LABOUR BRIEFING

40p FORTNIGHTLY

NO.81 APRIL 12 - 25 1989

INSIDE:

★ INTERVIEW with BORIS KAGARLITSKY from Moscow: "The electoral process is becoming (...) an element in a revolutionary process."

See page 15

40p

TGWU, labour movement: organise support!

THE DOCKERS MUST NOT STAND ALONE!

If the expected all-out national dock strike goes ahead the dockers must not stand alone! They must not face the isolation which led to the defeat of the miners and the print workers at Wapping.

That must be the response, and the resolve, of the trade union movement to the dockers' decision to take on the Tory government and defend the National Dock Labour Scheme.

The Tory Cabinet has announced that they will rush through a Bill to abolish the Scheme in yet another planned, set-piece confrontation designed to break a strong section of the trade union movement.

A strike would contain all the dangers and opportunities of which faced the miners, the print workers, and the seafarers. United action could bring a much needed victory for the movement and turn the tide against the Thatcher regime. Isolation would bring a defeat and open the working class to further attacks and weakening of their organisations.

The role of the leadership of the TGWU is crucial. Although the registered ports handle the majority of cargo, there are hundreds of unregistered ports which are ripe for scab operations. These are not Scheme ports, but they are T&G organised, some of them strongly unionised.

It is clear that the government has detailed plans to divert cargo to these ports in a mass way. International support will be vital, since continental ports can be used to break cargos down.

The key issue in this strike, as in most others these days, will be the use of the law by the employers and the willingness of the unions to break it.

Solidarity action from the unregistered ports will be *illegal*; picketing of unregistered ports by strikers from Scheme ports would be regarded as an illegal picket. The TGWU would be quickly in the courts facing sequestration.

The right response to this is the one adopted briefly (and then abandoned) by the NUS at Dover: forget the union's money, forget its assets and buildings, support the strikers, call out the unregistered ports, spread the strike to the whole of the TGWU, and call for support from the rest of the movement.

The TGWU is the biggest union in the country, covering not just the docks but also related industries such as road haulage. It is well placed for a major confrontation with the government.



Dereliction: the future facing the registered dockers if the Tories are allowed to do to them what they did to the miners.

By ALAN THORNETT
Trade Union Briefing

An all-out strike by the TGWU requires the decision of a delegate conference of the whole union — which can be called within a couple of weeks. This is a hard road, but there is no other way to win the strike.

A dock strike would place a major responsibility on the rest of the labour movement. A mass support movement would be needed, on the model of the Miners' Support Movement, giving support to the dockers at every level and involving every section of the movement.

We must not allow the TUC to sit back. An organised support movement, working to raise the question of solidarity action in every union, will be vital in the task of pushing them into action.

Form Support Groups now! Invite dockers to meetings to explain their case! Discuss solidarity action in workplaces. Don't leave the dockers isolated; prepare for solidarity action — starting now!

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 19th if possible.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

Knight unright; Kuper super!

Dear *Briefing*,

Chris Knight's article attacking Richard Kuper's advocacy of PR makes several points which fall wide of the mark.

Chris argues that the notion "Yes to PR, no to pacts and coalitions" is contradictory. Not so.

Under PR, Labour could not increase its representation in Parliament through pacts, as is currently advocated by right winger John Evans.

And on coalitions, Labour's room for manoeuvre in opposition in a hung parliament caused by PR would be far greater than at present.

Chris talks about "legitimation" and "popular mandates" conferred by the present electoral system. But surely we don't want to suggest such things of the Thatcher government — with its 42% electoral support.

"The more we can marginalise such trash [the likes of David Owen] the better."

I'm no friend of Owen, but Chris, through supporting first past the post, seeks to over-represent the Tories, largely at the expense of the centre parties. Does this serve the left?

Chris backs the present electoral system because it "imposes collective discipline" and forces us "to sort out our leadership problems internally", i.e. the electoral system weds us to the Labour Party for our own benefit.

But surely our support for Labour is based on our analysis that this is the best way to advance socialism, not on corporate loyalty. Socialism comes *before* the Labour Party.

Finally, Chris makes a vital error. Even if Labour were to support PR — for propaganda, tactical, and democratic reasons — it would not necessarily prevent Labour winning an overall majority, simply because the Tories are not about to change the electoral system.

Peter Bowing,
Devon Labour Briefing



Demonstrating during the recent Spanish General Strike

The old popular front in a *Unida* disguise

Dear *Briefing*,

The article on Spain by Jesus Mari Garrido Ituarte is profoundly dishonest in presenting the Spanish Communist Party's (PCE) electoral front, Izquierda Unida, as a broad left alliance.

After the Party split into pro-Moscow and Eurocommunist factions in 1984, IU became necessary in order to avoid electoral competition.

It has not succeeded in attracting substantial non-Stalinist forces, although it makes advances to some small bourgeois parties. It has been rigidly controlled by the Party bureaucracy.

Garrido Ituarte is nostalgic for the time of the 1978 Pact of Moncloa (an agreement modelled on the Wilson/Callaghan Social Contract), where the PCE's role was crucial in winning trade unions to a wage freeze and to political demobilisation.

Once the danger of workers' militancy had passed the Spanish ruling class spurned those who had helped it in its hour of need. The PCE was forced into opposition, where it began to fragment.

It would be tragic if the opportunities now opening up for the left as a result of the split between the PSOE government and the UGT leadership were once more to be squandered in support of Stalinism.

The Labour right and the PCE leaders share a concept of politics in which leaders know best and the rank and file should do as they are told!

Many *Briefing* supporters are aware of Stalinism's treacherous role in the defeat of the Spanish revolution in the 1930s. Yet Garrido Ituarte's call for a re-run of the Popular Front will probably arouse little comment.

It would seem that we learn nothing from history.

Fraternally,
John Sullivan,
Bristol

A Soviet road-block

Dear *Briefing*,

I have one quibble with Alison Clarke's article contrasting Cuba and Nicaragua (*Briefing* no. 79).

Alison states that the Nicaraguans opted for political plurality and a mixed economy "because they did not want to go down the same road as the Cubans."

In fact the Cuban road was never open to them.

Through trade and other links, Cuba benefits from a massive subsidy from the Soviet Union.

Moscow's relationship with Nicaragua is however much more circumspect, typically using its economic leverage to force Nicaragua in a different direction.

One recent report suggested that future Soviet oil supplies to Nicaragua would be dependent on the FSLN bringing the political opposition into government — against the express wishes of the Nicaraguan people.



Training in Honduras

This is despite the fact that Nicaragua's annual oil needs amount to less than one day's production in the USSR!

Poverty and hunger exist in Nicaragua because imperialism has got the country by the throat.

This is not just an immediate military problem — but the long-term deformation of Nicaragua's economy so that it produces crops which it doesn't need for export, to sell on a world market it doesn't control, to earn hard currency to buy the infrastructure needed to improve the condition of its people.

These are the realities which circumscribe policy options for the Sandinistas. One thing is certain: any suggestion of "socialism in one country" in a country as impoverished and throttled as Nicaragua is definitely excluded.

Let us continue to discuss the Nicaraguan Revolution in the context of redoubling our efforts to organise solidarity with it in this, its tenth anniversary year!

Mike Phipps,
Woolwich, London



Celebrating in Nicaragua

Unilateral is popular

Dear *Briefing*,

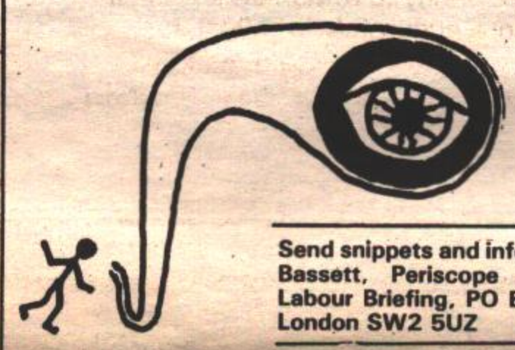
Loyal as ever to NATO's out of step war machine, Thatcher's insatiable desire for more American weapons flies in the face of worldwide talks and Soviet arms reductions.

A 17% increase in defence spending since 1979 and 50% of all government funded research and development being spent on the military shows something worse than feet dragging — it is provocative.

Labour's stance on unilateralism is hardly making the situation any better for the millions of people in this country who are opposed to government arms policy.

Yours sincerely,
Jack Hughes,
Enfield, London

Periscope



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

Spit in your eye?

When the Bird's Eye Company closed down their Liverpool factory recently, with the loss of several hundred jobs, Thatcher was quick to mourn the tragedy.

What a pity the workers had been so "inflexible"!

That very same day, however, another Merseyside factory shut. Four hundred workers, mostly women, at the Knowsley Garment Company were given just three days notice that they were destined for the dole.

Here it would be harder even for the *Sun* to scapegoat the workers.

For the firm had been set up by a Japanese company not noted for its indulgence in matters of working conditions, with public support from the Tory government and much fanfare from the bourgeois media.

Knowles back *Briefing*!?!?

Is some fiendish forger at work in the Midlands?

A copy of what appears to be the minutes of Birmingham District Labour Party for February 1st 1989 has fallen into *Labour Briefing's* sweaty palms.

The minutes appear to be genuine, though item 4, "Budget Debate", raised some eyebrows.

In this item it is reported that Dick Knowles, right wing Labour Leader of Birmingham Council, "recommended especially the middle pages of national *Briefing*... which gave stick to Labour-controlled cities other than Birmingham."

Thanks, Dick! May we recommend a lifetime *Briefing* subscription, especially reduced for you to only £20 million — or the sum total extracted from Birmingham tenants in rent rises, whichever is the greater.

Sub-Hulme-an

The January 13th edition of *The Municipal Journal* carried an uncritical plug for the LCC's "Making things happen: socialism and management" conference.

The *MJ*'s correspondent (who takes on trust everything he's told by LCC Secretary Ken Hulme) reports (with a straight face):

"The LCC is against witch-hunts on political grounds, but believes in dealing with groups like *Militant*."

Tell that to Mandy Mudd, whose would-be witch-hunters were all paid-up LCC members.

Camden Councillor Hulme also used the *MJ* piece to air his views on pacts and electoral reform. "Ken Hulme believes Labour has to have a serious debate about pacts and electoral reform...

"even without a purely Labour government ... a great deal could be achieved. A return to the Macmillanite consensus would provide 'a very great deal'."

The *MJ* article concludes with Hulme babbling of "major compromises" and "prices worth paying".

LCC: "Within and against the labour movement"

Highlights from a recent LCC members' mailing include self-congratulation on "a new approach to (local government) management by the left (sic) based on a new relationship between politicians and senior managers."

It appears that Council workers and service users are to be excluded from this innovative intimacy.

A report on the LCC AGM in Sheffield includes the following:

"Having agreed that a non-payment campaign would not defeat the Poll Tax we went to lunch and returned to find an Anti-Poll Tax choir in full swing in the middle of the shopping centre singing out the message 'Ain't no way I'm gonna pay...'

Most revealing, however, were Alan McDougall's notes on Labour's economic policy:

"The ... achilles heel for Labour remains its inability to develop an objective labour market strategy which isn't constrained by the sectional interests of trade unionism...

"Maybe we should appropriate a slogan from the early 1980s: 'within and against the labour movement'."

Will the real entryists please stand up?

Contact Briefing

So how is the new office? Just when we thought that nothing could be worse than no electricity, the plumber came, and turned the water off. We await the man with a good reason for restricting the air supply (there must be one somewhere, surely).

This week's lucky question is: how do you sex a random number generator?

All we can say is we're glad we gave the *Briefing* RNG the obviously hermaphrodite title of "Neville", for the latest prize number drawn shows that positive discrimination is still being applied.

Lucky winner of this week's £25 prize in the 500 Club draw is holder of number 483, longstanding supporter Di Parkin.

For details of how to join the *Briefing* supporters' 500 Club, write to 39 Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB, or phone us on 01-809 3927.

Please send all articles, correspondence and MONEY (yes, you do remember what that is!) to that address too.

Don't forget the *Briefing* Summer Raffle. Tickets can be obtained from John Wilton, 25 World's End Ave, Quinton, Birmingham B32 1JF, 021-422 1366. They cost £1 per book of 5 tickets, and ticket sellers' can keep a special percentage of the profits raised for use in the local group. The main profits raised go towards *Briefing*'s £1,000 fund drive, donations towards which are always welcome.

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BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

What he should have told her

We don't know for sure what Gorbachev said to Thatcher but we do know some of the things he should have said.

He should have told her...

- that her ten years in power had demonstrated with harsh clarity the monstrous inhumanity and chronic instability of capitalism...
- that her precious market mechanism was a millstone round the necks of the majority of the population she governs...
- that her systematic vandalism of public services outstripped anything committed by the "hooligans" whom she likes to condemn...
- that her condemnation of human rights abuses in other countries, given her own regime's violently and increasingly authoritarian record, was a piece of hypocrisy that fouled the planet as much as uncontrolled waste emissions had fouled her country's coastline...
- that in aiding and abetting the Afghan Mujahedin, the South African forces in Namibia, and just about every other reactionary cabal in the world she had exported her own brand of class war more effectively and extensively than any of his own predecessors had exported revolution.

Finally, he should also have told her she was dead lucky to be blessed with an opposition led by a pack of spineless, incompetent, self-seeking creatures who had squandered every opportunity to challenge her rule and whose greatest achievement to date is to have discovered, at last, how to ask a parliamentary question with sufficient brevity to avoid putting journalists, MPs, and half the nation to sleep.

Reselection

John Evans, Kinnock's stalking-horse and begetter of OMOV, is bracing himself for another round of that "debilitating exercise" in democracy known as reselection motivated, he claims, by the Labour Party's electoral "death wish".

Evans is no Boris Yeltsin. Rather than face the unhappy electorate of his local CLP, Evans has allowed himself to be repeatedly imposed from above by the Party hierarchy.

Nothing could reveal more starkly the real intentions of this hierarchy and the bureaucratic methods it relies on.

Reselection is an essential part of the democratic process by which Labour seeks to hold its elected representatives to account.

It is also an opportunity to refashion Labour's representation more accurately to reflect its supporters. The Party has at present a mere 21 women MPs. The "one woman on every shortlist" rule provides us with a way of beginning to change this disgraceful state of affairs.

Similarly, Black Sections are promoting a "Black List" of candidates to stand in the many constituencies where Labour relies heavily on the support of black voters.

The reselection process can renew the debate between socialists who backed Benn and Heffer and the Kinnockite New Realists. The choice will be between candidates of the status quo and candidates prepared to turn the Party outwards to the struggles of the working class.

Local issues are crucial but each candidate must be forced to state her or his position on issues such as the repeal of Tory anti-union laws, unilateral nuclear disarmament, an anti-imperialist foreign policy, public ownership, Poll Tax, the Alton Bill, and opposition to pacts and coalitions.

Reselection should be seen as a major opportunity for the left; after all it only comes round once every five years. As a matter of urgency, left caucuses and democratic forums should be convened, not only to choose candidates, but as part of the process of bringing more people into the fight to transform the Party.

For *Labour Briefing* the reselection process is an important part of the left's fight to win the leadership of the labour movement. Our task is daunting but the cost of failure is yet more defeat for the working class.

Labour Leader tells all!

Social ownership without the ownership!



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

Kinnock goes to market

On March 20th Neil Kinnock gave the first of a series of three speeches setting out the main lines of the economic policy developed by the NEC's Policy Review.

This has apparently become official policy some time before the October Conference which is supposed to debate it.

By JAMIE GOUGH

But for the moment let's leave aside the little matter of Party democracy, and look at what Kinnock has in store for us.

Kinnock's central theme was that "the market" — meaning private ownership of the means of production — is OK in itself but needs to be supplemented by the state.

The task of socialist policy is therefore *not to oppose what capital does but to fill the gaps which capital leaves.*

And these "gaps", as Kinnock calls them, these needs which the state is to meet, whose needs are they? Why, they're the needs of capital itself!

•First, industries which are "natural monopolies", infrastructure like telecoms, electricity and water, need to be "regulated".

