LABOUR BRIEFING

40p FORTNIGHTLY

NO.83 MAY 10 ~ 23 1989

INSIDE:

★Solidarity for the Docks
★Trade Unions swing into action
★Section 28 tour
★The Arts and the left
★Inside Brazil
★Comrades remember Paula Watson

40p

As NUR leaders are the first to obey the courts

DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE!

Mr. Justice Simon Brown, an unelected member of that highly exclusive pre-entry closed shop the High Court, handed his boss Margaret Thatcher an entirely appropriate tenth anniversary present.

He granted London Underground Limited an injunction banning an indefinite strike by London Underground workers set to start on Monday May 8th.

By K. JONES

Meanwhile management will ruthlessly drive home their plans to abolish all protective agreements on the Underground, give their new breed of first line managers (called, believe it or not, "Centurions"!) total power and smash effective union representation.

Privatisation would then follow. The union has followed Kinnock's line and stayed within the law; the full-timers have safeguarded their pay, pensions and cut-price mortgages all at the expense of the membership.

When it's a question of pay, management and the courts are prepared for a bit of give and take. But when the ranks say no to restructuring, as on the docks and in the official Tube dispute, that challenges management's "right to manage".

Especially in such disputes *the law will have to be defied — officially or unofficially.*

Labour law is only useful to the employers as long as it is complied with. Over the last ten years it has been defied by miners, printers and seafarers — but unsuccessfully. They were left to fight alone.

Leaders at all levels of the movement — many conditioned by a decade of defeats — will be put to the key test of defying the law. Those found wanting must be replaced.

This failure to defy a grossly undemocratic court diktat is not only a blow to the defence of Tube workers' jobs and conditions. It is also a blow to the mounting struggle of all transport workers.

Even more importantly for the many groups of workers currently balloting for industrial action of various kinds: this is the first time the courts have declared illegal a primary strike against a workforces own management.

Previously the judges have confined themselves to undermining striking workers by outlawing "secondary picketing" and solidarity action. Now the very right to strike is under threat.

The only means of defence — to defy the law — is the test which will be facing many union leaders over the coming months. The record of the NUR leaders in facing the political executors of Thatcher's anti-union laws should be a lesson to them all.

Voted

The majority of the leadership of the NUR voted to comply with the High Court order, and trampled over the democratic rights of the 12,OOO members of the NUR and TSSA who had voted by seven to one and two to one respectively to withdraw their labour.

Justice Brown had made a correct political judgement that faced with this calibre of opposition he could with impunity make the law up as he went along. He said he was forced to take a decision with insufficient consideration of the arguments but was comforted by the likelihood of the case going to the Court of Appeal.

In other words, call off the strike, demobilise the workforce and the union full-timers can pursue the matter through all the courts in the land. Each time we'll rewrite the law and generate more fees for the junior members of our profession.



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

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, May 17th if possible.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

End this mealy-mouthed, lesser-evil, half-way house!

Dear *Briefing*,

Unlike the *Briefing* Editorial Board (see *Briefing*, no. 80) I believe there is every reason for socialists to celebrate the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

What the Editorial fails to mention is the effect on socialists and the working class in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

"Dissident" groups there were calling for Soviet withdrawal from Day One, as were many socialists in the rest of the world.

A clear defeat for Stalinism in Afghanistan must mean a boost for socialists in the Stalinist states. It would be interesting to hear the views of the Russian Socialist Clubs, Solidarnosc, Charter 77, and so on.

I am sure they could not be as equivocal and mealy-mouthed as *Labour Briefing*.

I fail to see how any socialist can do other than condemn without reservation the role of Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

At least one million Afghans are dead and five million made homeless. Villages have been bombed and napalmed by Soviet forces and much of the country's fertile land laid to waste.

Yet our Editorial speaks of Brezhnev intervening to prop up a weak, pro-Moscow regime — a blunder rather than an imperialist incursion.

What has this to do with us?

We would want to see the legs kicked from under such a regime, surely.

We are talking about Stalinism, which I have always understood is a counter-revolutionary force — a blockage on our road.

If there are some comrades who still have some lingering hope in the progressive nature of Stalinism why do they not clearly spell it out instead of shuffling about with "lesser evilism".

In my view there is no way in which popular working class revolution can be replaced by bureaucratic intervention and manoeuvres.

We must be totally in favour of the Soviet troops pulling out and should celebrate with our comrades in the Stalinist states. No half-way houses, please: it's the worst of all worlds.

Dave Spencer,
Coventry

What about child porn?

Dear *Briefing*,

In *Briefing* no. 81, Jane Kelly argued against banning pornography.

But there is under current British law a ban on pornography involving children. Should we call for this to be repealed? And if not, why should we draw a fundamental distinction?

Yours sincerely,
Campbell McGregor,
Coventry

Shopping around for a policy

Dear *Briefing*,

The Saatchi and Saatchis in the Labour Party are onto a winner in the "disarmament" motion recently passed by USDAW.

It called on the Labour Party to abandon its unilateralist policy so that a Labour government could take advantage of opportunities for "multilateral, bilateral, and unilateral disarmament as they arise in the international situation."

Of course it's nonsense to suggest that we have to wait for "opportunities" for unilateral disarmament, which by definition depends on us only.

And it's nonsense to suggest that there will ever be opportunities for multilateral or bilateral disarmament — if those terms imply bargaining — since we have no country to bargain with.

And it's also nonsense to suggest (as the motion does) that there will be a myriad of complex decisions to make — rather than just the two: when do we get rid of nuclear subs and when do we get rid of US bases.

But that is all by the way, since the motion was just a formula for saying "we're not saying what we'll do."

Many must be wondering why they didn't think of that formula before. Why, we could rewrite the whole manifesto:

- On hospitals: "We are leaving our options open so as to take advantage of multilateral, bilateral, and unilateral opportunities that arise in the health situation."
- On public ownership: "We are leaving our options open so as to take advantage of multilateral, bilateral, and unilateral opportunities that arise in the public ownership situation."
- On trade union law: "We are leaving our options open so as to take advantage of multilateral, bilateral, and unilateral opportunities that arise in the trade union situation."

Etc., etc.

Yours fraternally,
Alan Leadbetter,
Stoke-on-Trent

Are the mass campaigns isolated?

Dear *Briefing*,

I was interested to read on the back page of *Briefing* no. 81's *Poll Tax Notes* the headline "Don't Register".

In my view, there needs to be a further discussion amongst *Briefing* supporters about the tactics for opposing the registration process.

For Briefing to *advocate* the tactic of individual non-registration, rather than other methods of disrupting the compilation of the register, as a universal nationwide tactic (which a casual glance at the "Don't Register" headline would seem to imply) would be a mistake.

The pre-condition for successful non-registration campaigns is obviously mass collective involvement in community based campaigns.

It was right that *Briefing* fought for a non-registration campaign in the lead up to the sending out of the registration forms.

But I feel we should *now* be in a position to make some assessment as to whether the non-registration tactic has any milage or not in our localities.

Most anti-Poll Tax activists have by now already come to a decision on this; we certainly have in Brighton.

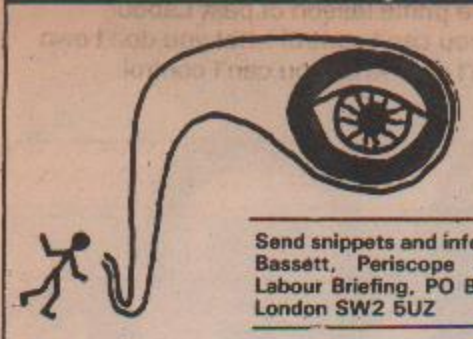
Although a number of anti-Poll Tax unions have been set up in Brighton, the left has consensually decided that we are still not in a position to give ordinary people the collective back up necessary when one has to face breaking the law, being fined, etc.

Other anti-Poll Tax campaigns in other areas of the country might have made a different assessment of the potential in their areas, as is made clear by recent coverage in *Briefing*.

But we should be aware of the obvious dangers that exist in building mass non-registration campaigns in isolation from everywhere else.

Steve Smith,
Brighton Kemptown CLP

Periscope



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

Quality Street: leading to Skid Row

We might have missed the publication of a new Labour Party policy document last week, had it not been drawn to our attention by the Municipal Journal.

Quality Street emphasises the need to "put the customer first in local government services", and has been welcomed — albeit cautiously — by free-market pressure group The Public and Local Services Efficiency Campaign.

A less cautious welcome has been given by Organising Secretary of the LCC and Camden Councillor Ken Hulme.

Ken is quoted in *MJ* as saying:

"What Labour authorities have got to be able to show is that a Labour government working *with* trade unions will put consumers first and will not allow itself to be put in a position where there are restrictive practices, special agreements and special favours done behind the scenes for the Labour Party...

"If New Realism policies [sic] are not pursued, Labour in London local government will be a memory."

One day perhaps, the New Realists will wake up to Reality. We can only hope it's before May 1990.

You can fool all of the people some of the time, but obviously not all of the people at the *Times*. You can, however, baffle them quite considerably.

How? Just stick to plain old methods of class analysis, and, it seems, bewilderment will reign.

Someone give these people a copy of the *Marx for Beginners*...

Camden invests in Apartheid

Camden Anti-Apartheid was recently going through the register of Shell shares.

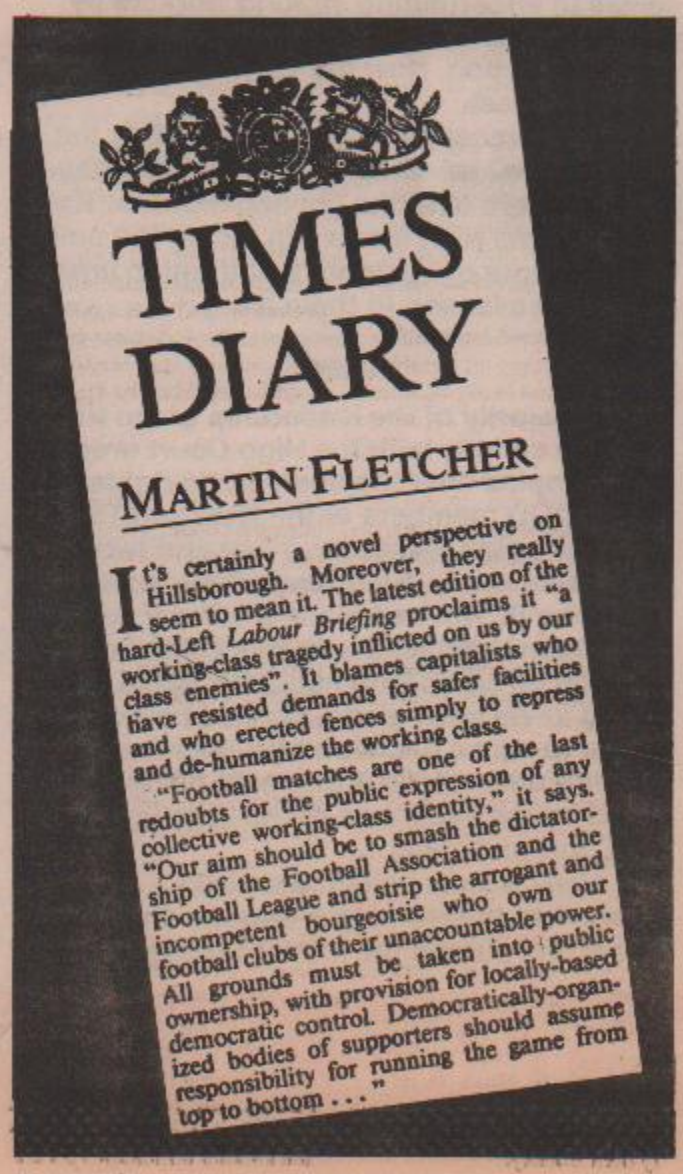
The company is high on the Anti-Apartheid Movement's boycott list.

What a surprise to find that 316,950 shares with a value of £3.5 million were registered in the name of the Mayor, Alderman, and Burgess of Camden!

These are straightforward investment by the Council and not part of a pension fund.

Such a large investment could not have taken place without the knowledge of the Leader of the Council (Tony Dykes).

And if it had been done without his knowledge, this is surely a scandal!



Contact Briefing

500 Club Winner

It's funny how once these so-called RANDOM number generators get an idea into their heads they just won't let go.

Neville seems to have decided it's time a man won the 500 Club prize draw again — but has opted, for the second draw running, and for the third time this year, for an Oxford supporter.

Lucky winner of this week's £25 prize is the holder of no. 308: B. MacKeith.

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 to that address too.

Next issues:
No: 84: Deadline for articles 16/5; distribution 24/5.
No. 85: Deadline for articles 30/5; distribution 7/5.

If you want to write an article, please give us a ring before you send it in, if possible, and let us know it's coming!

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Briefing Summer Raffle

All Briefing supporters and supporters groups should by now have ordered their supplies of raffle tickets. You've got two short months of HARD SELLING ahead!

Don't forget preferential rates are available, so that you can raise funds for your local Briefing group as well as raising money for Briefing's move into, and equipping of, its new office.

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.

The raffle will be drawn at the Briefing AGM: on July 15th.

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Ten years on: time to stop the Tories

The decision by Jimmy Knapp and the rest of the NUR Executive to bow to the decision of unelected judges rather than support the democratic wishes of their own members is a blow to the whole labour movement.

The decision by the High Court that the tube strike would be illegal effectively threatens the very right to strike.

In the Miners' Strike, the Wapping printers' dispute, and the Dover seafarers' struggle the Tory anti-trade union laws were used to stop the solidarity action and the spreading of action.

In the case of the dockers and the Underground workers, the judges have gone one stage further and declared the original disputes themselves illegal.

The reason judges have dared to go this far is simple: the New Realist trade union leaders have obeyed them all the way so far, while Kinnock & Co. have offered no challenge in parliament.

In calling off the all-out strike action supported by a 7-1 majority of Underground workers, the NUR Executive has shunned the opportunity to key in to a rising tide of militancy and resistance to the Tories' policies.

Rail workers, dockers, bus crews, BBC staff, firefighters, and engineers are all currently balloting for strike action against attacks on their standards of living, working conditions, and bargaining arrangements.

Pay offers of 7% are being rejected in the face of official inflation rates of 7.9% and an actual rise in the cost of living of nearly 19% for mortgage payers, as Thatcher's "economic miracle" turns out to have been a mirage.

The law must be ignored and all-out strike action taken in defence of living standards and working conditions.

The response of London Regional Transport to two days of unofficial action in pursuit of a £64 per week pay claim has been to offer £30 per week and two weeks more holidays to the train drivers involved.

Despite the stringent productivity criteria attached, the offer shows the power of collective action to win concessions.

Success by any one group of workers will spur others into action; while co-ordinated action could yet turn Thatcher's ten year celebrations into a wake.

Policy? Review?

At the time of writing, details of Phase II of the Policy Review have not been made available to us — unlike other members of the press, but very much like other members of the Party.

Nonetheless, their likely content is all too plain.

Unilateral nuclear disarmament is ditched. Silence reigns on lesbian and gay rights — and on nuclear power. Secondary picketing is definitely a no-no. And the House of Lords is to be "reformed" (not abolished) and given new and ill-defined powers of veto.

At the crux of the Policy Review lies its retreat from any radical critique of the market or any commitment to the principle of public ownership.

In one sense, then, Kinnock is right about it being a historic document — and one that will hang like a millstone round Labour's neck for some time to come.

