LABOUR
BRIEFING
40p FORTNIGHTLY
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40p

As Viraj is sent to Sri Lanka

STOP ALL DEPORTATIONS!

•One hundred police force their way into a church!
•They smash windows, destroy personal belongings, and break down doors with pneumatic drills!
•They drag a man, wearing only pyjamas, downstairs, and throw him into a police van!
•The teenage daughter of a clergyman is prevented by police from getting dressed and forced to stand around wearing only a towel!
Is this South Africa perhaps? Chile? Czechoslovakia?
No, this is Manchester, on Wednesday January 18th, when at 7.30am 100 police forced their way into the Church of the Ascension in Hulme and smashed down doors to end Viraj Mendis's fight against deportation to probable death in Sri Lanka.

Despite promises from the government that local police would not be used, the attack on the sanctuary was led by PC Holmes, the so-called community policeman based at nearby Green Hayes Police Station.

From the Church Viraj was taken to Stretford Police Station and from there to Pentonville Prison in London, where, handcuffed and wearing only his underpants, he was prevented from sleeping and subjected to continuous racist abuse and taunts about the death awaiting him in Sri Lanka.

On Friday January 20th Viraj was taken to Gatwick Airport and, handcuffed to two Special Branch Officers, forced onto a plane to Sri Lanka.

By Geoff Ryan Stretford CLP and Evan Pritchard Withington CLP

For over a week before he was seized, Viraj had been trying to find a third country prepared to accept him. The Home Office were fully aware of these negotiations, were fully aware that it was only a matter of a few weeks at most, before Viraj would have had a firm offer. Yet Douglas Hurd and Timothy Renton cynically chose to send Viraj to the dangers he faces in Sri Lanka.

Thatcher, Hurd, Renton and the rest of the Tory government have been deliberately lying about their willingness to let Viraj go to a third country.

•They totally blocked any possibility of Viraj going to Ireland — his preferred choice.

•They refused to grant any extension to the time Viraj was given to make necessary arrangements and they ignored the very real offers of asylum that had already been made.

Graham Stringer, Leader of Manchester City Council, says he received a firm offer to accept Viraj from the Governor General of Gibraltar — but the government wasn't prepared to wait the short time necessary to complete the formalities.

When Father John Methuen, Rector of the Church of the Ascension, rang the Home Office on Friday to inform them that one country was in the process of sending a visa, he was told "Oh well, he's on the plane now," and the phone was put down.

Glyn Ford, Labour MEP for Greater Manchester East, tried to see Viraj when the plane touched down at Zurich, but was refused access. Ford had a firm offer of refuge in West Germany.

In Zurich, Viraj was prevented from leaving the plane by the two Special Branch men, despite their having no legal authority whatsoever in Switzerland. At the very least, the Special Branch are guilty of kidnapping and false imprisonment.

Hurd and Renton had not the slightest intention of allowing Viraj to go to a third country. If Viraj were granted asylum, this would be a tacit condemnation of Tory policy.

Dissident

Viraj Mendis was deported because he is black and he is a communist. As Bill Morris, Deputy General Secretary of the TGWU, explained: "If you are a white South African or a Soviet dissident you are wined and dined. If you are black, and stand up for yourself, you are deported."

Viraj was deported because he had helped black people resist Britain's racist immigration laws. He was deported because he showed it is possible to fight back.

The Tories are now intent on stopping anyone following Viraj's example. Douglas Hurd has now warned the Church of England not to defy the Tories' racist laws.

In a number of areas church members are sheltering refugees, and mosques, temples, and churches have already given sanctuary to others faced with deportation. These activists of all religions need and deserve our full support.

Alas, the heroic stand of Fr John Methuen and the congregation of the Church of the Ascension is in glaring contrast with the abysmal failure of the leadership of the labour movement to do anything

Continued on page 5



PHOTO: Tim Nolan

Within ten hours of the police abduction of Viraj Mendis, 250 people turned out to picket Downing Street.
The demonstration on the evening of Thursday January 19th was addressed by Peter Tatchell and representatives of the Campaign, and attended by local anti-racist groups with their banners.
The following evening over 50 supporters took part in an all-night picket of Pentonville jail, where Viraj was held.

NATIONAL MARCH
Don't let the Home Office get away with murder!
Stop all Deportations NOW!
February 4th
Assemble 12 noon
Crown Square, Manchester

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Letters

WRITEBACK!
Disagree with something? Agree with something? Want to raise a new idea? — Write in.
Write to: Writeback, Labour Briefing, 39 Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB.

Solidarity, Stalinists, Sectarianism seriously simplified

Dear *Briefing*,

I find it regrettable that Mike Phipps should file such a negative and cynical report from this year's Anti-Apartheid Movement AGM, instead of pointing to the positive opportunities in the year ahead.

Unfortunately, such negativism is the logical result of a sectarian line which stresses the building of "oppositionist" caucuses of far-left activists rather than a united front approach for taking forward the movement as it actually exists.

Solidarity with all genuine forces fighting apartheid is a point of principle. However, solidarity is about concrete struggle not providing a platform for six or seven rival political currents to outline their formal programmes.

Presumably, Mike Phipps would not deny that the ANC, UDF, and COSATU remain the main points of reference for the mass struggle in South Africa. In that case, as far as solidarity is concerned, what we have in common with the A-AM majority is more important than what divides us.

What Phipps seems to be proposing is a division of labour which leaves solidarity with the ANC to the "Stalinists" whilst we promote more marginal forces.

Briefing readers will have been distressed to learn from Phipps that the A-AM has ignored, and will continue to ignore, the plight of Moses Mayekiso. They should therefore be delighted that Resolution no. 22, passed at the AGM:

"condemns the continuing political trial of the Alexandra 5 including Moses Mayekiso, General Secretary of NUMSA...

"salutes the resolution of COSATU to intensify and build the national and international campaign to seek the release of Cde Moses Mayekiso and the others in the Alexandra freedom trial...

"resolves to continue to work with the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering on the political trial of the Alexandra 5, involving Moses Mayekiso and call for the dropping of charges."

The day of action referred to was a picket of the South African Embassy, highlighting the case of the Alexandra 5, organised by the A-AM's Joint Campaign Against Repression of Trades Unionists.

The Joint Campaign has also issued a campaign briefing, campaign cards, and a leaflet for trade unionists.

Belated? Inadequate? Perhaps. But if we are serious about Moses's plight, rather than using it as a stick to beat the "Stalinists", shouldn't we welcome and build such initiatives?

I am not for a minute suggesting that the current A-AM leadership is building the kind of movement that we want — rooted in the labour movement and amongst black people and youth.

Nonetheless, over the past year there have been limited but significant moves in the right direction:

- the activist turn around the Mandela march (resulting, as Mike Phipps grudgingly acknowledges, in a mere trebling of membership);
- the institution of a youth conference, the formation of the Joint Campaign, and a greater emphasis on trade union work;
- the beginnings of a discussion about how to relate to the black community.

Most of these initiatives have been in response to discontent and pressure from the rank and file.

Unfortunately, Mike Phipps has nothing to say about how to take these developments forward; indeed, it is difficult to see any reason at all for being in the official A-AM if his article is to be taken seriously.

I would contend that if *Briefing* supporters are prepared to intervene in the A-AM in a sensible non-sectarian manner, we can find an audience going well beyond 40 "oppositionists".

In fact, we might even be able to make some inroads into that A-AM conference majority which Mike Phipps dismisses as "Stalinist".

Finally, as the most important year in Namibia's history looms, is it too much to ask that *Briefing* supporters mobilise against imperialist/South African manouevres and in support of SWAPO — as well as finding platforms for the tiny SWANU grouping?

Comradely,
B. J. Gibbons,
Levenshulme, Manchester

Who stands corrected?

Dear *Briefing*,

In his letter (*Briefing* no. 75) on my article on the Anti-Apartheid AGM (*Briefing* no. 74), Colin Adkins has perpetrated two deliberate distortions.

First, the fact that 40 oppositionist delegates attended a caucus meeting does not mean that the division in the AGM was 40 against a majority of 360.

As I pointed out in my article, the margin in one critical debate was only one vote!

Secondly, it is just not true to say that the AGM discussed Moses Mayekiso — unless you are referring to the moment when delegates got to their feet, at the end of the truncated trade union debate, to protest that there had been no discussion on Moses Mayekiso!

On one thing I stand corrected: Moses, the centre of one of the most important international solidarity campaigns of the last 18 months, does in fact get a two-line mention in a resolution over four columns.

How could I have failed to miss this microscopic reference?

Yours,
Mike Phipps,
Woolwich CLP

An Englishman's entertainment is his *Neighbours*

Dear *Briefing*,

Oh, Brecht, if only you knew to what purpose your revolutionary analysis of the dramatic event would have been employed!

I am, of course, referring to William West's supposedly "Brechtian" reading of *Neighbours*.

It's not that I object to anyone watching tacky, badly-produced, distorted television. But let's not delude ourselves or attempt to justify our activities with pseudo-intellectual posturing.

Soap operas, far from being subversive, usually reaffirm dominant ideologies. *Neighbours* is no exception.

Take, for example, the programme's portrayal of Australians as, almost without exception, white, middle class, unsophisticated dolts inhabiting a hermetically-sealed, boring suburban landscape.

For a British audience, this portrayal not only feeds popular misconceptions about Australia and Australians, but invites the British viewer to revel in a fantasy of her/his own cultural sophistication and superiority.

Is it any wonder then that in a period marked by Britain's decline as a major world power, *Neighbours* should enjoy such popularity in this country?

The extent to which William West has been seduced by the implict cultural imperialism of the programme is nowhere so evident as in his "ho-hum" dismissal of Aboriginal politics.

The fact that the programme resolved the highly political and contentious issue of Aboriginal land rights in five minutes is *precisely* the point!

Aboriginals may live on the other side of the world and their struggle for cultural recognition may not invade the safe security of our lives, but surely they deserve a little more respect than a complicit, self-satisfied yawn.

However, for those who still insist on regarding *Neighbours* as subversive, perhaps they should see it as a huge cultural joke cracked at their own expense — a perverse attempt by the Australians to discourage the ever-growing tide of English middle class emigrants!

Whatever *Neighbours* says or doesn't say, it certainly confirms what, deep down, every true "Englishman" knows: they might have a better climate but they ain't got no culture!

Signed: *outraged Aussie of Crouch End*

West is best!

Dear *Briefing*,

Reading the two letters responding to my article on *Neighbours*, I am reminded of the film Poltergeist, in which the television acts as an evil force exuding ghosts and hypnotising people.

It's easy to see this as distilling the paranoia of various rightist and Christian fundamentalist groups in the US. It is therefore depressing to find the same paranoia among some *Briefing* readers.

Frank Neal calls the effect of *Neighbours* "subliminal". This implies that viewers are passive, unable to sort out reality from fantasy, unable to sort out their own lives. This patronising view is all too common amongst socialists.

The coming deregulation of the airwaves means that TV could become even more dominated by soaps and adverts, game and chat shows. We'll either be able to switch off the TV or engage with it in some positive way.

I believe the latter approach is much more productive if we are to understand how capitalism works — and why capitalism produces such programmes.

I am certainly not advocating more *Neighbours*. What I am saying is that it's possible, and will soon be necessary, to develop a different, radical perspective on TV.

We must see soaps not as rightist propaganda imposed subliminally on an unconscious working class, but as pure fantasy to be enjoyed for their humour value.

It's not a lot to go on really, but with deregulation maybe fantasy will be our only way to watch TV.

William West,
Haringey Labour Briefing

Who's relevant today?

Dear *Briefing*,

I was disturbed to read the reactions to William West's article on *Neighbours*, and would like to challenge, briefly, their misguided Fabianism.

What do socialists mean when they use "quality" as a guiding principle?

All too often, quality is opposed to what is popular, i.e. to what a great number of people enjoy. Quality is what educated middle class socialists, liberals, and Tories enjoy.

Margaret Neal objects to *Neighbours* being inflated to the cultural level of Shakespeare, and in the next sentence she calls *Neighbours* "irrelevant".

That she finds *Neighbours* less relevant than a 400 year old mainstay of bourgeois culture says a lot about socialism today.

In re-staging family life in an at least partially realistic setting, problems *are* shown with the institution of the family itself (for example Jane's relationship with her mother, and Paul's marrying for purely economic reasons).

Nothing which pretends to realism can be pure ideology, but unfortunately socialists automatically seem to dismiss this possibility from anything but "great literature".

As long as socialists continue to ignore or dismiss the popular, they will remain — quite rightly — unpopular themselves.

Yours in comradeship,
Min

Periscope



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

Carried away at Christmas.

We all know that Christmas is a time of good cheer, and a good excuse for a few jars.

Woe betide then the union national negotiator and **Labour Party NEC** member who had to be dragged out of a negotiating meeting by his own General Secretary after management complained they couldn't talk to someone so obviously enjoying the Christmas spirit.

This all comes as no surprise for the rank and file of the union (which shall remain nameless) who have long wondered how anyone sober could have signed some of the sell-out deals of recent years.

Watch this space for details of early retirement.

Serving the Community

Talking of service to the labour movement, we note the recent press coverage in South London concerning a certain Labour Councillor, Chair of her Council's Rent Arrears Eviction Panel (and thereby responsible for adding to the numbers of homeless), she has built up over £1,500 in rent arrears herself.

Well, so be it. But this winner of the Gwyneth Dunwoody award for home finance has at the same time managed to claim over £15,000 in attendance allowance per year, and arranged to get a housing transfer twice — the second time into newly built accomodation.

We hope this is not going to be the only response from the right wing to *Briefing*'s debate on "Should socialists stay in local government".

Scientific Socialist is (sun) spot on

Southwark Councillor and *Briefing* supporter **Piers Corbyn** has been making a quiet killing — on the weather.

Using his studies of sunspots and weather cycles, Piers was able to forecast a short Indian summer, a frosty November, and a frost-free but damp Christmas — all spot-on, and worth several centuries in winning bets with bookies William Hill.

If you think we've avoided winter just remember, it's not necessarily as simple as it a-piers. The next Corbyn forecast is for bitter cold for most of February and the beginning of March. You read it first...

Sick as a Harriet

MP Harriet Harman has been "knocked off her perch" by a case of pneumonia caused by the parrot-linked malady, psittacosis.

Please, *Briefing* readers, this is nothing to crow about!

Harriet was forced out of the House of Commons for some six weeks by the bird-bug, which may have been brought on by her Shadow Cabinet duties.

After all, repeating "Who's a pretty boy, Neil?" day after day would probably have most of us crying "Stop the Claws!"

Still, what can you expect when you're MP for Peck-ham?

Contact Briefing

Contact *Briefing* at 39, Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB. Next issue out Wednesday February 8th; deadline for copy and letters is Tuesday January 31st.

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500 Club Winner

Neville, *Briefing*'s random number generator, continues with his feminist trend by selecting lucky number 467 as this week's winner. The holder of the number is Jane Stockton of Oxford. Contact *Briefing* for details of how to join the lucky number 500 Club.

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

No compromise on *Satanic Verses*

As if it wasn't bad enough that Salman Rushdie's novel, *Satanic Verses*, was banned in South Africa and India, burned by Islamic fundamentalists in Bradford, and taken off the shelves by WH Smiths, an amendment was tabled in the House of Commons by a group of Labour MPs (including Max Madden, Bernie Grant, Harry Cohen, Brian Sedgemore) "noting with concern the offence caused to Muslims" by the book and calling for *either* the abolition of the blasphemy law or its extension to cover non-Christian religions.

There's only one thing to do with the blasphemy law, and that's wipe it off the statute books. That is not only a socialist and libertarian demand, but an anti-racist one as well.

Racism cannot be fought by giving state privileges to a list of worthies. It requires the destruction of all racist institutions in society. This cause will not be advanced one jot by extending the privileges enjoyed by the Christian church to mosque, temple, or synagogue. Labour must renew the old democratic demand for the complete separation of Church and State, and pursue it rigorously, even into the controversial realm of education.

The amendment tabled by Madden et al failed to defend Rushdie's rights and to make the basic socialist points. Novelists, artists, indeed citizens of any kind, have the right to attack and satirise any and all establishment institutions, including organised religions. This is non-negotiable, as Eric Heffer rightly asserted.

In the interests of a spurious multi-culturalism, these MPs are giving succour to some of the world's most determined champions of bigotry and intolerance. The book-burners of Bradford are no better than book-burners anywhere else.

Good riddance Ronald Reagan

Reagan's retirement is a suitable moment to recall his countless crimes against humanity.

He committed terrorist acts against Iran, Libya, and Lebanon. He invaded Grenada. He kept up a stranglehold on the peoples of Cuba and Vietnam. He aided and abetted torture in Chile and Turkey. He worked hand-in-glove with the murderers who rule Israel and South Africa. His missile mania threatened the whole world with annihilation. He waged monstrous wars against the peoples of Nicaragua and El Salvador.

At home, he waged other wars: against trade unionists, civil liberties, industrial workers, black people, Spanish-speaking people, women, lesbians and gays, the homeless, the poor.

He vandalised the land and air of the entire planet.

All this he cloaked in a succession of arrogant fatuous lies, most vividly exposed in *Contragate*.

The final and fitting verdict on Reagan's reign was given in Miami, when the black ghetto exploded in rage for two days.

No one can believe any longer that Reagan, for all his clownish ignorance, was "only an actor".

Everything he did,he did in the interest of imperialism. The indictment against Reagan is, above all, an indictment against the class he so loyally served.

Oppressed people all over the world will rejoice at Reagan's retirement. At the same time, they will prepare themselves to renew the bitter struggle against his successor, Bush, and his numerous accomplices.

Mortgage rates and the housing crisis

It's not just dockland yuppies who suffer when mortgage rates skyrocket. To working class home owners a mortgage rate rise means a big cut in living standards — and in some cases homelessness.

The Tory attacks on Council housing, and the re-emergence of Rachman-style private landlords have left many working class people with no alternative but private home ownership.

For a while, this trend seemed to bolster the Tory myth of a land of happy individual home owners. Lawson's squeeze on credit has now exploded that myth. The freedom and security promised by the lure of home ownership simply cannot be delivered by a market dominated system.

Council tenants, private tenants, and working class home owners are united in this, at least: they are all at the mercy of this capitalist system.

The socialist answer is *a decent home for all*, provided through an unprecedented public house building drive.

Economic Notebook

Takeover troubles in the electronics industry:

Dog eats dog eats dog...

GEC is Britain's largest manufacturing company, directly employing 160,000 people, mainly of electronic capital goods.

Since 1985 it has been intermittently trying to grow even bigger — by taking over Plessey — Britain's third largest producer of these goods.