The type of "regulation" Kinnock has in mind was indicated by a leak of parts of the Policy Review, reported in the *Guardian* on March 21st.

This seems to propose that these infrastructural industries be regulated by a new Office of Regulation *independent of the government*, i.e. a quango.

Parliament

Labour's policy for these industries will therefore be developed and implemented by a board of the Great and the Good which won't even be answerable to Parliament.

So this is how Kinnock intends to "get away from the bureacratic, old-fashioned model of the nationalised industries".

•Second, the state needs to fill a "gap" left by underinvestment in training and research and development.

Here, Kinnock's solution is not to challenge the private ownership and lack of planning which are responsible for this underinvestment, but *to supply firms with the trained workers and research which they want but don't bother to invest in themselves.*

The government would subsidise large firms, via the tax system and "joint ventures", to undertake training and research. Small firms would be provided with advice and trained workers, and organised and subsidised into "research clubs".

No strings, it seems, will be attached to any of this bounty.

Training, it is true, has always been dominated by employers. But, research and development used to be run directly by government; now Kinnock is proposing to keep it within large companies, funded by public money.

•The third "gap" with which the new policy is concerned is takeovers.

Kinnock would give the government powers or use existing powers to prevent nasty "short termist" companies like BTR from taking over nice "long termist" companies like Pilkingtons.

The problem with this is that what companies do is not fundamentally determined by some inherent moral "character", either good or bad. And Kinnock overlooks the constantly changing nature of companies operating in a capitalist market.

Kinnock says the aim of his new policies is "to make the interests of firms and society concide." But in fact what he has outlined is a means by which "society" will meet firms' (private) interests, not the other way round.

As is obligatory nowadays, these policies are presented as "radical" and "new". The "traditional" dividing lines between public and private sector are to be redrawn.

Kinnock

By "traditional" dividing lines, Kinnock presumably means the lines between those industries which past Labour governments managed to pluck up enough courage to nationalise and the ones it left alone, for whatever reasons.

He did not and could not say just what economic changes justify the "new" policy.

The real justification is that he does not want to renationalise what Thatcher has privatised, let alone socialise any other parts of the economy.

The policy he is left with is actually an old and proven failure — a watered down version of Harold Wilson's "white hot technological revolution" of the 1960s.

Kinnock says this policy will bring Britain into line with its "successful" competitors. He even berated Thatcher for being out of step with these companies.

So now we know what a socialist economy looks like: West Germany, France, and Japan.

Actually, for Kinnock, some of these economies are rather ultra-left, since they utilise forms of state intervention which Kinnock specifically ruled out in his speech, the "planning" of *industrial sectors.*

This is the cornerstone of state intervention in France and Japan, and is carried out by the banks in West Germany.

Kinnock deliberately ignores the fact that in these countries, as here, there is high unemployment (officially 8% in "model" West Germany), dictatorship within the workplaces, and racism institutionalised in the economy.

Sectoral

In any case, Kinnock's project of transforming Britain into a West Germany or a Japan is unachievable. British capital is not interested and Kinnock's jettisoning of sectoral planning is an acknowledgement of this.

British industry has always been hostile to national sectoral planning, since the major firms extend across sectors and indeed across nations.

To compel British capital to be like West German or Japanese capital, to force it to change its spots, you would need far more than a bit of subsidy and "joint ventures". You would have to take complete control of it.

But then it wouldn't be capital any more. Kinnock's project of making Britain match its "competitors", apparently so moderate and sensible, is really a dream.

Campaign! (Democratic Rights)

Lesbian and Gay Rights

Attacks increase

"Violent attacks on gay men have become increasingly commonplace and have featured organised gangs waiting outside gay pubs with bricks, bats, coshes, and chains."

This is the conclusion of the Gay London Policing Group (GALOP), whose *Fourth Annual Report 1987-88 documents a rising tide of violence and discrimination against the lesbian and gay community.**

By PETER TATCHELL

It's a trend that I can personally confirm. At least once a week, I experience some form of verbal abuse or physical assault as I go about my everyday business.

Most of these incidents, which have happened as far apart as Bournemouth and Bradford, involve the explicit expression of anti-gay prejudice by the assailants.

As someone who is publicly known to be gay, I have to live with the ever-present danger of violent attack. But so do *most* lesbians and gay men.

"Queer-bashing" is a fact of life and every year it traumatises the lives of *thousands* of homosexual men and women who are murdered, blinded, paralysed, and disfigured by gangs of homophobic bigots.

Yet where is the public outcry? And what are the government and the police doing to protect the homosexual community? Judging from GALOP's report, very little.

The police refuse to monitor attacks on gay people or record anti-gay crime, such as "queer-bashing", as a separate category of assault.

GALOP complains that this obscures the vast scale of anti-homosexual violence and is symptomatic of the police failure to treat crimes against homosexuals seriously.

Monitoring is necessary, according to GALOP, to establish the true extent of homophobic violence and to ensure appropriate policing measures to stamp it out.

However, even if the police did agree to record anti-gay crime, without "gay awareness" training to change hostile police attitudes towards homosexuals, and without the amendment of the police disciplinary code to make homophobic remarks and behaviour a disciplinary offence, many lesbians and gay men will remain reluctant to report incidents to the police.

The legitimacy of these fears is amply evidence by the examples of police prejudice cited in GALOP's *Annual Report.*

These examples include police abuse of the victims of anti-gay crime, refusal to take statements, failure to attend the scene of "queer-bashing" violence, and reluctance to press charges against the assailants of lesbians and gay men.

Incidents such as these make it quite clear why most lesbians and gay men have little confidence in the police and why so much anti-gay violence goes unreported.

Furthermore, they highlight the need for greater public acountability of our police forces to ensure that homosexuals receive the full and equal protection of the law.

***Copies available from GALOP, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP (01-278 6215).**

Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights
Annual General Meeting
April 22nd/23rd
London Lesbian & Gay Centre, Cowcross St, London EC1
Friday 21st (evening): lesbian caucus
Membership of LCLGR is open to all lesbian and gay socialists, trade unionists and students. It costs £3/year unwaged, £6 low waged, £10 high waged. Send the money and your name and addres to: Membership Secretary, LCLGR, PO Box 306, London N5

April 23rd, Southall

Remember Blair Peach

Support is continuing to grow for the anti-racist demonstration and rally in memory of Blair Peach.

The mobilisation has attracted wide sponsorship from black and labour movement organisations.

By OLIVER NEW

Initially, there were two different mobilising committees at loggerheads with each other. Now there is to be just one event.

With this cloud of division removed, it has become even easier to organise support. Public meetings have been held in several cities and coaches booked by black and anti-racist organisations.

The demonstration and rally will be held in the heart of the black community in Southall. It was against this community and its supporters that the police, spearheaded by the SPG thugs, launched their all-out assault in April 1979.

It was a message to the black community from the imperialist state: stay on your knees or else.

Arrests took place on a scale unprecedented since the early days of CND's passive resistance. Police behaviour involved enormous brutality.

The attack was followed up by systematic lies in the media and the conviction and jailing of many of those who defended their community against the fascists and the police.

April 23rd 1979 is a day we must never let them forget.

This April also marks another anniversary. It is 100 years since the birth of Adolf Hitler, which will be celebrated by fascist scum all over Europe, fascists who are gaining strength, confidence, and votes year by year.

April 23rd in Southall will be a day of commemoration for Blair Peach, a celebration of 10 years of resolute anti-racist struggle, and part of the European-wide agenda of anti-fascist events.

Briefing readers should be there!

Memorial March

Assemble 1pm, Southall Park, Uxbridge Road, Southall

(Southall BR is 20 mins. from Paddington; or go to Ealing Broadway tube, then by 207 bus)

Rally 3pm, Fenner Brockway Centre, South Road, Southall.

Speakers: Scargill, Corbyn, M Abdullah (France), L Zeeskind (USA), M Becker (Germany), Broadwater Farm, *Searchlight*, Refugee Forum, Southall Monitoring Group, Southall Black Sisters, Anti-Fascist Action, Friends of Blair Peach, SWP, John la Rose, Clarence Baker.

Beating the Broadcasting Ban
Saturday April 15th
The Media and the North of Ireland
Day of film, talk and debate at Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham
Evening screening of *Acceptable Levels*
Contact Alan Fair 021-440 4221

LAMHA



We're *not* in-SANE

A poster campaign by SANE (Schizophrenia: A National Emergency) has been widely condemned for reinforcing the stereotype that people labelled "mentally ill" are violent.

SANE, sponsored by Burtons and closely allied to the *Sunday Times'* campaign on "schizophrenia", have paid for posters throughout South East England which proclaim:

"He thinks he's Jesus... You think he's a killer..."

Complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority have led to the ASA opening an investigation. British Rail and London Transport have decided to remove posters on their property.

The campaign against SANE has already drawn support from COHSE. Even the National Schizophrenia Fellowship (who share objectives and fund-raising activities with SANE) have disassociated themselves.

The London Alliance for Mental Health Action (LAMHA) held a day of protest in early March outside the Imperial War Museum, the site of the old Bethlem Lunatic Asylum (above).

Socialist Conference Diary of Events

APRIL

Local Conferences on Socialist Alternatives to Labour's Policy Review

Bristol: Friday 14th, 7.30pm, Shepherd's Hall, Old Market. Speakers: Campaign Group MP (invited), Reg Race (Socialist Conference).

Newcastle: Saturday 15th, doors open 1pm, debate starts 2pm, Newcastle Civic Centre, Council Chamber. Chair: Kevin Flynn. Speakers: Campaign Group MP (invited), Nadine Finch (Socialist Conference, Women for Socialism).

London: Saturday 22nd, 6-10pm, Council Chamber, Lambeth Town Hall. Speakers: Tony Benn MP, Hilary Wainwright (Socialist Conference), Hanif Kureishi (Director, *My Beautiful Laundrette*), plus Not the Red Rose Cabaret.

Sheffield: Saturday 22nd, 12 noon, Library Theatre, off Surrey St, back of main library. Chair: Joan Maynard. Speakers: Bill Michie MP, Reg Race (Socialist Conference), Annette Taberner (Sheffield Against the Poll Tax).

Birmingham: Friday 28th, 7.30pm, Carrs Lane Church Centre, Carrs Lane, Birmingham 4 (behind Marks & Sparks). Chair: Pauline Purnell. Speakers: Dawn Primarolo MP, Mandy Moore (Socialist Conference, Women for Socialism).

MAY

Local Conferences on Socialist Alternatives to Labour's Policy Review

Glasgow: Saturday 20th, 11am, City Hall. Speakers: Bernie Grant MP, Hilary Wainwright (Socialist Conference, Women for Socialism), Scottish Campaign Group MP (invited).

Sat. 13th. National Convention for Democratic Rights. Contact: Mike Marqusee, 01-341 9203.

Sat. 20th/Sun 21st. Local Government Conference. Rochdale (provisionally). Contact Tony Trehy, 7 East View, Mitchell St, Rochdale OL12 6SF. 0706-526624.

JUNE

Sat. 3rd/Sun. 4th. Gorbachev & the European Left. Conference, with Eastern and Western European speakers. Oxford University Conference Centre. Contact: Gus Fagan, 30 Bridge Street, Oxford OX2 0BA. 0865-723207.

Sat. 17th/Sun. 18th. Third Socialist Conference. Octagon Centre, Sheffield University.

NOVEMBER

Sat. 11th/Sun. 12th. Building the Left in the Unions.

Socialist Conference
Democratic Rights — A Call to Action!

Open *Organising Meeting* for a National Convention on Democratic Rights
Saturday May 13th, 1-4pm
Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Road, London N4
(Finsbury Park tube)
All civil liberties, anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-censorship, lesbian and gay, Irish, trade union activists welcome.
Help build a *united resistance* to the Tory attack on democratic rights.
For more details contact Democratic Rights, c/o Reading Matters Bookshop, Wood Green High Road, London N22.

With "England" in Albania

A visit to Albania is an experience in itself.

A visit to Albania for the first ever football match between England and Albania is an experience on top of an experience, not least because of the presence of some very unpleasant Englishmen.

The Albanian people treated our party (organised by alternative football magazine *When Saturday Comes*) like celebrities, lining the streets and waving at our coach.

They crowded around the hotel entrance in their hundreds each time we entered or departed. "It's because you're associated with the England team," our guide explained.

In the bars, locals predicted the score of the game with their fingers and invited us to play a matchbox flicking game which seemed to be the only available form of entertainment.

Most found our T-shirts, emblazoned with an Albanian rendition of "Friendly Football Supporters of England salute our Albanian comrades on the occasion of our first meeting" as amusing as was intended.

This reaction was not shared by the English fascists.

Our problems sprang from a group of about 13 self-proclaimed fascists who continually harassed members of our party.

Many of us were given a Nazi salute every time we walked into the hotel restaurant and others were abused as they walked around the hotel. This was often accompanied by cries of "We hate Commies".

At the bottom of their venom lay their resentment of our friendly intentions towards the locals. These people follow England to cause trouble, but the Albanians must be amongst the most hospitable people on earth.

We provided an easier target, ready to hand.

Many of our party deliberately disassociated themselves from the Nazi salutes at the Under-21 match in Shkoder by refusing to stand up for the national anthem. Others went further by shouting the Nazis down.

This provoked a ferocious argument in the car park. We met the "Sieg Heilers" by their coach and a small group began shouting at John Duncan, the organiser of our trip.

"We're fascists and you're dead, you're all fucking dead" was their final contribution to the debate.

Things almost came to a head when all the England fans in Albania were placed in the same hotel in Tirana, after the England squad conveniently made room for us by flying home.

By Craig Brewin
Football Supporters Association (personal capacity)

In order to avoid trouble, some of us went to Tirana's other hotel for the evening. On the way we met some of the more neanderthal elements, who had forced the hotel bar to close following a disturbance.

One of them shouted, "We get all this shit from *The Sun* and then you people come along."

Those who ran from them were chased. Curiously, those who just stood their ground were ignored as the thugs lumbered by.

The evening finished off with us having the time of our lives in the nearest thing Tirana has to a nightclub, with the thugs under police observation in the Hotel Tirana.

Eventually five people were ejected from the Hotel Tirana Tavern after one of them stripped naked on the dance floor. I was told the next day by the people who had stayed in their rooms that their evening was disturbed by regular knocks on the doors accompanied by shouts of "Kill! Kill! Kill!"

We discovered that we were under observation by plain clothes police after only a short time in the country, simply by bumping into the same people at different times.

There was no trouble at the full international match, probably due to the overcrowding in the stadium, an early goal from England, and the fact that we had agreed to ignore the political slogans and salutes.

The fascists are *not* football supporters. Many of the people we had problems with did not even watch the matches. They were there simply to give Nazi salutes while singing the national anthem and to shout political slogans.

Given the number of visa applications refused, there must have been some form of vetting procedure. As these people obtained visas it is reasonable to assume that they are not on any blacklist anywhere and that they have no criminal convictions.

So much for Part II of the Football Spectators Bill, which seeks to prevent trouble by stopping convicted hooligans travelling to England matches abroad.

The FA policy of discouraging people from following England abroad is wrong. We annoyed the fascists by diluting their influence and by not following their lead. When shouting down their salutes we noticed that many other people, not in our party, joined in.

The FA could argue that our presence might have provoked trouble, but there is no doubt in my mind that the fascists would simply have found another focus.

As it was, there was some minor trouble in the bars and we were told of an incident in Titograd where a Yugoslav was set upon.

When we left Ari, our guide, thanked us for visiting Albania. "You have shown us that not all English football supporters are like the nasty people," he said.

It was a statement that we appreciated greatly given the provocation we had faced. But as Enver Hoxha once said in a different context: "They may intimidate us, but we frighten them."



