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NO.78 FEB 22~MAR 7 1989

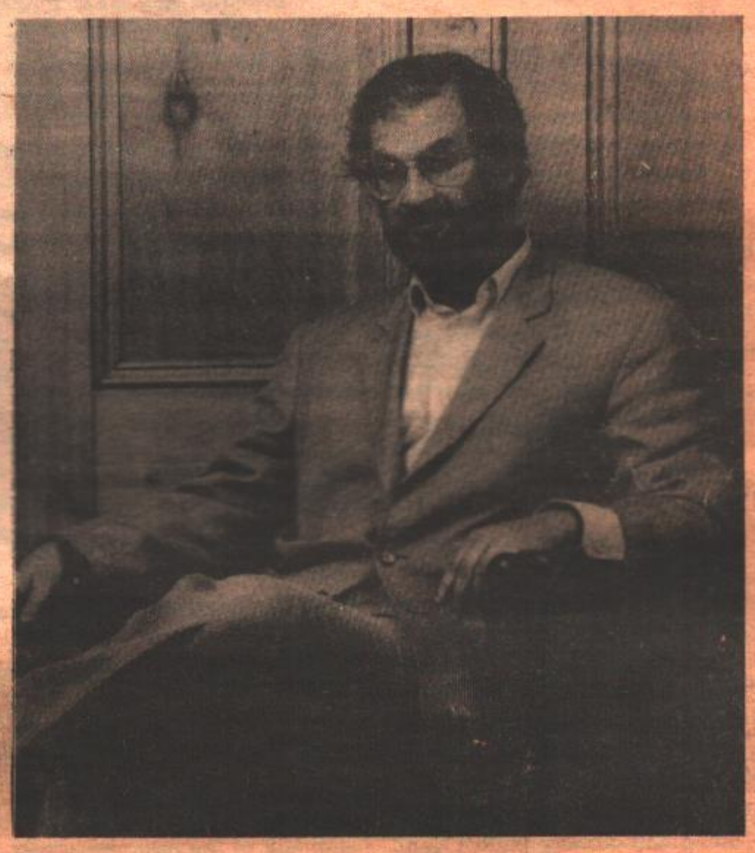
INSIDE:

- Health and Safety Conference
- Women in the workforce
- Miners: five years on
- Hungary's Economy
- PR Debate
- Briefing women's round table

40p

NO COMPROMISE ON *SATANIC VERSES!*

DEFEND SALMAN RUSHDIE!



In the worldwide controversy over *The Satanic Verses* no socialist can afford to keep silent.

In this contest between mindless authoritarianism and independent, critical thought, between obscurantism and enlightenment, we should have no hesitation in choosing sides.

Socialists must pierce through the cant emanating from both Teheran and Whitehall — and stand in unequivocal solidarity with Salman Rushdie.

In the wake of the disastrous war with Iraq, the Ayatollah's regime last year unleashed a new wave of terror against its internal opponents. Thousands were executed during the last six months of 1988 (without a whisper of protest from the British government).

Now, the regime has lit upon a useful hate figure in its increasingly desperate attempts to secure popular support.

Why Rushdie? After all, Islam, Iran, indeed the entire non-Western world are regularly traduced in blatantly racist terms in Western books, periodicals, films, and television, without protest from the Ayatollah or fundamentalists elsewhere.

But Rushdie — a major secular voice within the Asian diaspora — poses a different kind of threat.

By Mike Marqusee Haringey Labour Briefing

In their response to Rushdie, the rulers of both Britain and Iran have sought to disguise their real intentions behind hypocritical cant.

On the one hand, Khomeini and Co. need Western finance to rebuild a war-devastated oil industry. On the other, to remain in power they need to step up internal repression and ideological warfare, for which Rushdie provides a useful focus.

Commercial

Similarly, British capital needs new sources of profit, and violently anti-working class Iran is a juicy commercial plum; at the same time, the British state — as self-proclaimed champion of the "free world" — cannot allow a death-threat to one of its own subjects, even a foreign-born scribbling socialist like Salman Rushdie, pass without at least striking a posture of outrage.

The strange contradictions which have marked the inter-play between the Iranian regime and Western imperialism have now come home to roost in Britain, posing a major challenge to the labour movement.

The fundamentalist forces within Britain's oppressed black communities have seized on the Rushdie affair to batten down the hatches within their own communities and secure negotiating leverage in relation to the rulers of their "host" country, whom they have no intention of challenging politically.

For the labour movement, which has relied in many urban areas on a captive black vote, while distancing itself from the political and economic struggles of black people, this is another part of a crisis which has already flared up around the question of state support for religious schools.

Some have sought to deal with this crisis by recognising the claims of religious figures to be "the" leaders of "the" community — and seeking to secure for them special privileges such as money for schools or the protection of an extended blasphemy law.

This approach draws a direct and simplistic equation between religion, culture, and race. Such an equation is racist in itself and plays into the hands of the segregationist far right.

It also institutionalises reactionary hierarchies within black communities, making it that much harder to mobilise against racism.

Backlash

Meanwhile, the Tories can have their cake and eat it too, benefiting from both the racist backlash among whites and the separatist drive among blacks.

All socialists should answer this challenge by becoming sponsors of the Friends of Salman Rushdie (see box).

In alliance with Iranian oppositionists and black socialists in Britain, we should call for a demonstration in support of Rushdie outside the Iranian embassy, and organise for maximum trade union and Labour Party involvement in it.

At the same time, we need to press home the arguments for a democratic and anti-racist secularism, the separation of church and state, the repeal of all blasphemy laws, and an end to state funding of any and all religious schools.

For a quick end to the Ayatollah's regime — and a long life to Salman Rushdie!

"Friends of Salman Rushdie"

"We the undersigned deplore the call to ban Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*.

We are opposed to the blasphemy laws, which have used in the past to censor views considered offensive to Christians. As a result, we are also opposed to the extension of blasphemy laws to cover other religions, including Islam.

We deplore the recent statement by the Ayatollah Khomeini. We urge the widest possible condemnation of the threat to Rushdie's life. We believe that the energy deployed in organising against Rushdie would be better used to fight racism.

We believe that people should be free to practise the religion of their choice and equally that there should be complete freedom to discuss and criticise all religions and cultures.

***The Satanic Verses* should not be banned."**

Individuals and/or organisations wishing to sponsor the above statement, which will be printed in the national and Asian press, should send their name, address, and organisation (if applicable) to BM Box 1568, London WC1N 3XX. Please enclose a donation: cheques payable to Friends of Salman Rushdie. Suggested donations: £10 (organisations); £5 individuals.

(This initiative is supported by Salman Rushdie.)

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Letters

WRITEBACK!

We welcome your letters!

Disagree with something? — write in.
Agree with something? — write in.
Want to raise a new idea? — Write in.

Let's hear your views!

Write to: Writeback, Labour Briefing, 39 Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB.
Please send letters for the next issue to arrive by Wednesday, February 15th if possible.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

Slaughter character assassination

Dear *Briefing*,

I write to inform *Briefing* readers of a vicious slander campaign being conducted in Leeds against Cliff Slaughter.

In an Open Letter to Leeds Trades Council, Slaughter explains:

"...a vicious public campaign of vilification against my son (Patrick Slaughter) and against me and the political party of which I am secretary (the WRP) ... [is being] carried out by, amongst others, certain members of Leeds TUC who, I know, do not represent that body or the overwhelming majority of its members.

"Part of this campaign, slandering Patrick Slaughter as a racist and fascist, and me and the WRP as advocating defence of racists and fascists, was the leaflet distributed to Trades Council delegates at the December meeting by Stephen Long and other members of an organisation calling itself the International Communist Party.

"This leaflet referred, among other things, to, 'the campaign led by the Cliff Slaughter-led Workers Revolutionary Party which calls upon labour movement organisations to come to the defence of racists and fascists.

"The leaflet then says, 'It became clear in the course of the ("Wild Boar") trial that Patrick Slaughter associated with proven fascists.'

"...The main point here is the utterly unprincipled resort to guilt by association, a favourite method of the class enemy, in its police work and in its anti-working class capitalist press..."

Over the 20 years I have known Cliff Slaughter I have had many political disagreements with him, but I know that he has never been soft on fascists or their supporters.

I therefore condemn the miserable attempt by the International Communist Party to attack Cliff Slaughter over the imprisonment of his son, Patrick.

The ICP's method of linking an arrested football fan with Patrick Slaughter, and hence with his father, shows that this political current has failed to absorb any of the basic standards of socialist debate and method.

Yours,
Cllr Garth Frankland,
Leeds



PHOTO: Stan Thain

Portuguese peasants, c. 1954

Facts on EEC subsidies

Dear *Briefing*,

Once something has appeared in print, it tends to assume the status of fact.

Jim Thain is quite wrong in suggesting (*Briefing*, January 25th) that I ever said "the flow of EEC capital to Spain and Portugal will lead to substantial benefits for the Iberian working class."

Indeed, I have written extensively about the derisory character of the EEC subsidies which are to be made available to both Portugal and Spain and to the widening wealth gap between the richer and poorer regions of the EEC.

What I did say was that the 1992 project had contributed to a significant investment and production boom in both countries (they currently have the highest growth rates in the EEC).

I also predicted that this boom would create far more favourable conditions for struggle by workers in both countries and therefore the possibilities of substantial gains in wages, conditions, and living standards.

The remarkable Spanish general strike since then seems ample confirmation of this fact.

It is true that the Portuguese situation is far less favourable, but even there, a renewed sense of confidence appears to be evident in the Portuguese labour movement which cannot be unconnected with the current upturn.

Jim should, in fairness, also acknowledge that I have said repeatedly that these gains and the investment boom itself are vulnerable to a general European (indeed a global) downturn in the early 1990s.

John Palmer,
Socialist Society

To sign or not to sign?

Dear *Briefing*,

The exchange on Charter 88 between Hilary Wainwright and Mike Marqusee in *Briefing* no. 75 was enlightening, but it showed that the left has a lot more serious thinking to do on this matter.

First, Hilary claims that demands *"for constitutional reform are ultimately a challenge to the power of the City."*

I assume that she accepts the thesis, advanced by Tom Nairn (most recently in *The Enchanted Glass*), that the British Constitution is uniquely favourable to the protection of finance capital.

The solution: to render Britain "normal" by the modernising forces of republicanism, national devolution, and the creation of a *written* and *codified* constitution, which in some (unexplained) manner will stop the City from carrying on as it has.

The French *Bourse*, Frankfurt's *Börse*, Milan's *Boursa*, have not lost their power by being "republican". Finance capital has been noted for corrupting republics since the days of the Greek Agora.

Obvious

What is obvious, however, is that the British state has to undergo a radical shake-up if it is to meet the needs of the common people: us. We have to abolish the hideous monarchy, the peerage, the State Church, if we are to create a truly secular environment.

To cite only one example, the bigotry exhibited around Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* can only be combatted in an anti-racist way by an administration free of all religious influences.

But this kind of secular republicanism is not part of Charter 88's "march of history", designed to put the UK in line with other "modern" societies.

It has to be fought for and, if we can achieve it, it will be distinctly "post-modern" in that one would hope that the errors committed by other republics would be avoided.

Here Mike Marqusee is surely right to point to the actions of oppressed minorities as levers for change.

Strategy

This brings me to a second point: the *strategy* of Charter 88. Having lists of names published in the papers is a worthy act. But what kind of concrete action do the signers envisage?

Hilary talks of "public momentum". To do what? Mike counterposes a "militant social majority", but this is also vague. Do they sign petitions, march, or attend conferences, or... what?

I can suggest a project. Why not, following *Briefing*'s excellent Editorial of January 25th, launch an appeal to abolish all blasphemy laws?

This democratic demand unites defence of free speech with an activist challenge to other racist attacks on Salman Rushdie (they are racist because it is no coincidence that a Pakistani ex-Muslim should be singled out for hatred).

Finally, there is one part of Charter 88 which gravely worries me. I would never back an initiative which asserts that "Our central concern is the law" and then goes on to make the inscription of legal procedures as its goal.

Will a new "Bill of Rights" include (like the French Constitution) a right to private property? If it does, we can look forward to challenges to nationalisation from many quarters.

Who will rule on these matters? Judges? The independence of the US Supreme Court is, as Mike states, rather dubious.

Hilary may have "doubts" about this aspect of Charter 88. I have *disagreements*".

There is no way that socialists could be brought to accept the rulings of some "Constitutional Council" when social relations are really being challenged by a mass movement.

It is charming to defend "ancient rights and liberties" against a ravenous government. But this should never be allowed to get in the way of really radical measures to overturn capitalist power.

Andrew Coates,
Socialist Society
Steering Committee member

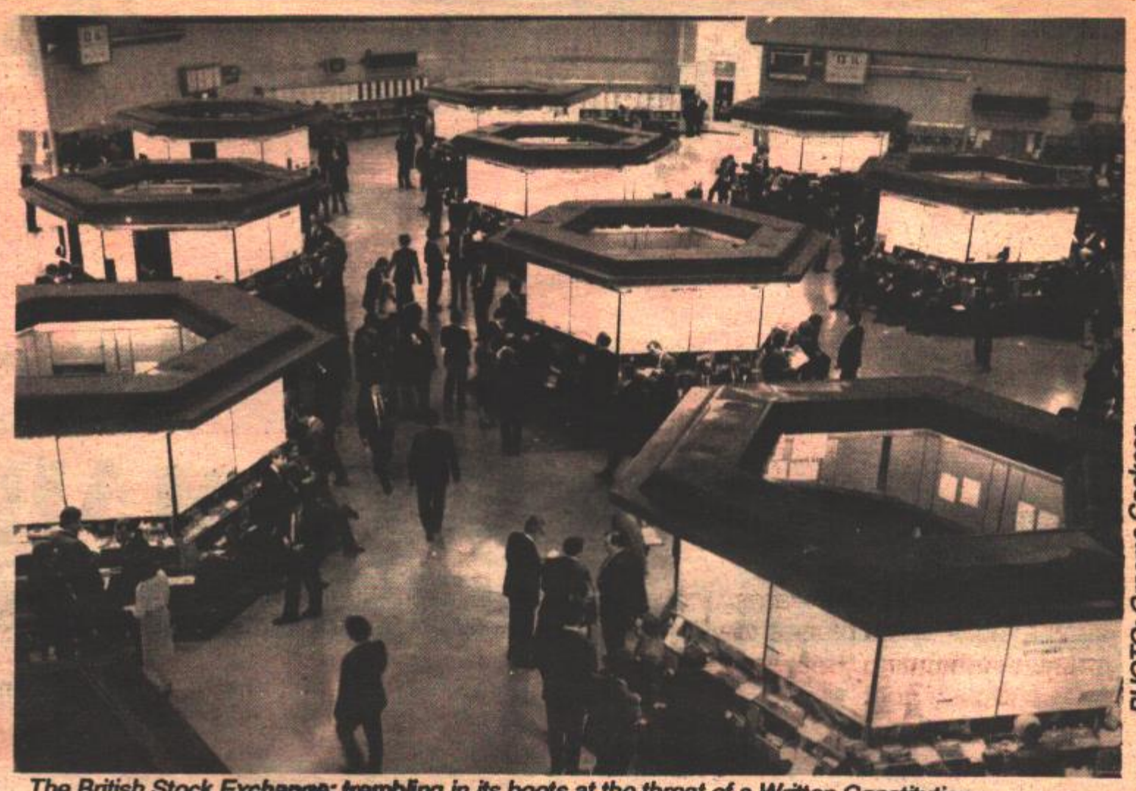


PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

The British Stock Exchange: trembling in its boots at the threat of a Written Constitution

Left leaves A-AM to wobble

Dear *Briefing*,

It's good that *Briefing* is publishing a discussion about the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) and the role of the left in it.

Is it too much to hope that this might lead to a greater involvement of the forces in and around *Briefing* in the A-AM?

If the A-AM leadership is mainly responsible for the movement's failure to acquire a militant, mass, anti-imperialist character, the left, by its general inaction, is also culpable.

We have to fight for the A-AM to make a much more serious orientation to the unions — at local as well as national level.

For various reasons, the A-AM leadership *never* attempts to pull the local groups behind any of the national campaigns aimed at the unions.

I have been accused by the Communist League, epigones of the A-AM leadership, of "wanting to subvert the unions" for suggesting A-AM do precisely this!

The problem for the left remains the Stalinism of the A-AM leaders.

Precisely because they see the A-AM being built on the basis of "popular front" unity, rather than militant working class unity, they advocate political support for those forces they think agree with this approach: the South African CP and the ANC.

This amounts to a de-facto adoption by the A-AM of a particular position on the nature of the South African revolution. This is the only justification for exclusive political support for the ANC.

As someone who opposes the ANC strategy, I am made to feel a second-class citizen in my local group, and most of my comments are contemptuously dismissed simply because of my politics.