The reasons for this are interesting both in terms of the development of the electronics industry and the choices facing British manufacturing capital.

•In 1985 GEC attempted to take over Plessey, helped by an enormous fund of cash (now standing at around £1.5bn) which it had not seen fit to invest productively.

Plessey resisted. The government stopped the takeover through the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, for decreasing competition, particularly in electronic armaments.

•In 1988 GEC and Plessey kissed and made up and formed a joint company, GPT, to manufacture telecommunications equipment. Plessey was won over by the size of investment now needed for development work.

•In December 1988 GEC launched another takeover bid for Plessey, this time in conjunction with the West German Siemens, Europe's largest electronics concern.

By Jamie Gough
Holborn and St Pancras CLP

Siemens's cash mountain makes GEC's look like peanuts — around £8bn (£9bn is the entire output of Britain in a week!).

GEC and Siemens claimed that their "sharing" Plessey would create less monopoly than GEC's first bid, where it had Plessey to itself.



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

Bryan Gould wants more planning... by the Monopolies Commission!

The bid was investigated by the Office of Fair Trading, referred to the Monopolies Commission by the government, and investigated by the EEC under its competition rules.

•On January 9th, Plessey bit back. A specially created consortium called Metsun, comprising Plessey; STC, the British second ranking electronic capital goods company; and Thompson, the French nationalised electronics firm, launched a £7bn bid for GEC.

Subsequently, other companies expressed an interest in joining Metsun, notably the US telecoms manufacturing giant AT&T. Others, such as British Aerospace, Fiat, Olivetti and AEG, declined.

Plessey's main aim was to stave off being taken over itself. The others want to get their hands on bits of GEC — STC, for instance, was after GEC's telecoms business.

•GEC hit back, revealing some large joint ventures with the US General Electric, the largest electronics firm in the world, and implying that GE is not interested in helping dismember GEC.

•Plessey claimed the GEC-Siemens takeover bid violated agreements covering their joint venture GPT, since Siemens would get a chunk of GPT.

With the costs of development now requiring such massive capital backing, companies can reduce risks by taking over rivals — especially with 1992 coming up. Thus there is an increasing concentration of ownership in electronics.

But the takeover strategy also illustrates the different strategies British manufacturing capital can use to meet the contradictory pressures they face.

Investments

GEC under Weinstock now goes for the largest profits in the shortest time. Plessey has adopted a longer time span for its investments. For example, GEC ceased microchip manufacturing in the early 70s because it faced a year or two of losses, so Plessey remains the only substantial chip producer left in Britain.

Of course part of the GEC's and Plessey's resistance to being taken over stems from their individual managers seeing their jobs in jeopardy). More importantly it reflects different strategies which sections of capital believe in and want to defend.

Around a third of the sales of both GEC and Plessey are of electronics for armaments. With Racal they account for the lion's share of British production — around £3bn a year.

The prospect of a large part of these assets being transferred to foreign ownership could well upset the government because armaments are, and have always been, the star performer of British manufacturing.

The implications for the war strategy of the British state are less clear. It could happily purchase armaments from abroad, *provided that* rivalry with the other imperialist countries making arms (USA, France, W. Germany) does not become too strong.

Rivalry may be forestalled by the integration already underway in the form of joint ventures between EEC armaments manufacturers and increasing moves, currently being spearheaded by the "socialist" Spanish state government, for EEC "defence" integration.

But should GEC or Plessey go into foreign ownership, the government would face the same dilemma that it had over Westland, though on a vastly larger scale: should it be the USA (AT&T, or possibly GE) or Europe (Thompson, Siemens)?

The response of the labour movement leadership to all this has been pathetic.

MSF called for the British electronics industry to be restructured according to a "co-ordinated plan" rather than "financial wheeler-dealing". But a "co-ordinated plan" *for what aims*?

Brian Gould said that GEC's record shows the failures of its "short termism". Funny: he's always said that short termism in Britain was the fault of the City, imposed on honest hard-working manufacturing firms.

He wants to replace it with long term capitalist planning, and has called on the government to ask the Monopolies Commission to draw up a "strategic plan" for the electronics industry.

What about a *labour movement plan, a workers' plan*?

The current takeover battle may now have cooled off, with the collapse of the Plessey bid, although as we go to press there is talk of GEC now acting with GE to pursue a bid for Plessey.

But unless the labour movement leadership changes its tack, it will be found wanting the next time the question is raised.

Campaign!

EVENTS

JANUARY

Sat. 28th. Labour Party Policy Forum: *People at Work.* Wales Region.

Sat. 28th. Labour Party Policy Forum: *Britain and the World.* North West Region.

Sat. 28th. Labour Party Policy Forum: *Physical and Social Environment.* Eastern Region.

Sat. 28th. *Demonstrate for British Withdrawal* on the 17th anniversary of Bloody Sunday when British paratroopers killed 14 unarmed civil rights marchers. Organised by Committee for British Withdrawal from Ireland (IBRG, TOM, Irish Sections, LCI, Women and Ireland Network, LWI). Assemble 12 noon, Grange Park, Kilburn, London NW10 (Kilburn & Kilburn Park tube stations). Rally at the Bridge Park community/sports centre, Brentfield, Harrow Road, London NW10 (Stonebridge Park tube). Speakers: Ken Livingstone, Sinn Fein, Indian Workers Association, Rising Phoenix Republican Flute Band, United Campaign against Plastic Bullets, Tom Durkin (Brent Trades Council). Rally centre is wheelchair accessible; creche available 1-6pm; (01) 609 1743 for details.

FEBRUARY

Sat. 4th. Labour Movement Conference: *The Alternative to the Policy Review.* 10.30am: Registration. 11-12.30pm: Key issues in the Policy Review. Plenary chaired by Harry Cohen MP, Speakers: Jeremy Corbyn MP, Unmesh Desai, Ken Livingstone MP, Ann Pettifor. 1.30-3pm: Workshops, including Women & Labour, Defending Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament, Labour's Economic Policy, Why Labour Needs Black Sections, Defending Party Democracy, "Time To Go" (British Withdrawal from Ireland). 3-4.30pm: Building a Modern Labour Party. Speakers: Diane Abbott MP, John McDonnell, Mildred Gordon MP. Sponsorship sought. 10.30am-4.30pm, Queen Mary College Students Union, Bancroft Road, London E1. Tube: Mile End. Bus: 277, 106, 25. Registration £2 (and concessionary unwaged rate). Contact East London Policy Review Conference, c/o 96a Stoke Newington High Street, London N16. Access: difficult; help provided.

Sat. 4th. NUS Day of Action. 7.30am: *Picket* Eastern Docks, Dover. 2.00pm: *Rally*, Eastern Docks, Dover. Speakers: Sam McCluskie (NUS General Secretary); John Prescott MP; MPs; and leading trade unionists. 7.00pm: American supper, Dover Town Hall. Leaflets/information from Dover NUS Strikers, Maritime House, Snargate St, Dover CT17 9BZ, (0304) 240590.

Tues. 7th. Irish in Britain Representation Group, Hackney Direct Labour Organisation, Construction Safety Campaign. Public Meeting: *End Building Sites Carnage.* Irish construction workers especially welcome. IBRG, CSC, DLO members available from 6.30pm for discussion over tea, light refreshments. Speakers, display boards, videos. Meeting 7.30-9.30pm, Hackney Town Hall, Mare St., London E8.

Sat. 11th. Labour Party Policy Forum: *Women and Labour's policies for the future.* London/South region.

Wed. 15th. London Health Emergency urgent meeting: *Stop the NHS White Paper! Hands off our hospitals!* To discuss full implications of the White Paper and the possibilities of a united campaign to defeat it. Representatives and individuals from all interested bodies welcome. Speakers: Frank Dobson MP, Judith Carter (COHSE national officer), Cllr Annette Barrett (Chair, Greenwich Health Sub-Committee. 7pm, Camden Town Hall, Judd St, London WC1, (Kings Cross tube). Details: LHE, 335, Grays Inn Road, London WC1, (01) 833 3020.

Sat. 18th. South East London Policy Review Conference. 10.00am. Registration. 10.30am: *Policies for the 90s*, plenary with Ken Livingstone MP, Bernie Grant MP, Carol Hall, SOGAT. 11.30-1.00pm: Workshops, including Disarmament, The Economy, Women & Society, Black Rights & Black Sections, Trade Union & Job Rights, The Environment, Party Democracy, Ireland: Time To Go. 3.30-4.30pm: *What Kind of Party?*, plenary with Jon Lansman, Diane Abbott MP. 10.00am-5pm, Thames Polytechnic Students Union, Thomas St, London SE18. Creche provided. Disabled access difficult, but help provided.

Sat. 25th. Labour Party Policy Forum: *Consumers and the Community.* Yorkshire/Northern Region.

MARCH

Weds. 4th. Miners' Strike, *5th Anniversary Event.* Supported by Manchester City Council. Morning: three major workshops on privatisation, victimisation, women in struggle. Afternoon: Rally in the Great Hall. Evening: Top class entertainment hosted by Mike Elliot (of Albert Hall Heroes Concert fame). Speakers include: Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield, Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner. Manchester Town Hall.

Sat. 14th. Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign. Second anniversary of the Tottenham three convictions. *March* through Wood Green, Tottenham, to rally on the Farm. Quash the Convictions!

Labour Briefing Steering Committee: Sunday, January 29th, London.

LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING

We apologise to our London readers that owing to problems of moving, etc., we have been unable to bring you a London supplement this issue.

Meeting for London supporters, Monday February 6th, 7pm. Ring 985 8892 for details. Agenda includes GLLP Conference, London Campaign for Socialism, London Briefing. At least one rep per borough, please!

Socialist Conference

West London

Big success for Conference!

Two hundred participated in the West London Socialist Conference held in Hounslow on January 21st.

Most of them found it a worthwhile and valuable experience.

By Peter Purton
West London Socialist Conference Secretary

Among specific projects launched form the event will be the founding of a local *Time To Go* campaign and a West London branch of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

There were also detailed discussions on the strategies socialists should adopt in local government in the era of cuts and capitulations, the struggle against racism both inside and outside the labour movement, and how to organise against the Housing Act.

The Conference was free of sectarianism and ideological polemic. This was largely because it had been structured around real local and national struggles, and the campaigns had been invited to organise their own sessions and provide their own speakers.

The first session of the Conference addressed the theme "Promoting Socialist Values", with platform speakers Tony Benn, Sarah Roeloffs from LCLGR, Marc Wadsworth from Black Sections, and Geoff Bell on Ireland.

The second session revolved around the theme "Democracy and the State" with speakers on local government, racism, abortion rights, and John Aitken of the EPIU on New Realism.

The Ealing Fightback Campaign organised three of the seven workshops which followed — on local government strategy, the Housing Act, and Education.

A closing rally reminded the Conference that "Socialist is international" with speakers from Nicaragua, Palestine and Ireland.

At all stages of the Conference local Briefing supporters, because of their central involvement in West London campaigns, played a prominent and leading role.

Scotland

Come to Stirling!

Stirling is to be the venue for a major national conference on "Socialism and Scotland".

The one-day event is being organised by the Socialist Conference and will offer wide-ranging political debate.

By MARK SEATON

Rowland Sheret, *Briefing* supporter and Chair of the Conference Organising Committee, explained:

"Scotland is entering a period of great potential change, with the establishment of a Scottish parliament becoming a real possibility.

"The Socialist Conference in Scotland aims to bring together all those on the left who wish to see a socialist answer to Scotland's problems.

"We recognise that any discussion of socialist policies and the need for social change cannot be confined to any one party or group on the left."

Among the speakers will be Tony Benn and Dennis Canavan representing the Campaign Group of Labour MPs.

Contributions will also come from Isobel Lindsay of the SNP; David Spaven of the Green Party; Bob McLean of Scottish Labour Action; Sheila Maher, Chair of Kincardine & Deeside CLP; and Eamonn McCann of the Socialist Workers Party, amongst many others.

Workshops will be held on Fighting the Poll Tax; an Econonomic Strategy for Scotland; Trade Union Strategies and New Realism; Strategies for Women's Liberation; Scotland and the Green Economy.

In the afternoon, there will be a forum on "Scotland, Socialism, and the National Question" with speakers from SLA, SNP, SWP and the Green Party.

"Our objective must be to involve more people in discussions about socialism, especially in working class organisations, the women's movement, the ethnic communities and in environmental groups," commented Tony Benn.

The Conference is being held in the Albert Hall, Stirling, on Saturday February 4th, 10.00am-5.00pm. There will be a creche, food, and bar. Further information can be obtained from Graeme Williamson, tel. (0259) 50364.

West Midlands

Socialists sent to Coventry!

Preparations are in full swing for the West Midlands Socialist Conference.

Representatives of the organisations affiliated to the Socialist Conference and other interested organisations have formed a successful working party to prepare for the Conference to be held in Coventry Polytechnic on February 4th.

By Pauline Purnell
Birmingham Edgbaston CLP

Registrations have been received from areas as far apart as Malvern and Stoke-on-Trent, and participating organisations will range from the Centre for Research into Alternative Employment to the Labour Party Campaign for Electoral Reform!

The morning session will focus on Internationalism, The Economy, and Democracy, with workshops on Europe and the EEC, Ireland, Socialist Foreign Policy, Unilateralism, Eastern Europe, The Market and The Plan, Trade Unionism and New Realism, Trade Unionism and Competitive Tendering, Privatisation, Oppression, Rights and Class, Poll Tax, Racism, and Electoral Reform.

The afternoon will focus on building local links, especially in rural areas. Workshops will include Local Government, Education, NHS, Trade Unionism, ET, The Labour Party, Housing, Green Socialism, and Peace and Disarmament.

Briefing papers will be circulated before the Conference and reports circulated after it. All delegates will receive a contact list to help build links between West Midlands Socialists.

Coventry can be reached by road or rail. Come and join Betty Heathfield, Jeremy Corbyn, Reg Race, and socialists of the West Midlands in a positive exchange of ideas. Forward with the struggle for socialism, towards a better society!

For more information contact Pauline Purnell and John Wilton, (021) 422 1366; or Colin Lindsey, Unit 15, The Arches, Spon End, Coventry CV1 3JQ.

STOP THE DEPORTATIONS!

Dora Oppong must stay!

Dora Oppong faces deportation — and separation from her three young children — after 15 years in Britain.

By Gill Lee

Dora came here form Ghana in 1973 and her children, aged 13, ten and eight, are British citizens.

If she is deported to Ghana, where she has no close family or friends, her children will be taken into care.

The government claims Dora has remained in Britain without permission since 1984, and that there is insufficient cause to allow her to remain with her family on compassionate grounds.

A decision on her right of appeal is due on March 6th.

Since the new racist Immigration Act came into force in August 1988, *over 250 black people a month* have been arrested, detained with no effective right of appeal, and simply loaded onto planes and flown out of the country.

In the vast majority of cases there is no publicity. The individual's right to choose the country she or he wants to live in is crushed. Black families are torn apart. In only a few cases, such as that of Viraj Mendis, is there a campaign big enough to cause popular outrage.

Dora Oppong's demand for an appeal has the support of Newham Council. For more information and copies of the petition contact: PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7.

Please send in letters supporting Dora's right to stay, so they can be presented to the Home Office via Dora's MP.

Deportation Update

This column is an update of deportation cases featured in previous Briefings.

Carlos Calderon (*LB* 75). Peruvian refugee. The campaign is gaining more labour movement support daily, and is awaiting a date for adjudication, which it expect to be set quite soon. *Contact*: Carlos Calderon Defence campaign, c/o 25 The Chase, London SW4 0NP. Tel. 01-249 3768.

Viraj Mendis

Continued from front page

to defend Viraj.

Whilst Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, and a few other MPs; MEPs Glyn Ford and Eddie Newman; and the Labour Group of Manchester City Council have all been active in defence of Viraj, the silence from Neil Kinnock, Roy Hattersley and Gerald Kaufman, as well as most national trade union leaders, has been deafening.

Roy Hattersley even admitted (in the *Guardian* on January 21st) that he only started to support Viraj on the day he was dragged from the Church of the Ascension. Perhaps he was unaware that Labour Party Conference voted in 1987 to support Viraj and fight for his right to stay in Britain!

Viraj is now in Sri Lanka, accompanied by Fr Henry West, curate of the Church of the Ascension. At the time of writing he is still alive. If Viraj is murdered by agents of the Sri Lankan government or by the racists of the JVP the responsibility for his death must be laid clearly at the door of the Tory government in Britain.

Viraj himself explained: "The gun may be aimed by a Sinhala chauvinist, but the finger on the trigger is that of Douglas Hurd."

The Labour leadership should endorse Tony Benn's view that "every single person involved in the deportation of Viraj Mendis is morally responsible, personally, for whatever may happen," and state unequivocally that all those responsible will be made to pay for their crimes.

The government has succeeded in deporting Viraj, but the fight is far from over.

Graham Stringer has pledged that Manchester City Council will continue its efforts to find a safe haven for Viraj, helped by Glyn Ford and Eddie Newman. Fr John Methuen and the Church of the Ascension will continue their support.

Viraj Mendis was deported because he fought back against the racism of the British state. There are thousands more black people threatened by racist immigration laws. We have to continue to build a movement that will fight back and support all those attacked by the racist British state.

That is why the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign doesn't accept that we have been defeated. And that is why it is going ahead with the national march on February 4th in Manchester.

Every single person must mobilise to ensure a massive turnout to let Thatcher, Hurd, Renton, Manchester Police Chief James Anderton and all those others responsible for whatever happens to Viraj know:

We won't give up!
We won't give in!
We're going to fight
— until we win!

Euro-tour against Section 28

Take heart from opposition in Europe!

The Stop Section 28 Euro-tour, organised by the Dutch Lesbian and Gay group, Labda, reached thousands of people in 18 different cities in Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland, West Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, before coming to Britain.

The tour consisted of speakers, videos, GDM gay cabaret group from Manchester, and Mouth Almighty, a lesbian band from London.

People in each city were shocked by the implications of Section 28, particularly the increasing violence we are facing, and the problems of lesbian mothers seeking custody of their children.

Also shocking was the self-censorship demonstrated in the banning of a school play in Bristol by a headmaster who thought its contents might be in breach of Section 28, a ban subsequently upheld by the governing body.

During the Tour a successful congress was held in West Berlin, organised jointly by Stop the Clause Berlin, Berlin Gay groups, and the Congress against Racism and Fascism.

In West Germany subtle legal forms of discrimination exist, as well as overt anti-lesbian and gay feeling, manifested in a recent Appeal Court decision upholding a conviction of grievous bodily harm against someone HIV+ for apparently having unsafe sex.