But if the Policy Review was really meant to be an attempt to update and modernise Labour's programme (as opposed to an attempt to convince the ruling class that Labour is a "safe" alternative to the Tories), it must be counted an abysmal failure.

Precisely because of the globalisation of finance and production in contemporary capitalism, the advent of new technology, the world ecological crisis, and the severity of the crisis of British capital, the Policy Review's old-style obeisance to the "mixed economy" and the permanence of market forces and its faith in "regulatory" mechanisms, however dressed up in the latest rhetorical rags, is already an anachronism.

Capitalism's latest re-shaping of the world has made public ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange more relevant, more urgently needed than ever before.

This does not mean the bureaucratised Morrisonian monoliths created by past Labour governments. It means a sweepingly democratic, bottom-up management of the country's resources in the interests of the majority of the population.

It means matching those resources (above all, the labour of the country's working class) to social needs.

It means removing the dead but heavy hand of private capital from telecommunications, car manufacturing, aerospace, shipping and ship-building, housing and transport, pharmaceuticals, oil, gas, and coal, as well as water and electricity.

This is the vision — radical, practical, powerful — that Labour should be holding out to the millions upon millions getting more fed up with Thatcher's Tories by the day, and more willing to take action against them.

The Policy Reviewers have either forgotten or never known the prime lesson of past Labour governments: you can't control what you don't own — and you don't own what you can't control.

R.I.C.O. hits Wall Street

The sad tale of junk bonds and LBOs

Michael Milken, deposed king of the $180 billion U.S. junk bond market, was one of the architects of the record $25 billion RJR Nabisco leveraged buyout last year.

He was charged at the end of March with 98 counts of insider trading and securities fraud.

Milken is a former associate of convicted arbitrageur Ivan Boesky — the real life source for Michael Douglas's "greed is good" character in Oliver Stone's film *Wall Street*.

Amongst the allegations against Milken are that he traded on insider information in takeovers of MGM/United Artists and Occidental Petroleum, manipulated stock prices, and cheated clients.

Much of the case against Milken is based on information provided by Boesky, who is asking for his own three year sentence for insider trading to be cut because of this co-operation.

Boesky is expected to be the chief prosecution witness. Other key witnesses are likely to include prominent clients of prestigous New York investment bankers Drexel Burnham Lambert's junk bond department, which Milken headed until automatically suspended pending his trial.

By Dave Palmer
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

Many of the charges against Milken are under the anti-organised-crime Racketeering Influence And Corrupt Organisations Act (R.I.C.O.) which allows the government to seize the alleged proceeds of crimes and defendants' incomes before the trial.

It is expected Milken will be asked to lodge $500 million bail with the court.

The U.S. government is demanding $1.1 billion worth of salary paid to Milken by Drexel Burnham between 1984 and 1987, and the return of trading profits and commission if convicted.

Drexel Burnham itself appears to have got off lightly.

It has agreed to pay $650 million for breaking securities laws; to be subject to "administrative probation" by the Securities & Exchange Commission (the U.S. Stock market watchdog), and to a $350 million fund to compensate investors "injured", by Drexel's violations of company law.

Milken is believed to be personally worth over $7 billion. In 1987 alone he recieved $550 million (about the same as McDonald's post-tax profit that year!) in salary from Drexel.

If convicted of the racketeering charges under the extremely punitive R.I.C.O. Act, Milken would be additionally liable for fines of nearly $10 billion and up to 520 years imprisonment.

The Justice Department's use of the draconian R.I.C.O. is causing Wall Street some concern, though Milken is unlikely to be treated much more harshly than Boesky.

Milken has plenty of supporters in Wall Street. A cheering crowd of dealers greeted him outside the Manhattan court house when he appeared to plead not guilty.

Already the cry is up for the repeal or reform of the R.I.C.O. statute. The outraged arbitrageurs point, with some justice, to the political ambitions of the prosecutors involved.

Former New York district attorney Rudolf Giuliani won public prominence and popular acclaim for his sucessful Mafia prosecutions and pursuit of Wall Street crime in a city where graft and corruption is institutionalised and endemic to all levels of society.

Guiliani resigned last January. His successor, who is handling the Milken and the Marcos prosecutions, is expected to announce his candidature as a Republican in the forthcoming New York mayoral elections.

The ramifications of the Milken case reach far beyond New York's domestic politics and another billionaire speculative parasite getting his just deserts.



"And I thought RICO was just another breakfast cereal..."

Since the 1987 crash there has been growing concern over the stability of U.S.'s financial sector and its uncontrollable levels of debt.

The junk bond — utterly unproductive by application, high risk by design and backed by no tangible assets — has come to symbolise the more bizarre excesses of the U.S. financial markets and the vacuity of the "Reagan boom".

The Milken prosecution is a limited attempt by the S.E.C. and other Federal authorities to ensure the financial system is better able to weather any future deflationary shocks without any major defaults — which could induce a general crisis of confidence.

Similar bolstering has already occured in the Savings and Loans industry (similar to building societies) which the U.S. Treasury is bailing out to the tune of $150 billion.

***Next issue, Dave Palmer looks at the wider junk bond market, its role in the recent round of leveraged buyouts, and their implications for the US economy.**

Information on LBOs from *Wall Street Buyout Binge — The Next Debt Crisis?*' by Vince Valvano, in *Dollars and Sense* No. 144.

Campaign!

Irish Year of Action

Leeds

Leeds Irish in Britain
Representation Group
Leeds Troops Out Movement
Joint Public Meeting

TWO STRUGGLES; ONE CAUSE

The Irish and Black people's fight against British state repression
Wednesday May 31st, 7.30pm
West Indian Centre
Laycock Place, Leeds 7
(Rear of Trades Club)

Speakers:
Ali Hussein
Leeds/Bradford Black Activist
Dave Kernohan
Chairperson, Leeds IBRG
Janet Clarke
Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign;
Tottenham Three Defence Campaign
Wolde Selassie
Leicester TOM

- Both communities came as immigrants seeking work.
- Both suffer poor social conditions (bad housing, high unemployment, low living standards.
- Both communities suffer with physical and mental problems due to their standard of living.
- Both are at the receiving end of racist abuse and racist attacks. Remember the signs which read "No Blacks or Irish Need Apply"? They face "humour" that racially stereotypes Irish and Black people as lazy, stupid, and violent.
- The Troops Out Movement and the Irish in Britain Representation Group both believe that the conditions of Irish people in this country are a consequence of the partitioning and occupation of six counties in the North of Ireland. The recent haemorrhage of Irish youth abroad shows the continuing effects of imperialist interference in another people's country.
- The only solution is *Troops Out Now* and *Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole.*
- Irish people have to be kept passive or face the consequences of the racist PTA laws, or being made a scapegoat and framed for something they didn't do (Birmingham 6 and Guildford 4).
- Black people have to be kept passive and face the intimidatory SUS laws and also face being made scapegoats as a warning to others (Mark Braithwaite, Engin Raghip, and Winston Silcott — the Tottenham Three).

Manchester

CONFERENCE
The Position of the Irish Community in Britain and Ireland
SATURDAY JUNE 10TH
Manchester Town Hall

Organised by Irish in Britain Representation Group (Manchester Branch)

Speakers include:
Ken Livingstone MP; Michael Mansfield, barrister; Fr Des Wilson; Maurice Moore, Tom Walsh, Fr Joe Taffe, Tony O'Brien, Virginia Moyles.

Discussion Topics include:
Prevention of Terrorism Act; Irish Youth Emigration; Irish Women in Britain; Construction Safety Campaign; Birmingham Six Campaign.

The Conference will be formerly opened by Graham Stringer, Leader of Manchester City Council
Full programme available from IBRG, c/o Grassroots Books, Newton St, Manchester 1

Socialist Conference

Diary of Events

MAY

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

Sat. 20th. Glasgow: *Local Conference on Socialist Alternatives to Labour's Policy Review*, 11am, City Hall. Speakers: Bernie Grant MP, Hilary Wainwright (Socialist Conference, Women for Socialism), Scottish Campaign Group MP (invited).

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.

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
Sponsored by:
New Statesman, Tribune, New Left Review, Critique, Labour Focus on Eastern Europe, Labour Briefing, Socialist Worker, END, Campaign Group of Labour MPs, the Socialist Society, and CSE.

CONFERENCE THEMES ARE:

DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISM
With Tony Benn, Ludmilla Arutunyan (Armenia), Ernest Mandel, Edward Batalov (Moscow), M Lazic (Yugoslavia), Z Kowalewski (Poland), Teodor Shanin, Norman Geras, S Maliqi (Kosovo), L Arutunyan (Armenia), Steffi Engert (German Greens), Olga Ivanova (USSR).

ECONOMICS OF SOCIALISM
With Diane Elson, Edward Ambartsumov (USSR), Wlodzimierz Brus, Chris Harman, Branko Horvat, Ken Coates, Catherine Samary (France), Andre Gorz, Kate Soper.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
With Yegor Yakovlev (USSR), Luciana Castellina (Italy), Tariq Ali, Denis Healy, Victoria Brittain, Alex Callinicos, Fred Halliday.

FUTURE OF EUROPE
With Otto Latsis (USSR), Julia Szalai (Hungary), Oliver Macdonald, Peter Glotz (West Germany), John Palmer.

Prior registration is advisable as seating space is limited. Creche must be booked in advance. For further details contact Gus Fagan, 30 Bridge Street, Oxford OX2 0BA, or phone 0865-723207

Refugee Crisis

Kurds need urgent support

By Jim Thain
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

Three hundred and sixty-eight Kurdish refugees have arrived in Hackney, fleeing the repression of the Turkish state where 250,000 have been imprisoned and tortured over the past eight years.

Turkey is pursuing a policy of deforestation, destroying villages near the border with Iraq and forcibly resettling the inhabitants. More refugees may well be on the way.

The 368 have been given 30 days temporary admission and have been dumped on the Kurdish and Turkish communities in Hackney, as there is no state support system for refugees.

Their situation is desperate. They are sleeping on the floors of local halls and in churches, urgently in need of food and bedding.

A Kurdish Refugee Support Group was set upon May 5th by the Kurdish Workers Association, the Halkevi, Kurdish Cultural Centre, and other community organisations.

They have issued an urgent appeal for the following items: money (cheques payable to Kurdish Refugee Support Group), food, bedding, toiletries and towels, clothing, accommodation, access to bathrooms, security stewards.

The KRSG calls on all labour movement bodies to provide whatever help they can. Offers of help, etc., should be addressed to:

- **the Kurdish Workers Association, 531A Kingsland Road, London E8, 01-254 7558/254 0442;**
- **Halkevi, 92-100 Stoke Newington Road, London E8, 01-249 6980;**
- **Kurdish Cultural Centre, 13 Stockwell Road, London SW9, 01-274 6251;**
- **KRSG, c/o HTUSU, Liberty Hall, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8, 01-249 6930.**

Education

LMS

Will your school be worse off?

By Richard Hatcher Ladywood CLP

Local Management of Schools is on its way!

Every Local Authority (at least outside inner London) is producing plans for how they will allocate the money to schools.

After consultation, the "formula" goes to the Department of Education and Science for approval by the end of September.

LMS is then to be phased in over three years starting next April (Inner London a year later), though most Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are already running pilot projects.

Check the plans now for cuts, before the consultation period ends. There are three main things to look for.

- Is any school financially worse off?

In Avon's LMS plan, inner city majority-Black primary schools will lose up to 15% of their budgets. In Birmingham's formula, many working class schools are worse off.

Alter the formula or increase the global sum so no school is worse off.

- How is the formula made up? What is the LEA including in the up to 10% that it is allowed to keep centrally? And how is the rest decided?

Of the global sum allocated to schools, at least 75% has to be allocated according to pupil numbers, age-weighted.

The remaining 25% or less is allocated according to criteria decided by the LEA. The most important of these should be social class — working class schools should get the most money.

Is your LEA taking up the full 25%, and is it skewing it as much as possible towards the schools that need it most?

Some Labour LEAs may use LMS to redirect resources to *middle class* areas to discourage opting out and buy votes.

- What will the LMS plan mean for teachers, cleaners, dinner workers, and other school staff? Will contracts be worsened, hours cuts, jobs lost?

The resolution on LMS from the Socialist Teachers Alliance passed at this Easter's NUT Conference shows the way.

It said that unions need to be preparing now to negotiate with school governing bodies to adopt, as a minimum, existing LEA/union agreements and negotiating procedures, and to make clear that the alternative is industrial action.

Dockers start to ballot

Todd spreads political confusion

Dockers have at last begun balloting for strike action.

The ballot result, which is likely to endorse the call for action, is likely to be known by about May 24th. The political problems of winning an all-out dock strike, however, remain unresolved.

Many stewards, however reluctantly and for various reasons, now seem to have accepted the Ron Todd line — although there are divisions and debates over the strategy in some ports.

•there is to be no "illegal" action in defence of the National Dock Labour Scheme, which Transport House has already written off;

•any strike must be against the Port Employers for refusing to replace the Scheme with one offering equal conditions.

It is hard to see how such a policy could be successful. It lays the dockers open to divisive manoeuvres by the employers and piecemeal offers in individual ports.

By Alan Thornett Trade Union Briefing

No port employer is going to give guarantees equal to those of the Scheme, although they may make empty promises designed to confuse the issue.

The port employers cannot conceivably concede anything on the workers' control element of the Dock Labour Scheme, which gives dockers one-for-one representation on its controlling bodies.

Only the continuation of the Scheme can defend the jobs and working conditions of both the registered dockers and the 30,000 non-registered workers whose wages and conditions are linked directly to the Scheme ports.

What makes Ron Todd's policy even worse is that it is advanced for the worst possible reason: to try and avoid conflict with the law.

The courts have just declared illegal a London Underground strike ballot which was directly over the actions of management by inventing technicalities concerning the wording of the ballot paper.

They would have no difficulty with a strike triggered by the introduction of Bill into Parliament — whatever hoops are jumped through by the TGWU.

TGWU officials have been busy spelling out to the dockers what working within the law means:

•there must be no action of any kind in the unregistered ports, either solidarity action or the boycotting of scab cargo diverted from striking Scheme ports;

•there must be no picketing of the non-Scheme ports by striking dockers, or any other pressure to stop them handing scab cargo;

•there must be no action by other workers who send materials through the docks, which would equally be classed as secondary action.

A dock strike run along such lines, with striking dockers required to stand back and see their work done by others, would be a recipe for disaster.

Although not all cargo from the Scheme ports could be switched, there are hundreds of unregistered ports capable of handling a damaging amount of it.

It is crucial for the whole trade union movement that the dockers defend the Scheme — but it is also crucial that they *win*, not go down in gallant defeat.

Whatever strategy the strike is fought on, however, the whole labour movement has an obligation to give the dockers full support — starting now.

The Solidarity Network meeting in Hull on May 6th heard reports from a number of Support Groups which have been set up and planned activities.

Some have already contacted the ports nearest to them, made twinning arrangements with dockers, and fixed up meetings for them to address.

These initiatives need to be multiplied many times over to build the kind of support movement which will be needed once the strike starts.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Will Todd's loyalty to Kinnock be stronger than his loyalty to the interests of TGWU members?

British Rail

All out now!

As the London Underground and buses prepare for strikes, British Rail is also under threat of industrial action.

The dispute is over the current pay claim and British Rail's intention to end the present system for negotiating national pay and conditions.

