, mandation and accountability.

I hope this article can start a far-reaching debate and lead to *Briefing* once again taking the lead in fighting for Party democracy.

Trade Unions and the Sinn Fein ban

Seen but not Hurd

The new government measures have far reaching consequences both for media freedom and the democratic rights of every citizen.

By MIKE JEMPSON

The issue at stake is nothing to do with support for "terrorist violence" in pursuit of political ends.

It is about our right to know and understand what is happening around us.

Our response to this political censorship must be firm and immediate.

The ban is profoundly undemocratic. How can we judge whether a government deserves our support when we are denied access to its critics or to information that will help us make up our own minds?

How do those who voted for Sinn Fein, because no one else is prepared to articulate their aspirations, now express their views? Despite recording their preferences through the ballot box, their political stance has now been outlawed.

They are not the only ones who feel that coverage of the military, social and political situation in the Six Counties is too infrequent, seldom thorough, and already subject to censorship through the notorious "reference upward" system.

Few people could provide a resume of the political programme which has won Sinn Fein 83,000 votes (35% of the Catholic vote in the north of Ireland), 59 seats on local Councils, and a number of MPs in recent years.

They would, perhaps, be even harder pushed to explain the difference between the UDA line and that of Paisley's "Democratic" Unionists.

Broadcasters should be required to spend more time investigating Sinn Fein's political programme rather than suppressing it.

Instead we are faced by a ban which is as ludicrous as it is dangerous. According to the BBC it allows "genuine performances" of Irish rebel songs, but not if they are sung on demonstrations.

Channel 4 insisted on removing Christy Moore's Unfinished Revolution from the sound track of *Mother Ireland* even before the Derry-made film was banned under the Hurd ordinance, because it contains a previously unseen interview with Mairead O'Farrell.

Discretion on all such matters will now lie entirely with the Home Secretary. Countering the Hurd ban is a political struggle we cannot afford to lose.

Opposition cannot be left solely to the hapless journalists whose daily work will be most directly affected. They must now seek assurances from everyone they speak to that they do not belong to or support any of the banned organisations.

That is hardly a recipe for open and impartial journalism, and makes "live" coverage of incidents impossible, unless it is reported solely from the British government's point of view.

Meanwhile the "deregulation" and restructuring of British broadcasting have thrown broadcasting companies and their workers into chaos.

It is significant that the Hurd ban came on the eve of the government's White Paper on the future of broadcasting and in the middle of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation into trade union practices in what Mrs Thatcher has called "the last bastion of restrictive practices".

The ban is yet another convenient way of intimidating broadcasters, who have previously shown themselves far more independent than their colleagues in "Fleet Street".

Phone-ins have already been cancelled, and instructions have been issued to cut off, or simply not take, any caller whom the broadcasting station believes might make a "proscribed" contribution.

What is to prevent similar bans on Welsh nationalists, animal liberationists, Class War and other "unconventional" political groups thought by the authorities to espouse violence?

There have already been calls from other governments for Britain to restrict media access for their "violent" critics. Given Mr Botha's support for the ban, it would come as little surprise if there were moves to gag the ANC, or the PLO.

We would then be halfway down the slippery slope to totalitarianism. By defending our civil liberties now, we may at least clamber back from the brink.

The broadcasting authorities must be constantly challenged about every application of the ban. "Health warnings" should signify where reports have been censored, and the Home Office should be badgered by legal challenges and complaints.

The NUJ Day of Action on November 10th should be the prelude to a broad-based campaign for a a Bill of Rights that would enshrine the Right to Speech and the Right to Know in law.

After all, the British government built such safeguards into the German constitution after World War II precisely to guard against the return of fascism.

Mike Jempson represents the NUJ on the National Council of the Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom, and has been co-ordinating the Union's response to the Hurd ban.

Labour Party

Soft left on wild goose chase

Many of the speakers invited to *Tribune*'s "Hard Labour" Conference espoused politics way beyond those with which the journal usually associates itself.

By Pete Firmin
Brent East CLP

These included Narendra Makanji of Black Sections, Kevin Davey of the Socialist Society, Tony Benn, and Ken Livingstone.

During the previous week, Peter Hain's paper calling for a new left grouping between the Tribune and Campaign Groups had been published.

The scene was thus set for lively debate between "soft" and "hard" left.

The organisers expected 300-500, but only 150 turned up — and "debate" was limited.

Jack Dromey of the TGWU kicked off proceedings with a straight Kinnockite speech, giving full support to the Policy Review, praising cost-efficiency, good management, and industrial relations in the private sector.

To top it off, he lashed out (in the most sectarian manner) at the "sectarianism" of the hard left, likening the Campaign Group to the Politburo under Brezhnev.

We were also treated to a speaker from the Royal College of Nurses in the trade union workshop and a dishonest Tom Sawyer, failing even to mention his recent prominence as Labour's witch-hunter in chief, talking of "change through persuasion not coercion."

Robin Cook and Peter Hain did at least attempt to examine the problems facing Tribune and the Tribune Group of MPs, but derided the hard left as "oppositionalists" and "fundamentalists".

Insults

The intention of such insults is to limit the scope of debate. They recognise the dilemma faced by a soft left which backs a leader who is taking the party ever further to the right; but they rule out in advance any thought of linking up with those forces which have opposed this leadership from the start.

Instead, they frantically seek a "third road". Put most clearly by Livingstone, this involves: welcoming but distrusting the Policy Review, refusing to continue to prop up the right, and setting a soft left agenda in local government (neither cuts nor deficit budgets).

He spoke glowingly of the emerging block in the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) straddling the Campaign and Tribune Groups.

For Robin Cook the Tribune Group's problem is that it is the largest group in the PLP at a time when Thatcher has made Parliament largely irrelevant. He spoke of the need to link up with those outside Parliament.

Peter Hain said he was fed up with fundamentalism, but also fed up with the Party's current direction.

He described the Tribune Group as an echo chamber for the leadership and talked of the *prospect* of a major shift to the right in the Party (yes, we wondered where he'd been for the last few years).

Clare Short welcomed the fact that the leadership issue is "settled" and questioned the policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

From the platform, only Tony Benn and Kevin Davey began to spell out clear left alternatives to this confusion.

There is much useful discussion to be had with *Tribune* supporters who now recognise where Kinnock is leading the Party, particularly over defence. But so many of them want to limit such discussion from the outset.

They want to square the circle of support for Kinnock and disapproval of all its consequences. They fear being tainted as "oppositionalists".

How much of an audience exists for this wild goose chase is debatable, but with Kinnock setting up unilateralism as his next target, it may well grow.

Vacuum? What Vacuum?

If you organise a conference on the future of the left it is probably better not to ask Jack Dromey to be the first speaker.

By Jane Kelly
Peckham CLP

His "progressive realism", (calling on trade unionists to support efficient management and on Councillors to put service delivery up front) was peppered with attacks on other speakers in the meeting.

These included Tony Benn for "calling for socialism from a small market town in the North" and Ken Livingstone for supporting "Pol Pot tactics in local government".

His speech symbolised the ideological confusion of the Tribune Conference framework.

Speakers closely identified with Kinnock's politics — Robin Cook, Michael Meacher, and Harriet Harman — were placed alongside explicit opponents of Kinnock, including Benn and speakers from the Socialist Conference.

The "Hard Labour" Conference was set up in the belief that it was possible to form a new democratic left, to the left of the Tribune Group and the LCC but to the right of the Campaign Group.

Both Livingstone and Peter Hain argued that there was a role for such a centre left. Indeed the latter claimed it would fill a "huge vacuum".

But deriding the Campaign Group and its allies as "oppositionalist", on the one hand, and Kinnock's supporters as "pragmatist", on the other, is not an adequate analysis of today's political geography.

It is true that the soft left has been used by Kinnock, rather than the other way around. But this is not a revelation for some of us who have argued for two years that support for the leadership was providing a left cover for a conscious and deliberate shift of Party policy to the right.

Unfortunately for erstwhile LCC supporters, Livingstone and Hain, there is no political space in which to organise, despite the apparent opening made by Todd in his Tribune speech in Blackpool.

In the Parliamentary Party, MPs have had to decide whether they are prepared to fight the rightward drift, in which case support for the Benn/Heffer leadership campaign was an obvious benchmark.

Amongst the rank and file the case is even clearer. Learning the lessons of the Miners' Strike and of Wapping, many have moved to the left. Others, seeing no other route than dropping every principle in order to win at the polls, have capitulated to Kinnock.

There *is* a third group. Demoralised by the Party's incapacity to fight the Tories and confused by the unprincipled tactics of the LCC, they have dropped out altogether. No one on the left crows about this loss of membership; what we have to do — and are doing — is to seek solutions to the problem.

As Kevin Davey (speaking for the Socialist Society) pointed out, there is already a group of socialists facing up to the decline of the left, determined to fight the Tories in the here and now, and to take on Kinnock and Willis in the process.

The caricatures of Chesterfield made by Dromey *et al* bear no relation to reality. Compared to the 150-200 unenthusiastic and confused activists at the *Tribune* weekend in London, the 2,000 who have twice committed themselves to a weekend in a "small market town in the North" do represent the beginnings of a real answer to demoralisation and isloation on the Labour left.

Refugees from *Tribune*, the LCC, and others are welcome to join the process. But in the end, of course, it's a matter of politics.

As one SWP comrade put it "Which side are you on?". If you want to fight *now* against the Poll Tax, against redundancies, for the right to choose, for the right to free speech, then you will inevitably find yourself opposing, not just the Tories, but Kinnock, Hattersley, Willis, and probably some of the Tribune Group as well!

If, however, you only want to stop Kinnock moving so fast to the right, and would rather avoid the matter of building a new leadership — then the Tribune/LCC axis is probably where you should stay.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Tony Benn: criticised for "calling for socialism from a small market town in the North."

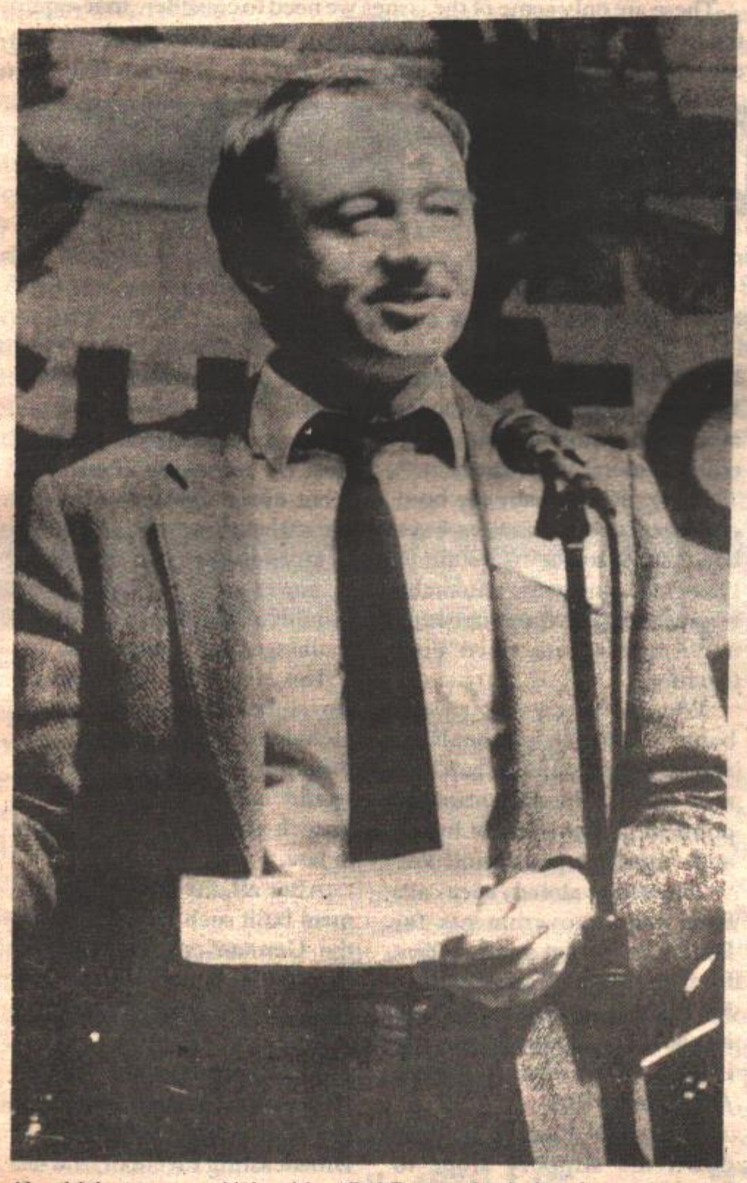


PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Ken Livingstone: criticised for "Pol Pot tactics in local government."