By Paul Langton Stop the Clause and Vauxhall CLP

On its way across the French border the bus was thoroughly searched, with books, magazines, and a tape being confiscated, as well as personal questions being asked of the tour members. When these items were returned, hours later, the tape had been erased.

In Scandinavia, lesbians and gay men are encouraged to go to secondary schools to talk about their sexuality — a far cry from the situation here! The movement for lesbian and gay equality began in Denmark in 1948, and organisations quickly sprung up in Sweden and Norway.

At present the Swedish trade unions are paying for a leaflet about homosexuality to be distributed to all their young members. In Oslo, 60 people demonstrated against Section 28 in front of the British consulate.

A major incident occurred in Stockholm. A member of the tour had stolen a small amount of whisky. It was thought the matter had been settled but the police were called in, took the woman and an observer into a room in the Gay and Lesbian Building for questioning and then beat the two women up.

At the same time a Dutch member of the tour was thrown, but luckily unhurt, through a plate glass window by a security guard at the centre.

After scuffles, five women were taken to jail and three charged with resisting arrest and assaulting police officers. The women were held for a week without being able to see any members of the organisation.

Whilst in jail one of the women was beaten up, with a bag being placed on her head and a policeman's foot on her neck. Two of the women received 14 days imprisonment, and the other woman a month and a £300 fine.

The Euro-tour bus resumed its travels two days after the incident, less six women who stayed to support those in jail, in order to continue the fight against Section 28 and to publicise what happened in Sweden.

There was a great reception in Copenhagen, where the Gay Liberation Group DNF is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

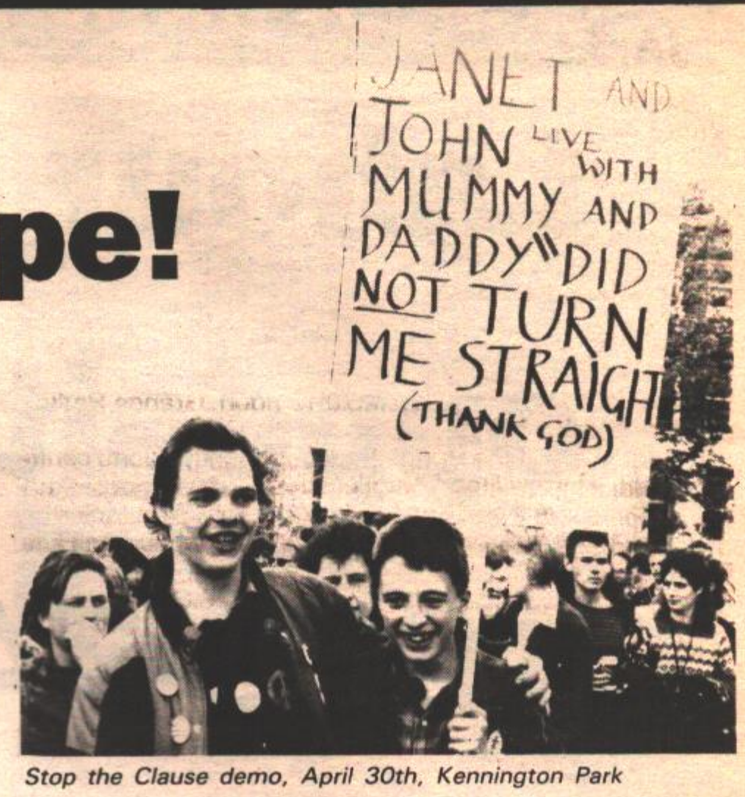


PHOTO: Martine Stead

Stop the Clause demo, April 30th, Kennington Park

At the Hague a monument made by artists from the Dutch Academy of Arts was presented to the bus by Dutch MPs from various parties, as a symbol of lesbian and gay oppression and general resistance to oppression everywhere.

Unfortunately, no MPs or MEPs were able to be at the reception given to the bus in London by the Association of London Authorities. A formal handing over of the monument will now take place in February.

A benefit was held in London before the bus travelled to Manchester, where the Mayor and local Councillors greeted the bus.

At further well attended benefits in Edinburgh and Birmingham, Marc Lazarowicz, Leader of the Edinburgh Labour Group, David Martin MEP, and Councillors Trudy Livingstone and Andy Foster spoke to reaffirm their commitment to lesbian and gay rights.

The final disco of the tour proved a fitting celebration to an eventful, fascinating and exciting way of making links with other radical groups in Europe and exchanging information.

To consolidate these links a meeting of all the groups involved will take place in Amsterdam in February. Meanwhile, a book is being compiled about the tour.

We should take heart from the fact that so much opposition to Section 28 and support for lesbian and gay rights exists throughout Europe.

"A Known Associate of Mandy Mudd"

Football campaigner victimised

Craig Brewin is the National Secretary of the Football Supporters Association, as well as an anti-cuts Labour Councillor in Haringey and a *Briefing* supporter.

Obviously, it's a tricky combination.

Craig now find himself at the centre of a multi-pronged witch-hunt, involving establishment forces from the worlds of football and Labour Party politics.

Through the FSA, Craig has been campaigning against identity card schemes for three years.

Long before Tory Sports Minister Colin Moynihan decided (after being kicked into action by Thatcher) that a compulsory national scheme was the answer to all football's ills, the FSA recognised the dangers represented by voluntary club-based schemes, notably the much-ballyhooed Luton Town FC scheme.

The FSA therefore set about compiling evidence to show that such schemes simply don't work.

In particular, they wanted to show — and did show, on national television — that anyone who really wants a card can get one, and that therefore the scheme was no deterrent to the "dedicated hooligan".

The FSA campaign was effective enough to force even the Labour leadership to take up the issue.

By MARK SEATON

Neil Kinnock organised a "private meeting" (with TV cameras on hand) involving Labour MPs and virtually everyone in football — the Scottish, Welsh, and English FAs, the Football League, the players' organisation, and the FSA, represented by Craig Brewin.

Obviously, this was a potent alliance which the Tories wanted to break up.

David Evans, Tory MP and "Chairman" of Luton Town FC, wrote to Kinnock two hours before the scheduled meeting to advise the Labour Leader that Craig was to be the subject of a police investigation for "deception" in allegedly obtaining a Luton Town membership card under false pretences.

Kinnock appears to have been the first to be informed of this investigation. Craig received a letter from Evans several days later. The letter was addressed to "Councillor Brewin" and sent to Haringey Civic Centre, an address Craig has never used in his FSA capacity.

Sources at Walworth Road have informed *Briefing* that David Evans was not the only one gunning for Craig.

It appears that shortly before the scheduled football meeting, Kinnock was provided with details of Craig's political background, including the fact that he was a "known associate" of Mandy Mudd (a public flogging is surely in order!).

It also appears that there was a discussion about Craig's alleged misdemeanours in Kinnock's office, but that wisdom prevailed, and the football meeting went ahead with Craig present. All concerned agree it was a success.

However, when Craig arrived at the meeting and began to distribute "No ID Cards" badges, he was asked by one of the Labour Party people present if he was handing out "Defend Mandy Mudd" badges.



Craig Brewin

Later, Craig telephoned the Football Intelligence Officer at Luton Police to inquire about the Evans' claims, which by now had appeared in the press.

He was informed by police that they had received no complaint about the alleged "deception" and that they had no knowledge of any "investigation".

Craig has since been advised by legal counsel that he has committed no criminal offence.

"It's quite clear that David Evans is trying to use the police and Luton Town Football Club in a political battle over the government's discredited identity card scheme," Craig told *Briefing*.

"Instead of victimising those who have exposed the failures of this scheme, he should address the real problems facing football supporters."

Contact the FSA at 59 Oakwood Road, Liverpool L26 1XD.

A modern history of the Labour Party

Labour in opposition 1970-74

On June 18th 1970, Edward Heath was elected against all odds.

The labour movement was devastated.

The years that followed were to usher in a great wave of class struggle which, for the first time in British history, overthrew a government and brought to power a Labour Party pledged to "an irreversible shift in wealth and power to working people."

Heath's strategy for the 70s was to point British capitalism firmly in the direction of the European market.

By STEVE ROBERTS

The apparatus of the Wilson years, most particularly the Prices and Incomes Board, was to be scrapped. The combination of rising unemployment and new legislation would force the trade union leadership to crack down on unofficial strikes and undermine workplace organisation.

British capitalism, freed of Keynesian inhibitions, would expand into a bright new European future.

It was Heath, not Thatcher, who was the first to try to break the post-war mould. But Heath faced a far more powerful obstacle than did Thatcher a decade later.

The trade union movement was at the height of its post-war strength. Over ten million trade unionists were organised in the TUC. Rank and file organisation and the number of shop stewards were still growing.

The section of the trade union leadership which had based itself on that development, notably Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon, were soon to dominate their unions and the TUC.

The ferocity of the government's initial assault rocked the labour movement.

First, the postal workers' strike was smashed. After organising a huge national demonstration against the Industrial Relations Bill in February 1971, the TUC suspended further action.

In the summer, Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS) went into liquidation. In the autumn, the engineering union, after a campaign of factory occupations, abandoned its national claim and settled for local bargaining. In one year, unemployment doubled to over one million.

The government, cock-a-hoop, imposed the "N-1" incomes policy. Wage settlements were to be reduced, first from 8% to 7%, and then further deductions.

In the space of six weeks, the miners' strike was to shatter Heath's illusions.

In the previous 15 years, half a million miners had been made redundant; 250,000 remained. The right wing leadership of Will Paynter, which had presided over this decline, opposing all industrial action, was now under challenge from the left, reflected in the election of Lawrence Daly as the union's Secretary.

The initial signs were not favourable. The strike vote was not overwhelming. Coal stockpiles were high. The TUC refused active support.

But a new strength was infusing the union's Area leaderships. Under their guidance, and particularly that of the Yorkshire Area, a vast system of flying pickets, drawing in 40,000 workers, closed off the stockpiles from the power stations.



Edward Heath: the miners' strike was to shatter his illusions

On February 10th 1972, engineering workers in Birmingham went on unofficial strike and 10,000 marched to the gates of the Saltley stockpile. The police were forced to shut the gates. The flying pickets were in control.

A state of emergency declared by the government only succeeded in polarising public opinion on the side of the miners. At the start of the strike the press was sure that the miners would be forced to abide by the 7% norm. Six weeks later they won 30%.

With its economic policy in ruins, the government now turned to its new industrial legislation to hold back the tide. But the fatal flaw built into the Industrial Relations Act soon became evident.

The government had wished to stand aloof from day-to-day industrial conflicts. The legislation was therefore drafted so that employers could take action against unions through the courts.

But this also meant that the government ceded most of its control over industrial disputes. The first moves of the new National Industrial Relations Court ended in fiasco as an NIRC-ordered ballot in the rail industry ended in an overwhelming rejection of the employers' offer.

Then, five dockers were jailed for refusing to appear before the NIRC. On Monday July 24th, dockers marched on Pentonville prison, and on Wednesday the TUC threatened a national strike if the Pentonville Five were not released. They were.

The economic gains for the dockers, the miners, and, potentially, the rest of the working class were significant. But could the labour movement wring full political capital from its victory?

While the trade union movement was at the height of its strength, the Labour Party was in the pits. Between 1964 and 1970 there had been a sharp decline in the Party's strength.

The number of branches with over 2,000 members had been cut from 66 at the beginning of the Wilson government to 22 at the end, as rank and file activists lost heart.

The Party leadership was in ideological disarray. The issue of Europe had split the Party, with what was to become the SDP emerging under the leadership of Roy Jenkins and Bill Rogers.

For the right, European entry was increasingly placed above loyalty to the Party and the labour movement.

Wilson seemed paralysed, unable to confront the challenge from the right, and bereft of a convincing policy to replace that which had led to such unexpected disaster in 1970.

The way was open for the left. Through his association with the UCS struggle, Tony Benn rose to prominence as the champion of the left in the Party. UCS was Benn's own creation, one of the rationalisation projects achieved in his MinTec days under Wilson.

But Benn now started to forge stronger links with the unions, often giving support to struggles, such as the miners', which were spurned by the rest of the Party leadership, and formulating a new industrial policy for the Party.

Benn summarised his policy in the call for "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of the working people and their families."

Buttressed by the call for the nationalisation of the top 25 monopolies, this policy became the backbone of the 1973 Labour manifesto, the most radical since the 30s.

The adoption of the manifesto reflected the tremendous leftward pressure being exerted from the Party base. Denis Healey adapted himself to the new mood with his slogan of "squeezing the rich until the pips squeak."

But while all this reflected the activity of the mass movement, it still failed to grapple with the fundamental question of those years — the question of the legitimacy of the state and its laws, powerfully underlined by the coup in Chile.

The Party leadership firmly rejected all confrontations with the law. The left, at best, vacillated. Benn said of the UCS struggle:

"There are two ways forward, one is to carry on working while it is legally possible... The other is choose a dead-end clash with the law. This has been clearly and rightly ruled out in all the statements of the UCS leaders."

The combination of an upsurge in industrial struggle and a move to the left in the Labour Party could have given birth to a movement for the overthrow of the government, despite the opposition of the Labour leadership.

Instead, that potential was sacrificed to the needs of an alliance between left Labourites and left trade union bureaucrats.

It was left to the miners to carry forward the political momentum of the labour movement. The second miners' strike of February 1974, while trade unionist in form, was profoundly political in content.

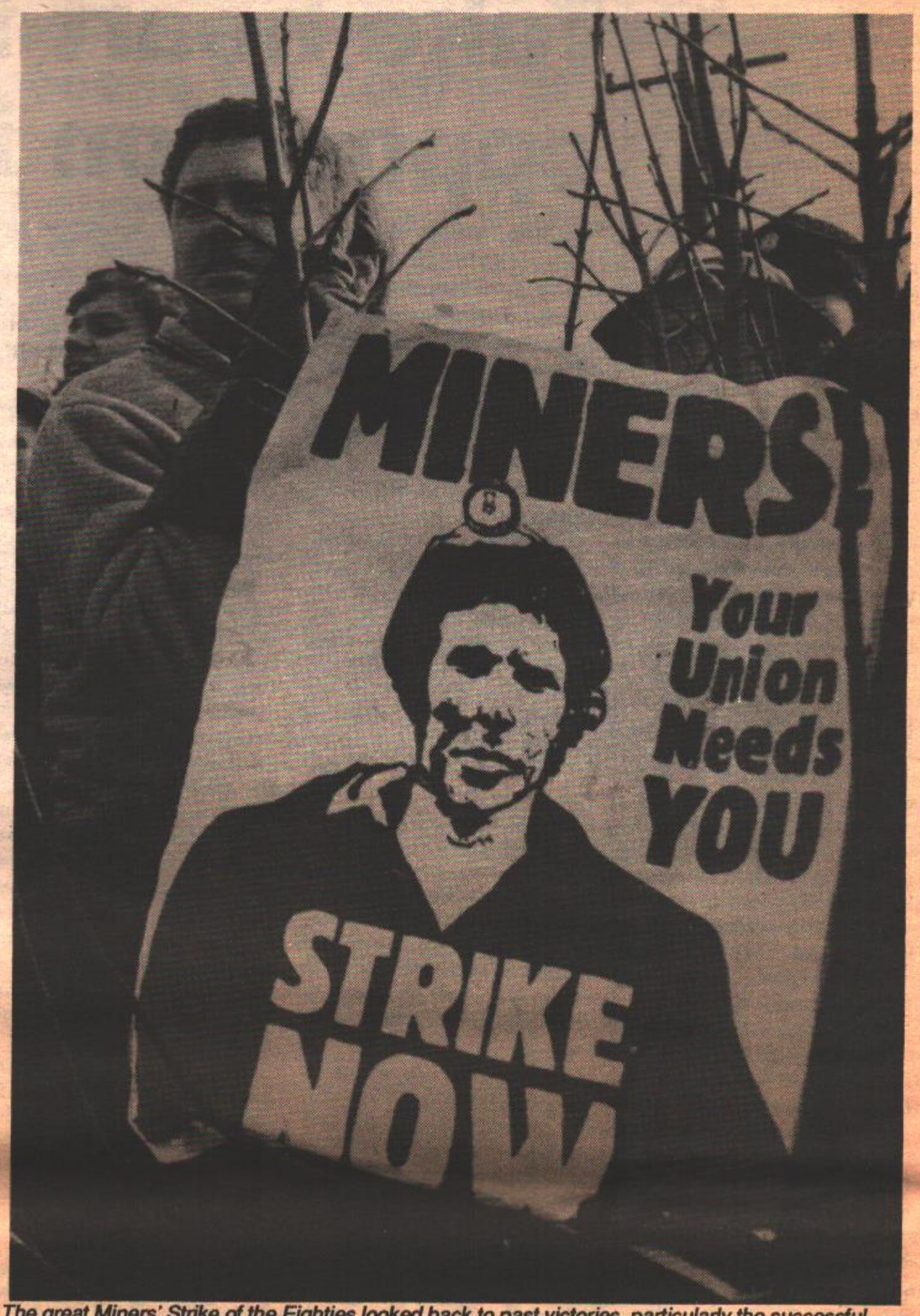
Though the heroic mass struggles of two years earlier were mostly absent, the miners were nevertheless not only confronting the policies of the government — they were fighting for its overthrow.

Heath went to the country on the issue of "Who rules?" and the country answered: "Not you!"

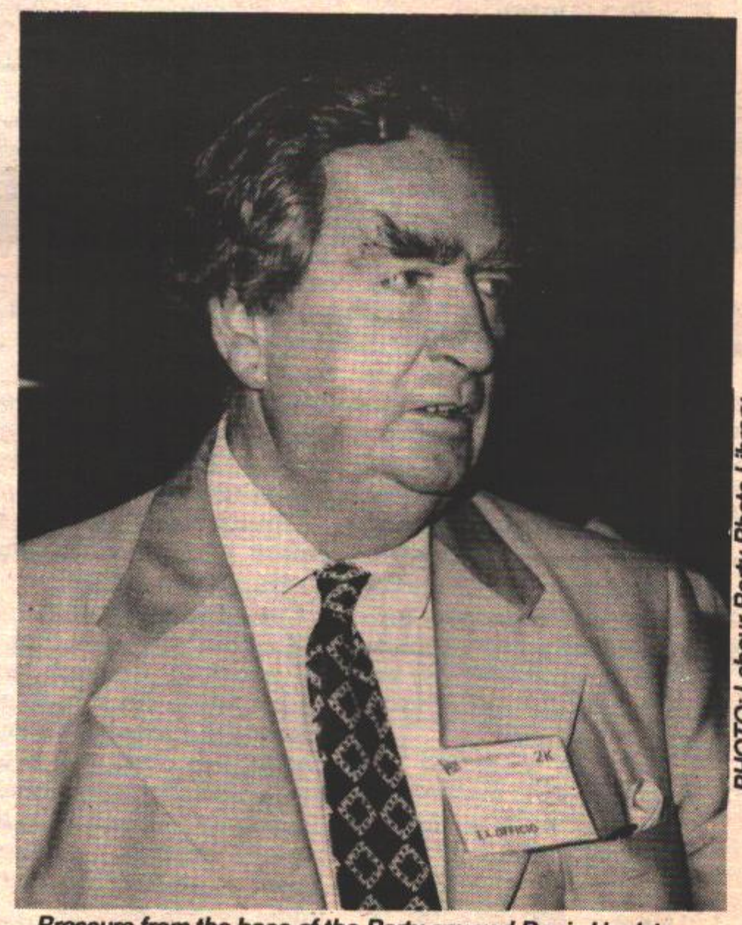
For the moment, the establishment was crushed. The Tories were bewildered. The new government had the support of a powerful trade union movement, ready for mobilisation. The radical policies of the 1973 manifesto could have been implemented.

