LABOUR BRIEFING

40p FORTNIGHTLY

NO. 85 JUNE 7-20 1989

INSIDE:

★Hopes for the third Socialist Conference
★Veteran Chinese Trotskyist, Wang Fanxi on Chinese revolution
★Debate: an economic policy for the left
★CLR remembered

40p

BUREAUCRATS WILL NOT PREVAIL

CHINESE STALINISTS MASSACRE STUDENTS AND WORKERS

For more than three weeks the world has been gripped by the spectacle of Chinese students, joined by workers from autonomous trade unions, fighting for democracy.

In response, the stymied Stalinist leaders turned to butchery. As their orchestrated "counter-demonstrations" collapsed into farce, and as secret police began arresting workers' leaders in factories, the ruling elite sent in tanks and troops to crush the democratic movement.

The army's savage brutality is unparalelled in any post-capitalist state since Russian soldiers put down the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

By Labour Briefing Editorial Board

Students were machine-gunned and crushed by tanks in Tienanmen Square. Soldiers fired indiscriminately at the ordinary people of Beijing who had come out onto the streets to protest. The army entered Beida — the largest Beijing university — searching, beating, and killing.

The heroism of the students and the workers of Beijing is extraordinary. Repeatedly, they erected barricades and faced-down army units. On Saturday evening, the night of the massacre, tens of thousands came out on the streets to do battle with the army, with Molotov cocktails, with sticks and stones, with bare hands.

Rows of students in Tienanmen Square linked arms to face machine guns, and as they fell others came forward to take their place in the firing line.

Students had to be literally dragged from the Square when resistance became hopeless. And as day broke on Sunday morning, workers came out on the streets to renew the battle with the army.

As we go to press, protest strikes have broken out in Shanghai. Even if the strike movement is crushed and "order" restored, the bloody "victory" of Li Peng and Deng Xiaoping will be phyrric.

The bureaucratic elite and the army have lost all legitimacy and all support among ordinary people. The Chinese Communist Party is in ferment from the top down.



PHOTO: Tim Nolan

Demonstrations in London on Sunday June 4th, the day after the massacre in Beijing.

Either Li Peng and Deng Xiaoping will be removed and sweeping democratic reforms instituted, or rebellion will erupt again.

The army was sent in, after Deng and Li had defeated Zhao Ziyang and the "reformist" wing of the Communist Party leadership, precisely because of the massive support given by the workers to the students.

This movement, for socialism with democracy, is the culmination of a series of revolts since the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. Those who have been massacred had the support of millions — Deng and Li have the support of no one but the army, and possibly only a section of that.

And an army alone cannot prevail unless it has some sort of social base, some mass support for its actions.

China's ten years of economic "reform", and marketisation have not seen any democratic advance. Power is still monopolised by the bureaucratic elite.

By choosing to crush the democracy movement, the Communist Party leaders have only ensured that new leaders, new political currents, new efforts at organising resistance will emerge.

The thousands of dead and the bodies littering the streets and filling the hospitals are testimony not to a self-confident regime brushing aside a weak opposition, but a panic-stricken ruling elite fighting for its very existence.

The people of China will never forget or forgive what has been done. Against them the present regime cannot and will not prevail.

● Send messages of protest from labour movement bodies to the Chinese Consulate, 41 Portland Place, London W1.

● *Briefing* supports the China Solidarity Campaign; speakers and information from 68 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1.

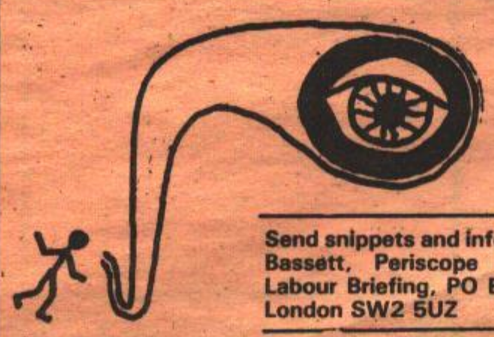
● A Socialist Conference protest meeting is being planned for Sun. June 11th as we go to press. Ring 01-809 3927 for more details.

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LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Letters

Periscope



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

Amen!

Robert Kilroy-Silk, former Labour MP for Knowsley North and currently picket-line crossing TV eminence, is disappointed.

Just when it looked like the Labour Party was beginning to appear "moderate and sensible... up pops Martha Osamor."

Kilroy-Silk vented his despair in a *Times* article entitled "Martyred by the Marthas" in which he fulminated against "Martha and some of her new-found friends" who would "undemocratically ... impose a black candidate on the white two thirds majority" of Vauxhall electors.

However, even Killyjoy-Silk had to admit that Martha won the support of local Party members fair and square.

To him this "suggests that the loonies are still with us... Whatever gloss Neil Kinnock tries to put on it, behind the moderate veneer of the national Labour Party there are still a thousand Martha Osamors."

No help needed, says Neil

A offer by Trade Unions for Labour to pay for a full-time Labour Party employee to work on the NHS Review has been turned down by Neil Kinnock.

Robin Cook, to whom the TUFL-financed worker would have been assigned, was understandably miffed.

But the Great Helmsman of the Craggy Cliffs told Cook he couldn't possibly approve the extra worker – after all, "everyone would want one."

Docks Docket

Did you know...

- That unlike British ports most ports in Europe get massive government subsidies which enable them to maintain "profitability".
- That according to leaked internal documents both the Department of Transport and the National Association of Port Employers expected immediate and all-out strike action when the abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme was *announced* — and were making strike-busting plans accordingly.
- That the National Association of Port Employers claims the abolition will create "a loyal, united workforce... free form statutory demarcation lines and third party interference."

Unilateralism: People's Choice

From a Gallup poll, February, 1989:

"Here are two views about disarmament. Which one do you agree with more?

"We will only make progress with disarmament if one side takes the initiative. That would be proof of good will that the other side cannot ignore. This would lead to peace and better international relations."

Or...

"The government that initiates unilateral disarmament lays itself open to possible attack. It is subject to blackmail and thus contributes more to insecurity than to peace between East and West."

Result: 62% agree with the first proposition, 28% with the second, and 9% don't know.

Marxist Meterology

The glorious warm weather is set to continue until beyond the middle of June, but after that there is bad news for Wimbledon and the cricket season.

So predicts Piers Corbyn, *Briefing* supporter, Labour Councillor, and astrophysicist turned long-range weather forecaster.

Piers has just won £290 from William Hill for successful wagers on the dry and sunny weather in May.

Using his unique "solar-weather cycle" studies, Piers says:

"We can expect daily minimum temperatures in the 70s, and sometimes in the 80s, to continue almost without break until the third of fourth week of June for most of England and Wales, with the Midlands and South being generally hotter than the North.

"After that the weather is expected to break dramatically."

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, June 14th if possible.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

Out of the frying pan, into the cold...

Dear *Briefing*,

At last the cat is out of the bag!

Vincent Johnson has revealed why some supporters of *Briefing* are rushing to embrace PR. He says it "may enable a real socialist party to elect MPs" (*Briefing* no. 82).

In other words, in the hope of getting one or two MPs he is advocating that socialists should leave the Labour Party, thereby throwing away the influence we have on the mass party of the working class, and handing it over permanently to pro-capitalist leadership.

Vincent Johnson seems to be taking the advice of the liberal bourgeois press, who have always thought that socialists should have their own party, which could present a "pure" socialist programme to the electorate.

This is because they realise that in the Labour Party socialists are a potential threat to the *status quo*, but on their own they will be ghettoised — as the experience of the CP and SWP shows.

What on earth could Vincent Johnson's one or two MPs possibly achieve, having isolated themselves from the political movement of the working class? Perhaps he could enlighten us.

Yours faithfully,
Pete Willsman,
London SE18 1JT.

*More on the PR Debate: p7

Front to Back?

Dear *Briefing*,

Issue no. 84 of *Labour Briefing* must have been the only paper on the left in Britain not to feature the mobilisation in China on the front page (or at least the back page).

The events in China are of historical significance and the coverage in issue no. 84 was pathetic: a small article and a short editorial.

China should have been on the front page, with Tony Benn's article on the Policy Review on the back page or possibly page 2 or 3.

Letters and Periscope should be put towards the back. And events in the class struggle in general (not just in the Labour Party) must be given more prominence in general.

The *Briefing* Editorial Board ought to plan regular "heavy" but short articles on history of the labour movement, polemics against other currents, debates on programmatical questions.

Instead, *Briefing* gives the appearance of being *essentially* concerned with internal Labour Party affairs. This is wrong.

Of course, we must give extensive coverage to the Labour Party, but the front page of no. 84 ought to have been changed.

What's needed is a complete rethink of location of articles and features as well as relative prominence of articles on trade union and Labour Party struggles.

Yours,
Fred LePlat
Camden

*Editor's note: Readers, what's your opinion? Write in, and let us know what you think *Briefing's* priorities should be.

Labour Briefing Annual General Meeting

Saturday July 15th
10am-4.30pm
London

Your chance to challenge "Thatcherism", "Kinnockism", "post-Fordism", and "why-botherism".
A fun day out for all the... comrades

- **Morning: Plenary discussion on aspects of the "twin track" approach with Graham Bash, Rebecca Fleming, Martha Osamor, Reg Race and Joan Twelves.**
- **Lunch and *Briefing* raffle prize draw**
- **Organising for the future — Debates on: Building a new left in the Labour Party; Struggles and Campaigns outside the Party; how *Briefing* itself should organise. (Draft papers available in advance).**
- **Rally for Socialism with Jeremy Corbyn, Ken Livingstone (invited), Mandy Mudd, Alice Mahon plus speakers from current industrial and international disputes.**

To book creche places phone Mandy on 01-801 6041 (ansaphone).
To register in advance, and to order draft papers, phone 01-809 3927.

In solidarity with the Chinese Struggle

Sunday June 11th
Demonstration
Assemble 1pm, Stone Lion, Gerard Street to march to the Chinese Embassy
Solidarity Rally
Organised by the Socialist Conference, Chinese Solidarity Campaign, etc
3-5pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square
Speakers include Tony Benn

Contact Briefing

Please send all articles, correspondence and money to 39 Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB. You can telephone Briefing on 01-809 3927.

Next issues:
No: 86: Deadline for articles 12/6; distribution 20/6.
No. 87: Deadline for articles 26/6; distribution 4/7.

No. 87 is the last scheduled issue before the summer break. We are considering whether to produce a Summer Special: let us know if you have any views.

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

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Briefing Summer Raffle

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

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

Tickets can be obtained from John Wilton, 25 World's End Ave, Quinton, Birmingham B32 1JF, 021-422 1366. They cost £1 per book of 5 tickets.

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

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

The block vote and the left

Neil Kinnock has followed up the Policy Review with a promise to do away with the trade union block vote. John Edmonds is already setting the wheels in motion at the GMB's annual conference.

The goal is clear: the break-up of Labour's historic base in the organised working class and the creation of a new type of Party comprised of inactive individual members, with politics determined at the top.

The irony is that to achieve his goal Kinnock requires unflinching support from the very people whose influence would seem to be under threat: trade union bureaucrats.

Their support has been essential to Kinnock every inch of the way, from the attacks on *Militant* to the embrace of the nuclear bomb.

The vote at NUPE annual conference against unilateralism is clearly a major blow to the left and a victory for Kinnock, but it should not have been unexpected. Any lingering illusions that a left strategy can be based on alliances built at the top only must now be dispelled.

When it suited Bickerstaffe and Sawyer their union's longstanding peace commitments were reversed with minimal resistance from the rank and file, who indeed had never been allowed to play a significant role in determining the union's policy.

The left must redouble its opposition to Kinnock's attempt to break Labour's moorings in the trade unions. Inadequate, undemocratic, bureaucratic as these ties have been, without them Labour will become little more than a self-perpetuating clique of professional parliamentarians.

The working class, organised in the workplace, remains the key to defeating the Tories and to developing and implementing socialist policies. Labour therefore needs to strengthen, not weaken its links to the unions.

But the links must be taken out of the hands of the bureaucrats (for whom they are little more than a means of accruing personal power) and reforged on a new, democratic basis.