Such attitudes drive people out of the A-AM, notably black people. B.J. Gibbons notes the AAM leadership's attempts to relate to the black community, but he fails to observe that it appeals to the most conservative sections in those communities.

Their attitude to black youth (as noted in the report to the 1987 AGM) is that they require "education" — because they tend to support the black consciousness currents and are alienated by the A-AM's exclusive support for the ANC.

The left's response to this is to call for the A-AM to implement its constitution and support *all* forces fighting apartheid. This does not mean reducing solidarity work with the ANC.

It does mean the A-AM should recognise there is a debate in South Africa and try to reflect this as much as possible in its activities in Britain, *but take no positions on it.*

There is a precedent. In the 70s, the left in A-AM fought against exclusive support for ZAPU in "Rhodesia". This support was motivated by ZAPU's orientation to the USSR and the military alliances between ZAPU and the ANC.

While ZANU was bearing the brunt of the fight against Smith's forces, the A-AM were misinforming its people about the real situation in Zimbabwe, as can clearly be seen in hindsight.

The stakes in South Africa are too high to allow such a thing to happen again.

Philip Ward,
Sheffield



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

"Making a serious orientation to the unions..."

Contact Briefing

The VERY, VERY good news this issue is that we are moing into our new acommodation next week. For the moment, please still send all your correspondence to 39 Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB; we will print our new address and phone number as soon as we can.

Talk of moving reminds us to mention our £1,000 fund drive — a drive to raise money to equip our new accommodation with some basic infrastructure with which to bring you a better *Briefing*.

So far, we've raised £72: and for that we thank Andrew Coates, Debbie Epstein, David Horsborough, Leonora Lloyd, Frank Neal, Tessa van Gelderen... and the last meeting of the National Steering Committee!

The last NSC also heard a report from John Wilton, who is organising a fabulous Spring Raffle for Briefing. Watch this space for details!

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Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Unilateralism: Kinnock comes out

Kinnock's television announcement that unilateralism will be abandoned at the October Conference is a declaration of war on Party activists.

Ken Livingstone has warned in the past that such a move would plunge the Party into a vicious round of in-fighting. Between now and October he will be proved right.

Kinnock's statement has set the media agenda. Issues such as the NHS, or Tory weakspots such as food hygiene, will slip off the political agenda as the media asks yet again: "Can Kinnock get rid of unilateralism?"

Kinnock will be headlined for a bout with Ron Todd that will be second only to that of Bruno and Tyson.

Kinnock is confident, because he believes the Policy Review can provide him with victory in his battle to deliver what the papers want.

An unamendable paper abandoning unilateralism will be put to the vote as an issue of confidence. This vote will supercede any Conference decisions on policy resolutions.

Kinnock also thinks that the TGWU June Conference can be used to give him outright victory by overturning their unilateralist policy of 30 years standing.

Labour Briefing will unite with all Party members and trade unionists who are fighting to defend the unilateralist commitment. We urge all other currents on the left to do likewise.

Our response must be fourfold. We must:

•send resolutions to Walworth Road condemning Kinnock's statement;

•promote unilateralism at the summer trade union conferences;

•prioritise unilateralism for Conference resolutions;

•and demand the right to amend Policy Review documents.

Now of all times, when Gorbachev is actually cutting back on arms, is not the time to abandon unilateralism for the tired old ideas of the last Labour government.

For a secular state

Salman Rushdie must be defended against Ayatollah Khomeini's unique brand of literary criticism. All Labour MPs should sign Chris Smith's early day motion condemning the death threat.

The Tory government's regard for the author's welfare is ironic, given the way they have studiously ignored the thousands of opposition deaths in Iran in order to resume diplomatic relations in the pursuit of their commercial interests.

But Thatcher has few opportunities to go on the moral offensive on democratic rights, given her own government's record (GCHQ, the Sinn Fein ban, the Prevention of Terrorism Act).

The blasphemy laws in this country should be repealed, making it clear that the forces of religious reaction (Christian, Islamic, whatever) should not dictate what people can read, write, see or talk about.

One might think that Bernie Grant, Max Madden *et al* would now see the error of their motion calling for the repeal of the blasphemy laws *or* their extension to cover other religions.

Instead Grant, at least, seems unrepentant, suggesting Rushdie go "back" to Pakistan to argue his book's merits there!

Following the public burning of *Satanic Verses* in Bradford, the *Sun* has called for the Mullahs involved to be sent "home".

For the *Sun* Afghan Mullahs are heroic fighters against Communist totalitarianism, while their British counterparts are dangerous religious fanatics.

There is a real danger of a racist backlash following the demonstrations against Rushdie's book. The left must unequivocally defend the right of all people living in Britain to follow a religion of their own choosing.

It must also argue for the absolute separation of church and state, for example through the abolition of all religious schools and the repeal of the blasphemy laws.

Economic Notebook

Why Labour must get out of the groove

A socialist way out of the crisis

The Tory version of economic events is accepted almost without challenge by most of the media; and believed and adapted to by the Labour leadership.

It's one of the most frustrating things for the left these days! Our task is to challenge the myth-making as well as the half-hearted responses to it.

By PETER THOMPSON

The main myth is that "the economy is fundamentally strong." This rates alongside Reagan's "not bad, not bad at all" in terms of economic complacency.

The way the biggest trade deficit in history has been glossed over, as though it did not exist, and the jubilant jumping of the 2,000 "barrier" on the FTSE shows just how far the government has been successful in setting the economic agenda.

The deficit is at a level which is higher as a percentage of GNP than that of 1973, the "oil shock deficit". This is a result of deliberate government action.

The scale of destruction wrought upon manufacturing industry in the early 1980s meant that in a period of economic upturn engendered by credit-led consumer spending, domestic capacity was not in a position to satisfy the extra demand.

The import explosion was therefore the inevitable result of reflation for the last election.

Economic

Slowing down imports with higher interest rates is, however, a double edged sword, as the capacity necessary to switch from an import to an export dominated economic position is still missing and will be further discouraged by those higher interest rates.

The government's priority, however, is not reducing the trade deficit but attacking inflation. High interest rates, therefore, are as indispensable now as they were in the 1981 recession for disciplining workers and damping down demand.

The result of this will be a renewed recession which could, with the conjuncture of the "hard landing" now widely predicted, the US downturn and the Third World debt crisis, turn into a slump.

This time we have an unemployment base which is massively higher, even under the government's massaged figures, than it was in 1979.

The US economy, which has, through its own military-Keynesian deficit spending, been the main export market for European goods, is itself moving into a period of contraction and needs to reduce its own import quota.

The degree of indebtedness, mortgage defaults, and reduced saving caused by the higher interest rates are all worse than they were. All of these things point to a new period of austerity.

A return to the boomlet of the last two years is practically impossible without causing uncontrollable inflationary pressures and still worsening the trade deficit.

Our response to all of this must be that the late capitalist economy is far from "fundamentally sound" and is living on borrowed money and borrowed time.

The "corrective effect" of the 87 crash has corrected nothing, and the underlying situation remains critical.

That is why any socialist economic policy must go beyond Fabian tinkering and deal with the roots of the problem, namely the anarchic relations of production and ownership patterns.

Integrated

That is why our response must lie in the integrated nationalisation of the financial as well as industrial means of production under worker's control and the development of new internationalist economic co-operation with the Soviet Union and Eastern Block.

With the Soviet Union calling out for the West to help its economic regeneration there could be no better time for developing a socialist pan-European economic and social project which goes beyond the barriers of a Europe "open for business".

To remain stuck in the same pro-Nato and pro-capitalist groove as Labour has done since 1945 in the name of "realism" is to be unrealistic in the extreme and to ignore the fundamental contradictions in late capitalist society.



Roy Hattersley: stuck in the old pro-NATO, pro-capitalist groove. PHOTO MONTAGE: Cath Tate

Campaign!

Peru

Blanco disappears

Hugo Blanco, a prominent worker-peasant leader in Peru, was involved in a peasant occupation in Huacle.

On February 8th 1989, violent repression of the occupation left 28 dead.

On February 9th, police invaded the HQ of the local Peasant Federation and Hugo Blanco was taken away.

It is not clear where he is or if he has been officially arrested.

Hugo Blanco came into prominence in the late 60s, as the principle organiser of the peasant movement in Peru.

He became a leader of thousands of Quechua Indians, who fought to take back the land stolen from them.

As a consequence of these armed land occupations, he was senteneced to 25 years in prison. He was released in 1970 after pressure from an international campaign.

While in the infamous El Fonton prison he wrote his account of the peasant movement: *Land or Death*. Two days after his release he was already addressing a rally of 10,000 people.

Subsequently he was an active participant in all the major struggles of the oppressed and exploited of Peru, and was elected to Parliament as a Deputy on a revolutionary socialist platform.

More recently he again returned to work amongst the poor peasants.

Immediate action is needed. Labour Party and trade union branches should send emergency resolutions to the Peruvian embassy, demanding Blanco's release, and should lobby Labour MPs to do the same.

Please send copies of any resolutions or letters you send to *Labour Briefing*, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ.

1992 and the labour market

Capital looks to migrant workers

The single European market is a transnational strategy for improving the efficiency of capital at the expense of labour.

A key device in the minimising of labour costs is *the exploitation of migrant labour*.

People forced to emigrate through economic or social necessity tend to find work in poorly paid, under-protected, and politically unorganised sectors.

For the capitalist, these people are at once flexible and expendable.

The function of immigration legislation is to regulate the supply and disposal of this source of cheap labour. In particular, immigration legislation confers on migrants a provisional, second class status.

The basis of all EC immigration controls is the systematic undermining of ethnic communities' civil, social, and political rights, limiting migrants' access to social provision, benefits, services, and democratic processes.

This is particularly clear in the cases of Turkish "guest workers" in West Germany and North African people in France. Once the worker's labour power is no longer required, she or he is deported.

Britain also deports 200-250 people every month.

It is obvious that the interests of capitalism will not be served by the "harmonisation" of EC member states' immigration policies in line with the social and democratic provisions of the most advanced state.

Any such proposal would never achieve the unanimity which the rules require for it to be adopted. It is much more likely that we shall see a gradual levelling down.

By Jim Thain Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

With growth in the informal service sector and the entrenchment of regional differences, capitalism will find the "guest worker" system increasingly attractive.

Anti-immigrant legislation itself does not effectively minimise labour costs. Adequate monitoring is also required. So migrants are often obliged to carry identification cards.

This has not so far been necessary in Britain because controls at ports of entry are relatively tight. Illegal entry is seen as being on a par with terrorism and drug trafficking and similar repressive and punitive methods are employed, e.g. strip searching.

There is a real possibility of the introduction of a national ID card on the back of the Poll Tax and the experiment on football fans.

The supply of labour migrating into the EC will be regulated through a common immigration policy. The Treaty of Schengen calls for visa requirements for EC entry and the international exchange of information on migrants and people seeking political asylum.

When capital needs to inflict a defeat on the working class it will usually adopt the divide and rule tactic, attacking specific sections of the workforce, and pitting worker against worker.

In such circumstances, black and ethnic minority communities are often in the front line of what is ultimately an attack on the *entire* class.

This is one reason why capitalism fosters racism. When the 1992 job losses begin to bite, there will be no shortage of right wing demagogues inciting racial violence.

The material basis for this will not just be unemployment, but also the fact that in a contracting labour market, the wages commanded by indigenous unskilled and semi-skilled workers will be undercut by impoverished migrants, whose insecure status will be a disincentive to militancy.

Hence the *Financial Times*'s prediction that in West Germany, immigrant labour will "act as a Trojan horse to break down some famous rigidities among the workforce."

There are specific socialist demands on immigration that we must raise during the Euro-elections:

- •reduce immigration controls at EC ports of entry;
- •no deportations;
- •no police checks on nationality/immigration status;
- •no workplace harassment of migrant workers;
- •no obstacles to public benefits and services;
- •equal pay for work of equal value;
- •statutory protection for the low paid;
- •the right of all EC residents to stand for and vote in all national and local elections;
- •equal rights of residence and political asylum for all;
- •free association for political purposes;
- •for the self-organisation of black and ethnic community groups;
- •above all, the labour movement must campaign vigorously against racist and fascist attacks.

*This article is taken from a discussion paper written for the Socialist Conference Europe Working Party.

EVENTS

MARCH

Sat. 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. 4th. Birmingham Anti-Apartheid Youth Congress Dayschool: *Youth Against Apartheid.* Speakers include: ANC Youth League, SWAPO Youth League, Birmingham Black Sections, Manchester Anti-Apartheid Youth Committee, Birmingham A-A Youth Congress. 12-6pm, Birmingham University.

Sat. 11th. Labour CND Day Conference: *Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament: A Policy for the 1990s.* Manchester Town Hall. Creche, disabled access, accommodation if required. Registration £3/£1 from 3 Birch Polygon, Rusholme, Manchester M14.

Sat. 18th. Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign. Second anniversary of the Tottenham three convictions. Assemble 12 noon, Tottenham Green, Tottenham Town Hall (Seven Sisters tube; buses 243, 123, 279, 259, 149, 73, 41, 76. March through Wood Green, Tottenham. Rally, with Irish in Britain Representation Group, 3pm, Duckett's Common (Turnpike Lane tube, buses 123, 221, 41, 67, 29). Speakers include Bernie Grant, Unmesh Desai, relatives of the framed prisoners. Quash the Convictions! March for justice!

Women for Socialism

Conference February 25th: Open Conference February 26th: Members' Conference Wesley House, 4, Wild Court, London

Socialist Conference

Local Conferences on Socialist Alternatives to Labour's Policy Review

Bristol: Friday April 14th, 7.30pm, Shepherd's Hall, Old Market.

Glasgow: Saturday May 20th, 11am, City Hall.

Manchester: Friday March 31st, 7.30pm.

Newcastle: Saturday April 1st, 1pm, Civic Centre.

Preston: Saturday April 1st, 10.30am.

Sheffield: Saturday March 4th, 2pm, Library Theatre.

Gorbachev Conference: rescheduled to June 3rd/4th, Oxford University Conference Centre.

The Independent Left in the 1990s

A public discussion organised by the Socialist Society

Panel:

Hilary Wainwright; Anthony Arblaster; Dawn Primarolo MP; Steve Riley; John Chowcat

Friday March 3rd, 7.30pm
London School of Economics
•All welcome•Entry £1 (50p)•
Socialist Society AGM follows on Saturday March 4th
LSE access: Three steps to ground floor venue (porters will help). Lift to disabled toilet on second floor. No special parking facilities.

Stop the deportations!

Marion must stay!

On February 2nd, a 30,000 signature petition was presented by the Marion Gaima Campaign to the Home Office.

The decision to present the petition follows Marion's victory in the Court of Appeal in December, when the Law Lords ruled that the Home Office had acted unfairly in its assessment of her application to stay.

In light of this success it is hoped that the Home Secretary will allow Marion Gaima to remain on compassionate grounds.

If he refuses and she is forced to return to Sierra Leone, she faces persecution because of her family's previous political involvement.

This government is, of course, not noted for its compassion and the campaign is not complacent.

The recent deportation of Viraj Mendis was a big blow to the hopes of others threatened with deportation. The number deported is rising every year and Home Office figures of 3,000 a year are clearly an underestimate.

By MONICA DIXON and MARK METCALF

Marion Gaima is supported by her union, NALGO. Resolutions have been passed at all levels of the union, including the National Conference.

The successful fights of M. Idrish, Shahid Syed, and recently Lisa Huen show that unions can play a big role in helping black people fight immigration laws.

Like the individuals mentioned above, Marion Gaima has had to fight the trade union bureaucracy in order to get it to release the resources (both time and money) needed to wage a successful campaign.

The fact that Marion is still here, and fighting, is to the great credit of both herself and campaign members.

Immigration Laws are being used to split black people from their family and friends. They also have the effect of splitting black and white workers because their existence gives support to the idea that black people are to blame for unemployment, welfare cuts, inner city decay, and economic stagnation.

It is vital that immigration laws are debated within the trade union and labour movement. The existence of a national campaign opposed to all controls would be a big boost to all black workers.

For details of the campaign contact: Hackney NALGO, 245-7 Mare Street, London E8, tel. 01-985 7134; or Hackney TUSU, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8 4AU, tel. 01-249 6930.

Deportation Update

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

•VICTORY! Dora Oppong (*LB* 76). Ghanaian, with three children, all British citizens. Following broad-based campaign, supported by Newham Council, involving demonstrations, petitions, lobbying of MPs to intervene, the Home Office have granted Dora leave to stay! Send congratulations to: PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7.

Carlos Calderon (*LB* 75). Peruvian refugee. Expecting adjudication hearing in May. Campaign supported by the TGWU; now holding meetings with TGWU-sponsored MPs and Bishop of Southwark. Contact: Carlos Calderon Defence campaign, c/o 25 The Chase, London SW4 0NP Tel. 01-249 3768.