Campaign for Socialism

Re-organising the Labour Left

By MARK SEATON

The Campaign Group has called a national co-ordinating meeting in London on November 12th.

Representatives of the Labour left from all Labour Party Regions will meet to discuss the Campaign for Socialism, the initiative launched jointly by the Campaign Group and the Socialist Conference at Blackpool.

Make sure your Region is represented — and that the delegates in London are representative of all strands of opinion in your local Labour left.

This meeting marks a step forward for the Campaign Group. Linking grass roots activists with MPs and national campaigning bodies can only help build a stronger, more united, more democratic left.

The agenda is sure to include a debate on future leadership challenges, a discussion on a socialist response to the Policy Review, a campaign to defend unilateralism, and a number of pressing organisational problems.

Contact Jon Lansman, c/o Jeremy Corbyn, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA for details.

A Modern History of the Labour Party

Bevanism: Naked in the Conference Chamber?

Traditional Labour left-wingers were impressed by the achievements of the 1945 Attlee government on the domestic front. But the 1950 Labour government failed to move forward.

Attlee and his cabinet knew that they could only carry out their election programme by having a real showdown with the capitalists.

By BOB PENNINGTON

Drained of ideas, plagued by a balance of payments crisis, and with no stomach for a fight, they went into retreat. The buzz word was "consolidation".

But Gaitskell's budget, which imposed charges on the NHS to finance arms, provoked a revolt of left MPs. Bevan, Wilson, and John Freeman resigned from the cabinet.

Though they assured Attlee they would do nothing to impair party unity, they reserved "their democratic right to debate freely issues of government policy."

With this statement, Bevanism was born, and with it, the contradictions that would dog it until its demise.

Later that year, Labour lost office. The leadership, convinced their previous course was right, had no intention of abandoning its bi-partisan approach. On the big issues — the Bomb, German re-armament, Britain's colonial wars — they offered no opposition to the Tories.

However, the right's grip was weakened.with Labour out of office, a powerful argument for suppressing differences had gone.The ranks wanted to debate why Labour had lost and dissident MPs around Bevan gave the left a focus.

Tough right wing union leaders wielded the block vote with a ferocity which would have delighted Neil Kinnock, Bevan still had considerable support in the unions, notably from construction workers, boilermakers, foundrymen, metal mechanics, tobacco workers, vehicle workers and the Fire Brigade.

Although the Transport Workers was then a right wing bastion, it also housed dock, building and car workers, among the most militant sections of the working class at that time.

Their stewards and leading activists were often Bevan supporters — I remember organising three coach loads of Liverpool dockers to hear Bevan speak in Manchester one Saturday evening in 1955.

But the Bevanites' approach to the trade union question (and the block vote in particular) was inadequate. They increased *Tribune*'s industrial coverage, ran *Tribune* "Brain's Trusts" which attracted large audiences of Party and trade union members, but shied away from an organised fight against the bureaucracy within the TUC and the unions themselves.

It would have been difficult. The right wing leaders would have declared war, and wars have casualties. But it was the only way to break the power of the right and win fundamental change.

In the 50s, the left-right divide was demarcated by the Bomb. For Gaitskell & Co., the world was divided into two camps: "western democracy" vs. the Soviet bloc. They were totally committed to the west and therefore supported rearmament and the Bomb.

The Bevanites also subscribed to the "two camp" theory. They thought Labour should mediate between the worst excesses of the two great powers and create an alliance with so-called non-aligned countries, like India.

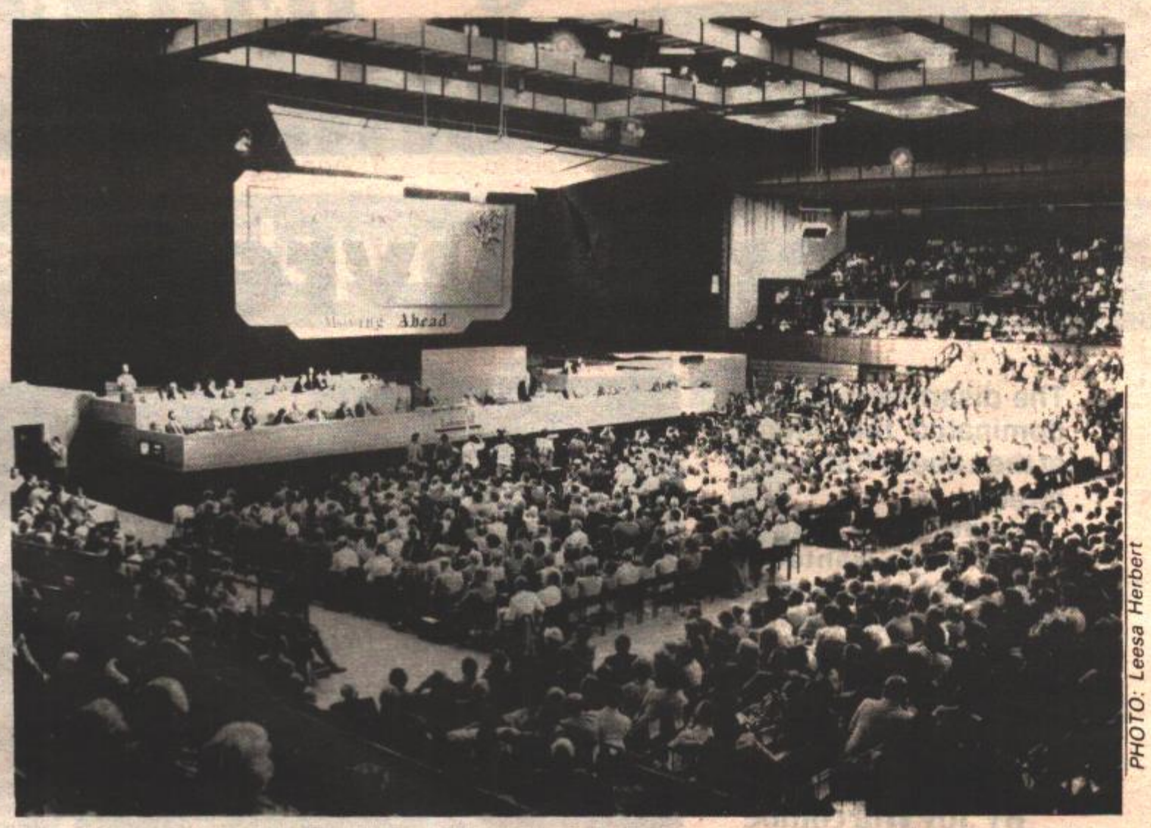


PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

The rank and file are still grimly clinging on to unilateralism at Party Conference — year after year.

But the acceptance of the "two camp" theory reduced politics to manoeuvre and diplomacy, and marginalised the mass movements.

By 1957, when he was Labour's foreign affairs spokesperson, Bevan believed a deal could be made with the Russians for a nuclear free zone in Europe, policed jointly by NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

So keen was he to get agreement with Khrushchev that, he admitted later, "he had suppressed his temptation to mention Hungary and Poland."

In the new situation created by the Khrushchev "thaw", Bevan saw an opening for negotiation, not unilateralism. The H-Bomb represented Britain's capacity to negotiate.

When the Labour Party Conference debated unilateralism, Bevan opposed it, asking: "Am I to go into the Conference Chamber naked?"

The left inside the Party and the unions was overwhelmingly unilateralist. Having declared for multilateralism, Bevan could no longer claim to be its leader.

It was the kiss of death for Bevanism, already jettisoned by former supporters like Crossman and Wilson. Bevan without Bevanism could not stay the course. *Tribune*'s influence and circulation took a nose dive. A new left had to be built.

Labour Students

New caucus fights for students' rights

The Labour Students Left Caucus has emerged as a national initiative from humble beginnings at Manchester Polytechnic.

By Roland Wood LCI Student Officer (personal capacity)

It has grown in response to widespread dissatisfaction with both the current leadership of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) and National Union of Students (NUS) *and* the "official" opposition, Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN).

Such dissatisfaction has created a vacuum on the left of NOLS, a vacuum which Left Caucus seeks to fill.

Initially, of course, Left Caucus will itself be an opposition current. In the immediate future we hope to establish ourselves as the largest opposition current.

Through that process we can lay the foundations for an alternative leadership in both NOLS and NUS and begin to transcend "institutionalised oppositionalism".

SSiN were, to some extent, beginning to recognise the pitfalls of being "institutionalised" but attempts to move beyond this suffered for a number of reasons:

•An underestimation of the need to challenge the current direction of NUS *inside* NOLS.

SSiN seemed to view a consistent intervention within NOLS as secondary to its independent intervention within NUS.

Left Caucus should not rule out the importance of an independent intervention but in doing so should never subordinate consistent and patient work within NOLS to the often transient glory of the NUS Conference floor. The "Democratic Left" control NUS *through* NOLS.

•A degeneration into unprincipled opportunism/popularism.

Rather than orientating themselves towards NOLS and *seriously* challenging for its leadership, SSiN preferred to build alliances with forces inside NUS which could in some cases be characterised as anti-socialist.

Such "popular frontism" led, particularly on international questions, to a dilution and sometimes outright rejection of principled anti-imperialism.

Similarly, as regards women, their perspectives became so crude as to appear hostile to most socialist feminists. All this for the sake of votes from the centre-right.

•A failure on the part of the largest tendency in SSiN, *Socialist Organiser*, to distinguish between advocacy of its own programme and promotion of one required for the NUS, thus destroying a potential united front.

Learning from these mistakes is a pre-requisite for the success of any new left current.

While we seek to build unity around a clear programme, we recognise at the same time that such a programme must be flexible and cannot encompass (at least initially) every possible angle of student politics.

The potential for Left Caucus to meet these challenges lies in its origins. Left Caucus grew out of a reaffirmation of certain basic socialist principles (internationalism/anti-imperialism, support for autonomous movements).

The politics that informed the basis of the draft programme we produced and circulated were positive — a statement of what we were *for* rather than what we were against.

Now, as we prepare for our national launch, our intervention around the attacks on student rights needs to be clarified. In a leaflet promoting the November 27th meeting we have attempted to identify key areas of debate:

•opposition to outside interference in the business of the union;

•opposition to voluntary membership;

•for the promotion of rank and file action and the widest possible involvement of NUS membership in these struggles;

•against the bureaucracy and careerism which has dominated NUS structures. This remains an obstacle to building a mass, participatory, democratic, fighting union.

National Meeting Sunday November 27th, 11-5 Manchester (venue to be announced) Copies of draft programme and further information from Roland Wood, 01-641 4158.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Socialist Organiser: "advocating its own programme."

Feature: Peace and Disarmament

DEFEND UNILATERALISM

Counter Kinnock's conference manoeuvres

The disarmament issue dominated the agenda at the Labour Party Conference.

Labour leaders desperately wanted to pass Composite 55 so that they could get on with the job of ditching unilateral nuclear disarmament before the next general election.

By Joy Hurcombe
Labour CND



Labour Leader Neil Kinnock: facing a crunch year ahead

Their tactics were well planned. First, the Leader's speech highlighted the key arguments ("we can do little about nuclear disarmament until we win power", "we are in a new international situation", "multilateral and bilateral options must enter now into the discussions").

There were strong hints that the vote for Neil Kinnock as Leader was an endorsement of his latest position, a rejection of the Party policy on which he stood in June 1987, for a policy in which nuclear weapons are kept as bargain chips with which to get "something for something".

With the help of the Union of Communication Workers (and John Edmonds) they planned Composite 55 with care, so that it would look harmless to supporters of Party policy. They lined up speakers to be called in order, as planned, by the obliging Gwynneth Dunwoody.