An extension of democracy and rank and file participation within the unions is an essential precondition for any sustained left revival within the Party.

We should work to organise grassroots socialist currents within all the unions and seek to win and mobilise support for socialist policies and leadership from the bottom up.

Industrial upsurge: breakthrough needed

As Thatcher prepares to sack Lawson, hoping that a new face can rescue her "economic miracle", a million and a half workers across ten industries are taking or considering strike action.

It will take more than a cabinet reshuffle to quell the discontent sparked by soaring inflation and a decade of attacks on working conditions and bargaining rights.

While the AUT has settled (reluctantly, and by a narrow margin) for a measly 6%, others may not be prepared to accept what is effectively a drop in pay.

NALGO's 500,000 local government members are being balloted on a 12% pay claim. ASLEF is about to ballot over pay for operators of driver-only trains.

But the new mood in the working class has yet to produce a major victory.

While many groups of workers are beginning to flex their industrial muscles, the trade union laws and union leaders' capitulation to them have so far saved employers and the government from a bloody nose.

As we go to press the port employers go to appeal in an attempt to overturn the High Court's refusal to grant an injunction banning strike action; and Ron Todd seems prepared to bide his time.

Unofficial action was beginning to appear to be a way around the law, but the Tories are moving fast to block the loophole.

Fowler's announcement that new legislation would be introduced in the autumn to rule out unofficial strikes may mark a return to Heath's Industrial Relations Act, under which unions were legally responsible for the actions of their members.

The Tories will continue to expand trade union legislation unless the unions act now, break the laws, and turn Thatcher's economic problems into an opening for a general offensive.

"Common Purpose" — in Ireland

Even the Tories conceded there was something dodgy about the conviction of the Sharpeville 6 under South Africa's notorious law of "common purpose".

Last month this miserable excuse for jurisprudence was hauled out once again as death sentences were passed on several of the Uppington 26. Their "crime" was having been part of a crowd involved in the killing of a policeman.

Within days the British version of "common purpose" was on display in a courtroom in the North of Ireland. Two men were convicted and sentenced for their presence at the killing of two off-duty British soldiers.

The soldiers had driven into a crowd gathered for the funerals of some of those who had been killed when a loyalist gunman opened fire on another crowd gathered for another funeral — that of the three IRA volunteers shot dead in Gibraltar by the British SAS.

In the North of Ireland at the beginning of June, the British Crown did not *prove* or even *allege* that the two men actually pulled the triggers or directly participated in the killings.

The much-vaunted modern video evidence showed only that the two were present at the scene. Even super-enhancement techniques failed to show that either of them pulled any trigger.

Nonetheless, both were convicted on murder charges and sentenced accordingly. This is nothing but "common purpose" British-style — a judicial method of dealing with collective resistance every bit as bogus as old fashioned "subversion" and "conspiracy" trials.

Thus, the process that began with a political execution in Gibraltar has continued with a political conviction in the North of Ireland. British justice, indeed.

Economic Notebook

As the Dollar soars

Stagflation returns

Briefing readers may have been rather bemused by the recent chaos in the world financial markets.

The dollar has been soaring, despite the bad economic situation in the USA.

Japan and West Germany, relatively strong economies, have been forced to raise interest rates — in the case of Japan for the first time in eight years.

Meanwhile in Britain, tragedy has turned to farce. One day, Thatcher says interest rates are high enough to do what she says they are supposed to do, control inflation.

The next day, Lawson raises interest rates — because Thatcher's statement has caused a run on the £!

The rift between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor caused one City pundit to comment: "The twitches about the political damage are far greater than I've seen in ten years of Mrs Thatcher."

To understand what's going on we have to look first at the *world* capitalist economy as a whole.

A striking feature is *rising* inflation. In the past year, inflation has increased from 3.9% to 4.8% in the USA, from 3.3% to 7,8% in Britain, and from 3.5% to 4.7% in the dominant capitalist countries as a whole.

These rates do not compare with the high inflation of the 70s. But they are worrying for the bourgeoisie.

Austerity policies, adopted by all governments since the mid 70s, were supposed to have made inflation a thing of the past. Inflation is rising despite a slowdown in the world economy and high unemployment in West Germany.

By Jamie Gough
Holborn & St Pancras CLP

It is rising despite decreasing barriers to international trade, which should lower prices. And it is rising despite two and a half years of ferocious anti-inflation policy in the US, of which more below.

The fundamental reason for rising inflation is that the "boom" of the 1980s has not produced enough world investment to keep up with demand.

Despite the recent anti-inflation policy in the US, a lot of extra spending power has been created (and borrowed by the US).

But capitalists have still not been confident enough to invest in capacity that would meet this demand, because the rate of profit is still low by historical standards.

In the US, for example, net investment fell from an average of 7% on GNP in the 1970s (itself hardly a golden age of capitalism) to only 5% in the 1980s.

The rise in inflation has so far been met by two responses. First, the classic monetarist recipe: restrict the money supply. For the last two and a half years this theory has been applied by the US; as a result the number of dollars has been at a virtual standstill.

The second response is to raise interest rates. Higher interest rates choke off borrowing and thus reduce demand — though these days they have the awkward tendency to choke off *investment* spending faster than *consumer* spending.

Again, the US was the first to go for this: the interest rate has increased by 3% over the last year, up to a high level of 11%.

This tight money policy has caused speculative money to flow into the dollar, despite the underlying weakness of the US economy. The result has been that since January the dollar has risen 30% against the Deutsch mark and 20% against the yen.

In response, other imperialist countries have also raised interest rates, with the aim of stopping the slide in the value of their currencies.

Changes in currency values of this sacle disrupt trade and "planning" by capitalist firms. Moreover, falls in the value of a currency produce *more inflation* in that country, as imports become more expensive.

The overall effect is *a world rise in interest rates* led by the US. *This will have a strong deflationary effect on the world economy.*

All this would be bad enough, but is made worse by the huge trade deficits of the US and Britain and worsening trade balances in France and Italy.

High currency values for the US dollar, and until recently for the £, may be good for fighting inflation. But they worsen trade deficits by making imports cheaper and exports more expensive.

In the US, the high dollar has prevented any improvement in the trade deficit. This is why the US government has started threatening protectionist measures against allegedly protectionist competitors — notably Japan.

Monetary policy is anyway squeezing the US economy into recession, which may finally



"improve" the trade deficit. The soaring dollar is therefore not a sign of strength of the US economy, but a part of its problem.

The contradictions for British capital are even more acute. Britain's inflation rate is by far the highest of any major capitalist country. This is because its investment rate during the 1980s has been by far the lowest.

Supply of domestically produced goods is now 5% less than demand. It is this disastrous productive record that is now causing the rows within the government over money policy.

To restrain inflation, the government is keeping the £ high — through high interest rates and through Bank of England buying.

But a high £ makes the already disastrous balance of trade even worse. This dilemma surfaces, though in a rather confused form, in the Thatcher-Lawson feud.

Thatcher still believes that control of the money supply and therefore *inflation* is all that matters.

Lawson, however, is worried about the effect that this has on the *exhange rate* of sterling, since he believes, with justification, that a *stable* exchange rate is important, particularly in relation to the balance of trade.

Thus he kept the £ *down* in 1988 and has tried to keep the £ *up* in recent weeks — in both cases against Thatcher's wishes.

The predictablly pathetic response of the Labour leadership to all this has been to call for deflation via credit controls. *With three million unemployed, Labour calls for deflation!*

They have no serious proposals for increasing the rate of productive investment, which is the root of the world problems.

And they have zero to say about the *world* money markets, which are currently dragging the world economy towards a slump. But then, markets are so efficient and flexible, aren't they?

Debate: an economic policy for the left

Productive and Competitive Economy Policy Review

Why the Policy Review's strategy will not work



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

With his alternative to Labour's Policy Review economic document, Ken Livingstone (above) hopes to encourage debate. Briefing invites contributions!

For the Labour Party to win the next election it must first adopt a credible economic policy.

The failure to present such a policy fatally wrecked our last election campaign and more than anything else caused our defeat.

The economic policy contained in the Policy Review does not deal with the decisive problem — that British manufacturing industry is not internationally competitive.

By Ken Livingstone MP

Nor does it deal with the question of finding the resources to carry through our economic and social programme. This will allow the Tories to exploit two fears in the minds of voters:

•that economic regeneration would be financed through taxation on ordinary incomes — the position that lost us the 1987 election;

•that resources would be found by the use of wage controls, which would not be accepted by the trade unions and would also lose us the election, as the experience of 1966-70 and 1975-79 shows.

Either policy means financing industrial regeneration by attacking the living standards of ordinary people — the voters Labour must rely on.

It is therefore an economic strategy which cannot work and will not be believed by the electorate.

The major problem facing the British economy and any incoming government is the balance of payments deficit.

The core of the deterioration in the balance of payments is the situation in manufacturing trade.

The surplus on invisibles has remained relatively static over the long term — ranging between 1 and 2.4% of GDP.

The situation on basic materials and food, drink, and tobacco has improved — and the situation on fuel has moved from deficit into surplus.

But the balance of trade in manufactured goods has deteriorated from a surplus of 6% of GDP in 1963 to a deficit of 4% of GDP in 1988.

This astonishing worsening of 10% of GDP in the balance of manufactured trade is the entire cause of the present deterioration of the balance of payments. It will dominate economic policy in the UK in the 1990s.

There are clear reasons why this situation cannot be considered temporary. The first is the long term deterioration in the competitiveness of British manufacturing. The second is based on the geographical distribution of trade.

The only major area of the world with which Britain now has a trade surplus is with the oil producing countries — due to the impact of North Sea oil.

The trade surplus with the United States, which reached 0.5% of GDP in 1985-87, has now turned into a deficit of £200 million in 1988, is running at a level of over £900 million in 1989, and is likely to increase.

This clearly reflects the effect of dollar devaluation.

The surplus with the United States was used to compensate for the deficit with Japan (equivalent to 1% of GDP) or the deficit with the EEC (equivalent to almost 3.5% of GDP — half of which is accounted for by West Germany alone).

Given the likely policies of the Bush administration, Britain's balance of trade with the US will get worse and worse.

West Germany, the most important EEC economy, is responding to its falling trade surplus with the US — down from $14.5 billion in 1987 to $9.2 billion in 1988 — by increasing exports in Europe.

West Germany's surplus with the UK is greater than any other EEC country — $13.4 billion in 1988 compared to $9.4 billion for France and $8.3 billion for Italy.

The UK is therefore trapped between the US economy on the one side, which has become more competitive due to dollar devaluations, and West Germany on the other.

The background to this unfavourable trend lies in developments in Europe itself. Since the economic crisis of the mid-1970s EEC economic growth and capital formation sharply.

Since 1975 economic growth in the EEC has lagged behind Japan and the US.

The rate of growth of capital formation in the EEC did not regain its 1979 level until 1987 and now lags far behind that of the US and Japan. This lack of investment explains the increasing uncompetitiveness of West European industry.

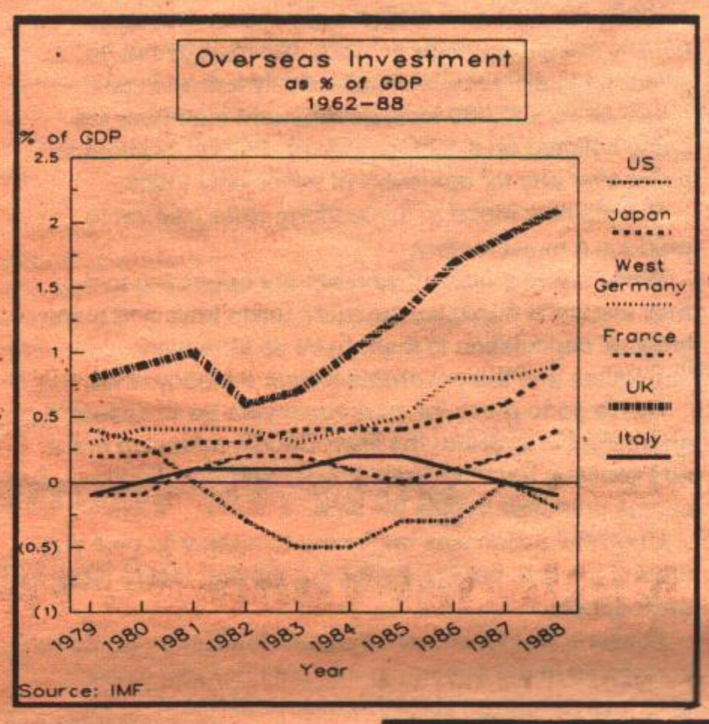
Moreover, investment in Britain is a lower percentage of GDP than in any major EEC country. In '88, investment was 18.2% of UK GDP compared to 19.2% in France and 20.2% in West Germany and Italy.