Francis Okanlami (*LB* 77). Manchester NALGO member; Defence Campaign supported by them. Appeal on April 20th: watch out for details of accompanying support action. Contact Manchester NALGO (address below).

Labour Movement Conference on Immigration and Nationality: called by Manchester NALGO and Francis and Moji Defence Campaign. April 15th. 10am in Manchester Town Hall; continuing from 1.30pm in Mechanics Institute.£10 delegates; £2 individuals (£1 unwaged). Varied workshops and speakers on labour movement involvement.

Contact NALGO Manchester Branch Office, First Floor, Elliot House, Jacksons Row, Manchester, tel. 061-234 3226 for details and supplies of leaflets.

Manchester STOP PRESS: Since the deportation of Viraj Mendis, there have been widespread police and immigration service raids within the Asian, Chinese and African communities.

At least six people are known to have been deported, at least a further six are missing; although how high the number of cases *not* known about could be is anyone's guess. More news next issue.

Six years after Bermondsey

Time for a right of reply!

As another Private Members' *Right of Reply* Bill makes a tenous way through the Parliamentary labyrinth, PETER TATCHELL describes the lasting effects on his own life of one of the 80s' most notorious cases of press vilification.

Six years after the Bermondsey by-election, I am *still* living with the often violent consequences of press fabrication and vilification.

For fifteen months, from 1981-83, I was pilloried by the tabloid newspapers as a "militant left-winger" and "gay rights extremist".

My advocacy of lesbian and gay equality was denigrated as "obscene", "bizarre", "offensive", and "sordid".

The press coverage during that period involved over a dozen outright falsehoods, including:

•the *Sun*'s accusation that I had deserted my prospective constituents to attend the Gay Olympics in San Francisco;

•and the retouching of photographs by the *News of the World* to make it appear as if I was wearing lipstick and eye-liner.

Despite my protests, these untruths were never corrected by the newspapers concerned, nor condemned by the Press Council. In the absence of legal aid for libel, I was unable to take court action.

As a result, much of the tabloid mud has stuck and has severly damaged my ability to earn a living.

In 1985, a feature I had been commissioned to write on AIDS for the *Sunday Times* was held up by senior management, who said that allowing me to write for the paper "would be like accepting articles from Martin Webster of the National Front."

On another occassion, when seeking a job as a television researcher, I was told that although I had good professional credentials, "negative public perceptions" of me made my employment problematic. I didn't get the job.

These "negative public perceptions" have sometimes also adversely affected my work within the lesbian and gay community.

Last year, when I co-ordinated the candlelight march in support of the human rights of people with AIDS, some lesbians and gays were reluctant to support it.

Having internalised the media's image of me as some kind of "left-wing monster", they absurdly feared that I would turn the march into a violent confrontation with the police.

Most alarming of all, the press vilification of six years ago has contributed to a *continuing* incidence of abuse, threats, and physical assaults.

Attacks on my home have included the painting of swastikas on my front door, bricks through the window, and the jamming of my locks with super-glue.

In the post, I've received everything from dog shit to



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

Peter during the Bermondsey campaign, Feb. 1983

bullets, razor blades, white feathers, sadistic pornography, invitations to my own funeral, and newspaper photographs of myself with grisly drawings of knives in my throat.

There's been a stream of obscene hate calls and death threats by telephone; including sinister messages where the caller utters a single word, such as "coffin" or "morgue", and then hangs up.

In the street, I'm menaced almost every week. I've been punched and spat at and deliberately knocked off my bike; attempts have been made to stab me with knives and broken bottles.

These attacks are invariably accompanied by foul abuse, usually along the lines of: "Fuck off back to Russia, you communist poof!" (Even the *Sun* had the decency to note that I was an "*Australian-born*, draft-dodging, immigrant upstart.")

It's arguable that the personal price I've paid for press vilification is far greater than anything suffered by Jeffrey Archer or Koo Stark. Yet, unlike them, I never had the money to sue for libel and, consequently, I've never received a penny in compensation.

While nothing can undo what's happened to me over the last six years, I only hope that my experience will convince more people of the urgent necessity of *a right of reply* and *legal aid for libel*.

Reclaiming the Game

Driving the fascists From Elland Road

A new drive to get rid of the racism and fascism at Leeds United's Elland Road ground has been launched in a effort to "reclaim the game".

The move came from the Leeds Trades Club in Chapeltown and Anti-Fascist Action who have called the campaign Leeds Fans United Against Racism and Fascism (LFUARF).

The campaign has backing from trade unions, politicians, the Community Relations Council, and local Councillors.

By Dave Walker Leeds North East CLP

This campaign is not being taken lightly. The National Front is still peddling racist literature outside Elland Road. There is a lot of hard work to be done.

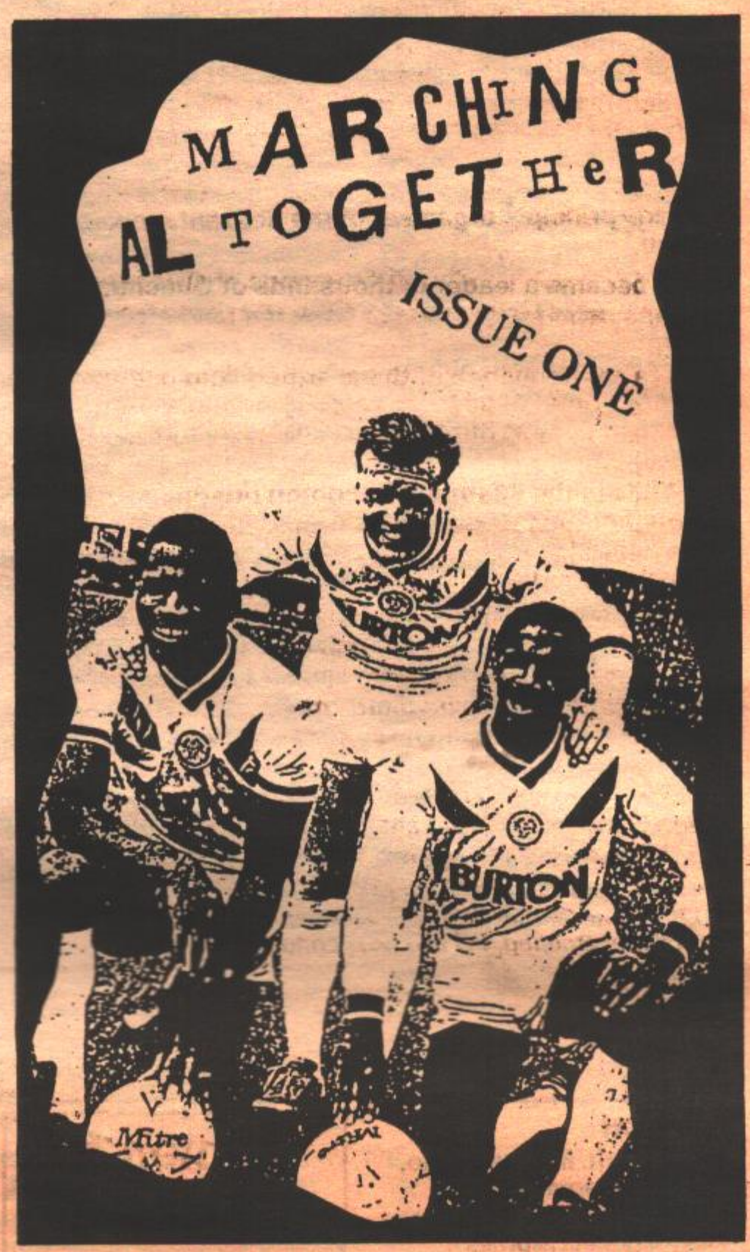
A meeting between Leeds AFA, trades club, officials of Leeds United, and Derek Fatchett MP was very positive. As a result, a dossier of the National Front and British National Party activity outside Elland Road was sent to Leeds United.

Prepared

But, as yet, they are not prepared to take any action against the fascists.

AFA and local trade unionists are stepping up the campaign to reclaim the game because Leeds United's fans are developing a bad reputation for racial abuse towards black players and, inevitably, violence towards the true Leeds United fans.

We began leafleting at the Chelsea match last year.



Letters of support flooded into the Trades Club, many asking for more details of the next leafleting, and how they can help get rid of the Nazis who disfigure the game.

A motion passed at Leeds North East Labour Party called on Leeds City Council, who own Elland Road, and the directors of Leeds United to make a clear statement against racism and fascism.

The motion now goes to the District Labour Party and to Leisure Services Committee, Leeds United's new manager Howard Wilkinson, and the West Yorkshire Police Authority at Wakefield.

We have also been giving Leeds United supporters a free fanzine, *Marching Together*.

It contains editorials, a "mad dog" column, letters, crossword, information on Leeds' two black players, Vince Hilaire and Noel Blake, and some of the favourite Elland Road chants.

True Leeds United fans are coming together to get rid of the fascists and "reclaim the game".

Religious vs. comprehensive education

Controversy over voluntary aided schools

Until recently, the pro-cuts Hackney Labour Group was at pains to argue its commitment to left ideological positions.

Now even this rhetoric has been dropped.

By Hilda Kean Hackney South and Shoreditch CLP

At a recent Borough Conference, the Labour Group and the majority of the Hackney Party reneged on one of the most basic socialist commitments — comprehensive state education.

The left put forward motions opposing all voluntary aided schools and seeking to ameliorate the worst excesses of the Education Act.

Motions advocated welcoming children from all religious and cultural backgrounds into Local Authority schools by the provision of culturally suitable diets, space set aside for particular devotions, and holidays coinciding with the relevant religious festivals.

Such attempts to develop policies which strengthened comprehensive education were set aside.

Instead, the Conference in effect supported all groups demanding voluntary aided schools. Initially, this means private schools run by the Orthodox Jewish community.

The corollary of giving such religious schools the support to "opt in" is to support other religious groups, such as Muslims, who may wish to "opt out". Such proposals are extremely divisive and in no way progressive.

The argument of the right is that if "communities" want schools of a particular type, irrespective of any general socialist position on education, then they must be supported.

(This is also the position of Tory right-wingers, such as Ray Honeyford).

This populist approach echoes that of the American Democratic Party, seeking unprincipled alliances with ethnic groups regardless of any class politics.

It is also extremely patronising. It suggests that black communities are homogenous and that no debates are taking place within those communities on the nature of education or the role of religion.

Moreover, it assumes that such groups are naturally reactionary and that such communities cannot be won over to socialist positions.

It also implies that religious, ethnic, and cultural identity are unquestionably the same. This is a dangerous line of arguement.

Taken to its logical conclusion, it could mean that Zionism, a political doctrine, is the same as Judaism, a religious belief. Opposing Zionism would therefore become an anti-semitic act.

It is no accident that for the first time in years a member of Poale Zion spoke at the Borough Conference and, as customary, denounced the left as anti-semites.

The growth of seperate schools for children of different ethnic origins, which is what the right's proposals mean, will encourage racism in the community at large.

It also presages a move away from anti-racist policies in schools. Race is defined on the basis of ethnicity and religion, rather than on political analysis.

What need of anti-racism, it may be argued, if children are to be educated seperately?

And what answer does this policy give to white and black parents who want their children to be educated in multi-cultural schools with an anti-racist, anti-sexist curriculum?

Those parents who want a progressive education for their children are seen as less deserving of Labour Party attention!

The argument which sees no view worthy of support unless articulated by the "people" fails to note debates taking place within communities and fails to see a place for the Labour Party to intervene in such discussions.

Because a group of Muslim "fundamentalists" burn books in Bradford, does this mean that all followers of Islam support this? And that the Labour Party should support it too?

Voluntary aided schools receive the bulk of their revenue from Local Education Authorities, but (even before the new Education Act) the providers of finance had virtually no say in the running of these schools.

The divisions created by the existence of these schools were recognised by the Labour Party in the past. When such schools were first set up, they were bitterly opposed.

In 1905, Will Thorne introduced an Education Bill into Parliament advocating (unsuccessfully) an entirely secular education system. This policy was backed by the TUC. No Labour candidate was to be adopted who did not support this. How times change!

The question of religious education will not go away, particularly under the new Education Act, which gives it pride of place in school life.

The right answers this by advocating religious pluralism as the solution, without questioning the nature of religious and ethnic identity. This disarms those socialists, of whatever race, ethnicity, or culture, campaigning for comprehensive education for all.

Labour Party

PR Debate

No to PR: No to pacts and coalitions!

"Yes to PR, No to pacts and coalitions!", runs the heading of Richard Kuper's article on Proportional Representation (*Briefing* no. 77).

You might as well say *Yes to religion, No to superstition!", or "Yes to Social Democracy, No to sell-outs and betrayals!"*

The slogan is pure sophistry, since pacts and coalitions are what PR is all about.

By Chris Knight
Lewisham East CLP

Never does Richard justify the "No to coalitions" component of his heading. The subject is sidestepped as he paints his uplifting scenario of a flowering of socialism under PR.

To the observation that PR would have precluded all former Labour administrations, Richard's only retort is that it would have ruled out most Tory governments, too.

This is itself a statement of coalitionist thinking: as if PR would curb the "extremes" of left and right equally.

The ruling class don't need popular mandates the way we do. While PR would not check the genuine extremism of capitalist *extra-parliamentary* power, it would prevent an electoral mandate for change ever legitimising *our* alternative.

"I am still waiting for a justification on democratic and socialist grounds for the electoral marginalisation of the centre in British politics in the 1980s", says Richard.

Personally, I'm happy to keep Richard waiting. I feel no twinge of conscience about marginalising the likes of David Owen. He and his backers have enough unaccountable power already. The more we can marginalise such trash, the better.

Owen, Eric Hammond and Co. back PR because decisive mandates, they complain, allow successive governments to swing between "extremes". I understand why *they* object to this, but for *socialists* to collude seems to me amazing.

The implication is that elections should no longer make decisions. PR forces voters to accept that real decisions are made only *after* elections, as the parties stitch up a coalition whose policies *no-one* will have voted for.

Under PR, the concept of a *popular* mandate disappears. Much of the present internal life of the labour movement would become meaningless, as we abandoned the principle that ultimate mandating decisions could be made by labour movement bodies such as Party Conference.

Even more than at present, the centre of gravity would reside in Parliament and in deals struck with explicitly bourgeois parties.

Richard argues that *"at the simple level of electoral representation* PR would be more democratic. Yes, General Elections might reflect peoples views better — perhaps better even than Marplan polls.

So what? I don't see what's "more democratic" about not being able to mandate those in office, and getting the same kind of government — *a capitalist coalition government* — whichever way you vote.

While Hammond and Owen complain that the present system promotes "elective dictatorships" and "extremism", Richard's complaint is just the opposite: that the present system "virtually imposes" fudging on Labour.

Both camps can't be right. Richard is referring to the "don't rock the boat" syndrome, a traditional trap for the left. But does "first-past-the-post" impose fudging on Thatcher? If not, why not?

Yes, the present system imposes collective discipline. In our respective class-camps, neither the labour movement nor the Tories have the luxury of fragmenting into small factions, each going to the electorate independently. We're forced to sort out our leadership problems internally.

In the eyes of most class-conscious workers, this has always been Labour's basic function. Any united front-type alliance imposes discipline, by its nature.

I dont want the "freedom" to be irrelevant. *Briefing* seeks a united ticket because we want *power*, not just the chance to voice diverse opinions to pollsters.

Winning power means winning unity on a class basis, in order to achieve a class-wide mandate. In this context Thatcher has put Kinnock to shame and given us a lesson in how a mandate should be used.

For the hard left, PR would mean the "freedom" to retreat into "pressure-politics", as the logic of Richard's argument concedes.

He suggests that with PR we could *"afford"* to lose the struggle in the Labour Party, we would have somewhere else to go. We'd have *"a clear and unambiguous socialist voice — an independent socialist party — at large in the country."*

This would have *"ideological and organisational independence"* and *"because"* of this independence (I fail to see the logic) would have *"a strength and influence far beyond its electoral support."*

This is nothing but the old chimera of an "independent" revolutionary party: *a sects short-cut route to nowhere.*

Richard's idea that wed capture 100 seats if we lost out in the Labour Party is nonsense. Wed get nothing like that unless there'd been some extraordinary upturn in the class struggle — which it would take more than the introduction of PR to explain.

But if there had been a massive upsurge in the class struggle, why not go for real power? Why assume defeat within the labour movement itself?

In periods of downturn, under PR, the extreme right would win more parliamentary seats than we would. The Tories and others would make deals with them.

Richard's one-sided picture of PR studiously avoids such potential developments, all too familiar on the continent.

An abstract formal case can be made for PR. Perhaps a future revolutionary administration should introduce it, provided it had first lain the groundwork for a democratic society by breaking the bourgeoisie's monopoly of power.