Alan Tuffin insisted that incorporating bilateral and multilateral disarmament steps into policy would not mean ditching unilateral nuclear disarmament. After all, his own union supported unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Ann Keane was brought in to deliver the CND vote. Denis Healey hurled his usual abuse at the disarmament "dinosaurs" (he likened the debate to a Punch and Judy Show).

John Edmonds appealed to the unions with his arguments about making subtle "deals" at the negotiating table.

They were so confident that the NEC recommended to support Composite 55 and remit (oppose) the unilateralist Composites 56 and 57. But they got it hopelessly wrong.

Ron Todd set down the marker for an end to the fudging of disarmament policy at the famous *Tribune* meeting. Conference, despite all attempts to prevent open debate, saw through the ruse, voted down Composite 55, and supported Composite 56 and 57.

This vote should be seen by the Policy Review as a clear rejection of attempts to weaken Party policy. Unfortunately, the Policy Review committee will probably ignore it.

Gerald Kaufman, one of the committee's joint convenors, said in an interview before the debate that the committee had been given a job to do and that there were no resolutions from this Conference instructing them to give that job up.

He neglected to mention the resolutions, ruled out of order, that would have clearly indicated that the policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament was *not* negotiable.

It is important that we consider carefully our strategy for the next year. We had an important victory at Blackpool. Our Party is still firmly unilateralist. But we must examine the arguments used by our opponents and make sure we know how to answer them.

We need to firm up our own arguments and unite together in a left alliance to defend Party policy both in the unions and the constituencies.

Next year is a crunch year for the Leadership. They will try to push through multilateral and bilateral nuclear disarmament in a policy statement from the Policy Review Committee, and we all know how undemocratic that process is at Party Conference.

We have a job to do in the unions. The Leadership will try to pick them off one by one. We must make sure that every union delegate conference has resolutions supporting unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Labour CND sees our unilateralist policy as closely linked to the issues of jobs and welfare. We see it as a forward looking policy, free from the Cold War attitudes of the old guard.

We see it as the basis for an international foreign policy which can take us forward to world peace.

We have always said that the INF talks would not have come about but for the impact of peace movements here and abroad. Labour's clear rejection of nuclear weapons played an important part.

Of course we want to defeat Thatcher at the next election. But we will only defeat the Tories if we have a clear alternative which we fight for and believe in. Who will vote for a Party that gives up and adopts the arguments of the other side?

Perhaps we should take a "leaf" from the environmentalists. They were derided for their "eccentric" views, yet they carried on arguing their corner. Now every party (even the Tories!) respects the "green" vote.

If they can win their arguments, surely a Party supported by millions can have the courage to stand up and fight for world peace?

A Labour Programme

Democrac in the Ran

In many other West European and NATO countries, the left has already won major extensions of civil, political and trade union rights for military personnel.

By PETER TATCHELL

As a result, the armed forces attract a wider range of recruits and embody a broader cross-section of society — not just macho militarists!

Furthermore, because these armies have a higher level of democratic consciousness, the likelihood that they could be successfully used in a military coup against a left-wing government or as an instrument of civil repression by a right wing regime is reduced.

Labour should therefore be committed to a programme of military reform which tackles every area of privilege, authoritarianism, and prejudice to create a truly democratic army.

Action is required to remove class division between officers and lower ranks. Nearly half the army's officer corps attended public school (in contrast to 5% of all school-age children).

Less than 6% of officers are working class men or women who have come up through the ranks. Separate messes and barracks and sometimes even separate entrances to buildings reinforce the class division.

Military employment contracts are of an almost semi-feudal character. They require recruits to "sign on" for fixed periods of three to 22 years. Those who try to "buy" themselves out find it an expensive and lengthy process.

Soldiers have to work as many hours a day as their officers demand (12 to 14 are not uncommon). Health and safety legislation does not apply.

Personnel can therefore be compelled to handle explosive, poisonous, or carcinogenic substances — in circumstances which would be illegal in civilian society — under threat of disciplinary action and with no right to sue for damages.

Labour must campaign for civilian-comparable contracts, including the right to resign at three months notice during peacetime, the extension of the Health and Safety At Work Acts to cover military personnel in non-battle situations; the right to sue the Ministry of Defence for damages in cases of proven negligence; and the introduction of a standardised eight hour working day with time off in lieu of overtime (which the Netherlands army implemented a decade ago!).

Injustices and victimisation rage unchecked within the military because there are no satisfactory mechanisms for the redress of grievances.

Any form of collective action against abuses is prohibited and could result in serious charges of mutiny, sedition, or treason. The individual pursuit of complaints is dependent on the whims of senior officers and sometimes results in further victimisation.

Only a small proportion of cases of brutality result in disciplinary action.

One such case concerned four Royal Marine instructors who were reprimanded and fined in 1984 after accusations that they stung recruits with nettles, squirted shaving cream into their mouths, poured rifle oil over their heads, wiped a brush soaked in urine across their faces and beat them as they slept in their beds.

Acquitted

Another case involved soldiers who were subsequently acquitted in the Cyprus spy trial of 1985. In court, they claimed they had been subjected to "mental torture" and "physical maltreatment" after their arrests, including allegations that they had been denied food and drink, held under bright lights for three days and nights, interrogated for up to ten hours nonstop, refused toilet facilities, made to shave themselves repeatedly until their faces were raw and bleeding, and forced to scrub themselves down with industrial carbolic soap.

To remedy this lack of adequate grievance procedures, Labour should be pledged to appoint an independent military ombudsman, answerable to Parliament, to scrutinise the armed forces and investigate individual complaints — as the West Germans have already done.

Servicemen and women should have the right to participate in trade unions and those unions should have the power to negotiate on behalf of their military members.

Service personnel remain subject to a quasi-medieval system of summary and arbitrary discipline. Officers can dish out large fines and up to 60 days detention without a solider having any right to legal representation or trial.

Even full courts-martial lack a jury, though they can pronounce sentences just as long and severe as any civilian court, with no right of legal appeal.

During the 1985 Cyprus spy trial, it was revealed that Corporal Peter Clark was denied access to legal representation and locked in solitary confinement for 64 days after he had been falsely accused of spying for the Russians.

During that time, he wa forced to endure "sheer terror by the Military Police whic twice drove him to attemp suicide.

After refusing to confess to crime he hadn't committed Clark was eventually court martialled and sentenced to si months gaol before being dis missed with disgrace from th army.

To instil some long overdu justice in to the military dis cipline system, Labour ought t seek the introduction of th Dutch and Swedish army prac tices which require that all pe sonnel on charges must b granted legal representation an that courts-martial ar reconstituted to include prope jury trial with the right of lega appeal.

Members of the force enjoy virtually none of th political freedoms they ar supposed to be defending. Un like their counterparts in th Netherlands, they are banne from participating in prote marches, political parties, an even pressure groups such CND, Greenpeace, and Anim Aid.

Their attendance at publi meetings, authorship of lette to the press, and signature petitions is also tightl restricted.

Democracy

To ensure that those wh defend democracy also live b its tenets, a future Labou government ought to legislate give servicemen and women th full benefits of citizenship – the right, in their off-duty hour to participate in full political a tivity.

The Race Relations Ac doesn't apply to the arme forces and as a result in stitutionalised racism is en demic.

Blacks are banned fro membership of the elite Guard regiments. Elsewhere, they a systematically denied promo tion to officer rank and in som units they are unofficiall segregated into mainly blac platoons.

Compared with white squa dies, black recruits are mo likely to be assigned to do th dirtiest jobs, suffer harshe punishments for breaches discipline, and on tours of du in Ireland they tend to be se out on the most dangerou patrols.

The commonplace nature racism within the armed forc was revealed at a trial in Exet in November 1984 when th counsel for the defendant in stabbing case admitted th racialist abuse was "norma within the Royal Marines.

Labour should make racism specific offence under th military discipline code and programme of "positive actio should be initiated to ensure th

for the Armed Forces

y
nks



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

"Members of the forces enjoy virtually none of the political freedoms they are supposed to be defending."

admission of black recruits into all-white regiments and the rapid promotion of more blacks to officer rank.

Women also experience great prejudice within the military. Parliament explicitly excluded the forces from the provisions of the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts. Hence, women personnel remain segregated in all-female corps, are banned from a range of military occupations, and are paid less than men of the same rank.

Pregnancy is a military "offence" and grounds for instant dismissal with no right of return after childbirth. Most insultingly of all, in the case of married service couples, the woman is always referred to as "w/o" (wife of) and before she can get an army medical or dental appointment, must first give *her husband's* name, rank, and number.

Labour needs to support the introduction of equal pay and maternity leave; plus the full integration of women into all sections of the armed forces, including the opening up of all military occupations to servicewomen on a completely equal basis with men.

Homophobia is also widespread in the forces. Though the House of Commons legalised homosexuality in 1967, the armed services are specifically exempt from the Sexual Offence Act. As a result, hundreds of lesbian and gay service personnel, dismissed from the military in disgrace, end up on the dole queue.

In many cases, prior to dismissal they are sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for committing acts which are perfectly lawful between civilians.

Worse still, in extreme cases, anti-gay prejudice within the army is so bad that it results in savage beatings and even suicides. A gay Private in the Drum Corps, James Darkin, was driven to take his own life in 1980 after months of bullying. The Coroner at the inquest into his death described it as a "living hell".

The inquest heard how Darkin had been thrown into a duck pond, kicked, forcibly bathed, urinated over, and scrubbed down with scouring powder. Senior officers told him he should "stand up and be like a man".

Labour should call for the legalisation of homosexuality for off-duty service personnel — as the Spanish government has recently done. As well as making life more bearable for gay soldiers, this would also remove the possibility of blackmail.

Copies of a model resolution on military democratisation can be obtained from Peter Tatchell, 45 Arrol House, Rockingham Street, London SE1 6QL (please enclose SAE).

Parliamentary View

Kinnock's defence policy gives ammunition to the Tories

On October 19th Parliament voted on the Defence estimates. The Government put a motion that they be approved.

An amendment was proposed by Neil Kinnock, Roy Hattersley, and four other Labour MPs. It called on the government "to cancel Trident and use resources to secure our non-nuclear defences" and to "work actively for (...) the adoption by NATO of a strategy of No First Use".

A further amendment, from Jeremy Corbyn, Eric Heffer and twelve other MPs would have rejected the defence estimates, and called for nuclear weapons to be scrapped and arms production to be reduced; the money saved to be diverted to social spending.

According to the quaint traditions by which we are governed, the Speaker takes one amendment — and gives no reason for which one (s)/he chooses. The Speaker chose the amendment in the name of the "Leader of the Opposition".

Eric Heffer protested, and asked for the other amendment to be taken too. Kinnock's blatant disregard for Party policy was spotted on the Tory benches, from where assistance to Party policy was offered, as this extract from Hansard shows.

"Mr Nicholas Bennett: (...) I wish to support the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton (Mr Heffer). It appears that the amendement in his name and those of his hon. Friends is closer to the policy that was approved at the Labour party conference two weeks ago. Is this not an example of the twin-track approach of the Labour party on defence policy?

"Mr Robert Hayward (Kingswood): (...) Given the decision of the Labour party conference on defence policy, the comments of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (...) demonstrate that his amendment is more important than that of the official Opposition."

What a sad day when the Tory back benches provide stronger support for Labour Party Conference policy than the Labour front bench.

Looking to Europe

An anatomy of the peace movement

The Western European Peace Movement grew in the early 1980s with mass demonstrations against the proposed sitings of Cruise and Pershing missiles.

The only country with no mass peace movement was France, where no such siting was envisaged.

By Dave Spencer
Chair, Coventry CND

Each national Peace Movement developed its own initiatives and campaigns, each learnt from the others and gained strength from shared objectives.

In general these developments went beyond the single issue of peace and nuclear weapons and began to make links with other struggles or movements.

For example: the women's camp at Greenham Common was copied at Comiso in Sicily and elsewhere in Germany and Holland. Feminist ideas and demands began to influence the organisation and politics of the whole movement.

The Dutch IKV initiated discussions with Independent Peace Groups in Eastern Europe, to break down the blocs from below. Their members found ways of getting through and getting round bureaucratic institutions.