But the moment was lost. Priority was given to "maintaining the confidence of British industry." The government turned to the trade union leaders to bolster that confidence.

The dynamic of the anti-Tory movement, lacking political or organisational focus, began to evaporate. The Social Contract was in gestation.



The great Miners' Strike of the Eighties looked back to past victories, particularly the successful picketing of Saltley Gate. Unfortunately, the government had also learnt the lessons of history — and was ready.



Pressure from the base of the Party spurred Denis Healy's conversion to "squeezing the rich until the pips squeaked."

PHOTO: Labour Party Photo Library

Merseyside East

Euro-reselection

The following is an edited version of a statement by Garston CLP on the NEC's interference in the Euro-reselection in Merseyside East.

We are the third CLP of eight to object. St Helen's South and Makerfield CLPs refuse to participate in this reselection procedure or send delegates in protest at what they regard as serious irregularities.

Merseyside East is now the only constituency with a sitting Labour MEP where reselection for the 1989 Euro-Elections is not completed.

Garston CLP feels that Leslie Huckfield MEP has been singled out yet again because of his politics, especially since he is still campaigning for withdrawal from the Common Market (on which policy he was first selected).

With the Party still involved in its Policy Review discussion, Garston CLP objects strongly that debate is being stifled.

NEC decisions seem inconsistent. In Merseyside West Euro seat, National Organiser Joyce Gould ruled that with Liverpool Broad Green CLP suspended Euro-Reselection could not proceed.

Yet in 1987 she told Wigan and Leigh to nominate in Merseyside East, although three CLPs were suspended (St Helen's North and South and Knowsley North). St Helen's South and Makerfield still refuse to take part until all CLPs can participate normally.

We believe the NEC should have followed the London South Inner precedent, with Richard Balfe MEP, when suspended CLPs Bermondsey and Peckham were told to keep existing Euro-delegates. Following this precedent would have seen our reselection completed long ago.

Wigan and Leigh CLPs nominated local Councillors Neil Turner and Terry Wynn over a year ago! Wigan TGWU 6/120 branch complained they would have nominated Huckfield, but received no notice of reselection. Legal advice was that the procedure was unconstitutional.

The NEC decided that St Helen's North Executive has the power to "run" the Constituency — despite its election at a meeting which has been challenged on the grounds that non-Party members participated!

The disputed CLP Executive, with an anti-Huckfield majority, on November 10th elected itself as the Euro-delegation!

Huckfield received 17 nominations, and other candidates three, but the Executive voted against him on December 20th. Party Official Peter Kilfoyle ruled that this decision was taken "in lieu of the CLP". *It is not known under which rule this can happen.*

Knowsley North CLP was reconstituted on November 17th after two years' suspension. The Assistant Regional Organiser ruled that the dozens of new members who appeared at wards' reconvening meetings had joined while the CLP was suspended and were eligible to vote. *It is not known under what rule this has taken place.*

Knowsley South nominated local Councillor Eddie O'Hara on November 3rd 1988. The original closing date for nominations was postponed, following a complaint from the TGWU that O'Hara, who is CLP Secretary, was himself organising the procedure!

The TGWU's North West Regional Committee has called for a fresh nomination process and insisted on the right of all the CLPs in Merseyside East to participate and elect their Euro-delegates.

Left Slate for NEC

Out for consultation

•Who do you think should stand on the left slate for Labour's NEC?
What do you think should be the political basis for the slate?

Yes, the national Campaign for Socialism wants to know your opinion. Discuss the matter in your local *Briefing* or other left group and send your recommendations to Jon Lansman, c/o Jeremy Corbyn MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. And don't forget to forward a copy to *Labour Briefing*, c/o 39 Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB.

Letters to *Briefing* on this subject are also more than welcome.

Defend unilateralism!

Meeting called by *Labour Briefing* for all groups or individuals interested in building a united campaign to defend Labour Party policy on unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Thursday February 2nd, 6.30pm, House of Commons (room booked by Jeremy Corbyn MP)

Mandy Mudd witch-hunt

NCC hearing postponed

On January 12th, a panel of Labour's National Constitutional Committee sat through the first four hours of testimony in the Mandy Mudd case.

This covered only the presenter's opening statement and the examination of the first two witnesses, both appearing for the NEC — and against Mandy.

By LESTOR YOUNG

Witnesses

With two more prosecution witnesses still to come and six scheduled for the defence, the hearing was adjourned to Sunday January 22nd at 10.00am.

Mandy, her defence team, witnesses, and supporters trudged down to Herbert Morrison House (London Regional Office) in Southwark for an early start on a bright Sunday morning, but one of the panel members failed to turn up.

After a two hour wait, the hearing was cancelled and provisionally rescheduled for Sunday February 5th.

Allegations

For Mandy, who has already waited a year for a chance to rebut the preposterous allegations, the ordeal continues.

Press reports claiming that Mandy will only be suspended, rather than expelled, are clearly premature — though journalists hvae indicated that their source is a full-time official at Walworth Road.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Mandy Mudd, selling Briefing and distributing leaflets

Campaign for Socialism

Hesitant steps towards a democratic left

The second National Co-ordinating meeting of the Campaign for Socialism (held in Manchester on January 14th) was a big improvement on the first.

This was thanks largely to a healthy attendance by regional representatives.

The first hour of business was taken up with regional reports, from Leeds, Bradford, the North West, Sheffield, the South West, the East and West Midlands, Wales, Scotland, the North East, and elsewhere.

By Mike Marqusee Haringey Labour Briefing

These reports revealed that the left is now engaged in a wide range of activities and is working hard both to organise itself and to reach out to new people.

The three year old Leeds Campaign Group, for example, boasts 100 (paying!) supporters and is now reaching out to new forces through a monthly news sheet dealing with Council housing, the Poll Tax, ET, etc.

Similarly, in the South West, the local left is trying to remedy the failure of the labour movement to take the lead on the Hinkley C inquiry (which has allowed Paddy Ashdown and the Democrat County Council to fill the gap).

It is also calling on Labour to stand for every Council seat in the local elections (opposed by the LCC).

Three Socialist Conferences are now planned in the region (Exeter, Taunton, Plymouth) and a Bristol Socialist Campaign Group has been set up.

What was clear from most of the regional reports was that on the ground left activists are busy implementing what has come to be known as the "two track strategy" — organising within the Labour Party while at the same time campaigning against the Tories and *for socialism* outside the Party (mainly through the Socialist Conference).

In the afternoon, a lengthy discussion on reselection was of limited usefulness.

The need to promote women candidates was agreed by all, though there were clearly differences of emphasis about how this should be done, with WAC pushing its own list and appearing to imply that women should be supported in all cases over men.

In contrast, Mandy Moore argued that we should see the selection process as part of our campaign for socialism, and that what was needed was the selection of socialist candidates — including unprecedented numbers of women and black socialists.

The discussion on the left slate for the NEC led to a major advance with the decision to launch a consultation exercise involving all local, regional and national left groups. At last, we are being asked whom we would like to support for the NEC and on what political basis.

Those of us who have argued for sometime that the left must democratise its own procedures must now make every effort to ensure that this consultation process is far-reaching and effective.

All local and regional lefts are invited to submit their views to the campaign for Socialism through Jon Lansman, c/o Jeremy Corbyn, House of Commons, London SW1A.

Amendments

As a national paper, *Labour Briefing* will be making its own submission and views of *Briefing* readers are welcome. Above all, don't waste time. Start the discussion in your area now.

Little time was left for the meeting to have a sensible discussion on the "Priorities" document (prepared by Jon Lansman), though a number of useful amendments were put forward.

Briefing argued for several changes — including a much more positive statement on our commitment to building democracy in the Labour Party, a commitment to non-sectarianism, and a much firmer and broader commitment to mass campaigning on issues such as the Poll Tax, housing, NHS, democratic rights, etc.

The meeting ended on a sour note when the question of allowing other organisations into the Campaign for Socialism (notably *Women for Socialism*) was postponed for the second successive meeting.

This whole incident must have been baffling for many of those present, cloaked as it was in procedural manoeuvres. But it does raise an unavoidable question of principle.

Is the Campaign for Socialism to be an inclusive forum, reflecting and co-ordinating the whole of the left, or is it to degenerate into an exclusive, self-perpetuating clique?

The admission of *Women for Socialism* is, bluntly, a test case. If the Campaign for Socialism balks at this at its next meeting, there will be many who will reluctantly conclude that there is no place in it for them.

The key to making the Campaign for Socialism work will be the regular attendance of people genuinely reflecting and representing the whole of the left in their regions and localities.

The next meeting, scheduled for April 8th in Birmingham, will be vital. Please make every effort to ensure that your area is fully represented. Contact Jon Lansman, c/o Jeremy Corbyn MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA for details.

MANCHESTER

City Council gives up fight against the Tories

Manchester Council has ditched any pretensions to be seen as "left".

The most crucial break came more than a year ago when a £110 million cuts package was implemented.

The recent decision to implement the Poll Tax is the latest turn to "new realism" and the policies of the Kinnock leadership.

By Finn Jensen EC member, Manchester District Labour Party (personal capacity)

A lot of hope and expectations were created when a left administration took power in the Manchester City Council in 1983 under the leadership of Graham Stringer.

The left had taken control of the District Labour Party and used that to get control of the Labour Group in the Council. And Labour Groups are always supposed to implement the policies of the Party.

Several progressive policies were implemented by the Council during the first three years of power.

•Thousands of new Council jobs were created and the services improved.

•Equal opportunities policies were implemented, although not as radical as one would have liked.

A majority of the Council workforce is women, but most of them are in low paid jobs, without much status. The percentage of black Council workers is way below the percentage of blacks among the working population.

•The Council declared Manchester to be a nuclear free zone, twinned with the Nicaraguan town of Pourto Cabezas and did a lot of solidarity work with Nicaragua.

•A police monitoring unit was established.

•Support was given to the gay and lesbian community.

•A magazine for all households in Manchester was established.

•Support was given to all anti-deportation campaigns.

The Council's sub-committees were fed by working parties in the District Party open to all Labour Party members.

But these progressive policies were not accompanied by fundamental structural changes in the Town Hall. With the same old management structure the users of Council sevices and the Council trade unions had little influence on the implementation of decisions.

Industrial conflict continued. But as long as the Council's budget was expanding, there was room for compromise.

The expansion in jobs and services was not paid for by increased grants by the government, so the Council started a policy of "creative accounting", i.e. leasing arrangements which in the short term enabled the Council to borrow money.

But the money had to be repaid in a few years. Instead of preparing the District Party, the Council workers and the labour movement as such for a confrontation with the government to demand an increase in the grants, the Stringer administration put all its hope into a future Labour government to bail out the Manchester Council.

When the Tories were elected for a third term on June 11th 1987 this hope collapsed like a pack of cards. Graham Stringer proposed a package of £110 million, 25% of the budget, but no compulsory redundancies.

The way these cuts were carried out created perhaps more demoralisation than the decision itself.

The District Party and the Council trade unions complained about the lack of consultation. Even Labour Councillors felt unhappy about the method of decision-making, a tendency that has continued since, with the result that 10 leading Labour Councillors resigned as Chairs and Deputy Chairs for various Council Committees in December 1988.

Industrial actions by the Council's workforce became more and more bitter. Council tenants in Hulme occupied a Council office for 16 weeks to oppose cuts and management's style.

Demonstrations had to be organised in order to ensure that the Council implemented the District Party's decision to establish an Immigration Aid Unit.

In general the Stringer administration can still rely on a majority in the District Party. But on the Council's implementation of the Poll Tax they had only a three to two majority.

Prior to the last Labour Party Conference most of the leading members in the Stringer administration supported Tony Benn and Eric Heffer in their challange for the leadership of the Party.

But it was a passive support, because in their daily work you do no see these Councillors campaign to support struggles of the working people in the same way as Benn and Heffer.

The relation between local and national politics is often full of contradictions, because the Council has no clear strategy for mobilising the labour movement against the government.

As a result of that the social base for the Labour Council is actually very weak, resting mainly on passive electoral support. There is a lot of cynicism about the effectiveness of the Council among working class people in Manchester

The right-wing turn of the District Party and the Council has created a lot of demoralisation among rank and file Labour Party members. People are increasingly aware of this right wing drift.

But the left in the District Party is still not organised as an effective opposition and its links with the trade unions are still too weak to get a change in the administration.

With the new attacks from the Thatcher government on local government (Housing Bill, Education Bill, etc) the question of whether to implement the Tory laws or mobilise against them will be the crucial question for the labour movement.

The phrase "Local government is finished" is already common in Manchester among Labour Party members.

The pressure from the government on the one side and the Labour Party supporters on the other will break up the old alliances around Graham Stringer. Will the left be able to use this opening to build new alliances?

LEEDS

A rose by any other name

On January 9th the votes of over half the Labour Group ruling Leeds City Council delivered the vacant leadership to the "business as usual" candidate.

Ly Keith Nathan Leeds Councillor

The Campaign Group candidate Garth Frankland secured as many nominations from the Party and the Unions as all the other three candidates combined (including the winner, Jon Trickett).

Garth won the support of nine members of the Labour Group to which the vote had been restricted.

That discrepancy gives a first hint of the flavour of Leeds local government. Here are a few more ingredients.

Trickett's campaign was a totally anonymous one outside the Group (and inside involved little that might be recognised as politics outside Chicago).

Trickett was the only candidate who failed to put out a statement of position for the monthly magazine of the local Party. He was the only one who failed to be available at the District Party meeting where he knew a debate would be proposed.

Leeds local government can be summed up in few words. here are some of the more printable ones.

Secretive — in making major policy decisions over recent years, such as on privatisation, Employment Training, the Poll Tax, multimillion pound development schemes, the leadership failed to inform, let alone involve, the Labour Group (and perish the thought that the District Party should play a role).

Undemocratic—the DLP has been packed with Trade Union delegations marshalled by District Officials whilst rank and file union negotiating rights have been unceremoniously dumped, and shop stewards committees "derecognised" in favour of sweetheart deals with full-timers.

Unprincipled — whilst carrying out its struggle to block any influence by the Party and union rank and file on the course of the Council's policy the leadership have slavishly bowed to every Tory government attack on local democracy (with the singular exception of the Housing Bill and HATs, which hit too close to home electorally).

They have cut jobs and services. They have opened the city to the attentions of the property developers and billion pound speculations where planning decisions can make millionaires overnight whether or not anything is ever built.

They have lauded schemes (without any mention of them to any part of the Party) which, if they eventually see the light of day as real developments, would bury half the citv and blight the other half with motorways.

All this and more (shutting down the unemployed centre, a purge on support to the voluntary sector, strike-breaking, etc.) has happened without a hint of concern from the majority of the Labour Group. This majority has voted to continue with the leadership it deserves.

Socialists in Leeds, in the Group, the Party, and the Unions, are increasing in strength, in organisation, and in determination to develop the fight to give the city and the labour movement the leadership it deserves.

Last November we ran a feature on loca should play. Most of the issues raised a experience of London over the last few In this issue, we continue the discussion England.

The pieces from Leeds and Brighton gi "municipal socialism" — reminding us why it is so important to do so.

Manchester and Sheffield, on the other which have been tagged "loony left" alo what their achievements were, why the face the left.

In many parts of the country, as John V remained a bastion of the right, but the beginning to lead to some fissures. In th currently posed for the left, which we w Whether your local experience is confir write in and join the debate? Send cont Road, London E14 9HB.

BRIG

Drawing the b

Pro:

Perks, like free food.

Con:

It's all meat (I'm vegetarian).

Pro:

I get to meet Council trade unionists.

Con:

They see me as management.

The latter is a real problem, and one that sooner or later confronts most Labour Councillors.

"We have this wonderful scheme, but the Council unions are opposing it. In the name of socialism, we must smash the unions!" It may sound absurd, but plenty of Labour Councillors think like that.

By Mark Thompson Brighton Councillor

It boils down to a basic question: will socialism come through a few thousand Councillors and MPs doing nice things for the poor; or through the self-organisation of the working class and other oppressed groups?

I stood for election out of frustration with the existing Councillors. After 130 years of Tory rule, Brighton elected its first Labour Council in May 1986, with high expectations of an apparently left wing Labour Group.

Nominations

Before long the Labour Group began to ignore GC decisions — nominations for Group Officers, economic development policy, grant allocations — not crucial points, but enough to sour relations.

In 1987, Brighton was rate-capped (on a Tory budget), but through creative accountancy the cuts were delayed to 1988.



For most of us, Brighton is a t interviewed on the seafront . O

With growing anger in the Party that years of hard campaigning had made little difference, it became inevitable that the leading activists at branch level (like myself) would be pushed to stand.

I was a little surprised to win, coming from third place in a marginal seat. The leadership were even more surprised to see the left minority rise from four to seven — out of 27 Labour, 2SLD, and 19 Tory.

A new, more confident left wing now speaks at every Council and Committee meeting.

My first speech in Council committed Brighton to non-implementation of Section 28. This would have been the strongest policy in the country, if Brighton had any positive images campaign to defend.

Since even the Tories supported the limited gains lesbians and gays have wrung out of Brighton Council, and lack of money apparently prevents anything more, the policy appears to be token.

At every Council meeting, we have been forced to vote against the Whip to oppose rent rises or asset-stripping, in line with Party policy. If we didn't, Council tenants and trade unionists would assume the Labour Party was no better than the Tories.

Becoming the "second op-

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with contributions from elsewhere in

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of just what we are trying to change and

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ng with London Boroughs. We examine
were built on sand, and what tasks now

Vilton reminds us, local government has
pressure of Tory-imposed cuts is
is situation, new opportunities are
ill ignore at our peril.
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ibutions to 39 Talia House, Manchester

HTON

alance



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

wn of Party Conferences, with sights like Jeremy Corbyn being
of Conference season, the local labour movement has plenty to do.

position" has allowed us to get our views across to all those Council workers, voluntary sector organisations, and tenants' groups affected by the cuts.

