LABOUR
40p FORTNIGHTLY
# BRIEFING
NO.80 MAR 21~APRIL 12 1989

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- The Way Forward in the Unions
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40p



PHOTO: Martine Stead

Bernadette McAliskey. Speech reprinted courtesy Troops Out Movement.

TROOPS OUT!

# KEEP IRELAND NEUTRAL!

**If you've been to Northern Ireland you can see that we live in Orwell's 1984. We live in the situation where there are cameras on top of houses, on top of police stations in all the towns, villages and cities of Northern Ireland.**

**The police do not have to patrol our streets, they sit in their police stations and they watch men, women and children. They know every single thing they do. They know when we were born, the registration of our cars. They listen to our telephone calls, they know how much rent we owe.**

**BERNADETTE McALISKEY speaks out against attempts to incorporate the Republic into the imperialist fold of NATO.**

They know our friends and relatives and, very simply, if they see somebody somewhere they don't think should be at that place, then they come round and ask them what they are doing there.

We are also seeing an attempt through the EEC to incorporate the Irish Republic into the system.

Europe believes that Ireland can be relied on to act as if she was in NATO and as if she wasn't neutral. We are looking at a country that is strategically placed in Western Europe and what *the USA is doing is buying itself a direct satellite* in part of Western Europe.

They know politics are unstable in Ireland and that *it is much cheaper in the long run to own Ireland itself.*

As we fight to rid ourselves of the last vestige of British Imperialism, the Irish government are in the process of selling us out to the Americans.

*Over my dead body.*

# DEMONSTRATE ON APRIL 2ND

Bernadette McAliskey's approach to NATO is both a Republican and an internationalist one.

NATO is not just militarily indefensible because its nuclear arsenal threatens the destruction of the planet. Nor is it simply a political affront to the sovereignty of nations by turning them into vast silos for its death-bombs.

NATO is the spearhead for imperialist policy in Europe. It is there to threaten, pressurise and intervene in local "trouble-spots" — propping up British occupation of the Six Counties, bombing Libya, and maintaining the superpowers' division of Germany.

NATO symbolises the utterly reactionary standpoint of capitalism internationally. This is why we say:

***BRITAIN OUT OF NATO! TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND! BREAK UP THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE!***

## LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

## Letters

# WRITEBACK!

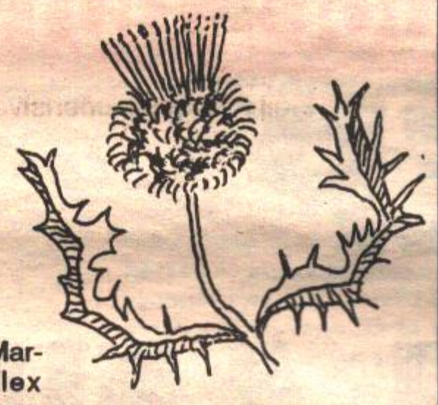
**We welcome your letters!**

**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, April 6th if possible.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

## Scottish Socialist Party formed — just



Dear *Briefing*,

When James Young, Margaret Stewart, and Alex Wood announced they were about to quit the Labour Party and to found a new group,it came as a complete surprise to *Briefing* supporters in Scotland.

On several occasions we had worked closely with Jim and Margaret and thought we were on the same political wavelength.

But their rash decision to form the Scottish Socialist Party disproved this assumption, and was seen by most *Briefing* supporters as a big mistake.

The founding meeting of SSP was held on February 25th in Glasgow. Less than 30 turned up for the morning session, which was restricted to members of SSP. After lunch, observers were allowed to attend and the meeting grew to around 60.

Debates around whether or not SSP should stand candidates at future election seemed rather academic, given that the "Party" claims less than 100 members throughout Scotland.

Initial attention from the media in Scotland will soon taper off as it becomes clear SSP represents only a tiny fraction.

The 100 or so members will only survive by confronting the reality of their situation as a small propaganda group.

Those who joined with great expectations of standing candidates against Labour and the SNP will soon depart when it becomes clear this is impossible.

What a shame to see talented comrades waste their time in this side show when the main debate is beginning to rage throughout the Labour Party.

These comrades could have played an influential role within the realignments unfolding in Scottish Labour. Instead, they have squandered that opportunity by indulging their political frustration.

*Jim Niblock*,
Glasgow Central CLP

## Sales before side-effects

Dear *Briefing*,

There are approximately one million prescriptions of the anti-depressant drug *Mianserin* every year.

It shares a long list of side-effects with similar anti-depressants including blurred vision, constipation, sweating and heartblock.

*Mianserin* (sold as *Bolvidon* or *Norval*) is particularly likely to cause haemotological reactions that can result in death. A similar drug, *Merital*, has already been withdrawn.

The Committee on Safety of Medicines (hardly an anti-drug company body) have announced their intention to publish a warning about *Mianserin*. The Department of Health wish to restrict its use to people over 65.

On February 17th the High Court upheld an injunction on behalf of Beecham and Organon preventing the warning being published and, in the case of *Bolvidon*, blocking even this very limited health restriction.

The court's decision focused on the Dept. of Health's failure to take account of the companies' claim that *Mianserin* is less likely than other anti-depressants to kill when taken in massive quantities.

The Committee on Safety of Medicines based its warning on deaths reported by GPs.

There are safer anti-depressants on the market; although they all have very unpleasant side-effects and do nothing to alleviate the causes of depression.

Why do Beecham and Organon insist on keeping this particularly dangerous drug on the market?

The answer of course is simple: UK sales of £2.8 million per year.

The companies, the government and the courts stand condemned of having learned nothing from *Thalidomide*, *Opren* and *Merital*. Profit-oriented health care lives on while people are dying.

*Dr. David Hill*
London Alliance
for Mental Health

## Why the silences?

Dear *Briefing*,

Gus Fagan's article on Hungary's economic reforms (*Briefing* no. 78) does not take us much further forward, but at least, in rejecting market socialism, it does not take us further back.

The problem, as Fagan points out, is that in the absence of a revolutionary socialist alternative, the socialist opposition in Eastern Europe has embraced the market.

As a position against their statist ruling classes, this is understandable. But, of course, it will not and cannot put socialism back on the agenda in Eastern Europe.

It is in this respect that Fagan's article has significant silences.

First, isn't the alternative to both the Eastern European ruling classes and the market workers' councils and workers' control? Ernest Mandel has said as much in *New Left Review*.

Secondly, what is the dynamic in Eastern European states that causes them to espouse the market, in very much the same way as Thatcher does?

Finally, and this point is raised again and again in *New Left Review*, is there some way in which the ideas of workers' power need to take account of, for example, feminism?

Are not consumerism and individual control important? In a sense, they are, particularly when one surveys the monolith, albeit cracked, of Stalinism — or the equally crisis ridden state machines of the West.

But these ideas can only become effective within the context of workers taking power. Otherwise you end up with a leftish version of *Marxism Today's* "New Times".

Why, therefore, the silences?

Yours,
*Keith Flett*,
Tottenham, London

## A sad story

Dear *Briefing*,

Maria Sundwall and Göte Kildén are upset by my article (*Briefing* no. 73) headlined "Now for the confrontation".

Although the title wasn't mine, I feel a little bit guilty — because I stated that "things are rapidly moving towards a confrontation."

It is hazardous to say things like that; but my point was that the elections showed a significant left turn among Swedish voters, whilst the Social Democratic Party (SAP) leaders and the government turned even further right, and that this will only sharpen the contradictions that already exist.

In my article, I blamed the Socialist Party to which Sundwall and Kildén belong, as well as the rest of the "left of the left", for failing to respond positively to the developments of the SAP-left and I underline this again.

Since the SAP returned to government in 1982 there has been growing discontent among workers and inside the labour movement. This has produced a loose movement among trade unionists called the "Dalamanifesto", which was described in my article.

It has also led to the creation of Social Democratic Alternative, to draw together elements inside the SAP that could no longer accept the leadership's right wing course.

The "Dalamanifesto" was a broad movement among SAP-supporting workers. They were finally pushed aside by more vocal people, mainly members of different left groups (such as Kildén). Since those leftists could not give the movement appropriate political expression, it faded away.

The Alternative group knows perfectly well that our links with the Dalamanifesto are very weak. But that is not to say that Socialdemocratic Alternative has no links at all with the workers' movement.

**Socialdemokratiskt ALTERNATIV**

Medlemstidning för föreningen Socialdemokratiskt Alternativ Nr 6 - 1988 Pr

Indeed, not only did the "Socialist Party" fail to respond positively, they did not even mention the alternative slate at all!

Maybe they were not interested in whether the alternative slate was successful or not, since the Social Democrats have been traitors since 1917. Maybe it was more important to raise slogans like "It is right to revolt."

But we were disappointed, because we had expected more from the Socialist Party than from some other leftists.

Sundwall and Kildén belittle the Alternative Slate by pointing out it was confined to Jönköpings Län, where we have been active as "local opposition for more than 20 years."

Is that some sort of "accusation"? One could add that the Socialist Party has been active nationally for 20 years, has no local strength, and has about the same number of members — 400 — that it had in 1975.

The *only* nationwide protests against the 1988 wage deal agreed by the metalworkers union were initiated by people close to Socialdemocratic Alternative.

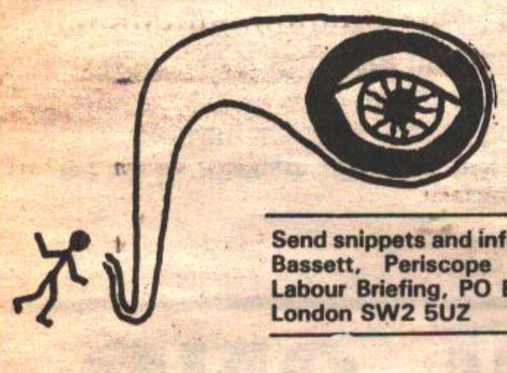
Almost everyone involved in Swedish politics today admits that the real battle over the SAP's political future is taking place inside the party *and* the unions.

Unfortunately for this important battle, people like Sundwall and Kildén tend to take a patronising stand, looking down on our struggle from their own "theoretical heights".

*Briefing* readers might notice more than a few similarities between the situations in Sweden and Britain, including the different views within Social Democracy, the Labour Party, and those building "parties" outside it.

Yours,
*Göran Kärrman*
Sweden

## Periscope



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

### Take care of the £s...

*Briefing* supporters alarmed at Council Chamber corruption and Town Hall backhanders will be cheered to learn that these are fourth division antics compared to some of the scams being worked in the EEC.

According to the European Court of Auditors, food companies regularly divert exports to countries where they can get the biggest subsidies — without altering the books.

Fourteen members of the Community's Economic and Social Committee claimed three days' expenses for attending committee meetings — but the minutes do not record their presence.

And a 77% rise in invalidity pensions indicates that many bureaucrats prefer being "invalided out" as a way of increasing their retirement pensions.

The fraud is estimated at £17.25 *billion* over the last eight years.

### Thought control

The decision by last November's Anti-Apartheid AGM to continue to support only one current in the liberation movement in South Africa has provoked some heated comment in the South African press.

In an article in *The Sowetan*, Azanian activist Sello Rasethaba, who was refused entry to the AGM, accuses the A-AM of a new form of colonialism: colonising the resistance of the oppressed.

And Jon Qwelane, in his regular column in the *Sunday Star*, attacks the British A-AM leaders as "so infernally arrogant it nauseates."

The article is entitled "We don't need thought control for our liberation."

### An under-the-bottom response

Cardiff Trades Council's decision to hold a conference on the Poll Tax last month met some problems... the refusal of the Labour Party or the TGWU to support it.

George Wright, TGWU Regional Secretary, a man not exactly known for his progressive views, was in contact with George Galloway MP, who was to have addressed the Conference.

Behind this sabotage lay a dread and fear, rather unfounded, that Labour was going to crash in the forthcoming Pontypridd by-election. Or, as George said to George, we don't need a Govan in the Valleys.

## Contact Briefing

**Those of you who have been following our office moving saga will be enthralled to hear that we are now some three quarters installed in our new office. We have learned to fuse the electricity (three times), which we suppose indicates a certain growing familiarity with the new surroundings. However, unpacking is taking a long time, not least because, in truly socialist fashion, the office workers have shared a particularly virulent flu virus between them. We cheer ourselves reading your correspondence, which we urge you still to send to 39 Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB. We will be still more cheered if you send cheques to that address too. You can, however, now phone us direct on 01-809 3927 (but will all those women who keep ringing Mike please only phone Tuesdays or Thursdays after Easter, or we'll start taking a Social Secretary's commission on the messages). We place our hopes in the fabulous Summer Raffle. John Wilton is waiting keenly at 25 World's End Ave, Quinton, Birmingham B32 1JF, 021-422 1366 for your orders for tickets: £1 per book of 5 tickets, and your inquiries about ticket sellers' discount prices. See you in three weeks time with the next gripping instalment...**

**Published by Labour Briefing: PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ.**
**Printed by East West Graphic [TU], 01-354 3827**

# BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

## What future for Afghanistan?

For socialists there is nothing to celebrate in the recent events in Afghanistan. The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan is a clear victory for the reactionary Mujahedin, US imperialism, and its regional partners — Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia.

Leonid Brezhnev's 1979 intervention was designed to prop up a weak pro-Moscow regime in Kabul — it has failed. Instead, Brezhnev's successor Gorbachev has left a country where the Mujahedin has been strengthened and allowed to expand its base in the name of fighting the invader.

Externally the Soviet presence in Afghanistan has strengthened anti-communists allowing them to capitalise on worldwide revulsion against the Soviet involvement in the Afghan war — a war that included napalm, cluster bombs, and landmines.

Soviet withdrawal is the lesser of two evils. The withdrawal runs the terrible risk of a bloodbath for the most progressive forces in Afghanistan, but the cost of maintaining the presence would be even greater, requiring an increased Soviet presence and the massive slaughter and destruction, if not genocide, of its opponents.

With the unifying presence of the invading army now removed it is likely the Mujahedin will fall out over the division of the spoils. The various components of the Islamic Alliance based in Peshawar are already clashing more and more openly.

It is our role to lift the aura of "freedom fighter" that surrounds the Mujahedin. Socialists and anti-imperialists in Britain and the USA must demand a halt to the funding of the Mujahedin. We must expose our governments' complicity in the restoration of 13th century style feudal and Islamic repression of the women and men of Afghanistan.

Imperialism must not be allowed to impose a "Lebanisation" of Afghanistan into zones of influence around various guerrilla groupings in the name of installing an anti-Soviet government.

## Labour and internationalism

The Labour leadership is stepping up its offensive against unilateral nuclear disarmament. Party officials are being used to pressurise Labour MPs who signed *Tribune's* statement defending unilateralism.

There has also been an increase in press attention around the Transport and General Workers' Union, whose traditional block vote against the bomb will be specially decisive at Labour's Conference later this year. Labour leaders are planning to use the Policy Review to dump unilateralism.

Their argument is breath-takingly illogical. They told us unilateralism was misguided during the Cold War when there were no Soviet initiatives on weapons reduction. Now the new Soviet leadership is engaged in real arms cuts, unilateralism is still "misguided". Heads they win, tails we lose!

Neil Kinnock's offensive against unilateralism is deeply unpopular within the Labour Party and its natural supporters. But the leadership's retreat from this policy also has a wider meaning.

Behind the multilateralism/unilateralism argument lies the question: will Labour confine itself to being a loyal opposition accepting the military alliances and definitions of "national interest" forged by the ruling class?

Or will it stand for independent politics, loyal only to the class it is supposed to represent, with an approach to international alliances based on the interests of working and oppressed people everywhere?

*Briefing* stands for the latter view, and that is why we will continue vigorously to defend unilateralism against the leadership's offensive.

PHOTO: Martine Stead



# Lawson's dilemma... *Our* opportunity!

**Nigel Lawson's sixth budget is a "do nothing" budget.**

**It epitomises the paralysis that has crept over Tory economic policy as the UK economy slides towards recession.**

In order to bring about a "soft landing" internationally the governmental managers of the major western economies — Lawson included — are trying to avoid being too deflationary.