The Eastern European groups themselves, like the Czech Charter 77, the Polish WIP, the Moscow Trust Group, have put the question of human and democratic rights high on the peace agenda.

The German Greens have linked concern with nuclear weapons to the issue of nuclear power and the destruction of the environment.

Solidarity

The French Codene has called for solidarity with the native peoples of the Pacific, where French and US imperialism test their nuclear weapons, destroying future generations as well as the environment — and maintaining the people in colonial subjection.

There have always been tensions within the European Peace Movement between those stressing *detente from above* and those stressing *detente from below.*

The main object of the former is to influence the policies of those with political power or with pretensions of power — mainly Social Democratic or Communist Party leaders, MPs, trade union bureaucrats and so on. They see the Peace Movement as a lobbying or pressure group on governments.

The second group advocates direct action and grass roots campaigning as a means of building mass support. Unfortunately, this group is made up of a myriad of political affiliations, whereas the former are fairly conscious and organised Social Democrats and Stalinists.



The recent decline of the Peace Movement is easily understood from that point of view. On the one hand the Cruise and Pershing missiles *were* sited in Europe so the unifying issue for protest was gone.

Gorbachev

On the other hand the INF Treaty between Gorbachev and Reagan, and *glasnost* have dissipated many people's fear of war, while giving the "detente from above" crowd an opportunity to claim victory for their position and an excuse to dismantle the movement.

The fact is, however, that all of the issues raised in the Peace Movement, e.g. feminism, ecology, Eastern Europe, solidarity against imperialism — still remain to be explored and developed. There are still groups active on these issues.

In addition new evidence makes it clear that, far from the INF Treaty scrapping nuclear missiles there will be *more* nuclear missiles in Europe. They may have agreed to scrap ground-to-air Cruise missiles, but they just move them into planes or onto ships.

An article by Dan Plesch and Paul Rogers in the *New Statesman* of October 21st gives details of the proposals. In particular they claim that the UK is a favourite spot for US missiles because:

- the Thatcher government is friendly;
- the UK is close enough to the Warsaw Pact for bombers with missiles to be sent post haste, but not so close as to be an immediate risk of land warfare.

The western European Peace Movement may be in decline but it has mass support and could quickly be reinvigorated. The Eastern European Peace Movement may well be growing. Disappointment with or cheating on the INF Treaty could well become unifying issues.

The two authors point out the possible impact of the increased number of missiles on the Labour Party. No doubt Kinnock is hoping for post-INF Treaty complacency and CND decline, so that unilateralism can be quietly ditched.

He may assumed that defence will not be a major issue in the 1991 elections, particularly as the F111s are supposed to be phased out immediately after 1991.

The arrival of more missiles kindles the possibility of a new campaign linked to the European Movement.

Next year's promised CND campaign against NATO in its 40th anniversary year should also be welcomed and supported by the labour left in its attempt to maintain unilateralism against the right.



Features

Another attack on civil rights

Silence is golden

Four blank walls, a couple of yards to stretch, dim lighting, little to eat, nothing to read, no ventilation, no window, just a hard mattress on a wooden bench and a hole to piss in, people screaming, doors clanking.

Then, a promise of daylight, of freedom... "Yes, I'll talk. Anything you want, officer." Anything, just to get out of here!

By a *Briefing* legal correspondent



Now sir, if you'd just like to recall what you were doing on September 3rd, 1939, we may possibly be in a position to scale down the charges

And then the questions: "What were you doing on 5.10.88?" Was that the day of the ward meeting? The Benn-Heffer Campaign?

At least, at present, you can remain silent — and recall at a later date that the meetings on 5.10.88 were cancelled because of Conference and you were in fact in the King's Head with Ron and Sue.

Now the Tories are abolishing the right to silence.

Defendants, they allege, have it too easy. They have the right to solicitors, the burden of proof is on the prosecution, alibis can be put forward at a late stage, and defences don't have to be disclosed before trial.

These advantages are largely mythical.

Since 1967, defendants have had to declare alibis to the prosecution within seven days of committal (i.e. weeks or months *before* an actual trial) and the police have the right to interview alibi witnesses.

Alibi witnesses can, and usually are, asked in court by prosecution counsel when they were first asked to give evidence, and comments can be made as to whether or not they've had an opportunity to discuss their evidence with the accused.

As for solicitors, they can do little more than ensure interviews at police stations are correctly recorded. They can't help when it comes to remembering what you were doing on a particular day.

Many solicitors will be represented in police interrogations by unqualified clerks (at least one such clerk in London is a retired policeman).

The *Guardian* editorial, supporting the government's proposals, said that technical advances, such as taped interviews, protect defendants, who therefore no longer need the right to silence.

But taped interviews record only the interview. They can't record threats to arrest members of your family made beforehand, whilst you are in the cells or in a police car.

The government's proposal comes hidden amidst other proposals for Northern Ireland, clearly an emotive attempt to gain public support and diffuse criticism because of the reluctance of so many prominent people to be seen to support "terrorism".

The timing was crude. The day after lawyers for the three defendants in the "conspiracy to kill Tom King" trial told the court that the defendants were going to exercise their right to silence, Tom King himself announced that too many "terrorists" were being acquitted or not brought to trial because of this right.

Why extend this proposal to all crimes on the mainland? With ever-increasing crime levels in Thatcher's Britain, the knee-jerk reaction is to convict more people. This is the precise result the government expects from removing the right to silence — albeit many of the people convicted will in fact be innocent.

Legal systems in most of Europe are "inquisitorial": the Courts sits as a neutral party to investigate the facts. In Britain's adversarial legal system, the prosecution must prove guilt — relying on the principle that you are innocent until *proven* guilty.

Without the right to silence, the adversarial system — and the presumption of innocence — falls apart.

This is just one of many changes made by the government to increase the conviction rate, for example: restriction of the right to challenge jurors and the right to make a statement from the dock, the obligation to disclose expert evidence in advance to the prosecution, and the withdrawal of the right to trial by jury for certain offences.

From my experience, I believe that even without any of these changes, the prosecution has the stronger hand. If the balance is to be redressed, it should be in *favour* of defendants.

Most judges continue to be white, Oxbridge-educated males. Police have enormous powers to search, question, arrest and detain. Illegally obtained evidence can be used in a trial.

Most magistrates continue to believe every word police officers tell them. And prosecutors have resources, particularly in the forensic field, which are not available to the defence (and this leaves out the question of unfair laws, and the theory and practice of sentencing and punishment).

The bottom line of any legal system which calls itself just and democratic must be that it is better to err on the side of acquitting the guilty than to convict the innocent.

The Tory reforms mean that more innocent people will be convicted and sent to prison.

DEBATE: A Socialist Strategy for Europe

Two riders for the left

In *Briefing* no. 70 we launched a discussion aimed at developing a socialist strategy for Europe.
Here, JOHN PALMER, JEREMY BEALE, and PETER WRAGG of the SOCIALIST SOCIETY comment on points raised by Peter Tatchell and Jim Thain.
We shall be printing further contributions to the discussion in future issues; meanwhile, if you want to add your voice to the debate, put pen to paper now!

The *Briefing* feature on "Strategy for Europe" was a valuable contribution to debate on an important issue.

We agree with virtually every word written by Jim Thain, but with two important riders.

•While the labour movement remains the primary and essential agency for social and political change, the political contribution of the Greens, and in particular the West German Greens, to a new European socialist strategy is essential.

It is superior to virtually anything on offer from the official social democratic or Euro-"communist" parties.

•The second rider concerns withdrawal from the EEC or repeal of Section 2.

It is one thing if this arises from a struggle between EEC institutions and a left or workers' government in a particular member state.

In these circumstances, the key would be the mobilisation of support and solidarity from the working class movement in other EEC countries for the stand taken by such a government (i.e. over economic planning, or defence of jobs or rights).

It is quite another to wage a "national" campaign for withdrawal *in advance* of such a programme being developed on the left, let alone in advance of a collision between a left government (as yet totally putative) and the defenders of the Rome Treaty.

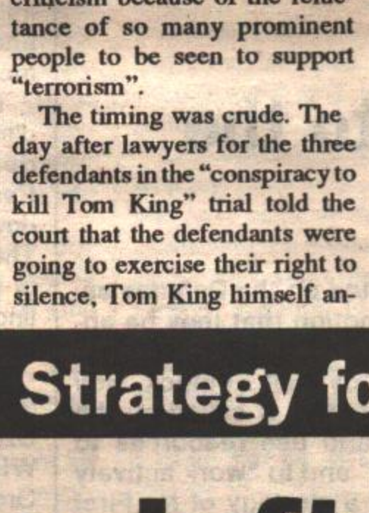


PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Peter Tatchell

In these circumstances "withdrawal", etc., has a hollow and nationalistic ring. It impedes rather than helps build a united socialist movement.

Jim is right, moreover, to caution Peter Tatchell against illusions in the adaptability of EEC institutions (including the European Parliament) for socialist change.

But the left has a number of vital tasks:

•It must become the most consistent defender even of "bourgeois" democratic rights, including real powers for the European Parliament over the Council of Ministers (which Thatcher & Co. are determined to resist).

•It must utilise every opportunity provided by the platform and programmes of EEC institutions to press demands which unite and mobilise working people and their allies (i.e. why shouldn't British workers have Danish social security payments, Dutch unemployment pay, or German trade union rights?)

We believe traditional British state nationalism on the left is dying on its feet.

•It must reach out to socialists and oppositionists in the non-EEC countries of EFTA and the Eastern block, especially around the demand for a non-nuclear, non-aligned united Europe.

The most important task for the left is to rescue a European socialist strategy from the opportunism of the Labour leadership, who combine a sickly attachment to the British state and the Atlantic Alliance with opposition to giving real powers to the European Parliament and ever-increasing softness towards the EEC internal market.

Robin Cook's Green Paper

Where's Labour's health policy going?

Robin Cook's "Green Paper" on Labour Party health policy is now out for consultation.

It is part of the Policy Review process and will be discussed at a major Conference of health activists in Birmingham on Saturday November 26th.

By Roger Harris
Socialist Health Association
National Executive
(personal capacity)

Cook's paper has left people aghast — at what's in it and what's left out.

Its proposals include:

NHS Structure: Amalgamating District Health Authorities with Family Practitioners Committees and creating new mega-districts on the old FPC boundaries! Amalgamation is welcome but why create another irrelevant mega-bureaucracy?

What about democratically elected Health Authorities? This could be a major vote-winner. Health service users and workers are always furious at the lack of accountability. Cook just wants to tinker with the existing system.

Power of Doctors: The paper fiddles around with peer group reviews and minimum workloads for consultants. Why is Labour afraid of the doctors? The Tories may soon come out with more radical proposals for control of medics than Labour.

Doctors should lose their independent contractor status and become NHS employees like all other health service staff.

Drug companies: Party policy is to nationalise at least one drug company. Cook appears to have forgotten this.

Generic

The Paper talks about mandatory generic substitution and a code to regulate the relationship between doctors and drug company reps. But these people only understand one word — *profit* (or possibly two: *massive profits*).

The only way to deal with them is to take them over and create one NHS drug company.

Patients Rights: This is an area where Labour should be leading a major campaign.

Allowing patients access to medical records is an *absolute must*, but the Green Paper leaves a question mark over it.

Instead, we have support for no-fault compensation schemes. Although these may have a superficial attraction, they let doctors off the hook.

Charter

A Patients' Charter is mentioned, but the Green Paper proposes no effective complaints mechanism. What about mandatory rights to have a second opinion, or advocacy schemes for black and ethnic minority communities and for people in long-stay hospitals?

The Green Paper puts a question mark over CHCs which, for all their faults, have been plugging away for patients' rights and against closures. They should be strengthened.



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

Quality of service: Cook stops short at proposing a Health Quality Inspectorate. Hard cash is needed to improve standards.

Quality of Service: The Green Paper proposes a Health Quality Inspectorate similar to HMI in education, the setting up of a Health Technology Commission to assess and promote effective use of medical technology, and performance-related pay for managers.

Insufficient

The latter should be totally opposed and the former is insufficient. Hard cash is needed to improve standards. Health service workers have to be involved. World Health Organisation targets should be mandatory.

Resources: How much money will Labour provide for the NHS? It is still forgotten that Labour cut more form the NHS between 74 and 79 than the Tories have since then.

