LABOUR BRIEFING

40p FORTNIGHTLY

NO. 84 MAY 24 - JUNE 6 1989

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★Defend Rushdie; fight the racists!

40p

AS DOCKERS PLEDGE TO STAND AND FIGHT:

LABOUR'S NEC SURRENDERS!

The Policy Review represents a virtual repudiation of our aspirations for socialism, and of our long standing policies for peace and nuclear disarmament.

It implies an acceptance of many of the policies of the Tory government, including an acceptance of the commissioning of Trident submarines.

By Tony Benn MP

The NEC decisions have been justified in the hope of winning votes, but in practice they may have exactly the opposite effect, fatally undermining Labour's credibility as a party that can be trusted to govern in accordance with its pledges.

It must be understood that a Labour election victory will lead to two contradictory pressures:

- first, rising expectations by working people for better wages, better conditions, and better public services;
- second, harsher demands by capital for a return to monetarist policies and non-intervention in financial and industrial matters.

Previous Labour governments have experienced these pressures. By capitulating to pressure from the IMF in 1976 a conflict with the trade union movement became inevitable and cost us the 1979 election.

This was the real origin of ten years of Tory rule, and not "post-Fordism", a trendy new theory popular amongst some intellectuals at *Marxism Today*, which is used to justify the abandonment of the idea of social class and is an illusion.

Labour's main objective must therefore be a democratic one: capital should no longer be free to dominate the economy at the expense of those who create the wealth.

Our party was established to safeguard the interests of those who depend for their income on selling their labour, men or women, professional, skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled workers, full or part time, and to secure for them all the right to enjoy the full fruits of their labour, and full democratic rights both at work and in political life.

The anti-trade union legislation passed by the Conservative government must be repealed in its entirety. Labour should also introduce an amnesty for all those penalised under the Tories' trade union laws. All sequestrated trade union funds should be returned, together with fines paid for offences created under those laws.

It should also be understood that the prospects for peace are now better than at any time since 1945. Soviet initiatives for both nuclear and conventional disarmament have had a profound impact.

A clear majority of people in Britain is now convinced that there is no Soviet military threat, and that what is required is a positive response by this country to the opportunities opening up for humanity.

The nuclear accident at Chernobyl, which poisoned the atmosphere across much of Western Europe, served as a practical reminder that the use of nuclear weapons by any nation, against any other, would destroy the country upon which it was used, and might unleash a holocaust that would wipe out the human race.

I hope that this year's Labour Conference will reaffirm our commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament, to socialism, and to the liberation of trade unionists from all the shackles imposed on them since 1979.

But no one should be under any illusion about the damage that may have been inflicted upon us by what the NEC has decided.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Nor should we under-estimate its implications for the future alignment of British politics, where the case for socialism and the campaign for peace must and will be kept at the centre of the agenda.

I urge everyone to join us in forging real socialist policies and a movement to implement them at the third Socialist Conference in Sheffield on June 17/18th.

Vauxhall: Martha Osamor hits back

After the imposition by the NEC of an unwanted white candidate in Vauxhall, South London, Martha Osamor, the candidate preferred by local Labour Party members, issued this statement to *Labour Briefing*:



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

The behaviour of the Labour NEC in relation to the Vauxhall by-election is an insult to black people and to ordinary Labour Party members.

There is no justification whatsoever for the blatant decision to exclude black and left-wing candidates — in clear defiance of the wishes of local Party members and the needs of the community in Vauxhall.

I sought selection as a Labour candidate in Vauxhall on the basis of my socialist credentials and commitments.

I was nominated by several local Party and trade union branches, as well as by the Women's Section and Women's Council. In the process I have been subjected to a politically motivated smear campaign.

Roy Hattersley's patronising comnents about me at the NEC are a clear example of the racism and sexism that permeates so many of Labour's leaders, and a warning to Party members everywhere that thier democratically-expressed wishes count for nothing with the arrogant elite who control our Party.

In spite of their cynical manoeuvres, I am sure that socialists in Vauxhall and their allies elsewhere will continue to fight — inside and outside the Labour Party — for the liberation of black people and women, for nuclear disarmament, and for socialist politics.

(For full coverage of the Vauxhall by-election scandal see p7)

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 31st if possible.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

Deeper into pluralism

Dear *Briefing*,

BJ Gibbons, in his letter in *Briefing* no.82, seems unable to distinguish the difference between pluralism on the one hand and the need for political clarity on the other.

Undemocratic practices within the liberation struggle are not only unprincipled but can distort the course of that struggle and leave the way open to political assassinations.

Martin Wicks, in citing the example of Spain, is not arguing that the present situation is exactly the same, but drawing an important historical lesson on the nature of Stalinism within the revolutionary situation.

It must not be forgotten that many leading members of AZAPO were assassinated by supporters of the ANC and although this was publicly denounced at the time by the ANC leadership, the assassinations continued for some time after that.

The "necklace" and other forms of political assassination are totally undemocratic and should be denounced by all socialists.

BJ Gibbons also seems completely unable to understand the notion of pluralism. On the one hand, he argues for the "broadest possible movement to isolate the apartheid regime" and on the other, he says "the ANC is not simply one current amongst several; it is the only current..."

The A-AM leadership has consistently denied any platform to organisations such as the PAC, AZAPO, and the Cape Action League which are not "non-existant forces", as Gibbons argues, but real organisations with mass support within the Black working class.

It is this point that Gibbons either by ignorance or stupidity is unable to grasp!

Briefing supporters must take up this point within the A-AM and turn it into a non-sectarian organisation capable of supporting the people of South Africa and not just the section they feel politically close to.

Dave Lee
(Azania-Namibia Forum)

Action on reactors

Dear *Briefing*,

In *Labour Briefing* no.82 Peter Tatchell called for a campaign of mass demonstrations and civil disobedience to stop the construction of Sizewell "B" and Hinckley "C" nuclear reactors.

As a start to this campaign the Anti-Nuclear Network is supporting a demonstration organisation by Blockade Against Hinckley (BLAH) on Saturday June 24th.

The demonstration will take the form of a blockade of the main site gate at 10am. Other activities are planned for the Friday and anyone interested should contact BLAH, c/ Box DAM, 37 Stokes Croft, Bristol BS2, for more details.

By June the Hinckley "C" inquiry will be nearly over. In spite of overwhelming public opposition and cogent arguments against the Pressurised Water Reactor the government will almost certainly go ahead with the project.

The Tories' determination to weaken the power of the National Union of Mineworkers by building a substantial nuclear power programme in Britain has been clear since 1979.

Already a £17 million order for boiler parts for the new reactor has been placed — in advance of consent being given for the project.

A campaign of mass direct action against nuclear power is needed. The Anti-Nuclear Network is a national federation of local anti-nuclear groups committed to building such a campaign.

The next Network national meeting, on Saturday May 27th in Bristol, will give anti-nuclear power activists the chance to discuss the campaign at Hinckley and the state of the movement nationally.

For further details contact us at Box 30, 187 High Road, London N22.

Yours fraternally,
Anti-Nuclear Network

No more "Attlees"

Dear *Briefing*,

The *Labour Briefing* Hillsborough editorial was clearly an outstanding socialist response to the tragedy and the coverage of the editorial by the bourgeoise press has reinforced its excellence.

No new stadia have been built in Britain since Wembley in 1922. Even the so-called left-wing Attlee Government appears to have taken no appropriate action in the wake of the slaughter at Bolton in 1946.

Socialists must make the point that the Attlee Government gave nuclear development and the prosecution of imperialist intervention in places like Korea a higher priority than safe leisure facilities for the working class.

No future socialist Labour Government must ever allow such a policy and practice to be repeated.

Yours,
John Hayball
Chessington South

Afghanistan again

Dear *Briefing*,

In his letter in *Briefing* no. 83 Dave Spencer says, "there is every reason for socialists to celebrate the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan."

The reasons given are: the effect on workers in Eastern Europe, the views of dissident groups, the casualties of the war, and the need to defeat Stalinism in Afghanistan.

First, it by no means follows that a military defeat for the Soviet bureaucracy in Afghanistan *by imperialist-backed forces* should improve the position of workers in Eastern Europe.

Secondly, the fact that "dissident groups were calling for Soviet withdrawal from day one" should not necessarily mean that Marxists echo this call.

Many dissident groups in Eastern Europe are anti-communist, sympathetic to capitalist restoration, and opposed to working class independence.

Many of the western "socialists", whose call for Soviet withdrawal is referred to, are in fact social democrats whose anti-communism has always been vital to NATO.

Thirdly, however terrible the casualties of any war, Marxists determine their position on the basis of the nature of the forces involved and the implications of defeat or victory for either side for the international working class.

In this context, we have to examine the implications of a defeat for Stalinist-led forces in Afghanistan. The PDPA government introduced reforms in education, women's rights, and land.

However inadequate these measures, they were still progressive, albeit bureaucratic.

Soviet withdrawal and the victory of the Mujahedin that will probably result will mean the end of any remnant of such reforms and the killing of many thousands of their beneficiaries and defenders.

In the USSR the winners will not be the Soviet workers but sections of the bureaucracy looking to introduce capitalist measures internally and appeasement of NATO externally.

We are in favour of the working class defeating Stalinism but should defend the USSR and its allies against imperialism.

Yours,
Aly Mir
Tottenham CLP

Green fingers off the button

Dear *Briefing*,

Unilateral nuclear disarmament is part of the soul of the Green Party. Since we save all our time trying to save the planet, we are not going to press a button that would blow the whole thing up.

Unfortunately, the Labour Party doesn't have the same preoccupation with survival.

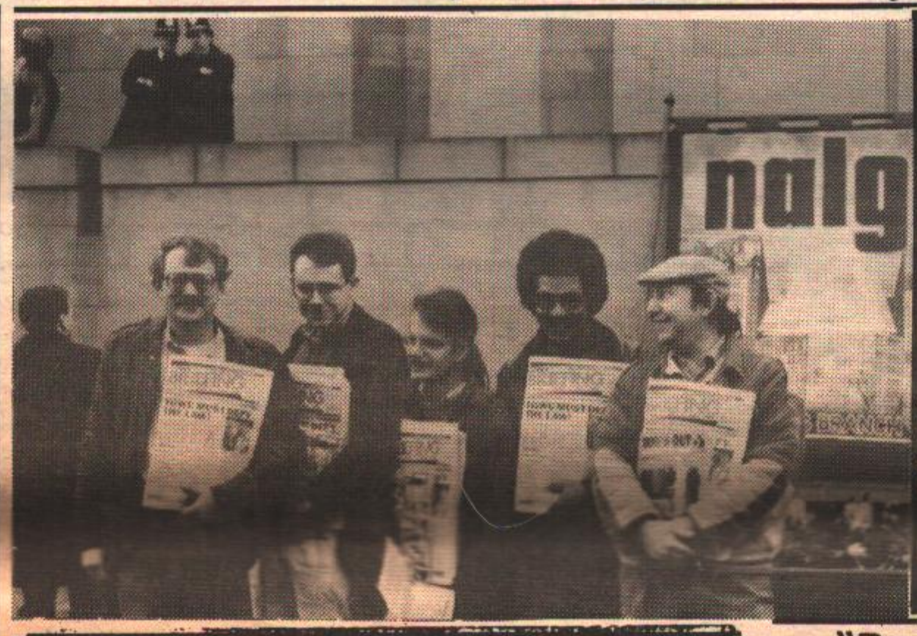
Labour's Policy Review also leaves us as the only main political Party committed to getting rid of our current economic system, rather than trying to make it work better.

The Green movement is already busy making practical changes to the way we live. A Green government would be another step in that direction.

At the recent Council elections we doubled our vote to an average poll of 9%. Our membership has grown by over a third since last autumn and we have displaced the SDP as the third force in British politics.

To paraphrase Joan Ruddock (Labour MP and ex-chair of CND), if the Labour Party gives up unilateralism, then a lot of hard thinking people will join the Greens. The European elections are just around the corner. Why not give us a try?

Yours,
Ian Wingrove
London SW12



Left: Yorks. police survey the new Leeds City Formation Briefing Sales Team, spreading the happy word about the Briefing AGM.

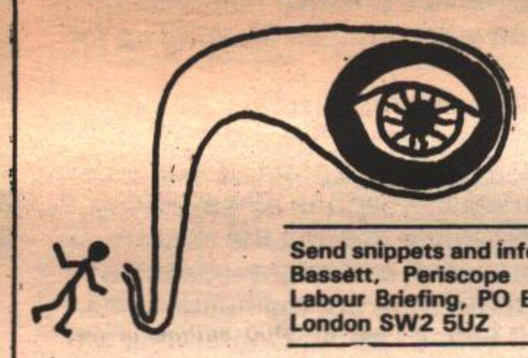
It's on Saturday July 15th, from 10am, in London, and features plenary discussion on the political situation and the Great Debate about setting our priorities inside the Labour Party and amongst the struggles currently outside it.

Further details next issue, or from the Briefing office on 01-809 3927.

This jam-packed issue has squeezed our space this issue, so, briefly: 500 Club winner G. Bash of Lower Clapton (no. 472); send everything to 39 Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14.

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Periscope



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

Vauxhall's sickening sideshow

- Greater London Labour Party Secretary Terry Ashton, overseeing the abortive Vauxhall GC selection meeting, was asked to help count a vote but refused because, he said, Black Sections delegates were participating.

To illustrate his point he indicated a black delegate who had been voting.

In fact, Black Sections delegates had decided not to participate, for obvious reasons. The black delegate in question was representing a local ward.

- Ashton's thought processes have never been noted for their subtlety, but sometimes he's quick enough to get the point.

An NUR delegate protested to Ashton when Assistant Regional Organiser Margaret McDonagh (who came a cropper in the Mandy Mudd case) claimed that his NUR branch's nomination of Martha Osamor had been "misplaced".

Ashton made sure the nomination re-appeared with all the others.

- Finally, the very day after the NEC's racist manoeuvre at Vauxhall, Paul Boateng MP suddenly appeared at Kinnock's side at a press conference hailing the Policy Review.

Boateng had not been notable previously for any special involvement with the Policy Review. It's hard to decide who comes out of this sickening sideshow worse — Kinnock or Boateng.

Things they say

"Neil Kinnock should be congratulated for having the courage to abandon his convictions" — *The Observer*.

"Boss Kinnock"

The Tories have been quick to seize the ammunition offered by Labour's leaders in Vauxhall.

In an editorial comment published under the heading "Boss Kinnock" the *Daily Mail* vented an unaccustomed outrage on behalf of democracy and equality:

"The putsch was conducted with cold efficiency. In Vauxhall local socialists were on the verge of picking a militant black feminist as their candidate for the forthcoming by-election. Suddenly Labour's National Executive swooped.

"Out went left-wing, Nigerian-born, ban-the-bomb Martha Osamor. In came white, bland Kate Hoey, the acceptable face of Neil Kinnock's new model Party.

"Not chosen from below but imposed from above. A demonstration of ruthless moderation...

"As a future Prime Minister Mr Kinnock may continue to lack credibility. But as an old-style Chicago party boss nobody can hold a violin case to him!"

Who guards *The Guardian*?

The Guardian prides itself on its boycott of the government's insidious system of "off the record" briefings for lobby correspondents.

Pity *Guardian* journos are less scrupulous when it comes to equally insidious "off the record" briefings from Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

On the day Hattersley's NEC panel interviewed the nominees for the Vauxhall by-election, Patrick Wintour used precious front-page column inches to regurgitate an old smear about Martha Osamor being "under investigation" by the DPP.

In so doing, Wintour provided a timely figleaf with which to cover the nakedness of the NEC's political determination to exclude Martha from the approved short-list.

Wintour, who earns his crust appending his name to LCC and Walworth Road press releases, cited unnamed "Party sources" for his smear.

It would obviously be quite unfair to compare this wheeze with the familiar "sources close to the Prime Minister" at which "The Guardian" turns up its sensitive nose.

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Mass action in China

No one can predict the short-term outcome of the drama currently unfolding in Tienanmen Square in Beijing.

But one thing is clear. The re-entrance of the Chinese masses — workers, students, intellectuals, even soldiers — into the political arena is an event of momentous significance whose historic consequences will be seen only in the fullness of time.

Not long ago, we were being told by bourgeois pundits that Deng Xiao Ping was a moderniser, a "westerniser", an advocate of democracy (remember "democracy wall" — exploited by Deng one day, torn down by him the next?).

Now we are told that Deng represents the old order, rigid, bureaucratic, stagnant — and his many overtures to capitalism and his collaboration with imperialism (not least in regard to Vietnam and Kampuchea) are conveniently forgotten.

Events are changing rapidly, and from this distance (and possibly closer up) the students' political programme is unclear. The scale and deepening radicalisation of the vast mobilisation against China's Stalinist bureaucracy seems to have caught everyone off guard.

Already, though, there is one lesson for all of us. When the masses are on the move, no force on earth is more powerful.

In their struggle *for* democracy and *against* bureaucracy, China's workers and students deserve the support of socialists everywhere.

Union leaders and the law

The three-to-one majority on the docks in favour of strike action and the success of the May 15th bus and tube strikes in London show the readiness of major sections of the working class to take action against the employers and the government.

The unofficial one-day strike on London Underground stopped all but a handful of trains, leaving London's commuters struggling to catch one of only 16 red buses scabbing on the unofficial stoppage.

Other sectors preparing to take action include bank workers, British Rail workers, steel erectors, and engineering workers.

In the electricity industry, the mere threat of an overtime ban has already won power workers some concessions. Union leaders want to settle for the employers' new offer, but workers may have second thoughts.

A major spur in the current round of action has been the recent rise in the cost of living. Official figures show that at 8% Britain now has the highest inflation rate of any leading industrial nation. Thatcher's economic miracle looks more hollow by the day.

The dockers know the government will do everything it can to defeat them. They know just what the media, the courts, the police, and the employers will throw at them.

In this context, their decisive vote for strike action is a boost for the whole labour movement — and a warning to both the Tories and their own union leaders.

Ron Todd's insistence that the TGWU must stay within the law has been rebuffed by union stewards in the docks, who have warned that they may take action regardless of judges' whims.

Their resolve to defend their jobs and conditions by collective action — whether or not it's sanctioned by the courts — deserves the total support of the labour movement.

The decision by some dock employers to seek damages from the union for profits lost due to the *threat of a strike* shows just how high the stakes have grown.