Much of my time is taken up with routine casework, like housing problems, planning applications, or rubbish collection.

The best advice on this comes from Sinn Fein Councillors. Rather than try to solve everyone's problems themselves, and dispense patronage, they explain to people how to do things for themselves and only step in when the bureaucracy needs a push.

Most Labour Councillors seem to enjoy dispensing patronage as well as the world of Committee meetings, which is usually several stages removed from politics.

I tend to think that anyone who enjoys this must be either mad or corrupt, and in either case should be kept well away from the Town Hall.

The next few years will pose real tests for Labour Councils. We may well find ourselves becoming the unpaid administrators of Tory policies — a paper shield against a very solid, very sharp axe.

BIRMINGHAM

It's "get in" in Birmingham

The debate about whether the left should "stay in" or "come out" of local government raised by John Turkie and Greg Tucker may be a debate that will surface in the future in Birmingham.

For the moment though the question is more "should the left go in" to local government in Birmingham?

Birmingham has been a stronghold for the right for many years, not only in local government, but at all levels of the labour movement.

By John Wilton
Birmingham
Edgbaston CLP

However, developments over the past year or so at local government level have seen the position of the right challenged.

In the middle of last summer, 20 Labour Councillors refused to follow the "Whip" and vote for the closure of a holiday home for children with disabilities. The "whip" was subsequently withdrawn from them.

This action by the Labour Group leadership was subsequently ruled unconstitutional by the NCC and all 20 were reinstated. Shortly after the "20" revolted, the left won control of the Birmingham District Labour Party, with a *Briefing* supporter elected as Vice Chair.

The twenty rebel Labour Councillors have remained a thorn in the side of the Labour Group leadership throughout the year, refusing to vote for cuts on different occasions and causing the Labour Group leadership to be defeated in the Council.

This continued at the January Council meeting when two of the "20", (Margaret Wells and *Militant* supporter Richard Evans) voted against the proposed closure of four homes for elderly people, and 14 of the rest of the "20" abstained.

The result was another defeat for the Labour Group leadership.

The "20" rebel Councillors represent a wide spectrum of the hard and soft left in the city. They do not represent just one particular political view.

The election last May of hard-left Councillors, such as Richard Evans and Margaret Wells, has had an impact on the positions adopted by the "20" in opposition to the Labour Group leadership over the past year and the cuts they have brought forward.

The cuts will continue to be proposed by the right wing leadership of the Labour Group. The crunch for the "20" will come soon on the issue of the 1989/90 budget.

There will undoubtedly by an attempt by the Labour Group to "buy off" some of the "20".

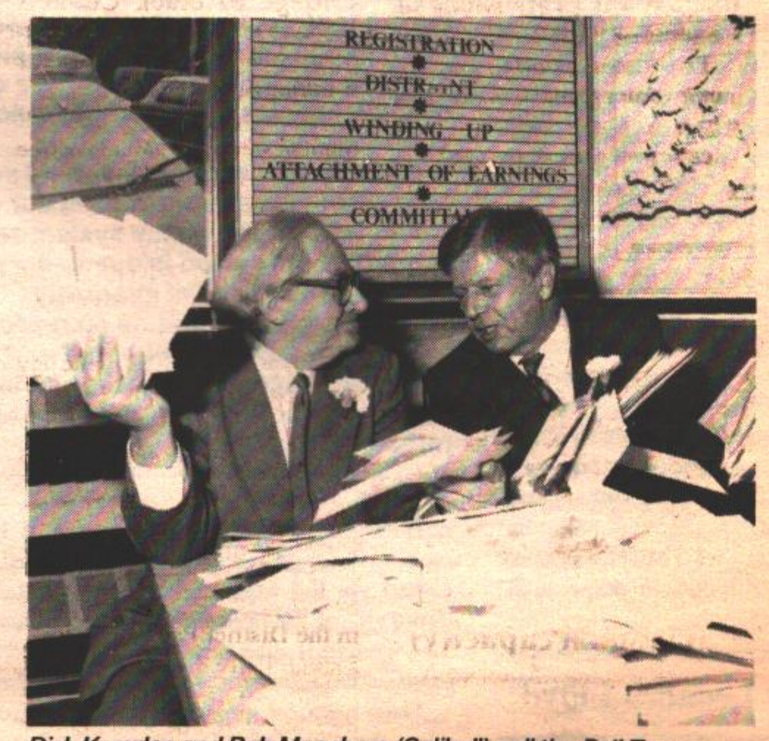
In our local journal, and in leaflets, Birmingham Labour Briefing has consistently argued that the "20" should vote against all cuts and publicly campaign against them.

Unfortunately, many of the "20" have preferred to abstain rather than vote against cuts. While their actions have helped defeat the cuts, and we should support them for that, we will continue to urge them to vote against in order to send a clear message to the Labour Group leadership.

Lobbying, public campaigning, and public pressure will be important in this, as it has been in the battles that have already taken place. The District Labour Party public meeting against the cuts on January 30th will be a vital focus for maintaining the anti-cuts campaign.

If the hard left really want to force the Labour Council in Birmingham to fight the Tory government and stop the cuts, though, comrades have to consider putting themselves forward for the panel of candidates for the 1990 City Council elections, which will open shortly.

The struggle against the Tories is primarily about what goes on outside the Council Chamber, but the hard left needs as many voices and representatives as possible inside the Council Chamber if we are going to change the direction of the Labour Council.



Dick Knowles and Bob Meacham (Solihull) sell the Poll Tax

Many comrades on the soft left in Birmingham appear to believe that by ditching the so-called "prestige projects" — the Super Prix road race, excessive expenditure on the International Convention Centre, for example — enough money can be saved — to "redistribute the cuts".

It is with so called "caring cuts" and a redistribution of cuts within the 1989/90 Budget that the Labour Group leadership will be attempting to "buy off" the "20".

Savings on "prestige projects" will not be enough. What is needed is to fight the Tory government with a mass public campaign in an attempt to retrieve the £480 million stolen from Birmingham in cuts in Rate Support Grant since 1981/2.

That means the left setting the political agenda in Birmingham.

The short term strategy therefore must be to apply public pressure through campaigns and lobbies of the "20" rebel Councillors in an attempt to get them to vote against all cuts.

In the longer term though, *Briefing* comrades, and as many comrades as possible on the hard left, should get themselves on the panel of candidates for the 1990 City Council elections.

Getting those comrades selected and elected is one thing, but should they be successful they must be given ongoing support. This has to include a left controlled District Labour Party prepared to fight the Tory government.

If comrades across the spectrum of the left in Birmingham want more left comrades to stand in the 1990 City Council elections it has to be on the basis of fighting, not capitulating to, the Tory government.

That has to be clearly understood by all shades of opinion on the left now. It is no good comrades urging other left comrades to get on the City Council just to take control and manage Tory local government capitalism better than the right of the Labour Group.

It isn't a case of being more "caring", it is a case of taking on and fighting the Tory government.

It is not an option for us to opt out, not to stand, as this will leave the working class defenceless in the face of the Tory onslaught against local services.

As many left comrades as possible should stand in 1990, if we are serious about changing the face of local government in Birmingham. Equally, though, the left as a whole must organise to support them.

Sheffield

Putting Sheffield on whose map?

In this third term of Tory government Sheffield has many of the same problems that confront other previously rate-capped Authorities.

We face a £20m cut in last year's budget, plus £20m cut this year, and a further £20m next year.

The housing revenue account is £13m short.

The £130m borrowed to build facilities for the World Student Games (have you heard of them?), which are to be held in Sheffield in 1992, are likely to cost the city £10m per year for the next 30 years.

By Paul Davidson
UCATT shop steward, Sheffield Council

Repayments for millions borrowed for deferred purchase agreements also come on stream next year.

This year rates are expected to rise by at least 15%, rents will go way above the rate of inflation, and children and elderly people's homes have already been closed in the name of "community care".

Four hundred jobs have gone in the DLO. Applications to buy Council houses are running at an all-time high. Despite verbal opposition to the Poll Tax, the Council is preparing for its full implementation.

There are just some of the problems facing the labour movement in Sheffield in the post-Blunkett era.

Response

The local Labour leadership's response to this crisis has been a call to "put Sheffield on the map" through partnership schemes with private capital (and a controversial proposal for an inner city airport).

Clive Betts, Leader of the Labour Group, has argued that cuts in jobs in the public sector would be more than compensated by these partnership schemes.Some Labour Councillors are even acting as paid advisers to the UDC, recently imposed by government.

Only a small part of the left have fought for a campaign to win the workforce in both the Local Authority and the private sector to a fightback.

It is only in recent weeks that sections of the left, including a handful of Councillors, have started to work together. But even that group is dominated by those who believe that the most that can be achieved is some sort of damage limitation.

Despite the general lack of opposition inside the Labour Party, things aren't all gloomy.

The parliamentary reselection process looks like becoming a focus for opposition to the New Realism; and the 20 anti-Poll Tax groups in the city are organising forces previously uninvolved in politics.

The Women's Page

Reproductive rights

Technologies update

Anti-abortionists are angry that the government has again delayed its introduction of a Bill on the issues raised by the Warnock report on reproductive technology, following the distribution of its White Paper last year.

If they had drawn enough places in the private members' Bill draw, they would have reintroduced Powell's Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, and they may seek to do this through the House of Lords.

New technologies are constantly being introduced in this field. A method which could replace or supplement in-vitro fertilisation is TOT (tubal ovum transfer) — a method using the pattern of heterosexual reproduction with some technological help.

By Leonora Lloyd

The woman has to take ovulatory drugs to stimulate the manufacture of multiple eggs and has sexual intercourse shortly before ovulation is expected.

The woman then goes into hospital for a laparoscopy to retrieve the eggs, which are then placed via the vagina into the upper end of the fallopian tube. The woman is then required to have sexual intercourse again.

This method only works when the cause of infertility is blocked fallopian tubes — and when the woman wants, and is able, to have heterosexual intercourse. The main danger of the method is that if all the eggs are replaced, multiple births could occur.

It has been hailed by anti-abortionists as "more natural" than IVF, because it uses the "natural process of generation aided by technology."

The NHS fertility treatment centre at Hammersmith Hospital is pioneering the use of IVF to help women who suffer from hereditary or other disease affecting their potential children.

Before implanting the extracted eggs, a single cell is removed and tested for genetic damage or disease, after which only "healthy" eggs are implanted.

The possibility of this technique has been known for some time and was specifically under attack by the Powell Bill. Mr Winston, the doctor in charge of the unit, points out that the alternative for many women in late abortion after the disability has been diagnosed. There is a long waiting list of women waiting for this treatment.

Licence

This year should see a licence for the use of the "abortion pill" RU486, already in use in France, despite attempts by far right religious groups to blackmail Roussel into stopping its production.

RU486 consists of mifepristone, which the body produces naturally, and which "sensitises" the womb to prostaglandins, which induce contractions leading to expulsion of the foetus.

The woman takes the pill and then returns to hospital after 48 hours for a prostaglandin pessary to be inserted, which results in bleeding similar to a heavy period and can result in similar pains.

Less than 10% in the British trial needed help for severe pain. The method can be used for women up to the 49th day after a missed period.

The main drawback of this method is that it can only be used where the woman's GP is aware of its existence and there is a centre using it nearby (because of the need to return after 48 hours).

Pregnancy

Because at present the method can only be used in the early weeks of pregnancy, it cannot be self-administered, as the length of pregnancy must be carefully determined.

These two factors make it unsuitable for use by women coming from Ireland, for example, as even if they presented in time, they would have to find somewhere to stay for 48 hours.

Another drawback is that bleeding can start before the woman returns for the prostaglandin to be inserted, but as long as the woman has been properly counselled that should not be a big problem.

Research is now going on into the use of mifepristone in later abortions and this explains why it has been attacked by anti-abortionists, although they are having problems explaining their opposition when it could reduce the incidence of late abortions.

They claim all sorts of dangers from this method, despite very good trial results.

We should be calling for its early and widespread introduction, backed up by massive publicity to ensure it is widely known about by women.

The struggle of women to control their fertility is a focus for women worldwide.

In the Spanish state a mass campaign in favour of a woman's right to decide on abortion has been the focus of building the women's movement.

Irish women continue to fight north and south of the border for free, legal abortion on demand.

Women in Latin America, Asia and Africa are beginning to fight against the use of their bodies by drug companies for experimentation with new contraceptives.

As socialist feminists involved in Labour Briefing we believe women should control our own bodies. This would weaken the family system and make it clear that women's oppression is due to the present structure of society, not biological inferiority.

Here we print an update on reproductive rights which we hope to follow up with further articles in the next issue. We hope women will write in to us, taking up the debate on abortion, reproductive technologies and forced sterilisation.



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

The abortion issue is less in the news than during the campaign against Alton (above).

Women for Socialism

First national conference

Women for Socialism is having its first national conference on February 25th and 26th.

Socialist Feminism: into the nineties will be held in London at Wesley House.

This will be the first socialist feminist conference for ten years — ten years in which Thatcher's governments have made big inroads into the gains made by women since the 60s.

Women have been hit especially hard by the attacks on the welfare state, on democratic and trade union rights.

There is an obvious need for a national organisation of women with socialist principles.

By Jane Kelly

Women for Socialism grew out of the Chesterfield Socialist Conference, holding its first meetings at the two conferences in Chesterfield.

It is an autonomous organisation of women with 300 members in all parts of the country, including women in the Labour Party, trade unions, campaigns, solidarity movements. There are now some regional and local groups as well.

The conference will start with a plenary including the following speakers: Martha Osamor, Betty Heathfield, Sandra Plummer, a woman from SWAPO, Inez MacIntosh, and an MP from the Campaign Group.

The rest of the first day will be divided into a number of smaller workshop sessions including Internationalism and international action; women and the economy; women's struggles; trade unions and women's employment; child abuse; education; pornography; deportations and family rights; housing; health; lesbianism and socialism; the Poll Tax.

Democratic

The second day will be for members of Women for Socialism and will aim to set up a democratic structure for the movement. It will include a mixture of workshops and plenaries and their will be time for women with particular interests, including those who are specially oppressed, to meet together.

Ideas for workshops on the second day include: WFS newsletter; links with other women's organisations both in Britain and internationally; regional and national structures; organising in the trade unions and Labour Party; WFS and the Socialist Conference.

Creche

All women will be able to join WFS on the Saturday. A creche will be available all weekend, but must be booked by February 18th.

For further information on WFS and the Conference please contact:

Barbara Green, 01-607 9729 (home), or 01-278 6453;

Ruth Clarke, 7 Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY, tel. 01-992 0945

Labour Party

It's going to be a long, hard fight

London Region Women's Conference is taking place at a time when the Labour leadership has reduced the role of both the Women's Organisation and Regional Conferences.

Labour Women have repeatedly adopted the most radical policies in the Party and have campaigned to promote these at regional level.

We have successfully built a socialist feminist current within the Labour Party, and built links with women outside.

Over the past year, during a period of intense struggle and repeated mobilisation, the London Regional Women's Committee appears to have done very little.

The reduction of women's places on the Regional Executive means that it too has been less effective in pushing campaigns.

Setbacks occurred at National Conference last year, when the NEC threw out the democratically agreed changes in the Women's Organisation passed at National Women's Conference.

In the face of this, the victory gained for "one woman on every shortlist" was a small one.

We certainly need more women MPs, but we also

By Mandy Mudd
Tottenham CLP

want to see a strong campaigning Women's Organisation with an input into policy making at every level in the Party.

Briefing Women believe we should fight for all the demands of Women's Conference, not prioritise some above others. MPs, whether male or female, are there to represent and implement our policy, and our inability to influence this remains a major obstacle.

The new reselection procedure could work against women anyway, with OMOV making it harder to unseat sitting MPs (mostly men).

As Labour Women we must continue to fight for the demands passed at last year's Women's Conference. We should also organise for increased representation of women at all levels of the Party, and fight for positive action in the form of quotas for women.

As long as Women's Sections and Women's Conferences continue to pass radical socialist policies which challenge the rightward drift of the Labour leadership, the fight will continue, though it will be long and hard.

Briefing Women

Please send me further information about the activities of Briefing Women.

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

I am particularly interested in: .....

.....

Send to; Leesa Herbert, 101 Vartry Road, London N15 6QD.

MUSIC COMMENTARY

Hip Hop, House, and a Host of New Sounds

By MAJOR UNREST

In criticising an article I wrote in the *Briefing Summer Special*, William West seems to have got me down as a bearded folkie.

In fact, I agree with much of what he wrote (and, actually, I shaved it off six months ago).