This is code for ensuring recession does not become slump, as growth slows and inflation and interest rates remorselessly creep up.

The other main economic buzz word now is "caution". The *Financial Times* headline summed it up: "Budget aims to curb inflation as economy begins to slow."

Lawson has little room for manoeuvre. UK inflation is the highest of the Group of Seven countries (almost 8% and still rising) and the trade deficit is projected to surpass last year's record figure at £15 to £20 billion.

The huge £14 billion surplus on the public account — a direct product of the progressive strangulation and privatisation of the public sector — should have allowed Lawson to make large tax cuts.

It should have allowed progress towards a now probably unachievable 20p in the £ base rate: a major blow to one of the bedrocks of Tory dogma.

Instead, fear of inducing a further twist in the inflationary cycle, and another uncontrollable rise in the level of imports, forced Lawson to tighten the anti-inflationary screws.

By Dave Palmer
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

This avoided another rise in interest rates — now apparently stabilising at 13% after nine rises in six months.

Apart from using the record fiscal surplus to pay off part of the national debt — Thatcher aims to stay in office till it's cleared — Lawson's other measures amounted to little more than tinkering.

Manipulation of interest rates is now his only macro-economic mechanism. In summary the main points of the Budget were:

- Statutory indexation of tax allowance of 6.8% but no change in basic or higher rates.
- Cuts in National Insurance for the low paid. Those on above £43 will pay 2% on the first £43 and 9% on the rest. Worth £3 a week to those on half average earnings.
- Increase in the amount taxpayers can invest in Personal Equity Plans to £4,800 per annum, in order to encourage further privatisation of pensions.
- Further measures to extend Employee Share Ownership and profit related pay.
- End to ceiling of two thirds of final salary for tax-exempt occupational pension schemes.

This represents only a £1.88 billion net cut in tax and NI for 89/90. Growth in GDP is projected to fall to 2.5% in 89/90 (4.5% in 88) and inflation down to 5.5% by the end of 89.

Compared to previous Lawson budgets, which aimed at fostering fundamental shifts in the socio-economic balance, this was a very low key approach.

In the run-up to the Budget, *The Economist* advised Lawson to correct his past sins on the inflation front and ensure he avoided:

"an incautious Budget [that] would make the financial markets think that Sterling's present strength was unsustainable."

Reassuring the City in order to keep the £ stable was clearly Lawson's main objective.

### Tribune

John Smith, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, surprisingly managed to make some pertinent points about the government's high £, high interest rate strategy in his pre-Budget review of the economic situation in *Tribune*.

Smith points out that high interest rates are now needed to help pay for the trade deficit. Lawson is plugging the massive balance of payments gap by keeping interest rates high enough to attract capital from abroad.

As a consequence, "Britain is becoming dangerously dependent on a mountain of 'hot money' placed in London in the short term."

This is a course similar to that taken by that other great debtor nation the US. Should market sentiment turn against Sterling, the only measure to stop its inevitable decline would be a recession — inducing a hike in the interest rates.

Secondly, Smith notes that inflation has been both demand led and supply pushed.

The Tory credit boom allowed demand to surge far ahead of UK industries' ability to supply goods, causing a huge surge of imports and fuelling inflation as they hit structural capacity restraints.

Further inflationary pressures lie in the government pushing up the price of water, transport and electricity and in interest rate rises themselves; by raising the cost of borrowing and mortgages.

Smith's solution is of course to redirect Lawson's cash mountain away from tax cuts and paying off the national debt to invest in the infrastructure, education, and training: "laying the foundation for sustained economic growth."

### Tax

In addition he calls for a return to a progressive tax system in which the rich once again pay their "fair share".

On Budget day Kinnock followed up "the Smith line" with an effective attack upon Lawson's refusal to use his huge surplus to improve health care, education, and economic infrastructure.

The Labour leadership's ability to score points on public spending is due to the fact that they are pushing at an increasingly open door. They will certainly manage to slam it in their own faces.

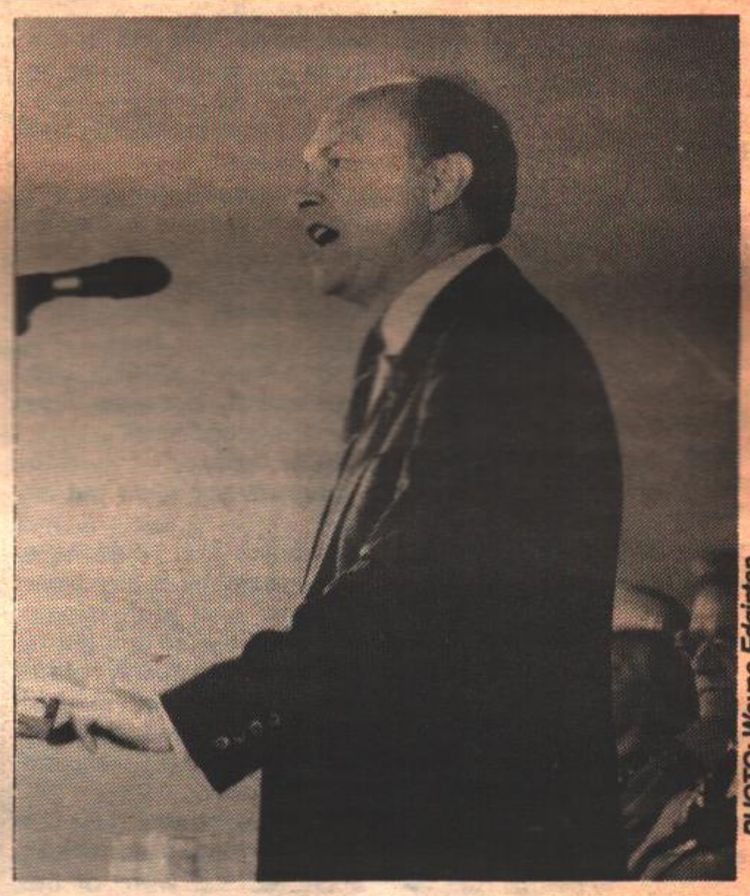


PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

*Kinnock manages to push the open door: we can only wait for him to slam it in his face.*

Labour's economic positions are now so timid and sub-Thatcherite as to be incapable of achieving a mass resonance, whatever the opinion polls say.

However, on the issue of public spending a critical opportunity has now opened up.

One of the central political questions in the coming months will be the co-ordination and extension of the struggle in defence and improvement of universal, egalitarian public provision.

The Tories' economic options are running out. Whatever course of action Lawson follows will inevitably have adverse consequences.

When Thatcher entered power she deliberately exacerbated the depth of the economic downturn in order to "shake out" the economy and discipline the working class.

It is difficult to see how it would be possible to sustain a further dose of monetarism in the coming recession. But Labour will certainly show itself incapable of exploiting the opportunities arising out of the new situation.

### Tories

It is important that the remaining opposition forces (both to the Tories and "New Realism") within the labour movement) register that a fundamental shift in the economic and political situation is occurring.

The left must rapidly begin to explore and develop the new potential for social struggle which will unfurl. Lawson's dilemma is *our* opportunity.

## Defending Rushdie

### Campaign gets going

By GILL LEE

**The campaign to defend Salman Rushdie against Khomeini's death threats continues.**

**In Islington *Labour Briefing* supporters were involved, through the local "Friends of Salman Rushdie" campaign, in organising a successful meeting with speakers including Chris Smith MP and Hanif Kureshi, of *My Beautiful Laundrette* fame.**

London Socialist Conference is organising a meeting on Saturday April 22nd at Lambeth Town Hall at which Kureshi will again be speaking in Rushdie's defence.

The Rushdie affair raises important issues around the question of racism. Some on the left are now scared of organising in defence of Rushdie's freedom of speech through fear of the racist backlash.

Whilst racists are using the Rushdie affair to drum up anti-Muslim sentiment, socialists can counter this by establishing local campaigns and meetings on an anti-racist *and* pro-secular basis.

Local meetings can be built involving Black Sections and the forces around the Socialist Conference. The racists and pro-censorship lobbies must both be confronted if we are to defend Rushdie and democratic rights in general.

Let us know what you're doing in your area.

## Ten Years On

# Remember Blair Peach

**Ten years ago the mobilisation of the Southall community against the National Front was inspirational.**

**Whole factories closed down as workers walked out, shops were shut, and houses started to empty.**

Supported by a strong anti-racist movement (the days of the Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism) the people of Southall came out en masse in a peaceful occupation of their town centre.

By Oliver New

It was planned to fill the streets around the Town Hall with a sea of people, who would listen to music and speeches — and prevent the National Front from coming into the area.

Before the people had assembled the police put the boot in. They used extreme brutality, some officers appearing nothing short of demented.

Spearheaded by the Special Patrol Group, they cleared the streets with boots and batons, clubbing men and women, young and old.

Desperate to stop local people filling the streets they had just cleared, they drove police cars up and down at breakneck speed.

Seven hundred were arrested. Some were simply released without charge or were dropped off miles away in the country outside West London.

Three hundred and forty-five were charged, many with serious crimes. Clarence Baker nearly died. Blair Peach was killed.

If they hadn't murdered Blair, the police might well have got away with this savage attack on a black community. Reports in the press described events on that day as some sort of "black riot" fermented by "evil communists".

The establishment did their best to cover up the killing and the brutality. Even before the inquest, the Director of Public Prosecutions announced that no policeman would be prosecuted. It seems they were "licenced to kill".

However, 345 demonstrators *were* put on trial.

Charges that could have been heard by a jury were changed and professional magistrates were brought in. The trials were mainly held in Barnet, on the far side of London, so as to isolate the defendents from their community.

The magistrates (just like the Fleet Street journalists) accepted the word of the police in case after case. An incredible 80% conviction rate resulted.

Almost everyone in Southall knew somebody who was arrested or who witnessed the police savagery.

The response from the national anti-racist movement was strong. Slowly the defence campaign began to publicise the truth about what had really taken place on April 23rd.

The conviction rate in the courts dropped to a "mere" 50%. Money for defence work poured in and meetings were held up and down the country. The brand new Tory government (elected in May) was forced to defend the role of the SPG.

Ten years on, there is widespread support for an anniversary march in memory of Blair Peach and in defiance of state racism and repression. Please give it your support.

## Women for Socialism



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

*An eager audience at Women for Socialism's national conference.*

# Labour Women: make your choice!

**Over 400 women from all over Britain attended *Women for Socialism's* conference "Socialist Feminism into the 1990's" at the end of February.**

**Martha Osamor, Haringey Councillor and Black Sections activist, set the tone for the weekend:**

"What we, as socialist feminists, need now is co-ordinated action, because we can't identify with what yellow-bellied men and women are doing with the word socialism.

"With *Women for Socialism* we can show what has to be done."

Mairead Keane, head of Sinn Fein's Women's Department, said the struggle for Irish women's liberation, including reproductive rights, would never take a back seat to the struggle for national liberation; there could not be one without the other.

Camden Councillor and Socialist Lesbian Group activist Sandra Plummer told the conference: "Traditionally the left has seen lesbian and gay rights just as a civil liberties issue and not as central to the struggle for socialism.

"*Women for Socialism* can create the space to develop these ideas which enhance and take socialism forward."

Workshops explored issues such as pornography, anti-racism and anti-imperialism, lesbianism and socialism, women and housing, reproductive rights and child sexual abuse

By Sarah Roeloffs and Ruth Clarke *Women for Socialism* Steering Group

Many initiatives were proposed from the workshops, including a dayschool on a socialist feminist approach to education; a charter for women workers; the production of a socialist feminist analysis of the recent NHS white paper, and a *Women for Socialism* delegation to Palestine.

A green issues meeting suggested environmental concerns be introduced onto the socialist feminist agenda, where they rightly belong, before being hijacked by the political right.

The Sunday was an organisational day for *Women for Socialism* members only.

An open Steering Group was elected to co-ordinate national and regional activity, with the aim of popularising socialist feminism and uniting in common action women inside and outside the labour movement.

Developing links with differently abled women and Black women's groups will be a priority, as will the building of anti-imperialist feminist solidarity networks in this country.

The need to make common cause with trade union women, through building campaigns around health and safety, low pay, casualisation, deportations and other concerns was recognised.

And finally support was expressed for the Committee of 100 against the Poll Tax in Scotland and for the setting up of similar Committees of 100 across the country.

*Women for Socialism* will encourage women to stand as Labour MPs on a campaigning socialist feminist political platform.

There will be further discussion on the Labour Party NEC elections, though the names of Betty Heathfield, Martha Osamor, Diane Abbott and Alice Mahon have been put forward.

Local *WfS* groups are already developing in Sheffield, Nottingham, Newcastle, South London, the West Midlands, Kent University, and Manchester.

A quarterly newsletter will keep *WfS* members and other socialist feminists in touch.

Feminists in the Labour Party are at a crossroads. The Party leadership have discovered the potential of women's voting power — but on their own terms, not ours.

The Labour Women's Organisation and Local Authority equalities work are progressively muted and marginalised. Either we campaign or compromise or leave. Or we join with other women and reassert our collective strength. Why not join us?

An annual subscription to *WfS* cost £5/£2 unwaged. Organisations can affiliate for £8. Please write to Ruth Clarke, 7 Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY

## Viraj Mendis

# Drop the charges!

**Viraj Mendis has succeeded in obtaining a passport from the Sri Lankan government, despite initial blocks at high level.**

By TONY PHERSON

**This followed exposure of the delay by Father Henry West at a Gatwick press conference.**

Viraj is once again seeking a safer country.

Since Viraj's kidnapping and deportation, at least 17 members of the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign have been arrested on spurious charges, including obstruction and assault on police.

A woman activist had her arm broken by police at Gatwick.

This clearly represents a concerted effort to discredit the campaign which succeeded in mobilising 3,000 for a march in Manchester on February 4th. Pickets will be organised for all courts where activists are to be tried.

The campaign has launched a fund drive. Phone 061-226 7529 for details. VMDC may be contacted c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL.




PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

**Demonstrators brave the cold March rain to protest the innocence of the Tottenham Three. The demo ended in a joint rally with the St Patrick's Day march, linking racism in the British state with its oppression of the Six Counties.**

## Political Football

# Fans fight ID cards

By Glenn Sutherland Our Man in the Shed

**If we are to believe Sports Minister Colin Moynihan, our national game — indeed, the future of British society in general — is under threat from hordes of violent "football hooligans" rampaging over the country every Saturday.**

**What is to be done about this threat to our way of life? Of course! Introduce compulsory identity cards for supporters attending all Football League games!**

The Minister's strategy relies entirely on whipping up irational fear and banner headlines, rather than logic or serious thought.

What is the real scale of the problem? Last season, 1,086 fans were found guilty of football-related crimes. This represents one fan out of 17,000 who attended League games in 1987/88 — or about one offence every two games.

Arrests have fallen in number over each of the last three years. In the same three years, after years of decline, League attendances have actually risen.

Clearly, football supporters themselves are not as fearful of "football violence" as the Minister.

Why is the government so hell-bent on imposing ID cards when even the Police Federation has come out against the scheme?

Apart from the benefits to the various multinational computer companies who stand to make a fat profit out of supporters for installing and running the system, the scheme will be a useful "dry run" for the introduction of computerised ID cards for the population as a whole.

In addition, the hysteria which Moynihan and his accolytes in the tabloid press have stirred up serves as a useful diversion in an otherwise difficult period for the Tories.

The ideological impact of the idea that we must all "stick together" under the onslaught of hordes of subhuman "football hooligans" is similar to that of the "Falklands effect" — although on a smaller scale.

The effects of the proposed scheme on the game of football will be catastrophic. Attendances will be hit dramatically. In Luton Town's last season before they introduced a 100% membership scheme, their home gates averaged 10,377.

In 1987/88, despite two Wembley appearances and League success, they struggled to just 8,162 — a pathetic figure for a first division club considering that the average gate over all *four* divisions is about 9,000.