But for as long as we are up against an entrenched ruling class, our best chance of gaining power lies in confronting the real problems in our own movement, struggling to defeat our reformist leaders, and working to install an administration with a full-blooded electoral mandate for change.

In the current climate, this strategy may mean "fighting against the stream." We are surrounded with defeatists, Euros and "realigners", and they may even be eating into our own ranks.

I cannot believe, however, that *Briefing* could contemplate what would amount to an act of class-betrayal on this issue.



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

If "first past the post" forces Kinnock to fudge, why is Thatcher so resolute?

Parliamentary Selection

A guide to the new procedures

Yes, the gremlins got into the paste-up of the last issue. Here, we print what REG RACE actually meant to say about Party Reselection. Sorry.

The changes in the Parliamentary selection process carried at Labour's 1987 and 1988 Annual Conferences were clearly intended to minimise the influence of the left.

But much will depend on the extent to which the new procedures are understood and used to best advantage by the left.

Below, *Briefing* offers an outline of the new procedures.

1. The Executive Committee (EC) of the Constituency Labour Party (CLP), in consultation with the Regional Labour Party Office, draws up a timetable.

This timetable needs to be approved by the National Executive Committee (NEC) — in practice, the Regional Organiser will give a seal of approval (or not).

2. The EC will also determine the way in which the CLP will carry out the procedure.

For example, it may decide to make key Party officers responsible for certain tasks, e.g. examination of postal vote applications, production of short-listed candidates' statements, etc.

It may also decide to encourage trade union and other affiliated branches to hold formal nomination and/or selection meetings (under the rules, the decision whether or not to hold such meetings lies with the affiliated organisation, not with the Party).

3. Invitations to nominate candidates are then sent out by the EC along with a copy of the timetable for selection to all Party and affiliated organisations.

4. At the EC meeting, a decision will be made as to the percentage of the electoral college allocated to trade unions and other affiliated organisations.

This should be determined according the the proportion of trade union and affiliated organisation delegates at the GC, but must be *no more than 40% of the total vote of the electoral college.*

Delegates from affiliated organisations will only be entitled to a share of the electoral college vote if they have attended the GC on at least one occasion during the 12 months prior to the "freeze date" (i.e. the date on which the EC agrees the selection timetable).

5. Nominations are then made by Party and affiliated organisations. (Nothing exists in the new rules to prevent a Party branch or affiliated organisation from having nomination meetings at which candidates are interviewed.)

6. Party branches must hold meetings within 21 days of the freeze date in order to obtain endorsement from the branch of the composition of branch's electoral roll, i.e. eligible voters.

Members eligible to vote are only those who have 12 months membership at the freeze date of the Party *in that particular CLP.*

7. The CLP EC then receives nominations from branches, considers them, and makes its shortlisting proposals. (There is nothing in the rules to prevent the EC from discussing or interviewing the candidates, if it wishes to do so.)

In making its shortlist, the EC must comply with a complicated set of rules which mean that certain kinds of candidates automatically go on the shortlist, including:

a) any individual receiving 25% of the nominations, as long as one nomination comes from a Party branch;

b) the sitting MP, if standing again;

c) at least one woman on the shortlist (where one woman has been nominated).

8. The GC then meets to consider the EC's proposed shortlist; the GC has the final say on the shortlist, within the rules of automatic inclusion noted above.

9. The EC distributes shortlisted candidates' election addresses, in a uniform format. The address must be no longer than 600 words.

The rules say that candidates "must be informed that the production of other material designed to influence the vote is not permissible. No other promotional expenditure will be allowed." It remains to be seen just what this means in practice.

10. The EC/GC approves arrangements for the conduct of the ballot. This may be held at a single CLP-wide meeting or at branch meetings. In either case, all shortlisted candidates should be invited.

Individual Party members who are on each branch's electoral roll then cast their votes.

Postal votes are available on the same basis as for Parliamentary elections, with the addition of those individuals who have to "care at home for the sick, elderly, or children." (Applications for postal votes are made to the CLP EC; there is right to appeal against refusal, with final decision given to the NEC's designated representative).

11. Affiliated organisations are sent one ballot paper each. It is entirely up to each organisation how it decides whom to vote for. It may decide to hold a proper selection meeting or delegate power to the branch officers or otherwise.

12. Votes are cast on the basis of the *single transferable vote*, i.e. Party members will vote for candidates in order of preference. The same principle is used for votes from affiliated organisations.

13. Votes are then counted. (There is no traditional style selection conference). Votes cast at branch meetings have been kept in sealed ballot boxes by the NEC representative.

Scrutineers are appointed, one from each Party branch, plus two from affiliated organisations as a whole.

The NEC is expected to issue guidelines on the new procedures. This is welcome, as some of the rules are very imprecise.

It is still not clear whether Women's Sections and Young Socialist branches will be treated as "branches" or as "affiliated organisations" or otherwise.

The NEC has agreed to a general timetable for Parliamentary selections:

➢Labour-held seats: January-July 1989

➢Marginal seats: June-December 1989

➢Safe Tory or SLD seats: January 1990 onwards.

It is clear that the left needs to get its act together quickly. The next *Briefing* will carry practical suggestions for left organisation in the CLPs and steps needed to make best use of the new procedures.

Groups follow own initiatives...

No way to defend unilateralism!

Tribune has received a lot of coverage in the press for its campaign to defend unilateralism.

Weekly articles by leading labour movement figures and a statement for mass signature are the main means intended for this campaign.

By Pete Firmin
***Briefing* Steering Committee**

Yet all is not as it might seem, from the experience at the meeting called by *Labour Briefing* on February 2nd of all organisations supporting unilateralism.

There, the editor of *Tribune* opposed the proposal of a joint campaign in the run-up to Labour Party Conference which would do more than support the initiatives already being taken by individual organisations.

He was supported in this by the Labour Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and *Socialist Action*.

Tribune made it clear that it does not want unity on unilateralism with those who would use it "as a stick to beat the leadership".

These sectarians are prepared to risk the loss of one of the few left policies which the Labour Party retains rather than work with organisations which they dislike.

The offensive by the right is there for everyone to see. In a recent interview, Kinnock predicted with confidence that Party policy would change. The multilateralists' attempts to win union conferences to rejection of unilateralism are already well underway.

To defeat these moves requires those who support the policy to do more than a slightly souped-up repeat of previous years' efforts.

A united campaign could attempt to take the arguments for unilateral disarmament into every union branch and CLP with bulletins, fringe meetings at union conferences, regional day schools and a lot more.

With the best will in the world, Labour CND and Trade Union CND are not in a position to do these things.

The Labour CND representative at the February 2nd meeting could not even tell us which trade unions were being prioritised! While the right is off and running, the left has barely started moving.

Even a mass petition to Labour Party Conference (*Tribune's* aim), would get much wider coverage and support if it was sponsored and promoted by all the organisations supporting unilateralism.

But the prime task is to win support at trade union conferences having fought the issue through at every level. Petitions can only be a part of this.

No one at the meeting proposed that common propaganda around unilateralism should attack the role of the leadership in trying to change Party policy.

That cannot be part of a campaign around a single issue. But every organisation participating has the right to say what it wants on the role of Kinnock.

Briefing certainly believes that trying to defend unilateralism without pointing out Kinnock's role in undermining it ignores reality. Kinnock himself will pose support for his position on disarmament as a vote of confidence.

We believe *Tribune* is trying to square the circle *and* weaken the fight for unilateralism in the process. But we are prepared to unite with them on what we do agree on.

The February 2nd meeting agreed, for the time being, to promote each organisation's initiatives.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Kinnock at 1988 Party Conference. His role in undermining unilateralist policy cannot be ignored.

Decision on the issue of a common campaign was deferred until the next meeting on March 13th to give organisations the opportunity for further discussion.

Briefing supporters will be bringing proposals to that meeting for a campaign. The issue is too important to risk losing it because some organisations are wary of who they would be working with.

We hope that as many other organisations as possible, including *Tribune*, will attend and support these proposals.

In a Political Education Pack near you...

Another Great Leap Forward!

In another bid to reassure us that our Party subs entitle us to something or other, Our Leader's New Thinkers have come up with a triumph of egalitarian thought-sharing: the Policy Review Education Pack.

By Peter Chowney
Hackney South and Shoreditch CLP

Comprising a set of loose-leaf buff discussion papers, each lovingly embossed with a red rose, the pack bears an uncanny resemblance to a GCSE exam paper. This, we assume, is meant to evoke an atmosphere of suitably studious concentration.

On close inspection, the similarity is borne out further, for each discussion paper is accompanied by a four-page response sheet, its front cover devoted to explaining four easy steps to participation:

1. Discuss the issues (we might have missed this one).
2. Complete the response sheet.
3. Fill in the form (explaining who you are!).
4. Return it to Walworth Road.

Useful advice, this. So useful, they've wisely included in on the front of *all seven* response sheets.

The form itself follows the topic headings and sub-headings laid out in such clear and simple prose in the Discussion Papers; after all, everyone knows Labour Party members have an average reading age of three. What a pity Initial Teaching Alphabet has been discredited.

The pack is introduced to the eager reader by a cover sheet which includes in its list of contents: "This cover sheet". Such clear-thinking messages set the tone for what is to follow.

The "Overview" sheet explains to us, with big print, short sentences, and very large diagrams, that *"Britain is going through a period of rapid change, and the development of policy must take account of this."*

Illuminating, you'll agree. Moving on to "Using this Pack", we are given eleven steps (this time in *very* big print) for organising a meeting, with useful tips like *"make sure you have enough copies"* and *"you may also want to arrange for someone to take notes."*

Invaluable advice to seasoned hacks everywhere. We all know how easy it is to forget the little details.

This sheet also includes information on the consultation process which, presumably due to an oversight by our betters, is rather more imprecise.

Branches should discuss issues in *"autumn"*. Which autumn is unspecified. Perhaps autumn is just a good time for serious talking, amongst all those sombre browns and ochres.

Quite what happens to the fruits of these discussions, or when or where it happens, is for some reason never specified.

Now we get to the serious business. *Discussion Paper One: A Productive and Competitive Economy*. Ah, yes... Issue Two, Discussion Point One: *What measures should we take in government to begin the move back to full employment?*



Turning to the Response Sheet, we find a generous space (1cm x 15cm) in which to solve this conundrum. It's just sufficient to write in *"leave it to Neil"*, and move on...

There are six more pairs of discussion and Response Papers, with the snappy titles we have grown to know and love: *People at Work, Economic Equality, Consumers and the Community, Physical and Social Environment*, and *Britain in the World*.

All contain similarly dynamic and comprehensive discussion topics: *What will full employment mean in the context of the 1990s and beyond? What can be done about the high cost of housing? How can we best safeguard our local environments?*

All have similar sized response spaces to help control that legendary Labour verbosity.

And it's good to see our leaders have not left us entirely without guidance. In *Britain and the World*, we find *"What should be our timetable and negotiating strategy for advancing our non-nuclear defence policy within NATO?"* and *"Can we get rid of our nuclear weapons in such a way as to accelerate disarmament in other countries?"*

Those extreme left wing pedants who are bound to carp and criticise can rest assured: the word "socialism" *does* appear. Once.

Peculiarly, however, there seems to be no mention anywhere of Ireland; or nuclear power. Our leaders presumably thought these sensitive issues were best left to those who really understand them, like government ministers.

In their desire to consult as widely as possible, our leaders are sending this pack to all branch secretaries; extra copies are available at just £1.

Having dutifully arranged meetings, discussed issues, filled in response sheets,and returned them to Walworth Road, I am sure we can rely on our political superiors to treat our views with the level of seriousness and dedication to democracy we have come to expect of them.

Thank you, Neil, for this wonderful opportunity to make our thoughts and opinions (but not more than three sides of them) available to those wise and great thinkers who are busy shaping Labour Party policy.

Away with all those boring old resolutions and time-consuming votes! This is the *real* leap forwards. Into what?

Health and Safety Conference

THEIR PROFITS, OUR LIVES

The increasing incidence of major tragedies such as Piper Alpha, Zeebrugge, King's Cross and the recent M1 plane crash has forced the issue of health and safety to the top of the political agenda.

The labour movement, alas, has been slow to respond.

Thatcher has paraded, ghoul-like, around post-disaster hospitals, creating the impression that these terrible accidents are simply a natural phenomena.

This could only happen because, with the exception of lone individuals such as John Prescott, the Trade Union and Labour leadership have allowed her to get away with it.

Steve Bell has mounted a more effective response in his *Guardian* cartoon strip than the Labour front bench. But the real fightback has been left to rank and file trade unionists.

In the aftermath of the King's Cross fire, rank and file tube workers were discouraged from campaigning to link the disaster to the profiteering of private contractors and the massive lack of funding compared to other European countries.

In the construction industry, the trade union officialdom joined with the building employers in attending a Requiem Mass for those that have died in accidents!

Health and safety isn't just about the big accidents: it is also about the day to day risk to health that millions of workers face in their workplace.

Pregnant women forced to use VDUs, offices with asbestos, cashiers with repetitive strain injuries, gardeners not certified to use dangerous chemicals... the list is endless.

Health and safety is a class issue, with women and Black workers facing the worse conditions. It is about employers cutting corners to increase their profits; it is about conditions worsened by public sector cuts and undermined by deregulation and privatisation.

In our racist society, black people end up in the most dangerous jobs in the most polluted workplaces, doing more than their share of shift work and home-working.

Black people are also more likely to be allocated the worst housing.

Deregulation in employment law means that more and more women find themselves where organising together is the only way to improve working conditions.

If the union leaderships are really serious about making union membership more relevant to low paid workers, then health and safety should be central to their concerns.

Not only would this aid union recruitment, such an approach would also strengthen workers' ability to build alliances with service users to defend services and fend off privatisation.

Groups such as **Tubewatch** and the **Construction Safety Campaign** show how the labour movement as a whole should take up the issue.

The *Tubewatch* magazine is written by rank and file rail workers who refuse simply to join Thatcher in mourning the dead and instead campaign to expose management's appalling health and safety standards in a fight to avoid another King's Cross.

The **Construction Safety Campaign** links health and safety to the strength of workers' organisation, insisting that only trade union and political action can make the building sites safe.

When the Tories push ahead with deregulation to increase their profits, we must fight for *people to be put before profits*. After all, it will be our lives and good health as service users and workers that are put at risk.

The only way such an approach can win is if we oppose the New Realists who deny class conflict. That is why it is so important that the Socialist Conference Health and Safety initiative is fully supported.

Useful Addresses

The London Hazards Centre

308 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DS. Tel. 01-837 5605

The London Hazards Centre was set up in 1984 to provide people in London with the resources to fight hazards at work and in the community.
They can supply information on thousands of different hazards from asbestos in the home to noise and chemical pollution in the workplace.
They advise on the law and how to use it.
The Centre helps people to organise effective campaigns and has working groups for black people, tenants and others organising in the community, women, and trade unionists.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Library and Information Service,
1 Chepstow Place, London W2 4TF. Tel. 01-221 0870.

This is the official government organisation. Although it is an under-resourced and somewhat toothless organisation it does have an enforcement role.

Labour Research Department (LRD)

78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1.

LRD is a labour movement organisation that provides excellent background information.

Socialist Conference

For information about the Health and Safety work of the Socialist Conference, the Solidarity Network and Hazards 88, contact John Laing, tel. 01-249 8086.

Construction Safety Campaign

72 Copeland Road, London SE15. Tel. 01-732 3711

Tubewatch

PO Box 22, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8.

An organisation involving rank and file tubeworkers that was set up in the immediate aftermath of the King's Cross fire. Tubewatch provides excellent information on health and safety on the tubes and on British Rail.

Construction



The collection of press cuttings pictured above illustrates the frightening situation in the Construction industry.

There are two deaths a week, with the serious accident rate rising faster than ever.

These accidents could be avoided if it wasn't for the disgraceful negligence of so many managers.

The Construction Safety Campaign includes the demand that such negligence should be treated as criminal behaviour, and those responsible should face imprisonment.

To date no employer has been imprisoned and the average fine is little more than £400!

The Construction Safety Campaign believes that the only way to end this carnage is for workers to get unionised, well organised, and eventually mobilised around a

Ra

Killing ther



Rail workers: under attack from government and management alik

In 1985 Don Bartlett, a London Underground train operator, collapsed and died of a heart attack at Blackfriars station on the District Line.

This was about one month after the introduction of One Person Operation (OPO) on that line.

Many more train operators have since died, or experienced serious health problems associated with stress.

Don's death is a link in the chain joining occupational health and safety to recent national disasters like the King's Cross fire or the Clapham rail crash.

Safety in public transport has become a major political issue during the 1980s, bringing an opportunity to define health and safety at work in a much more openly *political* way.

Many of today's health and safety problems are not new. Leeds, Blackburn and London busworkers have organised around the question of stress and OPO work since the 1970s.