Employers and the courts, backed up by the Tory government, seem determined to take trade unions back to the days before Taff Vale, when workers were regularly made to reimburse employers for the "costs" of a dispute.

Union leaders must be forced to break the law, not their own membership.

Labour drops bomb on Vauxhall

Back to the bad old days. We're being told what our policies are (the Cold War and the free market) and who our candidates should be (respectably Kinnockite and definitely white).

There's a clear connection between the profound rightward shift of the Policy Review and the racist, undemocratic imposition of an unwanted candidate in Vauxhall.

Both are designed to convince Britain's ruling class that Labour is a "safe" alternative to the Tories. Both are upshots of a process once touted under the polite euphemism of "realignment", in which the so-called "soft left" has played a critical role.

Kinnock has now openly declared what has long been custom and practice for Labour leaders: the "efficient" management of capitalism and absolute loyalty to imperialism, even to the point of admitting a willingness to obliterate the planet if called upon to do so.

Such a policy cannot serve an active, democratic, socialist party, nor can it answer the needs of a working class increasingly prepared to take action against what is now seen by many as a vicious class dictatorship.

This policy can only be imposed with the aid of ever more arrogant authoritarianism — an authoritarianism that is profoundly threatened by a working class black woman with the socialist commitments of Martha Osamor.

How should Labour Party members respond? Well, the next time you hear our leaders dishing out smug apologies on television, imagine what the students and workers marching for democracy in China would do...

Economic Notebook

What happens when the bottom falls out?

Junks bonds, LBOs, and financial crisis

The history of the Wall Street junk bond market tells a sad tale of the fundamental weakness of US corporate capital, whose long term crisis of profitability feeds the type of parasitical speculation which junk bonds are issued to finance.

By Dave Palmer
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

Junk bonds first came into play in the takeover boom of the early 80's.

Corporate raiders like Boesky began launching hostile bids against target corporations. By issuing high yield junk bonds to raise finance, small companies could manoeuvre themselves into position to swallow up hitherto unassailable giant corporations.

In response the managements of target corporations devised a series of defence mechanisms to preempt such takeovers. The most powerful defence was the **leveraged buyout** (LBO).

In an LBO a group of private investors (usually including the target company's current managers) borrow heavily through packages of bank loans and junk bonds in order to buy all the outstanding stock from other shareholders.

In the process the corporation is turned into a privately-owned firm immune to "outside" takeover bids. The corporation's existing assets act as collateral for the loans and bonds.

Once the deal has successfully gone through, the new owners then usually sell off part of the firm's assets in order to pay off debts, which have usually reached high levels.

U.S. corporations tend to prefer to raise finance through bond issues rather than floating new equities (stocks) since interest payments on the debt can be offset against coporation tax. Greedy investors also found the high yields on junk bonds, upwards of 16-17%, irresistible.

The "down side" was that in case of bankruptcy the junk bonds are always the last of a firms debts to be paid.

Nonetheless

Nonetheless, insider trading, using privileged information to speculate in the shares of companies subject to takeover bids, became rife.

The real winners were the elite of Wall Street investment bankers, epitomised by indicted junk bond King Michael Milken and their firms, who arrange the deals, and take both an enormous transaction fee and a cut of the action.

The main loser, of course, is the corporation (and its employees) which must finance the debt accumulated in the takeover battle out of its cash flow or by the sale of assets.

Events started to get out of hand in 1988 as LBOs became the latest fad on Wall Street. Takeover fever raged following the downturn in share transactions which followed the October 87 crash.

In 1988, $35 billion worth of leveraged buyouts were completed and another $50 billion were pending. Following hard on the heals of the $13 billion LBO of Kraft by Philip Morris Co., the $25 billion buyout of RJR Nabisco became the largest business transaction in history.

Three seperate investor groups — one including RJR's top managers — organised competing LBO packages in order to gain control of the huge tobacco and food conglomerate.

The winning bid came from Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. (KKR), a Wall Street firm that pioneered the use of LBO's. Milken's firm, Drexel Burnham, issued $5 billion worth of junk bonds as part of the KKR package.

RJR is now saddled with $19 billion of debt which KKR aim to cut by selling the company's food divisions — Nabisco and Del Monte.

Profits from this mega-deal for the new owners and their advisers have been huge. Recent KKR LBO's have produced returns on investment of 30-55%. The 200 banks participating in the financing will share close to *$400 million in fees alone.*

KKR's transaction fee is estimated at $100 million and the firm also takes a 20% cut on any profits generated by the buyout.

The sheer scale of the venality on display in the RJR deal has provoked a round of public hand wringing in Washington, forcing both Bush and the Congress to examine the tax provisions on corporate debt.

The dangers created by these enormous skimming operations are obvious. RJR's mountain of debt leaves it little room to adapt, should interest rates rise and/or recession ensue and sales drop. This would provoke massive layoffs and possibly bankruptcy or dismantling of the firm.

Since 1982, US corporate debt has more than doubled to $1.8 *trillion* (dwarfing the trade and fiscal deficits). On average corporations must now commit 50% of their earnings to finance debt.

The *Wall Street Journal* recently identified ten corporate LBOs which appeared "shaky", including several especially large one's, like the one involving airline giant TWA.

Recession could easily cause a series of LBO bankruptcies, causing a severe "debt crisis" for US banks, who have lent $200 billion for LBOs, compounding their Third World loan problem.

The impact of any such crisis on the junk bond markets would be immediate since junk bonds have last call on a liquidated company's assets.

The effect of defaults on such a highly speculative market would be an almost certain panic amongst investors and total flight from a market which, after all, consists entirely of pieces of paper whose only "real" value is the solvency of the corporations they are used to raid.

The knock-on effect in an increasingly fragile financial system would almost certainly force Federal intervention to restore order in the capital markets.

The Milken prosecution and the intervention of the Securities Exchange Commission (Washington's Wall Street watchdog) appear unlikely to place more than minor restraints on the growth of the junk bond market, though LBOs have probably peaked with RJR.

Shortly after Milken's indictment Drexel Burnham held its yearly conference for junk bond investors — the "Predator's Ball" — at the Beverly Hills Hilton. It was once again heavily oversubscribed.

Bush and the Federal financial authorities are generally against "re-regulating" the financial markets and show no inclination to deal with their ever growing potential liquidity crisis.

Milken may go down but the party will go on, at least until some greedy fingers get burnt. At which point it will probably be too late to avoid the sort of crisis outlined above.

One thing is clear. When the bill finally comes due, the Bush administration and Wall Street will make certain the US working class pick up the tab.

STOP PRESS:

RJR Nabisco has put five European food companies up for auction, including brand names Huntley & Palmer, Jacob's, Ritz, Club and Peak Frean biscuits, Walker and Smiths crisps, Planters peanuts, Belin (a French biscuit firm), and Italian snack-makers Saiwa.

This is all part of a plan to cut borrowing by $5.5 billion.

Meanwhile, Tony Coelho, the Democratic Party Chief Whip in the House of Representatives, is to be questioned by the House Ethics Committee about his involvement in a questionable $100,000 junk bond deal arranged by Drexel and Milken.

Milken and the investment company made substantial contributions to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, of which Coelho is Chair. Coelho used an account in the Committee's name to buy the bonds.

Campaign!

Third Socialist Conference

The Movement for a New Decade

JUNE 17th, 18th

•Shaping our policies for the 1990s

•Organising a modern socialist movement

The Octagon Centre
Sheffield

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Creche; full facilities for people with disabilities

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SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

Which Way Forward for Socialists in the Unions?

A national Conference for socialists 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. Socialists have 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

Gorbachev Conference

Plenty to think about

How should the European left respond to recent developments in the Soviet Union?

Gorbymania seems to be sweeping the continent and shaking up politics at every level — from NATO's top echelons to the socialists, communists, and Greens.

Neil Kinnock sees Gorbachev's new international policy as an excuse to abandon unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The Italian Communists have had Moscow's official seal of approval for abandoning the "outdated" divisions between Social Democracy and Communism.

They are now firmly on the road of creating a pro-capitalist, pro-NATO Party, modelled on the West German SPD.

By Richard James

Eastern and central Europe has been plunged into a rapid and far-reaching process of political and economic change — evidenced by the legalisation of Solidarnosc in Poland and the beginnings of political pluralism in Hungary.

Inside the Soviet Union itself recent weeks have demonstrated both the scope and the limits of *glasnost*.

The March elections to the Congress of People's Deputies saw the Soviet working class, entering the political stage for the first time since Stalin, vote down conservative bureaucrats and elect unofficial candidates in many areas.

But on April 6th, in the Georgian city of Tbilisi, *glasnost* became "gasnost" when poisoned gas was used against a nationalist demonstration, resulting in a massacre in which 20 people were killed.

This was followed by an announcement from Moscow that new laws were to be imposed to make actions "designed to arouse national... antagonisms" illegal.

Repression

But repression has so far failed to stem the rise of national and democratic movements, particularly in Armenia and the Baltic states.

One thing is clear. The emergence of Gorbachev poses big political questions for the left in Europe. An informed and wide-ranging debate is urgently required.

Oxford will host a major forum for this debate. The Socialist Conference has assembled an impressive array of speakers reflecting a wide range of left perspectives.

Speakers from the USSR, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Poland will be joined by contributors from West Germany, Italy, France, Britain and the USA in discussions which will deal with the issues of democracy, economics, international relations and the future of Europe.

The Conference is sponsored by *Labour Briefing*, along with the Campaign Group of MPs, *Tribune*, *New Statesman*, and *New Left Review* among others.

It will be the starting point of a vital political discussion on the future of the European left and the struggle for socialism in the 1990s.

Democratic Rights

Ready for the launch!

An open meeting called by the Socialist Conference to discuss a response to the Tory attack on democratic rights agreed to organise a major national conference on democratic rights in the autumn.

Some 30 individuals from a variety of local and single issue campaigns, some of whom had made the journey from Coventry to London especially for the meeting, discussed various proposals for building the conference.

Most of those present agreed that what was needed was an open, broad-based event, in which all the highly-diverse groups involved in campaigning for democratic rights would feel comfortable.

This event — which, it is hoped, will become one of the major priorities for the Socialist Conference — should act as a launching-pad for a real movement in defence of democratic rights, a movement which can link together many isolated struggles.

The idea is to mobilise and co-ordinate protest and resistance on a national scale. The importance of involving supporters of Charter 88 was stressed by many speakers and agreed by the meeting.

For more information, contact Dave Palmer (10-881 1254)

By Mike Marqusee — Haringey Labour Briefing

Gorbachev and the European Left

June 3rd-4th

St Cross Building, Oxford University

Conference to address the major policy issues facing the European left in response to developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Organised by the Socialist Conference

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

Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign

The VMDC was set up in 1984 to stop Viraj's deportation.

During its four and a half year fight, it won an unprecedented range of support, from the local people of Hulme to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, from lesbians and gay men to Lords and MPs.

Through its demonstrations, its pickets and its propaganda, the VMDC opened the eyes of thousands of people to the racist nature of the immigration laws, and allowed thousands to take part in the fight against them.

The VMDC has given practical help to over 50 anti-deportation campaigns up and down the country. It has marched against Section 28, against apartheid, against police harassment. It has marched for justice, peace, and freedom.

The VMDC and its members have endured and withstood attacks in the press, verbal abuse from racists, and violent physical assaults by extreme right wing organisations.

The VMDC has also been a target for police harassment. Over the last four and a half years, over 50 campaign members have been arrested.

Only ten have been convicted, but they include leading black activist Sonia Hughes, who faces a 28 day prison sentence.

Appeals against these convictions, and actions against the police for wrongful arrest, are yet to be heard in courts. However, substantial court costs will have to be paid.

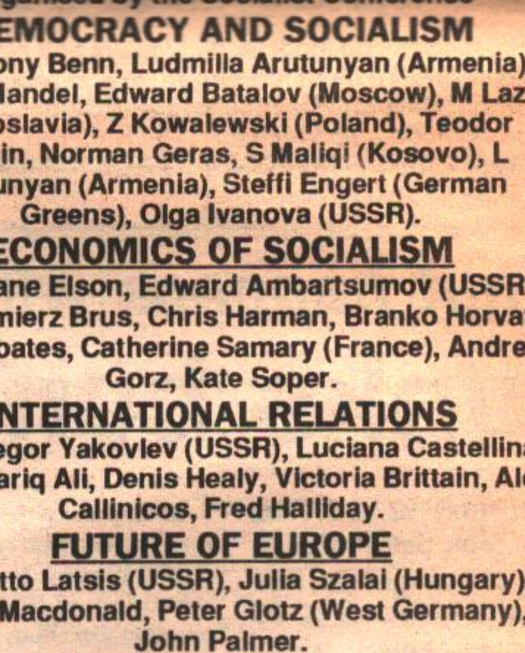
VMDC also urgently needs funds to keep in contact with our supporters over the next period and to take our experience out to other campaigns and other people under attack.

Send dontations to VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme M15 5AL.

*Taken from VMDC leaflet

Deportation Update

Marion Gaima victory



Marion Gaima, a NALGO member threatened with deportation to her native Sierra Leone, has won a five-year battle to remain in Britain.

On March 28th, the Home Office announced the decision to revoke a long standing deportation order.

Home Affairs Minister, Timothy Renton, said the decision was influenced by Ms Gaima's 15 years of residence, her active role in the church and community, plus a recent ruling by the Court of Appeal in her favour.

The Court of Appeal ruled last December that the Home Office had made procedural errors in processing Marion's application for political asylum, and that her claim had not been fairly considered.

Her application for refugee status was based on her fear of persecution if she returned to Sierra Leone, where her father was a Minister in a previous government and a leading member of the opposition Sierra Leone People's Party.

Marion Gaima's campaign against deportation had wide support. NALGO played a leading role in the campaign, as did diverse sections of the religious community. Over 30,000 signatures were handed into the Home Office in support of Marion.

Commenting on the decision, Marion said, "For five years I have lived with the fear of being seperated from my family, friends, home and job. It was an incredible ordeal and I'm glad the nightmare is finally over.

"However grateful I am for myself, I realise that there are hundreds of others facing deportation who have also made their lives here, or who cannot go home for fear of persecution.

"I hope that my case has some kind of impact on the fate of others whose lives may be disrupted if they are forced to leave."

Article reprinted courtesy of *Hackney Union News*, published by Hackney Trade Union Support Unit.

Voices for Rushdie

Fighting racism *and* fundamentalism

By Mike Marqusee
Haringey Labour Briefing

A new initiative in defence of Salman Rushdie emerged from a meeting held in London on Saturday May 13th.

Southall Black Sisters, the Campaign Against Repression in Iran, *Labour Briefing* and *Feminist Review* are among the groups involved with the new campaign, along with individuals from diverse backgrounds and political perspectives.

***Voices for Salman Rushdie* has issued the following statement and is inviting any and all labour movement, women's, black, or civil liberties bodies to endorse it.**

For speakers or for more information contact the *Labour Briefing* office or Southall Black Sisters (01-571 9595).

For the right to dissent *Against* racism & fundamentalism

We are a number of diverse individuals and groups who have come together to voice our concern about the issues of censorship, racism, and fundamentalism which have arisen around Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses*.

We support Rushdie's right to publish his book and we reject the attempts of both fundamentalists and racists to use this affair to promote their own ends.

There has been much talk of Rushdie's book giving offence. *We* are offended by:

•the use of this affair to mount racial attacks on the Muslim community in Britain;

•the sanctimonious claims, made in the context of increasing censorship and widespread racial discrimination, that British society somehow embodies the values of pluralism and the right to dissent;

•the racist assumption that Muslim and black communities are monolithic, and the attempt to identify Islam as a whole with fundamentalism and terrorism;

•the use of the book by fundamentalists to control dissent and repress diversity within their own communities, in particular their attempts to thwart women's struggles to control their own destinies.

We reject the attempt to present the controversy surrounding this book as a crude "Eastern vs. Western" conflict and we believe that such a false view only assists those who would restrict our right to public discussion and dissent.

No culture of society has a monopoly on the values of pluralism and the right to dissent. Indeed, all over the world, people from many different backgrounds and in may different cultures are involved in struggles for these values and rights.

We see our campaign to defend Rushdie and against both racism and fundamentalism as an intrinsic part of those struggles, including the struggles of the Iranian people against Khomeini's repressive regime.

We believe that as long as any religion is given a privileged position by the state, the right to dissent, and indeed the right to freedom of worship, is undermined.

We call for the aboltion of all blasphemy laws, the end of state aid to religious education, and the disestablishment of the Church of England as necessary preconditions for the development in Britain of a genuinely pluralist, democratic society — a society which has never existed in this country.

Salman Rushdie's right to write and publish is also our right to read, to think, to criticise, to dissent. It is the public's right to open and honest discussion and debate.

In the face of the appalling distortion of these issues by both fundamentalists and racist forces, we cannot be silent. We urge others to join us in supporting the right to dissent and opposing both racism and fundamentalism.

SALMAN RUSHDIE

BORN IN BOMBAY
CAUSING TROUBLE IN BRITAIN

REPATRIATION NOW!

NF P.O. Box 230, Worthing, BN14 8EG
Tel 021-783-3564

This NF sticker, seen in London, shows we need urgently to build a campaign to confront the bigotry being whipped up by the Rushdie case — before the Front get in on the racist backlash.