Many of the poorer clubs will be forced into bankruptcy by a combination of the implementation costs of the scheme and falling attendances.

The safety of fans will be put at risk from the inevitable delays in getting into grounds caused by ID card checks.

The scheme will be administered by a new quango — the Football Membership Authority. The FMA will be appointed by the government and accountable to the Minister.

They will have powers to exclude anyone from Football League grounds for an unlimited period, whether or not they have committed any criminal offence.

The ID card scheme has been opposed by both the Football League and Labour's front bench team.

But much of the opposition has fallen into the trap of accepting Moynighan's rationale that human rights — and the continuing existence of the game — must be sacrificed in order to "get rid of the hooligans".

Indeed, it was under a Labour government that video surveillance, police snatch squads and barbed wire fences were introduced into football grounds.

Socialists should be clear that such measures will never defeat what is, in fact, not "football violence" but simply "violence".

The roots of violence between gangs of (mainly) working class youth are complex and contradictory, but are linked to the destruction of traditional working class communities and the "false consciousness" of sexism, racism, and nationalism.



*The 1945 Moscow Dynamo team — well used to ID cards. Not a lot of trouble reported at their matches!*

Football supporters themselves, fed up with the platitudes of politicians and the football hierarchy, have started to take matters into their own hands.

The informal network of fanzines and unofficial supporters clubs which has sprung up over the last few years has put on the agenda issues such as the democratic control of football, anti-racism and anti-fascism, and improved facilities.

The Football Supporters Association (FSA), while still only an organisation of a few thousand, has been an influential voice of opposition inside the football world.

Socialist football supporters (yes, there are thousands of us!) have a duty to get involved in all these activities.

We must ensure that mass opposition to the ID cards is organised to kick out the scheme and the "brains" behind it — Colin Moynihan.

But beyond this, we have a duty to be active in the struggle to transform football into what it should be — *the People's Game*.

**•Join the FSA. Send SAE to 59 Oakwood Road, Halewood, Liverpool L26 1XD for details.**

## LCLGR

# Lesbian and gay socialists decide strategy

**The Annual General Meeting of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) takes place in London on the weekend of April 22nd/23rd.**

**The AGM comes in the year after the massive campaign against Section 28 and the 84% majority won at the last Labour Party Conference.**

By Peter Purton LCLGR

The meeting will be planning how to maintain lesbian and gay rights on the agenda of the labour movement at a time when many would rather that it disappeared.

The AGM will be debating a proposal for a national "Vote Labour" campaign which aims to keep lesbian and gay rights issues upfront during the forthcoming elections.

Within this, we shall consider the obvious threat that Labour leaders will see the issue as an electoral liability and attempt to sweep it away.

Serious trade union work will be the other area to be considered.

All lesbian and gay socialists should be members of the campaign, which is the only organisation of the lesbian and gay movements which has organised on a continuous basis to take lesbian and gay liberation work into the labour movement.

The comprehensive national policy of the Labour Party (won for the first time in 1985) and the unprecedented level of heterosexual labour movement support for the Stop the Clause campaign last year are largely due to the continuous struggle of LCLGR.

•The LCLGR AGM takes place at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, Cowcross St, London EC1 on Saturday and Sunday, April 22nd/23rd. There will be a lesbian caucus on the preceding Friday night.

Membership of LCLGR is open to all lesbian and gay socialists, trade unionists and students. It costs £3 a year unwaged, £6 low waged, and £10 high waged.

Send the money and your name and address to: Membership Secretary, LCLGR, PO Box 306, London N5.

labour campaign for lesbian and gay rights

## Food safety

# It's all in the brains

**In response to public concern over BSE in cattle (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy), the government has banned the use of cattle brain products in babyfoods.**

**It's not much of a response, considering no babyfood manufacturer uses brain products. But many other food manufacturers do, notably in meat pies and pâté.**

By Peter Chowney Hackney South & Shoreditch CLP

More worryingly, it may be a response which hides the real issues behind BSE; issues which make all other food safety scares seem insignificant.

BSE is a cattle disease which affects brain tissue. It causes loss of balance and behavioural changes, leading eventually to madness and death.

It is incurable and has a long incubation period: infected cattle may not show symptoms for a year or more.

Sheep also suffer from a similar disease, Scrapie, which is now believed to have been transmitted to cattle by sheep brain included in cattle food. BSE and Scrapie would appear to be the same thing in different animals.

BSE and Scrapie are part of a group of diseases called "transmissable encephalopathies".

Human transmissable encephalopathies exist too: the rare Creuzfeld-Jacob Disease (CJD), and Kuru, a disease of the Fore people of New Guinea transmitted through the custom of feeding the brains of their dead to their children.

Both CJD and Kuru have identical symptoms and neurological effects to Scrapie and BSE. They also have long incubation periods — up to 20 years in Kuru.

All these transmissable encephalopathies are caused by sub-viral particles called "prions".

Prions are smaller even than viruses, raise no immune response in their victims, and are very heat resistant — they cannot be deactivated by cooking or canning. The diseases they cause are always fatal.

Prions are not species specific. Apart from the Scrapie-BSE example, CJD has been transmitted experimentally to a range of laboratory animals.

Indeed, there is a good deal of circumstantial evidence to suggest that BSE, Scrapie, CJD, and Kuru are caused by the same transmissable agent.

This would all be serious enough. But CJD is very rare, and Kuru is effectively extinct. More worrying is the possible link between prion diseases and Alzheimer's Disease.

Alzheimer's Disease, formerly known as pre-senile dementia, has increased disturbingly in western countries in recent years. It is now the fourth commonest cause of death in the USA.

But even though it has never been demonstrated to be transmissable, its very similar neurological and pathological effects to transmissable encephalopathies have led some researchers to suggest that it, too, may be prion transmitted.

The extreme heat resistance of prions, coupled with very long incubation periods and the consequent apparent good health of infected animals, could mean that viable prions have been present in cooked meat products for years.

If CJD is indeed caused by the same agent as BSE, many of us could already be infected. The indirect link between BSE and Alzheimer's disease also cannot be ignored.

These very serious health risks cannot remain undisclosed. Pressure must be brought on the government to ban all animal brain products now.

But we must also ask why the ban was not introduced years ago. The link between Scrapie and CJD has been known for at least 15 years.

Once again, the government has allowed the interests of commercial farming to obscure public health concerns which could have very serious consequences. They must not be allowed to escape their responsibilities this time.


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Labour Party

## Labour in Scotland

# The dual mandate debate

**The main debates on Scottish Home Rule at the recent Labour Party (Scotland) Conference flowed from the positions put forward by Scottish Labour Action.**

**Conference discussed the Constitutional Convention, internal "devolution" for the Party in Scotland and the "Dual Mandate".**

**To the SLA's credit, they have taken advantage of the changed political climate in Scotland after Sillar's spectacular victory in Govan.**

**Only last year, Kinnock failed to mention Devolution or Home Rule for Scotland in his address to the Scottish Conference.**

**Worse, when asked why he missed Devolution out of his speech, he replied that he never mentioned "the environmental conditions in the Himalayas" either.**

### Insults

**These insensitive insults caused much anger in the Party in Scotland and brought Labour's commitment to a Scottish Assembly into general disrepute. This year, Kinnock went out of his way to try to redress the balance.**

**He told the Conference "Devolution ... is a distinctive democratic answer; for the Scottish people, contrived by the Scottish people, provided for the Scottish people."**

**Only a year ago, Donald Dewar and the Labour leadership were still cautious about the Constitutional Convention. Indeed, Kinnock specifically ruled it out. Now Kinnock and Dewar boast that the Party is united behind the Convention initiative.**

**This "U-turn" is to be welcomed — it helps create the atmosphere for further debate and action.**

**Allan Green**
**Maryhill CLP**

But we should be careful not to allow the Convention to be used by the leadership as a smokescreen for their refusal to act on Labour's Scottish mandate.

The Convention is to prepare the ground for a Scottish Assembly or parliament in the face of a Tory government in Westminster that refuses even to discuss devolution.

The Convention will have to develop a credible plan to force the Government to concede an Assembly or for the Scots to establish one themselves.

In the recent period, the focus of the debate on the Scottish left has moved from Devolution to Home Rule.

At a joint SLA/LCC/ Fabian Society Conference John Pollock (past Labour Party Scotland Chairperson and EIS General Secretary), said "Any acceptable form of Home Rule must be able to resist gerrymandering from Westminster.

A Scottish Assembly must be able to refuse to pay for Thatcher's imperialistic ambitions."

Robin Cook, from Labour's Front Bench, has also now



*Dennis Canavan*

stated that we must use the term "Home Rule" instead of "Devolution".

These arguments, along with the SNP's "Independence in Europe" slogan, have obviously made an impression on the Labour leadership.

Dewar told the Inverness Conference that Labour's plan now involved "independence and pride within the United Kingdom."

He also accepted it was possible that a future Assembly would raise its own revenue rather than receiving a grant from Westminster.

On the question of how to achieve Scottish Government, Pollock said, "The Scots cannot be expected to tolerate another Term of Tory dictatorial rule from Westminster.

### Electorate

"The Labour Party has a duty to the Scottish electorate — we must give them the certainty of voting themselves out of Thatcherism."

This was also the mood at the recent Socialist Conference in Stirling where Dennis Canavan argued for Labour to prepare for Scottish Government with or without the consent of Westminster.

The position of the left was put to the Party Conference by the SLA inspired motion on the "Dual Mandate". The motion stated "It commits itself to fight for Home Rule by every non-violent means, including cross-party and extra-parliamentary action.

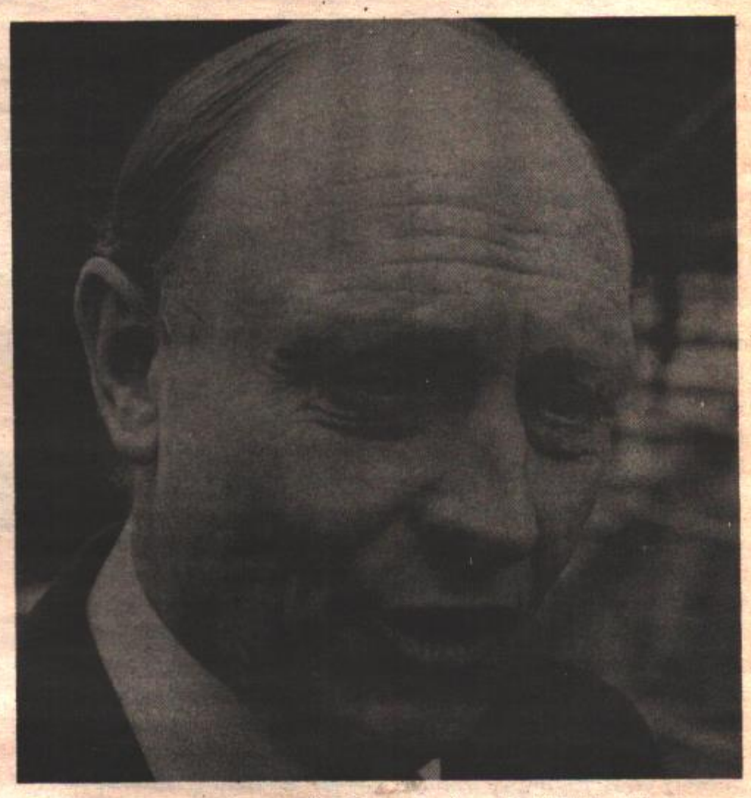
If such an Assembly has not been established by the time of the next General Election, the Labour Party in Scotland will regard the election of a majority of Labour MPs in Scotland as a mandate for the immediate establishment of an Assembly regardless of the UK election result."

Kinnock and Dewar made it clear they saw the Dual Mandate as "defeatist".

### Remitted

With the TGWU supporting the motion, it was remitted to the Scottish Executive; a victory of sorts. Prior to Conference the leadership had been confident that the Dual Mandate position would be heavily beaten.

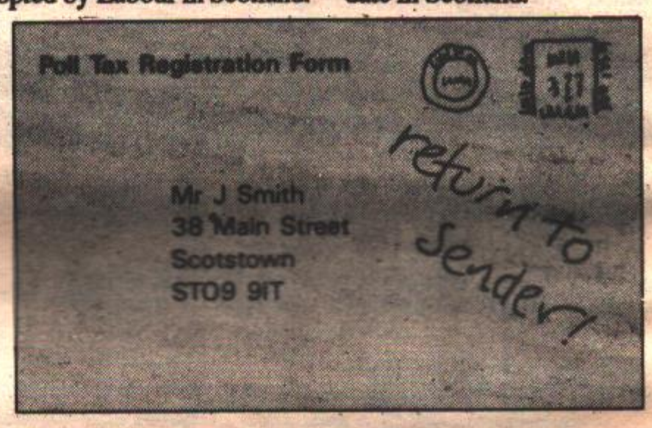
The left must work to take advantage of the opportunity to break Kinnock and Dewar's "New Realism" — they are using the Constitutional Convention as a fig-leaf for the tired old plea "wait until the next Labour Government at Westminster".



*Kinnock: the man who now realises Scotland isn't in the Himalayas.*

The left in the Party in Scotland has made considerable progress on Home Rule over the past year. We should build maximum unity around the SLA's drive for the Dual Mandate to be adopted by Labour in Scotland.

As an immediate task, we must continue to try to build as big a non-payment campaign against the Poll Tax as possible, utilising the argument that Labour should act on its mandate in Scotland.




*We need to build the anti-Poll Tax campaign in Scotland*

## Black Sections AGM

# Head on into the mainstream!

**Over 100 delegates and observers from as far afield as Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester and London, attended the sixth annual conference of the Labour Party Black Sections in Leciester.**

**Opening the conference, Narendra Makanji said the Black Section was now established as an authentic and legitimate representative of black interests in this country.**

He added "black politics has entered head on into the mainstream of British politics, where power lies, ending decades of neglect and marginalisation.".

In a crowded agenda, delegates debated education, attacking a system that undermined the confidence of black pupils by the negation of the rightful place of black acheivements in world history.

On local government, delegates roundly condemned attempts to water down the impact of Race and Women's Units by incorporating them in generic "Equality Units".

Race units must be maintained and not abandoned simply because the Labour Party considers it electorally opportune.

Poll Tax was singled out as a major battleground, particularly as black households will bear the brunt of it due to their disadvantaged position in society, over-represented amongst the low paid and unemployed and forced to live in cramped, run down housing.

**By Julian Lewis**
**Lambeth**
**Councillor**

Conference called for a campaign of solidarity action in support of Councillors and trade unionists under attack by the courts for opposing the Poll Tax and said "all forms of protest" must be used as part of a class wide reponse to oppose the new legislation.

Guest speakers from both the African National Congress and the Pan-African Congress were given standing ovations when they embraced each other in solidarity before adresing conference.

Cde Mzala of the ANC said



*Narendra Makanji, who opened the Conference.*

"this act of unity was not 'public relations', but a genuine move by both organistions to co-ordinate their attacks on South Africa."

He added that sharing a platform dispelled rumours that the ANC would never, as a matter of principle, share a platform with the PAC.

He said "We are of one community in South Africa, and the crucial issue now is to liberate our country."

In a full agenda, many issues were not reached before *Briefing* went to press.

## PR Debate

# An Advance for Democracy?

**Continuing our debate on proportional representation, RAY DAVISON (Honiton CLP, Exeter and East Devon Campaign Group) argues that PR is inimical to democracy in principle.**

**Arguments for Proportional Representation oscillate between those based on political expediency and those based on democratic principle.**

**Both sets of arguments require analysis, by those on the left who advocate PR as desirable in itself or as part of a package of constitutional advances appear to have an impoverished view of democracy.**

**They relate democracy only to a limited numerical consideration of seats allocated proportionately to votes cast, emphasising that under PR every vote would count positively.**

A crucial aspect of democracy, however, is accountability and, as we all know from the record of the PLP, effective accountability can only occur if organisational structures exist which facilitate direct, active participation by an informed membership.

Both the national and the regional list systems of PR and multi-member constituencies make it difficult for the electorate to know whom they are voting for.