These issues have simply been aggravated in the 1980s by managements ruthlessly committed to restoring profitability. Health and safety considera-

n Safety Campaign



The demands of the Campaign

The aims of the Construction Safety Campaign are:

•to get the labour and trade union movement to make deaths and serious injury in the construction industry a major political issue;

•for Local Authorities to refuse to employ contractors with a proven record of wilful and serious negligence in the matter of safety construction;

•to make a prison sentence on the employer mandatory where gross negligence is proven, or in the event of death or serious injury;

•to ensure no sacking of workers who raise health and safety issues on sites and a statutory right to immediate reinstatement;

•to canvas the support of the medical profession.

Construction Safety Programme which is directed towards mass demonstrations, mass pickets, and strike action.

The Campaign has built support amongst rank and file workers and UCATT branches, and they have the support of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs.

In Hackney, the Campaign, along with the Council DLO unions, has begun to build links with the Conolly Association. The Campaign held a joint meeting with the Irish in Britain Representation Group as part of the Borough's Irish festival.

With young Irish workers emigrating to Britain in such large numbers, many of them to work as builders, it is important that there is serious organisation against the non-unionised, badly paid, and dangerous conditions that they find in the construction industry.

For further details about CSC contact: Tony O'Brien, CSC, 72 Copeland Road, London SE15; tel. 01-732 3711.

Solidarity Network

Forging trade union links

Since its second successful conference in November 88, the Solidarity Network has attempted to develop the work carried out during the previous year.

By John Laing Solidarity Network

One aspect of that work, which has struck a chord with rank and file activists, is health and safety, a major issue in the P&O dispute and the Vickers shipbuilding strike in Barrow.

The P&O dispute was sparked by an attempt to impose new conditions on the workforce in order to save money.

As well as swallowing 500 redundancies, staff were expected to work seven consecutive days, 18 hours per day, with six hours rest period (if passenger figures allowed).

This came less than a year after the Zeebrugge disaster.

The Vickers Shipbuilding dispute, which affected 12,000 workers during the summer of 88, also forced health and safety issues to the fore. It emerged, for example, that the company had not introduced the agreed cancer screening for women workers.

After the majority of the workforce had returned to work, 400 welders remained on strike. They eventually won major concessions from the company, including a reduction in the amount of time spent working in temperatures of over 140° F.

The Solidarity Network has been helping with the trade union side of the Socialist Conference's work. Several people involved in the Network sit on the Socialist Conference's Trade Union Policy Group.

Discussions at the Policy Group led to the idea of a joint conference around Health and Safety.

The aim of the Conference is to bring together industries, workplaces, trade unionists, and local communities to discuss organising around health and safety issues.



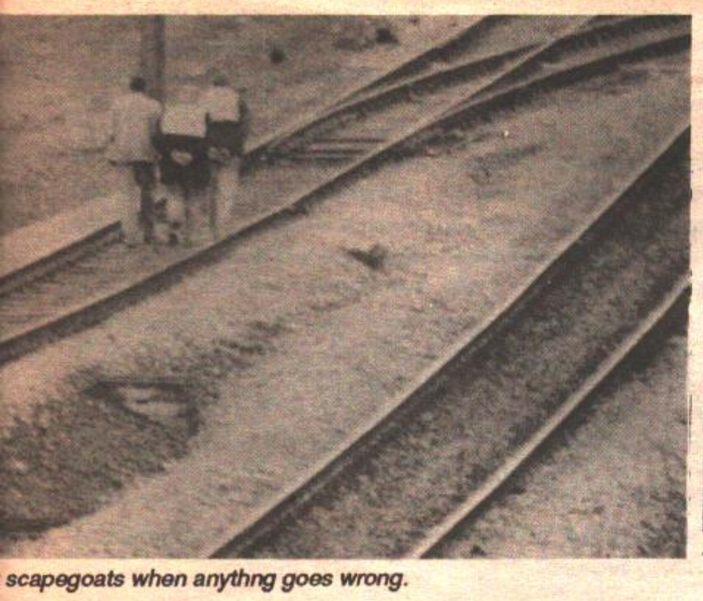
The Conference hopes to go beyond the question of "what are the hazards?" and to ensure that health and safety is seen as a major political issue.

There will be workshops on topics such as privatisation, employment training, women, building international links, organising for 1992, and building trade union links with the community.

Many different organisations and campaigns will be represented. It is also hoped to organise further conferences in different areas of the country.

ail transport

m softly



scapegoats when anythng goes wrong.

O. Martine Stead

tions go to the wall, as cost-cutting measures are implemented.

By Dave Stephenson Tubewatch

A British Rail document on "signalling fault coverage", written before the Clapham crash outlines that:

"Area Engineers will be encouraged to identify the hours of duty where economies can be made together with the level of associated risks."

Various agencies like the Railway Inspectorate have totally failed to withstand the onslaught of a government-led "new boss class" which sees the Health and Safety at Work Act as a barrier to greater profits.

Report

The King's Cross fire report points out that:

"The Railway Inspectorate in recent years has not made use of its powers or devoted sufficient resources to London Underground to create the tension necessary to ensure safety."

The report goes on to recommend a "review" and a full time inspector for LUL.

It's going to take far more than one inspector to deal with the growing problems of the Underground!

The P&O dispute has also proved that safety is not a "soft option" in today's world.

Massive

With proposed massive rail building in London in the 90s, not least to move thousands of travellers onwards to the Channel tunnel, the intersection of workplace and public safety will become even more important.

Such political developments require a far greater co-ordination of workers' organisations around public and occupational safety.

Any co-ordination must be linked with rank and file struggles in the various industries and needs to be built on the already established experience of the many workers' health and safety groups which have organised over the last 15 years.



Socialist Conference
Solidarity Network
Hazards 88 Campaign

Health and Safety Conference

Saturday March 11th, 10.30-4.30

Key Books, Birmingham, 136 Digbeth

Recent "disasters" have demonstrated the drastic affect that the drive for profits has had on health and safety conditions. Numbers of deaths and injuries in industry and in the community are soaring.

This conference aims to bring together a cross section of industries, workplaces, trade union and community campaigns to discuss organising around these issues.

There will be speakers and workshops. Space is limited, so please book in advance if possible.

Creche available

No disabled access (future venues will be accessible)

Registration £3 (organisations); £1 (individuals). Please note that there are only 100 spaces available, so register early!

To register, send name, organisation, address, telephone number, and creche requirements with cheque (payable to The Solidarity Network) to 74, Kingsland Road, Plaistow, London E13

The Women's Page

Round table discussion

Sisters, why do we do it?

One of the things that we hope to do with the *Briefing* Women's Page is provide space for groups of women, and individuals to write about why they are involved politically and the problems they experience. Here, Rebecca Flemming, Leesa Herbert and Terry Conway met to talk about where they work politically, and why; and to discover their common feelings about political "birthings".

Terry: Where I am active politically is partly where I think I'm going to get something out of it.

In the Labour Party I'm involved mainly in the Women's Section. Ward meetings are difficult because they're controlled by the Council leadership, so few independent people go along. All that happens is set piece debates.

Then there's what I see to be important. Recently a lot of my energy has gone to work around the Poll Tax. It is very rewarding to be involved in something which has mass support.

Heated political arguments, in the context of a growing campaign, are more productive than some of the rows I've had at Ward level.

The final factor is time. There are often things I would like to be involved in, or think are important but it just isn't possible.

Rebecca: The main reason I'm involved where I am is historical.

I got involved in politics through the women's movement and lesbian and gay stuff, and only then got involved in a much broader sense; being involved in the Labour Party and in student politics, not just lesbian or women's things.

It was a break from my tradition to stand as NUS London Convenor last year — I'd never before done anything I didn't know a lot about.

Now I have a more coherent political view, I'm able to start getting involved in a wider sense and make judgements about priorities; what I think is important, what I'd like to do and what I think I can contribute to.

Women on the left seem to suffer from running around madly trying to do 3,000 things. Not only are you involved in the Labour Party, might go to your Ward meeting, but you're also involved in the Women's Section.

Then you go to other things, say *Women for Socialism*. You have twice as many meetings to go to.

Leesa: I started getting active in my CLP, learning as I went along. On a Ward level it was very frustrating, because it was controlled by the right.

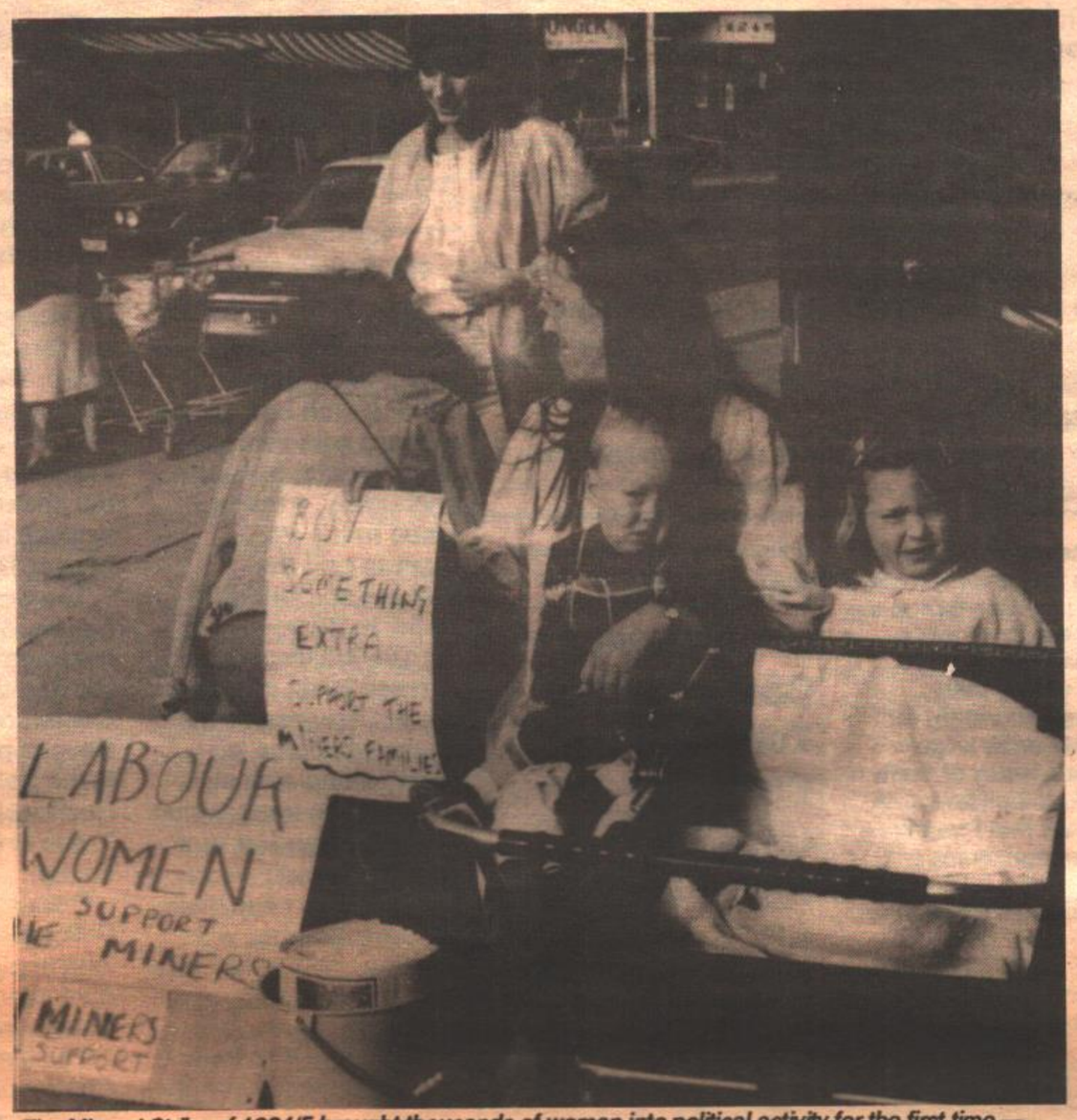
The Women's Section was a place to get experience, to get onto the GC and be delegated to Labour Party Conference in 1986.

At each stage I've got involved, I've felt often quite out of my depth, not found time to consolidate what I've learnt, but realising later I had actually absorbed a lot.

Things really blew up in Harringey around the Council's lesbian and gay policies and from that emerged *Positive Images*, a very broad and very diverse community group.

I became very sucked into the whole campaign, ending up as one of the four people running it.

That was very contradictory.



The Miners' Strike of 1984/5 brought thousands of women into political activity for the first time — especially the women of the mining communities. Perhaps the most common way women become involved in politics is when something happens "close to home".

It was an enormously gratifying experience. I feel really strongly that the political movement we had there was something I want to be involved in.

There are a lot of problems about involving the left in lesbian and gay politics, drawing in the black communities, black lesbians and gay men.

It came together very well, but it didn't go anywhere, and that left me with a great sense of sorrow. It was a very painful experience. There were so few people holding it together and the pressures were enormous.

After that everything seemed very flat. It had been a really major education for me and I found it frustrating to work with people who hadn't gone through that, and be in places that weren't at that level of energy.

I realised the politics I was involved in were what I was living my life by, but for many they were just the campaign of the moment. A campaign like *Positive Images* wasn't reality, but it takes you to a height that you can't find again.

Terry: I think my most comparable experience is leading a strike; where I felt that mixture of things being exciting and painful — but also incredibly isolating.

When I was involved in that, I felt the only people who really understood what was going on were those living and breathing the strike too.

Leesa: It takes your life over.

Terry: I felt very cut off from most of the people I had worked with previously, not because they didn't support me, but they weren't at the same level of intensity.

Certainly it was my most formative political experience. I can't imagine ever losing the relationships that I built up going through that baptism of fire together.

I identify with what you were saying about flatness; I wanted to go on being at that pitch even though I was completely exhausted by the whole thing.

Leesa: I wanted to be able to take the alliances built up in the *Positive Images* campaign forward, find space for them to continue.

I find it very frustrating that the places I am in in the women's movement are predominantly white, and though people say this isn't right, they don't prioritise changing it.

Rebecca: There is a common theme developing around our "baptism of fire". For me it was the *Stop the Clause* campaign. Then there is the question of what you do next, how you consolidate.

My experience was different because things did get very flat, and it was very sad, but I took the opportunity to bring my thoughts together in the peace afterwards.

What is so importance is to find for yourself a political coherence about how you view life and how to achieve change. I was really quite happy to settle to things that had a much more long term perspective.

If you have that jigsaw into which it all fits, then even when it's very hard going, it's worth keeping on.

International Women's Day

So why celebrate?

On March 8th women around the world will be celebrating international women's day.

In Britain, women will be asking just what there is to celebrate.

By Gill Lee

Ten years after being elected Britain's first woman Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher has done more to harm the majority of women than most men before her.

Women's wages average less than two thirds of men's, while cuts and closures in health services, education, housing, and local government have led to the emiseration of thousands.

Care for the old, the young, and the sick has been pushed back onto women.

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 has further heightened discrimination against lesbians. The banning of Sinn Fein has censored the voices of many Irish women.

Hundreds of black women every year are separated from their families under the racist immigration Acts; while thousands more are harassed by British state institutions as they go about their lives.

Thatcher has just sent a personal letter to Ann Widdecombe, resurrector of David Alton's anti-choice abortion Bill, assuring her the government will soon introduce its own Bill.

So just what is there to celebrate? The *Women for Socialism* Conference at the end of February showed us the commitment and determination of women to fight for liberation and to forge a new society.

It was based on the strengths of the women's liberation movement over the last ten years:

- the development of Women Against Pit Closures and the self-organisation of working class women;
- the growth of an anti-imperialist feminist consciousness, and the strengthening of black women's organisations;
- and the understanding by all participants of the need for a united socialist feminist movement in which all women can have a voice and which can forge solidarity with all women in struggle.

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.

Women for Socialism Conference February 25th, 26th

See page 4 for details

BOOK REVIEW

The IRA in prison

Out of the Maze, by Derek Dunn, *Gill and MacMillan.*

This book describes the moral giants of the IRA: heroes from the working class and the farms of Ireland who are creating and being created by revolution.

By Liam Devine

Compare them to their bigoted, vindictive, cowardly jailers and the politicians who make their sacrifices necessary, and you are overwhelmed by their towering moral superiority, physical courage, and dedication.

Out of the Maze is an account of the escape of 38 IRA Prisoners of War from Long Kesh in 1983.

It uses interviews with the organisers of the escape (both inside and outside the prison) and the Henessy Report, which was the British government's enquiry into how 38 men could get out of what it considered one of the most secure prisons in the world.

But, in a way, the account of the escape itself is not the most important aspect of the book.

It is the best account available of the IRA in prison: a group, like any other, arguing among itself, with its slackers as well as its martyrs.

But the lasting impression is of an organisation which contains the best of what the Irish working class has to offer.