Defending Council housing

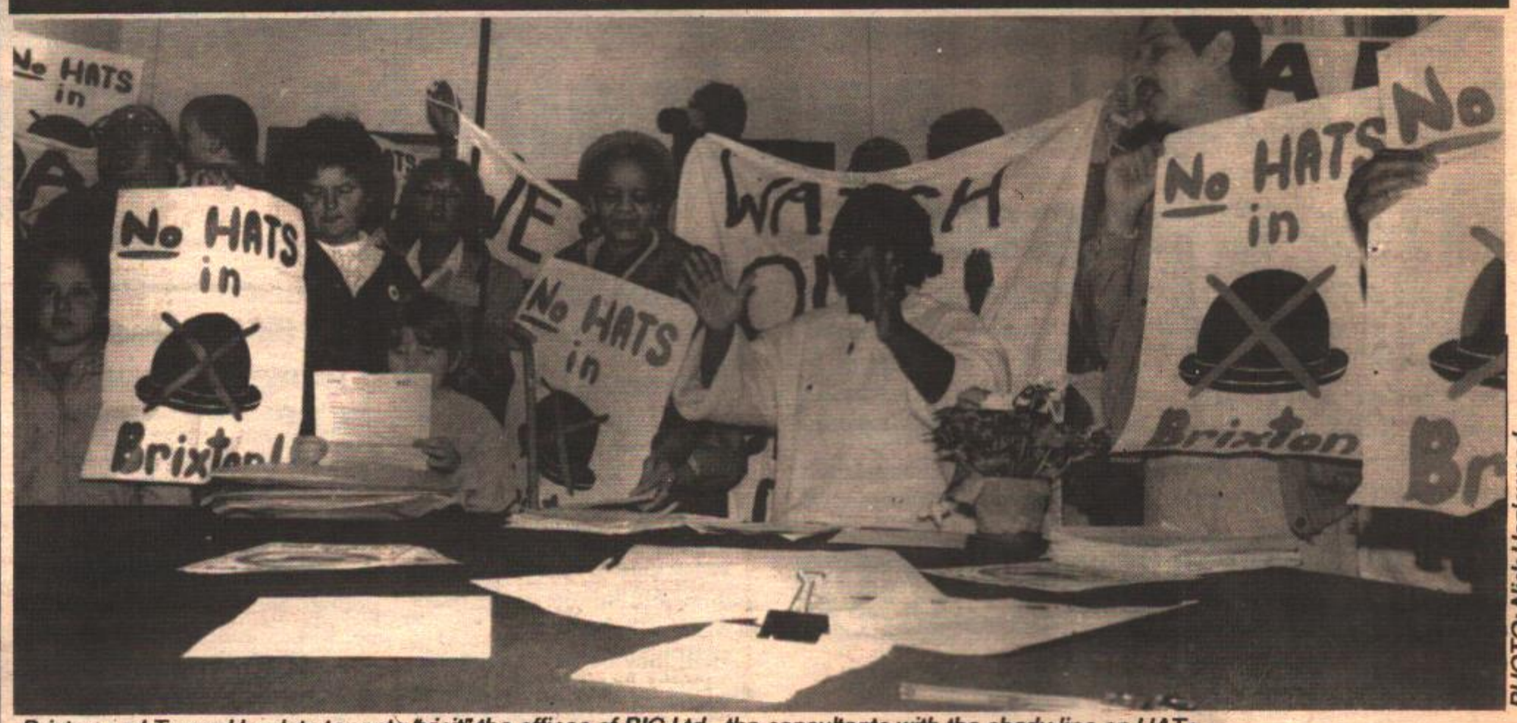


PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

Brixton and Tower Hamlets tenants "visit" the offices of PIC Ltd., the consultants with the shady line on HATs.

Take aim at the new Bill!

The government's "Pick A Landlord" (PAL) Scheme looks like being a flop.

Attendances at meetings against the scheme have shown massive oppostion amongst tenants. But there is no room for complacency.

The PAL Scheme is only the first half of the government's plan to privatise Council housing.

The second half is included in two proposals in the Local Government and Housing Bill which could have devastating impact on Council rents, repairs, and improvements.

At the moment a Council can fund Council housing expenditure from the General Rate Fund. It can also use this fund to pay for any deficit at the end of the financial year.

In addition, housing benefit, almost entirely funded by central government, is available for rent rebates for tenants on low incomes (or unemployed). The new Bill, however, proposes to outlaw transfers from the General Rate Fund.

If at the end of the year the Housing Revenue Account is in deficit, this will have to be made up during the following year through cuts in expenditure or rent increases.

Even worse, rebates will no longer be paid by central government, but will have to be funded *through other Council tenants' rents.*

In place of funding for housing benefit and Council subsidy the government will introduce a General Subsidy Grant.

But the amount of subsidy granted to each Council will be decided by the Minister, Ridley, who will be under no obligation to give any grant at all.

By Reading Labour Briefing

The result will be rent rises and cuts in repairs and improvements. The higher rents are driven, the more tenants will be forced into buying their Council houses.

Yet in Reading tenants are not being informed of this latest government attack. Why? Because the Labour Group is frightened of tenants opting out for fear of future rent increases.

This attitude is patronising, because it views tenants as beneficiaries of Council largesse, rather than as participants in a struggle to determine their own fate.

It is short-sighted, because without a campaign involving tenants through their own organisations, more tenants will buy and ballots are more likely to be lost.

Organisations

Whilst the "pick a landlord" scheme can be defeated by good local organisation, the new Bill, because it threatens the entire basis of Council house funding, can only be defeated at national level.

The Bill will not become law until April 1990, but we cannot sit back and wait.

The unions, in particular, need to develop a strategy for *national action.* If they organise only bland protests, and the Bill becomes law, rents will be forced up to intolerable levels and there will be huge job losses in housing departments.

The unions have to face up to the threat of the new Bill and not make the mistake of deferring it as "tomorrow's business". This mistake will be paid for with lost jobs.

There is clearly a need for a national campaign in defence of Council housing and local government jobs.

We should demand that the TUC and the Labour Party organise a national demonstration bringing together tens of thousands of tenants and local government workers.

We have to combine our work to ensure that local ballots are won with a campaign to force our national organisations to prepare for a real struggle against the new Bill, while there is still time.

Last year's NALGO Conference passed a resolution in favour of a 24-hour strike in defence of Councils and council workers under attack. NALGO should be held to this decision.

A strike of this sort could be turned into an action against the new Bill, and centred on the demands of no more cuts in funding.

The government was forced to retreat over the question of ballots in Housing Action Trust areas because of the huge mobilisation of tenants and Council workers in those areas.

This retreat shows the effectiveness of an outraged mass movement based among workers and tenants — in contrast to the tired old lobbies of Parliament which Labour and trade union leaders have used to dissipate our energies.

Thousands flee persecution in Turkey

Kurdish refugees seek asylum

In recent weeks upto 800 Kurdish refugees fleeing from persecution in Turkey have arrived in Britain.

Most of them are from the Maras region of South-East Turkey. They have been accommodated by the Kurdish Workers Association, the Halkevi Community Centre, and other voluntary groups in Hackney.

Ten years ago, in December 1978, Kurds in Maras were attacked by Turkish fascists known as The Grey Wolves with support from the Turkish military. Hundreds of Kurds were killed and many more wounded.

In local elections this year many right-wingers involved in that massacre were elected to office on a wave of anti-Kurdish action sponsored by the military. Fearing further attacks, thousands have fled.

By Simon Lynn Kurdish Refugee Support Group

In their search for self-determination, Kurds in Turkey are waging guerilla warfare and are in the forefront of democratic socialist struggles.

Their language and organisations are banned; their very existence is not "officially" recognised. They are subject to massive forced displacements.

According to Amnesty International, 250,000 Kurds have been arrested and tortured and 4,000 killed during the last eight years. South-East Turkey is a war-zone, with some 400,000 troops stationed in Kurdish areas.

The Kurdish Refugee Support Group has been set up by local organisations in Hackney.

We urgently require money, food, toiletries, accomodation, clothing, bedding, transport etc. We are also demanding that the government grant all these refugees the right to stay.

The Home Office, although it gave temporary status to the Kurds when they arrived, has already deported at least 18 back to Turkey and are pushing the refugees through the system at breakneck speed.

Economic

The Home Office claims (as with the Tamil refugees) that the Kurds are "economic" not "political" refugees and that the UK will refuse asylum to anyone fleeing economic or social hardship.

This distinction is as irrelevent to Kurds or Tamils fleeing persecution as it is to Black people in South Africa or as it was to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany.

There is strong support for the refugees in Hackney, based in the Kurdish and Turkish workers' organisations, a local anti-deportation campaign built up over a long time, and links with local trade unions and Labour Parties.

We must get the labour movement to see through the racism of the British state and its preparations for a racist "Fortress Europe" in 1992. We must not allow the Thatcher government to define who is or is not a legitimate refugee.

The Kurdish Refugee Support Group can be contacted at 489 Kingsland Road, London E8. Telephone 01-249 6930/881 2361. It meets each Wednesday at Liberty Hall, address as above, at 6.00pm. Cheques to HADC No.3 account.

Labour Party: Policy Review

Reviewing the Policy Review

Labour's capitalists come out of the closet

"They haven't gone far enough, but it would be churlish not to admit that the Labour Party has moved a long way, and very quickly" was the response of the SDP's John Cartwright to the new Policy Review documents.

Cartwright even beagn to speculate about the possibility of the SDP rejoining Labour.

Neil Kinnock has demanded "realistic policies for the next 30 years" and has effectively written off socialism for a generation.

Those who reluctantly support Kinnock on these proposals on the grounds that they may be necessary to win a general election must answer two questions:

•what kind of Labour government would emerge on the basis of these policies?

•will they be understandable and popular with the electorate?

The central documents of the Policy Review are those on economic policy and defence.

On the economy, we are met with a barrage of anti-socialist "Noes":

no wealth tax, no nationalisation of banks and financial institutions, no renationalisation (except for buying back shares in BT and water), no exchange controls — no anything which threatens capitalism.

The essence of what *is* proposed is profoundly anti-working class. The document proposes a programme of government-funded investment and at least partial restoration of the welfare state. But how is this to be financed?

The answer is to "shift resources from unsustainable consumption to productive investment." To you and me that means "raising taxes".

It means that Bryan Gould, Neil Kinnock and their friends want to chop down the "unsustainable consumption" of those sections of workers who may be a little bit better off than they were ten years ago, and who are currently trying to defend their living standards against creeping inflation by going on strike.

But shouldn't there be higher taxes? Shouldn't socialists want less spent on personal consumption and more on investment and the welfare state? The answer is that it depends on *whose* consumption you are talking about.

While the economy document proposes to raise taxes on workers to much higher levels, taxes on the highest "earners" — those making hundreds of thousands or even millions of pounds each year — will only be 50%... much less than the old "surtax" rate under successive postwar governments.

A modest proposal by David Blunkett to raise this to 60% was unceremoniously dismissed. Any notions of mobilising the huge reserves of unproductive capital, overseas investments, or reduced arms expenditure were also vetoed.

By Phil Hearse
Islington North CLP

Labour

Kinnock and Gould have now openly said that "we have to accept that we live under capitalism and we have to make it work better."

The net result is that Labour will simply be labelled the Party of High Taxes which wants to pay for investment and welfare by squeezing ordinary people.

Incidentally, Bryan Gould's contempt for the excessive consumption" of most people in this country beggars belief.

By any measure of advanced capitalist countries, Britain, or rather British workers, enjoy a low wage economy, low consumption of durable goods, and a small "surplus" after basic needs like food and clothing are met.

The chances of such an economic policy gaining widespread electoral support are remote. If Labour gets elected at the next general election it will be despite this policy, not because of it.

Now the defence fiasco, which goes under the name *Britain and the World.*

Kinnock wants to abandon unilateral nuclear disarmament not because of any intellectual breakthrough in his understanding of the drift of world politics, but because he thinks such a shift is essential to win an election.

But caught between the pro-nuclear logic of "multilateralism" and the anti-nuclear logic of the unilateralism supported by the majority of Party activists, Kinnock has come up with one of the most extraordinary doublethink arguments in recent history.

According to *Britain and the World* we shall keep nuclear weapons... in order to negotiate with others the best way of getting rid of them.

The smallest child can see this is an absurd formula, which is in reality a garbled gloss on Kinnock's real policy, namely to keep our bombs until the Russians get rid of their's — the traditional stance of multilateralists since Gaitskell and before.

In a paper submitted to the Policy Review committee on defence, Ron Todd tore the new stance to threads.

He pointed out the illogicality of an "anti-nuclear" policy which keeps three out of four Trident submarines, and which moreover keeps American bombers with hundreds of nuclear weapons on British territory under US control.

Leaving aside the technical irrationalities of the new position on nuclear defence, the whole thrust of the argument is based on an obscurantist Cold War myth — the myth of the Gorbachevite tanks waiting to roll into West Germany.

The anti-socialist and anti-working class character of the Policy Review documents comes out sharply in the document on "democracy" and the proposals on trade union law.

Key aspects of the Tory anti-union laws, including secret ballots for strikes and the banning of at least some sympathy action, will remain. The courts will still be able to interfere in the affairs of unions and declare strikes illegal.

The Policy Review rejects a Bill of Rights, rejects reducing the voting age to 16, and (what else do you expect?) rejects removing discriminatory legislation which makes the age of consent a ridiculous 21 for gay men.

So what kind of Labour government would this be a recipe for? Yes, you're right, it's a recipe for the kind of right-wing social-democratic governments we saw in the 60s and 70s under Wilson and Callaghan.

The ideology is more openly right-wing — especially on nationalisation and the welfare state — but in essence it's the same old story... with one difference.

Such a government would be elected in a situation of even more catastrophic collapse for British capitalism than existed in the 1970s, and would have even fewer answers to the accompanying economic and social crisis.

It was the shambles of the Callaghan government and the discrediting of Labour which gave rise directly to Thatcherism.

If the collapse of Thatcherism is followed by a right-wing Labour government or even a Kinnock-led coalition, the eventual debacle could lead to something much nastier than even Margaret Thatcher has yet come up with.

Economic Policy

Gould's strategy won't work

By Ken Livingstone MP

The Policy Review document *Supply Side Socialism* does not provide the basis for either winning the election or for a credible Labour government.

This is because it has no proposals for creating the resources needed to carry out its programme — the regeneration of British industry and Labour's social spending priorities.

It therefore will be believed by the electorate that the policies of *Supply Side Socialism* can only be financed by higher taxation or incomes policy — both of which would lose an election.

If, however, these are rejected then, within the framework of *Supply Side Socialism* no other proposals exist for creating the necessary resources.

The reasons for this failure are that *Supply Side Socialism* refuses to tackle the obstacles that shackle British manufacturing industry:

•concentration on overseas rather than domestic investment;

•the excessive proportion of GDP allocated to defence spending;

•and the distortions introduced into the economy by the City of London.

I have presented an alternative economic programme which will achieve the goal of regenerating British manufacturing industry through increasing investment directly in manufacturing industry and the necessary infrastructure.

This, unlike *Supply Side Socialism* provides a coherent framework for the Party's defence and foreign policies, and for generating the necessary resources for our social spending programmes.

*This article is the preface to Ken Livingstone's economic alternative. A summary of Ken Livingstone's detailed economic proposals will appear in the next *Labour Briefing*, and will be open to debate.

Lesbian and gay rights

"No holds barred" campaign

The Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights has launched an emergency campaign for the reinstatement of full equality for lesbians and gay men into Labour's Policy Review.

The Social Justice Policy Review Group (chaired by MPs Jo Richardson and Roy Hattersley) voted by four to two to remove commitments to an equal age of consent and to the repeal of *all* discriminatory legislation.

These commitments were included in the original document submitted by the Equalities sub-group. Only Joan Lestor and Jo Richardson voted for full equality.

Full equality for lesbians and gay men, including equalising the age of consent and repealing all those sections of current law that discriminate against lesbian and gay men is the policy of the Labour Party.

This policy was passed by the 1985 Annual Conference,and reaffirmed by the Annual Conferences of 1986 and 1988. In 1986 and 1988 the policy was carried by over a two thirds majority and with the full backing of Labour's NEC.

LCLGR will now campaign to hold and win a major debate on this issue at the 1989 Annual Conference.

An LCLGR spokesperson commented: "We participated in the Policy Review process in good faith and had some very good discussions with those overseeing the lesbian and gay rights section.

"Together we put in a lot of hard work preparing material, almost all of which has now been excluded. Yet again Labour looks set to let lesbians and gay men down.

"We are extremely angry. This will be a no holds barred, all-out campaign. We appeal to all lesbians and gay men to support us by raising it with Labour MPs."

*Taken from LCLGR press release.

Inside the NEC

How they voted on the Policy Review

Four left members of the NEC voted consistently *against* the Policy Deview documents (and *for* existing Party policies) throughout the NEC's marathon session of May 7/8th.

The four were Benn, Livingstone, Skinner and Hannah Sell of the YS.

On defence, they were joined by Beckett, Blunkett, Haigh, and Richardson (but not Short, Cook, or Gould) in calling for the removal of all nuclear bases and weapons in the lifetime of a single parliament.

Only the usual four backed Benn's amendment calling for cuts in arms spending and withdrawal from the EC.

Livingstone's amendment calling for an extension of public ownership and controls on capital was supported only by the four and opposed by Blunkett, Cook, Richarsdson, etc.

By MARK SEATON

Blunkett's amendment to push the proposed top rate of taxation up from 50% to 60% was backed only by the four plus Richardson and Blunkett himself.

On education, Benn was backed by three others when he moved to delete a reference to extending state support to Muslim schools.

Benn also moved an amendment to repeal all Tory anti-trade union laws — and requested a recorded vote.

The Chair, Dennis Skinner, granted the request (in accordance with standing orders) but a motion put by Gordon Colling to suspend standing orders was carried 22-5 (the four plus Richard Rosser).

Only the four supported Benn's amendment itself; every single trade union representative voted *against.*

Livingstone's amendment to make the age of consent the same for gay men as for heterosexuals was defeated by 17 (including Blunkett and Cook) to 11 (including Beckett, Richardson, and Short).

On Ireland, the left proposed amendments to terminate British jurisdiction in Ireland and to delete the following:

"We recognise that the majority of inhabitants of the North of Ireland wish to remain within the UK. We support the commitment contained in the Anglo-Irish agreement."

Only Sam McCluskie joined the four on these votes (yes, Clare Short *was* present).

The left did have one victory when the NEC agreed to refer back the section on wages policy:

"On pay generally we shall make it clear that our emphasis is on investment rather than on consumption and that money spent too generously on pay today could jeopardise jobs and services tomorrow."

Many thanks to *Campaign Group News* for providing the information above.

Vauxhall Reselection

Racist Roy rides again

From the moment sitting MP Stuart Holland announced his resignation it was clear that the NEC woukld try and impose its own choice as his sucessor in the Vauxhall consituency in Lambeth, South London.

But even the most jaded battlers against Labour's right-wing bosses may have been surprised to find just how far our leaders would go in showing their contempt, not only for local Party members, but for the entire black community.

Over a period of two weeks local Party Branches and trade unions held meetings to interview and nominate candidates.

Black Sections held a public meeting in the Constituency (which includes parts of Brixton and has a large black population) with several of the prospective candidates.

By Mike Marqusee
Labour Briefing
Editorial Board

At the end of the day, Martha Osamor, an anti-cuts Councillor in Haringey, North London, and an outspoken defender of the youth framed in the wake of the Broadwater farm uprising, emerged as the clear preference of local Party members.