Dialogue between electors and candidates and even between party and candidates is reduced.

### Meaningless

Pre-election manifestos become all but meaningless under PR because post-electoral consensus, if it can be achieved at all, will be based on deals and concessions made among elected MPs.

PR tends to obscure both *whom* and *what* the elector is voting for. Hardly conducive to accountability or democracy.

The "proliferation effect", in which small parties gain an influence *disproportionate* to their vote or real public support, makes a mockery of the notion of electoral equity and would lead to injustices greater than any which exist under the present system.

### Post

Of course this *can* occur under "first past the post", but it is much less likely than under PR. It also opens up the alarming prospect of putting the National Front in the Commons.

PR is also a recipe for coalitions with the attendant chaos of splits and rearrangements and instability.

This would not aid the kind of coherent, socialist advance based on radical structural reforms which is Labour's historic aim.

It is to be doubted that present party organisations would survive PR. We can have no idea what alliances would emerge — except that they would all be anti-socialist.

## NUT CONFERENCE

# STA organise the fightback

**This year's NUT Annual Conference takes place over Easter in Blackpool.**

**Last year, the "New Realist" leadership effectively gave up any challenge to the Education Reform Act and instead concentrated fire on inner union democracy.**

By Martin Allen
STA

The fact that the Conference is taking place at all is a reflection of the strength of the NUT left, organised around the Socialist Teachers Alliance, who mobilised delegates against proposals to abolish Annual Conference at last year's Special Conference.

Compared to many other unions, the NUT remains relatively democratic, although this year there will be the usual attempts by the Executive, dominated by the "Broad Left" clique, to stifle debate and block the continued progress of the left.

Motions supported by the STA are top in most of the sections of the Conference agenda.

The leadership are clearly finding it increasingly difficult to mobilise their traditional support as they have been unable to offer the membership anything except glossy publicity and various shopping and insurance deals.

There was no response to Kenneth Baker's imposed 6% pay rise (teachers still do not have their negotiating rights back) and no initiatives to stop increased demoralisation in schools.

The rebuilding of confidence within the NUT depends on being able to organise a fightback over conditions of service.

The work of the average teacher is becoming intolerable as she or he is expected to deal with a continuous stream of Tory initiatives.

Those teachers who have mistakenly seen parts of the Education Reform Act as progressive are increasingly seeing the true motives behind it.

The STA-backed motions call for a much tighter interpretation of a teacher's job, backed by strike action where LEAs refuse to negotiate or break agreements.

Teachers are also facing the introduction in the future of Local Management of Schools, which involves the Head and School Governors being responsible for much of what the LEA now takes on.

Conference will have its first opportunity to discuss this development.

Not only does the labour movement have to defend state education from Tory attacks, but it also has to offer alternative models of education that benefit the working class, the black community, and women.

The leading motion in the "education" section calls for an alternative education policy based around democracy and equality. Its adoption would at least be a start in a long struggle.

The STA has continued to campaign for positive action in a trade union with 70% women membership.

The motion that is top of the "equal opportunities" section makes several important demands about increasing women's participation within the union, along with the need for a much greater emphasis on campaigning around the implications for women of Baker's attacks.

Once again the question of changing the union's rules will be debated.

The archaic NUT rulebook prevents debate on motions that do not have an "educational" link and therefore stops Conference adopting the sort of policies that are necessary to create proper alliances with the labour movement.

Another aspect of the NUT's "professionalist" past is the absence of a "political fund". Most of the large white collar unions now have these and it seems that this year the Executive may at least accept the principle behind it.

The Socialist Teachers Alliance will be holding its usual programme of fringe meetings, and many delegates will undoubtedly find these more rewarding than parts of the Conference!

It will also be a chance to promote the left's challenge in the forthcoming elections for the union's General Secretary and other national officer positions.

## NALGO pay claim

# 12% or £1,200 — and no strings!

**In recent years, NALGO has included a flat rate element in its pay claims in order to benefit the low paid.**

**But at the same time the NALGO leadership has included a percentage element in order to "restore earning differentials with other groups."**

Pressure for a flat rate only claim has been mounting, and this year it was lost by only one vote on NALGO's National Local Government Committee.

Because of the drop in earnings of local government workers (a 16% increase is needed to make up the drop since 1984), and the low awards in the past (5.4% last year), this year's claim deals only with pay and not conditions.

However, the employers have already indicated that only a 4.8% pay increase has been allowed in the 1989/90 rate support grant settlement.

The employers have also stated that they expect changes in grading conditions (i.e. the introduction of flexibility) to overcome staff shortages.

These attacks on conditions are likely to include:

•the removal of fixed grades from the nationally-agreed spinal column of salary points;

•automatic incremental progression through a scale to be replaced by "performance" and "merit" based advance;

•removal of appeal rights beyond the immediate employer to provincial or national level;

•and the establishment of "enabling powers" so that Local Authorities can reach local agreements outside the terms of the national scheme.

The NALGO leadership is desperate to regain some credibility on pay with its members.

By Fred Leplat
Islington NALGO

NALGO held ballots of its members in 1986 and 1988 for industrial action over pay. Both were narrowly lost because the leadership failed to launch an effective campaign in support of the initiative.

Compared to the campaign organised to win the ballot for a political fund, those on pay were low-key.

The NALGO leadership should now explain clearly that the only way to win a decent pay award is an all-out national strike.

Instead, it talks of "alerting members to the possibility of industrial action" and warns that "any decision to ballot is made on a realistic estimation of members' response."

Without a strong lead to build confidence at the union's base, members will naturally feel that the union will not back them in a prolonged strike. Once again, the NALGO leadership will blame the membership for yet another defeat.

If there is no strike for the pay claim, the employers will probably force NALGO to accept a pay increase slightly higher than the suggested 4.8% in exchange for concessions on conditions.

In London, the campaign should be tied to the submission of a claim for London Weighting at £2,500 (in line with banks and private companies). A cost of living allowance for the South East is also necessary.

NALGO branches should campaign now for NALGO's National Local Government Committee to call a one-day strike and a national demonstration on May 17th, when the employers submit their final offer.

Branches should further demand that an all-out strike be triggered at the Local Government Group Meeting (conference of local government branches) scheduled for June 12th.

## NHS

# Hands off our hospitals!

**Kenneth Clarke may have £1 million of taxpayers' money to promote the NHS White Paper, but we have mass support to beat it.**

**That was the confident message from the 150-strong meeting which launched the *Hands Off Our Hospitals* campaign in London last month.**

The Campaign is trying to link all those opposed to the White Paper around these basic demands:

•No to major hospitals opting out;

•No to GP cash limited budgets;

•No to the bureaucratic anarchy of the "internal market";

•No to hospital trusts and business-style Health Authorities;

•No to more NHS privatisation;

•No taxpayers' subsidies to private medicine.

The Campaign has been launched first in London, with the help of London Health Emergency, because there are as yet no resources for a nationwide campaign.

By HARRY SLOAN

But its organisers recognise the need for national coordination and will seek immediate links with similar campaigns in other towns and cities.

It will also support calls for the TUC and Labour Party to organise a major national demonstration as a focus for the fightback.

The Campaign will produce a series of poster-style information sheets spelling out the implications of the White Paper for various groups. It has already published a detailed pamphlet replying to the White Paper (£1, available from 335 Grays Inn Road, London WC1), and is selling car stickers, badges, etc.

With opinion polls already showing a two thirds majority against the Tory proposals, *Hands Off Our Hospitals* promises to develop into a major counteroffensive against Thatcher.

One problem remains: the perennial apathy of the Labour left to NHS struggles. It would be tragic if we squandered this major opportunity to link a popular issue with socialist politics.

Affiliate now to *Hands Off Our Hospitals* and start building the grass roots links we need to save the NHS. Contact HOOH, c/o LHE, 335 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

## Bradford

# Who can stop the Tories?

**Smith "two votes" Midgley used his Mayor's casting vote on March 7th to inflict another round of cuts on Bradford's hard-pressed working class.**

**The package included another £4 million cuts, balanced by £1.2 million new spending.**

By DAVE MILES

Despite the reality of a rate increase, the Tories claim their cutting means no rate rise, blaming the increase on demands from Labour-dominated joint boards (such as the fire service).

The Tories' aim remains to get spending down by another £13 million so that Bradford's Poll Tax level will be in line with government limits. Although this has not yet been stated explicitly, this presumably means further cuts in the coming 12 months.

The largest portion of the cuts (£1.9 million) were in the education sector. Warned of the threat, Bradford NUT decided to ballot for a half-day strike on the day of the Council budget meeting.

Both NALGO and NATFHE were to ballot in support.

However, the National Executive of the NUT received "assurances" from the Council leadership and vetoed the local ballot. NATFHE action was then called off, reinstated, and called off again.

Promised action from NALGO also collapsed.

NUT militants have sought to draw comfort from the budget. They claim that schools have been treated better because of the threat of action.

Jobs lost due to falling rolls were already known, and there will be no compulsory redundancies. Job losses will be largest in the two smaller local colleges.

Clearly, the danger for the unions is to succumb to salami tactics. Much larger cuts in overall Council spending are obviously yet to come.

The demonstration outside the budget meeting mustered only a couple of hundred people, activists form various unions and from voluntary groups calling for Council money to replace lapsed government funding.

Various explanations are offered for this failure by union militants. But those who were not there may be coming to believe that nothing can stop the Tories carrying out their programme.

# ORGANISING TH IN THE UNIONS

**Trade Union Briefing is holding a day-school on April 20th. Here ALAN THORNETT starts the discussion on some of the issues posed in the trade union movement at the present time:**

**•Was this present period of damaging defeats inevitable?**

**•Who is primarily repsonsible for the successes the Tories have achieved?**

**•What shape are unions in after the Thatcher onslought?**

**•What is the political basis of today's "New Realism"?**

**•To what extent have the traditional industrial bases of trade union strength been destroyed?**

**•What is the shape of the employers' offensive?**

**•Is "post Fordism" a valid concept?**

**•Does the trade union movement still have the strength effectively to confront the Tories and their new anti-union laws if there was the will at the top to do so?**

**•What effect will 1992 and the single European market have on the trade unions in Britain?**

**•Can new realism be successfully challenged in the unions today?**

## Where did "New Realism" come from?

**Today's "New Realism" was never simply a British phenomenon.**

During the late 1970s Social Democratic parties across Europe responded to the general economic depression by shifting to the right and embarking on austerity programmes aimed at improving the productivity of labour and the competitiveness of their own national capitalist economies.

In Britain James Callaghan capitulated to the demands of the IMF (and the pact with the Liberals) and implemented austerity, wage restraint and rising unemployment.

The response of the trade union rank and file was the "winter of discontent" — a wave of militant struggles which rocked the Callaghan Government during the winter of 1978/9.

Disillusion with Labour deepened, and the Tories won the 1979 Election.

Failure of Labour at the polls triggered a deep crisis in the labour movement. The right wing blamed the defeat on militant strike action and deepened their class collaborationist trajectory.

This took the form of a conscious determination to refuse to support industrial confrontations with the new Tory Government — a decision which quickly became the main political basis of "New Realism".

Establishing "New Realism" as the dominant trend in the labour movement, however, was not so easy.

The upsurge of working class struggle at the end of the 1970s (1979 saw 29,474 strike days, higher than the early 1970s) had already produced a spectacular new radicalisation, which was boosted soon after the election by the Steel strike.

Its clearest political expression was the Scargillite leadership of the NUM and the Bennite movement in the Labour Party.

It culminated in Tony Benn's challenge for the deputy leadership which mushroomed into a national movement inside the Labour Party and the trade unions.

## A series of betrayals

**Benn's defeat, however, albeit by a hair's breadth, marked a turning point and the beginning of a revival of the right.**

This shaped itself through campaigns against the left and the conscious betrayal of a series of major strikes in the early 1980s.

The level of these betrayals was shown most starkly during the train drivers dispute in 1982 with the decision of the General Council to expel ASLEF from the TUC unless they ordered a return to work immediately and accepted management terms on flexible rostering.

The betrayal of the NGA by the TUC during the Stockport Messenger dispute at Warrington in 1983 marked the *de facto* acceptance by the TUC of the anti-union laws.

During the dispute the General Council instructed the NGA to comply with the Tory anti-union legislation in defiance of the TUCs own policy established at a special Congress the previous year.

The direct result was massive fines on the NGA and a huge defeat for the print unions. Within a few years the Fleet Street unions were virtually smashed.

By this time the shape of the Tory project was clear.

They wanted nothing less than the demolition of the gains of working class struggle and past Labour Governments, the reduction of trade union strength, and to put the employers back into the driving seat.

### Unemployment

To carry this out they closed down huge areas of industry, created mass unemployment and pushed through extensive repressive laws against the unions and the destruction of local government.

The Miners' Strike was planned by the Tories as their strategic showdown with the trade union movement.

The defeat of the Strike, through its isolation by the trade union leaders and Kinnock, was a disaster for the working class. It immeasurably strengthened both the Government and the employers.

It has led to the closure of more than half the pits and the sacking of half the miners — even more than Scargill forecast.

### Leaders

The soft left union leaders and the Euro-Communists soon distanced themselves from the Scargill leadership and attacked the strike. The "New Realist" project moved from its relative isolation during the strike to centre stage.

These defeats strengthened sinister developments taking place to the right of "New Realism" — the EETPU's evolution to US type "business unionism".

Hammond organised with Murdoch against the print unions at Wapping. Instead of expelling them the TUC leadership made concessions and adapted to their politics.

The most important counterweight to "New Realists" remained the Scargill leadership of the NUM.

Scargill maintained a class struggle line after the strike, both in the NUM, the TUC and the Labour Party despite a bitter campaign against him within the NUM by the right-wing and the CP.




*High noon at Mansfield Colliery, August '84. Scargill's worst predictions were not only realised, but excee*

His decision to stand for re-election and his victory despite a media campaign against him was a blow against new-realism.

The Tory victory at the last election gave the Tories the green light to proceed with their full project.

Kinnock's response to Labour's defeat was to move further to the right and step up the witch-hunt of the left. He initiated a fundamental "review" of Labour Party policy.

### Positions

He attacked traditional Labour positions on nationalisation, lesbian and gay rights, Clause 4, and the more recent gains on unilateralism and the move away from bi-partisanship on Ireland. He has dropped opposition to privatisation and Council house sales.

Was this response the only one possible? It depends how we assess the strength of the Tory Government. If the Tories are strong now what made them strong?

Was it a strength which came from the ruling class itself? Or was it a result of a weakness within the working class?

### Determination

The only conclusion which fits the facts is that their "strength" has been based primarily on the determination of most of the trade union leaders to stop a fightback against them.

Repeated betrayals robbed the working class of vital victories. Even one clear victory in a major confrontation would have created a different dynamic and the possibility of a generalised fight-back.

Opposition to the Tories in the first half of the 1980s was such that the number of strike *days* was not significantly different from the second half of the 1970s.

The *number* of strikes, did fall, reflecting the difficult conditions strikers faced and the more protracted nature of the strikes when they happened.

The number of strikes (though again not days "lost") for 1985, the year of the defeat of the miners, was the lowest since 1938.

### Conditions

Management has taken full advantage of these conditions with repeated speed-up and the widespread introduction across industry of management techniques imported from the USA and Japan: Quality Circles, Team leaders, and other forms of "employee involvement".

These are now being extended to the white collar and service sector with, for example, Quality Circles being brought into the Post Office.

"Flexibility" and "Multi-skilling" has been introduced alongside new "flexible" shift patterns.

Thousands of protective agreements have been abolished and the power of the managers and the supervisors reestablished on the shop floor. Under the drive for profit industrial accidents have escalated since 1980.

Payment systems have been rationalised with attacks launched on national pay bargaining, which, with a weaker rank and file movement at workplace level, is often now against the interests of the employers.

### Abolished

Wages Councils have been abolished and with them the basic employment entitlements of millions of workers.

In the public sector the unions have been hit by privatisation and by contracting out which has decimated sections such as the ancillary workers in the hospitals.