This is equivalent, in terms of the size of the UK economy, to a £4.6 billion investment gap compared to France and Italy and £9.2 billion compared to West Germany.

In the last quarter of 1988 the proportion of GDP accounted for by investment in the UK declined further. Investment has fallen despite the fact that private investment has increased as a proportion of GDP.

The reason for the overall decline is the collapse of public sector investment from over 8% of GDP in 1974 to under 3% in 1988 — a decline only *partially* accounted for by the transfer between sectors produced by privatisation.

To bring British domestic investment up to the same proportion of GDP as France would require an increase of £4.6 billion a year. To bring it up to West German and Italian levels would require an increase of £9.2 billion a year.



To match the Japanese would require an increase of £55.2 billion.

Following 1979 manufacturing investment, in particular, slumped from 3.25% of GDP to 2.25% — far lower levels than any of Britain's competitors.

This is 1% of GDP (equivalent to £4.6 billion) behind Sweden, 1.35% (£6.1 billion) behind West Germany and 1.5% (£6.9 billion) behind Holland.

The most urgent task in economic regeneration is to shift a minimum of 1% of GDP, £4.6 billion, into manufacturing investment. This means a 40% increase, but without it UK manufacturing industry cannot regain international competitiveness.

Although Britain has the lowest rate of investment (in particular in manufacturing) of any major country, it has the highest rate of overseas investment.

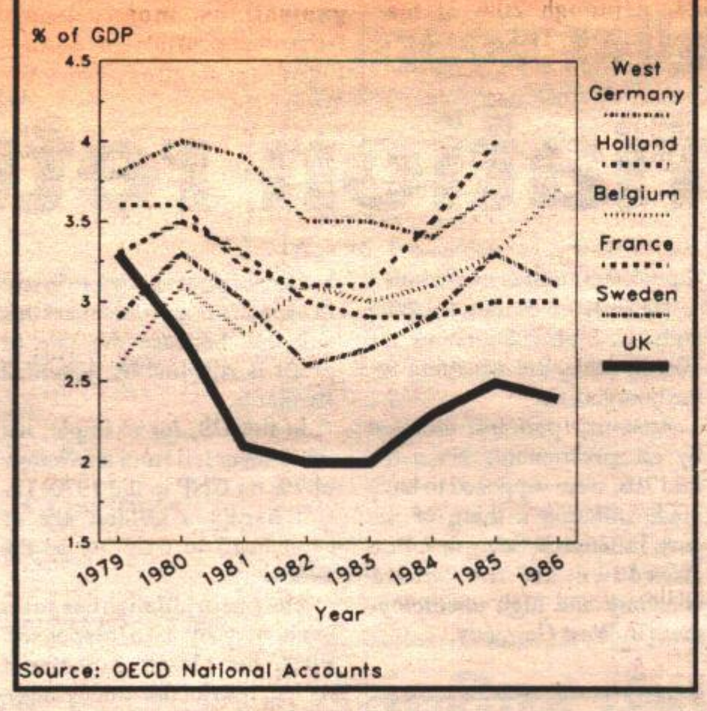
Direct overseas investment as a ratio to GDP vastly exceeds that of any other competitor. It is 1.25% of GDP (equivalent to £5.9 billion) greater than Japan or West Germany and nearly 2% of GDP (£9.2 billion) greater than France.

While Britain underperforms in domestic investment it overperforms in investment abroad. The excess in overseas direct investment over our competitors is equivalent to the shortfall of domestic investment.

The fundamental problem is that Britain spends 2% more of GDP (equivalent to £9.2 billion) on defence than its major West European competitors — and more than 4% (equivalent to £18.4 billion) more than Japan.

As this gap is greater than the entire shortfall on domestic investment it is ridiculous to attempt to frame an economic policy without tackling this issue.

To raise investment on manufacturing industry to the level of our European competitors requires an increase of £4.6 billion a year. To raise it to West German levels, leaving us far behind Japan, requires an increase of £6.9 billion.



However, increased investment in manufacturing will only bring increased competitiveness if it is accompanied by the necessary investment in infrastructure.

This means that we must seek to raise overall investment in the economy by a minimum of £9.2 billion if we are to reach West German levels.

The other main distortion of the British economy is the level of defence spending. This is not just an issue of research and development as suggested in the Policy Review.

The resources for such investment, as well as those for Labour's social programmes, are available. Reduction of defence spending to the same level as our West European competitors would release £9.2 billion a year — 2% of GDP.

Reduction of overseas direct investment to the level of West Germany and Japan would represent £6.9 billion for increased investment in the UK. This is without mobilising existing foreign assets (which amount to £100 billion net).

With such resources to be mobilised no substantial obstacles to Labour's programme exist, provided clear decisions on priorities are taken. Socialism remains the language of priorities.

Europe, with neither the dominant world position of the US, nor the low military spending of Japan, is doomed to economic stagnation. Britain in particular will suffer due to its low level of investment.

The way out of this situation is obvious. For Europe it consists of utilising the openings presented by Gorbachev, to achieve radical reductions in military spending and use this to relaunch investment — in particular in high tech industry.

Such policies require reforms to control the direction of capital and extend public ownership — there is no indication that the modernisation of Britain can be achieved by relying on market forces.

This economic package would also assemble an election winning social alliance.

It would mean Labour reaching out to the workers in the new high tech industries with the certainty that we, more than any other party, stand for the investment which will make these industries prosper and expand.

We would also reach out to employees in the vital infrastructure industries — transport, communications, construction — because it is here that much investment will be concentrated.

Particularly strong opportunities will exist for Labour to gain support in the education sector as big expansion in education will be required both for R&D and to provide the highly trained workforce needed for a growing domestic economy.

A modern high-tech economy can also be the basis of far superior environmental policies than the low tech squalor industries promoted by Thatcherism.

This policy would greatly improve the position of women and the black community because it requires an increase in skills with improved training and education opportunities.

It also touches the low paid — the national minimum wage becomes an integrated part of pushing the economy "up market". At the same time, the revival of the domestic economy will tackle unemployment.

Such a high tech modern economy would require strong trade unions representing working people, and the repeal of all Thatcher's post-1979 trade union laws.

The balance of payments situation leaves Labour no option but to seek to make Britain's manufacturing industry competitive. The only question is who will bear the burden of this and where the resources will come from.

The resources for rebuilding British manufacturing industry should be released by the subordination of foreign to domestic investment priorities and massive cuts in the burden of defence spending.

The Policy Review, by failing to tackle the excessive burdens which British manufacturing is forced to bear and by providing no means to resource the programmes it proposes, condemns the country to economic stagnation and fatally weakens the Party electorally.

All other policies are undermined as it becomes clear that we have no credible economic policies to finance our spending plans.

***This article is an abridged version of a document submitted to the NEC by Ken Livingstone. Copies of the document, which has been sent to all CLPs, can be obtained from Ken Livingstone, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. Please including a donation towards costs of at least 50p.**

Voices for Rushdie

Rushdie welcomes new campaign

Voices for Salman Rushdie, a new campaign to fight both racism and fundamentalism, has been welcomed by Salman Rushdie from his place of hiding.

Rushdie said he hoped the new initiative would help "open the debate about the nature of British society."

Voices for Rushdie, whose founding statement was published in *Briefing* no. 84, is planning fringe meetings at the Socialist Conference, the TUC, and the Labour Party.

There are also plans for local meetings up and down the country, a major cultural event in London, and publication of a pamphlet.

Raise the Rushdie issue! Get in toucb via the *Briefing* office or Southall Black Sisters (01-571 9595; ask for Gita).

Already, the following organisations have become Voices for Rushdie:

Campaign Against Repression in Iran, Black Lesbian and Gay Centre project, Black Voices for Salman Rushdie, Brent Asian Women's Refuge Group, Brighton Rape Crisis Centre, Feminist Library and Information Centre, Feminist Review, Gay's the Word, Iranian Women's Organisation (Defence Committee), Islington Friends of Salman Rushdie, *Labour Briefing*, Lesbian Archive and Information Centre, London Irish Women's Centre, National Secular Society, *New Statesman and Society*, Rationalist Press Association, Reading Matters Bookshop, Sheba Feminist Publishers, Sisterwrite Bookshop, Socialist Conference, *Socialist Outlook*, Southall Black Sisters, Third World First, Women Against Fundamentalism, Women for Socialism.

Get your group to add its name soon!

Down with racism! Down with fundamentalism! Long live Salman Rushdie!

The main News on the evening of Saturday May 27th featured skirmishes and pitched battles between fundamentalist Muslim youth and the Metropolitan police.

This was widely reported. Less well reported was the fact that when the militant vanguard of the anti-Rushdie demonstration entered Parliament Square, it met a different and unexpected challenge.

By Sarah Parker
Haringey Labour Briefing

This time it wasn't police defending the racist British state, but a noisy, peaceful, determined crowd of 40 Women Against Fundamentalism, made up of women of many different races, nationalities, religious backgrounds and ages.

The demonstration was led by women from Southall Black Sisters. We were united in our conviction that it is both important and possible to demonstrate our physical opposition to fundamentalism.

With the help of a large number of tin whistles, the WAF picket, perched on a wall high above the route of the march, astonished and/or angered the marchers by a forceful female challenge, clearly led by Asian women.

Our slogans were:

•Terror is your weapon; courage is ours!

•Women's tradition — struggle not submission!

•Religious leaders don't speak for us!

•Down with racists, down with fundamentalism!

•Our right to read, Rushdie's right to write!

A few of the marchers were sufficiently enraged by this chorus to try to attack the picket. They were dragged away in armlocks by the ever-ready police long before reaching us.

Our anger that men should feel so free to attack us was mingled with pain at the sight of black youth manhandled by the police.

The police were not pleased with the WAF picket. Apparently from nowhere, a line of police appeared to push the picket foot by foot away form its vantage point.

Eventually, the picket broke away and reformed on another corner of the Square.

"Long live Salman Rushdie!" was chanted as an effigy of the writer was burnt. "Down with racism!" was chanted as a young NF woman briefly goose-stepped under our noses.

Later, the policed and a few fundamentalist youth approached again. The youth was keen to argue; the police to demonstrate "community policing".

An Asian PC, and Afro-Caribbean PC, and a white WPC had been rustled up to help push the picket back again. Nevertheless, we continued for several more minutes and finally made our own way off in good order.

The WAF picket was a remarkable event, bringing together an exceptionally wide range of women activists in a dramatic demonstration of opposition to both fundamentalism and racism.

The recently formed group will campaign against *all* state funding for religious schools (including Christian schools, an issue the white left must take up urgently), against fundamentalism in *all* its forms, Christian as well as Muslim, and to provide support for women who wish to raise these issues but may at present feel isolated.

WAF is a major force in the *Voices for Rushdie* initiative.

Telephone Southall Black Sisters on 01-571 9595 for further information and dates of meetings.

No deportations!

Kurdish hunger strikers

Seventy-six Kurds are now being held in detention centres and prisons.

Nine have been on hunger strike in Winchester since May 28th in protest at their detention by the Home Office as criminals.

Twenty-five have already been deported. A picket has been held outside Gloucester prison.

One hundred and ten Kurdish refugees have entered Britain since May 2nd, with more arriving daily.

The British government had taken advantage of the crisis to impose visa restrictions on travellers from Turkey, which will come into effect on June 23rd. Turkish business people are exempt.

The Home Offfice claims Kurds are economic not political refugees, despite the 4000 Kurds killed in the last year — and the obvious fact that economic oppression is political.