Martha received more nominations than any other candidate; being nominated by three Branches, by the Women's Section and Women's Council, and by three trade union branches.

Unlike too many nominations in such contests, these were in no way pre-determined or stitched up. Martha was endorses by Party members after they had heard her (and other candidates) explain her political background and beliefs.

Her nearest rivals were local left-winger Kate Bennett and the right-wing chair of the Greater London Labour Party, Glenys Thornton, both of whom received five nominations (from one ward and four unions).

Russell Profitt was nominated by one ward and one union, as was Nick Rainsford. Linda Bellos and Marc Wadsworth were also nominated.

Black *Newsnight* journalist Wesley Kerr, hitherto unknown as a Labour Party member, emerged late in the day when a politically dormant UCATT branch nominated him.

The wooden spoon in this (democratic) phase of the competition went to Kate Hoey, who was rejected by all the wards she adressed.

A survey of all wards in the CLP reveals that Hoey received a grand total of five individual votes.

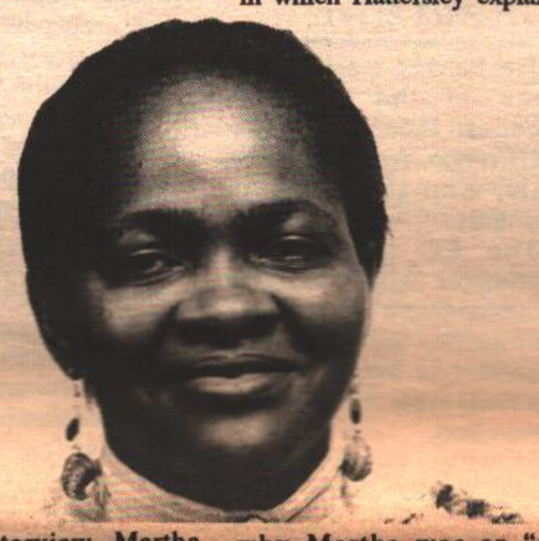
In the end she received only one nomination, from the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society.

RACS decided to nominate Hoey at a meeting of its Political Committee attended by SDP MP John Cartwright (a member of the Committee).

It appears that in the end, Dr Death's undertaker had more influence of the Vauxhall selection than most local Labour Party members.

Unlike Hoey, former Battersea MP Alf Dubbs, who also only recieved one nomination, had the decency to withdraw rather than to allow himself to be imposed on a CLP which had clearly rejected him.

Under the new Party rules on by-elections, all the nominated candidates were interviewed by an NEC panel chaired by Roy Hattersley on Tuesday, May 17th.



In her interview, Martha Osamor was told that her views on Ireland, the witch-hunt and the Policy Review were not acceptable to the NEC and was asked why she had made criticisms of the Party leadership.

She insisted on her right as a Party member to express her opinion on these and other matters.

When she was told not to speak to the press, Martha asked how it was that an article had appeared in *The Guardian* that morning quoting "Party sources" to the effect that she would be ruled off any short-list.

For good measure, these "Party sources" tried to revive an unsubstantiated smear against Martha in a vain attempt to disguise the real reason for keeping her off the short-list — and out of Parliament.

The next day, Hattersley recommended a short-list of Hoey, Thornton, Rainsford, Kerr and Pat Moberley (a local right-winger) to the NEC.

Gone were Osamor, Bennet, Profitt, Bellos and Wadsworth (all unilaterlists) who together had received eighteen nominations.

The shortlisted candidates (all "multilateralists") could boast a total of eight — including only three Ward Parties.

At the NEC Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone moved thst Martha Osamor be reinstated to the short list.

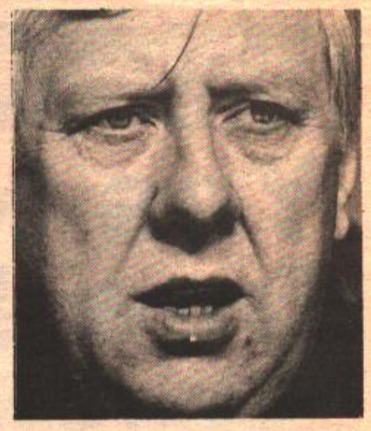
What Livingstone described as a "poisonous" debate ensued, in which Hattersley explained why Martha was an "unsuitable" candidate (see box).

Jack Rogers of UCATT said he had lived in an area with black people for years and insisted that he had never had any probelms.

Eddie Haig, a member of the NEC short-listing panel, insisted that "race played no part" and then warned Livingstone "if you say any of this outside, I'll sue."

When Livingstone asked why Russell Profitt was "unsuitable", he was told that it was because Profitt had worked for Brent council. (Roll over Widdicombe.)

Only four NEC members voted to reinstate Martha: Benn, Skinner, Hannah Sell from the YS, and Livingstone. *Richardson, Short, Beckett, Blunkett, Cook all backed Hattersley's racist short-list.*



The feeble attempt to use Wesley Kerr to cover the nakedness of this racism was exposed when Kerr decided he didn't want to be Kinnock's token black and withdrew from the short-list.

Meeting that night, the Vauxhall GC voted to reject the NEC dictat by 33-10, an unexpectedly decisive majority in a GC by no means "hard left dominated" in a lively and politically diverse CLP.

The GC asked the NEC to reconsider, to re-draw the short-list to include Osamor, Bennett and Profitt.

It has been Vauxhall CLP policy that all short-lists should include at least one woman and one black person and there was therefore no way the GC could make a choice from the selction presented to it.

The all-white official foursome (who had been sitting locked in the Council Leader's Office) were whisked away to the House of Commons (out of the back door of Lambeth Town Hall) to a pre-arranged meeting with Hattersley's NEC panel.

Thus Kate Hoey became Labour's candidate in Vauxhall.

Having been overwhelming rejected by local Party members, she has found a way into Parliament through the grace and favour of a right-wing racist paternalism that will discredit the Labour Party in Vauxhall and well beyond.

Labour Party and trade union Branches should send messages of outrage to the NEC and of support to Vauxhall CLP, c/o 3 Blades House, London SE11.

STOP PRESS: Racist Roy followed up his coup in Vauxhall by publicly calling on *Penguin* not to publish the paperback edition of *The Satanic Verses*.

What they said...

Cllr Greg Tucker, Vauxhall GC delegate:
"I've already had local Party members calling me up to resign in disgust. I've had to persuade them to stay in and fight. Hattersley's racist and sexist comments about Martha were not only an insult to black people and women everywhere: they were also an insult to the intelligence of the Party members who voted for her."

Roy Hattersley to the NEC:
"If there was ever anyone who has been used by extreme elements, it's Martha Osamor. She's a simple woman, of that sort. She could never have got elected to Parliament."

Ken Livingstone told *Briefing*:
"Hattersley might as well have added, 'But I did offer her a job cleaning my house.' "

Ken Livingstone MP:
"When the NEC discussed the short-list for Pontypridd it was generally agreed that the local Party's request for a Welsh candidate should be respected. It seems that when it comes to London the same rules simply do not apply."

Narendra Makanji, National Chair of Black Sections:
"The NEC's outrageous decision is a slap in the face for the black community and for Party members in Vauxhall.
"Despite the nomination of a wide range of able black politicians, the NEC refused to short-list any of them.
"Martha Osamor, who received more support from the local Party than any other candidate, was alternately smeared and patronised.
"This whole affair reeks of the cynical and neo-colonialist mentality of the Party leadership who continously ignore the authentic voice of the community."

Scotland

New fight for unilateralism

Scottish LCND, with the full support of Scottish CND and Scottish Trade Union CND, has launched a statement calling for rejection of the Defence Review and and reaffirmation of unilateralism.

We're hoping to get this signed by MPs, MEPs, Councillors, Party officers, and trade union officers.

Scotland's status as a base for Trident, US Poseidon and other nuclear submarines, a key RAF/USAF practice area, and as a vital NATO communications base, makes us particularly concerned.

Indeed, latest opinion polls in Scotland show 80% for dropping Trident.

For Mike Watson, Labours candidate in the Glasgow Central by-election, this is an urgent question. Sillars turned the screw on Labour when he invited Labour to propose putting the nukes on the Thames instead of the Clyde.

If he wants to get Party workers out for the by-election, Mike would be well advised to restate his commitment to unilateralism.

By Tony Southall
Scottish Labour CND

Contact SLCND c/o 51G Monteith Row, Glasgow G40.

Countryside coalitionism

And they say the *left* don't want to win?

At our February GC a resolution found its way onto the agenda from one of our more rural Branches.

It suggested that it might be a good idea, given the political make-up of our Constituency (*very* safe Tory), not to contest their division in the forthcoming County Council elections.

The logic (?) behind this was that the sitting SLD Councillor is a *really nice person* who nearly always votes with us and if we contested the seat it might split her vote and let the Tory in (something none of us want).

These people further suggested that by not standing they could canvass and explain why Labour supporters should vote SLD.

By Karl Statton
Banbury CLP

It was then pointed out to them that like the Tories, the SLD are *our opponents* and that it is Labour Party policy both locally and nationally *to fight every seat.*

After much discussion the proposal not to stand a candidate was overwhelmingly defeated. You'd think that would be the end of it — but no.

A month went by and after the AGM this branch was asked if they had selected a candidate for the elections, which were now very close. They said they couldn't find anyone to stand.

Southern Region gave the go-ahead to impose a candidate.

But when branch members were contacted all appeared to be either unavailable or unprepared to sign nomination papers, leaving the candidate herself to collect signatures from non-members.

It was later reported to us that at least two of these ever-so-loyal comrades had displayed SLD posters in their gardens.

At the May GC angry delegates called for expulsions. However, the delegate for the branch in question explained that the two SLD-supporting members had already tendered letters of resignation.

She also said she hoped that she could go home from the meeting and try to get the two to reverse their decision. She described the two as valuable members and the backbone of the Branch.

I would suggest that displaying posters actively encouraging people to vote *against Labour* is hardly the action of valuable Branch members!

Europe and the Left

No to a European superpower

Yes to a nuclear-free Europe

The European Community is at a crossroads.

It can either become an industrial and military superstate competing with the United States and Japan for dominance of the world market.

Or it can become a collection of nations restructuring their economies towards non-exploitative trade with the Third World and towards socially and ecologically sound methods of production.

There is already an emerging consensus between Christian Democrat, Conservative, Liberal and Social Democratic/Socialist parties in Western Europe in favour of the first option.

Britain's mainstream political parties are not yet fully part of this consensus. However, current trends indicate they will soon become so.

When it became clear that the US would sign the INF treaty with the Soviet Union, the EC's confidence in the US nuclear umbrella was shattered, particularly in West Germany.

After all, these missiles were introduced into Europe basically at the request of the European governents, with the US initially agreeing to the idea rather reluctantly.

After SALT 2, West European leaders had felt the need for a "credible" US nuclear threat to the USSR from European soil to prevent the possibility that a nuclear war be limited to European territory.

US readiness to give up these missiles in a deal with the Kremlin was tantamount to treason for the German Conservative-Liberal coalition government and resulted in a certain amount of "conservative anti-Americanism" within the Federal Republic.

As a consequence of US-USSR negotiations, the drive toward military integration of the European NATO states has gained momentum in recent years. In particular, West Germany and France have taken the lead in this "Euro-militarism".

It began with the largest ever joint Franco-German army exercises in 1987 and was followed up by agreement on:

- the formation of a joint brigade;
- the creation of a joint security council;
- and the continuing talks about extending the nuclear "protection" of the French *force de frappe* to German territory.

Though almost every NATO goverment agrees there should be an increased role in NATO for the Europeans (a strengthened "European pillar" in NATO) the close military co-operation between France and Germany was not welcomed by most other governments.

The British and Italians warned of Franco-German dominance, while Spain's Socialist government chose to join the bandwagon by proposing a Bonn-Paris-Madrid axis to reduce Franco-German dominance.

The problems of West European political and military integration reflect the difficulty of integrating a group of widely diverse nations where there is always at least one country which has serious reasons for opposing the next concrete step towards integration.

By Jurgen Maier
Die Grünen
(West German Green Party)

The hard core are the nations of the Western European Union (WEU): the UK, France, West Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries.

The EC institutional framework which includes "troublemakers" like Greece, Denmark, and neutral Ireland, has lagged behind the WEU in the drive towards integration.

However, with the Single European Act (SEA), which forced Ireland to change its constitution, the EC now explicitly assumes security policy responsibilities.

This was bluntly admitted in a recent report of the European Parliament (allegedly a civilian body) entitled "The Security of Western Europe".

Under the headline "Europe, a global power in the making" it states that Europe (i.e. Western Europe):

"must be able to assume in the not too distant future, and without changing its alliance membership, all attributes of a global power, including an independent defense".

Global power status, of course, includes a corresponding military-industrial complex, military intervention capabilities, and ultimately an integrated nuclear force.

All now accept that the US has to delegate regional military responsibilities to the European NATO states because of the shrinking power of the US economy in the world.

It's about time that these Euro-militarist aspirations were effectively countered and obstructed by an alliance of people, movements, and parties opposed to a superpower Europe, which would seek a Europe that overcomes its bloc division and its exploitative role in the world economy.

There are plenty of obstacles to building this alliance:

- the reduced strength of peace movements;
- the often strong Social Democratic influence in the peace movements (which clearly does not encourage policies that run contrary to their party political interests);
- the general feeling of relief after the INF treaty;
- and the widespread ignorance about the militaristic activities and preparations of the Western European governments.

However, despite these obstacles, there are also plenty of opportunities to undermine the Euro-military offensive: the enemy image of the "Russian bear" is rapidly disappearing.

Who feels threatened by Gorbachev? Without an enemy, you can hardly legitimise an arms build-up. The prospect of a European superpower is unpopular. So if we suceed in making it an issue, the parties supporting these ideas will get into political trouble.

Perestroika is opening up real chances for a "common house of Europe". Eastern European countries are increasingly turning to political pluralism.

In such a climate, it is difficult to maintain unity of the Western bloc around Euro-militarism and nuclear modernisation policies.

This is an opportunity we should sieze to build a progressive, green and alternative alliance across Europe to fight for European-wide disarmament and the dissolution of the system of military blocs.

We must start with campaigns of resistance to the emergence of a common defence policy within the EC and the strengthening of the "European pillar" within NATO.



NEW TRANS-NAT STRATEGIES FO EUROPEAN LAB

According to some opinion polls the voting turnout for the June elections to the European Parliament could fall to its lowest level since the first Euro-elections were held in 1979.

The apathy of voters is both an understandable and — in its way — accurate reading of the election's immediate political significance.

There is widespread suspicion of the European Community and of the propaganda hype surrounding the Single European Market and 1992 — and for good reason.

The abolition of the remaining political, social, industrial, technological and tax barriers to a single market will pose a serious threat to the jobs of workers in relatively less competitive industries as well as to whole communities in the economically more vulnerable regions of the EC.

However, a wary sense of the basic capitalist purposes of the Rome Treaty and the single market is mixed, in England in particular, with an overlay of nationalist, isolationist ideology.

By John Palmer
Socialist Society

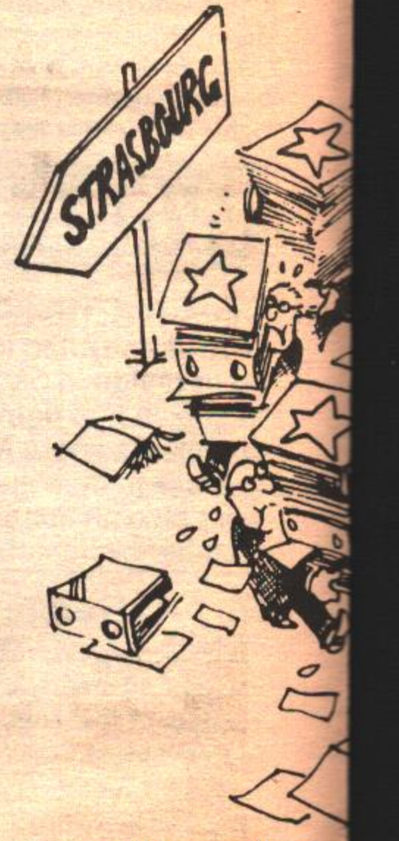
It is precisely to this constituency that Margaret Thatcher and the anti-EC right-wing, organised around the "Bruges Group", is directing its campaign.

Thatcher and the other EC governments are bitterly divided over the extent to which the potentially painful economic and social effects of a new wave of restructuring triggered by 1992 may need easing by common monetary and social policies.

Thatcher opposes such policies both as "neo-socialist" and as elements of a supra-national European state to which she is hostile, on nationalist and Atlanticist grounds.

The Single European Act increases the powers not so much of the European Commission (which can do little more than propose policies) as the Council of Ministers.

The Council consists of the 12 national member states and takes the key decisions on EC law. It does so in secret, accountable neither to national parliaments nor to the directly elected European Parliament.



The bourgoisie are building an embryo Euro-state but

1992

Unions aren't ready!

Big business is preparing for the Single European Market in 1992.

And at last year's TUC, European Commission President Jacques Delors received a standing ovation for his promise of a "social Europe" with increased protection of workers' rights.

Now the idea of a short-cut to socialism through the EC — rather than fighting an increasingly intransigent Tory government in Britain — is catching on amongst British unions.

But socialists shouldn't be taken in. "Social Europe" may well turn out to be a dangerous illusion.

NALGO's Conference resolutions on the EC begin with calls for "higher quality of information" and noted the "importance of ensuring progressive legislation".

It also calls for: urgent negotiations with employers to protect wages, conditions, and pensions; no use of casual labour; and development of language training.

The threats posed by 1992 are mainly recognised in the amendments submitted to the resolutions: the threat to migrant workers, strengthening of immigration controls, introduction of ID cards.

There is also an explicit rejection of TUC collusion with the Single Market with a call on the TUC to:

"mount a campaign to warn trade unionists of the dangers inherent in the extension of the 'Free Market' in the EEC ... mergers, redundancies and job loss, and further pressure on public services from privatisation."

By Dan Carter
Our man on the food mountain

These realistic amendments should be supported, and a cross-border fight should be mounted by workers in threatened industries to defend jobs, wages, and conditions.

The latest *NUPE Journal* also stresses the supposed EC benefits of worker participation, equal opportunities, and access to information.