The BR Board (BRB) has offered seven per cent to the workers in this notoriously low paid industry.

There is plenty of money available if the unions, in particular the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR), will accept increased productivity in the form of huge changes in working practices.

Excessive

Much has been made of the excessive hours worked by signal technicians before the Clapham Junction disaster, yet BRB continues to encourage overtime while making redundancies and keeping pay low.

Overtime and rest day working are the norm if staff are to earn somewhere near a living wage.

But BR's refusal to budge on pay is nothing compared to its proposals concerning the negotiating machinery.

System

The present system includes local committees with staff reps who negotiate local conditions; regional committees for problems unresolved at local level and regional issues; and national bodies dealing with pay and conditions.

The union is only recognised at national level. Local and regional reps are not seen by BR to be union reps and local branch officers have no direct access to management.

It's an out of date machinery to say the least. But BR's proposals would turn the clock back to the days of the private railway companies. This is no surprise, since the intention is preparing the industry for privatisation.

By Toni Matthews NUR

Locally, each grade will be represented by only one rep (instead of the present four) who will have to "negotiate" with management on her/his own.

Individual grievances, which at present can be discussed at local committee level, will only be dealt with by local managers, with no possibility of issues being taken up by staff reps or referred upwards.

At regional level, issues will not be discussed automatically and local issues will not be taken at all. At local and regional level, where there is no agreement management will impose its position after 14 days!

British Rail have no proposals to make on health and safety reps, although the present situation contravenes the Health and Safety at Work Act. So much for being concerned about safety!

The national structure will disappear. Instead BR have carved up the railway into five sectors — ready for privatisation.

The rail unions will only be able to negotiate pay and conditions, at present dealt with at national level, by negotiating with the manager of each function.

Workers in the same grade, in the same depot, but working for different "employers" will receive different rates of pay and conditions.

BR has already begun this process with an attendance allowance paid to London and South East staff. Drivers who have come up from the grade of guard now have different conditions of service from other drivers.

How will the unions react? Acceptance of BR's proposals without a fight will lead to privatisation and a complete erosion of conditions and pay; which would be a huge defeat for the workforce.

The three main unions concerned, the NUR, the drivers' union, ASLEF, and the clerical union, TSSA, have met each other nationally, but that is as far as it goes.

Response

A united response seems unlikely. ASLEF do not appear in favour of changing the present machinery (which suits them, as they represent only one grade) to one that directly represents the unions; and anyway NUR and ASLEF are locked in a membership war.

All-out action now is the only viable response. But NUR appear to favour an overtime ban and one day strikes: a recipe for disaster.

One day strikes are divisive — members cannot be united and organised as in an all out strike. Recent NUR one day strikes have been a disastrous experience.

Workers doing overtime cannot be picketed. A recent overtime ban with the Signal and Telecommunications workers, despite a massive vote for industrial action, resulted in deep divisions, loss of members to a scab union, and ultimately in complete defeat.

Prepared

The NUR leadership believe that the BR membership are not prepared to go for all out action. Previous ballots, for guards in particular, have resulted in a "no" vote for strike action.

But the mood has changed.

•BR workers see comrades in the rest of the transport industry taking action; they know this is the right time.

•This will be the first ballot since Jimmy Knapp took over to involve *all* NUR members on BR and not just one grade or depot.

•With the right campaign and good alternative proposals coming from the unions, members will be convinced by what's at stake.

The union leadership thinks differently. Jimmy Knapp said at an open meeting of railworkers, "Ask not what the union can do for you, but what you can do for the union."

It's time Knapp and the others realised that they have done very little for railworkers in the last few years. If they campaign for and call an all out strike, the members will be there. If they don't there will be no membership left. The choice is theirs.

ASLEF

Southern Region grinds to a halt

By Comrade Boris the train driver, Trumpton Depot

Disgusted at the ASLEF 's record in negotiations with BR, branches across the Southern Region have called an overtime ban and work-to-rule for two weeks in May (8th-22nd).

Over the past ten years, overtime has grown to such an extent that in London:

•drivers work a 12 hour day, seven days a week (and commute from the home counties)

•two-thirds of earnings comes from overtime and other bonuses

•safety is increasingly ignored as profit becomes all important.

Farther out, the problem is not quite so acute — yet.

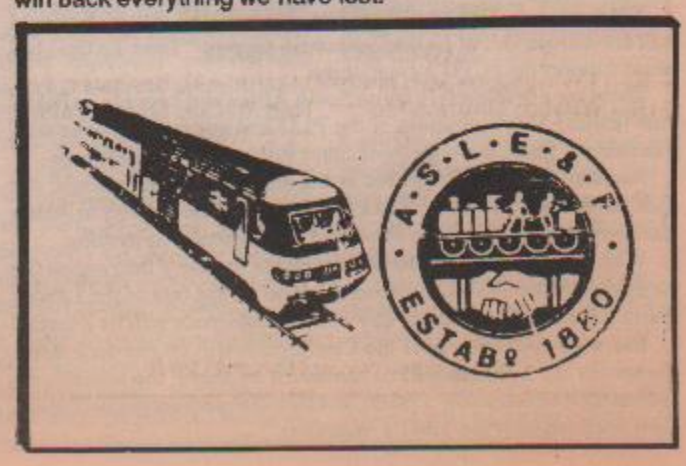
As a result of BR's lack of a recruitment strategy, half the drivers are over 55. The numbers retiring over the next few years will far outnumber any new recruits.

BR's answer to these problems has been to introduce a crash training programme — one year compared to the old three year minimum.

Most drivers are refusing to co-operate with it, but the union leadership's position has been to accept virtually everything the management come up with.

Most staff recognise that we are now in a far stronger position than we have been for years.

If we can link our action up with the Underground workers, bus drivers and dockers, and spread it to other regions, we have the potential to bring transport in Britain to a halt — and win back everything we have lost.



British Aerospace

Lobby keeps closure battles separate

By a British Aerospace worker

Over 1,000 British Aerospace workers lobbied parliament on April 26th as part of a campaign against closures and job losses.

This campaign was initiated by the British Aerospace Combine Committee, and is now supported by workers at Royal Ordnance and Austin Rover — two firms the government recently sold off to Aerospace at knockdown prices.

Hardly a week goes by without the closure of a factory owned by the combine being announced.

With the surplus land Aerospace says it owns recently revalued at £1.3 billion, mostly from its recent acquisitions, asset stripping is now the major profitable exercise for Aerospace management.

Combine Chairman Roland Smith is well qualified to lead the exercise. His anti-workforce, anti-union inclinations were first sharpened when he took on the Silentnight workers and then the Senior Coleman strike.

Although they are officially carrying out a joint struggle, every closure is being tackled separately, as the lobby showed.

That Rover Llannelli was sold off as a going concern was seen as a "victory", as is the fact that Royal Ordnance Bishopston is being kept open with a reduced workforce and with speed-up.

That Royal Ordnance Patricroft is closing, but another small factory is being built on the site, is also a "victory".

The other places listed for closure or job losses aren't even mentioned, because this would entail discussing a joint national fight.

All the speakers at the rally before the lobby of parliament talked about asset-stripping, but none of them gave a real lead.

Bryan Gould and Michael Meacher looked to a Labour government — which would insist on workers being *consulted*. Jack Adams and Jack Dromey, TGWU officers, also restricted themselves to criticising the lack of consultation.

A very powerful lobby, on a working day, ended up with just hot air. Aerospace workers should now demand the unifying of all the sections in one Combine Committee and that such a committee should discuss industrial action in defence of jobs.

TGWU Conference

Battleground Brighton

By a TGWU Conference Delegate

The TGWU's Biennial Delegate Conference, the most important of all this year's conferences, takes place in the last week of June in Brighton.

For the first time in many years the right wing are making a determined effort to reverse the TGWU's progressive policies; while the main concern of the Executive is to avoid embarrassing Kinnock.

The biggest number of resolutions centre around unilateralism: 45 in favour, 20 against; and 13 calling for a ballot of the membership. This will be the most closely fought battle, with Todd having to make up his mind where he stands.

There will also be battles right down the line over all the changes the Labour Party leadership want to make with the Policy Review.

Many resolutions oppose anti-union legislation. Some attack the Policy Review, and three call for defying the law.

But the Executive's resolution simply calls for a Labour government to bring in positive rights. Where was the "left" on the Executive when this was agreed?

On Public Ownership, the majority are in favour, but several call for a change of policy.

Of the 30 resolutions on the Poll Tax, several call for non-implementation and non-payment, but some call for staying within the law.

On industrial matters, there are a lot of health and safety resolutions, and strong resolutions on "blacklisting", "Quality Circles", and E.T. Many resolutions deal with the NHS.

There are very few resolutions on international issues. A couple call for Troops Out of Ireland and some support "Time To Go", but most support the ICTU's campaigns.

There are a few resolutions on South Africa and a couple on Palestine (calling for recognition of the PLO and questioning links with Histadrut). There are only three other International resolutions.

Another major battleground is the state of the union itself: the lack of women delegates; Black Sections; and the manner in which the membership should be consulted during decision-making.

With most of the Conference decisions having a bearing on the struggles of the TGWU membership and on the fate of the Labour Party Policy Review, every day of the Conference will be a battle.

But what will hang over the Conference will be the dock strike (however the leadership have handled it by then), the possible sequestration of the union's funds, and how the membership will react. The dock strike is the T&G's Waterloo.

AUT

Executive fails the test!

For 15 weeks now, members of the Association of University Teachers have been in dispute over a pay claim.

By Steve Reicher
Exeter AUT,
AUT Broad Left Steering Committee
(personal capacity)

After being offered no pay rise for 1988/9, the union initiated a total exam boycott — exams would not be set, invigilated, or marked.

This action had two targets: the Tory government, and our own management — the Vice Chancellors.

Although underfunded, management had some money available for a pay increase. They have consistently refused to pay it, or even talk about it.

Our action brought a partial success when Kenneth Baker, after saying no more money was available, released extra funds for salaries.

Derisory

The Vice Chancellors then made a derisory offer of 6% from March 1st 1989 — in other words, still no money for 1988/9. Six per cent over two years represents a real pay cut of some 9%!

Instead of throwing this out, the AUT leadership lost its nerve. They decided to ballot members on the offer.

With the leadership hinting that the action might be changed regardless of the ballot result, and massive media misinformation, it is hardly surprising that many members lost confidence. Even so, by 53% to 47%, the offer was rejected.

The next day the Executive voted to change the action: now we should set exams but not mark them.

While this was only a recommendation to Council, the General Secretary spoke to the media as if the decision had been taken. This confused members even further and many even began to hand in exam questions.

Ratified

It was hardly surprising that the second emergency council, on April 22nd, ratified the change. This must be acknowledged as a setback; but the blame for the dispute continuing must be laid with the Vice Chancellors.

AUT figures show that the VCs could settle the dispute. They are prolonging it in the hope of defeating the AUT, with the aim of then pushing through a complete restructuring of higher education.

Secret

Already a group of VCs has had a secret meeting with Thatcher in which they discussed how to "open up universities to market forces."

It is up to each university to insist that their VC seeks a national settlement. The AUT must mount a major campaign to show that the VCs do not represent the interests of education.

AUT must also widen its action, combining with students and with other campus unions to campaign for a properly funded system of public higher education.

NUPE

Fighting for democracy!

NUPE's bureaucracy has shown its true colours again as it continues its fevered rush to defend its New Realist chums in the Labour Party.

By Sally Morawetz
Branch Chair,
Nottingham City NUPE (personal capacity)

The bureaucrats have been forced by the High Court to back down on their outrageous decision to ban Steve McKenzie from holding office for life.

Steve is Secretary both of Bexley General NUPE Branch and (perhaps more relevantly!) of NUPE's *Militant* dominated Broad Left.

He was standing as an Executive Council candidate and broadcasting the Broad Left's call to nominate an alternative to Tom Sawyer for NUPE's Deputy General Secretary.

NUPE claimed Steve had stolen branch funds; but the court accepted that NUPE was late in handing them over, and that Steve had acted in good faith in arranging an overdraft to keep the branch ticking over.

This case was more about bureaucratic dirty tricks against left oppositionists than about money.

In Edinburgh there was further manipulation of the rule book to stop militants in action.

The Edinburgh No 1 Branch Secretary brought an emergency resolution to a tiny branch meeting (25 people — branch size 6,500!), without notice, to ban two NUPE stewards from being stewards and from attending branch meetings for a year.

Their "crime" was involvement in the anti-Poll Tax federation, continued public opposition to NUPE national policy, and continued denigration of NUPE national leadership.

The stewards are confident that informed debate on the issue in a real branch meeting will reverse this disgraceful anti-democratic decision.

Many of the NUPE left want to see an activists' Broad Left — one which doesn't just run a fringe meeting at National Conference and take undemocratic decisions on our behalf.

Activists from *Briefing*, SWP and *Militant* have called a regional Broad Left meeting to cover NUPE's East Midlands division — Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire — on Saturday July 15th in Derby. Details follow!

NUPE comrades outside the East Midlands should call a Broad Left meeting locally and/or get your branch to call on the Broad Left nationally to call a national conference.

We have nothing to lose but our chains... and Tom Sawyer.

Workfare

No to unemployed slave schemes!

Model resolution:

This (...) notes that the Transport and General Workers Union Community Programme Shop Stewards Committee is organising countrywide strikes on June 15th against workfare schemes.

We also note that in December 1988 over nine million workers went on strike in Spain against YTS; the result of which was that the Scheme was scrapped.

This (...) therefore resolves to support the day of action/national strike called on June 15th by:

•joining the rally in London at 2pm from Camden Town Hall;

•helping to organise local strikes/stoppages and other supportive actions as appropriate;

•make a donation to the TGWU Shop Stewards Combine/The National Campaign Against Workfare.

Donations should be sent c/o Tottenham Unwaged Centre, 72 West Green Road, London N15. For further details ring Mark Metcalf at Hackney Trade Union Support Unit, 01-249 8086.

NUJ Left

Conference

Saturday May 20th, 10.30-4

NALGO Building,
1 Mabledon Place, London WC1
(3 mins. Euston Station)

Opening Address
by Tony Benn MP (NUJ member)

Followed by a discussion on policy resolutions and organisation on the Left
Topics include: Statement of principles, Individual contracts, Anti-union laws, Media freedom

Attendance costs £2. There will be a pooled fare system. If you wish to use a creche, please let us know in advance.

To book in advance write to: Kyran Connolly, 213 Harvist Road, London NW6 6HE, tel. (day) 01-377 4889. Cheques to "NUJ Left".

All NUJ members are welcome. You are invited to submit resolutions or discussion material, preferably in advance to allow for duplication and circulation.

Council staff pay offer

Push NALGO leaders into action!

Local government white collar workers have just been offered a 6% pay rise.

Not only is this derisory — well below the inflation rate — but there are strings attached.

By Fred Leplat
Islington NALGO

It does nothing for low paid members — 40% of all APT&C (white collar) staff fall below the Council of Europe's decency threshold of £7,723 p.a; but the strings represent the greatest threat to conditions of Council staff.

These include:

•annual increments related to performance;

•national grades to be abolished;

•the scrapping of grading appeals beyond the local employer;

•the possibility of local variation of weekend and shift working hours and rates.

So far NALGO, along with the other unions, has rejected the offer.

The strings seem to have hardened the union leadership's attitudes. But they might accept a slightly improved pay rise if some of the strings were dropped.