Singing the national anthem in the Qemal Stafa stadium

SWP drop "Friends of Rushdie"

Censorship, Secularism, Socialism

***Briefing* readers will be disappointed to learn that the SWP have decided (unilaterally) to wind up the brief-lived "Friends of Salman Rushdie".**

***Briefing* had strongly supported what seemed an excellent and essential initiative.**

We urged our readers to sponsor the Friends' statement, which condemned blasphemy laws of all kinds and called for unity against racism, as well as defending Rushdie's right to publish and be read.

The SWP have now written to sponsors of the Friends, returning financial contributions and explaining why they have closed down the campaign.

The arguments they have advanced for their withdrawal from the struggle to defend Rushdie (and much else that rides on his fate) are painfully confused.

By Mike Marqusee
Haringey Labour Briefing

They claim that the racist backlash rules out any campaign in defence of Rushdie, and in particular a campaign based on the Friends' initial statement. Surely, this is anti-racist politics turned upside down.

Precisely because of the intensity and nature of the racist backlash, socialists have an inescapable duty to maintain a dual opposition to racism and censorship.

Even more important, we have to explain the link between the two and expose both the false promises of the fundamentalists and the false libertarianism of Tories and tabloids. The abstentionism advocated by the SWP gives free rein to both.

The SWP further argue that black and Muslim support for Rushdie is minimal or non-existent and that therefore it is impossible to mount a serious anti-racist campaign in his defence.

It would be interesting to see where this logic would lead if applied, for example, to the question of Zionism and its relation to the Jewish community (which has many parallels with issues raised by the Rushdie affair).

In any case, the SWP's sweeping dismissal of the quite searching and intense debate now going on within Britain's black, Asian, and Muslim communities reveals a disturbing willingness to endorse precisely the popular racist stereotypes to which they rightly object.

Finally, the SWP say that the Friends' initial statement would have to be radically redrawn to be suitable and that, as Rushdie is now in hiding, they would be unable to secure his assent to the necessary changes.

In the first place, the initial statement has become more — not less — relevant as the Rushdie affair has evolved, especially in comparison with the rather befuddled "World Statement in Defence of Salman Rushdie and his Publishers" (which attracted scores of prestigious sponsors but has gone absolutely nowhere).

Secondly, it has been reported that, contrary to SWP claims, Rushdie was never consulted about the original statement and his name was appended to it without his permission. The *Briefing* Steering Committee has written to the SWP asking for clarification.

With or without the SWP or the establishment intelligentsia, socialists, especially *Briefing* supporters, must take up the complex but unavoidable struggle to defend Rushdie.

A successful local meeting has already been held in Islington and another is planned in Haringey for May 11th.

Wherever possible, in whatever forum seems appropriate, socialists should offer a serious response to the questions raised by the Rushdie affair.

National labour movement conference on immigration and nationality

Saturday April 15th

10am: Manchester Town Hall, continuing after lunch in the Mechanics Institute.
Organised by the Manchester branch of NALGO and Francis and Moji's Defence Campaign.
The Conference is mainly to increase trade unionists' awareness of and involvement in defending Black people against the racist immigration laws.
A lot of trade union members are affected by the immigration and nationality laws, but for many unions it is a new area of work.
It is not limited to people under threat of deportation. It also concerns families that cannot be united.
Immigration lawyer Steve Cohen will give an update of the present immigration and nationality laws and how they affect Black people.
Labour Party Front Bench spokesperson, Alistar Darling, will speak on Labour's alternative to the present immigration laws. The Labour Party is expected to publish a new policy document in April.
Other speakers include Mohammed Idrish, Marion Gaima and Francis Okanlami, on the way forward, Keith Bradley MP, and a national trade union leader.
Workshops include:
1. The immigration laws: what do they mean? How do trade unions combat the new laws? What should be the alternative to the current legislation?
2. MP's intervention: how can trade unions put pressure on government for the right of appeal?
3. How to start a campaign: trade union and community groups' involvement in anti-deportation campaigns.
4. Racism at work: trade unions' fight against racism in the workplace and support network for Black workers in trade unions.
5. Sanctuary and safehouses.

Delegates fees are £10, £2 (waged) and £1 (unwaged) for individuals.
Registration and further information: Rena Wood, NALGO Manchester Branch Office, 1st floor, Elliot House, 3 Jacksons Row, Manchester M2 5NJ. Telephone: (061) 834 6564.

Islington

Some 250 people attended a public rally in defence of Salman Rushdie in his local Borough of Islington on March 20th.

It followed a half page advert in defence of Rushdie in the local paper signed by 100 individuals and organisations.

It was the first such public meeting anywhere in the country. While the meeting was organised by independent socialists and *Briefing* supporters, it was also helped by an unusual display of unity by the local labour movement.

Islington Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn and Chris Smith were joined on the platform by Council Leader Margaret Hodge and Race Committee Chairperson Milton Babulal.

The two largest local union branches — NALGO and NUT — also backed the meeting.

By Davy Jones
Islington South CLP

Also speaking were Gita Sahgal from Southall Black Sisters, Michael Foot MP, Labour Arts spokesperson Mark Fisher MP, two Iranian dissidents, and socialist filmmaker Hanif Kureishi (himself condemned by sections of the Muslim community for his portrayal of gay sexuality in *My Beautiful Laundrette*).

Twenty Muslims were present at the meeting and some spoke from the floor, calling for the banning of the "racist" book. But the debate was relatively constructive, and platform and other speakers stressed their commitment to opposing any racist backlash.

What the meeting clearly showed was that a very wide layer of people committed to anti-racism and anti-imperialism also understand that Rushdie and his book must be defended against religious bigotry.

It shows that a mass campaign on a principled basis in support of Rushdie could and should be built throughout the country.

Labour Party

Local Government Dayschool

Naked into the Council Chamber?



Workers rally in Liverpool against the government's financial and political restrictions on Labour Councils

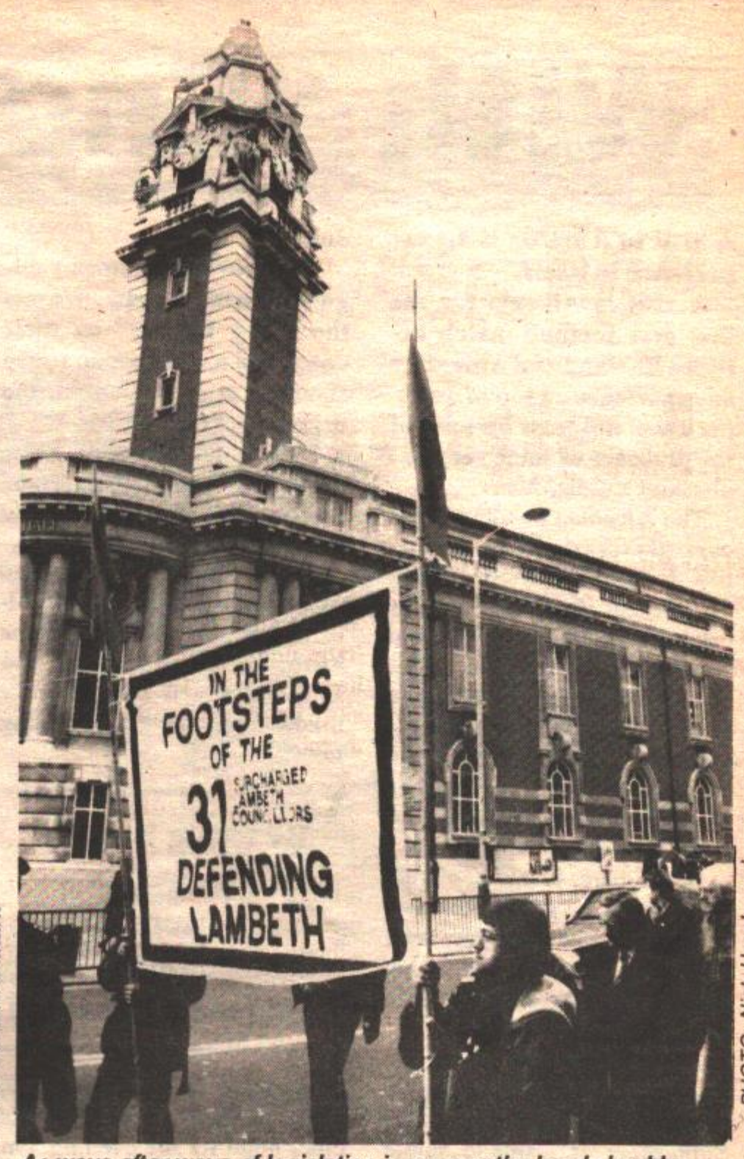


PHOTO: D. Sinclair/Militant

PHOTO: Nick Hazelwood

As wave after wave of legislation increases the legal shackles, workers are still on the march.

Briefing's **Local Government Dayschool on April 29th will address the vexed question of the left's future in local government.**

Since the late 70s, sections of the Labour left have worked within local government and consciously planned to win control of local Councils.

Once in power, these Labour Councillors have used their positions to extend the range and change the focus of services delivered through the local state.

By Mandy Mudd
Tottenham CLP

At the same time, they have pursued progressive social policies, particularly with regard to equal opportunities.

They have tried to use their positions to forge links with workers in struggle, as well as raise public consciousness through initiatives such as Nuclear Free Zones.

All of this can loosely be described as "municipal socialism".

In the same period, the Tories have transformed local government, passing 50 separate pieces of legislation.

They have drastically reduced the scope Labour Councils have. With the recent passage of Local Government, Housing, and Education Bills, they seek to smash the very idea of state run services under local control.

If the period since 1979 has seen some successes for the left in local government, it has also seen some notable failures.

As the 1990 elections and the Poll Tax approach, the questioning of whether the left should stand at all is being asked with increasing urgency.

The election of a Labour GLC in 1981 and the success of Ken Livingstone's leadership challenge changed things dramatically for the left in London. For the first time, it had a position of real power and influence.

Through its Popular Planning Unit, help for co-operative development, establishment of Women's and Race Equality Units, and its grant aid policies, it both extended the range of communities involved with the local state and changed the focus of service delivery.

In the 1982 local elections the left took control of many Councils in London and other urban areas.

They followed through many of the GLC initiatives and placed many left reformist policies on the agenda: decentralisation, strengthening the links with trade unions, and the opening up of Councils through co-options and other attempts to share power.

Almost immediately, restrictions were slapped on spending through regulations and cuts in central government grants.

These spending restrictions and the attempt by a Tory Borough to suppress the GLC's Fares Fair transport policy provided an opportunity for a political challenge to the Tory government, uniting workers, service users, and Labour Councils.

In both cases, this opportunity was side-stepped. Instead of working to build for mass industrial action in the London transport unions, the GLC challenged the Fares Fair ruling in the courts.

Instead of demanding adequate funding for local government, Labour Councils inflicted huge rate increases on local people, forcing them to pay for services formerly funded by central government.

Throughout this period there was some expansion in services and new jobs were created, but on a relatively small scale. No massive increase in Council homes, nursery places, or home helps took place.

Although left Labour Councils were committed to delivering "municipal socialism", they were prepared to do so only within the restrictions laid down by the capitalist state.

To a certain extent, Labour Councils were able to act as a buffer between an extremely right wing Tory administration and working class people.

But as long as they failed to use the Councils as a base from which to build united action against the government, their scope for doing this would be increasingly restricted.

The introduction of rate-capping in 84/5 brought the question of local government finance to a head. The miners were on strike, and many saw the struggles around local government as a chance to open a second front.

Strategies were debated, in particular whether to set a deficit budget or to refuse to set a rate. In the end, Labour Councils united behind the latter strategy.

There was massive public support for the anti-rate-capping campaign, bringing together Council workers, service users, and Labour Councillors.

The defeat of the miners, however, was followed quickly by the collapse of the anti-rate-capping campaign, when Labour Councils, led by the GLC, caved in to the demands of the law, except, of course, Lambeth and Liverpool.

Another opportunity to use local government to take the class struggle forward had been lost. As most Councils turned to creative accounting to balance their books, Lambeth and Liverpool were left to fight alone.

The failure to mount a united political challenge to the Tories' plans for local government has had disastrous consequences.

Instead of building united class action it diffused opposition and through creative accounting turned the struggle back into the Council Chamber from where it could never hope to be won.

The Tories could press ahead confidently with even more drastic reforms. The financial solutions undertaken by Labour Councils have deepened the crisis many of them face today.

Although there was recognition of the need to build a campaign to challenge the Tory agenda to date, the Labour leadership has studiously avoided building it.

As more people looked towards local services to defend them against the ravages inflicted by Thatcherism, Labour Councils were less and less able to do anything about it and the radical policies on which many had been elected remained largely unachieved.

After the 1987 General Election defeat there was shock, then panic, as financial crisis loomed large. Once again the question of a political challenge to the Tory government was raised.

This time there was real urgency, as all the creative accounting loopholes were closed and united action by workers, service users and Labour Councils was the only way of defending the very limited gains.

The "new realism" which had been gaining ground in the Party took hold in local government.

The demoralisation from three election defeats and the previous failure to prepare for such a campaign meant that many erstwhile lefts capitulated and voted for cuts.

Left Labour Councillors have mounted opposition from within — consistently voting against cuts budgets and giving a focus to those who wanted to fight. But the prospect for 1990 looks bleak.

The openings left to us by the Tory government are now so narrow there can hardly be anyone left who believes radical socialist policies can be implemented without a direct challenge to the state.

The centralisation of power within the Labour Party means those prepared to take such a road would be open to witch-hunting and vilification.

The period 79-89 shows us that the challenge to the Tory government cannot be mounted solely from within the Council Chamber: it needs rank and file involvement in the unions and community.

If it is to succeed, it needs to be on a scale which will force the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracies into some sort of action.

There is still scope for left Councillors to play a propagandist and agitational role — using their positions to support the struggles against the Housing Act and Poll Tax now developing outside the Council Chamber.

It is still important to carry on the battle for socialism at every level in the Labour Party. But the question of whether there is a *specific* role that can only be played by left Councillors is a difficult one.

Come along and discuss it on April 29th!



County Hall: landmark of the left GLC in London. For the first time, London's administration was opened up. Later, the crowds were to gather in protest at the GLC's capitulation.

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.

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

Labour Party Democracy

"Marxist group affiliates to Labour Party!"

If the *Sun* had been around at the turn of the century, that's how it would have described the founding of the Labour Party.

Involved were: The Marxist Social Democratic Federation (no relation to today's Social Democrats); the Independent Labour Party; the Fabians; and the major trade unions.

By DAN CARTER

In 1899 the TUC decided to set up the Labour Representation Committee based on the collaboration of "all the co-operative, socialist, trade union and other working organisations," in the words of the Railway Servants Union resolution.

Following organised attacks on trade union rights and the growing realisation that the left-leaning Liberal Party had little to offer, there was a clear need for working class organisations to seek independent political representation in Parliament.

Conference

The founding conference in London's Farringdon Street Memorial Hall in 1900 was attended by representatives of all the most politically advanced trade unions.

The new Party was deliberately set up as a federation rather than an individual membership organisation. Within four years around 200 trade unions and other groups had affiliated, together representing nearly one million members.

Members

By 1915, there were over two million affiliated trade union members and 33,000 affiliated socialist society members. In 1918, it was decided to admit individual members and to organise systematically at constituency level throughout Britain.

The affiliated status of unions and socialist societies, with representation at Conference, on the National Executive, and in Constituency Parties, has remained a prime feature of the Party since its founding conference.

Affiliation

This affiliation works through delegate structures, although the accountability of delegates varies according to the degree of democracy in the different affiliated organisations.

Campaigns should be mounted to bring in those major unions still not affiliated.

Radicalisation through recent struggles has brought a higher political awareness in, for example, the NUT and CPSA. The imminent NUPE-NALGO merger would strengthen links between the Labour Party and local government workers.

In recent years, the only new affiliation has been the Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance (BETA).

The obvious follow-up work from the political fund ballots, to turn those successes into Party affiliation, was never carried out; and indeed shows the surprisingly non-"political" nature of those campaigns.