The majority were imprisoned in their early and mid-20s. Many of those who escaped returned to active service and too many were to die. None were able to return to a normal life, but none repented their previous activity and commitment.

The level of support received by the men on the run is inspiring. Shortly after escaping, one group arrives in a small town. One of them stops a complete stranger in the street.

She brought the four of them back to her own house. Within minutes, her neighbours are pressing rosary beads and £20 notes into the prisoners' hands.

If you want to understand the human material of the IRA, its background and psychology, this book is essential.

It reads like a thriller, and would make a wonderful film. It is funny, tragic, and heroic, as well as offering useful hints on how to get out of Thatcher's prisons.

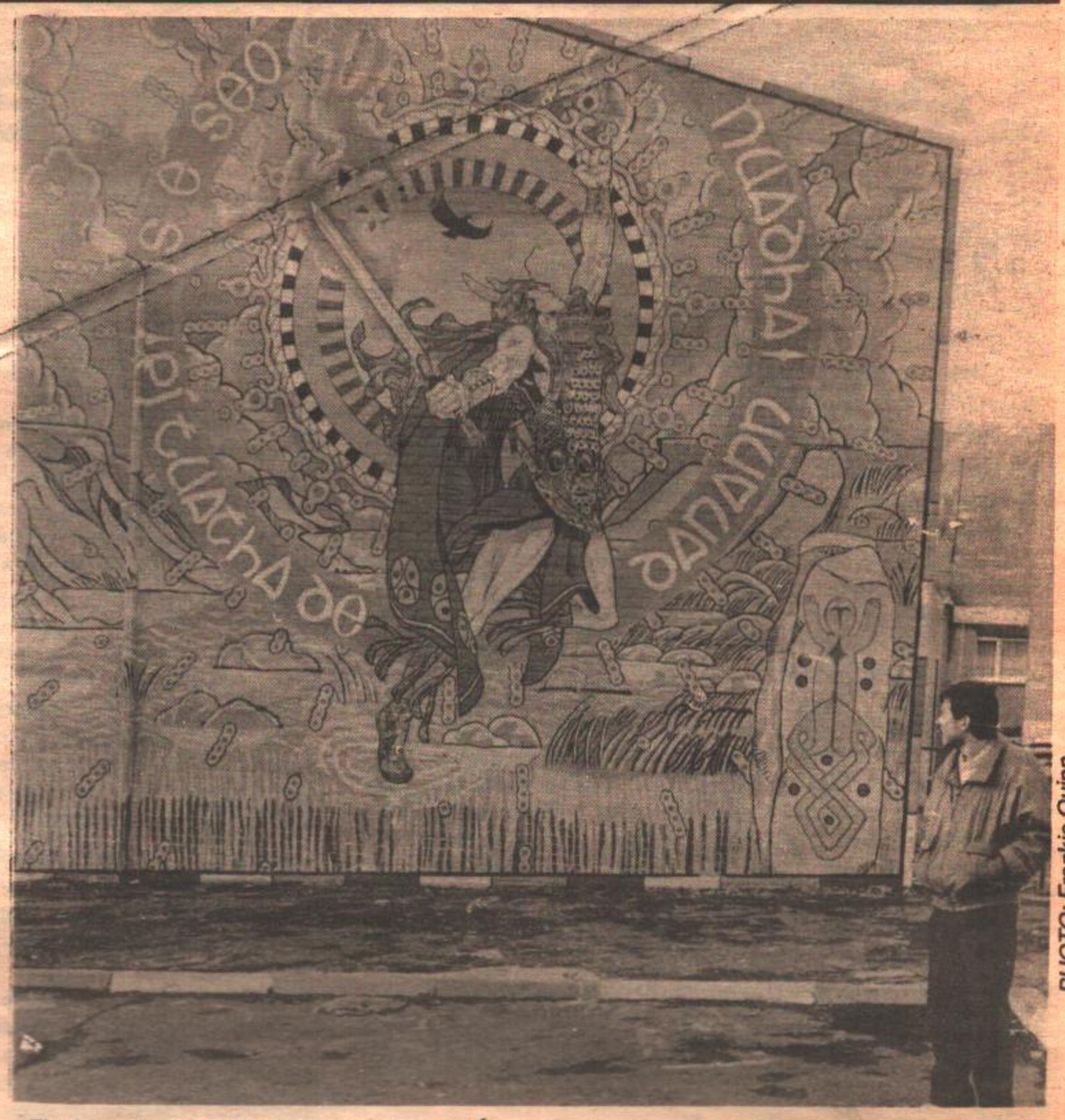


PHOTO: Frankie Quinn

The legendary Cu Chulainn (artist: Gearóid ÓCeallaigh) on Springhill Estate, West Belfast. The spirit of the Republican struggle is deeply rooted in the community.

BOOK REVIEW

Labour and Europe: a chequered history

Socialist Parties and European Integration, by Kevin Featherstone, *Manchster University Press*, £29.50.

When it comes to Europe, much of the British left tends to forget about socialist solidarity.

This peculiarity, and the left's attitude towards a united and socialist Europe, is the subject of Kevin Featherstone's new book.

He details the long and often chequered history of support for European unification within the socialist parties of the European Community.

By PETER TATCHELL

With regard to the British Labour Party, Featherstone concludes:

"The Party has traditionally identified itself with the maintenance of national sovereignty, whilst an identification with a class interest (or a 'socialist' interest) across Europe has been very much less apparent."

But Labour has not always been a passionate defender of British "national interests".

In the 1920s, the Party was committed to "world government", which was to be achieved by the transfer of sovereignty from nation states to a supra-national federation of all the world's peoples.

At the TUC Conference in 1927, Ernest Bevin proposed a motion in favour of a "United States of Europe", which was carried overwhelmingly.

In a pamphlet entitled *Labour's Peace Aims*, Clement Attlee wrote in 1939:

"In the common interest there must be recognition of an international authority superior to the individual States and endowed not only with rights over them, but with power to make them effective... Europe must federate or perish."

Unification

Nye Bevan echoed this theme in *Tribune* in 1944:

"The unification of Europe must be the independent act of Europe itself, and the aim of British Labour should be to enable her to do it as easily and peacefully as possible."

Implicit in Bevan's argument, however, was the view that Britain was not part of Europe and would not join the "organic confederation" that he had proposed.

In the closing stages of the war, Labour's policy began to emphasise strengthening Britain's position as an independent world power through its leadership of the Empire and its alliance with the United States.

Nonetheless, in March 1948, Britain signed the Brussels Treaty (the Treaty of Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defence).

Attlee announced that Britain was prepared to "pool some degree of authority" with the eventual objective of the "federation of Europe".

A month later, at a Paris meeting of European socialist parties, the Labour delegation agreed — despite initial objections — to a plan for the development of European institutions for collaboration and common decision-making.

Opposed to this plan, Hugh Dalton (whose first loyalty was to the US connection) led a rearguard action against subsequent proposals for the creation of a European Assembly.

He argued that all decision-making powers should be based on the unanimous consent of the foreign ministers.

(This idea was later adopted by the EC when it agreed that sole legislative power should be vested in the unanimous decisions of the Council of Ministers.)

Alliance

By 1949, with the onset of the Cold War and Britain's participation in the newly-created NATO alliance, the Labour Party had swung firmly behind Atlanticism. Henceforth, Labour's right wing would look to North America rather than Europe.

The project of European unification was abandoned in favour of an uncritical pro-Americanism which resulted in support for the US interventions in Korea and Vietnam.

As for the Labour left, Featherstone suggests that its opposition to European-wide socialist co-operation and European integration has been premised on implicit sentiments of superiority and arrogance.

The left seems to think that the Labour Party is more radical and more likely to win power than its continental counterparts, who are often dismissed as reactionary social democrats.

These sentiments linger on the left today among those who argue against membership of the EC on the grounds that it would prevent a future Labour government from implementing socialist policies.

The assumption in this argument is that Britain is more likely to elect a radical left wing government than other EC member states — an assumption which is not at all supported by the record of previous Labour governments or by three consecutive Tory election victories.

Featherstone concludes that, despite Labour's current pro-European rhetoric, all wings of the Party retain a deep antipathy towards European supra-nationalism.

The fetishisation of the nation state and obsession with British national interests has led both right and left of the Party to reject democratisation of the EC out of a fear that it would help legitimise the EC's supra-national authority.

There is surely little hope for a Party which, having largely abandoned socialism, is now too timid to demand even the elementary decencies of parliamentary democracy for the 320 million citizens of the EC.

BOOK REVIEW



A Trotsky look-alike playing a station master in "The Official Wife", provoking rumours Trotsky had turned to motion pictures.

Will the real Lenin please stand up?

Lenin, the Novel, by Alan Brien, *Paladin*, £5.99.

"Trotsky had already been in New York for ten weeks when the Revolution broke (What was he doing there? Someone says he was playing small roles in motion pictures — I can imagine that.)"

By Linda Clarke Haringey Labour Briefing

So reads an entry in the diary kept by Alan Brien's Lenin from age 15 to the year before his death in 1924.

The facts of Lenin's life (carefully researched) mingle with imagined conversations and thoughts to bring every person, place, and event wonderfully to life.

You'll meet Meks and Bolos (sorry, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks), left/right SRs, police spies, counter-revs., peasants, prols, and Lenin's mum, as Russian Revolutionary fervour grows and Ilyich goes into exile (time and time again) until...

If, like me, your knowledge of political history has been acquired from books come upon by chance, then this has got to be one of the best places to start.

On the other hand, if you think you're the bees' knees on the subject, read this book and you may be surprised at what you didn't know.

Finally, this book is the funniest I've ever read. Forget your dry old books, get stuck into this, and enjoy yourself (as Lev Davidovich would have said).

NATFHE profile

Lecturers' leaders in retreat

The Education Reform Act will radically alter all levels of education and transform the conditions of the workforces within educational institutions.

However, NATFHE's leadership has argued against industrial action, weakened the union's negotiating position, and exacerbated the general demoralisation of its members.

Only when they couldn't avoid it, have they opted for inoffensive action, such as bans on filling out registers, doing overtime, and driving one's car on college business.

Only as a last resort have they considered exam sanctions and rolling strikes.

By Woody Haut
Haringey
NATFHE

They certainly haven't considered anything to scare the Tories, especially since the union can't enforce even these limited actions, much less discipline members who cross picket lines.

This track record, coupled with the leadership's willingness to wait in hope that a Labour government will be elected before education *and* trade unions are utterly decimated, makes NATFHE a contender for the Norman Willis Award for new Realist Inertia.

NATFHE members in Labour Authorities find themselves at the mercy of "caring" cuts. Those in Tory Authorities are struggling to save jobs and implement the nationally negotiated agreement on pay and conditions (an extra £500 per year or 1% more than was turned down the year before).

Though NATFHE members voted by a four to one margin to set up a political fund, the union has been unable to translate that vote into industrial weight.

Authorities like Hereford and Worcester have unilaterally imposed pay and conditions that undercut the national agreement.

The National Executive votes as a block at Conference to defeat rank and file proposals, and is now trying to shorten and reduce Conference. But the union's failures cannot all be blamed on the leadership.

As an *association* rather than a union, it has too many members who believe they constitute an elite professional class, divorced from the working class and other Local Authority unions.

However, if one considers the conditions under which most members work, it's clear that many are poorly paid and are now being forced, like workers in other industries, to produce more for less, and will soon be appraised for their work and monitored for their politics.

NATFHE has not even been able to launch an effective campaign against the more obvious aspects of the Education Act.

In a matter of months, control of governing bodies will be transferred to the business community, turning education into even more of a commodity than it is at present.

As negotiating power is devolved to local level, governors will be able to decide if they wish to recognise NATFHE as a legitimate negotiating body.

Under a statutory instrument, governors, rather than the Local Authority, will now be considered the legal employer at industrial tribunals. No wonder many Local Authorities are stalling on reaching agreements with NATFHE.

If the government's newest plans for Higher Education — a 37-hour week, 30 days holiday, a mobile workforce — are implemented, last year's settlement will soon be viewed with nostalgia.

But it was that settlement, which only Outer London and East Anglia rejected, which set the stage for the current onslaught, including the job cuts.

The burden of these cuts will fall on women workers, who make up most of the part-time workforce (for whom there's still no negotiated parity).

The NATFHE left, at ground level, remains relatively strong. but with a union so much on the defensive, it's more difficult than ever to mobilise it. This leaves little opportunity to challenge the government or to discuss the educational needs of the community.

Nor does it allow time to develop a socialist plan for further and higher education that would address issues like community education, how education is used as a means of social control, or alternatives to government programmes like ET.

The "Broad Left" in NATFHE is a powerful coalition of Stalinists and representatives of the cuts win of the Labour Party, which argued *in favour* of last year's national settlement.

With little concept of democracy or accountability, they often vote with the right at regional meetings on matters coming from the women's committee or the left, especially issues that stretch the limits of union business, e.g., Clause 28, Moses Mayekiso.

In fact, the left is probably best represented by the Socialist Lecturers Alliance, which is comprised of the SWP, *Militant* and *Workers Power*. This is where *Briefing* supporters who are also NATFHE members should work.

Although the SLA controls West Midlands Regional Council, the left has no real impact at national level.

While the future looks dim, the issues have never been more obvious. The left in NATFHE has to keep arguing against the leadership's defensive campaign, and, at the same time, maintain pressure on Local Authorities.

We've got to support others in struggle and focus our attention on the grassroots, where discussions on the need for a major offensive, i.e. a national strike, against the Education Act and any further erosion of pay and conditions should be placed at the top of the agenda.

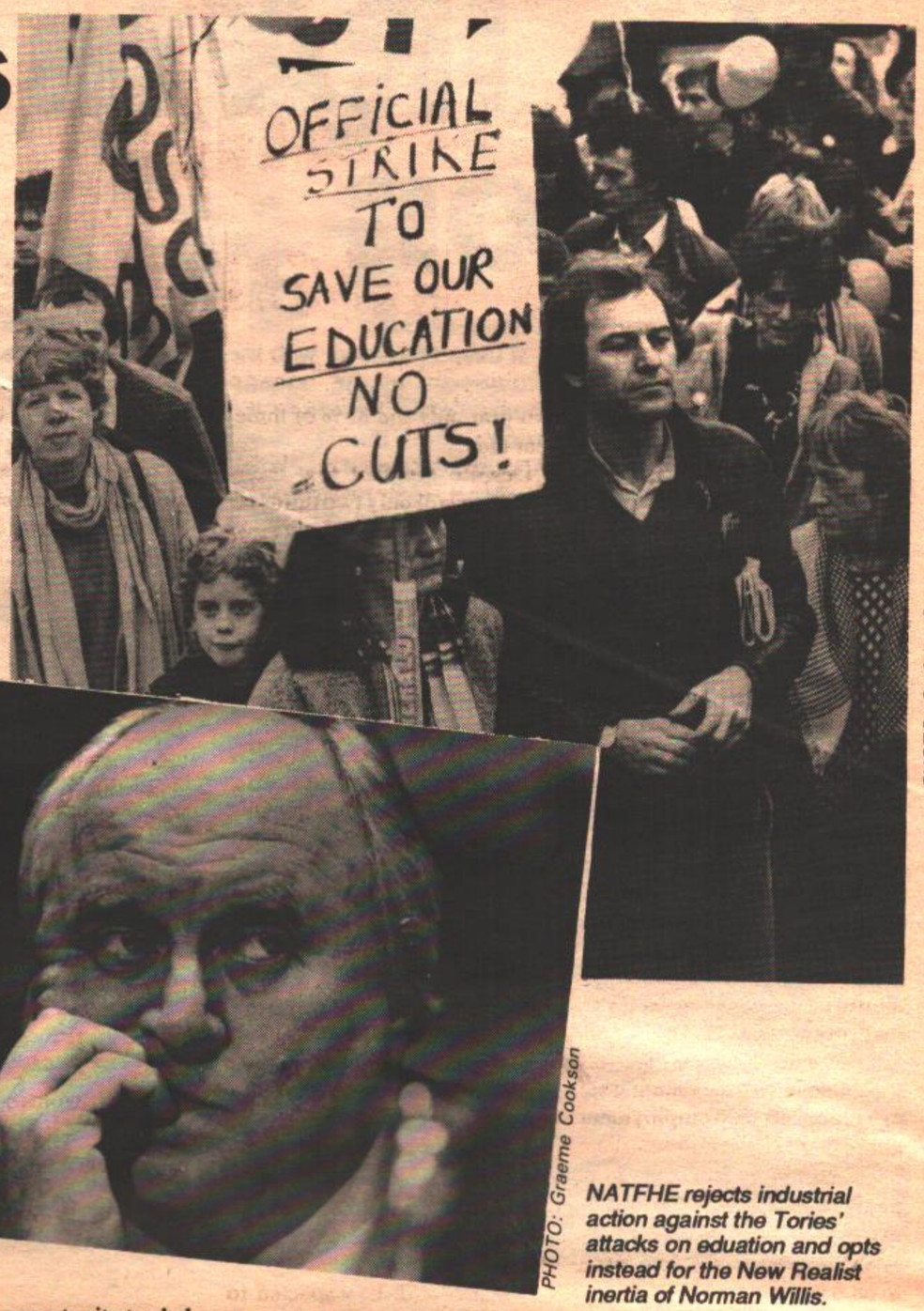


PHOTO: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

NATFHE rejects industrial action against the Tories' attacks on eduation and opts instead for the New Realist inertia of Norman Willis.