Throughout this century the Turkish state has waged economic war on Armenians, Greeks and Kurds, forcing hundreds of thousands to emigrate.

But the oppression of the Kurdish people goes beyond this. Although 20% of the population in Turkey is Kurdish, the Kurdish language and Kurdish cultural and political organisations are banned.

Turkish Kurdistan is presided over by a Colonial Governor with 400,000 troops who murder, torture, and degrade Kurdish people and raze their villlages.

This oppression will only cease when Kurdish people in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran succeed in creating thier own autonomous Kurdish state.

A protest march against the detentions is planned for Sunday June 11th, 12 noon from Hyde Park. For further details ring the Kurdish Workers' Support Unit on 01-249 8086.

Francis wins first round

The deportation order served on Francis Okanlami has been ruled illegal.

This decision affects not only Francis, but possibly thousands of people who have been illegally deported from Britain.

A leaked Home Office document has made it clear that immigration officers cannot serve deportation orders themselves. This can only be done by the Home Secretary or Home Office officials.

The Home Office can respond to the court decision in one of three ways. It can appeal and argue that the deportation order was legal. It might take this course if only to avoid hundreds of people claiming their deportations were illegal.

It might try to serve a new and legal deportation order on Francis; or it might decide to let Francis stay.

The Home Office now has two weeks to make its decision. In order to put maximum pressure on the Home Office to make the right decision, Francis and Moji's Defence Campaign is asking people to write to their MPs or directly to the Home Office.

Francis has won the first round. Let's make sure he wins the second.

Council Housing

National Tenants Federation formed

The National Tenants and Residents Federation was launched on Thursday, May 25th.

Forty-three tenants organisations, mostly local federations, affiliated at the founding meeting, held in Wakefield.

By Scott Reeve
South Hornsey Tenants Association

The meeting was attended by hundreds of tenants from all over the country. They elected an Executive Committee of experienced and capable tenants' activists from as far apart as Newcastle and Eastbourne.

Earlier the meeting set the affiliation fee for tenants associations at £5 and £25 for federations.

Although the National Federation is Council tenant-based, it welcomes affiliations from housing association and private tenant's groups.

It is also hoped that housing campaigns like Shelter and CHAR will join the organisation as non-voting members.

The Federation aims to organise united tenants action to improve Council housing and fight rent rises.

It also sees itself as becoming the national voice of tenants, and hopes to have constructive discussions with the Labour Party and trade unions on policies to ensure the maintenance of low cost, good quality Council housing.

The Federation will also try to co-ordinate local tenants' campaigns, provide information on tenants' struggles to affiliated groups, and organise education and training facilities for tenants' representatives.

Councils like Wakefield, which financed and provided the support staff for the meeting, and Leicester, which sent an observer, already work closely with tenants' associations.

These Councils sit down with tenants' reps to agree Council housing policy. Consequently, they provide services tenants want. Repairs are done within two weeks, transfers on request, etc.

Many delegates said that although they were Labour Party members they felt that most Labour Councils treated their tenants abysmally. At best they patronise them; at worst they are openly hostile.

A Labour Council in South Wales threatened to evict tenants if they did not get rid of their child's pet hamster.

Another sent bailiffs to seize the meagre possessions of tenants who still owed the 20% of their rates that have to be paid out of benefit.

Preston Council is selling off many of its homes to Barretts. When tenants tried to join Preston Labour Party to overturn this Tory policy, their membership applications were refused.

But there are some more heartening examples.

A leading member of Leicester Tenants' Association stood as a Labour candidate in last month's County Council elections and overturned a Tory majority of 1,700 to win the seat by six votes.

The Federation's first national campaign will be against the Local Government and Housing Bill, which will make Council tenants subsidise the private tenant services that are provided by local Councils and may double rents.

Tenants' opposition to the Housing Act has already deterred private landlords from taking over Council homes. Tenants' anger has also stopped the government from setting up Housing Action Trusts.

With mounting Tory attacks on Council housing, tenants need a national organisation to defend and improve Council housing and oppose exorbitant rents.

For further information on the National Tenants and Residents Federation write to its Secretary, Ken Webb, at Spencer Chambers, 4 Market Place, Leicester.

Labour Briefing at the Socialist Conference
Fringe Meeting: Saturday June 17th, 5.30pm
Building the left: inside and outside the Labour Party
With
Martha Osamor
Resisting the Poll Tax
Reg Race
Building a new Left in the Labour Party
Campaign Against Repression in Iran
The Rushdie Affair, racism, fundamentalism, and the labour movement
Mandy Mudd
(Chair)

Socialist Conference will see the launch of "The Left Alternative to the Policy Review".
Copies available before the Conference from Conference Organisers

Manchester Conference
The Position of the Irish Community in Britain and Ireland
SATURDAY JUNE 10TH
Manchester Town Hall
Organised by Irish in Britain Representation Group (Manchester Branch)
Speakers include:
Ken Livingstone MP; Michael Mansfield, barrister; Fr Des Wilson; Maurice Moore, Tom Walsh, Fr Joe Taffe, Tony O'Brien, Virginia Moyles.
Discussion Topics include:
Prevention of Terrorism Act; Irish Youth Emigration; Irish Women in Britain; Construction Safety Campaign; Birmingham Six Campaign.
The Conference will be formerly opened by Graham Stringer, Leader of Manchester City Council
Full programme available from IBRG, c/o Grassroots Books, Newton St, Manchester 1

Labour Party in local government

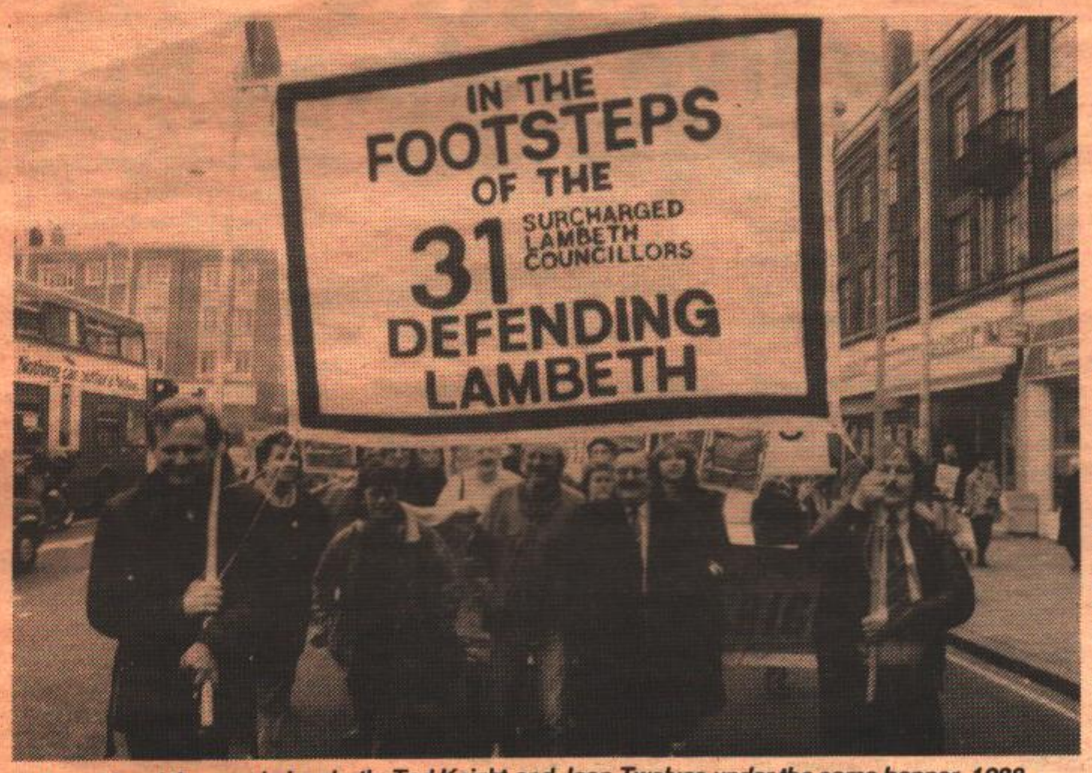
Local government

The wolf at the door

From the time the post-'79 left began to emerge in local government, we have rallied around the "three noes": no cuts in jobs and services, no rent or rate rises above inflation.

This platform enabled the left to strengthen its grip on local government, most significantly in London, culminating in the 1985 fight against rate-capping and the disastrous collapse of its GLC flagship: all now popular left folklore.

By Peter Chowney
Hackney South & Shoreditch CLP



The old and the new in Lambeth: Ted Knight and Joan Twelves under the same banner, 1988.



PHOTOS: Nick Hazlewood

"If the ideological wolf is at the door, we may as well let it in. It cannot be worse than letting it blow down our house without even taking it on." Is this why this NALGO placard has thrown itself into a Lambeth skip?

Since then, *Briefing* and its supporters have stuck to this line as a rallying cry, refusing to participate in cuts administrations, vigorously opposing cuts budgets... until recently.

Patterns began to change when comrades in both Haringey and Camden abstained on cuts budgets. Justifications for this have varied and local debates have now opened up the best way to oppose cuts.

Militant, too, appears to be engaged in the same debate. In Hackney, and elsewhere, *Militant* Councillors abstained on cuts budgets.

But perhaps the most obvious manifestation of a changing attitude has been the left "takeover" of Lambeth Council.

While it may be heralded as a victory for the left, it is a victory which has been achieved only with the support of the pro-cuts centre. No one's political position has changed.

What has emerged is an alliance based not on direct opposition to cuts, but opposition to the Poll Tax. A new kind of "broad front" has been constructed.

In this, comrades on Lambeth Council are to be congratulated, especially if they can pull off a stand of non-co-operation with the Poll Tax. It would mark a major victory for the left.

But it has to be recognised that left leadership in Lambeth has only been achieved through taking control of a cuts budget already agreed.

This may mean, technically at least, the new administration will not be making cuts itself; but budgets often get into difficulties in the course of the year.

And what happens at the end of the year, when a new budget is required, and more cuts and rent rises are demanded by officers?

There is still a pro-cuts majority on Lambeth Labour Group, and on every majority group in the country. The only way to retain control will be to capitulate to the cutters, to make "kinder" cuts.

For this is the very real danger in the strategy. Left Councillors, condemned perpetually to the sidelines, see a good deal more than just cuts taking place.

They see an erosion of equal opportunities policies, a failure to fill vacancies, a centralisation of bureaucracy.

In short, they see a series of small leaps backward into the bad old days of the 60s and 70s, of local government dominated by petty careerists and self-seeking opportunists.

They see all this, but can do nothing about it, because the central policy with which they are identified, a simple opposition to cuts, is no longer in fashion.

In such circumstances, the left has to think very carefully about its policies.

Can it put aside a confrontational opposition to cuts for the time being without succumbing to all the same arguments we have opposed so vigorously for the last two years, without joining the bland mass of bleeding heart realists?

Developments in Lambeth, and debates elsewhere, have woken a paradox which has lain dangerously sleeping on our doorstep these last two years.

The theoretical position of the "three noes" has become nothing more than a rallying call, a piece of rhetoric which no one seriously believes will ever be put into practice.

There is little taste left for the 15 fame-filled-minutes of head-on confrontation with the Tory government, at least not amongst those who are still prepared to put themselves in the front line.

But rather than a debate taking place around the development of counter-cuts strategies, taking the battle forward into a new and revitalised left, there is a gap emerging.

There is a danger that this will grow into a split between those who believe the answer is to compromise with a better class of cutter and those who would opt out of local government altogether.

Many of us still believe that no left platform can ever be credible unless it refuses to compromise over cuts.

But no radical or revolutionary movement ever survived long if it clung to policies out of nostalgia rather than a genuine belief that they could be implemented.

Some of our most fundamental icons may be in need of a shakedown. If the ideological wolf is at our door, we may as well let it in. It cannot be worse than letting it blow down our house without even taking it on.

British sign language

Britain's fourth language

Deaf people have yet to find a place on Labour's political agenda.

One hundred years ago, deaf people were in a much stronger position than now.