Ballot

NALGO is preparing to ballot in June for industrial action in July. But NALGO has not yet said what industrial action it sees necessary.

One day strikes will not beat off this attack. NALGO members are rightly cynical about this tactic, having seen one-day strikes against rate-capping and Metropolitan Council abolition lead nowhere.

Already some NALGO branches are supporting an all-out strike as the only action that can ensure the claim is met in full and the strings dropped.

Publicity

So far, there has been little publicity and no support for branches facing Councils like Southwark, which is breaking away from some of the national conditions. It has already unilaterally imposed performance related pay.

It is vital that the NALGO leadership steps up its campaign so as to give confidence to the membership and to win the ballot for industrial action.

If this ballot is lost, it will be the third time in a row, and will give a green light to employers to attack conditions, pay, and union organisation.

Islington NALGO is organising a lobby of the final national meeting between NALGO and the employers to demonstrate the strength of feeling against low pay and "flexibility".

This should also be used to campaign for an all-out strike as soon as possible after the ballot.

Lobby of Pay Negotiations
Wednesday May 17th, 9.30am
Belgrave Square, London SW1
(Victoria tube)



PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

NALGO on the rubbish heap" — the aftermath of yet another single "Day of Action". At least placards are biodegradable.

NUT Elections

Regan for General Secretary!

The nomination period for the General Secretary position of the NUT, Britain's largest teacher union, is now well underway.

Indications are that Socialist Teachers' Alliance candidate Bernard Regan is gaining support throughout the country.

He has received a massive vote of confidence from London members, with seven out of 11 Associations backing him so far.

Support is not restricted to London, nor to other metropolitan areas. A wide geographical spread of nominations is emerging — ranging from Plymouth and West Dorset in the South to Barnsley in the North.

This shows the conviction of members nationwide in carrying through their endorsement of the policies which Bernard supported at the recent National Conference.

It shows they are now prepared to back him as future leader of the union.

The current leadership, after their setbacks at the Conference, must be worried by this challenge.

It is rapidly becoming apparent that the membership are well aware of the issues at stake and are not going to be sidetracked by spurious arguments about an election being "damaging" to the union.

SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

Which Way Forward for the Left in the Unions?

A national Conference for the left in the trade union movement organised by the Socialist Conference

The trade union movement is in the grip of New Realism after taking a battering from the Tory government and mass unemployment. There is a need to reassert the relevance of the trade union movement for the 1990s and discuss a socialist response to the changes which are taking place. The left has to regroup and reorganise and start to come to grips wth the political issues involved in this.

Sheffield Polytechnic Student Union Building

November 11/12th

£6 waged; £4 unwaged

For credentials, and to book creche places, write to The Socialist Conference, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG

NHS White Paper

Manchester gets moving!

Health workers from all three Manchester Health Authorities joined forces on Thursday May 4th to picket Junior Health Minister Roger Freeman.

Members of COHSE, the Medical Practioners Union, MSF, NALGO, and NUPE — as well as medical students — made clear their opposition to the White Paper.

The lobby was the first action organised by Central Manchester Health Emergency which, although only newly formed, is beginning to make itself known inside the labour movement.

Stretford Constituency Labour Party has already decided to affiliate — even though the affiliation forms are not yet printed!

By Geoff Ryan
NUPE Steward,
Central Manchester
Hospitals Branch

Central Manchester Health Emergency intends to leaflet every house in central Manchester and will also be organising a mass lobby of the June meeting of the Health Authority.

Alongside the setting up of Health Emergency, a number of activities have been organised around the White Paper.

Central Manchester Community Health Council organised a conference on the effects of the White Paper which was featured on the local television news.

At a very successful public meeting organised by MSF, MSF full time official John Chowcatt warned of the threats the White Paper poses to NHS workers' pay and conditions.

Keith Bradley, Labour MP for Manchester Withington, called for all hospitals that opt out to be brought back into District Health Authority control.

He also stressed the need for Health Authorities to become democratic, elected bodies responsive to local health needs; and for a future Labur government to refuse to reappoint any Health Service manager who has been actively implementing the White Paper proposals.

Manchester City Council's Policy and Resources Group have agreed to organise a conference to discuss opposition to the White Paper and will, if necessary, fund local referenda on opting out.

The fight against the White Paper has only just begun in Manchester, but it is already obvious there is a potential for a massive campaign. The Tories are going to be faced with a hard fight to implement their attacks on the NHS.

Doctors protest

The following is an abridged version of a letter sent out to patients by Dr SJ Walker of Crossroads Surgery, Swindon

Dear Patient,

I am taking the unusual step of writing to you, because I believe that the changes proposed to the NHS in the government's White Paper *Caring for Patients* will, if implemented, be disastrous for the majority of patients.

(...) the main ways in which I think you as patients will be affected are as follows.

•Although the White paper is entitled *Caring for Patients*, there is to be no extra money provided for the NHS.

Our government at present spends less on health care than any other country in the EEC, and it is internationally known that the NHS (and in particular general practice) is a very efficient user of the limited funds available.

The new proposals will introduce cash limits for all the services I provide (for drugs, hospital out-patient appointments, X-Rays, blood tests, etc.) so that when the money runs out it is I, your GP, who will have to say to you:

"I am sorry, you can't have the treatment I think you need."

I believe that the government is attempting to shift the blame for underfunding of the NHS from itself to the doctors.

At present, as your GP, my only concern is to provide you with the best available treatment according to your need.

Under the new proposals I will be responsible for trying to ensure that a limited amount of money must pay for everybody's treatment, with the result that I would often have to treat you according to the money available, rather than according to your need.

This will inevitably mean that some people, particularly those "expensive" patients with greatest medical need, will not be able to obtain the treatment they should have.

•The government is proposing to change the way that GPs are paid, so that it would be necessary for me to have many more patients in order to maintain my present income.

This is a serious backward step, as I, and every other GP I know, already work hard to look after the patients we have, and a significant increase in our list sizes will inevitably lead to a deterioration in the care of individual patients.

•In the interests of economy, it will be necessary for me to "shop around" for the cheapest hospital treatment. This is likely to mean that you the patient will have to travel the country for your treatment.

It may well be that you would have to go to Halifax because a hospital there is offering the cheapest hernia repairs, or to Plymouth to have your varicose veins treated, etc. (...)

This is a bare outline of the changes which the government proposes to make. (...)

I therefore urge you to protest strongly before it is too late, as it is you who will suffer if these changes are brought in.

Music

Forward Culture

Forward Culture is based in Runcorn.

It aims to provide advice, assistance and promotion of the performing arts, principally through creating new initiatives and campaigning for improved provision of cultural facilities and services.

Forward Culture prioritises people who are unemployed, single parents, young people and people with disabilities.

The main activist behind Forward Culture is John Beddows, former music fieldworker for Merseyside County Council.

However, a lack of funding has meant that John has been doing his work with Forward Culture voluntarily, an arrangement which is not likely to go on for ever, and one on which such a vital organisation should not be dependent.

Forward Culture's reports stress the economic importance of the music industry in Britain today:

"Over 26,000 people are employed directly and indirectly in the music industry and over £4,000 million was generated in 1986.

"Over 67.4 million singles with a value of £76.1 million and 52 million albums with a value of £140.6 million were sold in 1986."

Locally, they stress the value of bands working together, partly because this produces greater variety of product, partly because it increases audiences:

"If they all have their own little audience of 50, 4 bands together will bring in audience of 200..."

They aim to get people to a position where they can earn a living. They point out that there are a lot of jobs created around any one gig, from publicity to merchandise to administration.

Their two main activities recently have been their Music Business Course, and Larks in the Park.

The Course was based on the premise that local musicians needed equipping with new skills and information to move beyond the pub circuit.

Over ten weeks 20 bands studied the studio and how it works; promotion and distribution (both from a DIY perspective); radio and TV promotion; the press; the manager; the lawyer; record companies and publishing; contracts; the promoter and the agent.

By Karen Merkel
Newham North West CLP

At the end of the course, the participating bands had the chance to spend a day in a professional studio to make a track for a demo tape.

The WEA funded the tutors, the County Council paid the students' fees and Merseyside Arts paid for the administration.

Larks in the Park was a large-scale event on the 1988 August Bank Holiday weekend. It featured 22 bands covering Jazz, Country & Western, Folk, Reggae, Pop and Soul.

It cost £4,274 and was funded by Merseyside Arts, Halton Borough Council, Cheshire Arts, and Runcorn 21st Birthday Committee.

In the community it was seen as a very positive initiative, though Council officers seemed to remain uncertain about the value of the event.

Forward Culture would like to follow up the music business course with a more advanced course.

They have purchased a tape copying machine with which to enable bands to copy demo tapes and therefore promote themselves better.

To encourage co-operation, they have brought together a roadshow of eight bands. They hope soon to have a PA system for hiring out, a porta-studio and drum-kit.

They are seeking funding for a community music worker, and are exploring the idea of a high-tech tour of local schools to help young people expand the use of electronic keyboards.

However, Forward Culture cannot develop much further while it is dependent on goodwill and voluntary effort. It needs investment in its facilities, staffing and premises.

It is only one of many music projects, run by and for young people, up and down the country. Few get the support they deserve.

This desperately needs to change, if the voice of young people is to be clearly heard.

Forward Culture, 209b Seneschal Square, Southgate, Runcorn, WA7 2SG. Runcorn 715979.

Forward Culture describes itself as:

"an umbrella organisation with the main aim of offering training and support for young musicians and artists, hopefully opening up employment opportunities for economically disadvantaged groups and promoting cultural activity in an area with little popular entertainment on offer to young people."

The Arts are not a marginal issue!

Why should socialists be interested in the arts? There are, after all, so many other priorities.

Even the most confirmed opponent of cuts can sometimes be heard to muse that maybe *some* services are less important than others. If a Council cannot house its homeless, should we be thinking of festivals or of books?

Yes, we should be thinking of festivals and books, and of a great many other cultural activities besides. However, it is understandable that some comrades see the arts as peripheral, because of the way in which they are normally presented.

By Felicity Harvest
Hackney South and Shoreditch CLP.

In the mainstream media, we are treated to debates about whether a certain exhibit in a London gallery (which only a few people will see) is really "art", or about the level of funding of some major institution.

This kind of arts debate is certainly not interesting!

But the arts pages of the national media are very far from covering the whole spectrum of the arts we should be concerned with, and there are strong reasons why socialists *should* think about the arts and about the means of cultural expression and communication.

One reason is the power of the Arts in catching the imagination and putting arguments. This can take a number of forms.

Arts can be used as tools to illustrate a socialist message — in the creation of banners, the development of songs to rally to, the use of theatre as propaganda, or in poster design.

They can also appear in more mundane settings. The public library on the street corner is a potent tool for catching and winning the imagination, if it is properly used.



The Channel 4 TV production of A Very British Coup spread this "entertainment with a message to think about" even more widely than the readership of the original paperback.

Instead, Labour Local Authorities are all too busy closing down these facilities, or displaying in them, through some concept of "fairness", all kinds of reactionary material.

One Labour Council recently allowed the CEGB to have a "right of reply" exhibition in its main library on the benefits of nuclear power, to "balance" its own Nuclear Free Zone exhibition!

The arts also form the basis of the recreational activity of an astonishing number of people.

The majority of the home-based entertainment available via television, video, cable, and satellite depends in some way on arts skills and practices — even if the connection with any kind of creativity is sometimes very hard to spot!

If we do not give our attention to the development of socialist form and content in the arts, there will never be anything to balance the endless flow of transatlantic — or antipodean — products.

Outside the home, cinema is still immensely popular, especially with young people, and audiences have been growing for several years.

As the Arts Council are fond of saying, more people go to the theatres than to football matches in any one year.

But, in addition to all this spectator activity, there is an enormous amount of *participation* in the Arts, by all kinds of people seeking everything from therapy, to relaxation, to the development of cultural identity, to earning a living.

This kind of arts activity never gets any attention from the media, which concentrates on reviewing works that people will never see, rather than setting out possibile activities



PHOTO: Ingrid Gavshon

Theatre used to spread a socialist message — from the Sarmcol strikers.

The

Work

I work as a community dance worker in my native region of North-East England.

My teaching, choreography and performance work is based on the New Dance techniques of Release and Contact Improvisation.

For readers not already familiar with New Dance, I will give a personal definition of it!

First, what it is not. It is *not* about special gear — leotards or footwear. It is not about looking in mirrors, about being thin, or being a

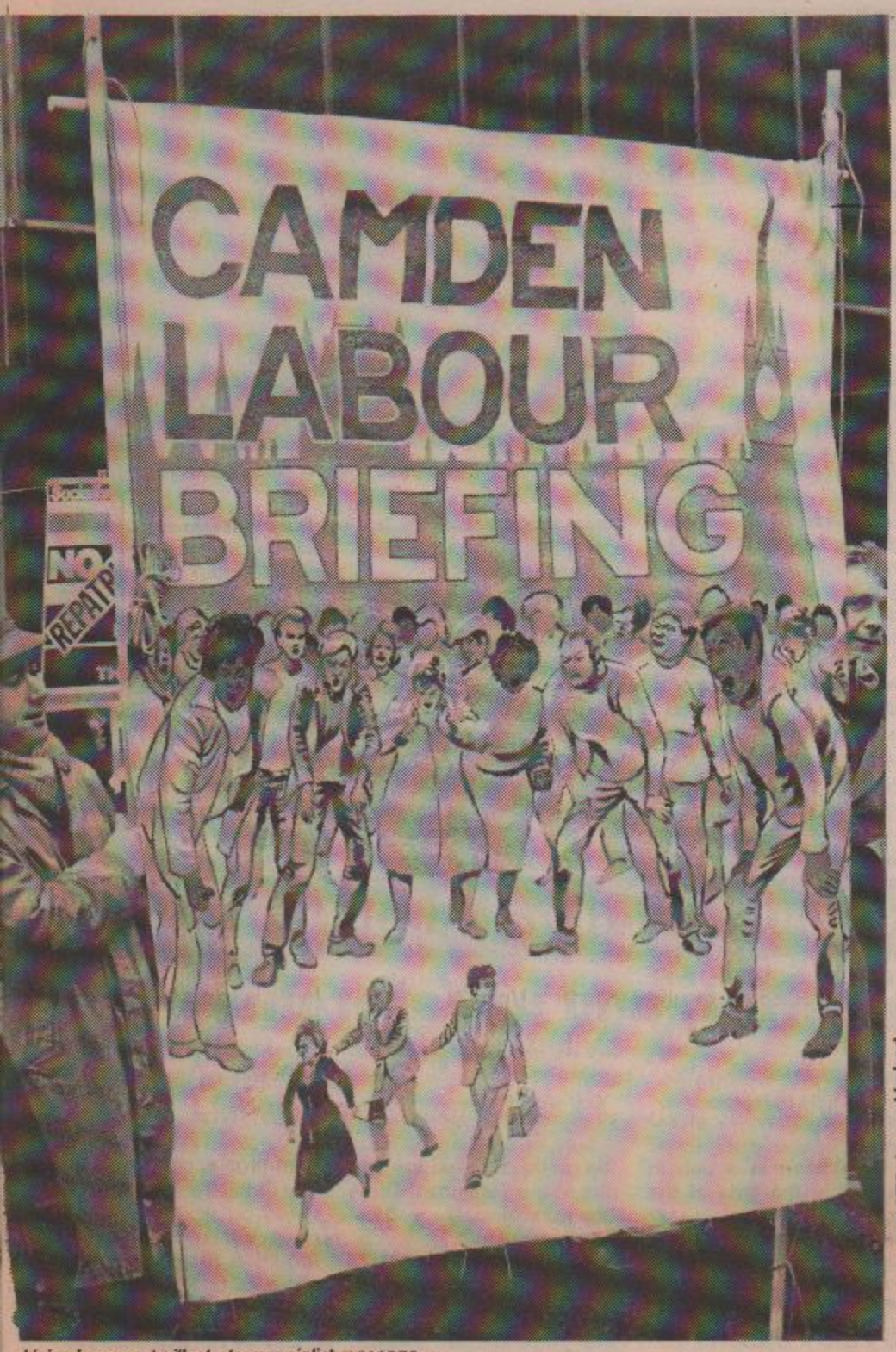


PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Using banners to illustrate a socialist message...

which people can develop to suit their own needs.