Firm commitment to at least 3% growth must be maintained. Tight top-down cash limits must be dropped and resources geared to locally set planning targets.

Private Health-Care: There is not a word in the "Green Paper" about how to deal with the private sector.

It won't just wither away. Our aim must be to do away with private health care by the end of one parliament. We can make an easy start by immediately nationalising all private beds in NHS hospitals, and turning them over to NHS patients.

NHS Struggles: Although it is good to have a vision of the future, one cannot forget the immediate struggles of health workers. This is another of Cook's embarrassed silences.

We must support any action against cuts and low pay.

Health Service Workers: The pay and conditions of NHS workers are intolerable. Nurses get the attention but thousands of other health workers are as badly off, if not worse.

Immediate measures much include a statutory minimum wage (on top of the 3% mentioned above); removal of *all* Crown Immunity, tighter health and safety regulations, and effective equal opportunities policies.

Health only seems to become an issue when people have become bored with defence or local government, but it is deeply political.

We have to fight for radical socialist policies far different from those currently being put forward by Labour's front bench. These would be immensely popular. But on this Labour isn't really listening.

Education Feature on Labour Governors

Stay away from the Tory management trap

Tens of thousands of Labour Party supporters are school governors.

By Richard Hatcher
Ladywood CLP

Some are Local Education Authority (LEA) nominees, some parents, some teachers — and now some are co-opted members of the new governing bodies.

The new Tory Education Act greatly increases the powers of school governors at the expense of the Local Authority, especially where the governing bodies are given control of the school budget.

LMS, or Local Management of Schools, is being phased in over the next four years: but many LEAs have already introduced pilot schemes.

Responsible

The governors will then be responsible for allocating money for salaries, for books and equipment, for maintenance, etc. They will also be responsible for overseeing the curriculum, testing, and discipline.

Admissions

They will be responsible for admissions of pupils and for the appointment and management of staff. And, of course, they can initiate opting-out.

The government is gambling that the vast majority of governing bodies will support Tory education policies, not just those full of yuppie parents and co-opted bank managers.

Credible

In the absence of a credible alternative to Tory policy, many ordinary governors will find themselves sucked into the logic of the education marketplace.

Many, swamped by their new responsibilities, will find themselves rubber-stamping headteachers playing the Tory game.

But governing bodies *can* be used to resist Tory attacks and Labour Councils' cuts and retreats. The changed composition of governing bodies means that there is the opportunity to make alliances between parents and teachers — for example, to out-vote Tory LEA governors (as has happened in Barnet).

Battles over what is taught, how the school is run, and in whose interests, can erupt in every school.

Rolling

In Ladywood, which covers most of the Handsworth area of Birmingham, we have started the ball rolling. A Governors Support Group, open to all governors who support the Labour party, has been set up.

Most of its members are black, and it reflects real concern in the local community that inner city areas will suffer most from Tory policies.

Action

The CLP is also demanding that the Labour Council takes action. They have already initiated city-wide meetings of Labour governors. These need to combine training with the development of radical policy initiatives.

But we also want the Council to establish a Governors Support Unit to provide advice and briefings and a joint committee of Labour Councillors and elected representatives of Labour governors.

On their own, none of these measures guarantees effective resistance. They have to be based on firm popular support at school level. This means two things:

•Governors have to establish an alliance with school workers, teaching and non-teaching, on a common political basis. The new tory legislation greatly increases the role of "plant-bargaining" in the schools, and Labour governors have to avoid playing the management role assigned them by the Tories.

•Governors have to make themselves accountable to the working class in the community. Not just the statutory AGM, but a range of measures — newsletters, public meetings, parents' councils, etc., are needed.

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).

Our Marx says...

Dear *Briefing*,

I was pleased to read the review of *Socialism, Merit & Efficiency*, the Fabian Society's latest pamphlet, looking at management of public services.

However, I was sad to see that your reviewer was misquoting Karl Marx in order to attack the authors of the pamphlet.

The quotation he gives: "from each according to his abilities; to each according to his need" is quite clearly applicable to communism.

In the 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', Marx contrasted this state of affairs (which would be some time in the far distant future) with that which would pertain under socialism: "from each according to his ability; to each according to his ability".

The Fabian pamphlet is fully in the Marxist tradition in espousing merit and efficiency, therefore.

More importantly, I am sad to see that your reviewer is part of those pessimistic adherents of socialism who can see no connection between it and efficiency.

The early socialists certainly believed that socialism would be a more efficient means of using resources than capitalism, and this is a message that seems to have got lost in the last fifty years.

Instead, people like your reviewer fall back on defending the vested interests of the producers, losing sight of the original aim of socialism which was to provide more goods for less cost in terms of human resources.

Yours sincerely,
John Willman,
Fabian Society

BRIEFING WOMEN

We are meeting

On Saturday November 12th, women working in and around *Labour Briefing* are meeting.

By Leesa Herbert
Labour Briefing Women

In the past we have had infrequent meetings to focus on particular campaigns and conferences.

We now plan to have three to four general working meetings each year, where we will review the past and plan for the future.

Briefing Women are active locally and nationally within the labour movement and in community campaigns.

Briefing Women have been centrally involved in the Positive Images campaign in Haringey, Labour Women for Ireland, local government campaigns fighting the cuts, the Chesterfield Socialist Conference, Women for Socialism, the FAB campaign, and much else.

We are also working hard in our constituencies, trade unions, and women's sections.

As working women, as unemployed women and students, as mothers and carers, as women with disabilities, as lesbians and as black women, we are being exploited by employers and the government, hit hard by cuts in benefits, new laws (such as Section 28 and the Public Order Act), and changes in housing, education and health provision.

As Briefing Women we must work to unite the left to challenge this exploitation and erosion of our rights.

Briefing Women are active and we must build on this activity. But we also need to co-ordinate our work and discuss how we use the paper to build and publicise our politics and campaigns.

We must provide time and space for debate and to review our efforts to revitalise the women's organisations in the Labour Party and in the trade unions.

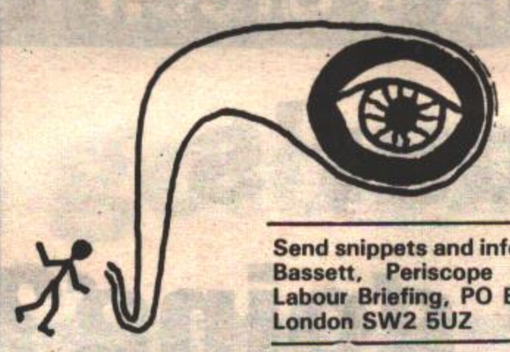
Yes, we've got a lot to do! Tell us what your are doing and what you are thinking as women on the left — and what you want Briefing Women to do.

National Meeting of Briefing Women
Saturday 12th November, 12.30 - 5.30
Central London Polytechnic, Marylebone Rd (opposite Madame Tussauds) Baker Street Tube
Access via lifts and ramp from Luxboro Street (side of Poly building). Help available.
Childcare/carers expenses repaid, pooled fare, snack lunch and tea/coffee available. Be there.

For information of Briefing Women (and to make sure your name is on the mailing list) contact Leesa Herbert, 110b, Alexandra Park Road, London N22

Briefing Economics Commission
Next Meeting
Sunday 20th November, 6.30pm, 89 Great Russell Street, London WC1

Periscope



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

Greg Bassett at the Tribune Conference

John Ross: "Let's be clear, socialism isn't on the agenda today or in the next decade."

Tony Benn: "Maybe John Ross is right. Maybe *Socialist Action's* project has failed."

Most successful heckle of our time award:

Briefing heckler to Tom Sawyer: "Why are you closing down Labour Parties?"

Sawyer: "I'll sit down then."

Peter Hain: "I see I've been praised in the *Briefing* leaflet. This must be like the praise a football manager gets before the sack."

Ken Livingstone, on arriving early because he didn't put his watch back: "John Ross only gives me advice on economics."

When the well-greased paths of Labour bureaucracy run exceeding smooth...

We are indebted to *Tribune* for confiming the rumour that the lifelong CND activist who spoke at Labour Party Conference AGAINST the unilateral resolutions and in favour of the fudge, did indeed arrive in Blackpool with a visitor's ticket.

When her constituency delegate (Brentworth & Isleworth) failed to appear, Ms Kean mysteriously became the delegate. It's amazing how well you can get on when you're a personal friend of Neil Kinnock.

LGIU Opts Out

After nine issues, *Poll Tax News*, brought out by the Local Government Information Unit, is to cease publication.

But surely, puzzled Persicopers will ask, registration only begins in England and Wales next year?

Alas, the LGIU has placed the Poll Tax firmly in the past tense: "We would ... like to congratulate all those who made the poll tax campaign such a vigorous and newsy one."

Pity, *Poll Tax News* was actually quite useful — when it wasn't preaching the virtues of obedience and legality come what may.

No Faction Fights Here!

Incensed at the 'No Travellers' sign hanging on the door of Gorton Labour Club in Manchester, the Labour Campaign for Travellers Rights sought out the local Labour MP for assistance.

The Rt. Hon Gerald Kaufman (for it was he) refused to help. He was reluctant to put any pressure on the local Party, he said, because of a faction fight currently under way there — a faction fight, our Mancunian mole informs us, in which GK himself is deeply embroiled.

WAC School of Falsification?

Latest from the WAC members mailing:

"It must be noted in passing that Diane's (Abbott's) candidacy has been opposed by some sections of the left, in particular those associated with *Militant* and *Labour Briefing*."

Yes, Diane Abbott did do well in the NEC elections — with *Briefing*'s support. Note to WAC — if you're going to denounce us, at least denounce us for something we've actually done!

Building Briefing

CONTACT BRIEFING

The *Briefing* Editorial Board, Trade Union Briefing, Briefing Women and International Briefing can be contacted at PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ, 01 733 7016:

Deadline for articles:
Issue no. 73 (out Nov. 23rd): notify EB as soon as possible, all articles in by Tuesday November 15th.
Issue no. 74 (out Dec. 7th): notify EB as soon as possible, all articles in by Tuesday November 29th.

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BOOK REVIEW

Tales of two cities

Venice, An Illustrated Anthology; New York, An Illustrated Anthology, **both compiled by Mike Marqusee, *Conran Octopus*, £14.95**

Nice things do occasionally happen.

These two illustrated anthologies, compiled by *Briefing* supporter Mike Marqusee, dropped on my desk and sat purring at me like two sleek cats amid all the worthy, dogged, *Briefing* earnestness.

Why Venice and New York? Both are remarkable cities and both have inspired a wealth of fine writing, but there is story of sorts running through the two collections of some interest to socialists.

By Paula Watson
Westminster South CLP

The two cities have certain similarities. Each is built on islands and derives its importance from proximity to key trade routes.

Venice grew to be one of the dominant mercantile powers in the 14th and 15th centuries, controlling trade through the Mediterranean to the West and overland to the East and China.

A republic in a world of monarchies, it was ruled by an upper class of wealthy merchants, a subject of admiration and envy to travellers from other lands.

By the 17th century the opening of sea routes round the Cape of Good Hope ended Venetian dominance and gradually the city changed from a centre of commerce to a centre of pleasure.

It retained its independence until the arrival of Napoleon, and after his defeat it passed to Austrian rule. Some of the best known passages concern this period, when Byron and Shelley lamented Venetian submission to foreign tyranny.

Uprising

The unsuccessful uprising of 1848 is vividly recounted in the words of its leaders, Daniele Manin and Niccolo Tommaseo, while the Russian radical, Alexander Herzen, describes the city's joyful reception of Garibaldi after the Venetians had voted to join the newly united Kingdom of Italy.

Venice — once regarded with fear and envy — became, with the loss of her temporal power, an object of love and admiration. Visitors wrote glowingly of the buildings, the sinuous, silent streets of water, and the quality of the light, while Ruskin, tapping away among the stones, revealed its artistic splendour.

Although the book is full of joy and light, there is also an ever present "intimation of mortality", inevitable among all those decaying palaces and long lost glory.

New York is quite different. In Venice the cycle of rise and fall is complete; the great American city is only just over half way — on the turn, as it were, past its zenith but only beginning its decline.