By Patrick Coleman
Hackney North CLP
and Paddy Lagg
Hackney South CLP

They had their own schools, many founded by deaf people themselves; as many as 40% of the teachers in these schools were deaf themselves; and a strong base was being built for integration into the wider community.

People like Dickens and Shaw spoke in praise of deaf people and their method of communication, British Sign Language (BSL).

But medical "experts" feared the emergence of a deaf race of inferior beings. In 1880, a small group gathered to ban BSL and deaf teachers. With government collusion, they eventually succeeded.

The results have been disastrous. Deaf literacy has plummeted. The average reading age of the deaf school leaver is now 8. Speech is 90% unintelligible.

There are only four deaf teachers in Britain today. BSL interpreters have been reduced to a handful.

This appalling attack has been carried out unchallenged, except by deaf organisations. A conspiracy of silence reigns.

BSL users have no access to basic information, TV, radio, printed matter, meetings at work or leisure. And without BSL interpreters, many are prevented from getting the training they need and are therefore barred from jobs or promotion.

All the UN Human Rights guarantees have been broken. *You* have been living under Thatcher for ten years. *We* have been living under her philosophy for 100!

In the last five years, deaf people have won some changes in some schools, on TV, and in politics (notably through the GLC). You see some interpreters at Party Conference (though the Party refuses to pay for them).

But this is only scratching the surface. On our issues, Labour policies are no better than Tories'. Now, as the Party prepares its policies for the future, is the time to change all that.

We call on the Labour Party left to:

•help get BSL accepted as Britain's fourth language; prepare branch motions for next year's Labour Conference;

•help establish the principle of *paid* interpreters inside the Party and in local Councils;

•formally consult with deaf people on all education policy;

•persuade your local Council Education Committee to offer bilingual education to all deaf children *and their parents* (at present, parents are systematically lied to from the moment their child is diagnosed as deaf);

•get BSL Research Centres (closed by the Tories) re-opened;

•get funding for BSL Video Translation Projects.

At present deaf Party members cannot actively participate because of lack of funds for interpreters. It may be necessary in the short term to set up a national or regional group, so that payment becomes feasible; so we can educate other deaf members; and so we can advise on relevant Party policy.

Comrades should buy *BSL—Britain's Fourth Language* from the BDA, 38 Victoria Place, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1HU (cost £1). Get your library to order *When the mind hears*, from *Harlan Lane Souvenir Press*, 1987 — an invaluable "deaf *Roots*"!

Rochdale Conference

Questions haunt local Councils

The Socialist Conference local government conference, held in Rochdale on May 20th and 21st, was attended by about 40 people.

By Pete Firmin
Brent East CLP

This disappointing turnout, reflecting a lack of resources and a common view that you cannot generalise "local issues", meant the meeting was dominated by the concerns of the "Rochdale Socialist Declaration" group, who had organised the conference.

It was difficult for "outsiders" to discover precisely what these concerns are, beyond loose phrases about the "style" of local government and the policy vacuum at national and local level.

The chairs of workshops tried to channel discussion around pre-set questions, even when participants wanted to raise others.

Ken Livingstone, introducing the Saturday plenary session, spoke of local government dying with the GLC and that since Thatcher's third victory in 1987 Labour Councils had to choose between cutting and fighting the government.

In his view the left should put its energies into trade union and community struggles rather than stand for Council.

This was an issue over which the conference was clearly split — a split with local resonance due to the recent resignation of two left Rochdale Councillors over implementation of Tory policies.

But it never became clear whether these Councillors and their supporters had gone so far as to defy the Labour whip and organise open opposition or whether they saw it as a choice between staying in and implementing Tory policies or getting out.

Themes such as municipal socialism — what was it and had it ever really worked — ran through the conference but were never grappled with.

Like other topics it would have benefited considerably from a wider geographical range of experiences. A *national* conference on local government is still needed.

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.

By Tony Southall
Scottish Labour CND

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, Labour 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.

Scottish Labour Movement Statement

We, the undersigned, elected public representatives of and office-bearers in the Labour Party and affiliated trade unions in Scotland, call for 1989 Annual Conference to reject the Defence Review document *Peace in our Changing Times*, and to reaffirm current policy for the removal of all nuclear weapons and bases from British soil and waters in the lifetime of the next Labour government and redirection of resources released to socially useful purposes.

Apart from a no-first use policy, an end to testing, cancellation of the fourth Trident, and new multiple warheads, no independent steps are proposed.

This attempt to reverse policy is justified with reference to the changed global situation.

Actually it is precisely the thaw — and especially the virtual disappearance of the myth of the Soviet threat, that makes it much easier to argue for a non-nuclear Britain.

Further, it is exactly now, when peace is on the agenda, that such a step can have the most impact in advancing the movement towards disarmament worldwide.

At this year's Conferences, both Scottish Labour Party and Scottish TUC reaffirmed, with massive majorities, their commitments to disarmament policies.

These, especially scrapping Trident and US bases, command massive public support and have never proven an obstacle to winning elections.

When effectively campaigned for, they are a vote winner. An about-turn as proposed will be a sore blow to Labour's credibility.

We therefore call on all sections of the movement to reject the Review Document and reaffirm existing policy.

Labour CND
Annual General Meeting

Saturday July 1st, 10am

Sheffield Town Hall

(Conference Room, side entrance in Surrey St)

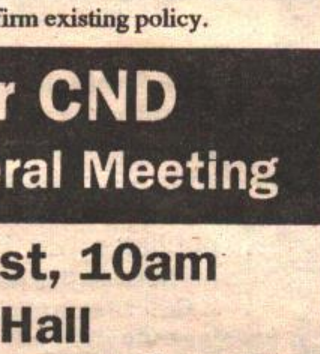
£5 per delegate; individuals: £3 waged, £1 unwaged

Nominations, and typewritten resolutions (or handwritten in block capitals), must be received in writing by the Secretary by first post Monday June 26th.

Creche: available if demand exists, for a small charge. Accommodation available on request. For either, notify Secretary by first post Monday June 19th (enclosing SAE & phone no. if possible).

Enquiries to: Carol Turner, Secretary, 29 Stodmarsh House, Cowley Estate, London SW9 6HH.

"The Chinese people have struggled against feudalism and landlordism. They have struggled against Western imperialism. Now they are fighting for democracy because they know there can be no socialism without democracy. Their struggle is part of an international struggle, one with the struggle against oppression in Latin America, the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and the struggle in Ireland."



Tony Benn
(Speaking at Chinese Solidarity Rally held in London on June 4th)

Vauxhall update

Hoey's up and running... away

The leaflets going through doors in Vauxhall show Kate Hoey with a black child and urge local voters to:

"Tell Kate: she's here to listen..."



PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

New Whip Steve French joins Lambeth Against the Poll Tax's June 3rd Registration Form bonfire.

By MARK SEATON

But one group of her constituents she's definitely not listening to is local Labour Party members.

Following a friendly if somewhat embarrassed meeting between Vauxhall CLP officers, Party General Secretary Larry Whitty, and Party Chair Dennis Skinner, the NEC-imposed candidate Kate Hoey was asked to attend a special, reconvened meeting of the Vauxhall GC.

But Hoey claimed she was "too busy" to come to the meeting — thereby further angering local Party activists and uniting the local Labour left, centre, and right — indeed, everyone but the hardcore LCC — in ever-deepening resentment of the whole undemocratic charade.

Hoey offered to meet "key Party members" on June 11th (four days before the election). CLP officers counterproposed June 4th. Hoey said no.

Local activists are voting with their feet and boycotting the by-election campaign, which is almost entirely dependent on full-time Party officials, one of whom has been assigned to each of the CLP's eight wards.

Vauxhall GC is by no means "hard left" and is widely recognised as fairly representative of all the diverse strands of opinion within the CLP.

Many local Party members who supported democratic due process are appalled to find themselves stigmatised as "ultra left loonies".

Claims by Hoey and her managers that the manoeuvre in Vauxhall was done in accordance with the Party constitution are disputed by some NEC members.

They point out that while the NEC clearly does have power to impose parliamentary candidates, it was not the NEC but the shortlisting Hattersley-led panel that chose and imposed Kate Hoey — without any authorisation for this action from the NEC itself.

Hoey was asked by organisers of Lambeth Against the Poll Tax to speak at their rally on June 3rd. So startled was Labour's candidate by this invitation that she ran away without giving an answer.

In the end Martha Osamor, who drubbed Hoey when the candidates originally presented themselves for selection to the wards, was among those who addressed the rally.

In response to the Labour leadership's racist manoeuvre, a local People's Movement for Electoral Justice was set up at a meeting attended by over 100 people at Lambeth Town Hall.

Nominate

The meeting agreed to nominate Rev. Hewie Andrews, minister of the Lambeth Mission, who joins:

- black barrister Rudy Narayan (standing as Independent Labour);
- the RCP (who were spotted leafletting for their candidate in the wrong constituency);
- the Greens;
- the Democrats;
- and the Tories

— all trying to exploit, one way or another, Labour's undemocratic idiocy in Vauxhall.

PR: "pure" reformism

"One minute at the ballot box"

The main arguments against PR are obvious: no Labour government ever, no accountability, undemocratic influence vested in the smallest parties.

But comrades who have called for PR in the pages o f-*Briefing* have made much of the reformist of Labour's electoral politics.

By John Wilton
Edgbaston CLP

Of course, if you believe Labour's electoral politics are reformist (as they are), then why be so concerned about changing the electoral system? Unless, of course, there is a "hidden agenda".

Richard Kuper's answer (in *Briefing* no. 77) to the "We would never have had a Labour government" argument was "by the same token, we'd have had only one Tory government since the First World War."

Does he therefore think a Tory-Alliance government in 1983, for example, would not in reality have been a Tory government and would not have introduced anti-trade union laws? Of course not.

Coalition governments are a far greater problem for us than they are for Tories, because our purpose is to challenge and change the *status quo*, not preserve it — which is the aim of Liberals, SDP, and the Labour right.

We *need* majority governments; they can make do with coalitions.

Phil Ward asserts (*Briefing* no. 82) that "under PR, each individual's vote will count."

But each individual's *Labour* vote will not "count" unless it helps elect a majority Labour government.

Suspicion

It is time the "PR is more democratic" argument was refuted. Richard Kuper (*Briefing* no. 77) argued that the left would gain from PR by dispelling "the suspicion that we don't really believe in democracy."

Besides the anti-democratic situation of the smallest parties holding the balance of power under PR, there is the point that democracy is also about accountability — something the left is surely aware of.

Coalitions and deals in smoke-filled rooms between party leaders will destroy democracy, not foster it!

PR, under the present Party leadership, would mean a centralised, politically controlled list of candidates. And what measures to increase accountability to Party members could possibly overcome the pressures of coalition government?

Vincent Johnson (*Briefing* no. 82) argued that "working class gains... are only attained through struggle." Yet he then went on to embrace PR!

This strangely static argument assumes struggles and heightened class conflicts will not change people's positions and perspectives. It assumes working class Tories are somehow born, not made.

To deal with this phenomenon we need socialist policies linked to working class struggles.

The cul de sac of PR is a defeatist detour. The equity, justice, and democracy that the electoral reform lobby seeks can't be won merely by tinkering with the electoral system; what's needed is political agitation, struggle, and activity.

The issue of PR is used by some people on the Marxist left to conceal a "hidden agenda".

Incredibly they attempt to sustain their static "Marxist" position by arguing that the election of a "radical" Labour government will not bring a "socialist revolution".

This is true. But why then argue about PR? PR is an irrelevance unless you are interested in promoting small parties like the Greens or some as yet unspecified socialist party to the left of Labour — both poor substitutes for a mass, working class based party.

Under *either* the present electoral system *or* PR we will still need over 50% of the vote to mobilise real support for socialism and even that will only be a small step towards our ultimate aim.

Socialism, after all, is a way of life as much as anything else. It cannot be conjured up by adjustment in the electoral system. It cannot be left to politicians elected under any system.

It has to be fought and argued for, through the actions and deeds of millions. Such democratic activity needs to encompass a lot more than "one minute at the ballot box every five years", as a successful socialist "campaign manager" once argued.