In these pages, we look at three kinds of cultural activity, through a description of a music project in the North West, a critique of Labour's policy on libraries, and a personal statement by a dance worker in the North East. There could have been many more, similar articles.

These kinds of activities are under threat from all sides. If they operate on a voluntary basis, they too often burn out the individuals involved, and are treated with scant respect.

If they try to obtain public funding, they come up against the climate of New Realism, and cuts in Local Authority funding.

They are also the target for all kinds of prejudice from Council members, particularly if they are youth projects.

If they try to be commercial, they often find it extremely difficult to raise loans or obtain premises because they do not fit standard ideas of what a "business" should be.

If the left ignores cultural issues it will be to its detriment.

The Tories have gained the high ground in the last decade when it comes to defining cultural norms and practices. Socialists can only win this ground if we are willing to consider what we mean by culture, and how we can develop it.

There is no reason for us to accept an elitist view of culture and the arts.

If we do not work to create our own means of cultural expression, we will be stuck with other people's till the end of time.

Libraries

Culture on the corner

The government Green Paper on the future of the public library service (introduced in February 1988), was greeted with indignation from left and right.

Seven thousand institutions and individuals protested that library services should remain free and should not be contracted out.

By Barbara Bampton Wimbledon CLP

"We have one of the finest library systems in the world," was a phrase used with pride by Labour and Tory alike.

But what is the truth behind this bipartisan rhetoric?

At this moment, many public libraries are being squeezed to death by Thatcher's deliberate starvation of funds to local government — particularly to services not deemed "profitable".

The Minister for the Arts is on record as saying that his aim is to provide a better service for the same money, or the same service for less money (*Hansard*, 8.2.89).

But where is Labour's own commitment to developing our libraries?

In the course of February's debate on Clause 124 of the Local Government and Housing Bill, some Labour MPs spoke out.

Jeremy Corbyn called for "library services of all kinds [to be] declared free for the benefit of everybody."

David Winnick commented on the "immense cultural and literary contribution that the library service had made to generations," and mentioned self-education via the library system.

But there were no cries from the Labour benches denouncing the wanton destruction of library services taking place at this moment, such as library closures and cut-backs in hours.

Perhaps this silence was prompted by the embarrassment of knowing that it is in Labour Local Authorities that some of the worst attacks are being made.

This last year has seen the closure of St Pancras reference library, the once-innovative Strathclyde library system brought to its knees, and the closure of many small sites in inner-London Labour Boroughs. There are more attacks on the way.

It is at its peril that Labour overlooks the educational and cultural needs of its traditional supporters.

The reading and cultural demands of the working class can only begin to be met by the most vigorous and outspoken defence of a strong public library service which reaches into the poorest areas of the country.

The dominant ideas of a society are those of its ruling class. How is Labour to impose its own, very different perspective (and its own version of history) if it closes down or allows to be closed the very channels of alternative information, reading and knowledge which are most available to its supporters?

As is too often the case, while local voices are raised in protest, the silence from the Labour leadership is deafening.

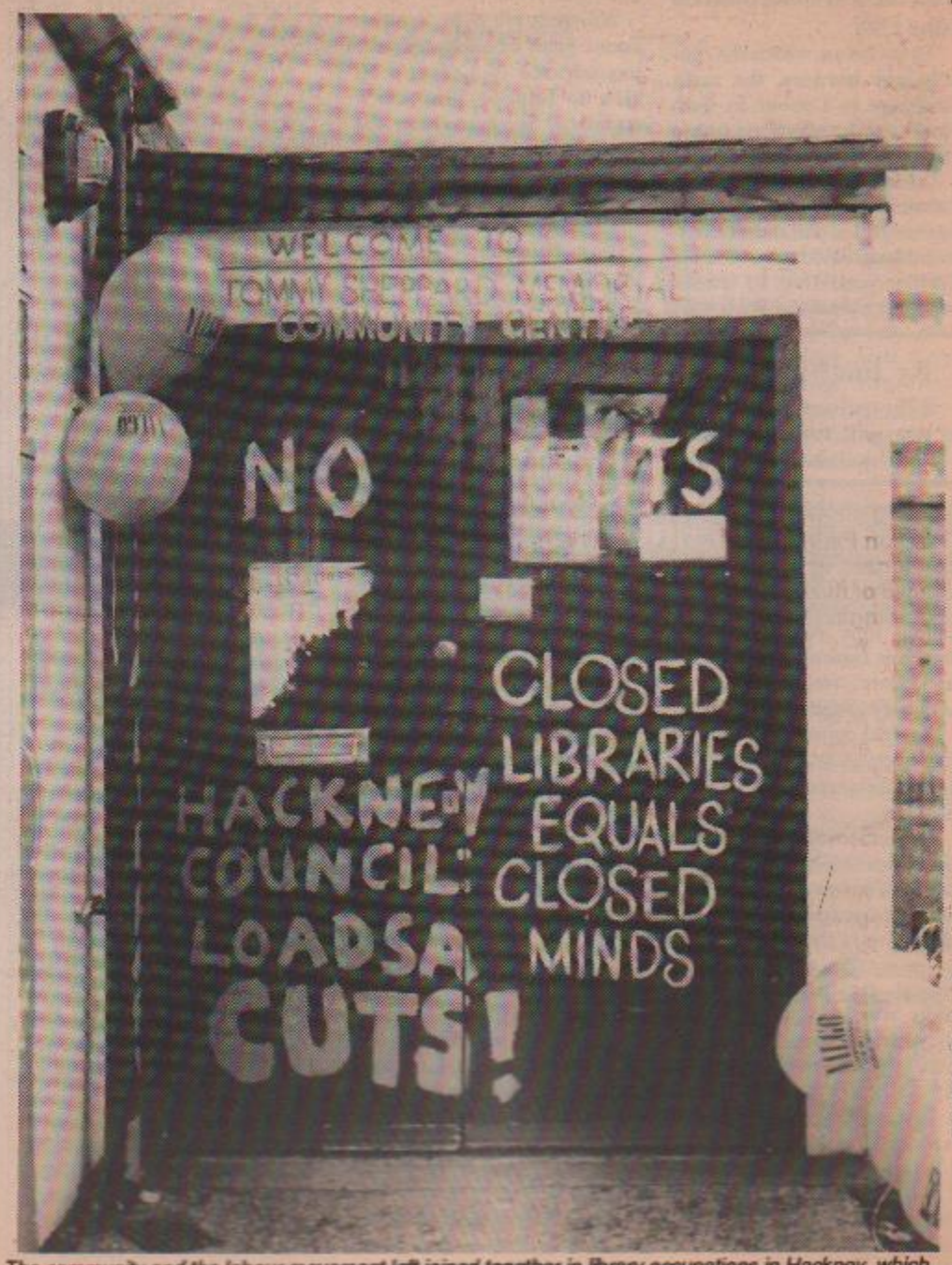


PHOTO: Martine Stead

The community and the labour movement left joined together in library occupations in Hackney, which kept the libraries open for many months. Eventually, the "Labour" Council resorted to vicious police evictions to claim back "their" property — and protestors laid the blame where it was due.

politics of New Dance

king for change

By Angela Kennedy Tynemouth CLP

particular shape or size.

It is definitely not about pain, or feeling "the burn", feeling inadequate, or learning steps.

It *is* about enjoying movement, and discovering or rediscovering ways of moving for yourself. It is about building movement skills and confidence, so as to enable freedom of movement without tension.

It is about breaking down barriers through touch and the giving and receiving of weight through the body, and about not being afraid of what we are.

Traditional dance promotes traditional values, whereas New Dance challenges those values in a very radical and political way.

The method of teaching is un-hierarchical and questions the physical stereotyping promoted by the often very elitist dance establishments.

These new methods of dance have developed alongside the feminist movement, and encourage and respect people's experiences and ideas.

The very nature of "contact" and "improvisation" allows for the fact that we are individuals and also deals with the sexual politics of the body by de-mystifying how we feel and talk.

It helps us to understand the body, while building a great deal of physical trust in one another.

If we can incorporate this same understanding and care into the rest of our lives, then New Dance can really change us, and challenge the premise that dance is only for the talented and privileged few.

Labour Party

Election boost

A Vale in the shadow of the Policy Review



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

"Rambo Kinnock" — now that'll get the Tories quaking in their boots...

All Labour Party members must have been delighted with our creditable Vale of Glamorgan and County Council election results.

The pundits have stated that they were our best results since the creation of the SDP.

John Snow's computer predicted that the County results translated into a nation-wide picture would have given us a Labour government!

Whilst it would be wrong to become over-optimistic it is important that we recognise that a new mood is expressing itself amongst working class voters.

Long held opposition to major Tory policies such as the Poll Tax, NHS reform, and water privatisation is at last seeing its reflection in the Labour vote.

By Bryn Griffiths
Tottenham CLP

The "she's gone too far" phenomenon has been fuelled by the decline in the government's economic performance.

To date, a significant number of working class voters have been prepared to vote Tory as long as they delivered tax cuts, rising pay (for those in work), low inflation, and cheap mortgages.

For these voters, as the tax cuts dry up first time buyers face foreclosure and inflation creeps up above wage increases Thatcher is simply failing to deliver.

Dissatisfaction with Thatcher didn't just mean a stay-at-home protest by Tory voters allowing Labour to slip in. It led to Labour increasing its vote by 5,000 in a General Election size turnout.

On the industrial front this dissatisfaction is clear for all to see.

Disputes are smouldering under the surface on the rail, London Underground, London buses, in the power stations, docks, Town Halls, Fire Service, Post Office, Universities and amongst the engineers.

We have good reason to feel a little more optimistic, but the new mood can be squandered. Tony Benn has pointed to the change in public opinion and argued that it is important that Labour does not lag behind it.

The danger is that Kinnock's Policy Review, referred to as "Labour's Bad Godesberg" (where the German Social Democrats abandoned their socialist heritage) in the *Independent* will derail this radicalisation.

It looks like Kinnock will be using the summer to mount a Rambo-style attack on the left in an attempt to further Social-Democrat-ise the Party.

In contrast, the left must strive to avoid the loss of another great opportunity. We must use the new mood to rebuild our Party at the base so it can provide a credible alternative to the Tories.

In our trade unions we should be fighting for the linking up of the different disputes to transform smouldering discontent into a raging fire.

In our Poll Tax campaigns we must nurture working class anger as a source of strength for both Labour and the unions.

We must explain that such a task also requires that we must fight Kinnock — who will be undermining strike action in an attempt to court respectability.

Now is the time to become more militant and deliver Thatcher a tenth anniversary present to remember: a leadership that is capable of providing a clear alternative.

Glasgow Central

Govan Mark II?

The Glasgow Central by-election is likely to coincide with the Euro-elections on June 15th.

As in Govan, which the constituency borders, the main challenge to Labour in both Euro- and by-elections comes from the SNP.

Ominously for unionists — Labour and Tory — the most recent opinion poll shows an extraordinary 61% support for the SNP's position of independence within the EC.

By Jim Niblock
Glasgow Central CLP

At present they hold one of Scotland's eight Euro MPs. If this poll proves accurate they could increase that by four.

On the by-election front, Labour look vulnerable. The objective factors which underlay Sillars' victory at Govan have not changed.

A recent opinion poll showed SNP support at 27% — nearly double their vote in the General Election.

Labour are still all talk and no fight. Meanwhile, every adult in Scotland has been stamped with the Thatcher agenda through introduction of the Poll Tax.

As if this were not bad enough, the Labour candidate, Mike Watson, is hampered by the official Labour Party line of calling on people to pay the Poll Tax.

The main subjective factor in Labour's favour is a large expatriate Irish community, Labour loyalists by tradition, though they may yet find their loyalty stretched by the Poll Tax.

If the nationalists win Central and four Euro-seats it will amount to nothing less than a direct challenge to both Thatcherism and New Realism.

With only ten MPs, Scottish Tories were dependent on the acquiescence of Labour's 50 MPs to impose Thatcher's agenda in Scotland. Now the spectre of the SNP resurgence is haunting both Thatcher and Kinnock.

The rise of Scottish Labour Action illustrates Kinnock's "Scottish problem". Only one year after its foundation at the 1988 Scottish Conference, SLA's political agenda dominated the 1989 Conference — because of Govan.

SLA had foreseen the possibility of a Govan and their politics urged a stronger Labour response to Thatcher's Scottish onslaught and to the challenge of the SNP. Of necessity this meant a break from New Realism (in Scotland).

Although SLA dominated the Conference agenda the outcome as always was determined by the union bureaucracy, which stuck with Kinnock.

If Central becomes Govan Mark 2, the opposite may happen. New Realism would lie downplayed as SLA and the "dual mandate" come to the fore.

Meanwhile, rumours abound in the Scottish press of an incipient revolt within the Scottish Tory Party against the high risk strategy of dogmatic Thatcherism pursued by Forsyth and Rifkind.

Far from extending their narrow base in Scotland, the Tories have become more isolated with each new piece of Thatcherite legislation.

The "Doomsday scenario" was anticipated at the General Election of June 1987. We may have got the date wrong by two years.

West Midlands Regional Conference

The bar; the buffet; and unilateralism

The West Midlands Labour Party is renowned as the most right wing in the country.

This is mainly because of the dominance of the engineering unions and the Labour District Council bosses from Birmingham, Sandwell, Coventry, and Wolverhampton.

This year there seemed to be fewer delegates and visitors — and a larger proportion of them spent their time in the bar and buffet than in previous years.

Frank Dobson's keynote speech was lacklustre to put it mildly.

The Conference decided to meet every two years in spite of a populist appeal to trade union delegates to maintain their annual freebie.

Nevertheless, there were some genuine socialists in attendance who came alive during the unilateralism debate — as delegates poured in from the tea rooms.

The resolution from Coventry South West CLP reaffirmed the Party's commitment to unilateralism and demanded that this be part of coherent foreign and domestic policies.

By Dave Spencer
Coventry Labour Briefing

It was moved and seconded by *Briefing* supporters — myself from Coventry and John Wilton from Birmingham. We pointed out that Gorbachev had shown that unilateralism could be a popular policy.

People are also concerned at the increasing level of famine, poverty, and waste of resources in the world — witness the £15 million collected for Comic Relief.

Yet world governments spend over £500 million *each day* on weapons of war.

Delegates voting against the resolution were voting to continue that situation and also put their fingers on the nuclear button. There were many speakers in favour of the resolution, obviously very emotional about Kinnock's intention to scrap the policy.