## The changing composition of the working class and post-Fordism

**As *Marxism Today* claim, the Tory project has changed the composition of the working class.**

Rationalisation automation and new technology have wiped out millions of jobs in the traditional industries such as coal, steel, shipbuilding, cars and docks.

Where new jobs have replaced these they have often been white collar or service sector jobs.

Part-time, low paid, unorganised jobs have increased through privatisation and restructuring, creating a vast new workforce the majority of whom are women workers.

How do we assess these changes? Do they represent a fatal weakening of the working class, seen by Marx as the grave digger of capitalism? Should we now look for some other force to challenge capital or conclude that it cannot be challenged?

Not at all. This is not what the Tory offensive has been about. Their aim has been to increase the exploitation of the working class, not attempt to abolish it.

Despite huge cutbacks, manufacturing industry workers are still many millions strong and still remain the key factor in trade union and political developments in this and other advanced capitalist countries.

Whilst the number of workers in traditional industries has declined, those left remain in potentially powerful positions. Smaller numbers of people control vast operations.

For example rationalisation in the docks has reduced the number of registered dockers to below 10,000 (there were 60,000 in the 1960s). Those

# E LEFT

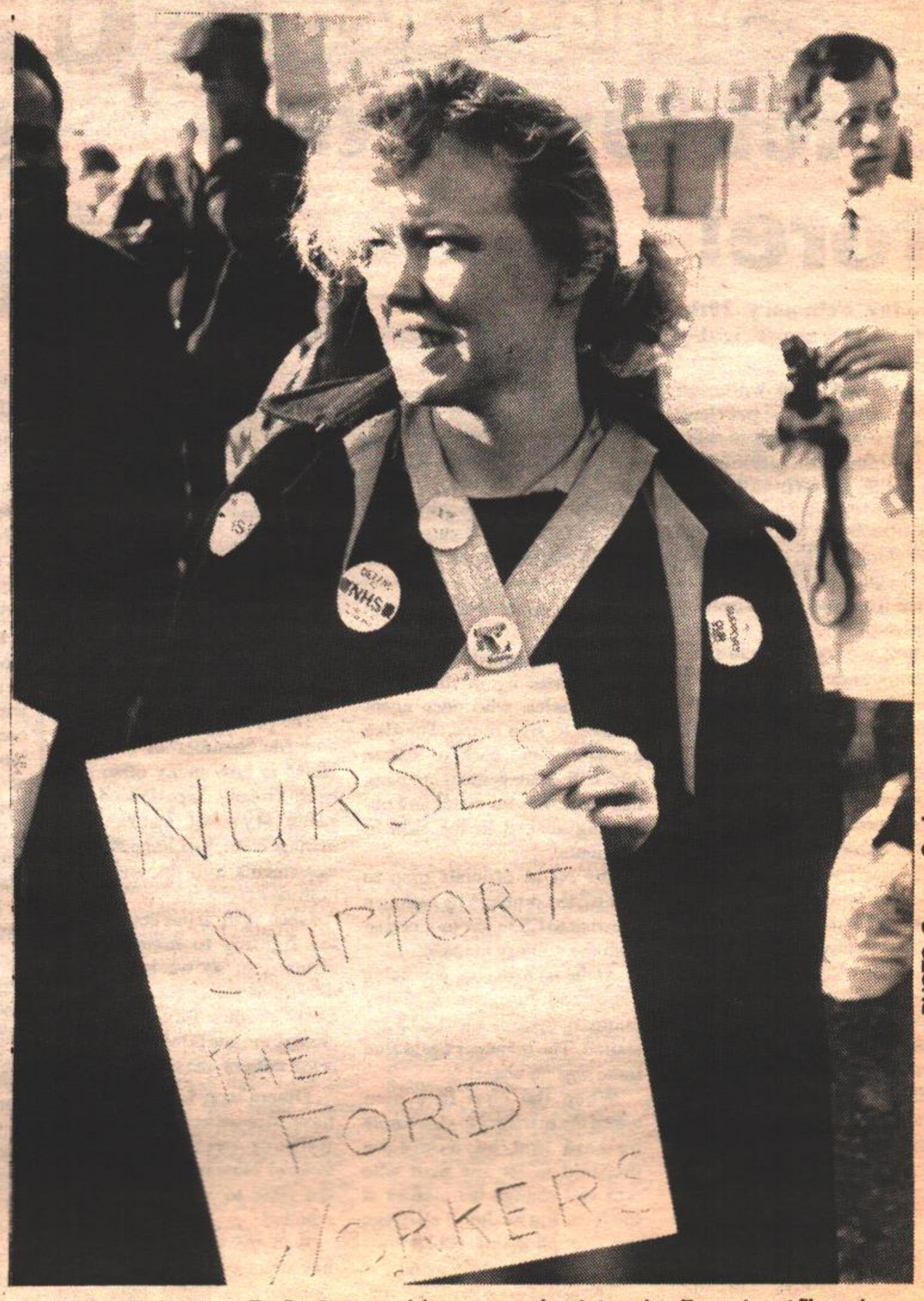



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

*For Marxism Today, "post-Fordism" means giving up on workers' struggles. For rank and file workers, the real struggle at Fords meant an opportunity to show cross-union solidarity.*



*ded.*

remaining still handle 75% of all cargo moving in and out of the country.

*Marxism Today* also talks about "post Fordism".

This is the idea that new technology is changing the production process out of all recognition; workers are no longer alienated from the product of their labour and thrown into conflict with the ruling class through the objective conditions of their exploitation.

Instead they are drawn in as partners in the employers' plans. In fact there have always been developments in the production process, but they have not changed the relationship between workers and employers.

What is taking place is an intensification rather than a dissolution of the old relationships through speed-up and competition on a world scale.

Trade union membership remains high though it declined by 1 million during the early 80s.

In 1970 there were 11,178,000 trade unionists — 10,002,000 affiliated to the TUC. By 1985 there were 10,716,000 trade unionist with 9,586,000 affiliated to the TUC.

More damaging than the net loss of trade union members has been the break-up of shop floor organisation.

In most blue collar sectors fewer stewards have facility time, while viable shop stewards and combine committees are the exception rather than the rule.

## Growth

There have been important developments and growth in both membership and organisation of the white collar sector. However, extensive damage has been done in the blue collar sector which was the bed-rock of the trade union movement.

Despite this damage it would be absurd to argue that the present 9,000,000 trade unionists affiliated to the TUC do not have the power to take on the Tory Government or the capitalist state itself.

The problem is one of organisation and the development of class consciousness: something which is influenced not just by the representatives of capital but the politics of the workers' movement and the quality of leadership it is able to develop.

It is equally absurd to argue that the movement is incapable of taking on the anti-union laws.

If unions were prepared to defy the law as a matter of policy, and be prepared to lose their funds as a part of the struggle, a generalised fight-back could be developed.

The present disastrous policy of complying with the law imposes a damaging straightjacket on the movement.

## The current period

**The upsurge of militancy early last year demonstrated the ability of the working class to struggle. The fightback in the NHS, most spectacularly amongst the nurses, was a part of it. The London local government day of action was another.**

At Fords the workforce rejected a three year pay deal, tied to a package of new working practices, and voted for strike action. The powerful strike which followed closed down most of Ford European production.

This could have led to a much needed victory for the trade union movement, fuelling the growing militancy at that time and raising the possibility of developing a more generalised fightback.

## Betrayed

Instead, the strike was betrayed by the officials just as it reached its strongest point.

There was a simultaneous radicalisation in some of the white collar unions, with the protracted struggle of the teachers and the radicalisation in NALGO over the attack on local government.

The strength of that militant action began to open up divisions in trade union leaderships. The TGWU elections were an example of this.

Although they were more a defeat for the right and a victory for Ron Todd than a victory for the left, they were an important step forward, clearly influenced by the militant struggles at that time.

The battle to hang on to unilateralism at Labour Party Conference last year was one consequence.

The wave of militancy had receded by the autumn through the problems of leadership which it faced — not just the betrayal from the top but the weakness of the rank and file movement.

It left the nurses continuing their grading struggle. But it did demonstrate the possibility of militant action and how quickly it can emerge.

Despite the serious defeats inflicted the working class in Britain has not suffered a definitive defeat, such as that of 1926 which rendered the movement almost powerless for more than a decade.

In fact the dynamic of the present period is towards higher levels of class struggle. The single European market in 1992 may lead to struggle across Europe as the restructuring of European capitalism gets underway.

In Britain the pressure of higher inflation and the tensions created by the implementation of the Tory project point in the same direction.

The postal strike in September again showed the ability of militant action to break through the dead hand of the leadership. The result was a a temporary disruption of the introduction of changes in working practices planned by management.

## Organising in the unions

**The weakness of the hard left in the blue collar unions is not new. In the Miners' Strike it proved unable to tackle the political problems which arose and to chart a way to victory past the political limitations of the NUM leadership.**

But these weaknesses can be overcome. The struggle in the unions is for the leadership of the working class against existing reformist leaders.

As Trotsky pointed out, trade union leaders in Britain have a unique authority, rooted in their role in British imperialist expansion.

This authority has occasionally been challenged from below, by spontaneous struggles, but it has never been broken.

This makes a united front approach to the labour movement in Britain crucial to a socialist perspective.

A class struggle current must be built within both wings of the labour movement. Long term work is needed to build bases in sections of the working class through involvement in day-to-day struggles.

Socialists must be prepared to take positions in union structures, as shop stewards and representatives, and to work in Broad Left formations, setting them up and fighting for their democratisation.

These lefts should fight for a class struggle line and leadership.

The struggle for democracy in the unions is central to the struggle for a union leadership which will fight. It would open up unions to the voice of the membership.

The struggle to break the white male domination of the labour movement would similarly help democratise trade unions more generally.

Some unions such as the TGWU and the G&M motivated largely by loss of membership have taken initiatives to recruit women workers.

Success would involve addressing issues which affect women particularly, such as abortion rights, nursery facilities and the accessibility of meetings.

We have to defend the interests of lesbian and gay workers within the unions in terms of discrimination and abuse at work.

There have been attempts, most successfully carried through in NALGO, to set up black organisations. NALGO has the best record of any union for successfully fighting immigration cases.

The organisation of low paid and part time workers must be taken seriously. The current expansion of the building industry with a largely unorganised labour force must be tackled.

## The tasks of Trade Union Briefing today

**Despite current difficult conditions there is scope for constructive work in the trade unions. There are signs of a regeneration of trade union organisation, in which the left and Trade Union Briefing in particular must be involved in it.**

*Briefing* should consider developing a charter for democracy in the unions which would deal with election procedures, the conduct of meetings and the accountabitity of those elected. The struggle for democracy is essential to the struggle for a fighting leadership.

Solidarity is a central issue too. Tory laws have made it illegal but it is central to each major strike in this period — the seafarers are an example.

The solidarity established during the miners strike through the support groups and WAPC needs to be preserved and developed. The Solidarity Network, which *Briefing* supports has consistently addressed this need.

A very important focus for building a class struggle left in the unions at the present time is the Chesterfield Socialist Conference.

Although it has not been strong in the unions up till now, Chesterfield currently offers by far the best format for a broad left initiative in the trade unions.

Its recent conference on Health and Safety at Work, organised jointly with the Solidarity Network shows the potential. Trade Union Briefing must be fully involved in it.

The Trade Union Policy Group which also organises the trade union side of Chesterfield and is preparing policy documents for the June Chesterfield conference.

Chesterfield has called a major conference of the trade union left in Sheffield for November 11th and 12th, inviting sponsorship from trade union broad left organisations.

Properly built this could be a major event and could develop the work of Chesterfield in the unions.

We should aim for a Chesterfield trade union steering committee to actively organise in the unions; to build solidarity with those in struggle; and to organise a further conference in a year's time.

**BRIEFING TRADE UNION DAYSCHOOL**
**April 22nd, 10.30-5**
**Polytechnic of Central London, Marylebone Road**
**(opposite Baker St. tube)**

• £5 (waged); £3 (unwaged) • Creche available if booked in advance •

**For further details contact Pete Cooper, 17 Dodbrooke Road, London SE27 0PF, or phone 01-809 3927.**

## Mining Safety

# Frickley to the fore!

**Monday February 20th. C83s Coal Face, Frickley Colliery.**

**There had been water on C83s coal face all the previous week but not enough to warrant a water note (permission to leave 30 minutes early).**

By start up on Monday morning, February 20th, water levels had risen to between 12 and 18 inches. The coal face is only 36 inches high.

There is no way under these circumstances to avoid the water. Underground water isn't just wet. It's slurry, acidic, and icy cold.

The Monday day-shift "face men" asked for a water note, in accordance with the Yorkshire Water Agreement. These notes are issued by the face Deputy (supervisory staff and NACODS) and are negotiated by the spokesperson (chargehand).

In most cases notes are issued by the Deputy at his discretion. These day to day decisions are normally not the concern of senior management, unless agreement can't be reached.

The Deputies on the day and afternoon shifts agreed that a water note was in order, but would not sign one because senior management stated that there was no water and if a water note was issued the individual Deputy would be disciplined.

Upon asking NACODS where they stood, we were told: "We do not expect our members to take part in an agreement that could result in them losing their jobs."

**By a proud miner from Frickley NUM**

When the NUM officials became involved they asked senior management why they were interfering. Management initially backed down and said it was prepared to leave the issuing of water notes to the Deputies.

On that Monday's night shift, management again threatened the Deputies, who once again refused to sign notes. Tuesday day-shift were back to square one, with management insisting that there was no water and becoming soaked to the skin in moments.

The NUM officials tried to resolve the problem by calling a site visit to C83s, in conjunction with the colliery manager.

At the face no coal was being produced because a water pumping system was being installed. The manager again said there was no water!

When the coal face men asked the manager to sign a note he said that he would be prepared to let any man who was wet change his clothes at the face. But he didn't envisage any disruption to production — because there was *no water*.

The now very wet NUM officials, even though under threat from a previous dispute of £10,000 fines, felt obliged to call all the men at Frickley out on strike.

On Wednesday February 22nd, a branch meeting was held and the resulting vote put the pit on strike until the Saturday.

Between the Wednesday and the Saturday British Coal took the Yorkshire Water Agreement to an Industrial Solicitor to see if it could smash the agreement in Court.

The reply was that the agreement was legally binding and, if you'll excuse the pun, "watertight". This resulted in an apology to the NUM and to NACODS, with a promise not to interfere again.

**We had won!**

The problem to me as a rank and file member of Frickley NUM is how many other pits have already experienced the same style of aggressive management, had longstanding agreements torn up, and done nothing?

Once again it has been Frickley fighting to maintain the status quo, as we have done dozens of times since 84/85. I know at some pits faced with closure morale is low, but where is the miners' tenacity?

Others won for us what we have. Are we going to give it up without even raising our voices? Now more than ever is the time to stand up and be counted.

One last word on those who have had enough and are not prepared to fight. Take your *redundancy*, get out, leave the pits to those who not only want to work in them, but who are also prepared to fight for decent working conditions.

**Postscript: Three miners killed, first week of March.**

## Health & Safety Dayschool

# Safety and solidarity!

**A successful trade union Health and Safety Day School was held in Birmingham on March 11th.**

**Organised jointly by Hazards 88, Solidarity Network, and the Socialist Conference Trade Union Policy Group, it attracted activists from a wide range of unions and research organisations.**

Participants attended workshops on occupational health, international links, women, employment training, community campaigns and the labour movement, and the work of the Construction Safety Campaign.

The advent of 1992 and the single European market were discussed in the final plenary.

Workshop discussion showed only too clearly the staggering inhumanity of capitalism in sacrificing workers' lives and health in its search for profits.

•Young workers on YTS schemes are burned to death in chemicals explosions.

•Irish building workers are decapitated when their overloaded dumper truck rolls over on an uncleared path.

•Steel workers from the Yemen are crushed to death by unguarded machinery.

In cases affecting migrant workers, their families may never know what happened to them: eight Irish building workers killed on London sites last year are still unidentified.