Whilst warning that social gains "may" be offset by economic and industrial collapse, the *Journal* does not discuss *how* unions should fight.

Public procurement legislation will mean an opening up of the public sector to even more privatisation, with competition from all EC states — yet none of the local government unions have undertaken the groundwork necessary to resist this.

Trade unionists should unite internationally:

- against job losses;
- for higher wages throughout multinational companies;
- for an "open the books" policy;
- for an EC-wide 35-hour week campaign, and for an end to immigration controls and full employment rights for migrant workers.

Ultimately, it must be realised that the EC, set up by and for Europe's capitalists, will provide no answers for Europe's working class.

Food Mountain Obscenity

The Common Agricultural Policy costs an average British household £13 a week. Half the EC's budget goes on storing or destroying surplus food.

LATEST EC FOOD MOUNTAINS:	
Butter	77,000 tonnes
Beef	367,000 tonnes
Skimmed Milk Powder	7,000 tonnes
Wine	1,585 million litres
Olive Oil	319,000 tonnes
Dried Fruit	8,000 tonnes
Tobacco	34,000 tonnes
Oilseed	22,000 tonnes
Cereals	7,518,000 tonnes

TIONAL R OUR



without elementary bourgeois democracy.

Should the left accept this? Or should we follow socialists in virtually all other EC countries (notably the radical, green, and independent left outside the main social democratic and Euro-Stalinist parties) who have demanded that the European Parliament take real legislative power away from the Council of Ministers?

The debate over European strategy (notably regarding eventual European union) is now very sharp inside the Tory Party itself. To some extent this reflects the split within British capital between:

- the City (which fears that the 1992 market might go protectionist);
- and manufacturing capital (which wants 1992 to help keep Japanese and US multinationals at arms' length).

Neither the Euro-social democrats not the Euro-Communists make any serious attempt to address these issues.

Apart from lip service to modest reforms — under the "social Europe" rubric — neither grouping has any serious programme for resistance by the labour movement and/or the new social forces to the wave of restructuring and the parallel offensive by capital and the state which is likely to accompany 1992.

A blatant example of this lack of preparedness was Ford's recent move to switch production among some of their German, Belgian, and British plants (notably Dagenham) to exploit differences in wages, working conditions, and shop floor organisation.

This occurred despite warnings from the West German metal workers to the British Ford unions about what Detroit was planning.

The European Parliament election campaign provides a limited but useful opportunity to raise these issues.

The left should be organising known meetings throughout the country on key issues such as the environment, and the wider political issues raised by the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe.

A key campaigning focus must be opposition to the modernisation of NATO's short-range nuclear weapons — and an intransigent defence of unilateralism in the face of the Labour leadership's latest pronouncements.

The West German government's positive stance on short-range weapons reductions is in fact driven by the solidarity of the German peace movement's unilateralism.

Both the Belgian and the Danish governments have taken unilateral initiatives. For the Labour Party to capitulate now would be a major reduction in the pressure for disarmament.



The Golden Triangle: a two-tier Europe

It may be that little can be done by elected MEPs in Strasburg, although the demand for democratic powers has a powerful potential to expose the undemocratic nature of the intergovernmental cabal which runs the EC.

More important for the immediate future is the forging of new links between activists from all comers of Europe — an important human investment for a future United Socialist States of Europe.

**This article is also published, in a different form, in the May/June issue of Interlink, £1.25 (plus 22p p&p), from Interlink, 284A-286A Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2AA.*

Interview: Eddy Newman MEP

A referendum on Thatcher

Here in Britain the elections for the European Parliament on June 15th will be seen as a referendum on ten years of Thatcherism.

It will be the first nationwide ballot since the General Election two years ago between the main political parties.

If Labour succeeds in getting more votes than the Tories it will not only be a setback for the government and its ability to go ahead with privatisation, the Housing Bill, dismantling of the NHS, etc.

It will also be a morale boost for the whole labour movement. We therefore need to get the Labour vote out on June 15th.

The Euro-MP for Manchester and Trafford, Eddy Newman, has himself a good chance of getting re-elected to the European Parliament. But he is campaigning hard to maximise the Labour vote not only in his own constituency but across the country.

Eddy's campaign is not only about 1992, the food mountains and the EC bureaucracy. It is also about Tory attacks on the working class: the Poll Tax, the NHS, housing, education, the democratic rights, etc., and the need for a fightback.

If the Labour Party does not offer radical solutions, if Labour looks woolly, there is a risk that workers will vote for the Tories.

In Euro-elections, as in any other election, we need to campaign around the immediate interests of the workers and put them into a political perspective.

In Euro-elections there is always the risk of a low turnout. At the last Euro-election it was 32%, while at General Elections it is around 72%.

Interestingly enough, the Liberal vote has been traditionally lower than normal in Euro-elections because they are seen as the most pro-European, pro-Common Market.

Just before June 15th I expect to see Margaret Thatcher on the television arguing for "A strong voice for Britain in Europe".

With this slogan the Tories will try to get the best of both worlds: on the one hand, they appeal to nationalist sentiments; on the other, they make it clear that British business cannot stay outside the European Community.

FJ: How do you see the Euro-elections in relation to the Single European Market in 1992?

EN: I have received a mailing from the Institute of Directors, a very right-wing organisation. They say the 1992 process is not Thatcherite enough.

They do not want a social dimension, for example, increased rights for workers, but just a free economic market, i.e. a capitalist jungle.

I see 1992 as a threat to the workers, not only in Britain but in the whole world.

The EC is a capitalist project for big business. Despite all the rhetoric about European collaboration the fact is that the capitalist states in Europe are alive and well, and they are all fighting in the EC to get a bigger share for themselves.

By Finn Jensen Manchester

In opposition to this capitalist Europe we can call for a social Europe: a Europe that gives social rights to workers, women, youth, and blacks.

If we have to harmonise let us take the highest pension in any EC country and raise all other European pensions to that level; the same with health and safety, environment protection, etc. Let's harmonise around the *highest* level, not the lowest.

It is of course one thing to call and campaign for such a social Europe, which we should do. It is quite another thing to expect it to happen as part of the 1992 project.

When the Single European Act was passed, Thatcher insisted that although decisions on the economy could be taken with a qualified majority (roughly a three-quarters majority), decisions on social rights in the EC should be taken unanimously. And that was what was carried!

In some cases, for example, on women's rights, some of the other EC countries seem happy to hide behind Mrs Thatcher's rejection of social improvements.

FJ: Some socialists argue that instead of withdrawing Britain from the European Community (EC), we should fight, along with the left in other EC countries, to democratise EC institutions. What is your opinion?

EN: I am happy to be called an anti-marketeer. But I do not consider myself anti-European.

I opposed membership of the EC in 1973 and in the 1975 referendum. I maintain my opposition not only to British membership but also to French, German, Danish, etc., because the EC was and is set up to help big business.

That has nothing in common with the ordinary people in any European country.

I'm looking for a way forward. I do not think it is correct to campaign around a slogan of "British withdrawal from the EC now". It is far more important to campaign around socialist policies and for a planned economy.

Even after 1992 we will still have strong national state apparatus in the European countries. We will not have a European state with its own army and police for a very long time.

I am for a socialist Europe, for a socialist world, and I will ally with all progressive forces — whether inside the EC or outside — to achieve that.

We have to put the case for socialism forward and it might very well result in a radical Labour government being expelled from the EC. Very well, so be it.

A Labour government should stick to its election promises despite instructions or even blackmailing from the EC.

It is naive and utopian to think that we can democratise EC institutions. It is easier to campaign for socialist policies.

The European Parliament is just a talking shop. Of course, we should have representatives there to use it as a platform and to develop links between workers in Europe.

But to think that you can solve the problem by giving more power to the European Parliament is not to realise how removed it is from any accountability.

The European Commission is even more unaccountable. In practice the powers are in the hands of the Council of Ministers. We should demand that their meetings are held in public, so everyone has the chance to know what is going on.

Ordinary people will have more influence through election of their own national government than a remote body like the European Parliament can ever give. It is like demanding all power to the UN because it represents the world!

FJ: The Socialist Group in the European Parliament has produced a Manifesto for the June 15th elections, which the Labour Party has signed although the Manifesto is not directly in line with Labour Party Conference policies, to put it mildly.

Are you bound to campaign for that Euro-Manifesto in your election campaign?

EN: Where there is a difference between this Euro-Manifesto and Labour Party Conference policies I will stick to Labour Party Conference decisions.

Euro-election in Scotland

Stirling CND held a public meeting with the five candidates standing for the Mid-Scotland and Fife Euro-seat.

The packed room testified to the intensity of political debate now taking place in Scotland.

Labour's Alec Falconer, the present MEP, won the seat from the Tories at the last Euro election.

A former shop steward at Rosyth naval dockyard, Falconer described his experiences in winning his membership to a non-nuclear position and his part in developing a TGWU policy on alternative employment.

Alec is against NATO and the EC, and for unilateralism. However, he could only pledge to fight in the TGWU and the Labour Party to stop the Policy Review proposals.

Socialist Conference Scotland
EEC DAY SCHOOL
Saturday May 27th
Albert Hall, Stirling
10.30am-4.00pm
- The EEC and the Third World
- Trade Unions and the EEC
- The Scottish Economy and the EEC

Registration £3 (waged); £1 (unwaged)
Further information: Elaine McDougall 0786-62537; Ken Thomson 0786-815486
Please book creche places and special needs in advance

By Rowland Sheret Scottish Labour Briefing

Kenny McAskill is an articulate spokesperson for the SNP. A lawyer, he holds sophisticated left wing views, much in the Jim Sillars mold.

Unlike Alec, he could pledge the support of his party for unilateralism, for withdrawal from NATO, and for a nuclear free Scotland having an independent voice within the EC.

Many CND activists seem prepared to give the Greens a chance. However, George Morton, the local Green candidate, offered only laid back, bland generalities, and muffed his chance.

The Democrat, Malcolm Black, put his case for multilateralism, and ended up sounding like the Tory, Alec Christie.

The meeting highlighted the dilemma many activists — and indeed the electorate in general — face in Scotland.

In Mid-Scotland and Fife, Labour's candidate is a left wing, ex-shop steward fighting the policies of New Realism but caught up in the Broad Left's inability to challenge Kinnock.

In other European constituencies Labour's candidates are much less attractive. On the Poll Tax, the national question, unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from NATO, the SNP is challenging Labour from the left.

The Women's Page

Section 28 and the Splits of the 70s

Lesbian struggles and socialism

The last year has seen an increase in political activity among lesbians and gay men.

Section 28 was the catalyst which brought thousands of lesbians and gay men onto the streets and into action in defence of our rights.

By Dani Ahrens Brighton

The campaigns against Section 28 would not have been possible without the years of work by lesbians and gay men pressuring local Councils and the labour movement in general to take up questions of discrimination against lesbians and gay men and the need for positive images.

In turn, the work of the Section 28 campaigns has strengthened those campaigning around AIDS, custody for lesbian mothers, and many other issues.

For many lesbians (and gay men), the Section 28 campaign was their first involvement in a mixed group for a long time. This campaign, in effect, brought together a new generation of lesbian and gay activists.

Nevertheless many of the debates recalled discussions within the gay liberation movement of the 1970s, especially those surrounding the splits between lesbians and gay men which took place at that time.

Those splits have left a complex legacy.

The decision of many lesbians to put their energies into the women's movement rather than the lesbian and gay movement has meant that a limited awareness of lesbian issues has filtered through to the labour movement as part of the impact of feminism on society in general.

This has made a difference not only in education and equal opportunities policies, but also in the lesbian and gay movement itself. This difference is symbolised by the use of the word "lesbian".

The struggle waged by lesbians to replace the use of "gay" as an umbrella term with something that recognises the specific contribution of lesbian women has been long and hard won.

It is an important part of the broader struggle of lesbians for recognition and visibility in all spheres of life.

Of course, the struggle is far from over.

Pink

Perhaps because of the gains made in the 1970s for gay men (such as the increase in the number of places to go and the growth of the "pink economy" in general), awareness of politics and especially of women's politics among many gay men is rather limited.

The nature of much gay male culture also affects attitudes towards women (and the attitudes of feminists towards some gay men).

For example, something which seems to prevail to a certain extent among gay men is the application to each other of traditional straight male attitudes towards women (regarding personal appearance, etc.)

The extension of these attitudes to women can be offensive to lesbian feminists, and is the source of other barriers between lesbians and gay men.

More worrying is the emergence of *Action*, a newspaper whose entire purpose seems to be to counter the influence of lesbians in the lesbian and gay community.

It aims to "put gay men back in the driving seat", and pursues this objective in an offensive and racist manner.

The quick and angry response to this development from gay men as well as lesbians is very encouraging. It reflects, I think, a positive shift within the lesbian and gay movement.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Lesbians join the June '87 Pride Demo — visible as lesbians, not just "gay".

A final significant legacy of the debates of the 1970s has been the strength of radical feminism amongst lesbians.

Though feminism has had a positive impact on the Section 28 campaigns, there have also been problems associated with this particular fact.

In many of the local groups there have been tensions between lesbians and gay men, between lesbians and gays and straight people, and between members of left groups and other activists.

In my opinion, many of these debates have been conflated and confused by the radical feminist habit of pitting lesbians and gays on one side against socialists on the other.

Failure

I feel this is a problem which stems from the failure of socialist-feminism to take up adequately the specific demands of lesbians and the resulting isolation and political weakness of socialist lesbians.

Of course, many lesbians have encountered the problems faced by women in all mixed campaigns, such as the use of women's labour for organisational jobs, while men take the spotlight.

But in those places where women have remained part of the campaigns, they have held together and led the groups, both organisationally and politically.

This has, I feel, been one of the many lasting gains of the past year's activity, and can only strengthen the lesbian and gay movement in the future.

FIGHT FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS

START·HOVE TOWN HALL 2PM

ONE YEAR ON
MARCH AGAINST SECTION 28

RALLY·BRIGHTON TOWN HALL

MAY 27TH

Women Against Fundamentalism

"We will not be dictated to..."

A new group, Women Against Fundamentalism, was launched at a meeting held on May 6th.

The meeting had emerged out of an initiative taken by Southall Black Sisters and Southall Labour Party Women's Section, which issued the following statement:

"As a group of women of many religions and none, we would like to express our solidarity with Salman Rushdie.

"Women's voices have been largely silent in the debate where battle lines have been drawn between liberalism and fundamentalism.

"Often it's been assumed that the views of vocal community leaders are our views, and their demands are our demands.

"We reject this absolutely. We have struggled for many years in this country and across the world to express ourselves as we choose within and outside our communities.

"We will not be dictated to by fundamentalists. Our lives will not be defined by community leaders.

"We will take up our fight to determine our own destinies, not limited by religion, culture or nationality.

"We believe that religious worship is an individual matter, and that the state should not foster one religion above any other.

Freedom

"We call on the government to abolish the outdated blasphemy law and to defend, without reservation, freedom of speech."

Women Against Fundamentalism will be holding a public event on May 27th, the day of the anti-Rushdie mobilisation in London.

For more information, contact: Southall Black Sisters, 52 Norwood Road, Southall, Middlesex. 01-571 9595

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.

THEATRE REVIEW

"A pinprick for free speech"

***Iranian Nights* by Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton, presented by *Bandung Productions* at the Royal Court Theatre and Channel 4.**

By Bryn Griffiths Tottenham CLP

***Iranian Nights* ends with a drum roll.**

Three actors — Nabil Shaban, Fiona Victory, and Paul Bhattacharjee — then take it in turn to call out the names of writers — Dante, Christopher Marlowe, Oscar Wilde, Omar Khayyam, D H Lawrence, Bertholt Brecht — whose work has been banned or censored.

The effect is dramatic but marred by an important ommision: Jim Allen, whose anti-Zionist play *Perdition* was censored last year by the Royal Court and its artistic director, Max Stafford-Clark.

One can only assume that the Muslim fundamentalist lobby has less weight than that of the Zionists.

Howard Brenton hopes the play will be "a pinprick for free speech... a pinprick, to set debate going with some humour, in a play written quickly, but, with minds much concentrated by the fearsome issues at stake... a pinprick to clear the air."

In a clear reference to Khomeini's Iran, Scheherezade talks in the play of a land where "dissident women in prison who were virgins had to be raped because the Holy Man's jailers believed that virgins who die go straight to heaven".

In *Iranian Nights*, a Labour Councillor and Chairman [sic] of the Multicultural Committee for Racial Integration, a Muslim who drinks at the pub on a Saturday, rails against his fundamentalist son, who has abandoned his Cambridge education for the Party of Islam.

In response, the son explains how the English upper-classes (drunk, crazed, vomiting, and immaculately dressed) had stripped him naked, spat on him, and shat on his head. That night he had sworn never to be humiliated again and found himself reciting the creed of his faith.

As the argument develops, the Labour Party's rotten role in all this becomes clear. The son refers contemptuously to his father's efforts efforts with the ringing phrase, "Result: nothing".

But to the father, the Mullahs are no answer. They are ignorant, corrupt hypocrites.

The father cries, "The Mullah in our village stole food, drank on the sly, and one afternoon was seen interfering with a goat behind a bush."

The play effectively alludes to Mohammed, who wrote: "When oppression exists even the bird dies in its nest..."

The play does not attack Islam. On the contrary, it celebrates the richness and variety of Islamic traditions.