Docks

Preparing for battle

By MIKE PICKEN

On February 8th, two thirds of the 800 Liverpool dockers walked out over the allocation of labour.

Though the dispute was quickly settled, it shows the dockers' increasing militancy and organisation to defend their rights.

Confrontation is looming nationally over Tory plans to end the National Dock Labour Scheme.

The Scheme, introduced by the Labour government in 1947, protects dockers from the use of casual labour.

One hundred and thirty Tory MPs, led by former cabinet Ministers Norman Tebbit and Michael Heseltine, have signed a House of Commons motion calling for the Scheme to be scrapped.

Liverpool Labour MPs, led by Eric Heffer, have tabled a counter-motion defending the Scheme.

A delegate conference of the dockers' union, the TGWU, has backed industrial action to defend the Scheme.

Hereford & Worcester

This letter, sent in November 1988, gives a glimpse of the feelings of frustration felt in the NATFHE rank and file membership about the equivocations of the union leadership.

Dear Mr Dawson,

We wish to express our extreme displeasure over the non-action of yourself in Hereford and Worcester.

In this county we have had a continued series of disputes, *all officially* sanctioned by yourself, a succession of presidents, plus the National Executive Committee.

During this time, the local membership have been involved in a variety of different actions including strikes.

The latest dispute about the imposition of a "Gold Book" for new and promoted posts has profound implications not only for the local membership but for the existence of this trade union.

Despite the seriousness of the situation and the fact that the membership voted four to one in favour of industrial action, you and other senior lay officials decided that the vote was insufficient to take action.

Ironically, in the political ballot, the vote by a much smaller percentage of the national membership than voted in Hereford and Worcester, was hailed as a great success!

At a meeting of the ALC on October 19th a member of the NEC informed us that *all* industrial action was to be discontinued in the county. New action would be undertaken — none of which is effective or important, e.g. target local events.

This is all right in conjunction with industrial action but on its own is without impact of merit. Further, the decision to discontinue action was made without any discussion with the ALC or the local branches.

Obviously, the same lack of democracy applies to the NEC of NATFHE as applies to the County Councillors. Local opinions were not sought nor branches allowed to ballot on this issue.

Furthermore, it was interesting to read in the NATFHE journal that you and the President were able to attend a conference in Melbourne at the expense of the NATFHE membership.

No doubt your contribution, if any made, was totally insignificant — in keeping with your personal contribution to this dispute. Perhaps if Hereford and Worcester was located in Australia you might have managed to visit us.

For these and other reasons of which you are well aware we are unable to continue as Chair and Vice Chair of the ALC. Since you have given up the struggle, there is no point in our continuing to front a pathetic,inept, incompetent, disorganised trade union and to attempt to justify your non-action and craven cowardice to the membership.

It may be of interest to note that no one else was elected at the meeting on November 16th to fill the vacancies.

Yours sincerely,
Jo Kelly (Ex-Chair)
Maurice Turner (Ex Vice Chair)

The changing face of the working class

Women and the labour market

"The age of the independent career woman has arrived... with Mrs Thatcher at the helm," proclaimed the *Daily Express* of January 19th.

They were greeting the publication of the latest set of government statistics, entitled *Social Trends 1989*.

Those of us who remember the said lady's warnings about latch-key children and the duty of women to be wives and mothers will treat the *Express* euphoria with scepticism.

Nevertheless, the figures are pretty startling and do indicate a big change in employment patterns. An increase of 2.3 million in the labour force between 1971 and 1987 was attributable almost entirely to women, especially those aged 25-44.

Less than 20 years ago, almost one in five women in that age group left paid employment altogether to have children. The latest figure is just one in a hundred. In 1971 52.4% of this age group were working; by 1987 this percentage had risen to 68.6%.

The projection for 1995 is that three quarters of the women in this age group will be going out to work, compared to about half in 1971.

All this has occurred despite Britain's appalling record on childcare provision, one of the worst in Europe: almost nothing for two year olds and provision for only 20% of three year olds.

In contrast, France can boast full-time provision for 33% of two year olds and 88% of three year olds.

Despite the fact that their wages are still only two thirds of male rates and even though they are getting no more help in the home than before, women are going out to work in greater numbers than ever.

By JUDITH ARKWRIGHT

Recent statements from the Department of Employment have welcomed the sharp increase of women in the labour market.

John Patten, a Home Office Minister, is chairing a special Ministerial Group on Women's Issues. But don't hold your breath. Ms. T. and her Ministers have not been suddenly converted to women's rights.

The latest figures show that there is going to be a labour shortfall in the 1990s, due to a 1.2 million fall in the number of 16-24 year olds.

Women will be expected to make up the shortfall, a continuation of capitalism's age-old ruse of using women as a reserve army of labour.

This is what lies behind government statements encouraging more flexible work hours. Already one in two women workers are part-time.

The government is even encouraging firms to establish workplace nurseries, although it opposes giving any financial incentive for this. In fact, in 1985 they started taxing mothers for use of such facilities.

Workplace nurseries would be a step forward for women, but the danger is that as soon as the labour shortfall disappears, the nurseries will disappear with it.

In a survey conducted for the Thomas Coram Foundation in 1982, for example, one spokesperson for a firm said that the nursery they had set up was no longer needed because *"there was no real recruitment problem."*

Margaret Thatcher's brand of "feminism" is just an extension of the dog-eat-dog, survival of the fittest philosophy she has always peddled.

In an interview in *She* magazine she said tax concessions for women paying for childcare were out of the question because *"there would be the most terrible abuses. Women make their own arrangements now and they can carry on doing so."*

Millionaire

Her complacency is breathtaking. What arrangements is she thinking of? Perhaps, as Dawn Primarolo MP suggested in Parliamentary Question Time, she really means we should all try to emulate her by marrying a millionaire?



PHOTO: Chi Chan

Women in work: a matter of survival

If women are going to be needed in the workforce in the 1990s, then we should certainly make the most of it, not least by campaigning for nursery provision in industry, for state funded childcare provision, for equal pay and for job security for part-time workers.

We mustn't let the government get away with its cynical attempt to use our labour — and then get rid of us when it suits them.

Women are entering the labour force because they have to. It's a matter of survival. But in doing so they are also claiming their right to independence — a right that will only become a reality if we fight for it.

Education

Playing the market?

The government's recent White Paper on public expenditure casts an interesting light on the opting out provision of the 1988 Education Act.

The few schools to opt out of Local Education Authority control and receive funds directly from the DES appear to be those threatened with closure or change by the Local Education Authority.

Where schools have been under no threat from LEAs, parents have overwhelmingly rejected moves to opt out.

Far from being a means of setting schools free, of giving parents choice, etc., the opting out provisions are a means of escaping possible LEA closure plans. The White Paper confirms this.

The government has cut its number of "surplus" places from an estimated 170,000 to 133,000. It hopes more schools under threat will opt out, but if they do the government cannot force through its cuts targets.

By Brian Elkington NUPE, Hull Education Branch

It would not be a good advertisement for opting out to close schools that have just done so. The government appears prepared to "rig the market" to make opting out appear to work.

Searching for cuts to make up for what it cannot achieve in closures, the government is suggesting more should be cut from cleaning, caretaking, and the school meals service.

Opportunities

Socialists have always argued that the fall in pupil numbers gives an opportunity to reduce class size and increase quality of education. But this must be planned and should not be achieved by opting out.

Similarly cuts should not be passed from one area to another, as the health service experience shows.

For example, for many children the school meal is the only adequate meal received: malnourishment does not increase educational opportunities or standards, no matter how many teachers there are.

In 1993, schools over a certain size will have their own budgets and be able to set their own staffing levels. The unions must struggle together now, or hang separately in the future.

Left teachers plan future strategies

Supporters of the Socialist Teachers Alliance and other left activists have met to discuss the next stage of the teachers' fightback against government attacks.

The Conditions of Service Conference held in London on February 11th, organised by Ealing NUT, was well attended, with 29 Associations from across the country represented.

The opening session charted the historical background to the present situation and examined the response of the NUT leadership; before looking at the future implications of government attacks.

The Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1986 paved the way for the 1988 Education Reform Act.

By David Wahl Ealing NUT

At the same time as it took away teachers' negotiating rights in return for an enforced pay settlement, the Pay and Conditions Act imposed considerably worsened conditions of service.

Tasks previously carried out as a matter of professional goodwill became contractual duties clearly defined by statute.

The "withdrawal of goodwill" could no longer be used as a sanction in times of struggle, without breach of contract.

Issues such as "no cover" action became fraught with the problems of "illegality"; arguments which the national leadership were only too happy to seize upon.

Given a teaching force that was now "manageable" and a union leadership that was not prepared to use industrial action to oppose the government, the Education Reform Bill inevitably became law.

Dangerous

As a consequence of this last Act, teacher trade unionists now face the twin threat of the "privatisation" of state education (as schools vote to "opt out" of LEA control) and, probably even more dangerous, the atomisation of their organisation and membership under Local Management of Schools.

The powers given to head-teachers and school governors to control school budgets and "hire and fire" staff now pose a major threat to the future of collective bargaining and action.

The response of the leadership of the National Union of Teachers throughout the process has been a catalogue of failures and capitulations: from the Interim Agreement on Cover and the drawing up of the ACAS deal which prefigured the Teachers Pay and Conditions Act itself, through to the present regional reorganisation of the Union.

This last move is a clear indication of the leadership's intention to reject collective resistance in favour of casework and individual grievance procedures.

Given this background the Ealing Conference has come at a particularly opportune moment. With the NUT's Annual Conference less than two months away, the afternoon workshops provided valuable fora for discussion.

Minimum

There was broad agreement on the strategies that should be adopted and it is clear that large sections of the union membership are unconvinced by the New Realist policies of their leadership.

At the very minimum they will be pressing for strong and effective action in defence of their conditions of service when Annual Conference convenes at Easter.

International Briefing

Hungary's economic reforms

Plan vs. the Market

Hungary's 22 year old experiment in economic reform is one of the models for Gorbachev's *perestroika*.

The core of the reform was the abolition of central determination of output targets and central allocation of intermediate inputs.

"Autonomous" enterprises were to be free to negotiate contracts with one another and with suppliers. Prices were gradually to be freed from state control and gradually brought into line with world prices.

Wages were to be kept within socially acceptable limits by means of taxation.

The state, however, would continue to play a major role. It made "major investment decisions" and had the power to establish, integrate, or liquidate enterprises.

It made "indicative" five year and annual plans, and established output targets for the relevant ministries.

Overall direction of the economy was to be achieved by means of "economic levers" — taxation and credit policy, exchange control, investment policy, etc.

In essence the Hungarian reform tried to combine central planning with a limited and regulated market mechanism. The market mechanism was to become an instrument of planning.

The Hungarian system was never intended to be "market socialism" — if by that one means a state owned economy in which the market (and not the plan) *dominates*.

The question is whether the market mechanism has in fact proved a successful instrument of planning.

Failures

The "failures" of the Hungarian economy are well known: the highest *per capita* debt in Eastern Europe; a

By GUS FAGAN

serious trade deficit; failure to modernise (machinery makes up only 6% of large scale exports to the West); the continued existence of large sale social deprivation and poverty; as well as a deteriorating system of social services.

It's true that these failures are not directly attributable to the reform.

It's also true, however, that the major success of the Hungarian economy, the higher level of consumer satisfaction, may have less to do with the reform mechanism than with the regime's decision to invest heavily in consumer goods.

Enterprises have not achieved the hoped for autonomy. Central ministries still control investment, inputs, etc., in a highly concentrated range of industrial enterprises.

Enterprises are also shielded from market forces by means of state subsidies (in 1987, 50.4% of total subsidies were paid to the seven largest enterprises, constituting 44.5% of the state budget deficit).

Bankruptcies

In 1985, there were 218 loss making enterprises — but no bankruptcies. The state has had to intervene directly to increase the wages of industrial workers.

A large degree of price freedom has been achieved, but at the cost of dramatically increasing the scale of poverty (roughly 20% of the population live on or below the poverty line).

Plans for large scale foreign investment and joint ventures with Western companies have not materialised.

In Hungary itself, the technical intelligentsia, economists, and opposition intellectuals see the root of the problems as the regime's unwillingness to let the reforms run their natural course without state interference.

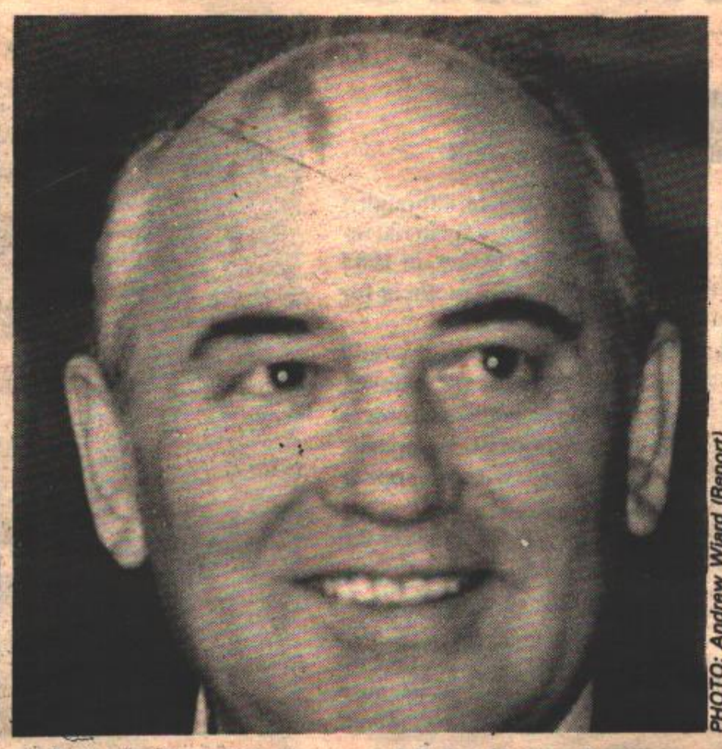


PHOTO: Andrew Wiard (Report)



Gorbachev's market reforms: modelled on Hungary?

Hostility

Thus, problems develop (enterprise losses, workers' hostility to increasing wage differentials or threatened redundancies, etc.) leading the state to intervene (subsidies, wage increases), but the problems continue to mount, eliciting a chorus of protest form the intellectuals against any further state intervention.

The perceived failure of the planners leads to an increasing demand for full-blooded "market socialism".

But the demand for more market and less planning is not, in all cases, the result of enthusiasm for the market itself. Certainly, among many oppositionists, the market is seen as a means towards democratisation, as the only alternative to state domination.

In the absence of a *political* alternative to statist domination, one opts for the market, a paradox pointed out by Wlodzimierz Brus in *New Left Review*:

"marketisation of the socialist economy as a substitute for pluralisation of its polity."

The argument so far has been between those who would defend a more extensive use of the market mechanism as an instrument of planning (maintaining the primary of planning) but in the context of greater economic and political democratisation (Brus, Kornai in Hungary), and those who opt for full scale marketisation (the intellectual opposition in Hungary, Solidarnosc's leadership in Poland).

Defenders

The latter position also finds defenders at high levels within the regimes. Nikolai Shmelev, a highly placed Soviet official, commented on unemployment:

"The real danger of losing one's job and having to take, temporarily, unemployment benefit or work wherever one is sent is a very good cure for laziness, drunkenness or irresponsibility."

Recent legislation and changes in leadership personnel in Hungary seem to indicate a new determination to push through the market side of the reforms.

Seminar

At a recent seminar in Oxford, the president of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce, Peter Lövincze, spoke openly about the need "to shift the burden of taxation from corporate structures to ordinary people."

According to Lövincze, "consensus policy is dead" in Hungary and to speak of "socialism" in the present context would be utopian ("perhaps in 200 years").

At the same time, there is a greater awareness among some sections of the Hungarian opposition of the need to defend working class people against the effects of the regime's economic and social policies.

There are also now two independent trade unions, the Democratic Trade Union of Scientific Workers (2,500 members) and the Motion Picture Democratic Trade Union (400 members).

Of course, neither represents ordinary workers, but their existence is an important precedent.

What is lacking, however, is a clear left wing alternative to both statist autocracy and reliance on unrestrained market forces.

In the Hungarian opposition, as well as among large sections of the Western left, the arguments for some form of "market socialism" have been widely accepted.