This book has a completely different feel. It is full of fear and horror. The illustrations are stark and modern. Here are the press and hurry, the growing divisions and squalor, the relentless pursuit of money and power.

The story, beginning with the rather pathetic immigrants, proceeds through unparalleled growth, stock market crashes, strikes and struggles to the present city of speed, violence and urban decay.

New York, the great centre of capitalist power, is a nightmare. And while Venice is unique, shoddy imitations of Manhattan have sprung up all over the world.

But take heart. If the human race could build Venice, it can do anything! The pleasure of anthologies is that we are given each writer's own words and authentic voice, not an all powerful narrator's vision. In a way it is a very democratic form.

Painless

The books are beautiful and a painless way of acquiring a great deal of useful (and useless) information. You will find old friends in new surroundings and make some pleasant discoveries.

By seeing the cities through many different eyes, our own perceptions are sharpened and deepened.

But if you want to use them as presents, give Venice to those you love — and New York to those you fear.

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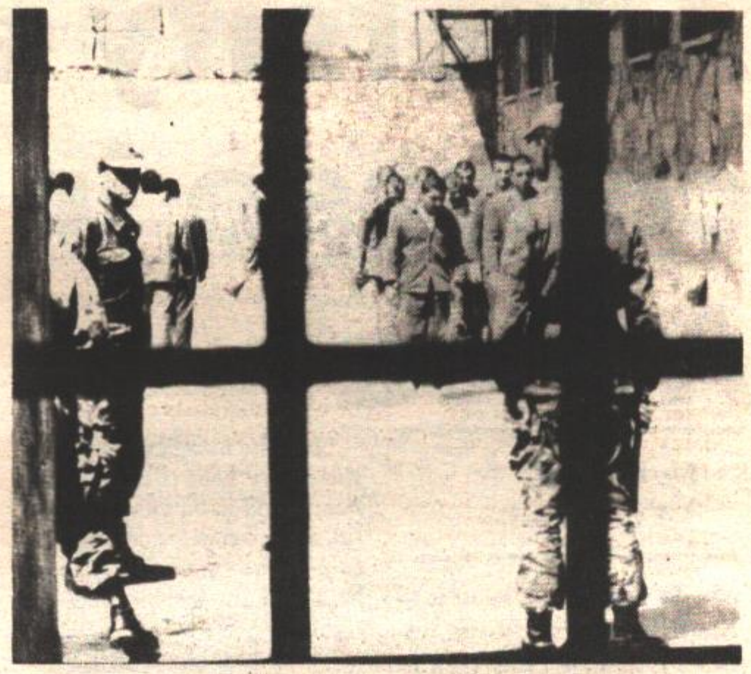
TELEVISION REVIEW

Turkey exposed

Margaret Thatcher doesn't only believe in building bridges *in* Turkey.

She is also a keen supporter of those who would build bridges *with* Turkey — and its military dictators.

By CHRISTINE FRASER



A brief glimpse inside a Turkish prison

Turkey's strategic position makes the country a desired member of NATO. As if flattered by being accepted into one Western "club", Turkey now seeks to join the Common Market too.

That's the problem. Since the coup in 1980, Turkey's military dictatorship has terrorised its people with widespread arrests, lengthy detention, and systematic, brutal torture.

Maybe Western leaders can ignore human rights abuse in a longstanding member of NATO; can they do the same with a fresh application to join the EC?

Channel 4's *Dispatches* programme on October 26th let us share something, for 45 minutes, of the agony and terror, the experiences, the fears.

Statistics were related in the cold, dispassionate voice of a narrator who knew the facts alone would shock the audience. Two hundred students at Istanbul university have been arrested since January — a short ferry ride from where British tourists view Ottoman relics.

Stark graphics detailed the kinds of torture used. Detainees spoke for themselves (with a welcome use of subtitles rather than dubbed interpretations).

Two teenage sisters told us how they were sexually abused and tortured for 22 days. British teenagers interviewed on television would perhaps have been talking about GCSE, or Bros T-shirts.

We watched the parents of Mustafa Gulmez weeping over his grave. His mother described their attempts to find out how he had died in custody.

From her eagerness, it seemed as if the British interviewer was the first person she'd met who might believe he didn't just walk into prison and commit suicide.

These victims' evidence was corroborated by a former torturer, who spoke about the 200 plus people he'd beaten, electric-shocked and crucified.

The Turkish government, of course, has just ratified the European Convention on human rights, and denies torture exists. Minister Ali Bozer says "Torture is out of question."

All corpses are taken to the official mortuary; autopsies are performed by state pathologists (and *Dispatches* suggested they are under instruction to falsify medical reports); no independent doctors may see the bodies.

Perhaps the Turkish government really believe their own propaganda: out of sight, out of mind.

Well done, *Dispatches*; well done, Channel 4 for telling us this story. But there are, of couse, many other stories to be told about Turkey.

You've told us about the state torture; how about a further programme telling the story of the heroic resistance organised in the jails, the hunger strikes, the protests — especially by the women?

The same Turkish government gaining respect for taking in Iraqi Kurds is hell-bent on annihilating its "own" Kurdish population — albeit more slowly. There's another story waiting to be told.

And what about the Turkish people in Britain, who have temporarily escaped that torture you described? Perhaps they were watching your programme in fear of arrest or deportation as illegal immigrants or workers in Britain.

Now you have condemned the Turkish government's treatment of the Turkish population in Turkey, how about a critical look at the British state's treatment of Turkish people here?

POETRY REVIEW

Neruda's legacy

***Let the Rail Splitter Awake*, by Pablo Neruda, *Journeyman*, £3.50**

Journeyman's republication of Pablo Neruda's *Let the Rail Splitter Awake*, first published in the 1950s, arrived on my desk at the same time as I heard the results of the Chilean plebiscite.

By Terry Conway
Islington North CLP

It was a fitting coincidence.

This collection of poems is powerful in its exploration of anti-imperialist struggle and international solidarity. But Neruda's membership of the Chilean Communist Party and and his paean to Stalin do weaken its impact.

Impressive

The most impressive and best known sequence is the magnificent *Heights of Macchu Picchu* whose core idea is overcoming personal and collective alienation.

The title piece is an exploration of the relationship between American workers in the southern and northern continents.

"my brother Juan sells shoes,
just like your brother John,
and my blood is of miners and sailors
like your blood, Peter."

It is optimistic about the response of the peoples of Latin America to Washington's plans for their future:

"But if you arm your hosts, North America,
to destroy this pure border...
to govern the music and order
which we love,
we will emerge from stones and air
to bite you,
we will emerge to burn you in hell."

The spectre of Stalin towers over the piece:

"Within three rooms of the ancient Kremlin
lives a man named Joseph Stalin...
Other heroes have brought a country into being;
beyond this, he helped to conceive his
and construct it
and defend it."

No sooner is one moved by the depth of the imagery and the force of the ideas, than one comes across this unconvincing rhetoric which undercuts the rest.

Weakness

Neruda's weakness is not an individual one. It represents the hold of Stalinism on Marxist thought, particularly during the 50s and early 60s.

The rejection of Pinochet in the plebiscite means that more possibilities are opened up for the Chilean left than at any time since the American backed coup in 1974.

Lessons

But to what extent has the Chilean (or international) left learnt the lessons of that rout, in which the CP played such a disgraceful role?

The Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions have massively strengthened Latin American Marxism since the days of the Cold War, but whether this will be sufficient for the Chilean working class to forge a new revolutionary struggle remains to be seen.

Interview with Sheila Lapinsky

Adversity and courage in South Africa

By PETER TATCHELL

Sheila Lapinsky is one of South Africa's leading lesbian and gay rights campaigners.

In the mid-1970s, she was subject to a five year government banning order because of her political activities as General Secretary of the National Union of South African Students.

A former Chair of the Western Cape branch of the Gay Association of South Africa, she left after becoming disillusioned with GASA's "apolitical male-orientation".

Today, she is a prominent member of the Cape Town-based Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OLGA) which is committed to "fight for homosexual equality as part of the wider struggle for liberation in South Africa."

In South Africa, over the last few months, one of OLGA's main pre-occupations has been support for the gay conscientious objector, Ivan Toms.

A founding member of OLGA, he was gaoled in March for 21 months after refusing to be conscripted into the South African army.

Toms is being held in the notorious Pollsmoor Prison, along with Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. He is restricted to 26 visits a year.

All conversations are taped by the authorities and he is not allowed any physical contact with his visitors. Communication is through a glass panel via a loudspeaker.

Lapinsky recently visited Toms in prison: "Though we were physically separated, just speaking with Ivan again and touching hands on the glass was a moving experience."

"Despite his circumstances," she says, "Ivan is coping brilliantly and is incredibly cheerful. He remains as committed as ever to the fight against apartheid and for lesbian and gay rights.

"Ivan has been thrilled to receive letters and cards from progressive people in Britain," Lapinsky reports. "Those messages from well-wishers have been a great morale-booster. Please keep sending them."

Lapinsky says that through his stand against apartheid, Toms has done much to raise the public profile of lesbians and gays involved in the liberation struggle and has helped win new allies for the lesbian and gay movement.

Last February, the day before Ivan's trial began, Archbishop Desmond Tutu hosted an inter-denominational service in solidarity with Ivan at his official residence in Bishop's Court, Cape Town.

"During Ivan's trial, the Bishop of Grahamstown, David Russell, gave evidence that the Anglican Church of South Africa fully supported Ivan. When the prosecution tried to drive a wedge between Ivan and the church on the grounds of his homosexuality, the Bishop stated his opposition to the persecution of lesbian and gay people and his belief in the validity and acceptability of lesbian and gay sexuality," says Lapinsky.

The other influential development in South Africa in recent months, according to Lapinsky, has been the public declaration by the African National Congress of its support for lesbian and gay equality.

"The ANC statement has been invaluable to us," says Lapinsky. "Lesbians and gays inside the anti-apartheid organisations now feel a lot easier about openly identifying themselves, raising the issue of lesbian and gay rights, and getting involved with the lesbian and gay movement.

"Many of the anti-apartheid groups have become less homophobic. They are increasingly inclined to accept their gay members and support lesbian and gay rights as part of a free South Africa. In turn, this is radicalising the lesbian and gay community and drawing more lesbians and gays into the liberation struggle."

Lapinsky warns that radical lesbians and gays could face increased state repression in the years ahead:

"We already operate under conditions of considerable adversity with progressive lesbian and gay activists being subjected to harassment and intimidation — sometimes by the security services and sometimes by right wing vigilante groups.

"We have to put up with threats and abuse, telephone tapping, mail interception, hoax callers, graffiti, and damage to our cars. Recently, a new slogan appeared on the main highway into Cape Town: 'OLGA Should Be Banned'.

"Being active in a lesbian and gay organisation which is committed to the fight against apartheid is frightening a lot of the time. It's like walking through a minefield. You're never sure which of your next moves may set it off.

"A recent report, commissioned by Botha, suggests tightening up the laws against gay men. The influential Dutch Reformed Church is now demanding that the country's anti-gay legislation be extended to repress lesbianism as well."

Lapinsky is also worried that many hundreds of mixed race lesbian and gay couples who are currently living together will be badly affected by the new Group Areas Act:

"While it will create some 'grey areas' where black and white people can live together legally, everywhere else the racial segregation of residential districts will be strictly enforced with fines for infringements amounting to Rand 20,000 for landlords and Rand 5,000 for tenants."