Socialist Conference

All out for Sheffield!

The first Socialist Conference met in 1987 against the backdrop of the Stock Market crash.

In Sheffield, the third Socialist Conference will meet with the Tories presiding over rising inflation, high interest rates and a balance of trade crisis.

The consumer boom is over. Officially inflation is 7.6% — but for mortgage payers, supposedly the bed-rock of Thatcher's support, the figure is nearer 19%!

Robert Worcester of the Adam Smith Institute declared that elections are lost on bread and butter issues.

He argues that in 1987 there was almost a 100% correlation between *change* in economic optimism (positive) and *change* in voting intention (Tory).

He further suggests that the Tory vote has become less vulnerable to changes in economic optimism. Labour's sucess in the recent Vale of Glamorgan and County Council election suggest otherwise.

Dissatisfaction with the Tories is also expressing itself on the industrial front. Some one and a half million workers across ten industries are currently involved in strike action or balloting for it.

These disputes, and the new mood in the working class they represent, take place as the New Realists and Kinnockites are strengthening their grip on the labour movement.

•Despite growing militancy "left" unions such as the NUR and TGWU are arguing that members should conduct their disputes within the courts' legal straight-jacket.

•The NEC has adopted the Policy Review, the market and multilateralism.

•Kinnock's success in the Labour Party is directly linked to the trade union New Realists. NUPE voted by three to one to abandon their ten year old policy of unilateralism.

By Bryn Griffiths Tottenham CLP

•The NEC is centralising the Party, vesting more power in itself, as illustrated by the Vauxhall selection and the Policy Review itself.

These developments show that the left's strategy of the early 80s, when it managed to involve several influential trade union leaders in its campaign for Party democratisation, is no longer effective.

This alliance rested on the militancy of the 1979 "winter of discontent" and the pressure it put on public service trade union leaders.

A crucial mistake of the early 80s was the failure to take the battle for democratisation into the unions. This meant the left had little comeback when the trade union leaders abandoned it after the creation of the SDP.

Today the hard-left's support amongst trade union leaders is negligible — as illustrated in the Benn-Heffer leadership campaign.

Privatisation

Its isolation has been further compounded by the support of soft left figures such as Claire Short, Jo Richardson and David Blunkett for Kinnock's Policy Review.

The biggest question facing the Sheffield Socialist Conference is how to challenge Kinnockism and New Realism.

The left must consider how it takes up issues such as the NHS, the Poll Tax, privatisation, and democratic rights, where Thatcher is tremendously weak. The burgeoning industrial struggles must be pushed to the forefront of the left's concerns.

It will be argued by some that such issues should be linked to a new "off-the-peg party". But such a move would only compound the isolation of the left and abandon any struggle for leadership against the New Realists.

At last year's Labour Party Conference, the Socialist Conference and the Campaign Group promoted the "twin-track approach".

This approach expressed the unity of the organisational struggle in the Labour Party and the struggles taking place in trade unions and campaigns. The correctness of this approach is confirmed by the current wave of disputes.

At this year's Socialist Conference, Labour Party members must discuss how to work together to express the concerns of the Socialist Conference within the Party.

Only the forces around the Socialist Conference and last year's Benn-Heffer campaign are committed to linking the Labour Party to extra-parliamentary battles.

Thatcher is faltering as her economic success wanes. We can all celebrate Labour's success in recent elections, but we must also ensure that such successes are not squandered.

The need to fight for independent working class politics is greater than ever. This means defending Labour's link with the trade unions and fighting to ensure the Party supports the current wave of industrial struggles.

The left must fight both *within* and *outside* the Labour Party — a twin-track approach. The development of this approach must form the centrepiece of debates at the Sheffield Socialist Conference.

Socialism a

One strugg Beijing to

No one reading *Labour Briefing* will be in any doubt that there is a wide-ranging attack on democratic rights in this country.

People are being gagged, bugged, sacked, locked up, thrown out, beaten up, and shot dead.

It it was happening in Eastern Europe, Thatcher and the media would cry themselves hoarse over "human rights violations".

The response to Charter 88 indicates that awareness of this attack is spreading.

But this concern, as registered through Charter 88, remains abstract. And the strategy which Charter 88 proposes — a campaign to secure a written constitution which, it is said "will set us free" — is inadequate.

Socialists, and the Socialist Conference in particular, must make the question of democracy and the day to day struggle for democratic rights a central priority.

Those who argue that the matter of democracy is a diversion from socialism, or who dismiss democratic rights as "bourgeois" will only isolate themselves from the very people they claim to be addressing — the most combative sections of the working class.

On the other hand, those who argue that "democracy" should replace "socialism" as our goal, either short or long term, or that major democratic reforms *precede* any general struggle for socialism, are equally wro

If we leave the democ struggle to them, they abscond with it into a s sphere of abstraction — a action.

By Mike Marqusee Haringey Labou Briefing

In reality, the struggle democratic rights and the s gle for socialism — the struggle — are inextricabl terwoven. It will be impos in practice as well as theor pursue one without pursuin other.

After all, who's on the rec ing end of the attacks on de cratic rights?

The victims are easy to fi you're ready to look in the places: among black and people, lesbians and gay activists and journalists at with the military, t unionists (dockers, t workers, miners, print seafarers).

Alas, these are "unpopu and "dangerous" realms, w the Labour Front Bench many of the politicians and tellectuals associated w Charter 88 fear to tread.

The recent attempt by students to champion Win

Mental Health

Getting on the socialist agenda

At last year's Socialist Conference the Mental Health Policy Group produced a paper with the title — and aim — of *Putting Mental Health on the Agenda*.

"It is time we developed socialist policies for mental health," we declared. "It is not good enough to imitate simple demands for more money with no thought about what sort of services and who should control them."

At the Conference 30 people, including users of mental health services, participated in two days of discussion based on the Socialist Health Association's *Goodbye to all that* document.

This debate led to the following summary statement, enthusiastically received at the closing plenary session:

"While strongly supporting the SHA document we urge that its proposals include immediate abolition of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and public ownership of the drug industry.

"We reject the current emphasis on illness, labelling, drugs, ECT, and institutionalisation, which serves to disguise our collective pain as medical problems of the individual.

By David Hill Convenor, Socialist Conference Mental Health Policy Group

"We urge the labour movement to support user involvement in the planning and management of services, based on choice of service and the meeting of basic human needs for companionship, housing, employment, and freedom from discrimination.

"We urge the abandonment of terms like 'crazy', 'schizophrenic', and 'mentally ill'.

"We call for a campaign to close all mental institutions, with no redundancies, and for properly funded, democratically controlled, community care programmes."

The past 12 months have seen an intensification of the right wing campaign, orchestrated by the Murdoch empire, to keep open old mental hospitals.

Given the government's inadequate funding of community care and the attention given by the media to the resulting casualties, this campaign has proved difficult to combat.

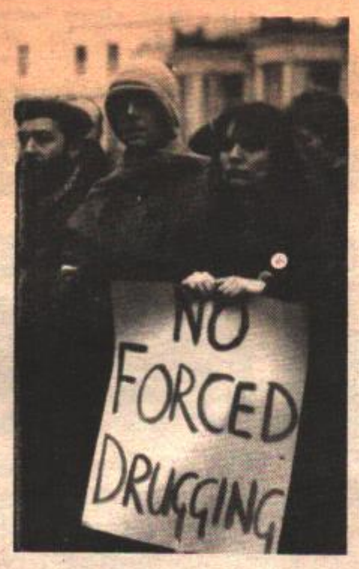
Besides endless stories in *The Sunday Times* about "violent schizophrenics" intimidating families and the community in general, Murdoch people have helped fund (along with P&O and drug companies) *Schizophrenia: A National Emergency* (SANE).

The London Alliance for Mental Health Action, supported by COHSE, has spent the spring successfully countering a bigoted SANE campaign which covered the London area with posters proclaiming "He thinks he's Jesus... You think he's a killer."

The "user movement" has continued to grow. On June 20th, 40 users of mental health services will meet Robin Cook MP. Planning for this meeting revealed that there are now more than 40 user-led or user-only groups in Britain.

This does not include the growing number of MIND local associations with significant user-participation.

In February a postal ballot of all MIND members passed a resolution that each of the more than 200 local associations must have at least two users on its management committee and at least one on every staff appointment panel.



Campaigners join LAMHA demonstration against current methods of treatment.

"Survivors Speak Out" has provided an information network linking the many and varied user groups.

Now that a set of socialist principles regarding mental health has been widely debated and agreed, the task before us is to build an effective campaigning alliance between users, unions, radical professionals, and the left.

Workshops at this year's Conference should, perhaps, focus more on strategy than policy. One question that might be addressed, for instance, is whether the movement is ready for a Socialist Mental Health Association or whether it is more important, for the time being, to build alliances at local level.

Whatever the outcome, mental health has at last been firmly placed on the socialist agenda.

Women f

Year one in

The Sheffield Socialist Conference will provide Women for Socialism with an opportunity to consolidate and publicise our development over the past year.

Our first national conference in February attracted over 400 socialist feminists representing a wide range of outlooks. Discussions was positive and fruitful. Democratic structures were agreed and policy development work initiated.

WfS established itself as an autonomous organisation aiming to popularise socialist feminist ideas through a federation of local groups and an elected National Steering Group.

We aim to build practical and supportive alliances between left Labour women and women campaigning outside the labour movement.

Since February, WfS has participated in *Spare Rib's* "Plan of Action" debate on current difficulties facing the women's movement in this country and worldwide.

We have affiliated to a wide range of grassroots campaigns, including SWAPO Women's Council, CARI Women's Sect Broadwater Farm, E Peach, Birmingham Stop the Clause, and anti-Poll Tax groups.

WfS members are ganising a conference women and anti-imperia and a delegation to Pale is planned for March 19

Closer to home, an ed tion dayschool is planne October, a green issues work has been establis and a group of women producing a socialist fem critique of the NHS W Paper.

By RUTH CLARKE

WfS has organised fri meetings at trade union, dent and Labour Party C ferences, and is in process of drawing u women workers' charter offering support to soci feminists standing as liamentary candidates.

At Sheffield we hope policy discussions will dress issues of concern women and other groups ganising autonomou against oppression.

These issues will be hi lighted both in the plen

nd Democracy

gle: from Brixton!

ust for tic ill to- in-

Silcott's innocence was met by the Tories and their pals with all guns blazing — and Labour, trade union, and NUS leaders beat a hasty retreat.

IT seems large numbers of would-be democrats are quickly scared off by the taint of violence, the death of a policeman, and the ugly reality of racism.

These social conflicts which frighten liberals and right wing labourists are at the heart (or should be) of our socialist analysis of what is going on in Britain today.

Under present circumstances, any struggle to defend or improve living standards will become at some point a struggle for democratic rights: local jobs and services, miners, printworkers, dockers.

The converse is equally true: the struggles of women, black people, and lesbians and gay men for equal rights inevitably raise profound economic demands and thus assume a class as well as a social character.

In Scotland, it has obviously become impossible to separate the economic (class) and democratic (national) questions.

Propagandists for capitalism have worked hard to forge an iron link between "democracy" and "free enterprise" (or the "market").

While they seem to have convinced Neil Kinnock and the authors of his Policy Review they don't seem to have go very far with the Chinese or Soviet masses.

In both Beijing and Moscow the thirst for democracy is one with outrage at corruption and bureaucratic privilege, and demands for a more egalitarian order.

In our development of a socialist programme we must integrate radical democratic demands into our policies on education, housing, health, social services, local government, the media, sport, public ownership, and the labour movement itself.

But we must also take steps to defend those people whose democratic rights are under attack right now. Towards this end,the Socialist Conference has already begun organising a National Convention for Democratic Rights, to be held in the autumn.

The aim of this meeting will be to bring together all those involved in campaigns around democratic rights, policing, immigration, victimisation, censorship, etc.

We hope to share resources and information and create a network that can co-ordinate and mobilise resistance.

By taking a lead in building a movement for democratic rights, socialists and the Socialist Conference will help strip bare Britain's class dictatorship and rally opposition to it around a comprehensive socialist alternative.

or Socialism

a long march

on, air ix, cal or- on m, ine ca- for et- ed, are ist ite



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

A woman's right to choose — one of our key concerns!

sessions and in the Women's Policy workshop on the Saturday afternoon.