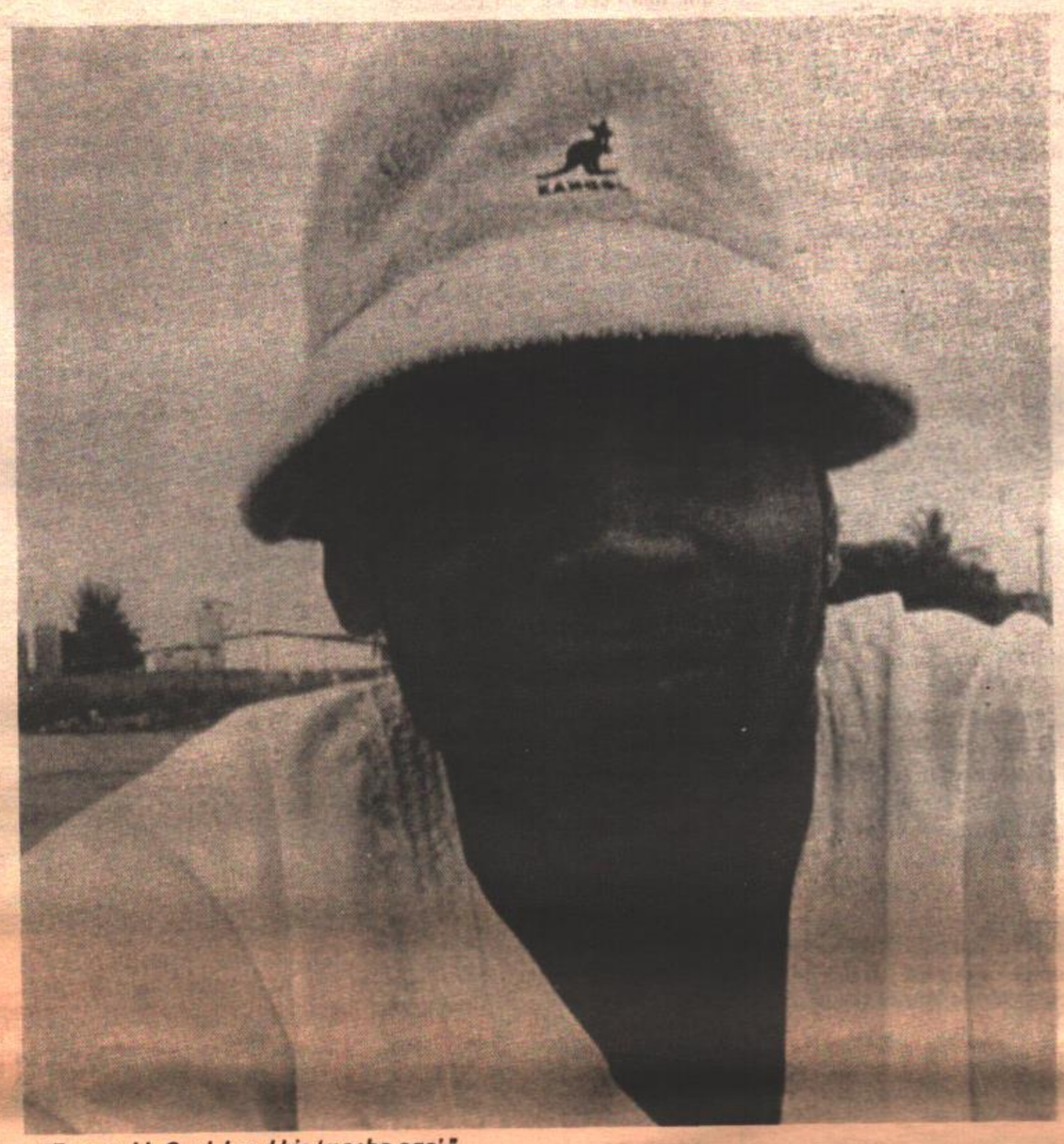
In my first *Briefing* article, I said: "Rather than hanging on to fossilised folk forms, socialist musicians should have a critical awareness both of the folk roots of all popular musics and of the continual innovations taking place at the crossroads between pop and folk."

We should use *all* means of production at our disposal: synthesised, electro-acoustic, and acoustic instruments, and all and any sound, to have a full palette to create with.

The real problem with new technology is who controls its design and distribution: the mass media which moulds the forms of music that reach a mass audience. As William says, science doesn't have to be used to enslave and stifle creative expression.

To the die-hard acoustic folkies who claim synthesised sounds lack expressiveness, I would say that the development of touch sensitive keyboards and samplers (computer memories in which any sound can be stored) has greatly increased the range of musical sounds available for expression.

The development and mass marketing of quality portable 4-track recorders, drum machines, multi-sound keyboards and sequencers (computer memories into which basic song structures can be programmed and replayed automatically) has opened up the possibility of music-making to more people.



"Rapper LL Cool J and his 'macho ego'."

But it'll come to no good if we let the capitalist music Biz call the tunes.

Yes, it's impossible to escape the alienating influences of capitalist society but the whole point for progressive creative musicians, and artists, in general, should be to strive to create something *beyond* alienated feeling, to suggest the ocean of possibility before human society, and to realise the capacity of worker-controlled technology to give free rein to workers' creativity.

Where does this lead us in regard to Acid House? To my ears, House music and Hip Hop are two lines of musical development out of Electro-Funk, as the result of black musicians getting their hands on drum machines, sequencers, effects, boxes and other such things.

House is more of a business-moulded form and Hip Hop more folk-rooted. Of course, no hard and fast division between the two can really be made, but to me Hip Hop retains more feeling for its generative environment, more raucous rebellious energy, and reflects the increasing self-confidence of black youth.

It's a shame that the macho ego concerns of most male rappers spoil a lot of it. Much of the best stuff is coming from women DJs such as the Cookie Crew, Salt 'n' Pepa, and the Ivee Papa Girl Rappers, but check out Public Enemy, Stetsasonic, and EPMD too.

I do like some House grooves and the use of weird noise in Acid Hose, but there's little new in it really; the heavy mixing and layering of sound is taken mainly from Reggae dub mixers such as King Tubby, Joe Gibbs, Lee Scratch Perry, Augustus Pablo, Scientist, and Adrian Sherwood, who in combination with the Sugarhill Gang Rhythm Section, amongst others, is now responsible for the brilliant Tackhead Sound System. Punk Funk at its best.

In this country, the distinction between Hip Hop and House is blurred and they are open to cross-fertilisation with other musics such as Punk and Asian Bhangra.

This reflects a positive development: the coming together of many black and white working class youth in multi-racial inner city communities, the increasing self-confidence and openness of many young black people, and a generation of young white people growing up with and to some extent respecting and learning from the rebellious combativity of black culture.

Socialist cultural activists must build on this to create a rock-solid counter-pole of attraction the next time the state whips up massive racism (as it will when the capitalist crisis deepens).

The same cultural breakthrough between English youth and youth of Irish background will come as the increasingly high level of political consciousness in the Republican leadership filters through the Republican community and increases self-confidence. Christy Moore and the Pogues are part of a cultural vanguard here.

Folk purists and cultural nationalists may argue that real traditions are being compromised by global cultural imperialism, and that the only means of resistance is to go back to roots, stay pure, and dig in for Armageddon.

But I believe this approach romanticises past cultural forms and battles instead of preparing oppressed communities for present battles with the new tools and weapons at hand (rather like fighting guns with bows and arrows).

The globalisation of cultural imperialism, with its consequent plundering of folk forms worldwide, has at least broadened the horizons of its global audience.

I believe there is more opportunity than ever for anti-imperialist musicians to attempt cross-fertilisation of musical forms to create internationalist musics that actually reach significant audiences, if:

- they are strong enough musically and lyrically;
- they can draw together on an equal basis the forms being cross-fertilised and reflect real understanding of their roots;
- they communicate and deal with the feelings of today, striving to go beyond alienated feeling towards new insight and vision.

It's a massive task, but then again, so is international socialist revolution. Both are not only possible, but necessary!

MAGAZINES

***Nicaragua Today*, 60p, NSC, 23 Bevenden St, London N1 6BH.**

The winter issue of *Nicaragua Today*, the bulletin of the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, is a "Hurricane Disaster" special.

Last year's Hurricane Joan caused more damage than eight years of US-inspired war. Aid from foreign governments has been shamefully inadequate (and, in the case of the US, non-existent).

The special issue contains on-the-spot reports of relief efforts in Nicaragua as well as articles on the CIA, Contra Aid, and El Salvador.

The next *Nicaragua Today* will be a special women's issue.

***Action on Namibia*, 60p, Namibia Support Committee, PO Box 16, London NW5 2LW.**

Action on Namibia is the quarterly magazine of the Namibia Support Committee.

The winter issue of 88/89 includes an eye-witness report from the war zone and articles on the latest South African smear campaign (against Namibian churches), on rapes committed by the SA Defence Force, on the welter of diplomatic activities surrounding the Namibian struggle, on UNITA banditry in Angola, and many other topics.

NSC also publishes the useful and detailed monthly *International Newsbriefing on Namibia.*

BOOK REVIEW

Women remember the 60s

***Very Heaven, Looking Back at the 1960s*, edited by Sara Maitland, *Virago*, £4.95.**

After a year saturated with media coverage of '68, it was interesting to read a collection of personal accounts of what the whole 60s decade meant to 25 diverse women.

There are fascinating snapshots of the fight for civil rights in the North of Ireland, Paris in May 68, and new laws on women's rights.

The power of these vignettes is precisely that they are subjective, that you learn as much about the author as the events she is describing.

The number of black women involved allows different insights into the experience of racism and of what the 60s meant for sections of the black community in Britain.

Terry Quaye's reminiscences of her family's fight against racism and for pride in being black British are moving and pieces by Gina Adamou and Yasmin Alibhai which provide (among other things) different perceptions on arranged marriages.

By Terry Conway Islington North CLP

The book includes famous women, like Barbara Castle and Julie Christie, women who are not famous, women of different generations, and women who grew up in different parts of the world.

But amongst all this diversity there is no discussion of lesbianism or the experience of being lesbian. This gives the work a strange one-sidedness.

One of the most fascinating and infuriating pieces is Castle's account of her time as a Cabinet Minister.

It's fascinating, both in its story of the political thinking behind the introduction of the Equal Pay Act, child benefit, and reform of national insurance, and in Castle's forthrightness about her own attitudes to sex and feminism.

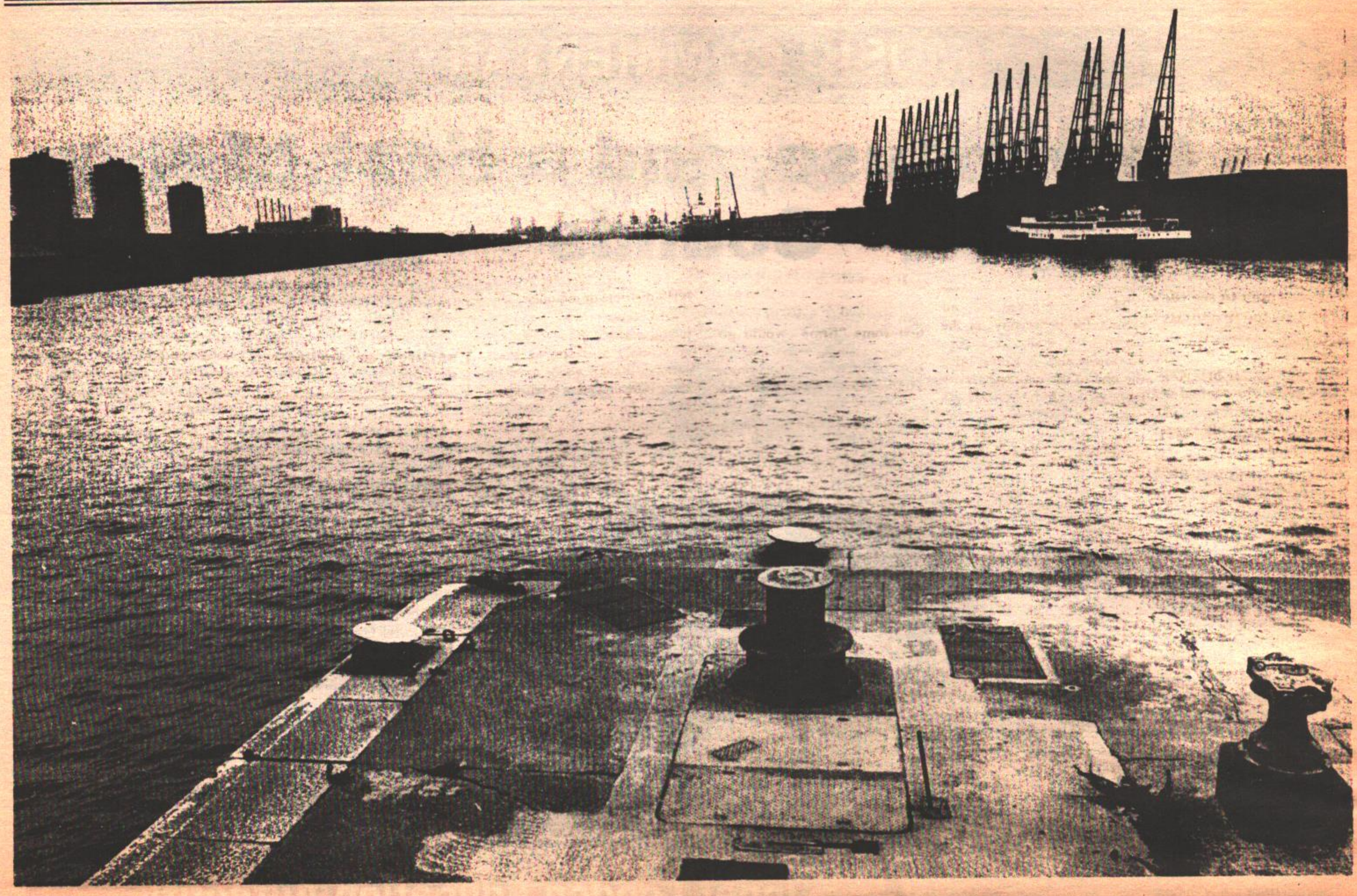
It's infuriating, because of its dismissal of the women's movement, defined as "making women feel big by making men feel small."

While Castle's piece is untypical of the rest of the book, it does highlight some of the problems intrinsic both to this type of project and the particular way in which Sara Maitland has chosen to approach it.

Castle's argument that the failure of feminism (she says nothing about the failure of the Labour Party) to mobilise against Thatcher is due to an unhealthy introspection and preoccupation with sex amongst 60s feminists, and this argument is never really answered elsewhere in the book.

What becomes clear is that for such a book to have an overall direction, without negating the different experiences represented within it, it needs a strong editorial voice, a clear stance not just on the 60s, but on their relevance to the 80s.

But don't let me put you off reading the book. It is entertaining and amusing. But for an account of the rise of British feminism, or of political ideas in the 60s you will have to look elsewhere.



Confrontation on the docks?

The present situation

The government and the port employers have been itching for the abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme for some time.

The protection it gives to dockers is clearly out of step with both government policy and the employers' plans to cut wages, hire and fire at will, and curb trade union strength on the docks.

Tory back-benchers, in conjunction with the far-right *Aims of Industry*, have been campaigning against the Scheme for some time.

By Alan Thornett
Trade Union Briefing

The Centre for Policy Studies, a leading Tory think-tank, held a conference in January to discuss ending of the Scheme. Some of the port employers are now taking action clearly designed to provoke a confrontation on the issue.

In Glasgow, several employers have recently used casual non-registered labour in defiance of the Scheme. In Liverpool, the employers have begun using the temporary unemployed register (previously used for dockers moving between jobs) to sack dockers covered by the Scheme.

Under pressure from the National Port Shop Stewards Committee, which meets regularly and organises effectively, the TGWU (now the only union organising the dockers in both registered and un-registered ports) is balloting registered dockers for a a mandate for national strike action in defence of the Scheme.

A national meeting of dockers is to be held in London on January 28th to decide what action to take in light of the ballot result, to be announced shortly. A national dock strike is becoming a definite possibility.

Origins of the Scheme

Before the war, the dockers were employed on a casual piecework basis. They had to fight for work every day.

The National Dock Labour Board (NDLB), which controls the Dock Labour Scheme, was established in 1944 and was made a statutory body by Act of Parliament in 1947.

Under the Scheme, the dockers had to seek employment twice a day and the employers paid 3% of their wage bill into the NDLB. This was used to provide fall-back pay when there was no work — although it was substantially less than normal pay, in some cases less than state benefit.

It provided increased security of employment for the 80,000 dockers covered by the Scheme, in return for the creation of a regular pool of dockers available to the employers.

Militant action during the 50s and 60s improved pay and working conditions, but there were also challenges to the Scheme and a major rationalisation of the industry which remains a key problem today.

Devlin

After the 1964 election, Harold Wilson's Labour government faced an immediate confrontation with the dockers over pay. His solution was to set up a Commission of Inquiry under Lord Devlin, which recommeded a pay rise of 19/- (95p!) a week, tied to a further examination of the industry as a whole by the same commission.

This settlement was backed by T&G officials and accepted by a docks delegate conference.

At that time there were two unions on the docks — the "white union", the TGWU, and the "blue union", the National Amalgamated Stevadors and Dockers. The "blue union" was the most militant and had been expelled from the TUC for its militancy.

Devlin's first round of recommendations was introduced in 1966, completing the decasualisation process by ending the piecework system of payment and introducing Measured Day Work.

This was tied to changes in working practices, the introduction of shift-working, and the introduction of increased productivity. Devlin also proposed the de-recognition of the "blue union" in the northern ports.

The second part of the Devlin reforms, published in 1969, involved another major restructuring of the industry through the introduction of containerisation, the establishment of huge container ports, and a vast increase in the use of inland and unregistered ports where work traditionally carried out by dockers was carried out by unregistered labour.

There was great hostility to these proposals amongst dockers and they were immediately rejected by a mass meeting of "blue union" members in London.

The TGWU, however, represented by Jack Jones, continued to negotiate. Although most TGWU shop stewards were as opposed to Devlin as anyone, some of the leading stewards, including Communist Party members, participated in the controversial "modernisation committees".

The National Strike

After 1970 the introduction of the second phase of Devlin fell to Edward Heath, who coupled it with the Industrial Relations Act.

In April 1971, the National Port Stewards Committee declared "total war" on Devlin and began taking action against unregistered ports — ignoring advice from Jack Jones and other T&G officials. The stewards were not opposed to mechanisation — but they were opposed to accepting it on the employers terms.

In July, five dockers, the "Pentonville Five", were arrested under the Industrial Relations Act for picketing the gates of Midlands Cold Storage — a new unregistered port taking on work normally done by London dockers.

The arrests quickly led to a national dock strike, the threat of a general strike by the TUC, and the subsequent release of the Five.

The national dock strike continued. A joint committee of inquiry was established, headed by Jack Jones and one of the port employers, and known as the Jones/Aldington Inquiry.

In reality there were only two ways that dockers jobs could be protected: by nationalisation of the whole docks industry, or short of that, the inclusion of all dockers in the NDLS.

Jack Jones and the T&G leadership never pressed nationalisation with the Wilson government, although it was put forward by stewards and the "blue union". Jones did press for the inclusion of all dockers in the Scheme, but the employers refused.

Eventually, Jones recommended an end to the strike with a deal involving a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies for registered dockers, enhanced voluntary redundancy payments, the completion of reorganisation, and creation of unregistered ports.

The dockers were bitterly opposed to this. There was a huge demonstration and battle with the police outside the T&G delegate conference, which voted by a narrow majority to call off the strike — in direct opposition to the National Port Stewards Committee.

Registered dockers were decimated and the "blue union" was submerged in the T&G. Devlin did to the docks in the 70s what Edwardes did to BL, McGregor to coal mining, and Murdoch to Fleet Street in the 80s.

Today there are less than 10,000 dockers covered by the Scheme, while 12,000 work in unregistered ports. About 70 ports (half of Britain's larger ports) are now part of the Scheme.

Nevertheless, registered dockers have remained an important part of the labour movement, retaining much of their trade union strength and rank and file organisation.

Building support for the Dockers now

If an all-out strike takes place it will be bitterly fought. Already T&G officials are saying that they will not involve unregistered ports in a strike in defence of the Scheme — although the workers there are also T&G members.

The divisions created in the early 70s will be a major factor in any strike. There are now hundreds of unregistered ports capable of dealing with work normally covered by registered ports.

If a strike takes place the registered parts are likely to be solid. The main battle will be around the unregistered ports.