Capitalism is a system that tears people away from the lives they want to lead, kills them and throws them on the scrapheap. And the fines for fatal accidents at work still average only £600.

It's easy to let our horror and anger at this carnage overwhelm a positive response. The employers have banded together successfully in the face of relatively "progressive" European legislation.

In Britain, the noise levels required by the EC directive have been pushed back from 85 to 90 decibels. As the speaker in the final plenary put it:

*"More workers will be deaf because we weren't as well organised as the employers."* This battle has not yet been lost, but employers are determined to wriggle out of health and safety legislation whenever and wherever possible.



Hazards Publications

*"You've been overworking yourself lately, Burrows. Keep it up!"*

**By SHEILA COHEN**

Speakers in the workshop on international issues described how employers will "export" hazards. If legislation in one country prevents them from carrying out unsafe practices they will move work elsewhere.

How do we begin to fight back? Speakers at the conference saw rank and file action as the key. Workers need to be organised nationally and internationally to establish and maintain standards.

Internationally, organisations like the Workers' Health International Newsletter are working towards this. A second international conference of rank and file activists on health and safety is to be held in Hamburg in May.

Even the most progressive legislation on health and safety is useless if there isn't the grass roots organisation to support it in the workplace.

Successful examples of rank and file trade union and community campaigns in Britain were represented at the Conference by Walsall Community Action Against Toxic Waste and the Construction Safety Campaign.

The Walsall campaign has secured the backing of the local Council in fighting the effects of the poisonous chemicals dumped in the area by Leigh Industries.

The Construction Safety Campaign has seen a resurgence of rank and file protest amongst London building workers amid a sharp rise in deaths and injuries in construction.

In a context where 55% of building workers are now self-employed and most non-unionised, this shows how campaigns around safety can themselves play a central role in boosting basic trade union organisation.

The overall message of the day school was that *only* such organisation can effectively end the scandal of unnecessary death, sickness and injury at work.

The links formed at the day school between Hazards 88, Solidarity Network and the Socialist Conference are a welcome step forwards in that direction.

**Contacts/Dates:**

**Hazards 88**, c/o Tommy Harte, HASAC, Unit 304, The Argent Centre, 60 Frederick Street, Birmingham B1 3HS. 021-236 0801.

**Construction Safety Campaign AGM:** April 8th, Kingsway College, Sidmouth St, London WC1.

**Socialist Conference Trade Union Policy Group and Solidarity Network national conference of the left in the unions:** November 11/12th, Sheffield. Contact Sheila Cohen, 25b Elmore St, London N1 3AW.

## Miners' Strike

# Manchester remembers

**The fifth anniversary of the Miners' Strike was celebrated in Manchester on March 4th with a day-long series of events.**

**Some 1,000 people attended, including miners from France, Belgium, Australia, and South Africa.**

At a packed rally in the afternoon, Arthur Scargill said that today it must be clear to everyone that the Miners' Strike was not about uneconomic pits but about destroying the NUM.

The strike could have been won if either the Notts miners, the deputies' union (NACODS), or the rest of the TUC had given industrial backing to the NUM.

He called on the next Labour government to withdraw from the European Community, and to take into public ownership all the industries privatised since 1979, plus the mass media and the big finance and production companies.

Tony Benn emphasised in his speech that the lessons of the Miners' Strike are more valid than ever.

**By FINN JENSEN**

He was optimistic about 1989 being a turning point in the struggles against the Tory government. He ended his speech by stressing that internationalism is the fabric of the world.

Allan Simone, the General Secretary of the International Miners' Organisation and a militant in the French CGT, said that the British Miners' Strike had lifted the last obstacles to the creation of the IMO.

After three years of existence it is now the largest organisation of miners. He added that 1992 and the European Single Market were an attack on the workers.

In the morning, there were workshops on privatisation, victimisation, and women.

Dennis Pennington explained how it felt like to be without work for five years as a sacked miner. More than 200 other sacked miners are in the same position.

Last summer Dennis succeeded in getting eight weeks of work in a private pit and he described the working conditions there as nineteenth century.

It was also proposed that the trade unions should publicise the activities of the Economic League and other employer-sponsored blacklisting organisations.

Victimisation in the form of deportation of black workers was also highlighted and trade unions were encouraged to send delegates to a national conference on immigration on April 15th in Manchester (see p. 4 for details).

## NUR

# Left consolidates

**A well attended meeting in Sheffield on February 25th marked the consolidation of the NUR Broad Left into a force which can start to play a role in reshaping our union and fighting back the government attacks on railworkers.**

**In the past, the NUR has seen various "Broad Lefts" dominated by particular political groupings. This time, speakers addressed the need for relative independence.**

Over a year of patient work at the grass roots, building local and District level left caucuses involving the widest political forces, has borne fruit.

Representing many more railworkers, over 70 activists from 40 branches have now "founded" the NUR Broad Left, based on a charter to meet the needs of our union.

**By Greg Tucker Southern District Council Secretary**

Agreeing the need to unite railworkers to fight against privatisation and for decent pay and conditions, for a 35 hour week and a £135 minimum wage, the Charter also calls for all-out opposition to regional or sectoral pay bargaining.

As one NUR EC member said at the meeting: "The task is to unite all the various struggles going on over pay, the machinery of negotiation, over traffic grade restructuring, or the P-way shift system.

"We can't win if we fight each attack separately. Collectively, we can."

Importantly, in also calling for positive action in the union to deal with the discrimination against women and black workers, the Charter recognised the need for self-organisation.

Recognising the wider political role the NUR has played, the Broad Left pledged itself to campaign to maintain a commitment to Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament, and to build international solidarity.

The work done by Rail Against Apartheid in linking up with South African railworkers is now to be complemented with similar solidarity work on Central America and, as the Charter stressed, the need for Britain to withdraw from Ireland.

# Defending Unilateralism

# No time to waste!

**As union conferences approach, a lot of work needs to be done to ensure the Labour Party remains committed to unilateral disarmament at the October conference.**

**Not only is this policy important in itself, it is one of the few remaining left Labour Party policies. A defeat would open the floodgates for many members leaving in despair.**

The extent of the challenge within individual unions is not yet clear, though several motions have been tabled for the Transport and General Workers' Union biennial delegate meeting (the union whose policy the right most want to overturn).

**By Pete Firmin**
***Labour Briefing***
**National Steering Committee**

In every union there has to be a fight to win on unilateralism, whatever the present policy. Every union branch should discuss the issue (even if it is too late for conference resolutions) — the greater the support for unilateralism, the less opportunity there is for union leaders to manoeuvre over Labour Party policy.

At Party Conference the right will go all-out to defeat the unilateralist resolution; but they already have their fall-back prepared.

At last year's Conference they hoped that if the unilateralist resolution were passed, the fudge resolution (calling for multi-, bi- *and* unilateralist initiatives) would also be passed.

They hoped then to claim that the fudge was policy. The fudge, however, was defeated.

This year they are more sure of success. They can use the Policy Review document "Britain in the World" (which will undoubtedly be multilateralist) instead of a fudge resolution.

## Party

The Party NEC has already decided that Policy Review documents cannot be amended by Conference and that they will take precedence over conflicting resolutions.

Last year's tactic of presenting Policy Review documents as a vote of confidence in the leadership will then be repeated, leading, the right hope, to them being passed as easily as it did last year.

This will even provide a cop-out for those "unilateralists" who will not oppose the leadership. They will be able to wash their hands, saying the policy was won — even though it would be a dead duck.

The left must be prepared to mount a campaign to *defeat* the Policy Review document.

The Labour Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (LCND) Conference in Manchester on March 11th was an important opportunity to discuss both these tactical issues and the arguments for unilateralism as part of the build-up of a campaign.

There was a good discussion, refuting the argument that the world situation (with the INF treaty, and *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union) has removed the need for unilateralist initiatives.

But unfortunately there seemed to be little feeling of urgency, nor for the scale of the task facing the left this year.

That only 35-40 people turned up may reflect the fact that Labour and Trade Union CND seemed to be rather complacent about retaining policy.

Indeed, John Geliet, convenor of Trade Union CND, was unaware of the resolutions down for TGWU conference to change it's policy. There was next to no mention of campaigning plans.

The second meeting of organisations supporting unilateralism called by *Labour Briefing* on March 13th took some important steps in this direction.

While there was still no agreement on the need for a common campaign between now and Labour Party Conference, there was consensus on initiatives that should be encouraged.

•The Labour CND model resolutions should be put to every labour movement body possible (let us know when they are passed). The resolutions should be combined with a call for a *campaign* around disarmament.

•Where labour movement bodies pass unilateralist resolutions this should be made as widely known as possible. Already Greater London and Scottish Labour Party conferences have done so, as has the conference of the National Organisation of Labour Students.

•Resolutions should still be submitted to the Labour Party NEC demanding the right to amend Policy Review documents. When the documents appear, amendments should be submitted regardless: there will be a fight at Conference for the right to amend.

•There is still doubt over whether the Party's policy conference on "Britain in the World" will be held. Resolutions should be sent to the NEC demanding that this takes place.

•Alternative "Policy Review" conferences are being organised around the country by the left. Supporters of unilateralism in each area should be encouraged to attend and draw up plans for activity.

•Despite its shortcomings (it doesn't reiterate Party policy on withdrawal of US bases), the *Tribune* statement should be given the widest possible coverage and signatures obtained in every area.

It is hoped to reproduce it as an advertisement in a national paper just before Party conference. Party officials are leaning on MPs who have signed.

•Trade Union CND is trying to organise a fringe speaker at every Trade Union conference. Make sure this is happening in your union, and let us know the outcome of the conference.

•A rally will be organised at Party Conference on the eve of the debate. The possibility of a demonstration will be discussed nearer the time.



PHOTO: Cath Tate

*Street protests against war-mongerer Reagan: who will organise action this year to defend unilateralism?*

## LABOUR CND MODEL RESOLUTIONS

### 1) Reaffirmation of policy

**Conference believes that ridding Britain of all nuclear weapons is an important step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons world-wide. We therefore reaffirm our continued commitment to the unconditional removal of all nuclear weapons and nuclear bases from British soil and waters within the first parliament of the next Labour government.**

### 2) Unilateralism and defence spending

**Conference reaffirms its continued commitment to the unconditional removal of all nuclear weapons and bases from British soil and waters within the first parliament of the next Labour government. Conference likewise confirms its commitment to reduce defence spending, initially equal to the average level of other West European countries, and to transfer the savings made by the elimination of nuclear weapons from Britain to health and other social services underfunded by the Tories.**

## *Tribune Statement*

# Disarmament: an appeal to Labour and the unions

**This statement has been drawn up by *Tribune* as a short summary of the position which we believe the Labour Party should adopt as the most effective means by which a future Labour government could speed the pace of world disarmament and achieve a non-nuclear defence policy for Britain. *Tribune* invites signatures to the statement, which will be printed in batches in the paper.**

**We accept that "unilateralism" is not an objective, but a means to an end.**

**However, acting independently to accelerate and contribute positively to the international nuclear disarmament process is an important way of assisting the progress of peace.**

That is why we believe that Britain should dismantle it's own nuclear arsenal and remove American nuclear weapons from British soil and waters, within the lifetime of the first parliament of the next Labour government.

These weapons of indiscriminate mass destruction can never be used to defend us: they target those who host them and threaten the very existence of human life.

We are convinced that the changed international situation brought about by Mikhail Gorbachev's disarmament initiatives and the success of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Force negotiations makes Labour's policy of removing nuclear weapons from our land, sea and air more relevant and practical than ever before.

We are also convinced that changes in British public opinion have opened up the opportunity for Labour to go on the political offensive in favour of accelerating the process of de-nuclearising the defence of Britain.

Labour's own polls indicated that unilateralism has contributed only a marginal loss of votes in previous elections, taking only third or fourth place among the reasons given by those who did not vote Labour in 1987.

Only a tiny minority of the British people now think that there is a serious military threat from the Soviet Union. It is also clear that the demand for the removal of American nuclear weapons from this country remains popular.

We therefore reiterate our support for Labour's continued commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament as part of a comprehensive defence strategy, based on the principles of non-provocative defence and the simultaneous pursuit of initiatives and negotiations towards European common security.

Our policy could contribute to but in no way diminishes the necessity to seek ways of avoiding proliferation of nuclear capability which threatens not only independent action but also the negotiated super-power moves to lessen the threat of nuclear war.

We invite all those who share our belief to join us by supporting this statement and by working to ensure that Labour policy continues to contribute to peace and disarmament.

**Yes, I support *Tribune's* disarmament appeal**

**Name** .....

**Address** .....

.....

**Please send this form to Tribune Disarmament Appeal, 308 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8DY.**
**Published in *Labour Briefing* no. 80**

## *Briefing* Dayschool

## *What future for Local Government?*

## The 1990 local elections: *Strategies for the left*

**April 29th 10am-5pm**
**Polytechnic of Central London, Marylebone Road**
**All *Briefing* supporters invited**
**Creche - bookable in advance only, phone 01 801 6041 for places and more details**

## CLPs Conference on the Witch-Hunt and Democracy

**Saturday April 29th**
**AEU Hall, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool**
**11am to 5pm**
**Each CLP is entitled to three delegates at £2.00 per delegate. Visitors are welcome.**

The Women's Page

# WOMEN AND EDUCATION

**Baker's Education Reform Act is a part of the general Tory attack on the working class.**

It fits with all the other attacks being made — the Poll Tax, the destruction of local government, and of the health service, the attacks on housing and employment, and so on.

In particular, it is part of the ideological attack on the gains made by women in the past 20 years — through Alton, through attacks on the sexuality of lesbians and gay men — and on black people through racist immigration legislation.

The Tories have always understood the importance of education in the ideological battle for the minds and consent of the working class to the capitalist system.

The attack through ERA is on several fronts — through the curriculum, open enrolment and opting out, and, most importantly, through Local Management of Schools.

With the destruction of the Welfare State, it is becoming increasingly necessary to have women back in the home, caring for children and the elderly and servicing men. It is part of the function of the Education Reform Act to assist this process.

The leaderships of the Labour Party and of the teacher unions have totally failed to develop coherent policy on education.

Last year's Labour Party Conference "debated" education for approximately 20 minutes, including Neil Fletcher's castigation of teachers for failing to deliver the goods.

The NUT Executive is not prepared to fight for a decent education for all, nor for adequate pay or conditions of service for teachers. The recent announcement by the Government of a 6% pay rise for teachers — a rise below the rate of inflation for the second year running — has been greeted by hardly a squeak from the Executive.

They also refused to take any action when The Education Reform Bill was first introduced, preferring to rely on the House of Lords to amend it!

The attack on the working class through education bears most heavily on oppressed groups — black people, lesbians and gay men, people with disabilities and women.

The left needs both to fight the Tory legislation and to develop its own policies for a socialist education. The Socialist Teachers' Alliance has made a start with its "Charter for Education".

What we need now is a campaign within the labour movement for a genuinely equal education for all.

*Debbie Epstein*, Birmingham NUT




David Hoffman

*The Act pushes women into thehome and young girls into traditional roles.*

# Equal opportunities are *not* a luxury item!

**Baker's Education Reform Act is discriminatory against women and girls.**

**The DES document refers to all teachers as "he" — *his* is seemingly the only acceptable career model.**

Women remain at the bottom of pay scales, the promotion ladder and the education agenda.

Things will be bad enough in schools remaining under LEA control, with Local Management of Schools. In schools which opt out the situation will be even worse, both for students and staff.

By Jan Pollock
Socialist Teachers' Alliance

These schools may throw in the bin any LEA policy on equal opportunities — gender, race, sexuality, class or disability — and the LEA support services that accompany them.

This will affect all who work in schools: teachers, catering and cleaning staff, school secretaries and students. Curriculum development, especially where it concerns inequality, will become a "luxury" item.

In the face of such attacks, the NUT Executive's refusal to develop any effective campaign to defend education or women teachers' interests reflects their own earlier "rationalisation" in cutting the Equal Opportunities Department.

This decision — in a union with 70% female membership — was overturned at a national conference.