The Socialist Societies affiliated to the Party are a motley collection of:

- drinking clubs (National Union of Labour and Social Clubs);
- the remaining founding group (Fabians);
- the various bodies of what's left of the Co-operative movement;
- a Zionist organisation linked to the Israeli Labour Party (Poale Zion);
- and various small pressure groups representing health, education, social workers, lawyers, and Labour Students.

Relaxed

The NEC recently relaxed its ban on new affiliates to admit those which had existed for a set number of years with a minimum national membership. 1988 saw Neil Kinnock welcome the Christian Socialist Movement (which proceeded to vote for Benn in the leadership election).

The talk of Black Sections seeking affiliated status has opened a welcome debate on this question, which should be defined in much wider terms than before.

The Party's "Socialist Societies" section should cease to be merely a way of getting on to your local GC. It should be opened up to encompass community groups who should be naturally linked to Labour.

Amongst these would be Tenants' Association, Irish organisations, Pensioners' Action Groups, Women's Groups, black and ethnic minority organisations such as the Indian Workers' Association, and British sections of socialist parties from around the world.

Trades Councils should be encouraged to affiliate on a much more systematic basis, with an exchange of delegates and regular report-backs to both organisations.

In other words, CLPs should become real local federations of working class and oppressed groups.

Their make-up would clearly vary from region to region, with rural Labour Parties working with environmental groups, and Welsh and Scottish Parties making links with socialists in nationalist groupings.

The Labour Party would also have to look at its relationship to longstanding single issue campaigns, such as CND and Anti-Apartheid.

If Labour is really to become a representative mass membership party,with an active rather than passive membership, these ideas will have to be examined seriously.

After all, if the new Parliamentary selection procedures actually give Conservative trade unionists a say in choosing Labour candidates (as they may well do in some instances), then anything is possible.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

If the Labour Party of old could tolerate affiliations from openly Marxist groups, why are they so scared of Labour Party Black Sections — relegated (above) to Labour's Conference fringe.

Plaid Cymru and Pontypridd

Carnival of the unimpressive

Neil Kinnock eagerly seized on Labour's retention of Pontypridd in the recent by-election as a success for his "new style" Party.

Though Plaid Cymru managed to force the Tories into third place, and more than quadrupled their vote, it never looked a real threat.

Both the SLD and the SDP lost their deposits, as did the Communist Party and an anti-abortion independent.

So what can be expected from the new member for Pontypridd? Kim Howells earned his "safe candidate" credentials in the Miners' Strike, with his virulent denunciations of Arthur Scargill.

Much was made of Kim's close personal friendship with Neil during the campaign and he is already being tipped for a Shadow Cabinet post.

His campaign was stylish and energetic, but with little content. One memorable leaflet announced: "Next to Kim Howells the others fade into insignificance."

An interesting by-product of the election was Neil Kinnock's conversion to a Welsh Assembly, which he linked to an assembly for the North of England, as well as Scotland, thus removing any dangerous national content from the demand.

By CERI EVANS

Given Labour's unimpressive performance, why didn't Pontypridd become a Welsh Govan? The answer lies in the weaknesses of Welsh nationalism, both immediate and historic.

Plaid Cymru's divorce from the South Wales working class dates back to its founding, when its leader, Saunders Lewis, proposed de-industrialising the South Wales valleys.

He was answered by the communist poet, T.E. Nicholas:

Symud y dur a'r glo I
wlad y mylli?
Dad-ddiwydiannu
Merthyr? Yffach wylieti
(Move the steel and coal
to the land of sheep?
De-Industrialise Merthyr?
Wild nonsense!)

Since then, the Party has modified its vision of a Welsh agricultural nirvana, but its failure to address the Welsh working class remains.

In addition, Plaid has always faced a battle in the South Eastern valleys (where Pontypridd is situated) to convince voters that it is a Party of Wales and not merely the Welsh language.

The Labour bureaucracy has of course fuelled this distrust, absurdly labelling Welsh as a middle class language.

This divide was never more starkly illustrated than in the last General Election, with Plaid's vote reduced to a pittance outside its three seat stronghold in Welsh-speaking Gwynedd.

Those results caused a considerable crisis of strategy in the Party. The response from its leadership was to accelerate moves to the right.

Coupled with this has been a turn to Europe and three is a continuing debate as to whether Plaid should view the British or European parliaments as its main battleground.

Conflict

This right turn has brought the Plaid leadership into conflict with sections of its left, notably over law-breaking to defend the Welsh language and tours by Irish language activists, including Sinn Fein.

MP Dafydd Elis Thomas can make these rightward moves, confident that despite a few meek complaints the left will still support him.

In an effort to achieve respectability Dafydd Elis has been vociferous in his condemnation of Meibion Glyndwr, the holiday home burners, while offering no real alternative strategy for national discontent.

From the outset, Plaid's by-election strategy appeared totally inadequate. They tried to build a campaign on the hope of a self-fulfilling prophecy: say you're going to win often enough and you will.



Kinnock: leading the unimpressive show in Wales

They completely failed to grasp the essence of the Govan campaign: active opposition to the Poll Tax. Jim Sillars had "No Poll Tax" after his name on the ballot paper; Plaid Cymru did not.

Their main campaign slogan was "Change for the Better" and they pushed a Plaid vote as the one which would "frighten Thatcher most".

Plaid's Poll Tax campaign, we were told, would consist of selecting 100 test cases and taking the government to the European court on their behalf. Definitely no law-breaking, stressed the Party press conference.

All in all, Plaid Cymru proved completely unequal to the challenge.

The round of Welsh by-elections continues with the death of the sitting MP for the Vale of Glamorgan.

Here the Tories are defending a majority of only 6,000, with Labour in second place. This will prove a much stiffer test for the new model Labour Party than the contest in Pontypridd.

But as with Pontypridd, neither Labour nor Plaid Cymru will use the campaign to best advantage — as a focal point to build a movement to defend the NHS, defeat the Poll Tax, and win a Welsh Assembly.

Education

BEATING BACK BA

NUS Conference

Executive manoeuvres while Rome burns

This year's annual NUS Conference met in Blackpool from March 20th-23rd at a time when more severe attacks face the student movement than ever before.

Loans, Baker's "review" of the national unions, Poll Tax, increased tuition fees, cutbacks have combined to create a major crisis for students.

By Alistair Chisholm
Secretary, SOAS Labour Club

Procedural manoeuvring and prevarications by the Executive failed to stop the loans debate (scheduled originally for Tuesday) taking place on Thursday morning.

Conference censured the Executive for its inactivity and demanded a weekday, third-term demonstration against the loans scheme.

The President's assertion in regard to the Baker review, that "if they come for us, it is because we *were* effective", was less reassuring than she thought, not least because she proposed no resistance.

The crucial discussions on housing and access, benefits and cuts were never reached, despite the length of the conference day: from 9am to 11pm!

The "Democratic Left" (DL) went to extraordinary lengths to prevent debate of any kind.

As for the incoming NEC, there is an interesting difference between the full- and part-timer elections, representing an increased polarisation in NUS.

The former showed an alarming shift to the right with the election as National Secretary of "Cosmo", who variously appears in the guise of an "independent", a clown, Father Christmas, and an elephant, and is in reality horribly right wing.

However,the right did not have it all their own way. In the elections for part-time members the hard left made considerable gains. The capitulation politics of the "Democratic Left" were firmly rejected.

The 12 elected part-time included five hard left, two "Democratic Left" and five "independents" of differing types.

The previously encouraging trend of a number of political currents standing candidates from oppressed groups was reversed, as the NUS's liberation campaigns have been increasingly manipulated by the right and abandoned by the left.

The policy debate on sexual abuse was a breakthrough and may well be the first time a national organisation had broken the taboo surrounding the subject and provided a way forward, even if the discussion was reduced to a somewhat simplistic level.

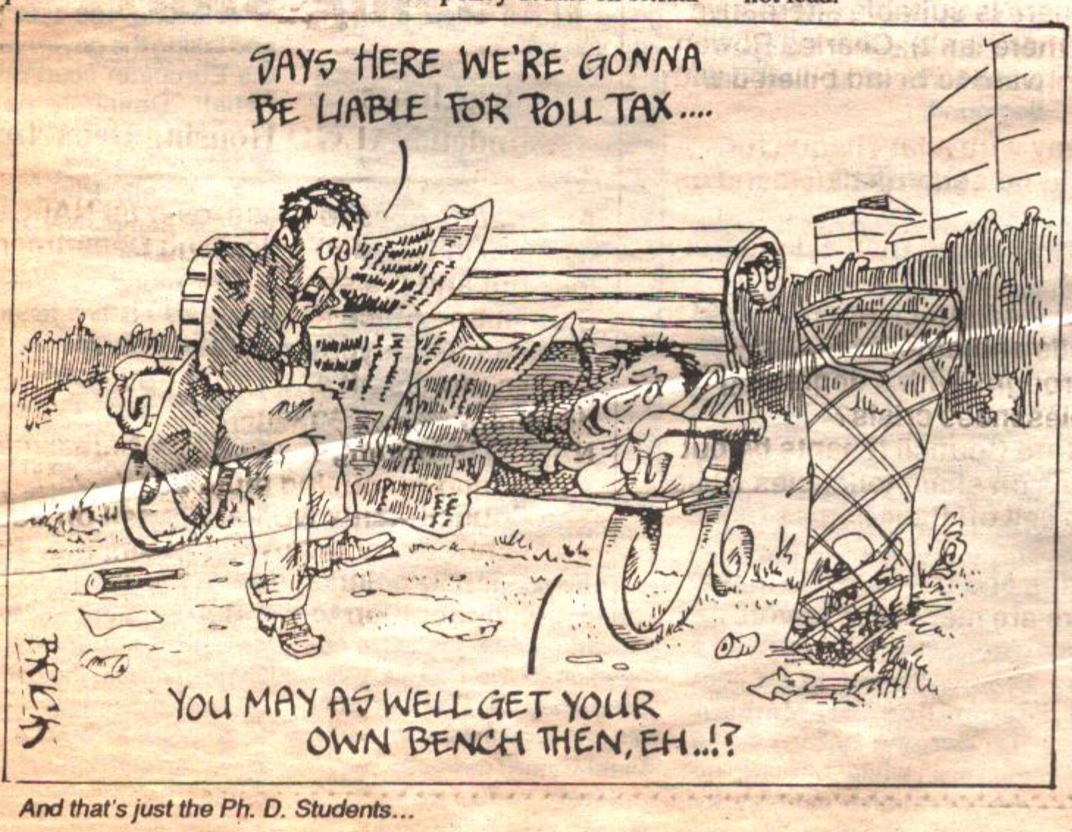
Mature students finally made it onto the agenda. The worst excesses of the Executive's internal reform — abolition of winter conference and political strings attached to central funding of Areas — were rejected.

Advances were made for the lesbian and gay liberation campaign. But the left failed to achieve the two thirds majority necessary to give FE students voting rights.

Before the Conference, Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN) (*Socialist Organiser's* appendage in the student movement) issued a call for left unity.

Partly electioneering, partly a response to their own internal problems, the call nevertheless corresponded to a real need for left unity. A unity fringe meeting called after "Cosmo" was elected attracted over 300 people.

A follow-up conference in Sheffield on April 22nd could prove a useful focus for the *mass action* which is needed and which the Executive will not lead.



And that's just the Ph. D. Students...

NUT Conferen

Teachers surprise New Realists!

The Broad Left leadership got a rough ride from militant teachers at the recent NUT Conference.

On most of the key debates, including salaries, it was unable to convince a majority of delegates to back the low-key approach to Baker's reforms.

On the final day the Executive pulled out all the stops to defeat an STA-backed resolution calling for extended strike action in support of a flat rate claim of £2,500.

By VALERIE COULTAS

Although the STA proposal had been passed the previous day, it was overturned at the last minute by a mere 11,682 votes. The NUT was thus left with no policy on salaries!

This was a last-ditch stand by an otherwise discredited leadership whose strategy of "working within" Baker's framework was torn to shreds in debate after debate.

Conference refused to debate the Executive's priority motion on Local Management of Schools and Conditions of Service, passing instead a resolution that rejected Local Management of Schools in principle.

Against the Executive's advice, Conference voted to elect the Deputy General Secretary and refused to endorse the proposal that candidates for elections should be *nominated* (as well as elected) by ballot!

In a fierce exchange on City Technical Colleges, Conference voted to encourage members not to apply for posts in which they would be denied trade union rights.

In a closed session, a sharp debate took place on plans to spend over £3 million on refurbishing Hamilton House, the NUT headquarters. A resolution expressing solidarity with the AUT was also passed by Conference.

The Executive's failures stimulated a public crisis both in the Broad Left and the Communist Party.

An argument took place over whether Doug McAvoy should be the Broad Left's candidate for General Secretary and Marion Darke, a left Eurocommunist, offered herself as an alternative.

The Socialist Teachers Alliance led the opposition to the Executive at every stage, through delegates' speeches and a daily bulletin. It used conference to launch Bernard Regan's campaign for General Secretary in the first elections NUT members have ever had to elect their leader.

Regan represents a clear political alternative to the Broad Left's tried and failed formulas. Make sure he is invited to your school or Association!

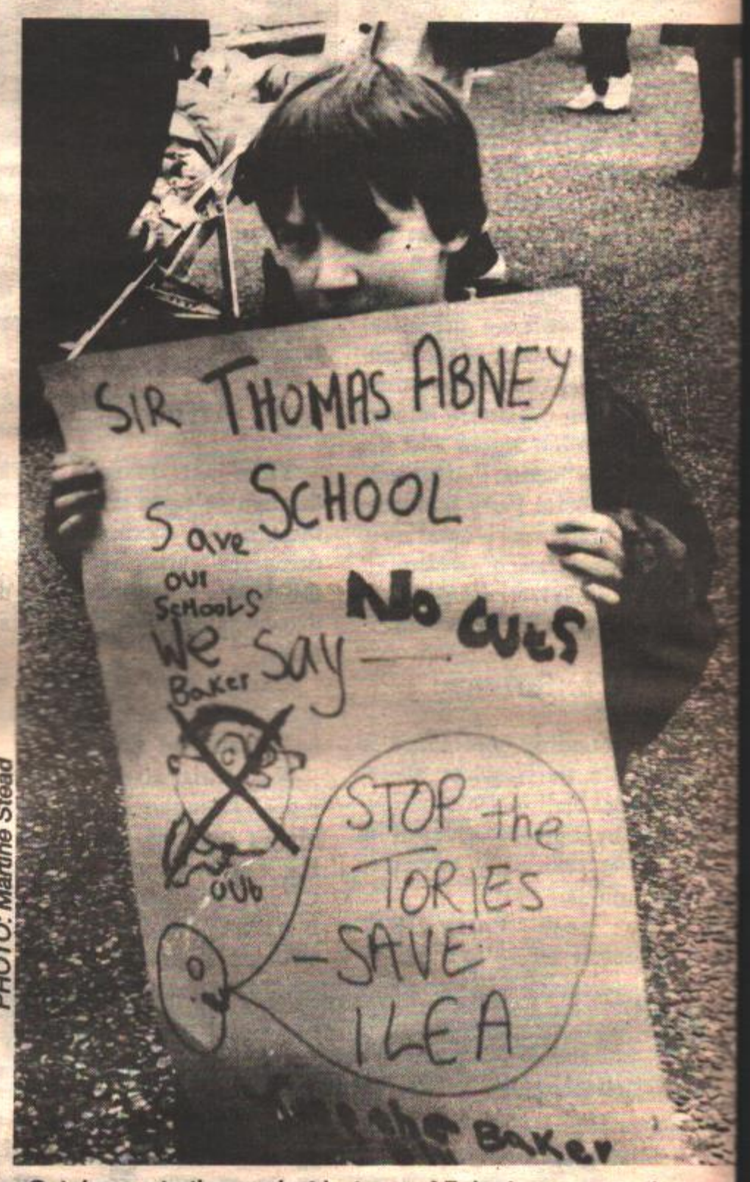


PHOTO: Martine Stead

Out demonstrating against just one of Baker's many attacks on education: the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority.

SOCIALIST TEACHER
SOCIALIST TEACHERS' ALLIANCE

AKER'S BILLS

nce

HOW LONG?