The right countered with pathetic arguments like "it lost us the last election" and "wait for the Policy Review". Nobody really put a positive case for keeping the bomb.

Nevertheless the resolution was lost on a card vote by 280,000 votes to 265,000. We understand the block votes against were EETPU, AEU, GMB; and those for were TGWU, MSF, and NUPE.

Labour Briefing put out a bulletin to delegates and held a lively fringe meeting on the Poll Tax addressed by Cllr Greg Tucker from Lambeth and Pauline Purnell and John Robertson from Birmingham.

Pauline Purnell and John Wilton were both elected by Conference to the Regional Committee.

Defending Unilateralism

The next meeting of those organisations campaigning to retain the Labour Party's commitment to unilateral disarmament will be:

Tuesday May 16th, 6.30pm
Room 18, House of Commons
(room booked by Harry Cohen)

CND Rally: Sunday October 1st, Brighton

Birmingham

Gould picks the First XV

Officers of the Birmingham District Labour Party and leaders of the Labour Group recently met Labour Party Organiser Joyce Gould to discuss next year's budget making process.

Typically, no one on the Labour Group had let the others know where the meeting was! I eventually found it — after 15 minutes searching the Council building — by following someone who was taking a cup of coffee into a room...

A row broke out at the very start of the meeting (half an hour late).. Regional Office had agreed to the Policy Group Convenor being present, but had not told Joyce Gould!

By Pauline Purnell
Vice Chair, Birmingham District Labour Party (personal capacity)

Right wing Group officers immediately jumped on this fact and wasted valuable time arguing that the officer should leave.

Labour Group officers soon left the meeting to attend their advice desks. Obviously they are so interested in their wards that they can't find anyone to cover for them.

The disturbing result of the meeting is that Joyce Gould was clearly displeased with Birmingham District Party's proposals for the manifesto process for the 1990 local elections.

The DP had elected policy group convenors and invited Party members to attend policy group meetings — held on dates agreed by with Committee Chairs. Dates and venues of the meetings are advertised at District Party meetings and notified to wards.

Joyce Gould wanted the groups limited to 15 members — one from each constituency (12) plus reserved seats for women and black people.

She was keen to argue that no one with a "vested interest" could participate in policy-making unless invited as advisors.

Arguments from DP officers that many people joined the Party to participate in policy making, and offer the process valuable expertise, were in vain.

I would be interested to hear how other DLPs organise and influence their areas' policy making. Then I would know if I have just been plain naive, or if the Gould Limit is a disgrace and can be argued against.

LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS

A year of the Section

Section 28 became law a year ago on May 24th.

During five months of feverish campaigning, lesbian and gay rights as an issue attracted more public attention than ever before.

By Peter Purton
Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights

There was the largest ever mobilisation of labour movement support. In October, the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights resolution won an 84% majority at the Party's annual conference.

Some of the left expected that the significant effect of Section 28 would be a spate of court cases.

Reality

But, as LCLGR correctly foresaw, the reality was the suppression of lesbian and gay equal opportunities initiatives by Labour Councils — and a sharp increase in physical violence against lesbians and gay men.

There still has not been a single testing of the meaning of "promoting homosexuality" before a court.

But right across the county, Councils which had previously embarked on work to combat discrimination against lesbians and gay men have retreated on the issue; and others could not be moved to take them up.

The excuse in these cases was fear of breaking the law. The real reason in many of them is political.

As the Party's plunge to the right threatens crucial policy commitments, and as local elections loom, the increasingly right wing or centre-controlled Councils finally come out into the open.

They want nothing to do with anything which might (on their reading of the hysteria of Tory biased local media) lose them votes.

Anything radical is out of the question, lesbian and gay rights, in particular, is completely taboo, and section 28 is the perfect excuse.

As *Lesbian and Gay Socialist* wrote last summer, the Tories "achieved their objective without the cost of a single solicitor."

There have been struggles.

Students

Students have fought successfully to overturn bans on facilities for Lesbian and Gay Societies imposed by terrified college administrators in Strathclyde and Leeds, and Essex County Council will be lobbied on May 16th to overturn a similar ban.

Lesbian and gay activists at local level are continuing their campaigns to promote our equality through Local Authorities.

In many unions continued advances are being made, with the possibility of an historic debate at the TGWU's Biennial Delegate Conference in June, and the NUT holding its first ever national Lesbian and Gay Conference the same month.

Sustained

Within the Labour Party, LCLGR has planned a sustained offensive over the next period to relate to the series of forthcoming elections: Euro, local and General.

We shall be campaigning vigorously to maintain lesbian and gay rights on the agenda of the labour movement at a time when every pressure will be on to drop us.

In the week before LCLGR's Annual General Meeting on April 23rd, the right wing moved in on the Party's Policy Review group, which had taken on board the LCLGR submission.

The right deleted anything contentious — like an equal age of consent and the repeal of all discriminatory laws — despite the fact that these had been reaffirmed as Party policy at three Conferences, twice with the unanimous backing of the NEC!

Part of the campaign of the next six months, therefore, is to reinstate the missing commitment at this year's Party Conference.

For this the support of the rest of the left is critical. But also critical will be the decision of lesbians and gay men to join the Labour Party, join LCLGR, and take up the struggle in every corner of the movement.

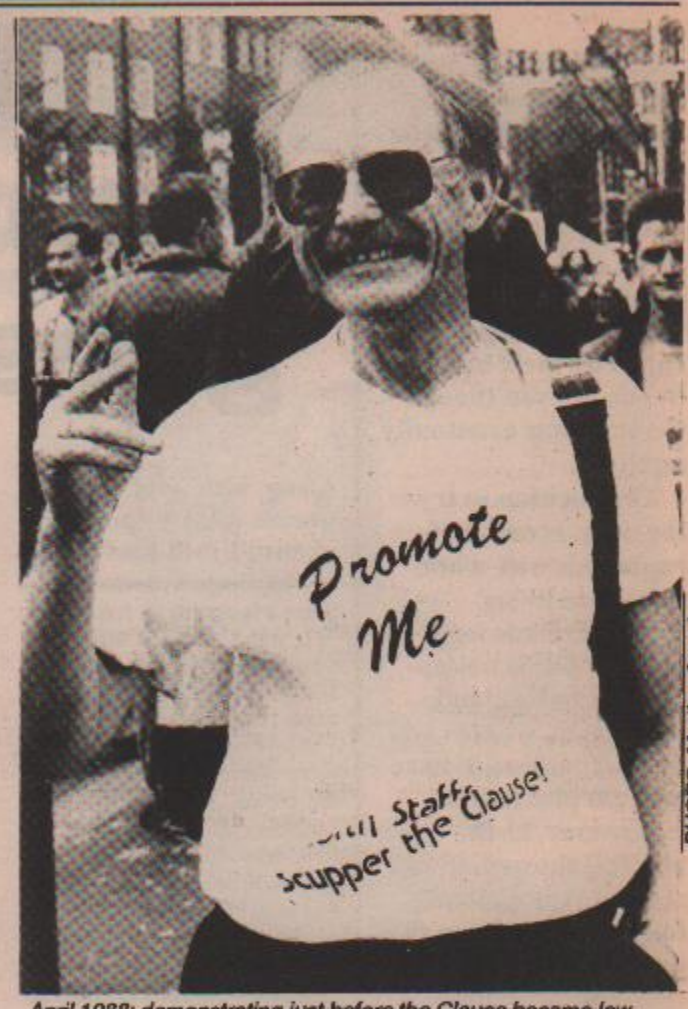


PHOTO: Martine Stead

April 1988: demonstrating just before the Clause became law.

Education

Is this equality?

Education has been in the front line of the fight against Section 28 from the very beginning.

The most offensive part of the Section is the phrase prohibiting the promotion of "the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" in schools.

By REBECCA FLEMMING

This effectively legislates that lesbians and gay men are second class citizens, not even acceptable, let alone equal.

During the parliamentary debates on the Section, Dame Jill Knight threw around allegations about two year olds being exposed to lesbian and gay literature in Lambeth nurseries.

Lord Carpenter went one better, with stories of Local Authorities employing special seducers to lure young people into lesbian and gay discos.

The heady mixture of "lesbians and gay men and other people's children" was effective in whipping up hysteria over Haringey's policy of positive images of lesbians and gay men in education.

It is perhaps surprising, then, that the most public instances of Section 28 being used have been in the area of Further and Higher Education.

Strathclyde Regional Council issued a circular to all FE colleges instructing them that grants to student associations had to be dependent on compliance with Section 28, i.e. not funding lesbian and gay societies, etc.

Essex Local Education Authority told the Principals of its Further and HE colleges not to allow any lesbian and gay groups to meet on college premises because of the risk of legal action under Section 28.

Self-censorship

Both instances of needless self-censorship and promotion of prejudice have now been reversed by concerted student campaigns.

However, the intimidatory and discriminatory effects of the Section have travelled far into the education system in many different ways.

The attack on Further and Higher Education reflects the fact that it is largely these institutions, particularly student unions and NUS, that have begun to include lesbians and gay men in their equal opportunities policies and taken seriously their responsibility to combat heterosexism.

Schools have often lagged behind, and this situation will be exacerbated by Section 28 and the blatant self-censorship it has provoked.

The question of education is at the heart of the debate, not just about Section 28, but about lesbian and gay liberation generally.

If it is accepted that (at the very least) lesbian and gay sexuality is equally valid with heterosexuality then both should be promoted equally throughout society.

There could be no such thing as corruption of youth (whether on the Rates or not). Any denial of this is clearly discriminatory and encourages and justifies bigotry and oppression.

This is the bottom line of the argument that must be used in the continuing campaign against self-censorship and for the extension and development of lesbian and gay equality policies — in education and elsewhere.

Stop the Section National Tour Details of Events
(subject to confirmation)
MAY
10th: Aberdeen
12th: Edinburgh
14th: York
15th: Hull
16th: Leicester
17th: Coventry/Leicester
18th: Cambridge
19th: Ipswich
20th/21st: Oxford
22nd/23rd: London
24th: House of Commons/Hounslow
25th: Canterbury
26th: Brighton

March Against Section 28
— One Year On
Brighton
May 27th
Hove Town Hall, 2pm
Organised by Brighton Area Action Against Section 28
For more information phone 0273 671213/676471
All comrades in the South East are urged to attend

Socialist Conference

After the *shoulds*, now the *whys*!

The Socialist Conference Lesbian and Gay Policy Group will be running two workshops at the third Socialist Conference in Sheffield.

We hope to set the basis for a socialist understanding of the theory and practice of lesbian and gay liberation. There is a profound lack of understanding within the labour movement, including the left, of these issues.

By Tom Loucas
Socialist Conference Lesbian and Gay Rights Policy Group

The New Realists would rather we just went away. Only under mass pressure have they learned to pay lip service to lesbian and gay rights.

The "enlightened" left have a liberal conscience attitude to our liberation. They know they *should* support lesbian and gay rights, but they have no analysis as to *why*!

The first Socialist Conference did not explicitly address lesbian and gay liberation. In 1988, the year of Clause 28, a workshop was held and the Lesbian and Gay Policy Group came out of this workshop.

In a productive year, we have reached a stage where we feel we can and must take, wholesale, the question of lesbian and gay liberation into this year's conference.

Pressure

The Labour Party and trade unions picked up lesbian and gay rights last year because of the mass pressure on them, but they dropped the issue as soon as they could.

We hope that the Socialist Conference will not drop lesbian and gay liberation in the fashion of the New Realists, but will seek to deepen its understanding of the links between lesbian and gay liberation and socialist theory and turn that understanding into policy central to its vision of socialism.

Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights

Model resolution for Labour Party Conference

Conference is appalled that the commitment to full equality for lesbians and gay men has been excluded from the Policy Review, especially in the light of Section 28.

Conference reaffirms, again, the commitment of the Party Annual Conferences in 1985, 1986 and 1988 to full equality in law for lesbians and gay men, legislation to end all of the many forms of discrimination suffered by lesbians and gay men, repeal of all existing discriminatory laws, and action by local authorities to combat discrimination.

Conference further notes that in 1986 and 1988 the policy was carried by a majority of more than two thirds and with the unanimous backing of the national executive committee.

The NEC is therefore instructed to reinstate forthwith the full policy commitments, including explicitly the commitment to an equal age of consent at 16, and the repeal of all discriminatory laws.

In this issue of *Briefing* the Women's Page once again looks at the issue of women's control of our own bodies.

A recent Scottish court case means that women in Scotland can no longer be legally raped by their husbands — even though the man was eventually aquitted.

The decision to try the man, accused of raping his wife while they were living together, made legal history; but is not applicable in England and Wales, where women contine to have no legal protection.

However, as the aquittal showed, it will remain very difficult for Scottish women to prove, against all patriarchal assumptions to the contrary, that marrying and living with a man does not give him the right to force her to have sexual intercourse.

The case is a reminder that 200 years after the French revolution, women still do not have the freedom to control their own bodies.

The limited control we do have is being further eroded by the policies of the Thatcher government.

A recent survey shows that drastic cuts in birth control facilities in much of central London have pushed up the abortion rate to two and a half times the national average.

In the Bloomsbury Health Authority area, which includes Soho, Camden, Mayfair and Kings Cross, £200,000 a year is being cut, leading to the closure of 11 out of 26 community family planning sessions and reduced grants to Brook Advisory centres.

In a report by the Bloomsbury Community Health Council unsuitable premises, long waits, inconvenient opening times and sessions cancelled with little notice are blamed for the increased abortion rate.

And Bloomsbury is not alone: lack of central government funding is leading many health authorities to cut family planning services.

But women, as we always have, are fighting back...

Anti-abortionists attack the clinics

Women's opposition goes international!

Along with over 300,000 women (plus a sprinkling of men) I took part in one of the largest demonstrations ever seen in America.

It was the April 9th abortion march in Washington, DC (see last *Briefing* for report).

At the same time, thousands more women, unable to get to the capital, marched in towns and cities all over America.

It was the first time the American women's movement had sought to involve women from other countries and I was privileged to be invited as the "English" delegate. (I did keep on explaining that it was actually *Britain*!)

The organisers, the National Organisation of Women, arranged a number of special events for us and treated us as "honoured guests".

Two things in particular led to so many women making the journey to Washington. One was the anger aroused by the anti-abortionists' increasingly violent and virulent attacks on abortion clinics, their clients and workers.

I was told about the feminist-run clinic in Atlantic City, used mainly by Black women, which is under constant siege in an area where few women are willing to stand up to the religious fundamentalists and act against them.

The more immediate event, however, was the imminence of the case to be heard by the Supreme Court, Webster vs Reproductive Health Services, which challenges the legality of abortion.

Going to meetings to plan how to counter Operation Rescue (the clinic attacks) proved to be especially enlightening and useful.

By Leonora Lloyd

On returning home, I was rung up by clinics expecting to be under siege by anti-abortionists on April 27th, the 21st anniversary of the implementation of the 1967 Abortion Act.

Using the techniques I had learnt in America, I was able to organise a successful counter-operation in Bournemouth!

Of course, our clinics are not under anything like the same level of attack as in America. There, the anti-abortionists welcome arrest and even jail, for the greater glory of god and The Cause.

A book has been written on 99 ways to close a clinic, which includes such ploys as walking in, scattering anti-abortion propaganda and talking to women waiting for treatment.

However, the pro-choice side are fighting back. For example, in San Fransico, they learnt where Operation Rescue's HQ was and barricaded them in for 5 hours!