The experience of Yugoslavia, however, provides important evidence for the view that any effective operation of market forces is incompatible with self-government or social equality.

This is the first in an occasional series of in-depth profiles of the economic situation in various Eastern bloc countries.

Poland

Socialists need your help!

The reformation of the PPS (Polish Socialist Party) in November 1987 was a welcome revival of organised socialist politics in the Polish working class.

For Western socialists the distressing prospect of Margaret Thatcher's rapturous reception in Gdansk will have underlined the need for a coherent and dynamic socialist current in the Polish opposition.

The Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution), as the Party is now known, has maintained its early promise.

Confronted with the mass strikes of May and August 1988, the fledgling Party strained every nerve to meet

By David Holland
Director,
International
Office of the PPS
(RD) in Great
Britain
Chair, Kensington
CLP

the challenge, actively organising strikes and support activity.

On the anniversary of the imposition of martial law on December 13th last year, it was one of the main groups organising large demonstrations in a number of Polish cities.

More recently, on January 24th and 25th, it mounted joint actions with Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. In Poland these took the form of demonstrations outside the Czechoslovak embassy, in solidarity with the demonstrators in Prague.

This is an indication of the internationalism and combativity of the PPS (RD) and should be welcomed by socialists everywhere.

The PPS (RD) publish a number of clandestine periodicals in Poland. These include *Robotnik*, distributed nationally, and various local papers, such as *Gazeta Jastrzebska*, *Robotnik Wybrzeza* and *Robotnik Mazowiecki*.

In order to keep up their work and support the families of sacked and imprisoned activists, the PPS (RD) is in urgent need of funds.

Since the average wage of a Polish industrial worker now stands at about £7 a month, even the smallest donations can have a significant impact.

The PPS (RD) has now opened a London office, under the auspices of Kensington Labour Party. The office is staffed on Thursday evenings from 6-10pm.

Interested parties are invited to drop in, without appointment, or ring 01-229 6259.

The London Office is also in the process of forming a support committee in Britain.

Standing Order Authority

To the Manager:

Bank.....

Branch.....

Address.....

Accountno.....

Sortcode.....

From.....

Address.....

.....

Tel.no.....

Please pay £ ..... every month until further notice.

Payments should commence from the date of ..... .
This money should be paid to the following account:
Bank: National Girobank
Branch: Girobank plc
Address: Bootle, Merseyside GIR 0AA
Account no. 58643420
Sort code: 72-00-00

Signed:.....

Date:.....
Please return to D. Holland, PPS-RD, The Basement, 92 Ladbroke Grove, London W11 2HE.

El Salvador

Insurrection and election

El Salvador watchers have been amazed by the latest political initiative of the FMLN.

The FMLN is a political and military front that has grown in strength so much that insurrection is a real possibility this year.

By GARETH MOSTYN

The civil war in El Salvador has been going on now for ten years, during which time the US government has made a massive financial and political intervention into the country.

Reagan pumped £2 million a day (equal to the entire national budget) into El Salvador, but still the country's rulers have been unable to defeat the FMLN.

On the political front, the FMLN and their allies the FDR have made great gains. In the past three years an independent mass movement has grown up, based around the trade union movement, the UNTS.

There is increasing support for the demand for an end to US interference and rejection of the US insistence that the government priority must be the defeat of the FMLN.

An increasing majority of people support a negotiated political solution to the war.

The popularity of this demand has meant that the FDR leadership has felt able to return to the country. This is a great step forward after the massacres of the past.

The FDR has also decided to stand in the forthcoming Presidential elections (in March) as part of a left wing alliance called Democratic Convergence (CD).

Guillermo Ungo of the FDR and the Socialist International affiliated MNR is the CD candidate for President and Reni Roldan, of the Social Democratic Party, which is not part of the FDR, is standing for Vice President.

They intend to use the election as an opportunity to put forward their politics. The FMLN has not supported their stand and will not be calling on its base to vote for the CD, but to abstain.

Election

It views the election as part of the counter-insurgency strategy and does not wish to give it any credibility.

It was therefore a great surprise when the FMLN revealed a plan at the end of January to participate indirectly in the electoral process. They put forward six conditions which can be summarised as:

- cessation of all repression;
- the army confined to barracks on election day, with no participation in the elections;
- the integration of the CD into the Central Electoral Council and the formation of a Monitoring Council incorporating civic organisations;
- establishment of a new electoral code which would represent a consensus among all parties;
- the right to vote for all Salvadoreans abroad;
- the US government to remain outside the electoral process and provide no support for any party.

The elections would have to be postponed for six months.

In return, the FMLN has offered complete co-operation in the electoral process, a military truce for two days before, during, and after the election, and acceptance of the legitimacy of the results.

They would encourage everyone to vote and campaign for a CD victory.



PHOTOS: Pietro Gigli (IFL)

FMLN: making great gains as an independent mass movement grows

The immediate response in El Salvador has been a huge cheer among the trade unions and the popular movement. The government, army, and right wing have been further confused and demoralised. So far it has left the bourgeoisie divided and the US speechless.

The FMLN has posed its initiative as "a last effort to avoid the social explosion." They would prefer to negotiate the surrender of the army in order to save the bloodshed and massacre typical of the right wing in its death agony. This would also reduce the chance of US intervention.

The FMLN is extremely confident that the CD would win fair elections in El Salvador. The prospects of such an outcome would delight us all as much as it would confuse the theoreticians: the possible scenarios send the imagination well into overtime.

Offensive

Though the most likely result of this political offensive is rejection by the government and army leaders, it will lead to more support for the FMLN and the further isolation of all those who oppose the idea.

Meanwhile, the word from El Salvador is that the struggle is accelerating on all fronts. A general strike is a possibility and concrete political support for all strikes is definitely needed. Many unions are on the verge of further action.

So please, get geared up: these people are counting on international solidarity.

For more information affiliate to the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign (ELSSOC), £6 (individuals); £10 (trade union/Labour Party branches, etc.), 20/21 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN, tel. 01-704 9849.

STOP PRESS: As we go to press, the government has rejected FMLN moves, and the Presidential elections are still scheduled for March.

Along the Color Line

Towards a Rainbow government

The Rainbow Coalition which supported Jesse Jackson's Presidential campaigns in 1984 and 1988 must move to its next logical stage of development in the struggle for power.

We need to rethink our political strategy and develop more effective methods to advance our agenda.

By Dr MANNING MARABLE

In recent years too much emphasis has been placed on Presidential politics. To be sure, the Presidency is a powerful position, dominating the government's agenda and determining the composition of the Supreme Court and the federal bureaucracy.

By contesting the Democratic Party's Presidential nomination, Jackson elevated the progressive agenda on foreign and domestic policies, while acting as an invaluable counterweight to the Democrats' ideological stampede to the right.

But a re-run of this strategy, placing too much of our energy and too many of our resources in the 1992 primaries, could be counterproductive.

We need to take a serious look at the strengths, contradictions, and possibilities of America's electoral system.

At the federal level, it is difficult for progressives to mount serious challenges to incumbents in either Party.

The turnover rate of the House of Representatives is much lower than the turnover rate of the Soviet Union's Communist Party Central Committee.

White

One probable electoral scenario three years from now will be a coalition of white conservative and centrist Democrats behind a "great white hope", possibly Virginia Senator Chuck Robb, New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley, or even ex-Vice Presidential hopeful Lloyd Bentsen.

The "trade-off" to the Party's liberal wing could be the selection of an Hispanic or African-American Vice Presidential running mate, someone like Congressperson Bill Gray of Philadelphia.

The Party bosses will leave no stones unturned to defeat Jesse Jackson, no matter how "reasonable" or "moderate" he becomes. White conservative Democrats continue to look for a scapegoat to explain their recent defeats.

Meanwhile, Jackson's trying to repackage himself as a more credible or "responsible" factor within the Party. But no amount of repositioning will permit Jackson or anyone else with progressive left politics, such as Texas's Jim Hightower or California Congressperson Ron Dellums, to assume the mantle of Presidential leadership.

This has nothing to do with personality, but with power and ideology. What the Rainbow represents is simply too threatening to the class interests which dominate the Party.

But if we shift the focus to *local* electoral politics, a more optimistic picture emerges for progressives. There are a total of 504,404 elective offices in the United States.

Most of these are township officials, town clerks, members of schoolboards, and municipal officials. In many states, it takes relatively little money or organisation to run successfully for state representative or schoolboard.

Leadership

These positions permit people who have an interest in political work to gain experience and to acquire necessary leadership skills to serve their constituencies. Progressives must think globally, but act locally.

Keep in mind that although African-Americans represent 12.5% of the population, they hold only 3.3% of municipal positions; they account for only 2.6% of county officials, 2.4% of all school district office holders, 0.6% of the special district officials and only 0.4% in town offices.

Women represent about 26.5% of schoolboard members, and only 18.5% of municipal officials. Only 1% of all office holders are Latinos, despite an Hispanic population of more than 7%.

In short, Blacks, Hispanics, and women remain grossly under-represented within the electoral arena.

A political vehicle outside the Democratic Party is needed to engage in successful electoral competition. In some districts, progressives may be able to "take over" the Democratic organisation and press forward with a Rainbow agenda.

But in most cases, the Democratic regulars will attempt to block and frustrate the progressive forces.

What's required is a network or organisation of activists who have personal histories of struggle inside the civil rights, feminist, labour, peace and gay rights movements, and in community based formations.

This network, if connected with the Rainbow, must have a system of democratic accountability. The national leadership or spokespersons must be directly elected and accountable to the membership.

The struggle for democratic leadership must be waged inside the Rainbow.

Such a third force could help to mobilise students on college campuses, struggling against tuition hikes, racism and sexism with the curricula, and cutbacks in minority recruitment.

It could link activists inside the labour movement struggling against plant shutdowns and union concessions.

But to do so, it must develop a viable national presence and organisational structure. At minimum, this means the funding of a national, monthly newspaper, which highlights the activism of local groups.

Regional offices are needed, not simply a room with a telephone, but a regular meeting place for progressives. We need a national theoretical journal which analyses the lessons of recent political struggles, and especially the successes and failures of the Rainbow.

But most importantly, we need field organisers, itinerant activists going from city to city, distributing literature and linking the various constituencies.

The goal must be a national Rainbow government by the year 2000.

LABOUR BRIEFING

Poll Tax Notes

Black People and the Poll Tax

We continue our series on how the Poll Tax affects different sections of the working class with a look at the way the Tax attacks black people.

When you are at the bottom of the pile, you tend to expect that the tax system will be used to level things out at least a little — to take from those who can afford and give to those who can't.

For black people, already suffering discrimination in education, employment and housing, the Poll Tax will do exactly the opposite.

The discrimination that black people already suffer is likely to mean that they will end up paying an inordinate proportion of the total Poll Tax bill.

While only 6% of white people live in households with more than three adults, 17% of people of Afro-Carribean origin and 22% of Asians live in such households, according to a recent survey.

Discrimination in housing hasn't meant bigger families in bigger houses paying more rates. On the contrary, it has meant big families crowded into small properties. The Poll Tax bills for these families will far exceed anything they have ever had to pay in rates.

The great majority of black people live in inner city Labour controlled Boroughs — precisely those Councils which will be forced by the law to charge the highest levels of Poll Tax.

Government rules for the Poll Tax and the new unified business rate mean, for instance, that average inner London Poll Tax levels will be two and a half times those for outer London.

An Association of London Authorities survey has shown over 90% of black people in inner London will suffer — losing an average of over £750 per year per household.

And of course, discrimination in employment will mean this burden falls on those in the worst jobs with the lowest pay.

Black people will also be directly affected as Councils are encouraged to cut back on services in order to set lower Poll Tax levels.

Exactly how the registration process will affect black people remains to be seen — but the implications of a nationwide register are not hard to understand.



PHOTO: Andrea Campbell

The pressure is already on for a national Identity Card system. Police, already in the habit of demanding to see black people's passports, will soon be able to ask for their Poll Tax registration numbers.

Enforcement of discriminatory immigration and nationality laws will become even more ruthless.

For young people, a shadowy world on the fringes of society will beckon. Already the changes in benefit regulations have meant that many young people leaving school, unable or unwilling to go onto YTS, are dropping out of sight.

With the Poll Tax this will certainly increase, as people try to dodge the register.

How long before we find a new layer of young black people, discriminated out of the labour market, unable to claim benefit, exiled from society by the Poll Tax – and thus denied use of Council services or even registration as homeless?

Their only future may be waiting to be picked up by the police — because they cannot quote their Poll Tax registration number.

Liverpool

Opposition hots up

Living standards of Liverpool people will be massively hit by the introduction of the Poll Tax.

The area has twice the national unemployment level.

By MIKE PICKEN

A pamphlet recently published by Liverpool City Council estimates that 73% of the City's adults will be worse off under the Tax.

Despite this, the City Council Labour Group are pushing ahead with plans to collect the Tax.

Twenty Labour Councillors broke the whip at the December Council meeting by voting for non-implementation. But the combined votes of Tories, Liberals and a majority of Labour Councillors, including City Council Leader Keva Coombes, won the day.

Labour right wingers have subsequently witch-hunted the 20, and Merseyside full time Party official Peter Kilfoyle used the pages of the *Liverpool Echo* viciously to attack Keva Coombes for not disciplining the Labour rebels.

Across the city meetings have been held to form local anti-Poll Tax unions. While primarily being instigated by *Militant* supporters, these meetings have tapped broader support for a mass campaign of non-payment of the Tax.

However, the Labour leadership have so far been let off lightly for opposing such a campaign.

An LPYS-organised city-wide "debate" in February, attracting over 100, had a Tory Councillor on the platform (Liverpool has only a couple of Tories out of nearly 100 Councillors!).

An LPYS demonstration against the Poll Tax in Southport attracted several hundred, but the planned target — Thatcher visiting the Young Conservative Conference — failed to materialise. Thatcher had cancelled the visit in a calculated snub to the increasingly ultra-right YCS.

Opposition to the Poll Tax will also be a prominent feature of a student demonstration against loans in Liverpool on February 22nd.

In the neighbouring Borough of Knowsley, the NALGO branch AGM voted with only four against to organise a boycott of Poll Tax preparations by the right wing Labour Council.

However, when this was taken to NALGO's national leadership they turned it down, arguing that NALGO was not prepared to be the "shock troops" to defeat the Poll Tax.

Knowsley NALGO's leadership are fighting this decision and Branch Secretary Roger Bannister told the recent launch meeting of Huyton Anti-Poll Tax Union that the branch would be taking a motion to NALGO's June Conference.

Knowsley NALGO will also be represented at the meeting of NALGO branches against the Poll Tax called by Lambeth NALGO on April 15th.

In another move by local trade unions, Liverpool TGWU have called a meeting against the Poll Tax on February 25th.

A long hard year of struggle against the Poll Tax is building up on Merseyside!

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Hull

Demo moves the Council (but not very far)

By BRIAN ELKINGTON

Five hundred, mostly young, people, marched against the Poll Tax in Hull at the beginning of February.

The march, which was organised by a local housing co-operative, was based on the slogan "don't implement!".

This so aroused the Council to rebellion that they are considering debating the Poll Tax at their next meeting!

Whilst the march showed the potential for opposition that exists, it also showed some of the problems that could arise.

There are now three groupings actively opposing the Poll Tax in Hull. Though at the moment a Labour Councillor who pledges non-payment but opposes non-implementation will be applauded, there are clearly dangers of real disagreements becoming entrenched positions in each group.

These cannot be allowed to wreck any campaign!

Scotland

Bank accounts frozen

By Terry Conway
Islington Against the Poll Tax

Activists in central Scotland who have failed to pay their fines for non-registration for the Poll Tax have had money taken out of their bank accounts and put into a special "suspended" account.

The amount taken far exceeds the actual fines.

Roland Sheret from Stirling told *Briefing* that £150 had been removed from his ordinary account — even though the bank had been told that the amount concerned was some £61.

It is scarcely surprising that banks are co-operating with the state in this attack on civil liberties. It is more disturbing to find the information regarding who has not registered or not paid fines comes from Local Authority Finance Departments.

The need to wage strong campaigns for non-co-operation with the Poll Tax amongst NALGO members is clearer than ever.

Many trade unionists are only slowly realising the full implications of what they are being asked to do. This aspect of the struggle will and must be prolonged.

NALGO Conference

Lambeth NALGO have called a National Conference to discuss the Poll Tax.
It will be on Saturday April 15th at Lambeth Town Hall.
The Conference, initiated by white collar workers in Lambeth, will discuss strategies for fighting the new tax in the months leading up to its implementation and in the coming years.
The Lambeth Conference will consist of workshops and speakers from the Union's National Executive Committee, Black Workers' Group, the Newcastle Organising Committee, from Scotland and Council representatives.
For further details contact: Sian Moore, Vice Chair Lambeth NALGO, Brixton Town Hall, London SW2.