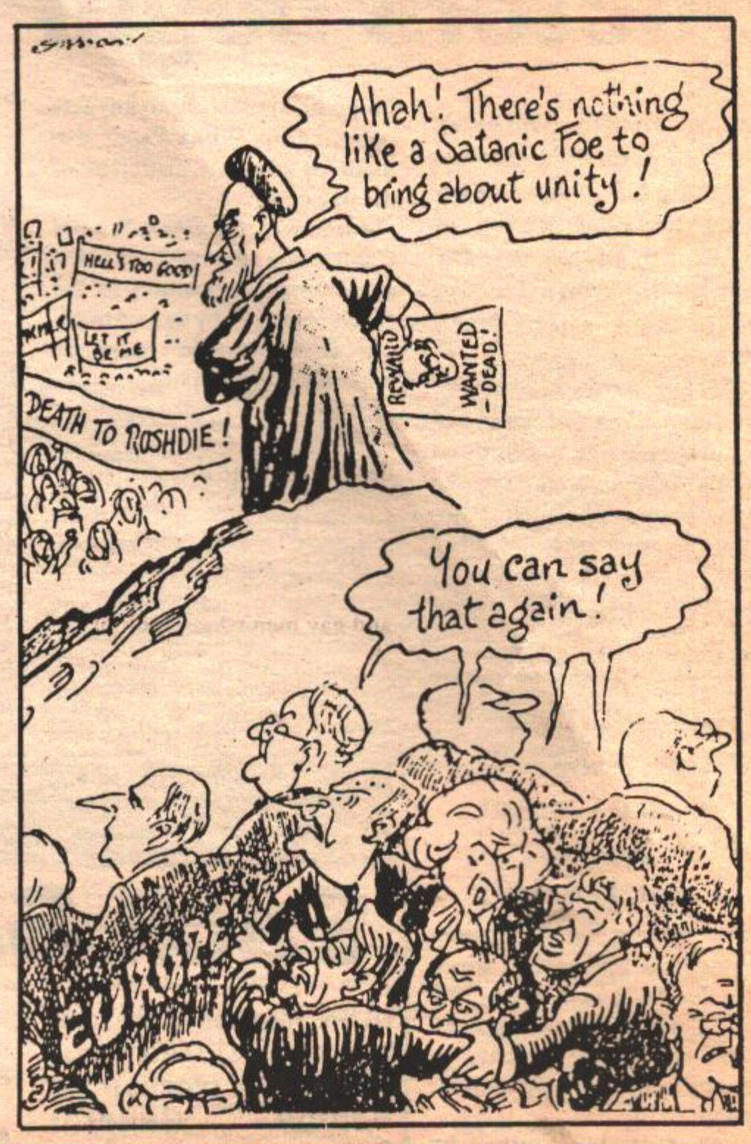
What it does attack is the practice of the fundamentalist Mullahs. *Iranian Nights* situates the Rushdie affair in the context of British racism and the attempts of fundamentalists to hegemonise the Muslim community worldwide.

Within this community there are many who are struggling against both fundamentalism and racism.

Socialists must stand up to the fundamentalists. In doing so we will have to proclaim and demonstrates our anti-racism and stand up to the craveness of our own Labour leaders.

As the play clearly illustrates, the separatism of Islamic fundamentalism feeds on the racism of British society and the failure of the labour movement to provide a socialist alternative.

A small pinprick it may be, but the writers of *Iranian Nighths* deserve to be congratulated for the speed of their response in defending not only Rushdie himself but also his deep felt opposition to reactionary fundamentalism.



Cartoon from The Guardian

Honour amongst thieves?

BOOK REVIEW

Insight on Althusser

***Althusser: The Moment of Theory*, by Gregory Eliot. *Verso*, 1987, £10.95**

By Andrew Coates

Althusser remains a controversial figure on the Left.

People who have never read a line of his writings respond with a self-satisfied grin when his name is mentioned.

Althusser's silence, after the tragic murder of his wife, Helene, and his subsequent internment in a French asylum, are too well known still to be used against his theories.

But they marked what Maria Antonietta called the "dissolution of the schools" of high structuralism — and the end of the French intellectuals' fascination with Marxism.

It will be difficult to write a better book on Althusser than Gregory Eliot's. He rightly sees the central feature of Althusser's work as the attempt to make a "renewal of Marxist theory".

Readers who might find Althusser's early description of "theoretical practice" difficult going would do well to consult Eliot's crystal clear account of the central ideas.

Althusser's later, often neglected, emphasis on the role of class partisanship, notably in Lenin and Philosophy, is also well covered.

Above all Eliot demonstrates the fruitful nature of Althusser's writings for scores of Marxist researchers, from Nicos Poulantzas to (less directly) the "school of regulation" economists like Alain Lipietz.

No better answer could be given to the narrow-minded banalities of our own E.P. Thompson.

Yet Gregory Eliot is by no means uncritical. He is severe with political career choice: adherence to the French PCF and superficial flirtations with Maoism.

Althusser's notion of a "crisis of Marxism" (the second this century, after that caused by Bernstein just before the First World War) refered essentially to a "crisis of Stalinism".

Despite valiant, rather belated, efforts to criticise the French Communist Party, Althusser never developed an adequate theory of Stalinism and bureaucracy. His ambiguities left it open for others to exploit.

Where are the Althusserians now? Some have spectacularly fallen by the wayside. Others, perhaps less visibly, have joined up with the once despised Trotskyists in an effort to create an alternative to orthodox Communism and Social Democracy.

In France, Georges Labacia, a once prominent Althusserian, is now a leading supporter of Pierre Juquin. In Britain, the second Chesterfield Conference attracted many people who were once in the thrall of Althusser, including Gregory Eliot himself.

Perhaps the rest of the Left should pay attention to the ideas that drove them to the right side of the class struggle. There is no better way to start doing this than read Gregory Eliot's absolutely brilliant book.

BOOK REVIEW

"Never to be released?"

***Time Bomb: Irish Bombers, English Justice, and the Guildford Four*, by Grant McKee and Ros Franey, *Bloomsbury*, £4.99 (paperback).**

This book is the most up to date account of the Guildford Four and is a good introduction for those who know little of the case.

It begins with an interesting contrast, between those who actually planted the bomb (and were later caught in the Balcombe Street siege) and those accused and convicted of the bombing.

The Guildford Four spent their time drinking or experimenting with drugs. IRA Active Service Units (ASU) were highly dedicated and disciplined.

The books shows clearly how people's careers were boosted by the conviction of the Guildford Four. A future Chief Constable, a Master of the Rolls, and an Attorney General all owe their careers to the case.

However, the book implies the difficulties their involvement in the case causes, rather than explicitly stating the problems that any exoneration of the Guildford Four would cause for the British establishment.

A point strongly made is the need felt by Surrey Police to get convictions, particularly after their first feeble attempts to investigate the bombing, had led to them issuing photofits of suspects who turned out to be people hit by the bomb.

The book continually castigates the police for failing to follow correct procedures and the court for making assumptions against the Four. The court procedures are explained concisely and simply.

By Ian McLarty Guildford CLP

The book successfully highlights the faults of the legal system without becoming a dry legal text. Nowhere is this more clearly shown than when the book deals with the first appeal.

It shows that the evidence of the ASU has never been in front of a jury and that the Court failed to explain 153 inconsistencies in the Guildford Four's statements!

The authors also show that vital forensic evidence was destroyed by Surrey Police.

The book only has one real drawback. The authors conclude, "it is possible to advocate measures of reform," including safeguards during interrogation and a tribunal of last resort.

Whilst reforms in the legal system should be supported by socialists, cases like the Guildford Four must not be looked at in isolation, but placed in the context of British "justice" towards Ireland as a whole.

One of the four, Conlon, has written to Gorbachev to publicise the case.

Paul Hill is now ill, having spent four years in solitary confinement. When involved in the Hull prison riot he saw his file, which states, "never to be released."



PHOTO: Jim Thein

Last year's IBRG March for Justice: a pressing demand from the Irish community.

Contact the Guildford Four Campaign:
131 Eastgate Buildings,
St John's Way,
Archway,
London N19

NHS White Paper

Doctors begin to operate

Despite Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke's success in getting GP leaders to accept a new contract agreement, the Tories are far from having won a decisive battle over their NHS White Paper.

The two issues became intertwined when Clarke introduced changes in methods of paying GPs into the White Paper proposals — although these changes had not been mentioned at all in a year of discussions with GPs on contracts.

By Geoff Ryan
NUPE Shop Steward Central Manchester Hospitals Branch

The new agreement stipulates that from next April 50% of GPs' pay will be determined by the number of patients on surgeries' lists or the number treated.

This represents a retreat by GP leaders who had said that bigger lists would damage patient care and reduce consultation time.

The previous week a conference of GPs had declared that such a capitation-based system of payment was a reversal of 20 years of progress towards smaller lists and better care. The negotiators ignored this.

Although the contract is a climbdown by doctors' leaders, there is as yet no guarantee that it will be accepted at the June Conference of GPs.

Over a week after the agreement a Gallup Poll in the *Daily Telegraph* showed only 1% of GPs supporting the White Paper and 48% rejecting it outright.

The latest series of British Medical Association adverts opposing the White Paper also includes implicit criticism of the pay contract.

Moreover, the BMA Special Conference on May 17th voted to continue opposition to the White Paper. They agreed to advise doctors not to co-operate with the White Paper.

GPs will be advised to refuse to accept practice budgets, whilst hospital doctors will be encouraged not to let their hospitals operate as opted-out, self-governing trusts.

It was difficult to find any speakers at the Conference to defend the government's proposals. Virtually all the motions attacking the White Paper were passed unanimously.

However, BMA leaders beat a quick retreat when they said they were willing to participate in trials of various aspects of the White Paper.

This is not surprising, given that many leading BMA members naturally favour Tory policies and look principally to preserving their own power and prestige.

Nevertheless, most doctors are not yet prepared to abandon opposition to the White Paper.

At Guy's Hospital in London, which was supposed to be the Tory flagship for self-governing hospitals, a recent ballot amongst consultants (the group most likely to support the White Paper) showed one third totally opposed to opting out.

Two thirds opposed premature consideration of independent status.

The battle at Guy's has also shown the government resorting to cynical blackmail.

The Management Board was told at its April meeting that if it opposed self-government getting finance to complete long-planned development might become a problem.

Former Tory Health Minister Barney Hayhoe has expressed his reservations about much of the White Paper.

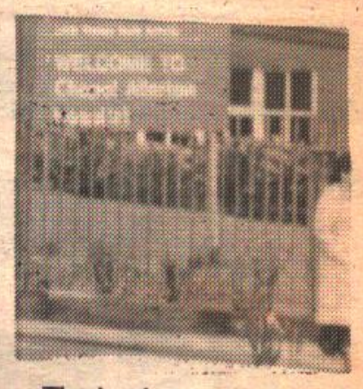
The Health Minister is also in conflict with his EC counterparts over anti-smoking measures and the setting up of a committee of health experts to campaign against strokes and heart disease.

But Health Authorities, rather than wage battle with the government, continue to look for ways of raising revenue by:

- opening second hand car lots at hospitals (Glamorgan);
- doing deals with insurance companies (Merseyside);
- preparing for large scale hospital closures (Birmingham);
- or closing wards (Withington Hospital, Manchester, where over 77% of psychiatric nurses recently passed a motion of no confidence in their managers).

Finally, newly qualified nurses at Middlesex Hospital have been given a choice: they can continue on student wages, or they can go. The Health Authority cannot afford to pay them at staff nurse rate.

And we are only in the second month of this financial year!



The battle to save Chapel Allerton Hospital in Leeds (above) continues. The latest rumour is that the police want the site for a new station — a proposal strongly opposed by Cllr Neil Taggart, a member of the W. Yorkshire Police Authority.

NUPE

Sack Sawyer; vote Bradley!

NUPE members are now being balloted in a union-wide election for Deputy General Secretary.

Nick Bradley, a NUPE full-timer, is mounting a strong challenge to Tom Sawyer from the left.

By Mark Seaton

Witch-hunter Sawyer (who promises in his election statement to "oppose those who damage, disrupt, and distort Labour, particularly the *Militant Tendency*") is being backed by Rodney Bickerstaffe, who is standing uncontested for re-election as the union's General Secretary.

"I am standing for election because I want to see a change of direction at the top of our Union," says Bradley in his official election statement.

"Every NUPE member has suffered at work from cuts. The hours of school meals workers and cleaners have been slashed.

"New pay structures for local Council workers and nurses have replaced one unfair system with another. Hospital ancillary workers' pay remains a disgrace.

"Pay settlements for all sections of NUPE have cut living standards. Health workers have been blackmailed by privatisation to accept cuts or lose jobs. Part-time workers in particular have borne the brunt of these attacks.

"Now privatisation threatens everyone. Wherever our members work the axe is now poised. But too often NUPE members have been left wondering — where is our Union? I want that to change."

Bradley believes NUPE should:

Unite

"Unite our members. Too often senior officials have gone to the employers without first organising our members behind them. Section after section of our members have been picked off because of a failure to unite the membership.

"•Organise national action. With NUPE members acting as one to stop managers blackmailing workers into accepting cuts by threatening privatisation.

"•Fight to defend national agreements which govern everyone's pay and conditions. I want to put an end to all discussions which weaken these agreements.

"Too many of our members have lost holiday retainers, seen bonus schemes fiddled, lost plus payments or suffered reduced paid holidays.

"•Fight for a minimum hourly rate of £3.75.

"•Do more for women workers. I will fight for workplace nurseries and special paid leave so parents can care for sick children."

Union democracy is vital, says Bradley.

"I have always believed in regular elections of full-time officers directly answerable to branches and members.

"I believe full time officers wages should more closely relate to those of NUPE members.

"As Deputy General Secretary I will retain from my salary only an average skilled workers wage donating the rest to NUPE."

On NUPE's relation to Labour, Bradley is clear:

"I have been a Labour Party member for 21 years. NUPE should support Labour. But the Party must also support NUPE members.

"•Mrs Thatcher has fought hard for the rich and privileged. I want Labour to fight just as hard for working people.

"•I shall fight for Labour to remove contractors from public services, restore cuts and keep water in public ownership.

"•I believe that watering down Labour's basic socialist principles is against NUPE members' interests and should be opposed."

BBC

Rough justice for the workers!

Think of industrial militancy and the BBC does not immediately spring to mind.

But more than 18,000 of the Corporations 25,000 employees took 24-hour strike action in April, and even more joined in the 48-hour stoppage in May.

From our own correspondent

Many of these employees are badly paid. Secretaries, even in London, can earn as little as £7,000 and at top whack just reach the level of starting salaries paid to legal, city, or even some agency secretaries.

Most BBC staff could earn half as much again working for one of the ITV companies, and significant numbers — technical and secretarial staff included — have trebled their salaries by moving to Murdoch's SKY TV.

BBC journalists' and production staff salaries are also lower than those offered by competitors, and more and more are offered short-term contracts, rather than permanent jobs.

You're lucky now to get a year-long contract (stipulating that you do what you're told, when you're told). Many new recruits are taken on for only three or six month terms, according to the needs of the schedules.

Conditions in many BBC workplaces are appalling.

Busy newsrooms with continually ringing phones might look exciting, but the novelty of working in an office so overcrowded that the minute you stand up somebody whips your seat, soon wears off.

And a Thatcherite ("if you don't like it there are plenty of others out there ready to take your place") management seems to expect that "quality" programmes can and should be made on the back of compulsory unpaid overtime extracted from reluctant production staff.

If the BBC were making shirts and not programmes it would be called a sweatshop.

Only the idea that it's a privilege to work for the BBC (suggested by an increasingly desparate management) has kept them in business.

But when staff see top management rewarded with up to 30% rises and fancy cars while a 7% pay rise is imposed on the rest, that idea seems a a bit thin.

This is what is at the heart of the BBC's summer of discontent. Staff are fed up with low pay (absolute and comparative) — but they're fed up with a whole lot more too.

Behind the stone wall facing staff, unions, and even at times management, is Thatcherism: in this case the demand that the BBC toe the political line, spending, and increase productivity, with "performance related pay" for the chosen few.

Management says there's no money to meet the unions' 16% across the board claim. The money, of course, is there but management have got word from the government that 7% is the absolute limit.

In 1991 the present system of linking the television licence fee to inflation will come to an end. In 1996 the BBC's charter runs out.

This government has made it clear that it regards the BBC as, variously, an outmoded public sector monster ripe for the free market, a home for malcontents spreading messages hostile to the government, and at worst, a communist plot.

Far from worrying about strikes that take BBC programmes off the air, the government as the BBC's present paymasters, would happily see it permanently removed from the airwaves and replaced with something even more reliable.

By toeing the line on pay, BBC management hopes that the Tories will be nicer in years to come. Fortunately, staff and the unions realise that this strategy won't work.

Importantly

Most importantly, there's a growing recognition that *only* staff, organised through the unions, can defend the BBC as an institution (or even try to improve it).

The pressure is now on the unions to deliver. So far union leaders look set to wage a respectable fight, vigorously fending off calls for re-balloting (coming only from a small minority of highly paid staff) and making determined noises about future action.

This will include lightning and selective stoppages (watch out, Wimbledon), selective overtime bans, and a work-to-rule.

All these tactics, designed to meet the "so what?" test (maximising impact and cost to management whilst preserving union unity), are steps in the right direction.

In the meantime there is a need to promote and build the action and the growing awareness of its political dimension amongst the workforce.

Unfortunately it is only the left in the unions — small and as yet poorly organised in broadcasting — who are likely to meet that challenge.

West Midlands Socialist Conference

Trade Unionists Day School

Saturday July 8th, 10-4.30

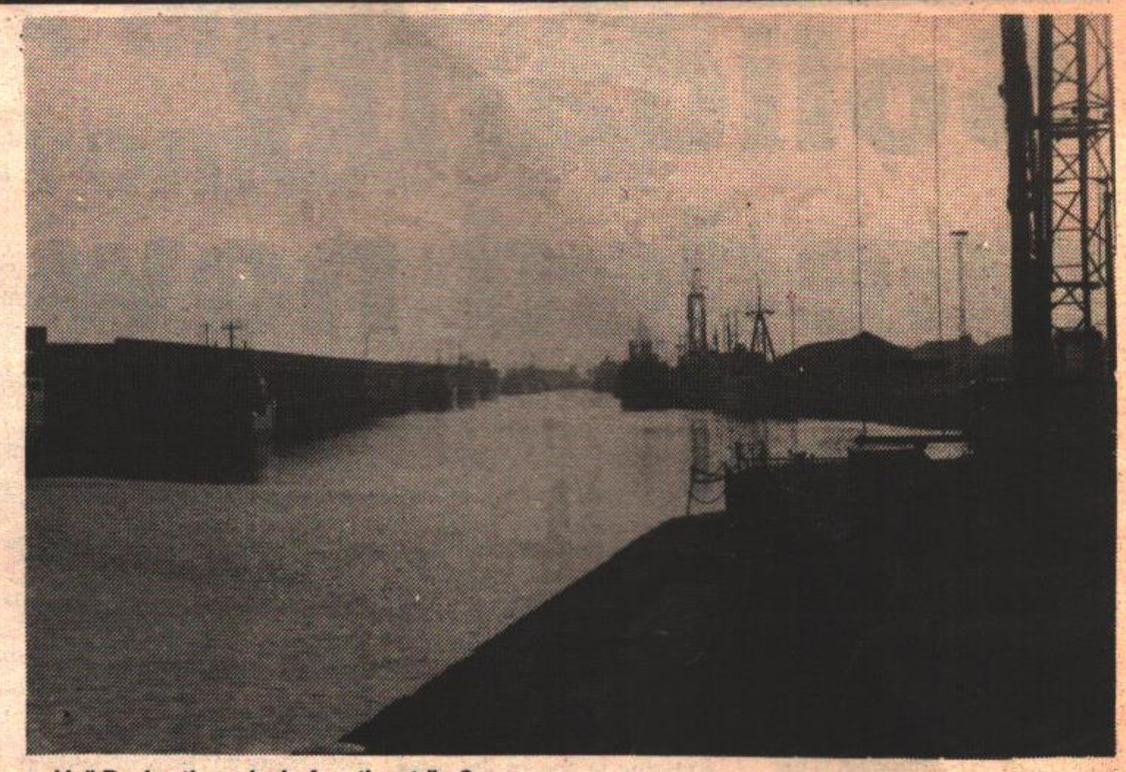
Star Club Key Rooms, 136 Digbeth, Birmingham

£1.50 waged; 50p unwaged

For further details, contact:
Nick Hay, 49 Watt Road, Erdington, Birmingham B23 6EU

Docks

After the vote, start the strike!