During the education debate at last year's Conference we spent one whole session debating, and eventually approving, the executive's plan for an "Education Commission" of the great and the good, which would rally the education establishment against the ERA.

The story since then was buried in the depths of this year's annual report. The great and the good have been too busy gaining influence *within* the framework of Baker's Act, to be at all interested in rallying opposition to it.

The fact is, there has been a collapse of intellectual and practical opposition to Baker. People are too keen on winning small victories on the ground chosen by Baker, to develop large-scale *alternatives* to Conservative policy. And so the Tories are able to lay down the basic rules for the school system of the next decade.

Whatever happened to the notion that the job of the union is to establish popular alternatives to Tory policy? There's an answer to that, too. Last year, Conference voted to begin such a task. The executive did not implement that decision. It decided that the major task was to *respond* to government initiatives, and that time to develop alternatives to them cannot be spared. So last year's decision — that talked about detailed policies for democracy and equality in education — was set aside.

At this year's conference, Resolution 24, instructing the Executive to draw up alternatives to ERA, was passed. But much more debate is needed if education isn't to be dominated by the Tory agenda.

ANTI-RACISM AFTER BURNAGE

Anti-racist education has become one of the great demons of the Thatcher era. As a result of the attacks of the media, the propaganda of Kenneth Baker, and the campaigns of some right-wing-backed parents, a climate of fear has developed. Teachers have become, in some cases, reluctant to take the issue up.

Resolution 27, which was passed, tried to respond. It was written in the light of the Burnage Report, a document which criticises some anti-racist policy not from a Tory viewpoint, but from a radical one.

The Report, still in large part suppressed by Manchester LEA, says that anti-racism depends on educational democracy — on a dialogue between students, teachers, and the community. It links anti-racist practice with ideas of education that are anathema to Kenneth Baker.

It contains important lessons for us. Not least of these is the importance of teachers learning from the experience and struggles of communities. Black communities, in particular, have a vigorous history of campaigning for educational advance, against racist practices.

It is time that the union listened to their experince, in the context of campaigning to assert the importance of an education which is open, critical, and the very opposite of the monolithic and elitist ideas of "British culture" which Conservatives want to see reproduced in the schools.

Articles reproduced from STA Conference leaflets, updated with Conference decisions

Interview: Bernard Regan



PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

Staring a bleak future in the face... Baker's attacks are not just upon teachers' pay and conditions: they will affect the way a whole generation of the working class is educated. The aim is to use schools as a containment area for children, who will be trained to do nothing more than cheap labour jobs.

STA makes leadership challenge

This year sees the elections for the position of General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary of the NUT. *Briefing* interviewed BERNARD REGAN, the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) candidate for the position of General Secretary.

Can you explain why you are standing?

It was a decision of the STA following discussion of the policies within the Union and the need for a response to the government attacks and the retreat of the Union leadership in the face of these attacks.

The STA is an organised left grouping within the NUT.

Can you spell out the particular issues involved in the retreat of the Union leadership?

They centre on three issues, at the core of the union's concerns:

- education and the attacks resulting from the Education Reform Act;
- wage cuts;
- the question of improving teachers' conditions of service.

In taking up these issues what is central is how we encourage members to become involved in campaigns, to achieve improvements and, in a union with a majority of women members, it is important that we address the concerns of women teachers in each of these areas, and in all the campaigns.

Can you give concrete examples of issues affecting women, and of how to encourage members to become involved in campaigns?

The starkest example is the question of pay. Nominally we have equal pay, but in practice women teachers are on the main scale, receive lower allowances, or are in primary schools.

One of the major debates at Conference has therefore been to put forward a salary claim that will discriminate in favour of teachers on lower pay.

If women and primary teachers see the union fighting on these issues, it provides a greater possibility of uniting teachers to oppose government policies.

The view of the National Executive seems to be that teachers have to work within the framework of the Education Reform Act. How does your view differ?

I'd want to see the Union making a public campaign of issues on testing, opting out, open enrolment, and other measures that will lead to the reintroduction of a selective education system.

I'd also want to see the Union taking that message to members of the Labour Party, parents, trade unionists, and black organisations in order to build an effective campaign.

The Executive majority strategy is based on creating a "partnership" with employers — many of whom have cut back on the education service and are uncritically working to implement the Education Reform Act.

The union should ally itself with all those resisting government attacks, and should support campaigns on the Poll Tax, the fight against the privatisation of the Health Service, and the campaigns of any union, like the AUT, which is trying to defend its members' pay and conditions.

The union needs a rounded view of the attacks; to pursue a clear anti-racist strategy; and to oppose attacks on the rights of lesbians and gay men, threatened under Section 28.

It seems likely that there will be two left candidates for General Secretary. Why has this happened?

At the moment there are two left candidates seeking nominations — myself and Ian Murch. The STA tried to get agreement to have one candidate on the basis of an agreed platform but this has not been possible.

Our view is that the candidate with fewer nominations could still withdraw and leave a straight fight. That would be my intention.

***Briefing* urges all NUT members to get involved in the campaign. NUT members can contact Bernard at 7 Ashmont Road, London N15 4QQ, 01-801 1475.**

Hull

Nasty shock for Baker

By Paul Montero
Hull University Union Labour Club

Education Secretary Kenneth Baker got a shock when he came to Hull for the formal opening of the new buildings of fee-paying Hull Grammar School on March 1st.

The school authorities had tried to keep the visit a closely guarded secret. Only on the afternoon before the visit did a leak emerge which enabled us hastily to organise an impressive demonstration against Baker's proposals to introduce student loans.

About 150 students from Hull University and Humberside college of Higher Education turned up.

The angry mood of those present left us wondering what would have happened if we'd had more time to mobilise!

The Women's Page

PORNOGRAPHY

The feminist debate

One of the biggest workshops at the recent *Women For Socialism* Conference was on pornography.

Giving one of the introductions were women from the Campaign Against Pornography, set up after the defeat of Clare Short's Bill on Page 3.

Much of the evidence used by them to claim direct links between pornography and sexual violence against women was drawn from letters received by the campaign from individual women describing their experiences and from the Everywomen book *Pornography and Sexual Violence — Evidence of the Links.*

Although the Campaign does not call for censorship, the Dworkin/McKinnon Ordinance, the basis for much of the book, does allow individual women to demand censorship of pornographic material, on the grounds that it infringes their civil rights.

The argument about censorship, on definitions of pornography and what to do if you oppose censorship is a vexed and difficult one.

Is pornography different from other, less sexually explicit images of women? Is there evidence of direct links between it and violence against women? Would censorship solve the problem?

The answer to all three questions is no.

Pornography is one end of a spectrum of the representation of women, all of which is sexist and oppressive and all of which rests on a system of male domination which is both patriarchal and capitalist.

This system is institutionalised in the family, which acts to reproduce an acceptable sexuality amonst its members. Heterosexual rather than lesbian or gay sexuality is the ideal, and marriage is the place for such sexuality.

By Jane Kelly

All images of women, on TV, film, in adverts or even often our own snapshots, are imbued with ideas of women's secondary and men's primary, active role.

Women are represented as passively accepting male aggression, even of having provoked it. And stereotypically we are seen as enjoying the violence. Why then should we simply target sexually explicit material?

There is no real evidence that pornography is the cause of male violence against women. It may be true that certain acts of violence, even murder, have been carried out by men who use pornographic material.

But what about in countries like Iran, where it is banned? Has its banning furthered the cause of women's liberation? Of course not!

In a society which oppresses women as ours does, all men are capable of rape. But to blame pornography for violence which occurs assumes no effect from other types of representation, let alone other forms of institutional sexism.

It does not take into account the social and economic conditions which further exacerbate violence.

Who is to decide what is pornographic? There is a thin line between the erotic and the pornographic; indeed one woman's eroticism is another's pornography.

Sometimes the context of an image or piece of writing often changes it from pornography to eroticism or to research evidence. An article in a feminist journal on the sexual experiences of nuns changes its meaning if published in a soft porn magazine!

The question of the audience, and of whether there is a choice in looking at or reading pornographic material, comes into the equation too.

And in a society like ours where sexuality is constructed in a very contradictory fashion, the exploration of sexuality and the erotic is very important if we are to attempt change.

If we allow the law to determine what can and cannot be seen and read, then all sorts of useful material, both educational and experimental, will be banned.

All the evidence shows that it will be lesbian and gay material, sex manuals and films and books that deal seriously with sexuality which will be censored.

It is no coincidence that the Japanese film *Ai No Corrida*, a sexually explicit exploration of a male/female relationship in modern Japan, was refused entry into the US while violent films like *Rambo* are shown everywhere.

Censorship never completely removes pornography. It would go underground, leading to increased prices and confining its sale to the rich, who have always had access to such material.

Censorship would increase the exploitation of women working in the porn industry. It would lead to a false sense of security — leaving the real pornography in our society — romantic fiction, programmes like *Dallas* etc. — free to pump out sexist propaganda against women.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Women at the recent Women for Socialism Conference — which reinvigorated the feminist debate on pornography.

Manchester Women for Socialism

First step in a long journey

On March 11th, about 70 women gathered for the Manchester launch of Women for Socialism.

Kicking off the discussion, Betty Heathfield recalled the strength of women during the Miners' Strike and deplored the fact that any had gone back, reluctantly, to the kitchen sink.

The year of the strike, though, had been their best, she said, because of the feeling of power it gave them: "the power to be able to do things for ourselves, about our lives."

There is a need, she said, to encourage all women in struggle and to get all women to participate more.

Betty said Women for Socialism should be about feminism, about women and socialism, and should be for *all* women, not necessarily those involved in political organisations.

We should base it "on our demands, with our programme", for economic independence, flexible and satisfactory jobs, proper provision for children, more training and opportunities.

In Women for Socialism, she said, we need to be sure about what we want. Women should be joining the unions in their thousands and stepping up the fight for women's demands.

Nanda from the *Outwrite* Collective spoke about the strategy needed over the next ten years.

She felt that the women's movement had lost the ability to mobilise on a large scale and that too many things today to go unchallenged (such as the Cleveland child abuse cases).

She suggested the creation of a federation for women from a wide variety of different groups, which would provide a new kind of forum.

Some single issue campaigns had been successful, but too often women did not discuss long-term strategy because the movement was too fragmented, too bitterly divided.

Nanda was also concerned about support for women's struggles in other countries, from which so much can be learnt.

She stressed the need to recognise differences within the women's movement, to deal with them and agree on a common strategy, based on mutual respect.

Few black women had attended the Women for Socialism national conference (there were also very few at the Manchester event). Those who did attend felt that rushing into another structure could be undemocratic and off-putting for independent women.

The next part of the afternoon was taken up by workshops which tried to address the following questions:

- What have been the positive experiences for you, as a woman, within political activity?
- Is there any possibility of the traditional labour movement organisation becoming more responsive to women's demands and needs?
- How can women of differing cultures support one another as feminists and socialists?
- Are women's demands unrealistic and unrealisable?
- How do you see the way forward for Women for Socialism?

On the whole, the event was positive. It was not dominated by political divisions, as many had feared. Most women were sensitive to the need to recognise and accept differences.

It revealed an obvious need for some sort of forum in which women could discuss their concerns and needs. But it came to no real conclusions and few practical suggestions were made.

Clearly, it will take a long time to rebuild a movement with clear aims, to regain confidence, to rediscover feminism from a socialist perspective.

The discussion has begun. If you would like more information, please contact Women for Socialism, c/o 88 Whitby Road, Fallowfield, Manchester.

Briefing Women Meeting
Saturday April 15th
12.30pm-5pm
11 Springfield Road, London N15
(Nearest tube: Tottenham Hale, Victoria line)
Light refreshments will be provided
All Briefing Women welcome
For further details phone 01-809 3927

Briefing Women

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

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

I am particularly interested in: .....

.....

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

Interview: CLR James

Waiting for the next explosion?

Briefing supporter **WOODY HAUT interviewed CLR JAMES in his room in Brixton in February. Also present was PAUL BUHLE, author of *CLR James: The Artist as Revolutionary, Verso.***

WH: **What do you think of Manley's recent victory in Jamaica? How will it affect the Caribbean in general and American policy there?**

CLR: I don't think it will do very much to affect it. The opposing politicians in the Caribbean are opposed in name, but in reality they are appealing to much the same people, who will vote for this one today, and his opposite tomorrow.

The divisions are not sharp in the way of fundamental opposition, but they like to say the most dreadful things about each other.

You have a small middle class which cannot allow itself to be really divided, because that would ruin them. So they keep up an opposition under the titles liberal, conservative, and so on.

But when it comes to it, in regard to fundamental policies, there isn't much difference.

WH: **How do you view the left in Britain?**

CLR: There cannot really be any fundamental difference between left and right in a parliamentary democracy. They must have more or less the same attitudes.

You must agree more or less on the same thing, however much you may differ in words. Otherwise the democratic parliamentary system cannot exist.

WH: **In other words, you don't believe, as Tony Benn might, that parliament is a worthy system that has merely been misused?**

CLR: A system that continues to be misused year after year is a system that is not misused but is properly understood by each side.

George Lamming told me that the British left have carried to a high degree the faculty of saying things that appear to be opposites but in reality are the same.

WH: **Nevertheless, this must be some kind of low point for the Labour Party.**

CLR: I don't know what a *Labour Party low point* means. They say that we can differ as much as possible as long as at the critical moment — and the critical moments in Britain are the elections — we agree.

It sounds very ironical, but that is British politics.

WH: **I was wondering what you thought about what's been happening in America around Jesse Jackson?**

CLR: In Europe, particularly in Britain, the political system is governed by historical perspectives.

The American system is more empirical, can be explosive, can run along, but it isn't ordered and disciplined in the way that it is in Europe.

But Jesse Jackson doesn't surprise me. The situation of the blacks in the United States in an impossible one. That's the plain fact.

You cannot continue that way for 20 years. The result is that out of this there must arise certain people who are able to exercise influence and yet maintain some sort of order.

They acquire great skill in exploiting the revolutionary proclivities of the population, but at the same time prevent it from upsetting the two parties.

As in any body of people, there emerges from the suppressed black population these gifted men who begin by promising to lift the negro out of the place he's in. That is easy.

So he starts, he gets going, he says a lot of things, and he's obviously a person who is destined.

Then both the black people who are in authority and the two parties who are watching agree that they should let him know that if he is disciplined and understanding he can go places.

And if he's not disciplined and persists in making these extravagant statements and taking these extravagant actions, he will get nowhere. If he's a man who can say a great deal but mean a little, they like him. But this is quite an art.

But the people up above and the blacks up above are very precise. They allow you a certain liberty but you mustn't go too far, you can't upset the regime, otherwise they get rid of you.

WH: **One thing that always struck me about your work is that you've retained an optimism about ordinary people.**

CLR: That I believe — where it comes from, I don't know. That is a psychological question.

But I consistently stick to that because I find that all the great moments of history originate not from the words and agitating and propaganda of gifted men — revolutionaries — but from the population itself, taken up by the revolutionaries.

And you can sum up what I think by this: that the revolutionary moments are not the result of revolutionary leaders creating a revolutionary people, but of the revolutionary people *making* the leaders who wish to lead them adopt some of their positions. I begin from there.

I would like to say one more thing about the British. I do not mean that they are condemned forever and ever to this moderating of explosive words and phrases. They are a very peculiar people.

They have been quiet for a long time but it doesn't mean they are committed completely to the status quo.

WH: **Paul, I was wondering why you called your book an "intellectual biography" rather than a "political biography".**

PB: Two reasons. The first is that a younger person from a Trotskyist background has written a political biography, which is still some time away from publication.

I thought it would be published before mine. It's a straight, narrative, political account.

The second reason — perhaps I wish I'd chosen "cultural" instead of "intellectual" — was that I meant to indicate the preliminary character of the study.

To me, to write the *political* history of CLR James would have involved vast realms and have ended up a much, much bigger book, whereas an intellectual history remains the history of an individual.