The strike will not be effective unless the law is broken. Picketing unregistered ports will be illegal and would lead to police confrontations, court action, and possible sequestration of T&G assets.

The labour movement needs to get ready now for the possibility of this confrontation. Support Groups can be set up and arrangements made to swing into action as soon as it is needed.

Links can be forged now with nearby ports. Stewards from the docks can be invited to address trade union or Labour Party meetings. Public meetings with rank and file dockers can be organised.

Now is the time to stop the rot, develop unity in action, and mark up a long-awaited victory for the trade union movement.

NHS White Paper

Caring Competition?

Just when you thought Thatcher's "review" of the National Health Service was never going to see the light of day, the proposals from the NHS White Paper leak out.

The proposals for bringing the NHS under the control of market forces are floated in the press to guage public reaction.

Health campaigners must swing into action now, and counter the leaked proposals with facts and figures to show what the "market" would mean for NHS workers and users.

The White Paper is based on the premise that competition and business management will produce a more efficient service. This is a nonsense in the NHS, as past experience shows.

The competitive tendering of ancillary services, for instance, led to deteriorations in hygiene and patient care and a high staff turnover. Turnover, and the fact that the ancillaries were working for different employers from other NHS workers, has helped to divide the workforce.

Nor has the tendering exercise succeeded in its own terms of encouraging "competition". With managements forced to award contracts to the lowest tender, regardless of quality, there is now very little competition in the ancillary services sector, and it has become dominated by a handful of multinational conglomerates.

The American experience of a competitive health service is that the less lucrative sectors, notably long-term care of the elderly, the chronically sick and mentally ill, become neglected in favour of more profitable surgical techniques.

With a "free market" NHS, the government would have a excuse not to increase funding. In the current tendency towards specialisation, vital services would have to be cut.

By Trevor Jones

The free market has no respect for geography, in the health service any more than anywhere else. It would bring the end to the national service now provided, for all its regional variations.

In the current economic climate of "develop the South East, let the rest eat vegeburgers", the economic drive of the market would be to develop lucrative services in the South East.

This could go, even to the point of over-provision, leaving smart hospitals competing for patients — leaving other parts of the country well alone, because there is no economic, or "market" incentive for them to go there.

The elderly, in particular, would suffer, as the NHS came under pressure to close down "unprofitable" services and devote resources to money-spinning private work.

Elderly

Long-stay care for the elderly could virtually cease in the NHS, forcing many elderly people to use up their savings or sell their houses despite having contributed to NHS finances for 50 or more years. These are but one layer of the "consumers" the government has not seen fit to consult.

And who will be consulted when your local hospital begins to consider "opting out"? The patients? Local residents? Or a team of managers and consultants?

The opting out of any hospital will in turn affect entire District health strategies, placing further strain on already shaky regional structures. Services presently co-ordinated on a regional basis, even if strapped for cash at the moment, would be under threat, e.g accident and emergency cover.

If we were to run the health service according to market forces, we would have to accept that some "firms" would go bust; or, in order to avoid going bust, they would close down NHS-contracted wards and services and concentrate on private health care; or they will simply resort to the most cynical asset-stripping, selling off buildings and land.

Implications

The staff implications of the White Paper must not be forgotten. For workers, "market forces" being introduced basically means "squeeze the workforce".

Hospitals which opt out would have total control of workers' pay and conditions. Workers would find national agreements tom up ovemight, and would have to adopt "flexible" working practices to maximise the hospital's profits.

Different employers for staff in different hospitals would make it unlawful for workers in opted out hospitals, even if they were treating NHS patients, to join in industrial action across NHS districts or regions.

The major health unions would suffer falls in membership; only widespread grass roots militancy would dissuade their bureaucracies from vying for the best sweetheart deals with emboldened managements.

The last people to be consulted on "opting out" will be the workforce who actually provide the patient care.

The White Paper proposals were leaked to see how public and press would respond. It does, however, give us maximum notice to plan a counter-attack. In the short term, an outcry now may even force some minor amendments before the Paper is formally published.

Thatcher's cards for the NHS are now on the table. This is the big one: do or die for the NHS. We cannot treat the matter like a game. It's time for health campaigners, trade unionists, Labour Party members, and patients to get together and plan their response.

P&O Strike

A year on, still undaunted!

The P&O dispute is almost a year old.

It began when management unilaterally decided to alter working conditions despite the union's having secured an arbitration agreement.

By TREVOR JONES

Management refused to negotiate; and, faced with the power of the judiciary, union General Secretary McCluskie backed down, refusing even to recognise his own picket line.

But the history of the strike has merely hardened the resolve of those women and men who have stayed out — and of their Support Groups.

To celebrate the anniversary of the dispute, there will be rallies and demonstrations at Dover's Eastern Docks Entrance on Saturday, February 4th, with a benefit in Dover Town Hall to follow.

Demonstrations with guest speakers will take place at 7am and 2pm; the benefit at 7pm.

Trade unionists everywhere should show their solidarity with these undaunted workers by supporting this event. Further details are available from Deal Women's Support Group.

Solidarity — financial and other — is still needed. Contact these Women's Support Groups and see what you and your organisation can do to help.

Aylesham WSG. 61 Castle Drive, Whitfield, Dover. 0304-820543

Canterbury WSG. 75 Tenterden Drive, Canterbury. 0227 66768.

Deal WSG. Magness House, Mill Hill, Deal. 0304 367840.

Dover WSG. 210, London Road, Dover.

Thanet WSG. 147, High Street, Ramsgate. 0843 587990.

Folkestone WSG. 7 Tennyson Place, Folkestone. 0303 51997.

Inner London Education Authority

Duff contracts scandal

Despite impending abolition, ILEA is luring local government clerical, administrative, and technical staff off national conditions of service.

These conditions are offered by every local government employer except ILEA, whose staff code offers much poorer conditions.

Very few local government workers entering ILEA have

By a *Briefing* supporter in ILEA

any idea that the Authority's new employees have no employment protection rights at all in their first six months.

Most believe they are getting the same terms as offered elsewhere in local government, i.e. protection based upon previous service with equivalent employers.

The real question about ILEA contracts is why so few local government workers, including active NALGO members and shop stewards, know anything about the threat they pose to the 500,000 NALGO members employed by other Authorities.

NALGO

With the transfer of education to the inner London Boroughs, the ILEA staff code will become the basis of workers' contracts, allowing the Greater London Staff Association to act as a Trojan Hose in relation to NALGO's organisation in these Boroughs.

NALGO appears to have done nothing to warn its members of the dangers of taking an ILEA contract, unlike NATFHE, which is currently running a full national campaign against Hereford and Worcester over a similar issue.

Tony Marriott was one active NALGO member and shop steward, who went to ILEA with years of active trade unionism behind him, but no knowledge of ILEA's atrocious contracts: Tony was subsequently sacked for his trade union activity.

Will NALGO begin to publicise the dangers of ILEA contracts? Or will we be seeing sackings of other shop stewards who also unwittingly give up national conditions in, say, the housing department of an inner London Borough, and then find themselves on the Staff Code from ILEA in the same Borough's embryonic education department?

The new education departments will be in urgent need of active and experienced trade unionists. These contracts will help managers to keep these people from moving in from other departments.

National agreements are under attack by employers in many fields, as part of a move towards making labour more "flexible". Will trade unionists in inner London local government allow this disease to spread from ILEA to the Boroughs?

Lewisham
NALGO Social Services
One-Day Strike
against cuts and job losses
February 7th
Join the picket lines at the Town Hall

Ford Victimisation

Softened up for losing Sierra?

New light was shed on the attempted sacking of Dagenham TGWU activist Mick Gosling when Ford announced plans to transfer all Sierra production to Ghent, Belgium.

The Dagenham Plant would be left producing only the Fiesta, with an immediate loss of 500 jobs and a probable loss of 3,000 by 1992 — 40% of the workforce currently employed in body and assembly operations.

Meanwhile, at the time of going to press, the result of Mick's appeal has not been announced. Unfortunately, it seems likely that the company will simply reject all the union's arguments and uphold the sacking.

At that point, industrial action will become a necessity if trade union organisation is to be defended at Dagenham.

By MARK SEATON

The whole episode is now clearly linked to attempts to make Dagenham a one-car plant — which could lead to its complete closure in several years time.

The company has promised only minimal investment in the new model Fiesta, which will remain in production for only five or six years.

Without a second model in production, there is no guarantee of a flow of new investment or new technology to the plant. Three plants in Europe produce Fiestas (Dagenham, Cologne, Valencia) but only the Ghent plant will produce Sierras.

In order to resist this, a powerful trade union campaign is needed, backed by militant action of the sort taken by Vauxhall workers to protect job levels at Ellesmere Port.

The victimisation of Mick Gosling is clearly part of a general offensive by the company against the union — in preparation for the shift to one-car production. The union must use all means necessary, including strike action, to secure Mick's reinstatement.

The greatest immediate worry is that some people in the union will seize on the Sierra announcement to say that the union can't fight on two fronts at once, and must concentrate on the bigger issue of single-car production.

In fact, the two fronts are linked, and the reality of this link must be driven home throughout the labour movement.

The Ford manoeuvre shows the harsh reality of 1992 and should throw cold water on the "pro-Europeanism" fashionable in some Labour Party quarters.

Clearly, Ford is positioning itself to take maximum advantage of the big restructuring of capital — against workers' interests — which will accompany 1992.

Shop stewards in the Assembly Plant at Dagenham have distributed a further four page bulletin to the workforce pledging to fight the victimisation all the way.

Messages of support and letters of protest from individuals, trade union and Labour Party branches are still urgently required. Write to:

- John Hougham, Director of Personnel, Ford Motor Company, Eagle Way, Brentwood, Essex CM13 3BW; and
- The Secretary, TGWU 1/1107 Branch, 27 Courtland Grove, Thamesmead, London SE28.

Ealing Teachers Association
Conditions of Service Conference
Covering: LMS; Erosion of Conditions of Service; Education Reform Act
February 11th, 10.30-4
PCL, Baker Street
For more details contact:
Anita Dickinson, 01-961 6503

Continuing the European debate

PETER TATCHELL's article on socialist strategy in Europe in our Summer Special sparked off criticism and counter-criticism. Here we continue our coverage of this vital issue.

Challenging the changing character of capital

The European Community (EC) is on the brink of a decade of dramatic expansion which will have far-reaching implications for future socialist strategies in both Western and Eastern Europe.

The emergence of a unified European capitalism under the auspices of the Single European Act, and the evolution of a unified European state under the aegis of the European Commission and the Council of Ministers, are altering the terrain of class struggle and presenting new obstacles — *and opportunities* — for socialists.

In my *Briefing Summer Special* article, I proposed a *transformative strategy* based on a "radical agenda for a *People's Europe*" which included the democratisation of the EC through the empowerment of the European Parliament and the expansion of the EC into a broader-based European Socialist Union embracing all of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals.

In *Briefing* no. 70, with Labour's Euro-election manifesto in mind, I outlined an "Alternative Strategy for Europe", premised on radical commitments to economic democracy, non-provocative defence, and ecological sustainability.

I envisaged that these strategies for the *transformation* of the EC could be implemented by co-ordination between left wing majorities in the national and European parliaments backed up by extra-parliamentary mass movements and joint trade union action throughout the member states.

By PETER TATCHELL

Though this *transformative strategy* does not amount to full socialism, its realisation would nevertheless result in major constraints on the hegemony of capital and would involve a massive redistribution of wealth and power to working class people.

Its achievement would also have a potent radicalising influence on popular consciousness and thus help strengthen the self-confidence and optimism of the labour movement, thereby paving the way for further socialist gains.

Based on an estimation of what is politically possible in the foreseeable future, this is a radical *and realistic* strategy. Those who reject it have failed to offer any plausible alternative.

Some critics, in condemning my alleged "reformism", have talked vaguely and non-specifically about a "revolutionary strategy" for European socialism.

Yet they have singularly failed to identify the existence of a mass revolutionary consciousness and a mass revolutionary movement which would be needed to bring this about.

Indeed, in opposition to my Euro-socialist strategy, Jim Thain posed the question: "Reform or Revolution?" He then went on to offer a far from revolutionary "labour strategy" which, as a shopping list of basic trade union-type demands, was much less radical than my original proposals.

Jim then compounded this economism by suggesting that the way forward is through workers' solidarity across European frontiers, as exemplified by the transnational links built up during the British Coal, Ford, and P&O strikes.

Though they are valuable, *by themselves* these links remain defensive and isolated responses to specific and separate attacks by capital.

Limited to a set of trade union demands, they don't add up to a generalised assault on capital; nor are they a coherent strategy for European socialism.

Arguing that the EC is an instrument of the ruling classes, Finn Jensen says that we must "maintain our independence from it."

Yet how can any socialist ignore an institution which is now an integral part of contemporary capitalism and is already dramatically affecting the lives of hundreds of millions throughout Europe?

The EC is a concrete expression of the late 20th century capitalist trend towards greater economic interdependence and the concomitant regionalisation of the world economy.

The challenge is poses cannot be met by looking backwards to an era when capitalism was rooted in separate and distinct nation states.

Internationalism

Today, in a new era of emerging European-wide capitalist empire (evidenced by the escalating scale of inter-European investment, mergers and joint industrial projects), we need to reject the implausible and chauvinistic isolationism which is implicit in a strategy of withdrawal from the EC.

Instead, the left must recognise the changing forms of capitalist development in Europe and embrace a forward-looking internationalism based on socialist solidarity across the European continent and geared to the *socialist transformation* of the EC.

Far from being "Euro-centred", as Finn suggests, this strategy for European socialism is part and parcel of a global internationalism.

The winning of socialism is essential for the establishment of more equitable relations with the Third World. Indeed, the huge economic strength of a united and socialist Europe would tip the balance of class forces on a *world scale* in favour of a new international economic order.



PHOTO: Stan Thain

Portuguese peasants, c. 1954

Portugal faces 1992

John Palmer has floated the idea that the flow of EC capital to Spain and Portugal will lead to substantial benefits for the Iberian working class, while weakening more powerful workers, especially in West Germany.

The only evidence for Palmer's assertion regarding the Portuguese working class is that for the next few years (and the last two) the Portuguese national (capitalist) economy will be a net recipient of EC funds.

By Jim Thain Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

It does not follow from this that the lot of Portuguese workers will improve.

Portugal's economy is the weakest in the EC, and its working class the worst paid: the hourly average of $2.72 is a third of the Spanish average (just one reason why it is wrong to lump the two nations together) and one fifth of the EC average. Welfare benefits are paltry.

The balance of trade deficit (even with Spain) is rising, as is inflation (currently 10%). The official level of registered unemployed, 6.6%, masks appalling exploitation of women and children and will soon rise steeply as public sector jobs are shed.

There is very little heavy industry. Productivity is low. Over 20% work on the land. Portuguese farming is the least efficient in Europe, with low yields and high prices.

The 1974 revolution made a minimum of six years schooling compulsory, but only 14% of the population has had over four (the previous minimum). Consequently, only 3% of the workforce has had senior technical or university training.

The last thing 1992 will do is raise the real level of wages. Bourgeois and socialist presses alike forecast *higher* unemployment.

On the other hand, I agree with John Palmer when he says the West German working class will suffer from 1992. Unskilled workers (many of whom are Portuguese emigrants) will be particularly hard hit.

In the end, 1992 is not about any kind of egalitarianism but about a Euro-strategy for the exploitation of labour.

Industry Minister Lois Amaral describes the acute shortage of skilled workers and middle management as "the greatest restraint on our economic and industrial development."

Clearly, there is little immediate prospect of Portuguese workers competing with their skilled West German counterparts.

The only thing Portugal has going for it, from the EC's point of view, is low wages. As Amaral puts it:

"We offer a European package with non-European wages. Why should investors producing for the EC look to Asia when Portugal is so close at hand?"

But Amaral's package is not enough. Brussels expects Portugal to "earn" its subsidies by abolishing the remaining working class gains of the Revolution: wide ranging nationalisation (over 150 companies and most banks) and job protection.

Workers have already registered their discontent. In March last year, anti-labour legislation aimed at smoothing the way to 1992 provoked a general strike.

About 1.75 million, out of a total population of 10.5 million, took action described by one observer as "the first mass action against the European myth", and certainly the largest mobilisation since the revolution.

While EC investment is welcomed, 1992 generally is not. Over 70% of companies employ fewer than ten workers. Most are under-resourced and inefficient, and all will lose such protection from market forces as they currently enjoy.

EC institutions and the British working class

Jim Thain (*Briefing* no. 74) asks for a solution to the riddle "How do EC institutions help strengthen the working class?"

The answer is — they do not!

Ridiculous

It would be quite ridiculous to suggest that the EC is a step forward for the working class or that it is possible to transform the EC from a capitalist club into a socialist club via the European Parliament.

On the other hand, using the same logic — since Jim wants Britain to withdraw from the EC — British institutions are no basis for a gradual transformation to socialism either.

But these institutions do exist and we participate in and make use of them in order to campaign and mobilise from below.

EC institutions and developments are becoming more and more important in the daily lives of the British working class. Therefore we must pay attention to what is happening and play a tactical role where necessary.

By Dave Spencer

My argument is that *both* Britain and the EC are capitalist clubs and that neither British capitalism's membership of the EC nor its withdrawal makes a scrap of difference to the strengthening of the working class as such.

Therefore to argue, as did both Jim and Finn Jensen (in *Briefing* no. 72) that British withdrawal from the EC is somehow a naturally socialist demand is mistaken.

Chauvinism

It is in fact a reactionary demand, whatever the motives of its advocates might be. It inevitably keys into the endemic racism and chauvinism of the British working class and thus becomes a blockage to any understanding of what is happening within Europe, West or East.

In his last contribution, Jim says that the withdrawal slogan should not be part of the left's campaigns around the European elections or 1992. I agree with him.

Knee-jerk

The problem is that when it comes to the question of the EC, withdrawal is usually the *only* thing the British left has to say, a knee-jerk reaction. Frankly, that is how Jim's and Finn's criticisms of Peter Tatchell read to me.

I think we need to be firmly *against* the use of the slogan of British withdrawal from the EC and *for* the development of a positive European perspective.

Palestine

Arafat moves the goalposts

By Anna Wagstaff
Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine

It was the PNC of the *Intifadah*.

For the last six weeks of 1988, as the 19th Palestinian National Council (PNC) met in Algiers, the *Intifadah* itself almost disappeared, in picture and in story, from the pages of the media... to be replaced by Arafat.

There were pictures of Arafat making speeches, giving press conferences; cartoons and profiles of Arafat; and reports of Arafat and his colleagues as they toured the major diplomatic stages of the world.

Confused? You shouldn't be! This was only a speeded-up version of the game Arafat and his supporters have been playing for many years.