This two hour workshop, which will be open to both women and men, will deal separately with economic and international issues.

A WfS fringe meeting, open to women only, is scheduled to follow the Women's Policy workshop at 4pm.

After a brief introduction, the meeting will break up into informal groups to discuss different aspects of WfS's current work: internationalism, Palestine, the women workers' charter, women in the Labour Party, education, and sexuality and censorship.

Women are also welcome to visit the WfS stall, which will be open all weekend.

Without doubt WfS has gained momentum, direction, and purpose since the 1988 Chesterfield Conference. We hope and expect many more women to join us at Sheffield.

Trade Unions

Time to bust out of court!

Even the media are talking about a "summer of discontent".

Ten thousand registered dockers have voted by 74% to 26% for an all-out strike to force port employers to negotiate a national agreement to replace the National Dock Labour Scheme (NDLS).

This vote was taken in the full knowledge that such a strike would entail a major confrontation with the government.

At the time of writing over one and a half million workers are involved in either strikes or strike ballots across ten different industries.

Big majorities for strike action are being registered in industry after industry.

Not all these ballots will result in strike action, and not all the strikes will win. But taken together they indicate an important change in mood at the base of the unions and demonstrate once again that the working class in Britain is alive and kicking and ready for a fightback.

The new factor here is the faltering of Thatcherism on the economic front — previously seen by many as its greatest strength.


PHOTO: South Wales Argus

The Miners' Strike showed that defying the law is the only way to take effective action.

By ALAN THORNETT

Despite the current rise in struggle, "New Realism" continues to dominate both the trade union and Labour Party leaderships. Many trade union leaders are more determined than ever to avoid confrontation with either the employers, the government, or the courts.

Recent decisions involving ballots held by dockers and London Underground workers underline once again that the role of the courts is now the single most serious problem facing the trade union movement in Britain.

Political

The High Court is currently considering a submission by the port employers that a dock strike would be illegal because it would challenge a decision of Parliament and would therefore be political!

They are also suing the TGWU for £250,000 for trade lost because of the ballot.

New Realism must bear the large share of responsibility for this situation. It has consistently called for compliance with the law, and each time the judges have been encouraged to go a step further.

Edward Heath's 1970 Industrial Relations Act was defeated because it was defied and discredited. The trade union movement is weaker today, and its composition has changed, but is such a strategy therefore impossible?

There are still 8,500,000 trade unionists affiliated to the TUC, despite declining membership and serious erosion of shop floor organisation.

It is absurd to argue that a trade union movement of this size has no alternative but to comply with outrageous undemocratic laws which are blatantly manipulated to the advantage of employers.

If an industrial price had to be paid for the courts' actions, decisions would be quickly tempered.

Inertia at the top of the unions is producing new responses at rank and file level. There has been some strengthening of the broad lefts, in the NUR for example.

One of the disputes on London Underground has seen the development of unofficial organisation which has outflanked the courts while pursuing a sectional wage claim.

It is a sign of things to come as higher levels of industrial struggle regenerate rank and file organisation. As a means of tackling the law, however, its usefulness is limited, since legislative moves will be made to plug the loopholes.

In any case any major confrontation with the law will need the full backing of the trade union movement.

During the Thatcher period, the employers have introduced repeated speed-up at the point of production as well as participatory techniques such as "quality circles" and "team leaders" imported from the USA and Japan.

They have abolished protective agreements and pushed in flexibility, multi-skilling, and new shift patterns.

Wage cutting, privatisation, and contracting out have created millions of unorganised, low-paid jobs, many part-time, many employing women. These workers need to be embraced by the unions and their needs addressed.

Health and safety is now a major political issue in Britain.

Accidents

Lack of investment in infrastructure, the rundown of basic public facilities (like tube and rail), low pay (which devalues the job and forces long hours of overtime) are all bound to lead to accidents.

Weakened trade union organisation — which is the only effective enforcer of even the existing and inadequate safety regulations — has exacerbated the problem.

The situation that the trade union movement finds itself in cannot be tackled by gimmicks like cheap holidays or credit cards. The unions must be strengthened at every level and the membership given the support to mount an effective fightback.

The necessary strengthening of the unions will involve the democratisation of union structures. This is crucial in challenging white male domination of the movement and also in allowing the voice of the rank and file to be heard.

This voice can even sometimes be heard through legally enforced balloting under Tory laws.

In fact, for the employers, balloting is a double-edged sword. Whilst it allows the law to intervene on behalf of the employers, it also allows a direct expression of membership opinion which can make a strike that much harder to stop.

But unions must have their own procedures.

Union members should be kept fully informed and be able to express their views in the most democratic way — through mass meetings, where possible, and workplace ballots free from court or employers' interference.

All union officers should be regularly elected, again free from the influence of courts and employers.

The conference of trade unionists being organised by the Socialist Conference in November aims to provide a forum to discuss these issues and the general direction of the trade union movement in the 1990s.

Labour Briefing at the Socialist Conference Fringe Meeting
Sat. June 17th, 5.30pm
Building the Left: Inside and Outside the Labour Party
MARTHA OSAMOR: Resisting the Poll Tax
REG RACE: Building a new left in the Labour Party
CAMPAIGN AGAINST REPRESSION IN IRAN: Rushdie & the backlash
For details see p5

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

The Women's Page

Labour Party parliamentary reselection

Select the *right* woman, not the *right wing* woman!

Labour women wanting to stand for parliament now have a better chance of being selected for safe seats than ever before.

Last October, to much trumpeting, the Labour Party agreed that there should be at least one woman on every shortlist, where a woman is nominated, for parliamentary reselection.

By Liz Davies

However, CLPs have to ensure that at least one woman is nominated, to avoid an all-male shortlist. Constituencies must also beware of falling into the trap of assuming that one woman on the shortlist is sufficient.

One woman and five men is not equality. Don't assume there is a ceiling on the number of women you can put on a shortlist; try and get as many women on as possible.

CLPs should also guard against the notion that selecting any woman, whatever her politics, is a "cred-worthy" left action.

Following the Conference decision, many women have emerged, desperate for a glorious parliamentary career, but with no political principles.

Women for Socialism believe the interests of women and the working class will best be protected by women who support the following principles.

1. Defence of the Labour Party Women's Organisations and support for the constitutional and policy demands of the National Labour Women's Conference.

2. Support for the right of the self-organisation of oppressed groups in the Labour Party, including Women, black people, lesbians, and gay men.

3. Support for building campaigns which link women in the Labour Party with those in trade unions and campaigns. In particular:

•reproductive and abortion rights — for a woman's right to choose;

•women fighting the Poll Tax;

•against strip searching;

•for equal pay for work of equal value, a shorter working day and week;

•support for campaigns at work against sexual harassment;

•supprt for unilateral nuclear disarmament;

•opposition to all immigration legislation.

WfS are asking women MPs and women interested in seeking selection to endorse these principles. We believe in organising so that women standing for these politics are selected for Parliament.

WfS can supply lists of these women, advice on achieving their selection and practical help and support to comrades trying to ensure that left women are selected.

Many reselections have already started, and several safe seats have finished. If you want to organise to select a WfS candidate, WfS can provide advice and encouragement, but the pressure must come from local activists.

First, get a left activists' group together. Don't be restrictive or unduly selective about its membership, the more people who are involved, the more work can be done and the more publicity you will get.

Second, choose a left candidate. Lists are available from WfS, Black Sections, and the Campaign Group of MPs.

Third, ensure all your left members of the GC have attended a GC meeting in the last 12 months or so and are eligible to participate.

You will need as much publicity as possible. Most importantly, the vote will be conducted by ballot, so there will not necessarily be an opportunity for candidates to speak.

Circulate the wards and affiliated organisations asking for them to invite candidates to speak when considering who to nominate to the shortlist. Don't be afraid to debate with other candidates — it all provides more publicity.

This nominating meeting will probably be members' only opportunity to hear the candidates, and so it is crucial.

Once your candidate is shortlisted, send out an election address to all members. Ensure it is eye-catching and the politics are clear.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Mandy Moore and Pauline Purnell at 1987 Party Conference, which agreed "one woman on every shortlist". In 1988, the NEC tried to dilute the commitment, and the successful campaign against this backtracking included women occupying the MPs' chairs in the Conference Hall.

Canvass individual members. Organise your group into different branches and give each person a list of people to ring.

Choose one person to deal with the local press. If members have little opportunity to hear the candidates, they will be all the more dependent on press information.

If you are up against a sitting MP, they will receive press coverage anyway, so ensure your candidate has a high profile.

Now you've won the selection, you just have to win the elections for Labour!

The work and organisation is really up to the CLP activists. WfS can provide lists of women available, advice, and (some) technical resources and publicity.

Don't fall into the trap of selecting any woman regardless of her politics.

Contact Women for Socialism, c/o 126b St Paul's Road, London N1 2LR for further information.

Women in the CPSA

Fighting for equality in the Civil Service

***Briefing* interviewed a member of the CPSA National Women's Rights Advisory Committee**

The CPSA has about 75% women members. What are the main issues that affect them?

The main issue for all CPSA members is low pay.

The membership has recently voted to accept a long-term pay offer which will do nothing to change this situation. Our increase on April 1st was 4% — well below inflation.

It is against a background of continuing low pay and government attacks on the Civil Service — privatisation, staff cuts, YTS, the formation of semi-independent agencies, etc. — that those issues which primarily affect women have to be placed.

The two big demands from women in the last few years have been for childcare provision and on-site cancer screening. On both of these issues the government has until recently refused to yield.

There have now been some concessions on cancer screening which will take a great deal of time and effort to implement.

And there appears to be a belated recognition of future demographic changes in a circular authorising departments to use their own funds to subsidise workplace nursery provision.

This means, of course, that we will have to negotiate separately with each department.

What is the role of the National Women's Committee?

It's purely advisory. It has no power at all. This doesn't mean that the quality of the delegates isn't high, or that good ideas don't come out of it.

The problem is that the union NEC don't have to accept any of our recommendations. Consequently everything that doesn't suit them they ignore.

A prime example of this is the issue of a Women's Officer. Conference in 1987 and 1988 voted to create a full-time post of Women's Officer. We are now in 1989, and women activists will be asking why this still hasn't happened.

Women's issues are dealt with by an Assistant Secretary who is also secretary of the Women's Committee, the Typing Grades Advisory Committee, has sole responsibility for New Technology Data Processing, communications grades, typing grades, and has now been made secretary to the Newcastle Central office witchhunt enquiry.

The protests of the NWRAC have been totally ignored. For the last two years we have been fobbed off with constitutional and procedural excuses.

The final insult is the 1989 Annual Report, in which John Ellis and Marion Chambers argue that they have fulfilled the terms of the resolution.

Their argument is that since the officer concerned deals with typing, new technology, data processing, and communications issues, and most of the employees in these grades are women, she is *de facto* doing the Women's Officer job.

The basic problem is that the moderate/Broad Left 84 NEC last year only paid lip service to women's issues. Sadly, the largest component of the Broad Left is guilty of the same offence. During its period of NEC control the same inaction prevailed.

A look at the BL slate for the 1989 NEC elections showed (apart from Doreen Purvis, a well known activist, and a couple of others) a dearth of women.

This isn't because there aren't women activists in BL, but because the big voting blocs at BL Conference don't support them in preference to men and don't endorse positive action measures.

With such a large female membership why do you think the union is still so dominated by men?

At branch level CPSA has taken the usual measures — meeting in work time, etc. — to ensure women's participation. But the union is still largely dominated by men at all levels.

The reasons for this are complex and not all within the power of the CPSA to alter.

The prevailing attitude in society to "women's work" (pin money, deference to family) is reflected in many members' lack of belief in their own status or ability to undertake union responsibilities.

To overcome this takes a lot of patience and support from other female activists. Even so, many women activists are regarded by workmates as being different in some way to "normal run of the mill women".

In so far as we are usually politicised, this is correct: but certainly many activists I know are struggling with the problems of the double and triple shift in the same way as other women.