Hull Docks: the calm before the strike?

Dockers employed under the National Dock Labour Scheme have voted by 74% to 26% (in a 90% poll) for an all-out indefinite strike over the refusal of the Port Employers to negotiate a national agreement to cover working conditions after the abolition of the Scheme by the government.

It is a remarkable vote by any standard, especially since every docker knows that this is not the same as striking against an individual employer.

It means embarking on a bitter struggle in which the Port Employers will get the full support of the government, including the use of the courts and even the army, if necessary.

Its obvious parallel is the year-long miners' strike of 1984/5. Its outcome will be a major factor in the success of the current round of industrial struggles and the future fortunes of the Thatcher government.

The Port Employers were clearly shaken by the size of the strike majority, which they had confidently predicted would be much smaller.

Sir Keith Stuart of Associated British Ports tried to claim that the result showed that "significant numbers of dockers did not support the union's call for a strike."

He was even desperate enough to argue that if the 10% of dockers who had not voted were counted as votes against the strike, "only 68% of dockers supported a strike."

By Alan Thornett Trade Union Briefing

Though obviously shaken by the vote, Stuart offered no concessions, stressing that the employers were not interested in a negotiated settlement to replace the Scheme.

Like the Stock Exchange, which showed no signs of grasping the momentous importance of this ballot for the British economy, he is clearly confident that, between Ron Todd and the High Court, a strike will somehow be avoided.

He described the TGWU as "blustering".

Stuart's optimism is well founded. Despite the thumping majority for strike action, Todd, speaking at a press conference called to announce the ballot result, fixed no date for the start of the action.

In fact, he called upon dockers to refrain from strike action until the results of current battles in the courts are known. That could take a long time, since there are already three legal actions taking place and there could be more soon.

On May 18th the High Court heard submissions from three of the employers claiming that any strike over this issue would be illegal, since it would be a dispute with the government and therefore not a legitimate trades dispute.

This case was "adjourned" until the following Monday in an obvious political and tactical move. Clearly the court wanted to wait for the outcome of the ballot and the response of the dockers before deciding what to do.

Employers at Tilbury Docks in London are going a step further. They are suing the TGWU for £250,000 for loss of trade — attributed to the calling and holding of the ballot.

In addition to these moves, it is certain that the employers will now challenge the wording on the ballot paper, claiming that it was too general.

Decision

They will be encouraged by the recent High Court decision against the NUR. In this case the court ruled that the union's ballot paper on London Underground was too detailed and therefore confusing.

Unless action is taken to implement the TGWU ballot, the dockers' magnificent vote will be squandered in the half-baked disputations of lawyers and barristers, who will certainly make a fortune out of it.

It has now become clear that it is almost impossible to have a legal strike on the docks.

Roy Garston, Chair of Hull Port Stewards, addressed a meeting of all 670 Hull dockers which voted unanimously to walk out in defence of four dockers who were to be removed from the register.

Hull Port Employers are now taking legal action against Garston for "incitement to breach of contract."

The choices facing trade unionists are increasingly stark. Either the law is to be defied or all the working conditions established by dockers and other workers over many decades will be destroyed at a stroke.

As we go to press, Ron Todd has called a meeting of the TGWU National Docks Committee for Tuesday, May 23rd, to consider the ballot result.

They should reject Todd's opposition to breaking the law, set a firm date to implement the dockers' democratic decision, and proceed with an all-out strike.

British Rail

Unions go slow

Industrial unrest is on the rise and British Rail workers are preparing to join the fray.

Unfortunately, at the moment, the struggle with the employers is mainly shadow boxing.

The real fight seems to be between the National Union of Railwaymen and ASLEF, the drivers union.

Both unions are balloting their members, but not at the same time. Nor is it clear if they will be asking the same questions — or wanting the same answer!

The issues at stake are crucial to railway workers: pay, conditions, jobs, the right to negotiate and the right to union representation at every level. All are up for grabs.

By Toni Matthews NUR

BR's proposals are essential to its privatisation plans. A transport system run to meet the needs of users can never be profitable.

The only hope the government has of making BR plc a going concern is to cut unprofitable services, keep wages low, get rid of even more jobs, and smash the unions.

Now more than ever the rail unions need to be united.

At a Federation meeting of the NUR and ASLEF, the NUR proposed all-out strike action. ASLEF rejected this. The NUR backed down and the Federation agreed on an overtime and rest day working ban and 24 hour strikes.

Apparently, ASLEF's Executive opposed *any* form of strike action. Furthermore, ASLEF announced the date of its ballot without consultation.

Its two day workplace ballot on May 25/26th does not give anyone enough time to prepare and campaign and is much too short a time for the NUR.

Balloting members who are spread far and wide round the railway system (unlike the drivers who can all be contacted at their depots) is an impossible task — even in the five days allocated by the NUR from May 30th to June 3rd.

(London Transport workers will be re-balloted over a *two week* period).

BR's proposals will ultimately set region against region, station against station, grade against grade, and worker against worker. ASLEF's attitude can only play straight into management's hands.

Under these conditions, the NUR should have stuck to its guns and called an all-out strike — the only way to bring BR to its knees.



STOP PRESS

ASLEF ducks the fight

ASLEF announced on Thursday night, May 18th, that it is calling off its ballot for action.

The feeble reason given by ASLEF's General Secretary, Neil Milligan was that BR has imposed it's 7% pay offer.

While this is obviously an attempt by management to undermine support for action, it hardly justifies calling off the ballot if the 7% was unacceptable in the first place.

Milligan said ASLEF would proceed with a new ballot in July on a ban on overtime and rest day working over BR's decision to scrap the negotiating machinery, but this seems unlikely given their performance.

This means the attempt of the rail unions to fight management together has collapsed with ASLEF's retreat and it is now up to the NUR to go it alone. It should now quickly re-affirm it's original plan to go for all-out action.

NALGO NEC

Crucial strike ballot

The recent NALGO NEC elections have resulted in a small shift to the left.

Existing left NEC members retained their seats and some improved their votes.

Paul Holmes, a *Militant* supporter in the Yorkshire and Humberside district, polled the highest ever number of votes in his district.

By Fred Leplat Islington NALGO

In London, Ivan Beavis, a *Morning Star* supporter, was re-elected without the support of the misnamed right wing "Fightback" faction (which includes Tories, Democrats, and right wing Labourites).

Jean Geldart (another *Morning Star* backer) was also voted onto the NEC for the first time.

First time candidates Carolyn Sikorski and Dave Burns, who stood on a clear anti-cuts platform and were supported by *Briefing*, polled well.

Fightback

With about 4,200 votes each, some 1,000 votes short of securing one of the eight available NEC places, they came 14th and 15th out of 24 candidates.

The NEC's first ever black member, Leroy Arscott, was elected from London, but he stood on the Fightback slate, and his election therefore does *not* represent a gain for the left or the NALGO Black Workers Group.

Candidates

The "left" (non-Fightback) in London increased its share of the vote from 50% to 56%, but failed to gain more than three out of six seats, as there was no agreed slate and some 15 separate candidates eventually stood!

nalgo

This election does indicate a small but positive change in mood and renewed confidence among the membership, which will probably be tested in a crucial June ballot for rolling national strike action in support of NALGO's national local government claim of £1,200 or 12% and no strings.

The latest employers' offer was 7% — with the abolition of national grades and grading appeals and introduction of regional variations.

This was rejected by the NALGO National Local Government Committee, which will recommend the ballot on industrial action to a conference of local government branches on June 1st.

This is a make or break ballot for NALGO. If it is lost, it will be the third national ballot on strike action lost in three years — and the employers will ride higher than ever.

Death squads in Colombia

Solidarity needed now

The Colombian trade union congress, the CUT, has appealed to the British trade union movement for assistance in getting Angela Toban Fuerta temporarily out of Colombia and into Britain.

If she remains in Colombia, her life is in serious danger.

She is the president of the Association of Teachers of Antioquia (ADIDA). Antioquia is the Colombian state of which Medellin is the capital.

Early in February she was contacted by a rank and file member of her union who had learned that four men had been hired to kill Angela Toban and her two children — by blowing up their home.

The men had been offered half a million pesos (about £10,000) for the job.

Angela Toban had every reason to take this threat seriously. More than one hundred teachers were threatened in Antioquia in 1988 and 34 were assassinated. A former president of ADIDA was killed in August, 1987.

When the president and vice-president of the Human Rights Committee of Antioquia went to the union office later that same day to express their solidarity, they were both shot dead by unknown assailants.

Antioqia is one of the most violent parts of Colombia, a country where 1,400 people were killed for political reasons in the month of January alone.

An average of nine people are killed every day in the city of Medellin, rising to 25 or 30 on weekends.

The violence is more extreme in Medellin than in other parts of the country for a number of reasons.

"The culture of Antioquia produces more extremes of left and right," said Dr. Ruben Dario Jaramillo, a human rights lawyer and supporter of the radical Catholic magazine *Solidaridad.*

"The Church her is very conservative and traditional; there is a very aggressive oligarchy; and there has been the terrible dynamic of the drug-traffickers, which has intensified the whole situation."

Medellin is not alone in experiencing this level of political violence. In the city of Barrancaberjeja, an oil-refining centre in the north-east, paramilitary assassinations have effectively suppressed all political or protest activity.

The headquarters of the oil-workers union there was attacked by groups of armed men twice in the past year. Thye were driven away on both occassions by the oil workers themselves, who were also armed.

In this situation normal trade union activity is impossible. Trade union and community leaders take their lives in their hands every time they criticise employers or the political system.

The ability to work for political and social change without threat has emerged as the main demand of the trade union movement, which organised a national strike last October for the "right to life".

In the last 26 months the CUT has had 250 of its leaders killed, according to General Secretary Angelino Garzon. Other organisations attempting to represent the poor and dispossessed in Colombia have also suffered.

Most savagely hit has been the new left-wing political party Union Patriotica (formed by the Communist Party) which lost 700 members, including its leader, Pardo Leal, in the first two years of its existence.



Civil Servants union demonstrates in Papoyan

These organisations are attempting to address the problems facing a country with more than a million officially registered unemployed, with three million dependents, plus a million officially registered as homeless, not including those living in shanty towns.

According to Angelino Garzon, "Eight years ago health and education made up about 10% of the budget and defence was 8%. Now health and education get about 5% and defence gets 16% — with 25% going on the national debt.

"The government claims the anti-terrorist laws are against the drug traffickers, but in the last year hundreds of leaders of trade unions, student, and peasant organisations have been arrested under this legislation but not one senior drug trafficker."

Although less than 20% of Colombian workers are in unions, the CUT is one of the strongest trade union federations in Latin America and a powerful voice for those excluded by Colombia's political system.

CUT is only one of a number of mass movements growing up in opposition to the country's rulers.

Some of them, like the peasants' organisation ANUC and thre Junta of Cmmunal Action Organisations, began as adjuncts to the clientelist two-party system and were originally controlled by party bosses.

But in recent times they have escaped this control and emerged as the democratic voices of their constituents.

The Junta, for example, coordinates the campaigns of town and city dwellers, especially in the "*invasion barrios*" or shanty towns, to get basic services like water and light.

For all these organisations the most pressing need is for freedom to organise.

Many of them were represented (some officially, some unofficially) at a meeting held on January 24th which discussed the setting up of a national and democratic movement to intervene in the discussions now being held between the government and the various guerilla groups.

"In this 'peace process' there are no concessions coming from the government, which wants to integrate everyone into the state institutions," said Camilo Gonzalez, one of the meeting's convenors.

"But it can offer a political space for the masses to organise. It can create public pressure for the government to control the military.

"We have to have that political space if we are to do anything. We have to be able to organise without threat from the paramilitaries."

Socialists and trade unionists in Britain can help by collecting the fare for Angela Toban to get out of the country and by demanding that the Colombian government protect human rights and tackle the death squads.

This article was written after a recent visit to Colombia by a journalist who wishes to return there and has therefore asked not to be named.

BTR AGM

"Blood, Tears, Repression"

Supporters of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) staged an angry protest at the recent Annual General Meeting of the British Tyre and Rubber Company (BTR).

By Celia Dignam
BTR Shareholder

As demonstrators protested outside the Hilton Hotel, concerned shareholders dominated the meeting inside with demands to end the four year dispute between the company's South African subsidiary and the union.

Nine hundred and fifty NUMSA members were sacked from the BTR SARMCOL plant at Mpophomeni in May 1985 following a two day strike for union recognition.

The AGM was dominated by NUMSA supporters who highlighted the suffering of the Mpophomeni community and demanded that BTR resolve the dispute and reinistate the workforce.

NUMSA members Dumisane Mbanjwa and Bongani Mkungo, chair of the BTR Shop Stweards Council of South Africa, pointed out that the company's decision to appeal against a Natal supreme court ruling in favour of the union could drag the dispute on for another four years.

This can only mean increased starvation and deprivation for the community for whom BTR are the only major employers.

NUMSA supporters also queried the level of wages paid by the South African company. In at least five plants, wage levels fall below the abolute minumum specified by the EC code of conduct for companies operating in South Africa.

Questions were also raised about the company's links with Inkatha who have been responsible for a number of violent attacks on the strikebound community.

BTR recognises the Inkatha union, UWUSA, as representatives of the scab workforce at its SARMCOL plant and scab workers are known to have been involved in recent violent attacks including the murder of five strikers.

Sir Owen Green, BTR chairman [*sic*], rejected requests for a negotiated end to the dispute, making it claer he would not instruct the South African subsidiary to meet the union.

He also refused demands for BTR to disinvest from South Africa.

The meeting was brought to an abrupt end with protestots unfurling banners with the company's initials spelt out as "Blood, Tears, Repression" and chants of "every year, we'll be here, settle now!"

Following the AGM, NUMSA held a press conference at which a number of substantial Local Authority shareholders including Sheffield, Derby, Brent and Ealing Councils pledged their support for the unions camapign against BTR.

For further information and details of forthcoming activities, including at the Wimbledon tennis championships, contact the NUMSA camapign supporters network at NCSN, c/o GMBATU, Council Yard, Mill Rd, Cambridge; tel. 0223-467473.

Nicaragua: 10 years of revolution

Ortega speaks

On a stifling hot evening, with a whiff of Central America in the air, an audience of 2,300 people heard Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega speak at Central Hall, Westminster.

The meeting was held at the end of a 36-hour visit to Britain in which he met both the Queen and Mrs Thatcher.

Ortega's speech was introduced by Andy De La Tour who pointed out, to much applause, that Ortega would meet "a different Britain here than he had met at Downing Street."

Ortega made it clear he had not come to beg for solidarity. Countries like Nicaragua had already paid their foreign debt many times over through resources stolen from them by imperialist economies.

He pointed out that 60,000 Nicaraguans had been killed in the Contra war — a percentage of the total population which amounted to nothing less than US sponsored genocide.

By *Briefing* correspondents

The tone of his speech was not one of aggression or even a desire to smash imperialism; it was more an expression of overwhelming war-weariness.

Ortega spoke of a country under siege, both from the *Contras* and a US campaign of insidious disinformation.

He spoke of the desire of the people of Nicaragua for peace and an end to the *Contra* war which had devastated the country's economy and restricted its programme of economic and political change.

Ortega emphasised that he was speaking on behalf of the Nicaraguan people — the intellectuals, the workers, the "mothers", and stressed their desire for and progress already made towards working with other Central American states to bring peace to the whole region.

Yet, beyond a reference to the Palestinan people, Ortega made no attempt to place the struggles of Nicaragua in any broader context, nor to analyse the policies of the Sandinista government.

This was not, in the usual sense, a political speech. Ortega is no Castro. He does not have the same charismatic delivery; the power to hold a crowd transfixed for hour after hour.

Collective

His strength is his image as a popular representative of his own people, a leader sharing collective responsibility.

On a lighter note, Ortega told the audience how a debate had emerged amongst his advisers and Sandinista ministers about whether he should wear a suit to meet Mrs. Thatcher, instead of his customary green fatigues.

In the end, he chose the latter, against advice. He believed that it made little difference to Thatcher's perception of the Nicaraguan people!

Earlier, novelist Graham Greene had flown in from the South of France to deliver a strong message of support.

Children from a Welsh primary school presented Ortega with gifts and the Cardiff Red Choir sang the *Internationale* and the *Himno de Sandinistas.*

But the evening's power and strength was not about stirring revolutionary speeches from Ortega or anyone else.

It was about the demonstration of solidarity, by British socialists, trade unionists, and internationalists who had turned out in a display which Daniel Ortega will be able to take back with him to Nicaragua, a counter-weight to Thatcher's lies and lectures.