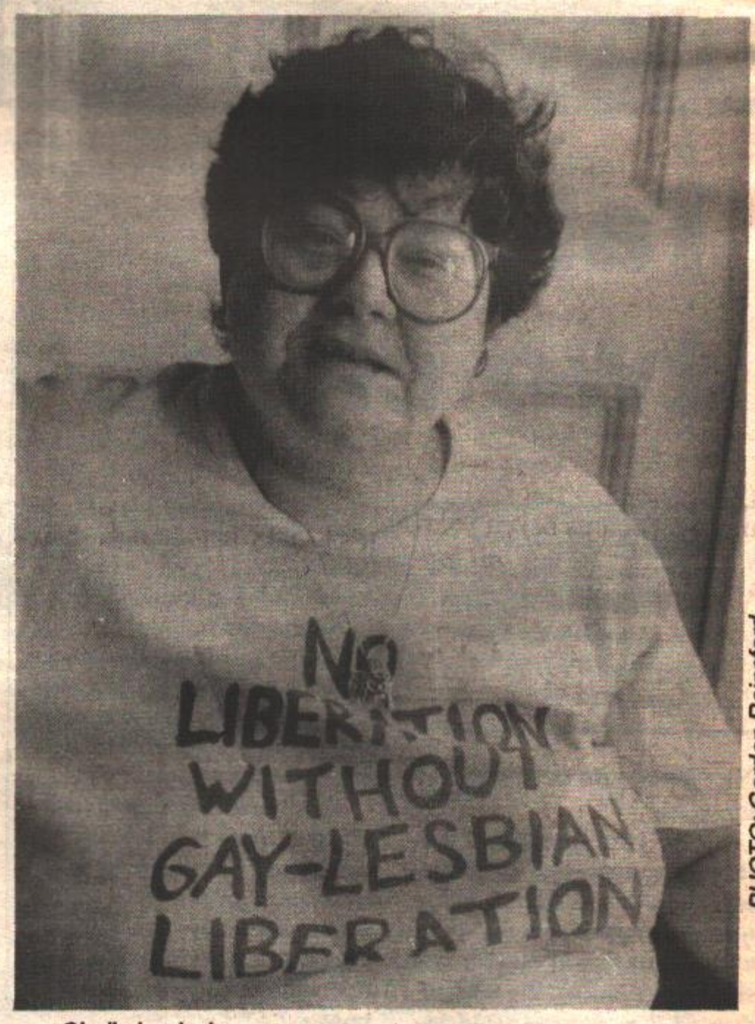


PHOTO: Gordon Rainsford

Sheila Lapinsky

Does OLGA have a message for socialists in Britain?

"The best way people in Britain can help the struggle against apartheid is by getting rid of Margaret Thatcher and electing a government which will enact measures to hasten the end of the apartheid regime."

•Messages of support for Ivan Toms can be sent c/o OLGA, PO Box 7315, Roggebaai 8012, Cape Town, South Africa.

A-AM AGM

Organise to air the issues

By Mike Phipps
Chair, Greenwich & Bexley A-A Group

Sixty-nine resolutions have been submitted to the Anti-Apartheid Movement AGM, to be held in Sheffield on November 26-27th.

Over one third of these come from official A-AM leadership committees and specialist campaigning bodies.

Once again, there will be a big debate of the critical issue of pluralism in the solidarity movement.

A motion from Stockport A-A Group calls on the National Committee to "support all political and trade union organisations who are fighting apartheid, such as ANC, AZAPO, COSATU, Cape Action League, NACTU, PAC, and UDF."

Greenwich and Bexley A-A proposes that all 17 organisations banned earlier this year be contacted to write articles for *Anti-Apartheid News*.

Greenwich and Bexley A-A also salutes the united campaign waged by COSATU and NACTU for the three day stayaway in June, and calls on the National Committee to organise a conference in the next year on trade union solidarity work.

The importance of the trade union struggle in South Africa is underlined by motions from the London Revolutionary Communist Group and from Reading A-A Group, who propose a national COSATU/NACTU joint speaking tour.

A resolution from Norwood Labour Party calls for a boycott of BTR products following the company's three year refusal to negotiate with its striking workforce.

The motion also calls for a day of action to highlight the case of Moses Mayekiso, the General Secretary of NUMSA, who has been detained since June 1986 and is on trial for treason.

A motion from Stockport A-A proposing that the AGM be the official policy-making body of the A-AM is to be welcomed. Too often the A-AM leadership has pursued narrow interests that do not reflect the interests of the movement as a whole, as in its initial hostility to the Friends of Moses Mayekiso campaign.

Delegates seeking to raise these issues at the AGM will need to work together to ensure their message gets across in what is usually a very tightly run conference.

Workers' sanctions

Will A-AM follow Todd's call?

By Paul Ward
Sheffield Walkley CLP

Over 500 people joined a militant march through Bradford on October 29th to demand independence for Namibia and sanctions against South Africa.

In the rally following the march, Bradford West MP Max Madden drew the links with the struggle against racism in Britain.

He called for repeal of the immigration laws and for support for the Kirklees Black Workers' Group Campaign against racist segregation in Dewsbury.

SWAPO representative Timmy Iseng called for vigilance in the face of South African manoeuvres at the quadri-partite talks on the future of Namibia and Angola.

Ron Todd, describing his recent visit to South Africa, contrasted the white suburbs of Johannesburg with the black townships of Soweto and Alexandria. He described the work of the TUC International Department in training activists from South Africa and Namibia.

He ended his speech with a call for trade union action to stop apartheid goods: "If Thatcher won't impose sanctions, then we must take action to do so ourselves."

A major campaign in the TGWU, undertaken by the Campaign Against the Namibian Uranium Contracts, for the blockade of Namibian Uranium has resulted in boycott action by Liverpool dockers, and the decision of the TGWU biennial conference to ask members to refuse to handle Namibian uranium at all ports.

This exemplary campaigning work should be followed up by similar activity by the Anti-Apartheid Movement, which at its last AGM committed itself for the first time to campaigning for workplace action to stop apartheid goods.

Unfortunately, little appears to have been done since then.

These matters will be up for discussion at the A-AM AGM — to which affiliated organisations still have time to send delegates.

Namibia

Talks on Namibian independence and peace in Angola continue.

While some progress has been made, there are still disagreements over the deadline for Cuban withdrawal and UNITA and South Africa's refusal to co-operate with the Namibian conference. South Africa, it is claimed, has acutally strengthened its presence there.

If the situation is not resolved, then SWAPO is prepared to renew the struggle in Namibia.

Meanwhile, the USA plans to double its military assistance to UNITA. Ultra-right groups are seeking to form a new right wing party to represent white racists "betrayed" by South African negotiations.

For more information, read the Namibia Support Committee's monthly *International Newsbriefing*, available from NSC, PO Box 16, London NW5 2LW, tel. 01-267 1941/2.

Algeria

Twenty-six years on

In 1962, the Republic of Algeria was born: exhausted by 150 years of colonialism and a ferocious seven year war in which one million Algerians had died.

On independence the government proceeded to reshape the social and economic structures.

Immediately after independence, land and a small number of factories were allocated to the workers and managed by them. Soon after, however, the state began a policy of nationalisation.

After 1971, the development phase began, aiming to destroy production structures inherited from the colonialists and promote a planned development of the whole economy.

These measures led to profound social changes. Sudden social mobility allowed destruction of isolated local powerbases artificially maintained by the French.

Industrialisation moved Algeria's centre from the countryside to the cities where, by 1986, half the population lived, leading to crises in housing, transport and food supplies. Those years also saw the emergence of a large working class.

However, after 20 years of optimism, with the state benefiting from a favourable international context, Algerian society was confronted with grave problems.

The fall in petrol prices, which represented 98% of exports, combined with the fall in the dollar exchange rate, exposed the relative fragility of the economy.

Algeria was importing two thirds of its cereals and its debt reached 15 billion dollars. At the moment the interest repayments absorb a third of its export revenue.

In the early 1980s, the government launched an austerity plan, with a draconian reduction of imports and a curtailment of industrial development.

By BEATRIX ROUDET

Unemployment spiralled — as new generations came onto the job market. Basic food prices, previously protected by heavy government subsidies, rose massively.

Politically, Algeria is a one party system, based on the FLN, and its press is controlled by the government. There is little space for political dissent.

Women have mainly been kept away from these social changes and new opportunities, despite the fact that the 1963 Constitution, recognising their part in the Liberation Struggle, formally expressed support for women having a more equal role in society.

The Family Code of 1984, however, is a blatant step backward, condemning women to remain as minors for life, under the guardianship of father, brother, husband or son. The only organised and recognised women's movement (UMFA) is a branch of the FLN.

Abortion (as well as male homosexuality) is a crime, and only the government's preoccupation with the high birth rate seems to be promoting some advancement in women's condition.

Last month riots expressed discontent felt by the youth who face acute unemployment, the housing crisis and general austerity.

Spontaneous riots appear to have broken out in Bab el Oued, the Algiers working class district near the Kasbah, on October 4th. Within three days Muslim militants had joined in en masse.

A third group played a later part: the Berber minority from Kabylie, in North East Algeria, demanding recognition for their culture and language. During Arab unification, this minority was suppressed; the written form of Berber language is still illegal.

There seems to be a conflict of loyalty between young people who did not experience colonialism or the revolutionary war, and the older generations — who showed support for the government in the later part of the riots.

Last month saw the worst rioting and repression since independence. Witnesses say the army's repression was ferocious, involving torture as well as numerous arrests and heavy casualties. Although the official figure is 154 dead, some estimates are as high as 500.

Despite Algeria's many achievements since independence, for example in the fields of education, health care and economic development, the country is now faced with widening contradictions between the aspirations of its youth and the realities of a developing country in the 1980s.

Nicaragua

Emergency Appeal

Virtually nothing is left of Bluefields, the main Nicaraguan port on the Atlantic coast.

People compared it to Hiroshima after the bomb: 90-95% of all houses were destroyed, all boats crashed, fishing industry gone, crops vanished.

The whole Atlantic coast was much more badly hit than originally thought. A major ecological disaster has destroyed some 15,000 sq. km. of rain forest, the whole coastal infrastructure, and 22 communities.

No one knows how many people were killed. In Puerto Cabezas, 25,000 were evacuated to the interior, but Hurricane Joan struck 20 hours earlier than expected.

In the whole of Nicaragua, some 300,000 houses were also destroyed. Heavy rains forced the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people and hit all the crops. President Daniel Ortega said that the disaster was worse than the 1972 earthquake which flattened Managua.

With its strangled economy, its massive inflation, creeping malnutrition, and widespread shortages, and the ongoing Contra war (despite the "ceasefire"), Nicaragua has not got the means to rebuild anything.

It can only rely on international solidarity — and that, so far, has been lamentable. By October 26th, only eight planes had landed in Managua to bring outside support.

The British government has announced a £250,000 donation, but this is for the whole of Central America and Nicaragua will get virtually nothing.

Act now! Help the Sandinista revolution to survive!

Ask your MP or MEP to put pressure on this government and demand more aid. Collect as much as you can. Get all organisations to make a contribution.

The Nicaragua Health fund is co-ordinating funds. It donated the first £30,000, and is now looking to other bodies to fund further shipments of materials.

Send cheques (payable to NHF-Hurricane) to NHF, All Saints House, 83 Margaret Street, London W1N 7HB.



Taking a break from packing up the first, NHF-funded, shipment of goods to Nicaragua, which has just left

ISRAELI EXHIBITION

Picket Ally Pally!

An official exhibition, extolling the virtues of the Israeli state, is being displayed at Alexandra Palace in Haringey.
The exhibition — "The Heart of Israel" — is organised by BIPAC, with funding from the state itself.
Pickets are being organised, and need your support.

Sunday November 13th: All day picket from 10am to 5pm.
Monday November 14th: Lunchtime picket of trade union rally.

COLOMBIA

Strikes provoke mass arrests

By Mike Phipps, Woolwich CLP

The Colombia Solidarity Committee are calling urgently for pressure on the Colombian government following the introduction of draconian measures last month.

Under the new decree, 1,500 detainees face up to six months detention without trial, a violation of basic human rights and international law.

Repression is sweeping Colombia. Death squads, with tactic government support, are systematically murdering democrats and trade unionists, at a rate of one every six hours. There is more political homicide in Colombia than in the whole of the rest of the Western hemisphere.

CSC are demanding that the siege of the public workers union HQ in Cartagena be lifted and that the banning order on electricity workers (with which the hospital workers' union is threatened) be rescinded.

On October 27th the new CUT trade union federation organised the first general strike in Colombia's history to protest against the repression and economic attacks on the working class.

Despite government intimidation, the strike affected 60% of the country. But within the strike's first hour, over 1,000 trade unionists had been arrested.

Immediate protests against this repression should be sent to the Colombian Ambassador, 3 Hans Place, London SW1. Send copies to the Colombian Solidarity Committee, Priory House, Kingsgate Place, London NW6.