WH: **But by counterposing intellectual history to political history aren't you cutting off politics from thought?**

PB: It's my opinion that every competent scholarly work on CLR James should be seen, at this stage, as a building block.

I myself believe that when the next phase of political activity develops, in a worldwide sense, in the West or in the Third World, even at an early point we'll be able to see the trajectory or significance of CLR's work better than at this moment.

What CLR made clear to me was that when the next revolutionary wave begins it sheds a new light on everything that's come before. Then we'll begin to see the entire 60s and early 70s experience from a very different perspective and see it as a phase instead of the last important thing that's happened in our lives.

CLR: An important part of historical writing is to see the way in which history repeats itself, but always in new forms. That's a combination that is always very striking.

WH: **The other thing that the biography seems to lack is a clear picture of the day to day political activity and struggles that James took part in.**

CLR: That's important. Otherwise I may go down in history as an intellectual person.

PB: Quite right. I think one thing that must be done is to reach a new understanding of the role of the small political group in history.

There's no external manifestation of American Trotskyism. Or British Trotskyism in the 1930s. There's nothing changed in society in the sense that the American Communist Party changed society in a number of ways.

So that understanding it requires a different sort of assessment. Their critique and their perspective was utterly unique and far in advance of anyone else. It's just that they lacked the numbers and the historic opportunities.



Photograph: Noel Ignatiev

Above: CLR James — taken from the front cover of the Artist as Revolutionary. Right: CLR with Paul Buhle.

Socialist Messenger

Monthly Information Bulletin of the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) London Office now out.

£5 per annum, available from 92 Ladbroke Grove, London W11

OBITUARY

Harry Wicks

Harry Wicks, one of the founders of British Trotskyism, is dead.

His career was unique. As a possible future leader of the British Communist Party he was selected to attend the Lenin School in Moscow. As a result of his experiences there he became critical of Stalinism and eventually went over to Trotskyism.

With Reg Groves, Henry Sara, Hugo Dewar, and a few others he was a member of the Balham Group and produced the first British Trotskyist paper, *Red Flag*, at great cost in poverty and privation.

Later, during the period of the Moscow Trials, he became Secretary and Organiser of the British Committee for the Defence of Leon Trotsky.

Though he remained active locally in South London and in the ILP he ceased from about 1939 to be so central a figure in British Trotskyism.

After his family had grown up he became more deeply involved in the movement and for a few years was a member of the International Socialists — predecessor of the SWP — before leaving in 1976 with many others.

Though frail, he continued to appear on public platforms of the SWP and other groups.

Harry Wicks was a very fine public speaker and a man of the sharpest intelligence. But the most striking thing about him to those who knew him was his extreme modesty, decency and transparent integrity.

Interests

He had not an ounce of sectarianism and was the embodiment of that statement in the Manifesto that Communists have no interests apart from those of the working class.

During his last few years his wife Marjorie was crippled by a severe illness and it was deeply touching to see Harry's care, love, and attention for her.

He remained mentally as active as he had ever been up to the last week of his life.

Comrades will be pleased to learn that his autobiography is in the capable hands of Logie Barrow and that the manuscript up to 1932 which includes his Russian experiences and meeting with Leon Trotsky has been corrected and annotated by Harry and is complete.

That was the unique period of his life.

Logie hopes to complete the manuscript of the autobiography up to 1939 by some time in the coming winter.

Ted Crawford from Revolutionary History

A look at trade union history

What's new about New Realism?

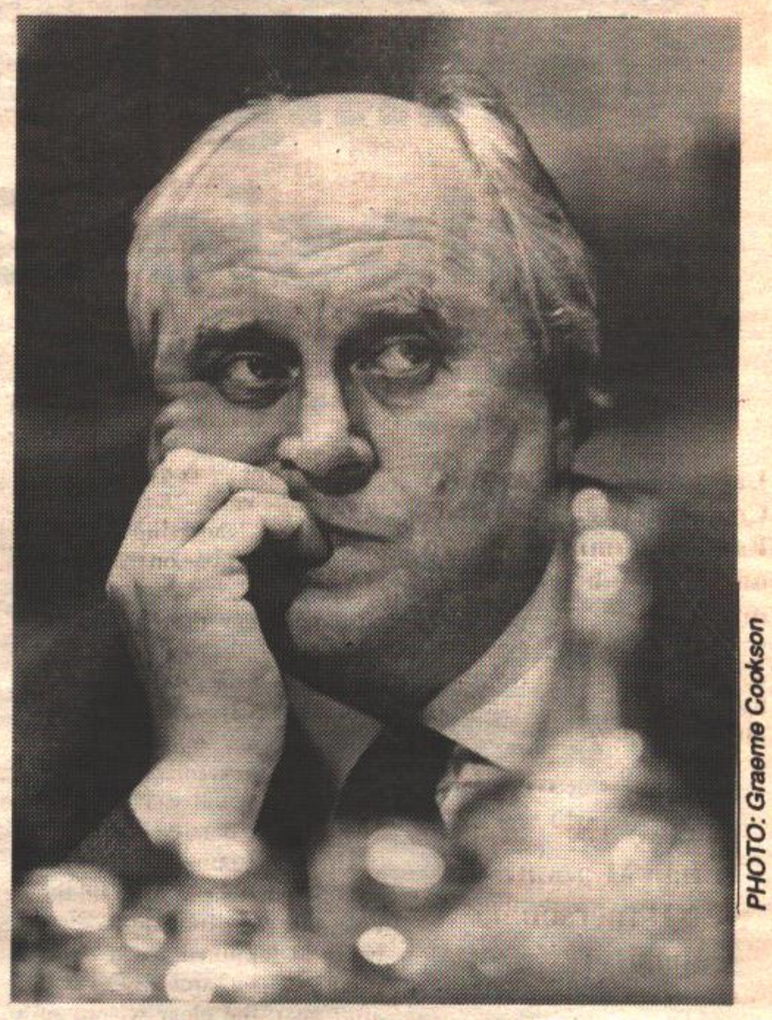


PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

Norman Willis: "distasteful for a large section of his membership."

The TUC's New Realists like to claim that their ideas are innovative and fresh.

Since class struggle is, for them, "outdated", they have little interest in the history of class struggle: the history of the organisations which the working class was forced to build in its self-defence.

Yet that history shows that these so-called innovators have produced nothing more than new suits from old rags.

By MARTIN WICKS

Their turgid arguments repeat those of yesterday's New Realists who wanted, like Eric Hammond, to collaborate with the bosses for the "joint benefit" of employer and employee.

Indeed, a brief sketch of trade unionism in the second half of the 19th century reveals a number of parallels with, and lessons for, our struggle today.

From 1850 British capitalism flourished and dominated the world market. Sections of the upper layers of the working class benefited materially from Britain's supreme position and from its superexploitation of the colonies.

In this period there developed what became known as the "aristocracy of labour", which was politically tied to the ruling class.

The main craft unions were dominated by Liberals who accepted "the logic of the market".

The British rulers modified their previously intransigent attitude to the unions. "Give them reform or they will give us revolution," ran the argument.

In 1867 they began extending the franchise and then consciously cultivating good relations with the trade union leaders.

Two years after the Ballot Act of 1872, Frederick Engels observed that:

"the chairmen and secretaries of trade unions... had overnight become important people.

"They were visited by MPs, by Lords and other well born rabble, and sympathetic enquiry was suddenly made into the wishes and the needs of the working class."

The 1872 TUC Congress was for the first time officially welcomed by the City Corporation. The delegates were wined and dined, and invited to the homes of prominent citizens.

Trade union leaders were invited to sit on Royal commissions. They were even, on occasions, entertained by the Prince of Wales.

Sidney Webb, Fabian and cynic, contemptuous of the "simple" working folk, commented that the period from 1850 to 1880 had seen:

"a shifting of leadership in the trade union world from the casual enthusiast and irresponsible agitator to a class of permanent salaried officials expressly chosen out of the rank and file of trade unionists for their superior business capacity."

These "permanent salaried officials" were the product of the labour artisans, skilled craftsmen who considered themselves a rank above the mass of workers.

Whilst the first unionists, in bitter struggles against the Combination Acts, had attempted to organise the downtrodden mass of workers, the craft unions positively excluded this mass.

They identified their own interests with those of the capitalists.

Henry Allen, a former Secretary of the Working Jewellers Trade Society, giving evidence to the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor in 1895, divided the working class into three main classes:

"•first, "the better educated skilled artisan;

"•second, "a class of man very honest and anxious to do well, yet from deficiency of education and perhaps some lack of moral strength and courage" not able to "hold their own;

"•and last, "the produce of the street corner, loafers I should call them", who existed on occasional work."

Ideology

Robert Knight, General Secretary of the Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders Society, summed up the craft ideology:

"It is assumed by many that Capital and Labour, instead of being invaluable allies are irreconcilable enemies, and the more that can be extracted from the one the better it is for the other.

"This is a great mistake, and one sided views of this kind are very dangerous, as it tends to produce and keep up feelings of abstention, if not hostility, between classes whose agreement is important, equally for the interests of both employers and workmen and for the peace of society...

"There is so much in common between the employers and ourselves that we should remove everything that would cause expenditure of their capital and our hard earned money, especially when we find they are anxious to deal with us fairly."

This account of the career of a typical official was given to the Webbs and quoted in their *History of Trade Unions*. Dated 1893, it could have been written yesterday.

"Whilst the points of issue no longer affect his own earnings or conditions of employment, any dispute between his members and their employers increase his work and add to his worry.

"The former vivid sense of the privations and subjection of the artisan's life gradually fades from his mind; and he begins more and more to regard all complaints as perverse and unreasonable.

"With this intellectual change may come a more invidious transformation... He goes to live in a little villa in a lower middle class suburb. The move leads to dropping his working class friends; and his wife changes her acquaintances.

"With the habits of his new neighbours he insensibly adopts more and more their ideas...

"A great strike threatens to involve the Society in a desperate war.

"Unconsciously biased by distaste for the hard and unthankful work which a strike entails, he finds himself in small sympathy with the men's demands, and eventually arranges a compromise on terms distasteful for a large section of his members."

The acceptance of the logic of the market was best expressed by craft union support of what was known as the "sliding scale".

Established

First established among iron workers and in many coal mining districts in the 1879s, it tied wages to "the laws of supply and demand."

The development of the "new unionism" (against craft unionism) in the coal and iron industries grew in revolt against the "sliding scale" when, in accordance with market dictates, it brought wages down. The demand for the minimum wage was counterposed to it.

Craft unions were undermined by the development of mass production techniques, the advance of the large scale factories, and with them a mass of semi-skilled workers.

This led to "new unionism", a movement to organise the mass of workers whom the craft unions had kept out. The conflict crystallised within the TUC over the question of the 8-hour day.

Supporters

The supporters of new unionism demanded its compulsory introduction through Parliament. Liberal leaders of the craft unions opposed such "state interference" as being against the principle of "self-help".

In the TUC's 1889 debate on Keir Hardie's 8-hour day resolution (defeated 75-49), the Secretary of the pattemmakers argued that the Bill would put up British prices and increase the influx of cheap foreign textiles from India.

The following years witnessed a series of historic struggles, which saw the foundation of the new general unions such as the Gasworkers, Dockers, Railwaymen, and Miners.

This wave of struggles began with the most oppressed — the Bryant & May "match girls" strike.

It ended with the victory of the miners in 1893 over the mine owners' attempt to cut wages by up to 25% because of "market conditions".

"New unionism" raised the need for working class unity against sectional interests. It spoke of the general emancipation of the workers and the independence of their interests from the bosses.

Perhaps its most advanced political expression can be read in the preamble to the rules of the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers, whose leaders were influenced by Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling.

"The immediate objects of this union are the improvement of the material conditions of its members;

"the raising of them from mere beasts of burden to human beings;

"the making brighter and happier the home of every worker;

"the saving of little children from the hard, degrading, bitter life to which they are all condemned today;

"the dividing more equally between all men and women the tears and laughter, the sorrow and the joy, the labour and the leisure of the world.

"It is important that all members should understand the necessity for and the aims of the union;

"that they should accept and loyally carry out its rules;

"that they should remember that the interests of all workers are one;

"and a wrong done to any kind of labour is a wrong done to the whole working class;

Victory

"and that a victory or defeat for any portion of the Army of Labour is a gain or a loss to that whole army which, by its organisation and union, is marching steadily and irresistibly to its ultimate goal — the Emancipation of the Working Class;

"that Emancipation can only be brought about by the strenuous and united efforts of the Working Class itself. Workers Unite."

Against this fighting class independence was counterposed "the intelligent co-operation of all concerned."

Take, for example, the following editorial, not from Eric Hammond, but from *The Trade Unionist*, a publication of conservative union circles, from February 1899:

"Thoughtful trade unionists have long entertained the conviction that strikes and lock outs are barbarous methods of settling disputes and recent events have strengthened this belief...

"Industrial war is now such a disastrous affair that instinctively its very magnitude and possibility for evil suggest the imperative necessity of preventing it...

"But this mutual apprehension is not the only factor likely to make for peace. There is a growing feeling that the keenness of competition with other nations leaves no margin for the frightful waste resulting from constant and protracted stoppages...

"Trade union leaders see that British industry has arrived at a stage when its present position can only be held by the intelligent co-operation of all concerned...

"Many other things are also required for an alteration in the very basis of industry in the direction of co-partnership which seems to many of us as a natural development..."

For trade unionists in the 1980s, it's a familiar story: "modernism" versus "outdated" methods. John Edmonds is not only peddling a lie; it's a very old lie at that.

New Unionism was the product of the death of small workshops and the growth of large scale factories. Crucially, it opened the road to the political break of the mass of the workers from the capitalist parties.

The Gasworkers Union, for instance, was instrumental in achieving a famous victory in West Ham — the first takeover of a municipal Council by workers' organisations.

The Labour Representation Committee and the Taff Vale events were soon to follow. The Labour Party itself was set up in 1906.

Its development in subsequent decades was to play a critical role in blocking the radical course of the New Unionism which had helped bring it into being.

*The next article by Martin Wicks will examine World War I and Fabianism, another precursor to today's misnamed "New Realism".

Trade Union Briefing School

Beating back New Realism

Saturday April 22nd 1989, 10.30-5pm

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I would like to register for the T.U. Briefing School.

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Defending Unilateralism

Meeting old arguments head on

Labour's 1988 Annual Conference reaffirmed the Party's commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament.

This was a major victory considering the efforts made by the Party leadership to ditch the policy.

By Joy Hurcombe Chair, Labour CND (personal capacity)

To many people in the Party who had watched in dismay as its leaders threw away one socialist commitment after another, this victory gave hope that all was not lost.

Surely, now, the message would sink in. This is one key policy which the leadership must respect.

But since the Conference, *that message — conveyed by a democratic vote — has been ignored.* The leadership and its acolytes have gone on the offensive.

In particular, they are targetting the TGWU and the CLP "activists". They refuse to accept that a policy of total rejection of all nuclear weapons is the popular demand of the Party membership and the hope of many people outside its ranks.

Under the guise of "consultation" and "Phase Two of the Policy Review" unilateralism is being undermined. Such "consultation" is a farce when, year after year, the clear wishes of Conference are ignored.

Responses

No doubt only "correct responses" will be noted (see the latest *Labour Party News*) for it is well known that in the end the Policy Review report will serve only the purpose for which it was set up, i.e. the watering down of the Party's commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament.

This will mean that the next election manifesto will contain only a vague and generalised commitment to the disarmament "process".

While it is still necessary for individuals and groups to make submissions to the Policy Review Group "Britain and the World", all the signs are that Kinnock & Co. are not prepared to listen.

It would be easy to give up the fight. But why should we, when we have consistently been in the majority? *Are we going to let go of the one policy which has united us for so long?*

Our opponents' arguments can be easily answered, because they are so old and familiar.

For instance, we are told that since the US/Soviet summits have agreed to make cuts in nuclear arsenals, there is no longer any need for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Unilateralism, we are told, was only valid when there was no other hope of achieving disarmament.