They have also developed a technique of surrounding the terrorists with banners, thus starving them of their desired publicity.

Here in Britain, it is important that we stop them now, before they gain confidence and strength. After all, there are far more of us than them!

We need to develop actions which do not upset the clients any more than they are currently being upset — the last thing they need is hundreds of banner-waving, slogan-shouting protagonists — but which can stop the anti-abortionists from doing what they want.

More international exchange of ideas and information is needed, especially on such questions as the tactics of the anti-abortionists, in and out of the courts. The meeting of women from all over the world in Washington was part of this process.



PHOTO: Carlos Augusto (IFL)

Women from the US National Organisation of Women (NOW) join an International Women's Day demonstration in Paris

Sexual harassment and the unions

Moving the NUR onto the right track

The NUR already has policy condemning sexual harassment.

The 1989 AGM will discuss a resolution from Willesden No. 1 branch which attempts to get some action on this principle.

By Pam Singer
Delegate, NUR Conference
(mover of the resolution)

Our first priority is to get union activists themselves to recognise the legitimacy of the problem.

Under pressure from local Women's Advisory Committees (WACs), steps have already been taken to begin the training programme called for in clause (a) (see box).

The union's education centre now uses examples of sexual harassment cases in its general reps course.

Some (very few!) District Councils have held successful day schools on the issue, organised by their WACs. The schools have been eye-openers for some of the male reps, as they listened to real experiences of the women members.

Women in the railway industry are particularly vulnerable, being in such a small minority and often very isolated.

Clause (b) was inspired by the excellent leaflets and handbooks put out by unions such as BIFU, NALGO, and TGWU. We hope that the National Women's Advisory Committee will be responsible for the content.

Finally, the resolution calls for the union to negotiate relevant clauses in all its industries so that sexual harassment is recognised as a grievance which can be properly processed.

At the moment we have to rely on the goodwill and understanding of a sympathetic local manager — very few and far between!

We consider it essential that the offender be the one to change jobs if necessary. It is a dubious victory if the victim is discreetly spirited away and the incident hushed up.

There is now a discussion on whether or not the resolution should be amended to take up the issue of "conflict of interest", where the union may refuse to become involved with one member's grievance against another member.

The active women in the NUR have always maintained that such an accusation is not the same as two NUR members getting into a punch-up.

Sexual harassment is not about a clash or personalities or a sudden outburst of passion. It is about the right of women to work in a safe and comfortable environment.

Resolution from Willesden No. 1 branch to the 1989 AGM of the National Union of Railway*men*

In line with NUR policy condemning sexual harassment, we propose that the following steps be taken in order to alert members to the nature of the problem:

(a) that union representatives, officers and officials at all levels be given special training on how to handle sexual harassment cases sensitively and effectively;

(b) that the union write and distribute leaflets defining the problem, letting women know their rights, and outlining what steps they should take if they find themselves victims of harassment;

(c) that, following TUC guidelines, the union negotiates a clause with all its employers committing them to recognising sexual harassment, and to handling grievances by disciplining or relocating the offender and not the victim.

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.

Obituary

In Memory of Paula Watson

Your commitment to the cause of socialism and to the working class will be missed, but not forgotten. Ex-Westminster Council workers and NUPE members remember the support you gave us in our struggle against privatisation and to defend our class. We salute the contribution you made on the picket of South African Airways and your support for the Women's Movement. You represented political integrity that is not easy to replace. You may have gone, but your contribution to the struggle cannot be taken away.

The fruits of your labour will benefit future generations.

Steve Harris, ex-Westminster Council street sweeper and NUPE Shop Steward, now postal worker
George Wood, ex-Westminster Council housing estate porter and NUPE Shop Steward
John Goddard, ex-Westminster Council street sweeper, now health service worker
Cliff Best, ex-NUS seaman, now supermarket shelf-filler, ex-distributor of Save Westminster Services
Tim Basta, ex-Westminster NUPE Shop Steward
Padraig Finn, TGWU/ACTSS, Westminster North Labour Party
Peter Booker, Westminster South Labour Party

Paula Watson was a fine Socialist who understood the history of the movement and used her knowledge to encourage and inspire other people who were tempted to lose heart when the going was hard.

She was one hundred per cent committed to the Trade Unions, the Labour Party, and socialism and gave strength to her constituency by her involvement in its work.

She was also a distinguished historian of the 17th Century and that helped to give her a perspective which she put to good use.

She bore the pain and suffering of her last illness with immense courage and will be very sadly missed.

Tony Benn

Our Paula: (1934-1989)

Paula (Kitty) Watson died on Thursday April 27th in St Joseph's Hospice, Hackney, after a long and courageous struggle against cancer.

Only her closest friends know of her indomitable courage, faced as she was with the sure knowledge that she had but a few weeks to live out the last phases of her rich and varied life.

By Cllr Ellis Hillman

Paula was a great socialist, an active and influential member of Westminster South General Committee, founder of the City Branch, a leading force in the Women's Section, Westminster South CLP's "delegate" to the Labour Group in County Hall — and twice a candidate in the City elections for the ward of Cripplegate.

At a memorial service held at St Giles Church in Cripplegate, a large congregation from many walks of life paid their respects to Paula on her last journey — friends from her political world, her university, and her many personal friends, who shared her love of the opera, music, and the arts.

Benn

Tony Benn paid special tribute to her at the service. He described her as a great influence upon him and concentrated on her enormous courage discussing with him in Middlesex Hospital the current political scene with the great verve we all knew.

"As a Parliamentary historian she was able," said Tony Benn, "to see the continuum connecting the struggles of the past with those of the present."

He said he was sure she would have been as elated with the wonderful results in the Vale of Glamorgan by-election and the good results in the County elections as she would have been depressed by the results of the NEC's Policy Review.

Jeremy Corbyn MP, Vidya Anand, Labour's Euro-candidate for Hertfordshire, Manuela Sykes, as well as representatives of Westminster South CLP and her many friends were joined by comrades from *Briefing*.

Paula had been Secretary to *Briefing* for two years, and had been active with *Briefing* since 1981.

To those of us who have worked with her — our memories are of her "outspokeness" (to which Tony Benn referred), her transparent honesty, and lack of pretentiousness.

"Trimmers"

She could not abide "trimmers" or "opportunists" who took on left colours for their parliamentary or leadership ambitions.

She had enormous time for Tony Benn and Eric Heffer and Jeremy Corbyn — and the comrades of the left of the Labour Group at County Hall who refused to go along with the rate-capping sell-out of 1985.

She took part in both Chesterfield Conferences and was looking forward to participating in this year's event. Although she belonged to no "tendency", she admired the courage of the *Militant* comrades, who concentrated on class issues, but was probably closest politically to the comrades around *Socialist Outlook*.

One of the last periodicals she read was the latest issue of *Revolutionary History*.

Paula loved life, and treasured every moment, every second of her last few weeks. She "demanded" to be kept informed of every new development — making comment on everything that was happening around her with her characteristic incisiveness.

Her courageous struggle will always be remembered by her friends and comrades, and her example an inspiration to us all.



Paula would never shirk the routine organisational effort needed to put ideas into practice — above, she conducts registration at the Briefing Socialist Policies Conference of Spring 1987.

On the Briefing Editorial Board, Paula was always the one to insist on the need to analyse economic developments — a timely reminder, which led to the regular "Economic Notebook" feature on page 3 being inaugurated.

She had suggested a centre page feature on "The Arts and the Left", which was scheduled in for this issue of Briefing. Sadly, it now has not included the contribution she intended to write — an exposé of the class inequities of opera funding, with particular reference to Covent Garden.

As Secretary of the Briefing National Steering Committee, Paula again resourced the work of many. As Ellis says, she "could not abide those who took on left colours for their own ambitions". Our discussions on so many personalities on the left will never be the same again!

BOOK REVIEW

The worst years of our lives!

This is a very welcome addition to books on the politics of the family, looking at the area least researched by the left — childhood.

By Jane Kelly
Peckham CLP

The writers explode the myth that childhood is the happiest time of our lives. They show how children are the least free in our society, are not allowed to play a productive role, and are kept in a state of subjection.

Family

Using historical and cross-cultural perspectives, childhood, like the family in a patriarchal capitalist society, is shown to be a specific rather than a universal state — a state which excludes the young from work, and suppresses their sexuality.

Other societies, like New Guinea, studied by Margaret Mead, treat their children quite differently.

They are looked after by the father and encouraged to be as active as possible, including in catching fish for food. Such societies also show different gender roles from ours.

Strike

The book also covers lost children's history, like the 1914-17 Burston School Strike.

The children went on strike in support of their Christian Socialist teachers Mr and Mrs Higdon, dismissed on trumped up charges for their activities around the Agricultural Workers' Union.

The book covers the role of children during the great Miners' Strike of 1984-5, and examines ways in which children can be politically active today.

Little

Altogether it is a refreshing look at a little discussed subject, especially useful in the present context of reactionary changes in the education system.

It is easy to read and profusely illustrated. Give it to your daughters, sons, grandchildren, nieces and nephews!

***The Politics of Childhood*, by Martin Hoyles and Phil Evans, *Journeyman Press*, £4.95.**



Brazil

On the road to revolution?



VW factory — Sao Paulo. Factory owners pass on their increased costs to the workers, keeping inflation spiralling.

The Brazilian municipal elections in November 1988 produced an unexpected surge of support for the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (*PT* — Workers' Party).

The trade union, community and radical pastoral church based party went from having three elected Mayors to 36 and from having 170 municipal Councillors to a remarkable 2,000.

In Sao Paulo Luiza Erundina became the new mayor of the second biggest city in the world.

A militant campaigner for the rights of the landless and homeless, Luiza is known as a leader of the radical xiitas (Shiite) faction of the *PT*.

She caused a furore by stating that that armed violence is a valid way of gaining political change.

With the first democratic Presidential elections since the military coup of 1964 due on November 15th of this year, the *PT* candidate Ignacio Lula da Silva, known as Lula, is running neck and neck for first place in the polls.

***Briefing*'s DAVID GRANT spoke to Ladislau Dowbor, an advisor for international affairs to the Sao Paulo municipal administration.**

What issues does the PT see as the most important facing Brazil?

Brazil faces massive structural problems, not tackled during two decades of military rule. We have 150 million inhabitants and a very young population. 10% of the richer families absorb 50% of the country's wealth.

Only an eighth of good farming land is used for agriculture. People are dying for land every day in Brazil — a situation which cannot continue.

People buy land and wait for the government or someone else to make roads and provide an infrastructure and let the value rise.

They just sit and wait for the value to increase, and there are no significant taxes on land not being productively used. We need a thorough-going agrarian reform.

The next key problem is the state, which does not exist in the modern sense of the term. One ministry supports a particular private economic group, another ministry supports some other private interest.

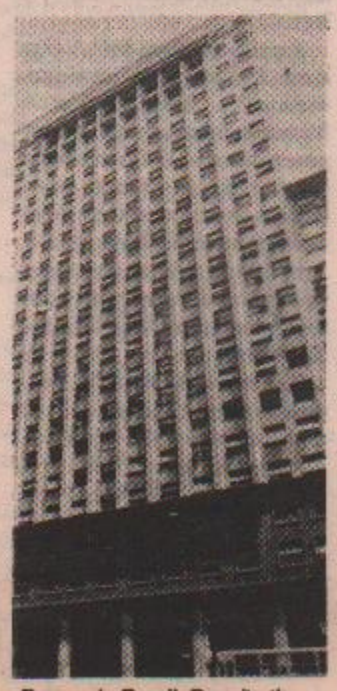
We do not have an organised political centre which can balance one set of interests against another to defend the interests of the population as a whole.

We are paying the price for 20 years of military dictatorship during which all mechanisms of popular participation and control of the state disappeared. Corruption is completely generalised and we need an instrument to rebuild our society.

Another huge problem is inflation, currently over 1,000% a year. When prices go up, it takes workers six months to get their earnings back up to what they were, while factory owners can simply pass on increased costs.

Transfer

This is a transfer of income from groups like workers, pensioners, small producers with no ability to control prices, to the bankers, those in commerce and the big industrialists.



Banco de Brazil. Despite the impressive building, the state is in crisis.

Everyone claims they are against inflation but it works in the interests of certain sectors of society.

Another huge problem is the issue of the environment, for example the Amazon. The current government, which claims it is "our" Amazon, is contributing to its destruction.

Problem

You also have a massive environmental problem in the cities of Brazil. Greater Sao Paulo, for example, has 18 million inhabitants and is growing by more than 300,000 per year.

There is no investment in the infrastructure. This leads to growing problems of obtaining clean drinking water, of sewage, of polluted rivers and air pollution.

And then there is the foreign debt, currently US$120bn. The tragedy of the debt is not its size — the USA, for example, is just as indebted as Brazil is — but the way it was accumulated and what it has been spent on.

Brazil put US$27bn into the Angra dos Reis nuclear power plant project when we have huge possibilities for hydro-electric energy. Money was spent on the trans-Amazonica highway, another useless investment, cutting through the Amazon.

Satisfied

Itaipu was built, the biggest dam in the world, costing US$18bn. With that sum you could pay off the landowners, make a complete agrarian reform and everyone would be satisfied.

Brazil took lots of money that was badly used, a fact which was very well known by the bankers, who also knew that if interest rates went up, Brazil would be unable to pay. We are currently giving some US$12-15bn a year to the richer countries.



Brazilian sugar worker. "Only an eighth of good farming land is used for agriculture. People are dying for land every day in Brazil — a situation that cannot continue."

Last November the PT made spectacular gains in the municipal elections, with the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), one of the governmental parties, losing out badly. Was this breakthrough anticipated by the PT?

We did not expect such positive results. To understand our success, you have to go back to the great hopes that were excited by the 1985 transition from military power.

Expectations

People had great expectations but those leading the campaign for a return to civilian government delivered nothing. The agrarian reform was aborted as was the demand for a new democratic constitution.

The *PT* is really the only party that has not been demoralised and has not compromised. We have nine years of serious work in the neighbourhoods, small towns, in the progressive religious organisations, everywhere where people have been organising.

The hopes of many desperate people have been transferred from the *PMDB* to the *PT*, which could be very dangerous for us. We are a young party, with weak internal structures. Many people are concerned that we shouldn't go too fast.

In recent weeks the latest economic plan announced by President Jose Sarney has met with a hostile reaction from both the militant trade unionists of the United Federation of Workers (CUT) and, interestingly, the moderate trade unions. What is the background to this development?

The first economic plan, the Plano Cruzado, was made in 1986 with great promises for indexing wages to price increases. Then the big car manufacturers were allowed to increase their prices by 80% at a time of almost zero inflation.

Next the big landowners put up the price of meat. The workers began to fight to maintain wage levels.

Various stabilisation plans followed, the most recent, and fifth, being the Plano Verano, which proposes a wage rise of less than 25% at a time when inflation is over 30%.

This is obviously a large slice out of the workers' purchasing power. The workers can not continue to pay for this chaotic situation.

The Sarney government has no legitimacy or respect; everybody knows that it can't keep the companies from raising their prices. We cannot hope to solve these problems without a major redistribution of income in the country.

People are just getting tired of the mockery that is made of them in the long run by the big landowners, the military, the multinationals, and the powerful families.

This led to a call for a General Strike on March 14th. After five broken pacts, the fact that the workers say "to hell with it" is, I think, at least understandable.

Why was Lula chosen to run for President?