The same determination is required to call on the Executive to organise a national conference this summer term to discuss strategies to tackle equal opportunities in education and in women teachers' pay and conditions.

In 1920 thousands of women teachers left the NUT when the male-dominated Executive refused to implement the union's referendum in favour of equal pay. The Executive stuck by non-implementation for decades.

Women — the majority of NUT members — can't afford more years of neglect of our interests and those of the young women we teach.

We want both women and progressive men NUT members to give a clear indication to the Executive that the union must give a high priority to equal opportunities.

# Maternity leave up for grabs?

**The implications of ERA for women teachers are going to be far-reaching and will throw into question every national and locally negotiated agreement.**

**In Nottingham, for instance, maternity agreements are to be retained at County level for the "time being". The implication is that they will be axed in the future.**

Under Local Management of Schools (LMS) women teachers could face the prospect of losing their right to maternity leave on the basis of costs to the school.

Staff may well be asked to cover for a long-term absence caused by maternity leave.

Women are likely to feel responsible for the increasing workload caused to their colleagues — and colleagues are likely to resent the extra work load placed on them by women having maternity leave.

By Ronnie Held
Haringey

The students of pregnant teachers will have a disrupted education if their teacher is replaced by a succession of supply teachers or her lessons are covered by another member of staff, instead of having a full time replacement.

A pregnant teacher could be viewed as a real nuisance by both staff and students.

We are faced with the prospect of losing fundamental trade union rights and have to place the hard-won right of maternity leave at the forefront of our campaign under LMS.



PHOTO: Photo Co-op/Corry Bevington

*Luxuries?*

There is no way the left can afford to be complacent about such rights. Right now each and every one is up for grabs.

# A view from the classroom

**Being a woman school student hasn't exactly been an easy experience.**

**Generally teachers pay more attention to boys than to young women. Women teachers will often engage in frivolous banter with boys who are disruptive, while they will simply tell the young women to shut up.**

**At the same time, male teachers tend to be more patronising to women students, and will often touch them, lean closely over them, or behave in other sexist and condescending ways.**

**A particular example of the way in which we were treated was in my technical graphics class — regarded as a "male" subject.**

**There were only two women in the class, and the male teacher found it difficult to handle our**

By Kate Ahrens
Selly Oak
Women's Section

**presence or the fact that we had less experience in this subject than the boys.**

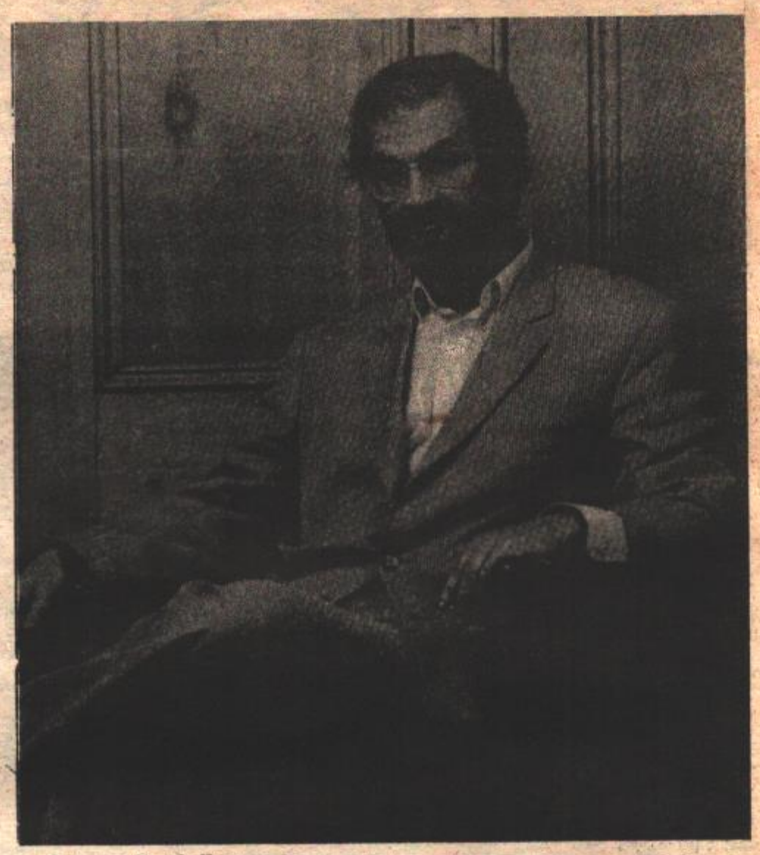
**At the beginning of the year he took a long time to reassure himself that we understood the lessons. By the end, whole lessons would go by during which he didn't speak to us at all.**

**The atmosphere was very much "all boys together", with the teacher as part of that group, while we were very much on the margin.**

**The school — like most others — had no anti-sexist policy. Under Baker, it will be less likely than ever that such policies will be developed, even though they are badly needed!**

# RUSHDIE REVIEWED

# Busting the border patrols



Salman Rushdie

*he Satanic Verses*, by
alman Rushdie, *Viking*
*enguin*, £12.95
ardcover).

I finished the book a
ning bolt leapt from
page.
r a moment I was blind.
oody hell, I thought, could
true after all? Was I about
punished by one of His
engers for my collusion
blasphemy?

By Mike Marqusee
Hornsey & Wood
Green CLP

ut no. As my sight returned
e appeared before me,
ering over my personal
puter, the image of writer
an Rushdie, looking rather
one say it?) satanic with
ted goatee and arched
rows.
loved your book," I cried,
to pre-empt attack, "it's
rtaining, illuminating,
ound."
You're just saying that,"
ered the irascible, semi-
sparent Rushdie-image.
e read the articles in *Brief*-
nd I know you've defended
ight to publish... but what
ou really think?"
*thought it was entertaining,*
.."
Get on with it," the spectral
hdie insisted, with a
atening furrow of the brow.

"Well to be honest it struck me as a book that was trying to do and say all the right things — things that really need to be done and said in contemporary fiction — but sometimes trying too hard, and too often not succeeding, despite the good intentions."

"For instance?"

"The theme of the book is spot on. Migration. Transmutation. An allegory about crossing borders. National, social, political, linguistic, cultural borders — as well as the more intangible borders of the collective and the individual, and even of time itself.

## Transformation

"The story of the grotesque transformation of the allegedly 'illegal' immigrant, which is at the heart of the novel, sums it up.

"In your book, the authorities of state and religion conspire against this 'illegal' immigration, this capacity of humanity to change and evolve, to decide for itself what's right and wrong, to live in and through history.

## Conspired

"And, as everyone knows, in the real world, the same authorities have also conspired against the book's own form of 'illegal' immigration, the immigration of dangerous ideas."

Rushdie looked at his watch — which was melting from his wrist, Dali-fashion. "So what's your problem, wise-guy? You like the ideas. What about the method?"

"Don't get me wrong!" I was really sweating now. Indecipherable hieroglyphs appeared on my computer screen.

"The method you try to forge is the right one. To represent this border-busting reality you need a border-busting style. Naturalism would never do.

"So you're right to employ fantasy, metaphor, time-travel. You're right to mix your narratives and your voices. You're right to take wildly improbably leaps in plot and daring risks in style..."

"Come on, spit it out. I haven't got all day. I've enemies, you know..."

"And with friends like me..."

"Out with it!"

"Right. The problem is that for me too many of the leaps, too many of the risks just don't come off.

## Naturalism

"Once you've abandoned the tried and tested laws of naturalism or of a particular genre (even sword and sorcery or science fiction) you're on your own.

"You have to create new laws that convince the reader there is some inner logic to what does and doesn't happen in the book.

"For me, in *Satanic Verses*, anything goes and therefore nothing matters. The whole ambitious, profligate mess is held together only by the whim of the author."

As I pronounced these last words, the Rushdie genie vanished in a puff of angry red smoke. I shouted to the empty room: "But I didn't tell you all the things I loved in the book!

"The wonderful re-telling of the Mohammed story, the bit that's got them all so narked, that was brilliant, touching, truthful...

"And London! It's about time someone said something pertinent about Thatcher's London. And the cops! Savage sons of bitches...

"Hey, and I really loved all the stuff about Bombay, and Indian movies, and Indian politics..."

Then I noticed the hieroglyphs on the computer screen shaping themselves into letters, then words, then a whole sentence... A Message...

I recognised it as the prophetic conclusion of *Midnight's Children* (a better, more coherent book):

*"it is the privilege and the curse of midnight's children to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in peace."*

# FILM REVIEW

# "No" means "No"

*The Accused*, on release
t local cinemas

d to think hard
ore I decided to go
see a Hollywood
vie about a gang rape.
could not imagine that a
e director, Jonathan
lan, could possibly
tray the issue as
thing else but gratuitous
lation, for male
sumption.

By Ronnie Held
Hornsey & Wood
Green CLP

However, the film actually
rks within its own terms,
for that reason it must be
e of the most significant
llywood films of the year.
Sarah (Jodie Foster) is a
itress who is gang raped in
ar. The film unfolds in
shback and her horrific story is revealed as she begins the process of getting her attackers put behind bars.

Her attourney (Kelly McGillis) does a deal with the defence attourneys and the charge of rape is reduced to "reckless endangerment". The prison sentences are light.

Sarah's reaction is one of total fury. She confronts Katheryn (McGillis) with the fact that her horrendous ordeal has been trivialised and rubbished because she is "low life", as she puts it.

Consequently she is insignificant to a male-dominated, bourgeois legal system and, in contrast, one of the defendants is a "nice, middle class undergraduate, with a great future."

Moved by Sarah's outrage, Katheryn decides to get the men in the bar, who watched and cheered as Sarah was raped, on the grounds that their approval constituted "an incitement to rape".

This would bring into the legal process a recognition of the "assault" on Sarah as rape.

Despite warnings from Katheryn's senior that she may find her career finished as a result of her work for Sarah, she goes ahead.

The audience watches the rape scene, in the form of a flashback, as it unfold in the courtroom. The spectator is then confronted, unequivocally, with the meaning of rape: violence coupled with male power.

No matter what transpired between the woman and her assailants prior to the rape, by definition she did not "ask to be raped", as her rapists claimed.

Sarah's emphatic *NO*, combined with her attourney's explanation to the court of the meaning of the word, is without any ambiguity. No means no.

The film bears testimony to feminist struggle and demands for recognition and justice around the issue of rape. It should not be missed.

# BOOK REVIEW

# Caveat elector!

*No Turning Back: the case for Scottish Independence within the European Community*, by Jim Sillars, published by Jim Sillars, available from Jim Sillars, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

**The Scottish Nationalists have found a timely slogan to counter the fears of separatism amongst the Scottish people.**

**An Independent Scotland within the EC, argues the victor of the Govan by-election, would give the Scots more power and influence than their current position as part of the UK.**

By DAN CARTER

Sillars' pamphlet, part of an ongoing battle inside the SNP between pro- and anti-marketeers, was written last summer and includes the ironic statement:

*"when next the Party bursts through to a prominence which threatens London's hegemony, the separatist chorus will be heard again from both Labour and Tory."*

Sillars is a self-confessed socialist and his pamphlet is written with a clear internationalist slant — no "Little Scotlander" protectionism, but plenty of bland nationalism asserting that the Scots have some particular gift to bring to the EC.

He tries to argue for the Scots' right to self-determination and a fair economic deal without differentiating between the Scottish capitalists and the Scottish working class.

The impression you get is that it's all right for Scottish workers to be oppressed by *Scottish* bosses!

Sillars claims that an independent Scotland within the EC would have increased numbers of Euro MPs, representatives at the European Commission, Council of Ministers, and Court of Justice.

Thus, while Sillars is opposed to the rule of Westminster law, he is strangely willing to cede control to Strasbourg, Brussels, and Luxembourg.

## Peripheral

He fails to see that as a peripheral region — or state — Scotland will still suffer at the hands of the "golden triangle" of industrial and financial strength.

He welcomes EC Regional aid to Scotland without realising that as soon as Scotland becomes independent, it will of course cease to be a region and therefore will lose all "regional" aid.

Only the most depressed regions of Scotland will then qualify for aid, almost certainly for reduced amounts.

His solutions for Scotland are based on looking for those "trade/economic groupings" within which it would perform most effectively.

He falls into the capitalist trap of the pro-EC propagandists: seeking an economic bloc to "protect us" from the:

*"countries on the Pacific rim who have a high proportion of young people able to seize the opportunities offered by the new technologies."*

Not once does he examine the decimation of Scottish industry since the UK joined the Common Market, nor the real threat to jobs and markets caused by the removal of national trade barriers in 1992.



*BP Oil Refinery in Grangemouth. Scottish industry benefits from EEC Regional Aid. Nationhood would jeopardise aid.*

He asserts that: *"The SEA (Single European Act, bringing about the free market of 1992) does not remove the right of governments to protect vital national interests."*

## Governments

Does he not realise that after 1992, national governments will no longer be able to give state aid to industry, or even stop the banks sending capital abroad once a socialist (or indeed nationalist) government has been elected?

State economic planning will simply not be possible except within the confines of the Treaty of Rome.

It is a shame to see the first candidate to beat Labour at a by-election *from the left* for many, many years adopt such a naive attitude to probably the most central economic question facing Britain today.

# International Women's Day in Ireland



Over 250 women (and some men) picketed Maghaberry jail to commemorate International Women's Week and the assassination of Mairead Farrell, to whom Bernadette McAliskey paid moving tribute.

Many women had come from Britain to participate in workshops organised by Sinn Fein. The names of female prisoners of war held in the jail were read out and messages of support shouted across the prison courtyard.

## South Africa

# Defend the Upington 25!

**Many people have now heard of the Sharpeville Six.**

**They became a cause celebre after a high profile solidarity campaign by the international anti-apartheid community helped secure their reprieve from the gallows.**

International pressure focused on the outrageous legal device employed against the Six, known as the doctrine of common purpose. This is a legal mechanism, contrived by the Apartheid Regime to deal with unrest in the townships.

It states that any person who is part of a mob which becomes intent on murder is equally guilty if mob action results in someone being killed — even if that person did not inflict the fatal blows.

Not many have heard of the Upington 25. They are, however, believed to be the largest group of people ever to face the gallows in South African legal history.

The majority of them (21) have been convicted of murder under the doctrine of common purpose, four have been accused of being principal actors directly involved in the killing.

They were convicted of the 1985 murder of a municipal policeman in the Northern Cape township of Pabollelo.

**By Paul Hepburn**
**Greater Manchester Anti-Apartheid (personal capacity)**

The evidence was that, after a meeting called by residents to discuss high rents and grievances was broken up by police using tear gas, a crowd stoned the home of a policeman.

He fired a shotgun, wounding someone fleeing. Tackled and brought down in a nearby field, he was twice hit over the head with his shotgun. The blows killed him.

His body was stoned, kicked, and then set alight. The court found that this was done by the same group of people who stoned the house.

Using the doctrine of common purpose, the Judge found that even though the accused may not have taken part in the actual killing, the fact that they were part of a crowd which stoned his house was enough for him to infer the intention was to drive the policeman from his house and kill him.

He found most of the accused were part of the stone-throwing crowd, thus actively linking themselves with the group and its intention.

Twenty-three of the accused have been in custody since April 1988, two of them have been in jail since November 1985. Their ages range form 21 to 64.

The youngest, Xoliswa Dube, was 17 at the time of her arrest. During the trial, which started in 1986, she gave birth to a daughter, whom she named Inocentia.

The 25 are currently facing trial to determine their sentences. Under South African law, if someone is found guilty without extenuation, it is obligatory to impose the death sentence.

Their defence lawyers are instructing expert witnesses to lead evidence on extenuating circumstances. However, the application of extenuation is notoriously subject to interpretation and discrepancies.

It is clear that, aside from the general principle that we aid all those who are fighting against the Apartheid Regime at whose door the blame for all deaths in this struggle must be unequivocally laid, the doctrine of common purpose is being used to derail and deter collective action against the Regime and its functionaries.

Given this context it is the duty of the labour movement to ensure that the Upington 25 are given the same degree of political prominence that was conferred upon the Sharpeville Six.