This argument is now used by those in our Party who in the past called themselves "multilateralists" but who, in reality, want to keep nuclear weapons indefinitely for "defence" or "national pride" or "international status" or "because they fought in the last war" or who are so greedy for power that they are prepared to adopt any policy which they think will lead to electoral success.

Superpowers

In fact, in a world in which the superpowers are ready to discuss disarmament, *it is even more important than before for this country totally to abandon nuclear weapons.*

The INF Treaty came about because pressures for nuclear disarmament could not be ignored, even by Reagan. The British Labour Party along with CND and others was part of that international struggle.

But the INF Treaty is only a start, and even that only came about because of Gorbachev's bold unilateral steps. And the Treaty can be easily aborted.

Modernisation

Thatcher clearly wants none of it. She is pressing for modernisation of battlefield nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, the US has already shown bad faith by placing more Cruise weapons at sea.

To maintain the momentum for disarmament, we need a clear policy of scrapping nuclear weapons and dismantling nuclear bases — British and American — on British soil and in British waters within the first parliament of the next Labour government.

This policy would in itself be a major step towards the international goal of abolition of all nuclear weapons by the year 2000.

If we want to get rid of nuclear weapons we don't need to negotiate them away. We just remove them ourselves.

If we really believe that the world would be a safer place without nuclear weapons, what security do we gain by a "something for something" policy?

In a world where the superpowers still have a vast overkill capacity what exactly would such a policy mean? Are we really to keep Trident if bilateral or multilateral talks break down?

And if we want to win elections, we have to convince people that there is an alternative to Thatcher's nuclear nightmare world.

We have to show that leadership does not mean strutting on the world stage wrapping yourself in the Union Jack. It means taking the bold and essential first step of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Making the same mistake twice?

Kinnock's proposed retreat on unilateralism gives rise to a host of disturbing historical echoes.

As E.P. Thompson has pointed out, Kinnock "stirs memories of Labour Ministers secretly approving Chevaline warheads for Polaris. Of Harold Wilson revoking Labour's anti-nuclear electoral promises.

"Memories (most of all) of Mr Gaitskell's reversal of Labour's Conference decision on unilateral renunciation of British nuclear weapons between 1960 and 1961."

At Scarborough in October 1960 Labour went unilateralist. The decision was precipitated, just as it was in the early 80s, by the mass campaigning of the then newly formed Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

Intense

CND was formed in a period of intense "Cold War" between East and West, reflected in an escalating arms race. NATO had reacted to the USSR's Sputnik satellite programme by stationing Thor Intermediate range missiles in East Anglia.

In 1957 Britain tested its own "independent" bomb on Christmas Island in the South Pacific.

But the grip of Cold War anti-communism was beginning to weaken. A generation of young people, inspired by anti-colonialist movements in Algeria, Africa, Cuba, and Indo-China, was leading a left resurgence in the British labour movement.

CND capitalised on the radicalisation amongst youth but did not link the struggle for disarmament with the colonial revolution.

By Bryn Griffiths Tottenham CLP

Later, CND refused to participate in the Vietnam Solidarity demonstrations.

As early as 1957 the Labour left's leader, Aneurin Bevan, pleaded with Labour Party Conference to reject a unilateralist resolution from Norwood CLP because it would: "send a foreign secretary naked into the conference chamber."

This sentiment was to be echoed years later by Kinnock's platitudes about "something for nothing disarmament".

Bevan, like Kinnock today, was able to get away with this bogus rationalisation because the unilateralist left had failed to understand the reasons for the war drive.

As a result, the unilateralist left offered no alternative to the Atlanticism of Labour's NATO supporters.

For Marxists, the way to ensure the elimination of the potential for nuclear war must lie in uprooting the economic system which generates and sustains "the bomb".

It lies in abolishing the stranglehold of imperialism over the Third World. It requires the removal of the bureaucratic forces that dominate the Communist World.

Overturned

In 1961 the Labour Conference overturned its unilateralist policy. Gaitskell, who had promised to "fight, fight, and fight again", had scuppered unilateralism on the rocks of NATO.

CND itself, formed in February 1958, did not adopt an anti-NATO position until March 1960. Even then the position was only adopted amidst acrimony and resignations.

Today, CND at best calls for the "mutual dissolution of the blocs" and at worst is silent on this issue.

After the 1960 Labour Conference adopted unilateralism, CND failed to capitalise on and entrench what was a major victory.

Surprised

Its leaders were surprised by the change and left the defence of the new Party policy to left figures such as Brockway, Foot, and Mikardo.

Today CND has all but abandoned the streets in favour of diplomacy and broad, but unclear, alliances. It is virtually silent on Labour's current Policy Review and is engaged in no mass campaigns to defend Labour's unilateralist policy.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Ruddock adds confusion to the debate, blurring multilateralism and unilateralism

The main contribution of its former figurehead, Joan Ruddock, now a Labour MP, has been to add further confusion to the debate with her blurring of unilateralism and multilateralism.

Last time round CND failed because of its lack of a foreign policy alternative and a reluctance to consolidate and expand its support in the labour movement. Unfortunately, we are now seeing the same mistake made twice.

If we are to avoid a repeat of the 1961 defeat, we must unite with anyone in the trade unions and the Labour Party prepared to campaign in defence of Labour's unilateralist stance.

We must urge CND and Labour CND in particular to return to the streets. But within these alliances socialists must put forward a socialist foreign policy alternative.

We must link up with groups such as the Campaign for Non-Alignment to explain NATO's role in the war drive — because without such an understanding the arguments for unilateralism will be vulnerable to the spurious Cold War logic of "something for nothing".

We must create a socialist understanding of the causes of war. Rosa Luxemburg's statement that the choice is "socialism or barbarism" remains as true as ever today.

For us the disarming of Britain and NATO is not merely a tactic; it is an essential prerequisite for a just and lasting worldwide peace.

Gorbachev and the European Left

June 3rd-4th

St Cross Building Oxford University

A conference to address the major policy issues facing the European left in response to recent developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

Organised by the Socialist Conference

For further details contact Gus Fagan, 30 Bridge Street, Oxford OX2 0BA, or phone 0865-723207

Namibia

Thatcher aids South Africa attacks on SWAPO

The United Nations is using South African military forces to kill Namibian freedom fighters.

As we go to press, the battles between the South West African People's Organisation's (SWAPO) military wing, PLAN, and South African forces continue, while South Africa calls for SWAPO's surrender.

Thatcher's criminal intervention in Windhoek on April 1st on the side of South Africa helped lead to this situation and she is wholeheartedly supporting the South Africans' attempt to use the UN independence plan to win the war!

It was South African forces which broke the formal ceasefire that came into effect at 4am on April 1st. PLAN has operated inside Namibia for 23 years and regularly crosses the Namibian-Angolan border for supplies.

Some PLAN fighters already in Namibia were awaiting the UN forces to confine them to bases when they were surrounded and attacked. They had no alternative but to defend themselves.

With UN permission and Thatcher's backing, the South Africans unleashed forces which should also have been confined to base by the UN.

The Geneva Protocol, cited by Thatcher to blame SWAPO, does not in fact require PLAN to redeploy its forces out of Namibia until the South African forces are dismantled.

By ROS YOUNG and BEN CAMPBELL

The British press has backed Thatcher with a massive smear campaign against SWAPO, using mainly South African military sources.

SWAPO has rightly refused to withdraw its freedom fighters from *their own country* and has denounced the UN complicity in the killings.

It has called for implementation of the UN plan and elections to be conducted by the letter: the South African occupation army must get out of the country.

But there will be no free and fair elections in Namibia unless there is:

- total withdrawal of all South African military forces;
- complete disbandment of the Koevoet terror squads, the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF) and all other local South African controlled military forces;
- repeal of all racist and repressive laws and regulations and release of all political prisoners;
- return of all exiled Namibians free of intimidation;
- proper UN-controlled nationwide registration of all voters over 18;
- total and immediate integration of all Namibia's territory, including Walvis Bay and the offshore islands.

According to Namibian lawyers inside the country, South African forces are operating a "shoot to kill" policy, while church witnesses in Northern Namibia confirm that 12 civilians have so far died in widespread attacks on villages.

Socialists should know that PLAN combatants are holding their own in the battles raging in Namibia today against Africa's largest enemy.

The British media trotted out South African lies on SWAPO casualties — the number of deaths on each side has been roughly equal so far.

The Labour Party must vigorously campaign against the machinations of Thatcher's government.

We must actively campaign in support of a SWAPO victory. Without it, there is little hope for the Namibian masses of driving back the shackles of colonialism.

- Get your Labour Party and trade union to sponsor and give a lead to the Namibia Emergency Campaign (jointly organised by the Namibia Support Committee and the Anti-Apartheid Movement), c/o 13 Mandela St, London NW1.
- Join the Namibia Support Committee (PO Box 16, London NW5 2LW, tel. 01-267 1941/2).

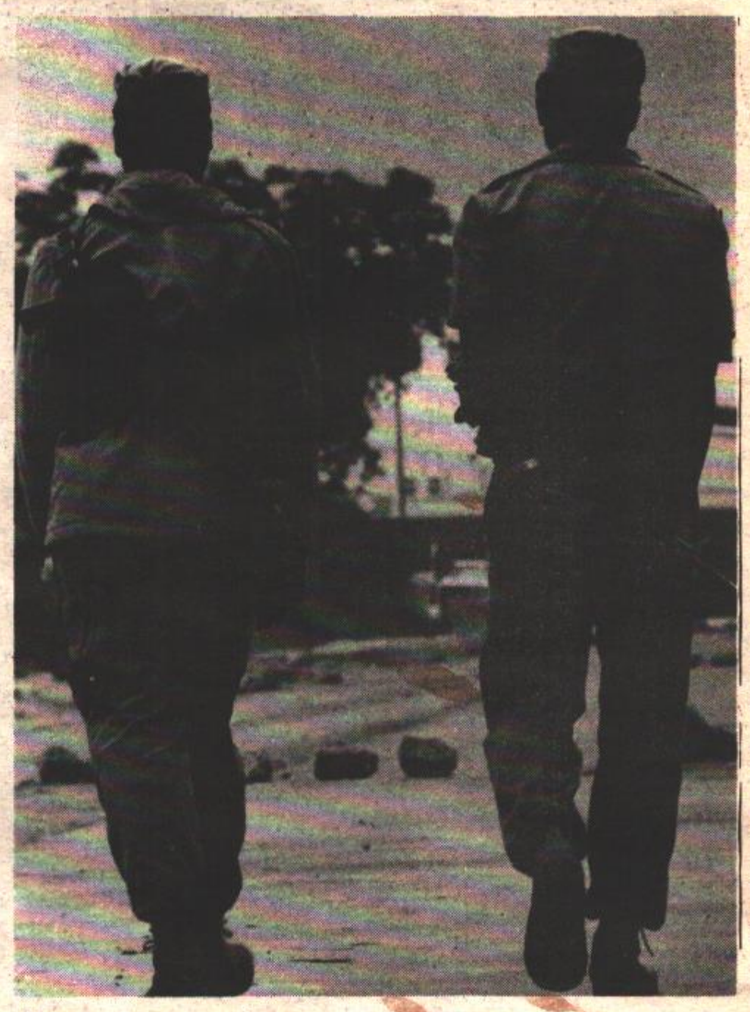


PHOTO: John Liebenberg/NCCT

Koevoet terror squads now patrolling the streets.

Namibia Emergency Campaign:
National Mobilising Conference: May 13th, Birmingham

The Namibia Emergency Campaign has been established jointly between the Namibia Support Committee and the Anti-Apartheid Movement to provide a focus for solidarity work in Britain over the coming period. We have two basic aims:

- **to raise the maximum financial support to enable SWAPO, the national liberation movement of Namibia, to fight an election campaign;**
- **to expose and counter South African sabotage of the independence process and to campaign against all forms of British collaboration with such sabotage.**

In order to achieve these basic aims, it is vital that as many individuals and organisations as possible attend the mobilising conference to hear from SWAPO about the current situation and to discuss how we can respond.

For more information contact Namibia Emergency Campaign, c/o 13 Mandela Street, London NW1 0DW. Send your donations in now to the same address (cheques payable to Namibia Emergency Campaign).

El Salvador

The movement gathers strength

Jose Chevez is on the executive committee of ASTTEL, the telecommunication union in El Salvador and on the International Committee of the UNTS, the trade union federation.
In an exclusive interview with *Labour Briefing*, conducted by GARETH MOSTYN, he explains some of the problems that the union movement faces.

The Democratic Convergence participated in the elections. Two of the three parties in it belong to the FDR. Why didn't you support their candidates?

The elections didn't represent a way of resolving the country's main problem, which is the war.

They took place in a climate of war and increased repression. So we did not have a good reason to vote for any party.

The FDR parties only took part in the elections to educate the backward sectors in our society and awaken a greater consciousness and to denounce the intervention of the United States.

Their purpose in participating in these elections was not to win them.

What type of negotiations would the UNTS like to see between the government and the FMLN?

The FMLN is a real military force and the workers' movement too is a real force in the country. The popular movement must fight for dialogue and negotiation, to bring about the formation of a popular democratic government.

This conflict has already brought 60,000 deaths, more than 8,000 disappearances, more than 5,000 trade union leaders killed since 1981. We have 60-65% illiteracy and 30% of the country is in exile.

But do you think that the army and the oligarchy are really able or willing to come to an agreement with the popular movement?

These parties, the oligarchy and the Christian Democrats, the traditional parties, have no interest in finding a solution to the war. They must bring out concrete proposals, so that we can see where they stand.

They must give better pay to the workers, better social welfare, education, hospitals. Land must be given to the peasantry who work the land but don't have enough to eat.

Meanwhile, the conflict continues.

What changes will there be with an ARENA government and an ARENA president?

We will see a new puppet for the US government, and there will be greater repression against the workers' movement. ARENA want to cut off all the opposition and to destroy the trade union movement.

We will see greater social confrontation, because the army is divided. Some support the Christian Democrats; others support the ultra right ARENA. The Christian Democratic Party itself is divided.

In ARENA, those who have the control are Medino, D'Aubuisson, and Coronel Ochoa Perez. These are well known internationally as the leaders and financers of the death squads, in which the army itself participates.

They come out in broad daylight to assassinate workers. So this will be one more problem for the Americans who made these elections and exchanged Duarte for Christiani.

Christiani is the new servant of the United States, but D'Aubuisson and Ochoa Perez don't like the United States. So that is another division. At the same time the workers' movement will be even more united as will the FMLN.

How will the UNTS and the popular movement respond to any increase in repression?

Just as the people destroyed the US backed project around the Christian Democrats, they are going to destroy the project around ARENA. The people are now more conscious and even more combative.

Before, when they abducted someone, we made a report over the radio or in a paid advert in the paper.

Now there is immediate mobilisation, a march, publicity in the streets of San Salvador. We occupy a church and continue our accusations.

In the workplaces, there are strikes, work stoppages of up to eight hours while the protest continues. In this way the regime can see that we are more united.

The FMLN was formed by workers who could no longer live in the city because they were going to be killed. When they hear the reports, they respond immediately.

They attack the main barracks in the city, or bomb some military officer's house. Thus the army has to think hard about repression against even one worker.

Could mass repression result in a situation like 1981 in which the people are immobilised through terror?

In 1980 and 81 there were mobilisations of 80,000 people in demonstrations. Such a concentration of people makes it easy to carry out massacres. Twenty or thirty people can be killed in one single burst of machine gun fire.

The workers' movement has since changed its methods of mobilisation. Now there will be a picket of maybe ten or 15; maybe three brigades will hand out information in the working class areas, for ten or 15 minutes.

And there will be simultaneous activities, co-ordinated in different zones. This makes it harder for the army to control things.

And the FMLN is already in the cities. If there is even a small attack they will make an immediate response.

In 1980 and 1981 the FMLN was not so strong as it is now and it was easier then to destroy the mass movement. It had a presence in only four regions of El Salvador, while now the FMLN is in the whole of El Salvador.