Lula is the obvious candidate. He is one of the founders of the *PT*, a great leader, perhaps the best politician that Brazil has produced this century.

He was elected as a federal deputy for the *PT* with the greatest number of votes ever.

He is the leader for the deep-going social reforms we need; a leader who has the confidence of the poor sectors of society; and who, as we saw with his opposition to the social pacts, does not take on trust what others say.

What will be the main issues raised by the PT in the Presidential election?

Agrarian reform, income redistribution, the foreign debt, the formal return of the military to civilian rule as in any normal country, the environment issue.

Before the municipal elections most people, including most of the *PT*, thought that it would be impossible for Lula to win. Now I think many believe it's not just a symbolic stand, that there is a chance.

Perhaps Lula is not the favourite, especially as in Brazil there are great regional differences and factors to be taken into account and the *PT* does not have strong roots everywhere.

But I feel we have to fight for power but that there is a danger in taking administrative responsibility without real power.

Namibia Emergency Campaign

National Mobilising Conference

May 13th, 11am-5pm

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

Activists Meeting

Sunday May 14th, 10.30am-3.30pm

University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1

The Namibia Emergency Campaign is convened by the Anti-Apartheid Movement and Namibia Support Committee in consultation with SWAPO.

The Mobilising Conference and Activists Meeting have been called in response to the crisis in Namibia caused by attempts by South Africa and its international allies to sabotage the implementation of the UN independence plan.

Mobilising Conference: £10 for national delegates (up to 5 per organisation), individuals £3 (waged), £2 (unwaged).
Activist Conference: £3 (waged), £2 (unwaged).

For more information contact the Namibia Emergency Campaign, c/o 13 Mandela Street, London NW1 0DW. Tel. 01-387 7966 or 01-267 1941/2

Send your donations in now to the same address (cheques payable to Namibia Emergency Campaign).

NATO

Who's calling the shots?



The near hysteria in the British and US media which greeted the West German government's insistence on negotiations between NATO and the Warsaw Pact over short range nuclear weapons has left most Germans puzzled.

Thatcher's visit to Chancellor Kohl's weekend retreat in Deidesheim, billed here as the Iron Lady's showdown with German pacifism and neutralism, was given far more low key treatment on the continent.

This is hardly surprising, as the principle cause of the row is to be found in London and Washington rather than in Bonn.

There is little that is new in the paper adopted by the ruling Christian Democrat/Liberal coalition, or in the foreign policy pursued by Hans-Dietrich Genscher — who is far from being the evil genius of German disengagement from NATO that he is often portrayed as.

It was, after all, his 1982 break with the Social Democrats that cleared the way for West Germany's agreement to the Cruise and Pershing II missiles.

It is true, however, that the Bonn government is under strong political pressure — not only from a string of poor local election results, but also from growing public opinion that the West is not doing enough in response to the Soviet Union's *perestroika*.

By GUNTER MINNERUP

With Gorbachev due to visit the Federal Republic this year, Kohl and Genscher clearly have to be seen to acknowledge that mood domestically.

For Bush and Thatcher, however, far more than the survivial of the Bonn coalition is at stake.

They realise that the Gorbymania sweeping the Western world, but in particular Western Europe, has already done much to erode the ideological *raison d'être* of the Atlantic Alliance, and has drawn much political energy over to consider possible alternatives.

Even before Gorbachev, the refusal of most West Europeans to go along with a new Cold War as proclaimed in Washington and London had driven a deep wedge into the "free world". Now Gorbachev is threatening to drive this wedge even deeper.

It matters not that the differences involved are superficially quite trivial. A formula to postpone the replacement of Lance until after the West German elections had, after all, already been agreed upon. There is little difference over NATO's linking further nuclear talks and deep cuts in the Soviet conventional forces.

A nuclear free Europe is not in Kohl's, or even Genscher's, political vocabulary, and SNF talks in themselves are not total anathema to the Pentagon or the Brussels Generals.

The real issue is who calls the shots in the Alliance. The American so-called nuclear umbrella over Western Europe has always been a short leash by which Washington could exert ultimate control over Europe's future.

Britain's position in turn has been principally defined not by its own industrial or military strength, but by its "special realationship" with Washington as the monkey on the organ grinder's shoulder.

This could only work on condition that West Germany, the real economic and military giant in Western Europe, was kept out of the nuclear game and politically subordinate.

Now any tendency for the Federal Republic to question the nuclear foundations of the Alliance, and to make space for its own independent policies towards the East, are identified as deadly threats not to Western unity as such but to the Anglo-American hegemony in the Alliance.

Hence, the need to force some sort of unequivocal commitment to the nuc'ear essence of NATO cut of the West German government before Gorbachev's visit to Bonn.

Not Kohl's own political loyalty to Washington is in doubt, but his ability to win the political and ideological struggle over public opinion in Geremany.

Hence Thatcher's ludicrous attempts to "appeal directly to the German people" over the Chancellor's head: for behind the massive but politically weak figure of Kohl, there lurks the threat of a Social Democratic or, even worse, a SPD-Greens victory in the 1990 elections.

South Africa

Defend the Cape Town Sixteen!

By Mike Phipps
Chair, Greenwich & Bexley Anti-Apartheid

In December 1988, 14 black members of Umkhonto We Sizwe, the armed wing of the African National Congress, were sentenced in Cape Town for their "crime" of resisting the hated system of Apartheid.

Their comrade in arms, Ashley Kriel, paid the highest price: he was shot in the back by the security police.

The 14, together with Ashley's wife, Yasmina (they married while in police custody), spent over 18 months in police detention. The charges against Yasmina were eventually dropped and she was released.

All were the victims of incessant interrogation and brutal mental and physical torture, which in most cases included repeated beatings and electro-shock treatment.

Ten of the trialists will spend time in a high security apartheid gaol where conditions are appalling. The four who were given suspended sentences face severe restrictions on their freedom of movement and expression.

So far the national Anti-Apartheid Movement has done little to campaign on behalf of these detainees. But Andrina Forbes, mother of 24 year old Ashley Forbes (sentenced to 15 years), is currently campaigning in Britain for the 16.

The Cape Town 16 campaign is calling for:

- the unconditional release of the ten and all other South African political prisoners who have been jailed, those on trial, those in detention, and those on death row;
- the unconditional freedom of those who received suspended sentences and the lifting of the severe restrictions placed upon them;
- Prisoner of War status for the 16 and for all other South African freedom fighters;
- an independent inquiry into the death of the fallen hero, Ashley Kriel, and for his killers to be brought to trial;
- drastic improvements to the inhuman conditions under which South African political prisoners are kept.

What you can do to help:

- provide a platform for Andrina Forbes to speak;
- publicise the details and facts of the case of the Cape Town 16;
- write to the families of the Cape Town 16, extending your support and solidarity;
- offer financial assistance in support of the 16 and their families;
- provide points of distribution for campaign material, leaflets, and pamphlets;
- pass resolutions through your Trades Councils, etc.

For further information contact:
Ethne Swartz, 0625-582 247.

Namibia

Workers call for solidarity

Since March, workers in the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) have been organising against the South African administrator's plans to privatise Namibian government services.

Our campaign culminated in a huge workers' march 20,000 strong.

We intended to deliver letters of demands to the South African administrator and the UN Secretary General's Special Representative, Marti Ahtisaari.

Our demands stated clearly that the sale of our public services must stop and that transactions that have already occurred must be reversed.

Our march was stopped by armed police. We were refused entry into the "white city centre" of Windhoek. The UNTAG forces were nowhere to be seen, although we had informed them of our intention to march.

South Africa intends to sell Namibian public services including hospital services, water services, post and telecommunications (including the colonial electronic media) and transport services.

There is evidence that the interested buyers are American, British, and Italian transnational companies with, we suspect, the tacit consent of the concerned governments.

Privatisation of water, hospital and transport in the context of the extreme inequality and poverty of Namibian workers and peasants casts a great question mark on the real possibilities of change and real independence in Namibia.

Privatisation of public services is an attempt to strip the future Namibian government of power over its own infrastructure, and the power to improve the living conditions of the oppressed majority.

Privatisation is effectively a strategy to displace political power of a future government into the hands of transnational corporations who are already dominating the economy of the entire Southern African subcontinent.

Botha and Thatcher are claiming to be guardians and midwives of Namibia's independence process while at the same time making sure that this independence will be firmly controlled by them.

After the April 1st march was stopped, we were informed by the UN that they could do nothing about it.

South African administrator Pienaar referred us to a previous press statement where he appears to say that privatisation will be discontinued.

In the same document he indicates that upon the materialisation of "foreign aid" the public services will be sold to a "trust".

The laws which empowered the process of privatisation have not been repealed. Privatisation in Namibia is going ahead.

Workers of Namibia are poised to take decisive action against privatisation. We need the active support of the workers of the world effectively to destroy this strategy to sabotage Namibian independence.

As we have been requested to make a direct and concrete appeal for solidarity to the members of the British TUC we have the following proposal.

In Namibia the available print media is heavily dominated by pro-South African newspapers. Printing houses are not favourably inclined to us.

For some time now the trade union has taken up its educational responsibilities by producing handbills, leaflets, magazines, wall newspapers and posters.

As our role is to inform our members on an ongoing basis we have a great need for an independent printing press controlled by the trade union movement.

Members of the TUC could assist us by providing such facilities as well as providing up to two qualified printers for a period of one year. These printers would be able to train Namibians in the operation of such a printing press as we do not currently have sufficiently skilled people within the ranks of our organisation.

***Taken from a Situation Report written by John Pandeni, General Secretary of Namibia Food and Allied Union, on behalf of the National Union of Namibian Workers.**

Our Demands

The organised workers of Namibia together with the organised community are calling for:

- the active and effective deployment of UNTAG and the increase of UNTAG forces to the original numbers of 7,500;
- an end to privatisation;
- restriction of the South African army and demobilisation of the South African proxy troops to their bases;
- confinement of PLAN fighters to bases inside Namibia;
- an end to all forms of intimidation of SWAPO supporters and random anti-SWAPO violence perpetrated by members of army and police units;
- freedom of association, movement, and expression for all Namibians;
- immediate repeal of all discriminatory laws and laws which institutionalise the South African propaganda machines in the form of the state controlled electronic media.

Moses Mayekiso

Released!

First the treason charges were dropped. Then, after a 16-month trial, Moses Mayekiso and the rest of the Alexandra Five were acquitted of all charges.

This result is a major victory and an important confidence booster to other South African detainees facing trial on trumped up charges.

It also represents a vindication for the 18 months of active campaigning undertaken by supporters of Moses and his comrades in Britain and internationally.

Despite the official Anti-Apartheid Movement's reluctance to campaign on Moses, support and solidarity poured in across the country. The high point of the campaign was a national tour by Kola Mayekiso which finished only two weeks before the acquittal.

The same solidarity must now be harnessed in support of other detainees.

Mike Phipps

LABOUR BRIEFING

Poll Tax Reports

Lewisham

Will the databases byte off more than they can chew?

Latest figures from Lewisham Council show that Poll Tax in the Borough will start at £366 in April 1990, rising to £805 in 1994.

But this projection assumes a 100% collection rate and inflation at just 4%!

Council policy in fighting the Tax is to pray for a Labour government in 1992.

Meanwhile they are implementing the Tax as effectively as they can — by sub-contracting out the bulk of the work to a private company.

Whether this firm is either unionised, an equal opportunities employer, or responsible enough to look after highly sensitive personal information is another matter.

By Brian Harrisson

The fightback against this outrageous tax is going well, with the recent fusion of Lewisham Against the Poll Tax and the Community Resistance into one united campaign.

The new group has adopted the slogan "Can't Pay, Won't Pay" and a policy of non-registration, non-payment, and non-collection.

Its first activity was to organise an area conference resulting in a Federation of South London anti-Poll Tax groups, committed to non-payment.

The Lewisham campaign has a network of over 600 supporters across the Borough, with various local groups based on wards and estates.

The fight is also being taken into the unions, with speakers at branch meetings, resolutions of support, affiliations, and a commitment from local unions to effective action against the Tax.

As registration approaches, we will be flooding estates with our anti-registration leaflet, coinciding with the appearance of the Council's registration forms.

Our leaflet calls for a collective boycott of registration as a first stage — leading into a campaign for non-payment — and non-implementation, when the databases finally get their bytes together.

Oxford

Now turn anger into action!

Recent events in Oxford demonstrate the massive opposition to the Poll Tax which exists throughout Britain.

A public meeting in March, called jointly by Oxfordshire County Labour Party and Oxford Against the Poll Tax (OAPT), attracted over 500.

A march and rally during the Labour Party weekend of "action" drew about 250, even though little real effort was put into building it.

Despite this OAPT has failed to develop into anything approaching a mass campaign and has drawn in few individuals or organisations beyond those represented at its inception.

A major opportunity was missed at the March public meeting where David Blunkett and the SWP's Paul Foot left us all in no doubt that the Poll Tax is a "bad thing".

The only challenge from the platform to Blunkett's defeatism came from the OAPT speaker — so comradely was Paul Foot that Blunkett invited him to join the Labour Party!

By Roy Leach
Oxford Against the Poll Tax

The "weekend of action" rally was little better but at least the OAPT speaker was joined by the Secretary of Oxford Trades Council in calling for a mass campaign of non-registration and non-payment.

The overall effect of these two events was to leave Oxford people with no strategy to fight the Poll Tax and with the certain knowledge that the Labour right have no desire to lead an effective campaign to defeat it.

OAPT needs to turn anger into effective action. It needs to put pressure on the Labour City Council to drop its policy of compliance with registration and collection.

Removing the City Council's name from the Registration forms isn't going to fool anybody!

Public meetings need to be organised on the Council estates where tenants will suffer most from the Poll Tax. Tactics for disrupting Registration need to be discussed and support won for all strategies of opposition to the Tax.

A Committee of 100(0) needs to be built to demonstrate that it *is* possible to fight the Tax and also to show solidarity with those too poor to pay the likely £400 bill.

Oxford Trades Council has already agreed to support those victimised for not paying. Unions and tenants groups can be won to this position too.

OAPT can be contacted c/o 10 Chapel Street, Oxford.

Sheffield Against the Poll Tax
Take the first step towards defeating the Poll Tax!
YORKSHIRE REGION MARCH AND RALLY
Saturday June 10th
Assemble 1pm, the Old Bus Station, corner of Love Lane, bottom of Snig Hill
2.15pm, Rally at City Hall steps
For further details contact SCCAU, 724866
Messages of support welcome
Bring flags and banners!

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Name.....

Address.....

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...../83

England and Wales Poll Tax Timetable

1989

May/June
Government wants Poll Tax canvass to begin. It will also launch a national advertising campaign and probably a household leaflet drop.

Late May
Launch of the "Fair Local Tax Charter" by the Poll Tax Forum

June
Government to take decisions on safety nets, enabling 1990/1 Poll Tax calculations.

July 1st
TUC National Rally, North-West Region

July
Outline RSG settlement for 1990/1

Late summer
Outline of new needs assessment system published

October
New Capital system gets Royal Assent

October/November
RSG settlement; government publishes 1990/91 Poll Tax figures

December 1st
Register to be published; "Extracts" to be sent to individuals; Capital Budgets set under new system

1990

February/March
Revenue budgets under new system and Poll Taxes to be set

March
Poll Tax bills sent out

June/July
Authorities begin enforcement of unpaid Poll Tax