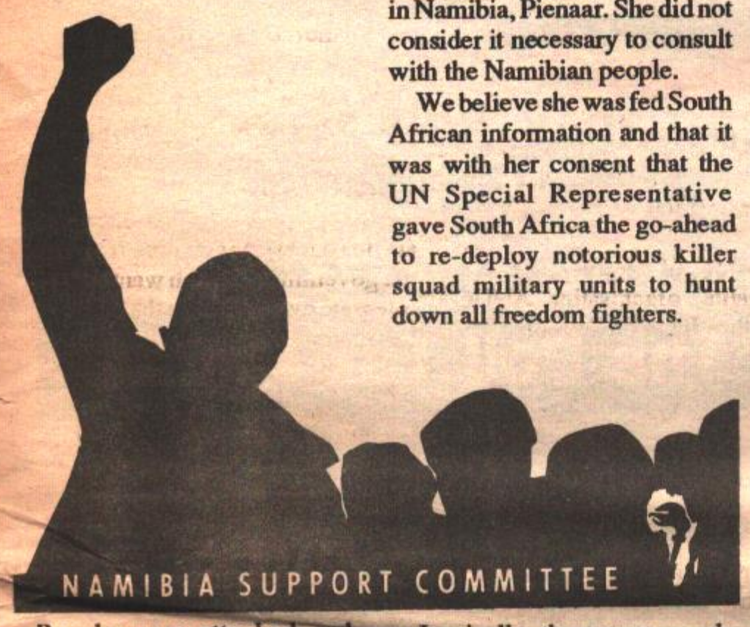
Namibian workers speak out

The truth about South Africa and the UN

We want to correct the impression of the independence process in Namibia in which Namibia is portrayed as a UN success story.

South Africa is portrayed as playing a key conciliatory role, while the people's organisation and liberation movement SWAPO is portrayed as an unreasonable — even terrorist — grouping.

From April 1st onwards numerous incidents of intimidation of SWAPO supporters occurred in Windhoek, Tsumeb, the northern regions and other parts of the country.



People were attacked and killed by pro-South African forces and police and army members. This occurred without any intervention by the UN forces who until very recently were only to be seen in shops, bars and restaurants.

SWAPO has been fighting for the liberation of Namibia from foreign rule for over 22 years. The struggle has been sustained by the active support of the majority of Namibians.

Members of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) have been operating from within Namibia since 1966.

These comrades were ruthlessly attacked and slain when they assembled themselves on April 1st. Their intention was to give themselves over to UN forces and be restricted to bases inside Namibia.

From April 1st onwards South African police were supposed to be armed only with side arms and restriced to "normal" duties.

In fact the police, acting on intelligence, planned and carefully staged genocide attacks on assembling PLAN fighters.

The first carefully executed attacks occurred over a front of 400 km and at five or six different places.

Clearly this was not a chance brush with guerilla forces. There are indications that a policy of taking no prisoners was implemented.

On April 1st Thatcher treated Namibians with contempt by visiting Namibia and holding discussions with SA foreign minister Botha and the SA agent in Namibia, Pienaar. She did not consider it necessary to consult with the Namibian people.

We believe she was fed South African information and that it was with her consent that the UN Special Representative gave South Africa the go-ahead to re-deploy notorious killer squad military units to hunt down all freedom fighters.

Ironically, these very people are claiming to be the guardians of our independence.

For 10 years they have delayed the peace plan and killed and oppressed us. Now they have succeeded in convincing the UN to back their genocide against Namibians.

Following the first attacks on PLAN fighters, reinforcements came from Angola to defend those who were under attack. A number of skirmishes followed.

In April meetings between South Africa, Angola and Cuba, with the presence of Soviet and US observers, led to the Mount Etjo declaration.

Countries

The declaration shows once again how some countries have nothing but contempt for the sovereignty of the Namibian people and the reality of our liberation struggle.

The Mount Etjo talks were meant to resolve the problem of SWAPO's armed presence in Namibia. But SWAPO was not even invited to these talks.

Unable to defeat the armed struggle for liberation, South Africa has now managed to get the backing of world powers for an agreement which would force our combatants to surrender themselves, to give up their arms before being transported to Angola.

Enemy

Is it conceivable that an undefeated army would ever surrender to its enemy?

We wish to remind you and the entire international community of who the aggressors are in the Namibian conflict. We never invited South Africa to rob our land, to kill our people, and to rule us harshly.

We are the sons and daughters of the Namibian soil. South Africa is the murderer, the thief and the criminal.

South Africans have for years been considered an illegal occupation force by the very western governments that recently agreed with South Africa that our brothers in PLAN must return to Angola.

All these events have occurred in a situation where the UN forces are supposed to monitor and check South African actions. South African atrocities against Namibians have been well documented and are especially known to the UN.

But UNTAG forces were unprepared for their deployment in Namibia.

Had they been in positions in northern Namibia the attacks on PLAN fighters would not have occurred. Had they been present in the townships and villages much violence and intimidation could have been avoided.

Namibians turning for help and protection to UNTAG forces have been met with the UN's admitted inability to restrain South African police and army units. The UN and its member states are showing their true relations to South Africa.

They are solely concerned with seeking accommodation with that unruly child of world politics, South Africa.

Taken from a National Union of Namibian Workers Report

Turkey

A challenge from below



Workers, "going sick" en masse, march to the hospitals

Since the setback for the governing right-wing party (ANAP) in the local election results of March 26th, the major cities have witnessed a wave of industrial action.

Some 500,000 workers have taken to the streets in the past seven weeks, bringing an end to nine years of silence following the military coup of 1980.

By Sahin Cengiz
Haringey Labour Briefing

These actions were orchestrated in the main by public sector workers, demanding a 170% pay rise, along with a general strike call, which is illegal in Turkey.

The sole trade union confederation, Turk-Is, has worked hard to limit the struggle. The Turk-Is bureaucrats have always hoped to clinch a bargain without resorting to strikes.

This aim is reflected in the passivity of workers' actions to date — canteen and factory boycotts, reporting sick *en masse*.

However, the challenge from below is so powerful that these so-called "passive" actions have caused havoc.

Production within the petroleum industry, for example, is reported to have fallen by 20% with long queues of lorries waiting at refinery entrances.

Bus drivers in Istanbul have driven at only 15 miles an hour, a literal "go-slow".

What's more, thousands of workers have spent their lunch hours at factory demonstrations, shouting "General Strike!" and anti-government slogans.

Sometimes, having reported sick *en masse*, workers have marched to the hospital in their thousands.

All these actions have been spontaneous movements on the part of the workers, in direct opposition to the directions of the Turk-Is bureaucracy.

The government has taken a hard-line view of rising militancy. The Prime Minister claims the workers have been provoked by the hard left.

Stomachs

Workers on the streets respond by pointing to their empty stomachs or meagre pay packets, shouting "This is the true agent provocatuer!".

This is not illogical, considering the fall in real wages by about 60% since 1980, along with a galloping inflation rate of at least 70%.

Discontent reached new levels after brutal police attacks on May Day demonstrators in Istanbul.

The government declared all May Day celebrations illegal, but thousands of workers and students marched in the streets of Istanbul.

Police used extreme violence to disperse them, and when protestors fought back, defending themselves against police truncheons, police opened fire killing one and injuring 50.

The volatile situation makes ever more likely the possibility of a huge public sector strike (proposed for May 25th) involving around a million workers. Twenty thousand steel workers in Karabuk and Iskenderun have been on strike since May 5th.

The government and Turk-Is are now attempting to speed up agreement on a "reasonable" pay rise before the struggle gets out of control. Whatever the result of negotiations, recent events clearly demonstrate a growing wave of militancy.

The Turkish working class as a whole is gaining experience. The demoralisation of the last nine years is at last being overturned by mass action against ruthless state violence and extreme exploitation.

The industrial action, the crisis within parliament, whose legitimacy has been called into question by the local elections, and a worsening economic situation herald a new era in Turkey's history.

Chaos

With the right-wing government in chaos, and the ruling class unable to sort out the mess, the time is ripe for struggle.

The responsibility for victory or defeat lies first and foremost with the Turkish working class, but also with their international comrades.

Chinese masses on the move

Workers and students join hands

Distance, language and preconcieved ideas make it difficult to understand the huge struggle going on in Beijing.

By Garth Frankland
Leeds Councillor

For the capitalist magazine *The Economist*, as for the rest of the press in Britain, the situation is summed up in the question "Can China free itself from Communism?"

But this view is hard to square with the spectacle of students and workers singing the *Internationale* and welocming Gorbachev.

The last 12 months in China have seen wave after wave of protests by students against corrupt and incompetent government. During each upswing the workers have held back from joining in the protests until these were nearly at their height.

The Chinese government would then offer concessions, the movement would ebb, but nothing was ever delivered, so the students started again. With each wave, the alliance between the students and the workers seems to have grown stronger.

The demands of the hunger strikers for a complete reform of the state, along the lines of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, are going to be difficult for the Chinese government to grant.

The level of corruption is higher than in the USSR and the bureacracy has moved further down the road towards an accomodation with imperialism.

The deal with Britain over Hong Kong and the massive concessions given to western capitalists, while protecting the interests of the bureaucratic elite, do not allow much room for giving in to the demands of the students and workers.

The Chinese people have been repeatedly told by their government that they already have socialism — and even communism.

However, the overwhelming majority of them reject the existing system which drives them to hunger and poverty and destroys their freedom.

They look towards the West and capitalism to provide an answer.

Every Chinese city leadership is involved in a mad scramble to twin with the West. China weeks now occur in every town in Britain from Bournemouth to Leeds.

The visting delegations are large and frequent. They are backed by the Chinese government who see them as a way of increasing trade.

The twinning of Leeds with Hangchow, for example, was arranged by the wife of the Chinese ambassador who brought perssure to bear to speed up the twinning.

The students' demands for democratic reforms, the singing of the *Internationale*, the joint demonstrations waving red flags with the workers, all cut across the Chinese government's drive towards the West.

Inside the movement in China, discussion is going on as to how to bring about real socialism. The ideas of previous dissident movements (as outlined in the book *Wild Lilies. Poisonous Weeds*) are being brought back to life.

LABOUR BRIEFING

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Non-payment in Scotland

Media manipulation and the missing 100,000

Although the Poll Tax was introduced in Scotland on April 1st, it will be some time before we know what level of support there is for non-payment.

By late June everyone eligible will be expected to have made some payment.

During this interim period the government have stepped-up intimidation by regularly screening a particulary obnoxious TV commercial, which equates non-payers with those suicidal aviation pioneers who preceded the Wright Brothers.

The old black and white footage is accompanied by a chorus from a 60s record, "Make it easy on yourself", i.e. sign a direct debit to pay Thatcher;s Tax.

For those without a bank account, or any prospect of opening one, this attempted indoctrination is highly offensive. Yet not one Labour MP has complained of this media manipulation, which goes on day and night.

Edinburgh has the highest Poll Tax in Scotland at £392. The administration of this Tax is in the hands of Lothian Regional Council, of which Edinburgh forms a substantial part.

A document prepared by Lothian's Social Work Department in April revealed that the Finance Department expected to apply for up to 100,000 summary warrants for non-payment of the Tax by the end of July.

If Lothian's figures were similar throughout Scotland, 700,000 would be in the non-payment camp.

By Jim Niblock
Glasgow Central CLP

However, this is likely to be an exaggeration, for the fact remains that since Labour withdrew from the fight against Poll Tax implementation, the campaign has been leaderless and fragmented.

On the ground there are several hundred anti-Poll Tax groups, most of which affiliate to the Federation, in which *Militant* supporters have played a prominent role.

But even these groups have found it difficult to stimulate activity since Labour's turn-around last September.

This has not stopped the right-wing from pressing ahead with their witch-hunt against *Militant*. Tommy Sheridan, Secretary of the Anti-Poll Tax Federation, has been suspended from the Party.

Between 20 and 30 others are also expected to get the chop. Their main crime is support of non-payment — although something else will be found to list on the charge sheet.

Committees of 100 developed late and half-heartedly in Scotland and have little support. (This does not rule out a successful application of this tactic in parts of England and Wales, provided it is linked to local and workplace-based campaigns.)

The main expression of mass opposition against the Poll Tax is the spectacular growth in SNP support, reflected dramatically at the Govan by-election.

Most people are still not prepared to go out on the streets and demonstrate against Thatcher's Tax; they are looking for a political solution which Labour has failed to provide and which now seems to be offered by the SNP.

This may produce a paradoxical situation. Over the last six years Labour's dominance has grown steadily in Scotland but failure to oppose the Poll Tax could lead to a mass exodus.

In England, however. the precise opposite may occur: the Poll Tax levels in some areas of the South-east may be double that of Edinburgh. Kinnock may reap the benefit despite himself.

In Scotland, leading Councillors are already resigning. Last year Alex Wood, former leader of Edinburgh District Council, resigned, and later left the Labour Party.

David Wiseman, Deputy Leader of Glasgow District Council resigned last month, although it is not clear whether the Poll Tax had anything to do with it.

However, John Mulvey, Labour Group Leader on Lothian Regional Council, makes no bones about his decision not to stand in next year's elections:

"As far as I'm concerned the Poll Tax was the last straw... collectively we should have put up a more serious fight against its establishment...

"I suppose it came about because we are so wedded as a Party to the idea of the 'Parliamentary Road to Socialism' that we are not prepared to give consideration to other means of achieving our political ends."

Mulvey, a left winger, could hardly maintain his political principles while hundreds of Labour voters are being harassed by Sheriff Officers in Lothian.

If the figure of 100,000 is even half right Scottish Labour may yet find itself sacrificed on the altar of New Realism.

Poll Tax Diary

London Against the Poll Tax
SUNDAY, JUNE 4th
Assemble 1pm, Central Hall, Westminster; Rally Conway Hall, Red Lion Square.

Sheffield Against the Poll Tax
SATURDAY, JUNE 10th
Assemble 1pm, the Old Bus Station; Rally 2.15, City Hall steps. Contact SCCAU, 724866.

Glasgow
SATURDAY, JUNE 24th
Non-Payment Demonstration

National TUC Demonstration
JULY 1st; MANCHESTER

The Poll Tax Pledge

Registering the unregistered!

Islington Against the Poll Tax is seeking signatures to the following Pledge.

Signatories should send their name, address, and an indication of whether they are prepared for their names to be publicised to: Islington Against the Poll Tax, Freepost, London N7 9BR.

We are opposed to the Poll Tax.

We believe that it is unfair, unjust, and undemocratic.

We believe that the Government should think again.

We believe that the Government will not reconsider without compulsion.

We therefore resolve to obstruct the implementation of the Poll Tax.

We will not:

(i) respond to the Registration form,

(ii) pay the Poll Tax when asked.

Computer hackers join the fray

The Poll Tax is already proving the most hated of all Tory measures in Scotland.

For the first time in ten years the MORI opinion poll for *The Scotsman* showed something other than unemployment as the major worry for voters.

According to the poll, 77% of the electorate disapprove of the Poll Tax and only 20% are in favour.

Mike Watson, Labour's candidate in the Glasgow Central by-election, has called himself a "reluctant" payer of the Poll Tax. This statement sums up the failure of Labour's leadership in Scotland.

With Labour's refusal to lead a mass non-payment campaign, the anti-Poll Tax fight has become a grass-roots campaign in the communities.

In reality it has always been this. Indeed, the much maligned *Militant* supporters have built their Anti-Poll Tax Unions very much on this basis.

The Anti-Poll Tax Unions are planning an all-Scottish non-payment demonstration on Saturday, 24th June, in Glasgow. Such initiatives put to shame the massed weight of the labour bureaucracy and the STUC.

By Rowland Sheret Scottish Labour Briefing

Grass-roots activists, Trades Councils, supporters of the *Militant* and the Socialist Workers Party, and most of all local tenants and their organisations are now the backbone of opposition.

The Scottish National Party has maintained a non-payment position which has ensured continuing media coverage for this issue. The SNP however lack the organisation, the numbers, and perhaps the will, to lead a genuine mass campaign.

Throughout Scotland there is a general reluctance to co-operate with what is seen as an unjust and inequitable tax.

Regional Councillors, who are helping administrate this Tory tax, are often torn in their loyalties, despite the assurance of Donald Dewar, Neil Kinnock, and the Labour Party Scottish Conference, all of whom have told Councillors that they have no alternative but to implement the law.

The Poll Tax seems to generate endless form-filling and administration.

In Central Region a second round of registration forms was sent out to "responsible persons" to register for 1990/91, not long after the first payment books had been issued for the 1989/90 tax.

The rebate scheme is confused and the apparatus set up to administer it is unable to cope. The non-registered are still awaiting any follow-up to the first round of fines. Now the computer hackers have joined in the fray.

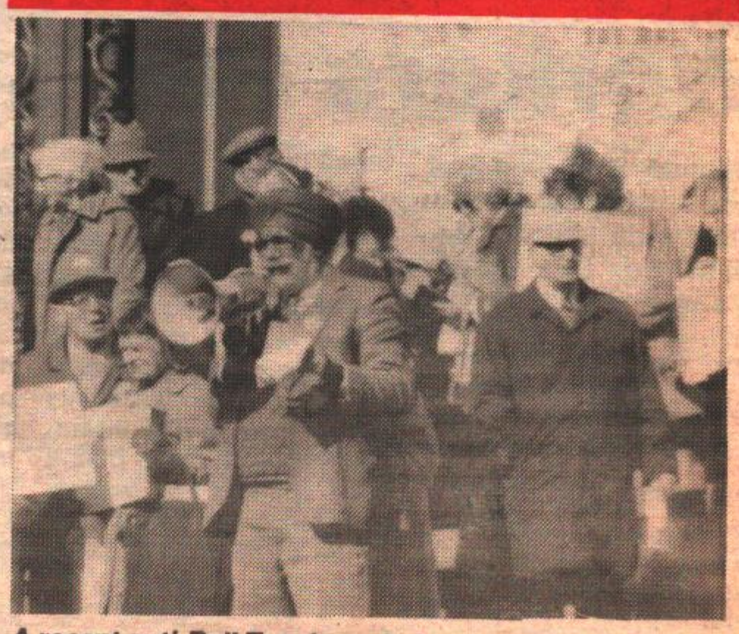
***The Scotsman* of May 13th reports: "Computer hackers have tampered with the Poll Tax programmes used by at least three Scottish Councils and the registers of those liable to pay the Tax have been thrown into chaos..."**

Lothian Region, Tayside Region, and Highland Region are mentioned in the article as areas where a computer "virus" may have been deliberately inserted into the Poll Tax records.

The Department of Social Security computer system may also have been affected.

The Labour leader of Lothian Regional Council, John Mulvey, commented, "Given the level of opposition it isn't surprising if some academic brains have put in the time to make sure the computer system will not work."

Leeds



A recent anti-Poll Tax demo in Leeds, where a series of local meetings involving students, Council workers, and local residents have been held.