The soldiers are peasants, forced in to the army by unemployment: some are literally recruited by force.

They do not have a consciousness to help them understand why they are fighting. The high command does not come out and fight; they just give orders. Many soldiers desert.

Interview: Boris Kagarlitsky in Moscow

Soviet Elections: beginning a revolutionary process

During the recent elections in the Soviet Union, BORIS KAGARLITSKY (author of *The Thinking Reed: Soviet Intellectuals and the State*) was a leading organiser of the left wing MOSCOW POPULAR FRONT, which played a key role in the mass mobilisations in support of BORIS YELTSIN's candidacy.
On April 4th, RICK SIMON of East Midlands Labour Briefing telephoned Moscow to speak to Kagarlitsky about the election campaign, the results — and the future.

***RS:* What role does electoral reform play in Gorbachev's project?**

BK: The problem is whether the term "Gorbachev's project" can be used at all. One of the most important criticisms made about the reforms is precisely that Gorbachev has nothing that can be called a project.

It is a kind of set of political and economic improvisations. The electoral reform, for example, was announced during the Party Conference and was not even discussed beforehand.

It is also necessary to understand why the law is being implemented. There was a growing conflict in the primary Party organisations between rank and file and functionaries.

One way to ease the tension in the Party structure was to switch the tension to the Soviets away from the Party, through the elections.

Now it seems the process is getting beyond control and is becoming dangerous, for the liberal wing of the ruling group as well as the conservatives.

The electoral process is producing a lot of impulses for deeper political change and is becoming an element in a revolutionary process.

***RS:* The Western press has emphasised the defeats inflicted on the conservatives. Was this process repeated throughout the Soviet Union?**

BK: I don't see any defeat of the conservatives as such — a lot of Party functionaries were defeated not because they are conservatives but because they belong to the apparatus.

Let me give a specific example. One candidate defeated in Moscow, Bryachikhin, is considered one of the most liberal in the Moscow Party apparatus.

This means that people were not just voting against conservatives, but against any one who was any kind of official.

***RS:* What is the likely composition of the Congress of Peoples' Deputies?**

BK: It is still difficult to tell. A lot will depend on the results from the Central Asian Republics which we don't yet know.

It is clear that the Congress itself will be very uncontrollable, at least to begin with.

This is because, on the one hand, there were a lot of officials defeated who were designated to fill particular positions in the Supreme Soviet, so it makes the whole project of controlling decision-making much more difficult.

On the other hand, those elected do not represent any organised opposition. They are just individuals and their ability to reach any agreement or understanding among themselves is problematical.

We are trying to form a faction of left wing and progressive Deputies, but it remains to be seen whether we will get enough support from Deputies outside Moscow.

***RS:* When will the Supreme Soviet be elected?**

BK: Probably at the end of May.

***RS*: Will its composition reflect that of the Congress of Peoples' Deputies?**

BK: People have different predictions.

In Moscow the Popular Front and those Deputies supported by the Popular Front are discussing the possibility of extending the powers of the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, not simply electing people to the Supreme Soviet, but organising some political discussion at the Congress, and launching some proposals about constitutional reform even before electing the Surpreme Soviet, thus involving more directly elected Deputies in the discussion.

***RS:* The Western media placed a lot of emphasis on Boris Yeltsin's success. What does he represent?**

BK: One on the one hand, Yeltsin is from the establishment, which means that he is an official connected with the system.

But on the other hand, he is constantly breaking the rules of the system, which makes him much more interesting and popular in the country. So he represents both radicalism and continuity and that's one of the reasons for his success.

The second point is that although Yeltsin sometimes makes what I think are political mistakes and is not able to take advantage of all the possibilities in the developing political situation, he does draw around him a very broad social base.

His programme is very general, very democratic, very progressive and reflects left wing thinking and popular concerns. At the same time, he tries not to be too concrete so that his hands are left free.

The real problem with Yeltsin is not his programme or slogans but how those slogans will be interpreteted.

Although there is a real Yeltsin movement growing, it lacks a detailed and well developed political and economic programme, as well as real political organisation.

This is why it sometimes depends very much on the support of the Moscow Popular Front, which has less people but is a permanently functioning political machine.

Yeltsin is opposed to the apparatus but he is a moralist, and his moralism is deeply rooted in the communist tradition.

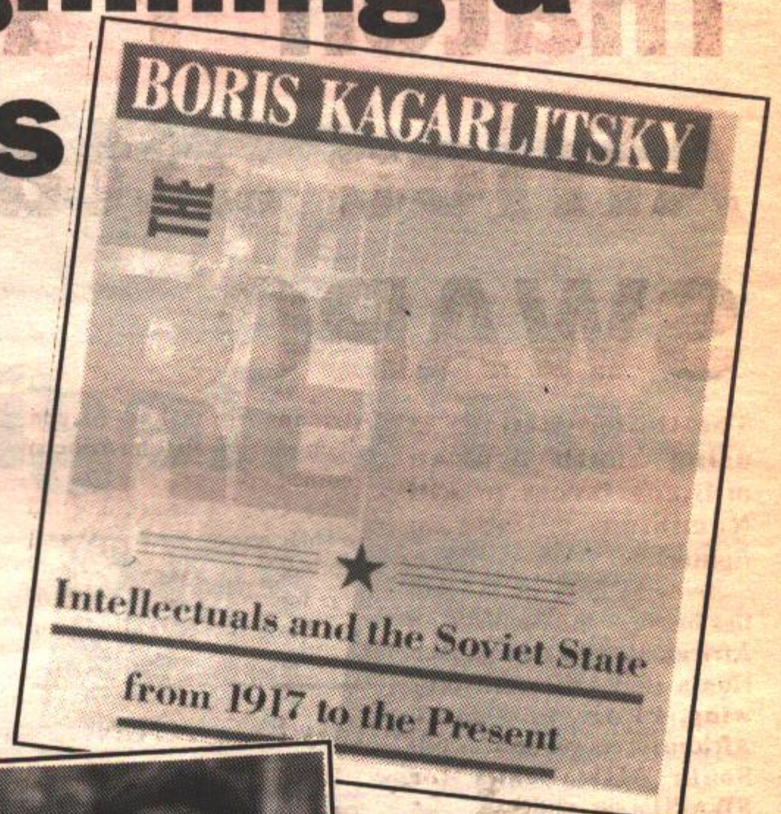
He is egalitarian and stresses social virtues and moral values and that makes him extremely popular. It is an interesting sign that not just socialist but communist traditions are alive in this country.

***RS:* What role did the Popular Front play in the election campaign?**

BK: In Moscow the Popular Front is growing very rapidly, thanks to the Yeltsin factor.

It was the only organised force capable of influencing the popular movement. It represented an element of reason. We consider that to be an important success for the left. We are no longer marginal.

It was a historic moment when the Popular Front leadership was on the platform of a rally of 35,000 people, although it was understood quite well that those people were brought to the Square by the name of Yeltsin, not by the name of the Popular Front.





***RS:* What campaign will you run around the local Soviet elections?**

BK: For us the autumn elections to the local and republican Soviets are very important. This is the highest priority for the Popular Front.

It will probably be more important than the elections to the Congress of Peoples' Deputies. The local Soviets are closer to the people and therefore more open to democratic forces.

The full text of Rick Simon's interview with Boris Kagarlitsky will be printed in the May edition of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*.
Annual subscriptions to *LFEE* cost £12 and may be obtained from Harper & Row Distributers Ltd, Estover, Plymouth PL6 7PZ.



Does the "Gorbachev Project" exist? Read Kagarlitsky's book, published by Verso, 6 Meard St, London W1V 3HR, £17.95.

South Africa

Historic workers' summit

***Labour Briefing* has received the following statement from South Africa. It was issued jointly by all the unions represented at the recent Workers' Summit, which brought together rank and file activists from throughout the trade union movement in South Africa.**

More than 700 delegates attended the historic workers' summit on March 4-5th, 1989, held at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The Summit was opened by Cde. Elijah Barayi from COSATU, Cde. Longwe Kwelemtini representing the NACTU affiliates, and Cde. Lawrence Phate representing the independent unions.

Their introductory speeches focused on the need to build maximum unity of organised workers in South Africa.

These sentiments were echoed over the next two days as delegates engaged in rigorous debate over the need for united action.

Spirits were very high and delegate after delegate emphasised the need for united worker action against the backdrop of increasing state repression and attacks from employers.

While rejecting the monstrous LRA [Labour Relations Act] the Summit stressed not only the need to regain the rights removed by the recent amendment to the LRA, but also the denial of trade union rights to millions of farm, domestic, public sector, and forestry workers.

The Summit transcended the differences existing between the various unions attending.

While recognising the different histories in the traditions and policies of the unions attending, the overriding objective was always to emphasise the need for unity in action.

The Summit defied the speculation of critics who felt that workers were not yet ready to discuss their differences and to seek ways to achieve unity. In fact, it was one of the most significant demonstrations of worker unity in our history.

Most remarkable is the fact that more than 700 shopfloor worker representatives were engrossed in rigorous, sometimes sharp, but always constructive, debate, on what today represents a fundamental attack on the organised workers of our country.

All full-time officials were excluded from the summit with the exception of a small secretariat whose only task was to record and translate the minutes of the proceedings.

To our knowledge, this was significant — not only for South African workers, but workers internationally.

The Summit and its recommendations represented the voice of organised workers in our country.

LABOUR BRIEFING

Poll Tax Notes

Don't Register!

With the start of Poll Tax registration in England and Wales less than six weeks away, the debate in the anti-Poll Tax movement on tactics for registration is developing.

The background to the debate is the uneven development of the campaigns and the split in the movement around the question of legality.

Three main positions have emerged in the last few months. Broadly speaking these are:

- calling on people not to register and organising collective "return to sender" campaigns;
- tactics to disrupt registration;
- and a propaganda campaign around registration.

In Tottenham the local anti-Poll Tax campaign has taken a clear decision to try and build a mass campaign of non-registration.

A structure based on street and workplace stewards is being used to collect registration forms and organise collective "burnings" of the forms.

This process will be repeated for the reminder letters that will be sent out some weeks after the initial forms.

By Jane Connor
Tottenham Against the Poll Tax

In a leaflet which will go to every household in Tottenham, the campaign will be advising people not to respond to the registration form but to hand it over to their local street or workplace steward, Poll Tax stall, or bring it to one of the public burnings.

TAPT will not be advocating use of the disruption tactics used in Scotland (see *Briefing* no. 80), because once you start to ask questions about the form you acknowledge that you have received it.

You thus enter into a relationship with the Poll Tax registrar and open yourself up to prosecution if the Poll Tax registrar assesses that you are wilfully attempting to avoid registration.

TAPT argues that you cannot be prosecuted for saying you have not received the form (unless of course it is sent by registered post and you sign for it) or the reminder.

Because Council resources are stretched and many Councils are already well behind on their schedule for registration, it will be some weeks before personal visits are made.

This will give local campaigns time to assess the success of non-registration and advise on subsequent tactics.

Although the level of organisation around the Poll Tax is very uneven and there are no *guarantees* that a mass campaign can be built, we should at least try to build such a campaign.

This will be helped as the Poll Tax starts to become a reality, when registration forms fall on people's doormats, combined with rising militancy in Scotland over non-payment.

Building a campaign of non-registration is part of the overall strategy against the Poll Tax: non-payment and non-collection. Collective action now will give communities and workers greater confidence in the fight over payment and collection.

No one argues that denying that you have received the form will necessarily protect you from being fined, and the



state has already shown its capacity to change the rules in response to different tactics.

But it will be extremely difficult to prove that you did get a registration form.

Anti-Poll Tax campaigns have to act responsibly towards those people getting involved in action for the first time — if it becomes clear that only a tiny minority of people are not registering campaigns will have to reassses their tactics.

If you are not already involved in your local Poll Tax campaign — get active. If no anti-Poll Tax campaign exists in your area, set one up and take the fight into your Labour Party, trade union, Tenants Association and community group.

Poll Tax in Scotland

A tale of two demos

Over 10,000 turned out for a lively march and rally called by the Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions in Glasgow on March 18th.

Although there were many LPYS and *Militant* banners on display, and a reasonable sprinkling from the trade unions, there were few from Scotland's CLPs.

At the Rally, MPs Ron Brown, Dick Douglas (who supports Scottish Labour Action), and Terry Fields all gave support to the non-payment campaign. There was also a solidarity speech from a LPYS representative from England.

Local anti-Poll Tax activist Tommy Sheridan, facing the witch-hunt for alleged *Militant* links, spoke from the platform, along with several Labour Councillors under similar threat.

The STUC demo in Edinburgh on April 1st — to mark the first day of the Poll Tax in Scotland — attracted over 20,000 people.

By Allan Green
Maryhill CLP

Again there was a reasonable spread of labour movement banners but it was obvious that the bulk of those attending were mobilised by the local anti-Poll Tax campaigns.

The demo, although fairly low-key, was turned into a non-payment demo in defiance of "official" intentions.

At the Rally, STUC General Secretary Campbell Christie publicly tore up and threw away his Poll Tax payment book, declaring that he would not pay.

He called on everyone to claim a rebate and to delay payment for at least three months (this remains within the law). Edinburgh's Provost, Eleanor McLaughlin, said:

"I represent some of the poorest people in this city. They won't be paying the Poll Tax not for ideological reasons but because they cannot afford it. It is up to us who could have paid it to make damn sure they are not left alone."

Even the Liberal/Democrat speaker argued that non-payment was morally correct.

It was left to Mark Lazarowicz, Labour's Chairperson in Scotland, to take the brunt of the crowd's anger when he tried to argue the case for the Labour Party leadership's position.

He was loudly booed throughout his speech. It was tragic to see Labour, on April Fools Day, stand up for compliance with the Tory Poll Tax.

With the first meeting of the Scottish Constitutional Convention taking place only days before the demo, there was an ideal chance to pull both questions together in an extra-parliamentary struggle.

But, the New Realism of the Labour leaders ruled out a Labour lead on the Poll Tax and the SNP, despite their success at Govan, blew their chances by pulling out of the Convention.

Even at the demo in Edinburgh the SNP forces, in true sectarian style, stood on the pavements with their own banners as the march passed by.

There is now a real fight underway on the question of non-payment. Thousands and thousands either cannot or will not pay the Poll Tax in Scotland. In this crunch period, we must step up our efforts to build as strong a campaign as possible.

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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 interpretor.

Manchester

Co-ordination overkill!

Local campaigns against the Poll Tax are mushrooming in Manchester.

There are active committees in Hulme, Chorlton, Withington, Crumpsall, Longsight, and Rusholme. Several local groups have attracted over 50 people to public meetings.

A first co-ordination meeting was held on April 5th. It decided to produce a leaflet to go out to as many households as possible.

The leaflet will urge people not to return their Poll Tax registration forms (which the Council is due to send out in May).

It is only when people receive a registration form *by recorded delivery* that they should return it with questions about how to fill it in. In that way the registration process can be delayed for months.

One problem in Manchester (and elsewhere!) is that in some local areas there is more than one campaign against the Poll Tax, and there is more than one city-wide co-ordination body!

Militant supporters have been active in establishing anti-Poll Tax unions, but often without trying to involve broader forces, including their local Labour Parties.

By FINN JENSEN

Militant supporters have also established *Manchester Labour Movement Against the Poll Tax* which is organising a delegate conference on Saturday April 29th (four delegates from each local anti-Poll Tax Union/Committee).

After nine months of preparation (!), Manchester District Labour Party has now launched its anti-Poll Tax campaign: *Manchester Campaign Against the Poll Tax*.

MCAPT is run by the City Party EC jointly with the Trade Union Forum, but without any direct grass roots involvement.

It supports the Council's implementation of the Poll Tax, but supports those who refuse to pay the Tax at the same time!

The mushrooming of campaigns and co-ordinating bodies is making it hard to build a strong campaign against the Poll Tax. You can have too much of a good thing!

Send us your reports on local Poll Tax activities! Write to 39 Talia House, Manchester Rd, London E14 9HB