It is not too late; at the time of their trial the Sharpeville Six had a similarly low profile as the Upington 25.

A similar, centralised defence campaign under the auspices of the A-AM is the best vehicle to employ to gain these people the reprieve they need.

All those active in A-A groups or bodies affiliated to the A-AM must begin to apply pressure, through resolutions and representation at the A-AM National Committee, on the leadership of the A-AM which focuses around the demand for them to wage a high profile, international defence campaign around the Upington 25.

In the meantime, people should send messages of support and money to sustain the defendants and their families to:

**The Rural Worker, SACHED (South African Committee for Higher Education), 5 Church Street, Mowbray 7700, South Africa.**

## REVIEW

# Newsbriefing on Namibia

**The February Newsbriefing highlights cuts to made in the UN's military presence in Namibia.**

**These cuts are opposed by SWAPO, the Organisat of African Unity, and the Non-aligned Movement beca of increased South African and UNITA military activ particularly on the Namibia-Angola border.**

**The cuts were pushed through by the USA and Britain, s ported by the USSR, China and France.**

**Meanwhile, South African police units are undermining democratic process by attempting to buy votes away f SWAPO in the coming elections.**

**The Administrator-General, furthermore, is South Afri appointed; and there are reports that South Africa is estab ing rebel groups in Mozambique to destabilise a fu SWAPO government.**

**Other articles detail the composition of the South Afri military forces in Namibia, the various Namibian polit parties' positions on independence, the economic situat and human rights violations.**

**There is also discussion of UN Secretary General Perez Cuellar's progress report on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 435, and a description of tripartite peace accords and the UN plan for Namibia.**

**INON is published monthly by the Namibia Support C mittee (NSC), which campaigns in support of SWAPO works in co-operation with the United Nations Council Namibia (UNCN).**

**Subscribers receive the monthly INON and the NS quarterly magazine *Action on Namibia*.**

**Subscriptions cost £10 (Britain and Ireland); £15 (Eur & surface); £18 (airmail) for individuals, respectively £15, £ £21 for institutions. Bulk rates are available on request.**

**Send cheques payable to Namibia Support Committe NSC, PO Box 16, London NW5 2LW, tel. 01-267 1941/2.**

***Jim Thain, Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP***

# SPANISH STATE




# Can labour movement meet the government's challenge?

**The transition from dictatorship to democracy in the Spanish state was made possible by the politics of consensus.**

These were expressed most clearly in the Mondoa Pact (1978), where the then President Adolfo Suarez and the right were joined by:

•the Spanish state Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE);

•the Spanish state Communist Party (PCE);

•and the main trade union federations, the Communist Workers' Commissions (CCOO) and the socialist UGT.

Over several years, in order to avoid social discontent, the bosses, government, and the unions made agreements.

Generally speaking, both political agreements and the economic expectations of big business were fulfilled, but the progressive social democracy, which had also been agreed in the Mondoa Pact, was not established.

When PSOE won the General Election in 1982, the Spanish state rediscovered hope. Nearly all progressive social forces had gathered around PSOE, with its promises to fight unemployment and pursue a peaceful foreign policy outside NATO.

But, once in power, PSOE began to carry out totally different policies. Leaving aside the spectacular about-turn on NATO, I will concentrate on their economic policies, similar to Thatcher's in Great Britain.

Big business, it was said, must make large profits to be able to reinvest. Therefore, inflation must be controlled and the budget deficit kept down.

Hence there were cuts in welfare expenditure, closure or privatisation of nationalised industries, salaries kept low, a spectacular increase in unemployment.

UGT, the socialist trade union affiliated to PSOE, accepted these policies. In exchange, the government offered help in elevating them to the same status as CCOO, which had more support at the beginning of the transition following Franco's death.

With its foundations in the factories, it was the only organisation of the workers during the Franco years. Led by Communists, CCOO saw the change in government economic policy as a betrayal.

It called a general strike on June 20th 1985, in protest at the cutting of pensions, which brought 4 million workers out on to the streets.

The government's economic policy was successful in its goal of increasing the rate of profit. Helped by the fall in the price of petrol and in the dollar, they started to suggest that the economic crisis had come to an end.

UGT then said it was time for the cake to be redistributed, to benefit the workers, the unemployed, and OAPs. However, things didn't work out that way.

**By Jesus Mari Garrido Ituarte Member, Political General Committee of Izquierda Unida of Aragon**

To the government, it was still necessary to control inflation and cut costs, so that the Spanish state would be made economically fit for Europe.

In this context, the trade union policies which would be the central demands on December 14th were being established:

•48% of the unemployed should be entitled to unemployment pay;

•pensions and public sector salaries should regain their purchasing power;

•government policies shouldn't continue endangering the job market with the so-called *Plan de Empleo Juvenil* (Youth Employment Schemes).

UGT ended up aligning itself with CCOO and came out against the government's economic policy, demanding a change.

Not only did the unions unite, but they did so with almost 100% support from Spanish-state workers. It was under these circumstances that a truly political general strike came about.

Other developments of strong social impact occurred, such as the support of the football players who called off their matches on December 14th, and the closing down of TVE (Spanish-state TV) at exactly midnight.

Along with mistakes made by the government in the battle of words in the days preceding the strike, these developments allowed a peaceful mobilisation which was more successful than any that had occurred previously.

It is now clear that the strike has brought about a crisis for PSOE.

What is particularly notable is how out of touch the Spanish-state government is with the electorate.

While nearly every Spanish-state worker came out on strike, parliament went to work as usual, turning its back on the problem. Only ten members of parliament came out with the 8 million strikers.

Maybe the most important result of all has been the development of a direct confrontation between government and unions. British readers probably recognise the problem, having experienced it in their own country.

The socialist government is trying to impose a non-political, conciliatory trade unionism, and to dismantle class organisation. The very existence of trade unionism is being threatened.

The result of the first battle marked by the strike has been positive for the unions. But now, their relationship with the government will be conditioned, to a large extent, by purely political factors.

The loss of an absolute parliamentary majority for PSOE and the successful electoral take off of Izquierda Unida (left unity) will largely determine the current confrontation.

A triumph for PSOE would put them back into a position of power; for Izquierda Unida an electoral launch would strengthen the position of the unions.

The future of class trade unionism and the Spanish-state left depends on Izquierda Unida's ability to transform the response of December 14th into a coherent political force.

The government, in refusing to accept the trade unions' minimal demands, isn't only stating that these claims are economically impossible, but by not giving an inch they're demonstrating a political determination to weaken the unions.

I'm writing this four days before the parliamentary debate on the state of the nation on February 14th.

If the government continues in its refusal to accept the implications of the 14th, and if it continues to refuse to listen to its voters, only an early General Election could put the government back in touch with the people it's supposed to represent.

The alternative would be to deepen the gulf between the Spanish state government and the ordinary people, a characteristic of the Franco period which still hasn't been overcome.

*Izquierda Unida is a coalition of left wing political groups, progressive movements, ecologists, feminists, left wing Christians, and political independents. In the last General Election they won seven parliamentary seats.

**Translated by LIZ GODDEN**

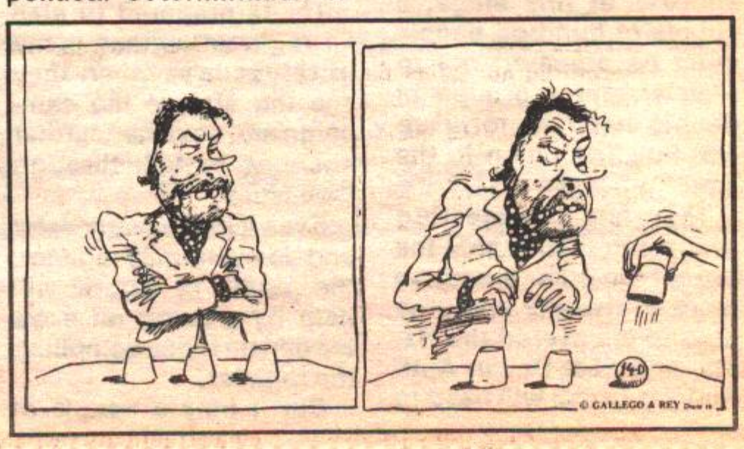



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

LABOUR BRIEFING

## Poll Tax Notes

# Disrupt the Register!

**A useful tactic in fighting the Poll Tax is disrupting the register.**

It's also pretty safe — the Poll Tax Officer has to warn you and then be convinced that you are wilfully obstructing the Register before he/she can fine you.

For those who do not wish to risk prosecution for outright refusal to register, Lambeth Against the Poll Tax has issued the following guidelines.

Here's what to do.

•If you are named a "RESPONSIBLE PERSON" for registering your household write back something like this:

"I'm sending this back as I know there is a duty on the 'Responsible Person' to fill in the form, but I'm not sure I am the person responsible here.

"Can you tell me why I am the responsible person, what I have to do and if I can appeal against being made one? I understand I have to fill in the form within 21 days and will do so willingly when I hear from you."

•If your are *not* named the "Responsible Person" you are not obliged to do anything. Don't co-operate in providing information about yourself. There is no obligation for you to do so before October 1st.

•If canvassers come round to question you, say you are the baby-sitter or looking after the premises while your friend is away. Don't fill in the form while they wait. You don't have to admit who you are.

•Wait a week or two and then write back saying your dog ate the form, it fell in the washing up, or you never received a form, so could you please have one. Any excuse will do.

•Wait 18-19 days, then return the form, asking what one of the questions means.

For example, you may be confused by the term "sole or main resident" if you have somebody who stays with you who is a student, travels abroad, in hospital, about to leave one address for another etc....

When they answer your query, wait another 18-19 days and repeat the process with another question.

Keep doing this and you can delay them by months!

•Write asking about the Rebate System and who is eligible. Or if you are a student enquire as to what exactly "term time" and "full time" courses mean.

The form is confusing so ask about anything you don't understand.

But, whatever you do...

•Keep a record of what you wrote on the form and when you sent it.

•Don't use any tactic more than once.

•Do it together!

Take your forms along to your local Poll Tax stalls for help and advice in filling in the form the way you want.

Alternatively, ask if your Tenants' Associations, ward Labour Party or trade union will help collect the forms.

During the registration period why not join one of the Return to Sender marches that will be organised?


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Name.....

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## NALGO CONFERENCE

**Saturday 15th April 1989**
**11am - 4pm**
**Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London SW2 1RW**

**Speakers:**
NALGO Black Workers Coordinating Committee
Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Campaign
Newcastle National Poll Tax Conference Committee
Lambeth Councillor
Paul Homes NALGO NEC
Dave Burn NALGO NEC

Workshops include: Organising in the Branch, Linking up with local campaigns, Annual Conference and the Poll Tax, The Poll Tax and Civil Liberties

The conference aims to discuss the effects of the Poll Tax on NALGO members and the responses of indivdual Branches to the legislation, with a view to developing a more coordinated and fighting strategy on a national basis, and to break down the isolation felt by some Branches.
We propose that Branches send a maximum of six delegates. A "Conference Statement" has been drafted. Ammendments can be brought to the Conference (please bring photocopies).

Sponsors include: Birmingham NALGO, Barnet NALGO, Bradford NALGO, Camden NALGO, Croydon NALGO, Greenwich NALGO, Islington NALGO, ILEA NALGO, Knowsley NALGO, Newham NALGO, Southampton NALGO, Westminster NALGO

For further details and to register, contact: Lambeth NALGO, 6a, Acre Lane, London SW2 5SG

A creche will be provided and it is hoped that there will be a sign language interpreter.

## Devon

# The fight starts in earnest!

**The Exeter and East Devon Anti-Poll Tax Union is based on reaching people directly.**

While the campaign can only succeed through the co-ordination of anti-Poll Tax campaigns across the country, the important first stage has to be local.

A steering group has been set up to check out the level of support for resistance among Exeter people.

An area will be leafleted with a double-sided leaflet. One side of the leaflet contains information. The other has a large slogan so that it can double up as a poster to be stuck in windows.

A public meeting will be organised as near to the centre of the area as possible. Then there will be a follow-up canvass of houses displaying the poster.

For the campaign to be a success at this stage, a couple of hundred people must be prepared not to register and a groups of people need to form an anti-Poll Tax union in the area.

They and the steering group can then repeat the process in other areas. As more of the city and area around is covered the Exeter and East Devon Anti-Poll Tax Union will need to become a delegate co-ordinating body.

The main plank of resistance in the first phase must be non-registration. This involves breaking the law.

The justification for this is that this law is one of the clearest and most penetrating pieces of class legislation that the Tories have perpetrated. It is a law that reaches directly into the pockets of all working class people.

By Tim Price
Devon Labour Briefing

Re-establishing solidarity is essential. The display of posters should help in this, by giving a visible signal that opposition is there.

The campaign also acknowledges the contribution that can be made by those who are not actually prepared to break the law.

Those prepared to stall on registration may come to refuse later when they see the size of the campaign and have had further chances to talk through the issues.

Even if they merely defer and do eventually register, the period of deferal will help by placing an extra burden on those compiling the register.

But if only a couple of hundred in the whole of the Exeter and East Devon area are willing to resist, then non-registration will be merely an act of martyrdom.

If funds, whether in credit unions or some other form, are built up, those who feel the sharp end of the law need not suffer more than anyone else in the campaign.

Other anti-Poll Tax campaigns are likely to spring up in Exeter. The TUC is expected to run one, but will refuse to break the law. This does not mean that they should be ignored.

Critical interventions have to be made. Platforms should be shared with such campaigns so that there can be public debates about the way forward.

News of the campaign has not been well received by the right of the Labour Party. Party members in the Poll Tax Union were vilified for refusing to adhere to the Party's policy of collusion with the Tory Poll Tax.

The irony of naming the Poll Tax collection officer after Wat Tyler must rebound on them — Tyler killed a Poll Tax collection officer!

Exeter and East Devon Anti-Poll Tax Union can be reached via Box 200, The Flying Post, 1 Parliament Street, Exeter.

## Scotland

# Anti-Poll Tax groups unite

**An important step forward in the campaign against the Poll Tax in Scotland took place on Saturday March 4th with the Glasgow "unity conference" of anti-Poll Tax groups.**

**Six hundred delegates representing local activists from all over Scotland, adopted two policy statements committing themselves to a community-based campaign of mass non-payment and a trade union campaign for non-implementation.**

**The conference also agreed to establish a Scottish Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions. There was a whole day of open and vigorous discussion on strategy.**

**The debate centred around two issues: the relative importance of the community and trade union campaigns; and the weight to be assigned to demands on the trade union leaderships as opposed to calls for direct trade union action.**

**Initially there seemed some danger of a false debate between the advocates of trade union non-implementation (led by the SWP) and those who placed the main emphasis on mass non-payment (including both *Militant* and most independent anti-Poll Tax activists).**

**However most speakers correctly emphasised the complementary nature of the two campaigns and the motions adopted confirmed this view.**

Brian Slocock
Stirling Anti-Poll Tax Union

**The second debate was a complex one. There was general agreement on the need to demand that the Labour Party and trade union leaders take up serious opposition to the Tax.**

**The conference agreed to hold its own non-payment demonstration on March 18th and to build a non-payment contingent on the April 1st STUC and Labour Party demonstration.**

**Differences emerged over whether trade union non-cooperation with the tax should be initiated by independent action at local level or by calling for official instructions.**

**Advocates of the former included those doubtful of the value of calls on the bureaucracy, and some trade unionists who felt that workers in the "front line" (like those in finance departments) needed to be persuaded and would be alienated by instructions from above.**

**The fight against the Poll Tax may get very tough indeed.**

**In Grampian Region several people who refused to register have had possessions seized by the Tory-controlled Council for sale to recover fines. In response the local anti-poll tax union mounted an occupation of the Sherriff's Office.**

**The creation of the Scottish Federation gives us a valuable tool to organise resistance to this unjust tax. The next step will be to build real roots for the non-payment campaign within our communities and the labour movement.**

They were convicted of the ... drive the policeman from his ... tion purpose is being used to