Czechoslovakia

No glasnost in Prague

"The atmosphere of togetherness and understanding ... is so intense it almost has the character of a conspiracy."

The remark was made by banned Czech playwright Vaclav Havel to an audience of several thousand young people at a folk festival in September.

More and more Czechs and Slovaks are developing a taste for this sort of conspiracy.

Apart from the well-publicised demonstrations of August 20th and October 28th, every week brings news of new discussion circles or social initiatives.

It is estimated that in Slovakia (where opposition has been weak in the past) some 20 underground journals are now being produced.

By Colin Meade Surbiton CLP

In contrast to the Soviet Union, where the new official policy is to encourage certain sorts of democratic movement, the Prague leadership has set its face against any relaxation.

All unauthorised demonstrations and meetings are broken up by police, and the press regularly carries attacks on opposition figures and thinly guarded criticism of Soviet glasnost.

Many people arrested before and during the October demonstration remain in prison. Some have now been charged with incitement against the state.

The recent leadership reshuffle eliminated several figures identified with Gorbachev, including Foreign Minister Bohuslav Chnoupek. The Prague leadership believe they have already seen the future of Gorbachevism — in 1968.

They are battening down the hatches, hoping that in a year or two the Soviet bureaucracy will discover the truth of Prague's warnings about the dangerous logic of democratisation and excessive dealings with the West.

Meanwhile, the Soviet leadership refuses to do the one thing that would really shake the Prague conservatives: making a public admission that the invasion of August 1968 was a crime against socialism and not an act in its defence.

Sections of the Czechoslovak people see the need to exercise what strength they have to thwart their leaders' plans. Many of the opposition activists combine democratic demands with a naive belief in the benevolence of market forces.

This contradiction is one that will be resolved in practice, as people are forced to choose between the real demands of the world market and the concrete logic of living democratic struggles.

Activists in the west can contribute to a debate on this issue by trying to build mutual support for democratic struggles, east and west.

The peace movement in particular should be alerted to the likely trial of three young supporters of a recently formed independent peace initiative: Hana Marvanova, Tomas Dvorak, and Lubos Vydra.

So keen are the authorities to imprison these three that charges against them were upgraded to make them ineligible for the official amnesty decreed on October 28th.

LABOUR BRIEFING

POLL TAX ROUND-UP

New Realism versus the New Mood

New Realism is moving Labour to the right.

But New Realism isn't just about the acceptance of capitalism with a human face or an abandonment of socialist tenets.

By Julie Jeavons

It is about an unwillingness to fight and loss of belief in the power of the working class. It's a surrender to the notion that the ballot is the only means of change. And it has spread defeatism throughout the left.

But the will to fight is there. There is a 'New Mood', as Socialist Worker likes to say, spreading through the working class.

It is seen in the anger felt by nurses, seafarers and postal workers, an in the growing anger against the Poll Tax. But it is being stifled by New Realism.

People up and down the country realise how unjust the Poll Tax is. They recognise that it attacks the poor and benefits the rich.

They know that is will reduce personal freedom. They want to fight and have looked to the Labour Party for a lead. Predictably, they have been let down.

The attitude of the Labour Leadership is "We cannot fight because we cannot win. Wait for the next election." Those who cannot afford to pay the Poll Tax can't wait that long.

The Labour Party will be seen as abandoning the working class, while Labour Councils collect the tax and prosecute for non-payment.

The New Realists cite past defeats as proof that fighting is useless. The left, they say, should learn from the miners' strke.

Indeed we should! That defeat was due to lack of support from the TUC and Labour Leadership. In the end, the miners were beaten by New Realism as much as anything else.

Although the miners did not win, the Tory victory was not complete. The NUM split, but it was not crushed. The miners can still fight.

The striking seafarers have lost their jobs but they too have not been totally defeated. P&O have lost so much money that other companies will think twice before taking on the NUS.

The seafarers have received no support from the TUC and Labour Leadership. They too were isolated by New Realism.

The law is used as an excuse for Labour Councils to collaborate with the Tories in implementing the Poll Tax. New laws which will accompany the Tax make it impossible, it is said, for Councils to fight.

The failure of the fight against ratecapping is invoked. But again, this failure was due to isolation and lack of support. Instead of building a solid campaign, the Labour Leadership joined the media in left-bashing and witch-hunted militants.

It looks as though the same is set to happen in the fight against the Poll Tax.

However, this need not be the case. Despite anti-trade union legislation, the law was not used against the postal workers. The government knew that, given the strength of rank-and-file feeling, the law was useless. The New Mood won the day.

The same is true of the Poll Tax. By channelling the anger and building a mass, national campaign of non-cooperation, non-payment and civil disobedience, the Poll Tax can be stopped.

There is still power in the unions. Trade unions and Labour Councils should refuse to implement the Tax. Collective action and mass solidarity will show the Tories that they cannot implement the Tax against the wishes of the people.

The New Realist arguement must be challenged now, before they help the Tories destroy our will to fight.

Poll Tax in Scotland

Fines Issued — Political Price As Yet Unpaid

Although the Poll Tax in Scotland does not come into effect until April 1989, its political impact is already clear.

While the Labour Party has refused to back a non-payment campaign, the Scottish National Party is looking for 100,000 volunteers to pledge not to pay the Tax.

A by-election in the Labour stronghold of Govan, just after *Briefing* goes to press, will be round one in the battle for the hearts and minds of the Scottish working class. Labour is defending a 19,000 majority.

Jim Sillars, former Labour MP and former leader of the Scottish Labour Party, is the SNP candidate. He is a firm advocte of SNP policy supporting non-payment of the Tax.

The Labour candidate, Bob Gillespie, a SOGAT official, personifies the dilemma of labour movement politics.

Comrade Gillespie has a history of supporting broad left policies. He has personally pledged not to pay the Tax.

However, he has refused to join the Committee of 100 which is attempting to organise an unofficial labour movement non-payment campaign. Worse yet, his extremely short by-election campiagn is being run by Donald Dewar MP and Brian Wilson MP, both hostile to non-payment.

The first fines for non-registration have now been issued.

In the Central Region of Scotland (covering Stirling, Falkirk and Alloa) the Community Registration Officer has sent out notice of £50 civil penalties, with this additional threat:

"I must warn you that if there is a continuing failure to provide me with the required information, I will be required by the Act to impose a further civil penalty of £200."

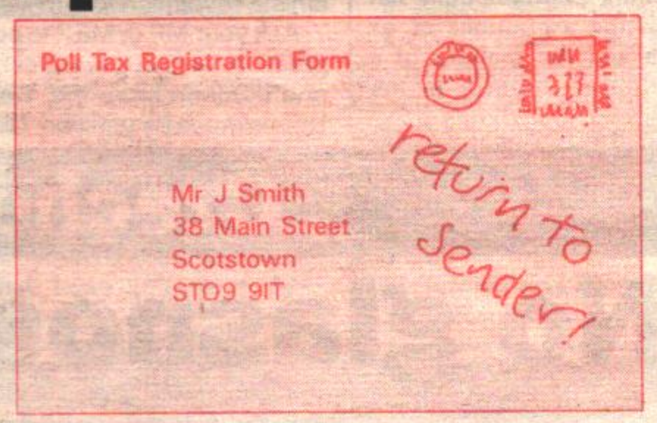
Rowland Sheret
Scottish Labour Briefing

The "Stop It" campaign made much noise at the time of the May 1988 District Council elections. But "Stop It" failed because of lack of any strategy for actually stopping the Tax.

Brian Wilson, chairman (his terminology) of "Stop It", now advises us to pay the Tax and wait for the next General Election.

But the depth of feeling in Scotland against being used as the Poll Tax guinea pig is intense.

The Reverend Dr. Ian Frase of Gargunnock, a research consultant for the Scottish Churches Council, faces a £50 fine for non-registration.



He is preparing for a court battle in which he will claim that the "community charge" is in fact a Tax and as such contrary to the Act of Union.

The Union of Scotland and England in 1707, which established one Kingdom and One Parliament, included an agreement "that all parts of the United Kingdom of Great Britain be under the same regulations, prohibitions, and restrictions, and liable to equal impositions and duties for export and import."

This gave Scotland access to overseas trade.

England insisted "that there be the same customs, excises and other taxes."

This gave them the unified state, protected borders, and the foundations for Empire.

Labour Regional Councillors have been keeping a low profile over the Poll Tax. They have implemented the requirements of the Act, allocated resources for the Community Charge Officers, and the £50 fines are now being issued in their names.

Where local anti-Poll Tax unions have been set up, witch-hunts have followed. In Glasgow, where *Militant* supporters have done much of the work in the local communities, a Walworth Road officer has been imported to do the dirty work.

Labour has power in Scotland — but is shirking its responsibility and refusing to use it.

With 50 of Scotland's 72 MPs, control of Strathclyde Regional Council, Lothian Regional Council, and Central Regional Council, Labour has a mandate based on overwhelming electoral support. We are witnessing an historic betrayal of this support. The political price has yet to be paid.

Editor's note: Rowland Sheret has been fined £50 for refusing to register for the Poll Tax.

Give them a workers' answer!

Continued from front page

This is a big chance for the left. The Polish Socialist Party (PSP) will be arguing for an end to illusions in the market and for a socialist solution to the crisis. The first consultative conference of the PSP adopted the following resolution on October 21st:

"That enterprises should be managed by the workers;

"that the management personnel is made responsible to them.

"To achieve this we need:

"seizure by Committees of Self Management of the intiative in the management of factories and the undertaking of a struggle for a new form of self management;

"setting up a horizontal and vertical co-ordination between Councils of Self Management, formation of self management representation of working people at a national level, a self management Chamber of Parliament."

Leaflet issued in Warsaw on Thatcher's arrival in Poland

Co-opt Mrs Thatcher to the Consultative Council!

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher will undoubtedly find a common tongue with General Jaruzelski. Most importantly, they should exchange experiences in crushing Trade Union Rights. The two are already world class experts in this.

In fact, there is already a tradition of co-operation here. When the British miners were on strike Jaruzelski hurriedly came to the Tories's assistance and increased coal exports to Britain.

They should find it easy to reach agreement on other things, too.

They can tell each other the best ways of protecting the privilege at the expense of the poor; of the most effective methods of lowering the consumption of working people; of the most skillful approach to adopt in cutting social services.

If it weren't for certain obstacles caused by their respective political systems, they would make a perfectly matched couple. Unfortunately, geo-political considerations rule out marriage.

So perhaps Mrs Thatcher could be made an honorary member of the Politburo. At least she should be co-opted to the Consultative Council. Her advice waas utilised back in May when our mass media quoted the example of the smashing of the British seafarers' strike as proof that sympathy strikes couldn't be tolerated here either.

Now Thatcher could oversee the sacking of miners from Jastrzebie pits. She has herself thrown tens of thousands of miners out of work.

And if it proved necessary to reintroduce martial laws the British PM's wealth of experience would surely come in handy. After all, martial law has been going on in Northern Ireland for 19 years.

It is quite possible Mrs Thatcher will use her visit to Poland to assure the Poles she is the defender of workers' rights by expressing her support for Solidarnosc.

Well, no thanks...

We would prefer a thousand times over the support of British miners, or seafarers, or of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, who have everyday experience of poverty, persecution and the terror of security forces. They can understand us.

Thatcher wants to use us. We say to Mrs Thatcher:

Reinstate your sacked miners!

Repeal your anti-union legislation!

Withdraw your troops from Northern Ireland!

Statement from Wroclaw District Workers' Committee of the PPS, November 2nd

The closure of the Gdansk shipyard is a political decision that throuws the cost of bankruptcy caused by appalling management on to the shoulders of the workforce.

An economic reform of this sort is unacceptable since it threatenes the future of thousands of Polish families whilst also threatening the economic and political position of the Nomenclapura.

The PPS programmatic resolution of October 22nd opts for a self management model of social and economic change. It is the workforce itself, through its democratically elected Workers' Council, that has to determine the fate of its factory, whilst society has to determine the fate of the country.

It is the Workers' Councils, not the ruling apparatus, that has to choose its managers.

It is only in that way that the workforce can bear responsibility for the financial collapse of its firm.

Workers' Councils in firms threatened by insolvency should attempt to save these firms by the assumption of the complete decision-making powers.