The US itself recognises the *Intifadah* as a threat to its interests. But Arafat's game is to bargain from the US a little Palestinian corner within the imperialist framework for the region.

That is the preferred solution for the Arab bourgeoisie, including a tiny sector of Palestinians. It's no solution at all for the mass of Palestinians fighting for self-determination.

The leadership of the Uprising succeeded in placing a resolution declaring an independent state of Palestine on the agenda. Essentially a propagandist resolution, it was still a tribute to the achievements of the 11-month Uprising.

Unfortunately, the PNC of the *Intifadah* is more likely to be remembered for accepting UN Resolution 242 — recognising the right of Israel to exist behind secure borders.

That recognition, the major US precondition for dialogue with the PLO, removed Arafat's major stumbling block in pushing the PLO down his chosen road. He spent the last six weeks of 1988 pushing the PLO as fast and far as he could; against an opposition weakened by lack of organisation and a common, clear alternative.

The PNC resolution on 242 was not as positive as Arafat had wanted.

Both the PNC and *Fatah*'s (Arafat's own organisation) Executive defeated the "pure American formula" — acceptance of 242 with no conditions, insisting on linking 242 with the Palestinian right to statehood and self-determination.

Even this diluted formulation failed to win overwhelming PNC support. The PFLP — which now commands the same level of support as *Fatah* in the Occupied Territories — voted against.

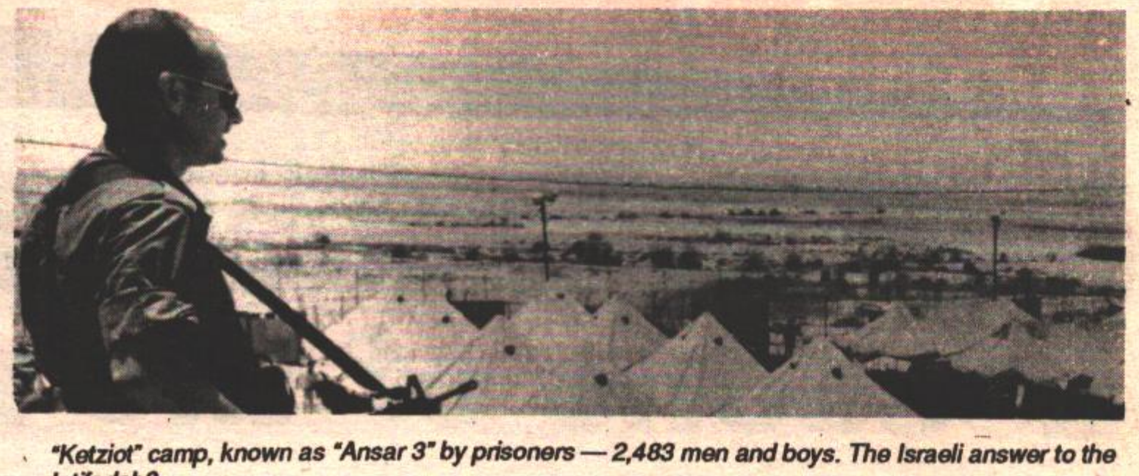
This led the US to up the pressure by refusing Arafat a visa to address the UN. Arafat used his chief spokesman, Bassam Abu Sharif, to deliver the "correct formulation" in discussions with a senior British Foreign Office Minister.

However, when Arafat himself finally gave his UN speech in Geneva, pressure from within the PLO made him stick to the positions agreed at the PNC.

Immediately after this speech he came up with a press conference not only to deliver the goods on 242, but also to throw in a universal condemnation of "terrorism" for good measure.

It was this that finally led to the "historic breakthrough"... the opening of formal relations between US officials and the PLO.

Arafat has now led the PLO to accept Israel's right to exist, has himself renounced violence, and has even offered to help the FBI find the perpetrators of "Lockerbie" because he'd be better at it than Mossad!



"Ketziot" camp, known as "Ansar 3" by prisoners — 2,483 men and boys. The Israeli answer to the Intifadah?

This comes after a year in which:

- the US, desperate to defuse the threat of the *Intifadah*, made unprecedented criticism of Israel over its use of live ammunition and deportations;
- Israel's "national unity coalition government", patched together six weeks after November's election, has no answer to Israel's crisis;
- the Palestinians themselves have felt stronger, more united, and more determined than ever before.

All that Arafat has won from the US is to formalise the dialogue which has been going on informally for years.

Arafat is still a long way from selling an imperialist-dictated settlement to the occupied Palestinians. However, his opponents are wrong to say that the *Intifadah* is the Palestinians' answer to Arafat. By itself, it is not enough.

The *Intifadah* must be used to polarise the situation both within Israel and in the surrounding Arab countries (where sympathy with the Uprising has already brought popular demonstrations into violent conflict with the forces of the state).

It is up to the leadership of the Uprising and those in the PLO to hammer out a strategy to do this.

Mexico

Free Jose Garcia!

The recent arrest in Mexico of "La Quino", the corrupt oil union's leader, and his cronies was the most public attack on those who had backed Cauhtemoc Cardenas in the Presidential elections.

President by fraud Carlos Salinas de Gartari appears to be beginning a campaign of repression against those who opposed him.

By Gill Lee

On December 16th Jose Ramon Garcia Gomez, local leader of the movement against the July 6th electoral fraud, disappeared from his home in Cuatla, Morelos.

Two unmarked police cars had been stationed outside his house all morning while agents questioned neighbours about him.

Garcia is a member of the PRT (Revolutionary Workers Party) and had stood against the official PRI candidate in elections for mayor.

The strength of the popular movement in Morelos led to immediate protest. There were demonstrations on December 18th in both Cuatla and Cuernavaca, the state capital.

A rally of 4,000 in Cuatla on December 24th was addressed by Cauhtemoc Cardenas and Rosario Ibarra. The opposition parties in the Chamber of Deputies have demanded his release and his case has been taken up by the Chamber of Deputies Human Rights Commission.

Garcia's disappearance came only two weeks into the Salinas administration, when it is still seeking legitimacy. Salinas has named a known torturer, Nazar Haro, as head of investigations with the Mexico City Police and authorised a massacre of unaarmed prisoners after a prison riot in Tepic, Nayarit.

The Mexican government must be forced to release Garcia and end the repression it has begun.

Telegrams for the immediate release of Jose Ramon Garcia Gomez should be sent urgently to:

Carlos Salinas de Gartari, Constitucional Estados Unidos de Mexico, D.F.;

Fernando Gutierrez Barrios, Secretario de Gobernacion, Bucareli 99, Mexico D.F.;

Antonio Riva Palacio Lopez, Gobernador Constitucional Estado de Morelos, Palacio de Gobierno, Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico.

JUQUIN INTERVIEW

A new force on the French left

PETER TATCHELL attended the recent convention in Paris of *Nouvelle Gauche* (New Left) and interviewed its leader, former Presidential candidate PIERRE JUQUIN, on the politics of the new red-green movement.

At a meeting held in the Parisian "Red Belt" suburb of St Denis, supporters of Pierre Juquin, the independent left candidate in last May's French Presidential elections, launched a major realignment of the French left through the foundation of a new political movement.

Over 400 delegates representing the 200 local committees which organised Juquin's election campaign agreed to establish *Nouvelle Gauche pour Socialisme, Ecologie, et Autogestion* (New Left for Socialism, Ecology, and Self-Management).

They also voted to hold a founding congress this October and in the meantime to negotiate with other left parties and the Greens (some of whose left wing members attended the convention as observers) to draw up a *common list* for the forthcoming municipal and European elections.

They also prioritised commitments to:

- a "European-wide strategy" to meet the challenge of 1992;
- the strengthening of co-operation with similar movements in "both Western and Eastern Europe";
- the "ecologoical conversion" of industry;
- a mass campaign against the proposed fast-breeder nuclear reactor near Lyon;
- and the articulation of an anti-state socialism premised on "citizen empowerment".



PHOTO: Peter Tatchell

Pierre Juquin

Nouvelle Gauche brings together the Federation for an Alternative Left (FGA), the "renovateur" faction of the French Communist Party (PCF), the left-wing Unified Socialist Party (PSU), and a minority from the Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist League (LCR).

But the membership of the new movement is mainly made up of non-aligned radicals who were involved in the Juquin Presidential campaign.

Pierre Juquin was a member of the Political Bureau of the PCF for 25 years and one of its most senior and best known leaders prior to his expulsion in 1987. Speaking at the convention, he said:

"The traditional left has no political project and is disconnected from the new social movements. It has failed to take into account a whole set of contradictions in society.

"Instead, it has focused almost entirely on the contradiction between capital and labour to the exclusion of all others. It has little to say, for example, about the contradictions between men and women and between ecology and human productivity."

Referring to the political perspectives of the three main left and progressive parties in France, Juquin commented:

"The Socialist Party doesn't want to change social relations; the Communist Party thinks that it's not possible; and the Green Party hasn't even considered the question.

"These attitudes have created a political vacuum on the left which *Nouvelle Gauche* aims to fill."

Juquin described the movement's political perspective as "a red-green convergence based on a pluralistic, radical and non-dogmatic synthesis of socialism and ecology at the levels of both political theory and political action.

"We want neither isolation from the rest of the left, nor domination by it. We are a distinct alternative political force and we are ready to seek dialogue and co-operation with other progressive forces within France and throughout Europe and the Third World."

On Europe, Juquin has articulated the concept of "A Europe of Citizens and Peoples, East and West" and the goal of a united Europe founded on a federation of states and nations, eventually including Eastern Europe and currently suppressed nations such as the Corsicans and the Basques.

In the immediate context of 1992, he has argued for a "European social space", including workers' rights and environmental protection, and for the harmonisation of the policies of the member states based on the standards prevailing in the most progressive country.

To ensure the public accountability of an increasingly powerful European Community, he has proposed that "at the minimum there must be basic bourgeois democracy and this requires the establishment of real powers for the European Parliament."

Juquin rejects a "purely productivist type of economic growth" and argues that there can be "no socialist economic project without ecology and a commitment to the ecological conversion of society."

He suggests that the left must not only seek the "deep transformation of social relations, but also of the *productive forces* by challenging anti-ecological forms of production and technology, for example, in the chemical industry."

*Next issue: Peter Tatchell talks to Pierre Juquin about his radical ideas on "citizen empowerment" and "self-governing citizenship".

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Poll-Tax round-up

Lessons of the non-registration campaign in Scotland

The Poll Tax Campaign is entering a critical phase.

In Scotland, Councils have now set the level of Poll Tax for their areas at between £200 and £400, averaging around £300 per head.

Extra government support has reduced the level for the first year (in Strathclyde by £50).

In April payment demands will be issued.

By Gordon Morgan Glasgow Central CLP

In England and Wales, hundreds of Councils are receiving registration computer packages this month. From April to October, the Community Charge Registration Officers will be constructing the registers in their areas.

A non-registration campaign can play a vital part in building opposition to the Tax.

In Scotland, the mass non-registration campaign is over. Representatives like Denis Canavan MP continue to refuse to pay fines for non-registration. Legal challenges continue over how registration data is held. However, the registers are over 95% "complete".

Their accuracy is, however questionable. Thousands have evaded registration; many others have subsequently moved. Tens of thousands have been registered without completing any form, using rating and electoral rolls.

Hinder

All this will actually hinder collection of the Poll Tax.

Moreover, through the non-registration campaign, hundreds of thousands made some attempt to obstruct the Tax.

From November 87 to June 88, local anti-Poll Tax committees sprang up everywhere. Many of these espoused different tactics and coexisted in the same area.

In retrospect, too much time was spent bickering over which group to work in and what tactics to adopt, rather than building anti-Poll Tax feeling door to door.

To be successful, opposition to the Poll Tax must become the accepted social norm. Each individual household will be asked to register and will be faced with severe penalties if they don't.

To overcome isolation, there must be a campaign in every locality and contacts in every street and block.

Two distinct moral responses are made to the Poll Tax. First comes opposition to the Tax as immoral in and of itself — people who feel this way will refuse to pay the Poll Tax, but may be happy registering.

Secondly, there is opposition to the registration process as an attack on civil liberties and on the right to vote. These people will refuse to register; they will probably also refuse to pay.

Registration

Moral opposition to registration *per se* was largely missing from the Scottish campaign. Instead, opposition focused on the inequities of the Tax, on general anti-Tory propaganda, and on economic arguments.

The expected high Tax levels were used to inflame opinion, often without a general explanation of the social meaning and effects of the Tax.

In Labour and SNP areas, hundreds of people normally inactive in politics crowded meetings.

In some areas, opposition to the Tax and registration was able to unite Labour, SNP, Democrats, and even some Tory Councillors.

The tactics of different groups included:

- ***delaying registration*** **by not filling in all details, questioning how to fill in forms, writing illegibly, etc.;**
- ***not registering*** **by evading the registrar or publicly burning registration forms;**
- ***harassing registration collectors*****, e.g. following them down streets with a megaphone, wasting their time, even occasional violence;**
- ***publicity*****, including demos, occupying registrars' offices, etc.**

Extreme tactics, such as sabotaging computers, were not adopted anywhere.

Persuading

The least successful tactic was persuading Councils and Council workers not to set up registers or appoint staff. Some Councils restricted funding and this contributed to incomplete and inaccurate registers, but in the end all Councils compiled.

Many Councils employed collectors to conduct door to door registration. Many of those carrying out this duty were postal workers, or local government workers carrying out second jobs in the evenings.

Unions should take action against members doing this. The UCW, at least locally, had such a policy.

The most successful tactic was the official STUC and Labour Party line of delaying registration. Hundreds of thousands didn't respond until threatened. Many kept up a letter war with the registrar, refused to fill in date of birth, or "misunderstood" the form.

In Strathclyde, close to the due date for publication of the Poll Tax roll, sacks full of correspondence had still not been answered. At that time the roll was "completed" with computer information derived, presumably, from the electoral roll.

Certainly, an additional electoral check was carried out. This enabled the registrar to claim the roll was over 95% complete. This was portrayed as a defeat for the non-registration campaign.

Such an assessment, fostered by the government, misses the point. At the start of the campaign, despite the publicity, few understood what the Poll Tax was or how it would affect them.

A few months later, most had a very clear idea about the Tax — they didn't want it! Hundreds of thousands, many for the first time, had defied the government, albeit temporarily. A consensus of opposition to the Tax had been created.

Had a vigorous campaign of non-payment been launched to build on this consensus, the government's flagship would be facing imminent scuttling. As it is, the non-payment campaign faces an uphill struggle to regenerate momentum.

English and Welsh socialists should work now to build the largest possible non-registration campaign, utilising whatever tactics they see as appropriate.

TUC Demonstration

Model Resolution

At last year's Trade Union Congress, the TUC committed itself to organising action against the Poll Tax. Since then the Labour Party's NEC has agreed to support a TUC-called lobby of Parliament in the Spring.

Despite these commitments very little detail has been forthcoming from Congress House or Walworth Road. We urge all comrades to press the TUC for action by passing the following model resolution:

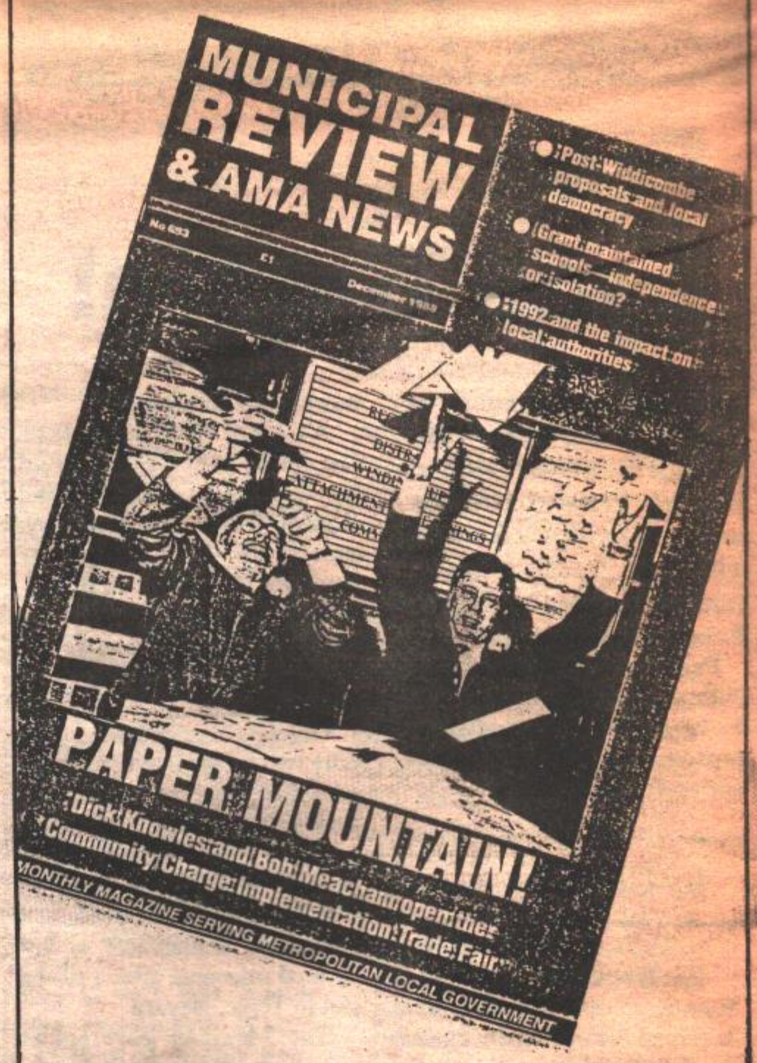
This meeting believes that the Poll Tax must be vigourously opposed by all sections of the labour movement. In this regard, a national focus is urgently needed to highlight public opposition, show that there is resistance to the Tory plans and help build that resistance at national and local levels.

We call on the TUC and Labour Party NEC to organise a mass demonstration against the Poll Tax at the beginning of April, to mark the introduction of the Poll Tax in Scotland and the immenent beginning of Registration in England and Wales.

We urge the TUC and LP NEC to treat this as a top priority, and call on them to ensure that Trades Councils, CLPs and affiliated unions are encouraged to set up broad based mobilising committees, at all levels of the labour movement, which can help form permanent Anti-Poll Tax campaigning groups after the demonstration, where these do not already exist.

Postscript

Whose side are they on?



Birmingham Labour Leader Dick Knowles appeared at the city's National Exhibition Centre to open a "Community Charge Implementation Trade Fair".

Yes, Knowles was depicted on the cover of Municipal Review apparently revelling in the Poll Tax "paper mountain" out of which the private sector hopes to make a big killing, flogging new technology to help hard-pressed Labour Councils capture and punish Poll Tax resisters.