Pressure from partners can be the greatest decisive factor against involvement. I have lost good potential activists who decided it wasn't worth the emotional blackmail or aggro from partners (mostly male, but in some cases female) who saw CPSA as a threat to their relationship.

What role do you think unions have in relation to women's oppression?

The union's role is to confront stereotypes and deeply held prejudices both within the membership and wider society. We must constantly seek to widen the field of women's rights and defend those small gains made so far.

The Alton Bill campaign was a case in point. We had to argue the case for choice with reactionaries in our own union, as well as on the street and within the Labour Party and the TUC.

That campaign was beneficial in that it saw a heightened level of activity and discussion and many previously apathetic members intervened in office discussions and gained confidence by speaking out.

Despite the need to campaign for a women's officer, the real problems will not be solved simply by replacing male bureaucrats with female ones.

The union itself must be recaptured by the "ordinary" members and turned into an organisation which fights for their real interests.

Obituary: CLR James (1901-1989)

Beyond many boundaries



Writer, editor, historian, theoretician, activist, anti-imperialist, Marxist, internationalist, revolutionary. CLR James did it all, saw it all, wrote about it all.

He was a man who crossed boundaries of all kinds incessantly, and carried the torch of Marxism into hitherto unexplored areas.

Born and educated in Trinidad, James lived to celebrate the West Indian independence of which he was a major early champion, to see the collapse of the West Indian Federation in which he had placed so many hopes, and to be gagged and arrested on the orders of one of his former pupils — Trinidad's post-independence leader, Eric Williams.

James came to Britain (Nelson in Lancashire, to be precise) in the early 30s at the invitation of West Indian cricketer Learie Constantine. Here he wrote about cricket, agitated for West Indian self-government, and encountered Marxism.

He wrote his epochal history of the San Domingo revolution, *Black Jacobins*, denounced Stalinism, joined the ILP and then the Trotskyist Revolutionary Socialist League, and campaigned against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia.

By MIKE MARQUSEE

His fascinating discussions with Trotsky in Mexico in 1939 (in which James showed himself an early Marxist proponent of the self-organisation of oppressed social groups) were followed by 11 years of political activity in the Trotskyist movement in the United States.

In these years he seemed to turn his back on the recognition and financial security which his intellect and personality could have easily commanded.

Instead he engaged in ceaseless theoretical polemic, on the nature of the Soviet Union and of bureaucracy in general, on "the Negro question", and on the dialectic of history.

In 1952, at the height of America's Great Red Fear, James was arrested and subsequently deported from the US.

Not long before, he had broken with Trotskyism, embraced a "state capitalist" analysis of the Soviet Union, and rejected the theory of the vanguard party.

But unlike so many others who shared his hostility to vanguardism, he did not become a reactionary or reformist. He remained delightfully impatient of parliamentarist or bureaucratic twaddle.

To the end of his days, a powerful insight into the revolutionary, world-changing capacities of the masses burned bright within him and illuminated all his work.

In 1963 he published his marvellous book about cricket, *Beyond the Boundary*. People who think there is something eccentric about James' interest in cricket miss the point. Cricket, he said:

"is not an addition or a decoration or some specific unit that one adds to what really constitutes the history of a period. Cricket is as much part of the history as books written are part of history."

In his writings on cricket, calypso, ancient Greece, the theatre, Rastafari, and other topics James pioneered the study of "popular culture".

But for James, unlike many now working in this field, "popular culture" was not merely the passive interplay of predetermined signs and discourses, but a site of active social creation.

What fascinated him was how the oppressed millions used what they found in their traditions and environment to create new meanings, symbols, and institutions.

It was, he believed, a part of the process by which these millions sought to take hold of and shape their own destiny.

James was a keen observer and at times a participant in the African and Caribbean independence movements.

He celebrated the new forces which these movements brought on to the historical stage but denounced the repression and collaboration with imperialism — the alienation of the masses — which marked their subsequent developments.

In the workers' rebellion in Hungary, the mass movements of the 60s, feminism, and Polish Solidarity, he found fresh evidence of the world-shaking potential of the masses and their ability to fashion new forms of democratic self-management.

For CLR James the oppressed were not the passive victims of history but thinkers, makers, and doers. He had no doubt that they would ultimately find their way, through many detours, to self-emancipation and the construction of a new world.

BOOK REVIEW

Ngugi in the neo-colonial madhouse

Matigari, by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Heinemann*, £10.95.

"Arrest Matigari!" cried Kenya's President Moi in 1987 on hearing that a man of that name was travelling the country in search of truth and justice.

When it transpired that Matigari was not a real person but a character in a novel, Moi banned the novel instead.

By William West Haringey Labour Briefing

And so *Matigari*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's first novel for five years, joined its author in exile.

Moi's confusion of fact and fiction is reflected in the form and content of the novel. Moving from the real to the surreal and back again, *Matigari* tells the story of an independence fighter emerging from hiding in a forest only to discover that neo-colonialism has replaced colonialism.

The workers are now exploited not by the white settler Williams but by the black John Boy and multinationals like the "Anglo-American Leather and Plastic Works".

Was the struggle for nothing?

This neo-colonial world is a madly unreal place in which "the tiller dies of starvation, the tailor goes naked, the builder sleeps on the veranda"; Matigari is locked up in a mental hospital for saying just this.

Here he realises that "in the pursuit of truth and justice" words alone are not enough, for those in power use words to define what is true and what is false.

He throws off the belt of peace, escapes, and flees to the forest to rearm himself with sword and gun. But before he gets there, the police spot him, give chase, and shoot him dead.

The novel seems to be ending on a pessimistic note until Matigari's child-friend, Muriuku, carries on the journey to the forest.

There, Muriuku uncovers the weapons of struggle and turns to face the world. A distant sound reaches him and grows louder.

He suddenly realises what it is: it is "the workers' voices, the voices of the peasants, the voices of the students and of other patriots of all the different nationalities of the land, singing in harmony: "Victory shall be ours!"

The source of Ngugi's optimism is not naivete but a deep Marxist understanding of the world. *Matigari* confirms his status as Africa's most important writer.

BOOK REVIEW

Capital's deadly poisons

Toxic Treatments, the London Hazards Centre, £5.95. Available from LHC, Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8DS.

Clinical ecologists, environmentalists and trade unionists are daily becoming more aware of the effects of chemical poisoning and in particular the insidious influence of pesticide spray and residues in food.

Over the last two and a half years, there has been growing public concern about the pesticides contained in wood preservatives.

Chemicals such as tri-butyl tin oxide, Lindane (GAMAH.C.H), and pentachloraphenol are not only harmful to plants, but stay for ages in the atmosphere.

When ingested, they weaken the human immune system and cause serious illnesses, such as epilepsy, leukemia, heart disease, aplastic anaemia, which often lead to early death.

The London Hazards Centre is an organisation which has enjoyed trade union and labour movement support for its critical campaigning on health and safety issues.

Its publication *Toxic Treatments* sets out to expose the now widespread risks, arguing with photos, diagrams, and empirical evidence that chemicals which are not allowed on farmers' fields may be sprayed freely in our homes and workplaces.

By GEOFF BIRCH

"Next year at least half a million people, including children, babies, and the yet unborn will receive what for many will be the biggest pesticide dose of their lives."

Clearly the inhalation and ingestion of these most persistent of vapours can cause serious harm. Or is this just scaremongering?

The government and the wood preserving industry say the treatments are safe. In answer, *Toxic Treatments* describes the devastation these poisons have caused to the lives of dozens of sufferers.

Many of these victims were falsely diagnosed or put on tablets which masked the real cause of their symptoms.

In Germany the victims came together in groups of thousands. They hold regular conferences and have forced the Federal government to act by issuing warning leaflets and banning the deadly pentachloraphenol.

The authors of *Toxic Treatments* are not prepared to accept assurances from the UK government and the wood preservative industry until they answer the following urgent questions.

- If these chemicals are safe to work with, why did Cuprinol employee Keith Pritchett die of leukemia?
- What caused the stomach cancers of two Council carpenters in Aberdare?
- Why is the former Rentakil sprayer David Rea dying of leukemia?
- Why have others such as Eric Riley become ill and then died after treating their homes with wood preservative?

Toxic Treatments is an invaluable health and safety guide. Not only does it alert us to the dangers, it also attempts to mobilise around the issues.

Amongst those already fighting successfully are the Hackney DLO Council workers who participated in a recently televised "London Programme" on the issue after several of them had fallen ill after treatment contract.

The book also contains useful detoxifying and decontaminating information and demands for a six point charter for the control of poisons. These demands should be the central features of an extended campaign including tenants groups, trade unionists, and environmentalists.

Readers will know that under the Tories health and safety issues are subordinated to the demands of shareholders and the drive to maximise profits. Meanwhile, millions suffer ill health, distress, and death as a result.

Toxic Treatments is both a safety safeguard and a political weapon against the unfettered, anarchic commercial designs of the construction and chemical giants.

Trade Union Briefing

MSF Conference

"Militant" union bucks New Realism

This conference, held in an airless, sweaty, overcrowded, inaccessible Bournemouth Pavillion from May 20-24th, was only the second annual conference of the Manufacturing, Science, and Finance Union (MSF).

The 600,000-strong MSF emerged 18 months ago from the amalgamation of ASTMS and TASS.

The conference had two main jobs. It was the MSF's first policy-making conference and the forum for constructing an integral rule-book for the new union.

Since the merger, most of the old TASS and ASTMS rules have been in force. This has led to the two halves of the union operating in parallel — coming together only at National Executive Council (NEC) meetings.

This year was an important test for the old (TASS) Broad Left.

At the 1987 rules conference, it became clear that the Broad Left,which had operated purely as a bureaucratic electoral machine, could no longer guarantee the delivery of annual conference decisions.

In the intervening year, disputes among the various factions in the Broad Left — involving all three wings of British Stalinism, soft left and right wing Labour, as well as political careerists — have further weakened the old machine.

By Glenn Sutherland Delegate, Charing Cross Branch

It has been unable to make headway among the new MSF membership, and has been limited to discussions in the middle and upper layers of the MSF "career structure".

But the Broad Left leadership learnt the lessons of recent events in the CPSU and decided to introduce an element of "*glasnost*".

At the largest fringe meeting of the conference — attended by 400 of the 800 delegates — the Broad Left formally dissolved itself, only to rise, phoenix-like from its own ashes, under the new rubric "Left Unity".

While this "new" formation will, apparently, have more "regional autonomy" than the old Broad Left — not a difficult thing to achieve — its function will be similar.



Ken Gill (left) has already managed to lose Clive Jenkins: now the MSF left make the union work?

This became clear when a number of potential candidates for MSF General Secretary took the opportunity to make anodyne hustings speeches. Ken Gill, the present General Secretary, does not retire for at least two years!

No *political* leadership was given, and no *political* answers to the attacks which face MSF members, and the working class as a whole, were offered.

The need to build an organised, democratic left current on a national basis in MSF is an urgent one. This need will not be met by the "Left Unity" initiative.

On the Conference floor itself, the debates on policy threw up some problems for the Labour Party leadership.

Conference voted overwhelmingly against any attempts to ditch unilateral nuclear disarmament.

In addition, delegates called for the removal of all nuclear weapons and bases before the end of the next Labour government, the reduction of conventional defence spending, and transfer of resources to public services.

Another MSF policy which will be unpopular with the New Realists is that the Labour Party should be committed to the repeal of *all* the anti-trade union legislation passed since 1979.

All of these motions were supported by the union's NEC.

Other more controversial policy debates were either drastically curtailed or removed from the agenda altogether.

This was no surprise. The published programme of business would have taken ten days to discuss properly, not the scheduled four and a half.

Proposals

The NEC proposals for the new rule book went to a series of close votes. The end result was a structure which has all the qualities of compromise, pragmatism and fudge beloved of the British trade union movement.

We ended up with an annual conference made up of "approximately" 800 delegates, with every branch of over 600 delegates entitled to one delegate.

The Craft and Tobacco Sectors, along with Medical Practitioners Union (MPU), remain entitled to their representation under the old rules; and the rest of the branches will be allocated delegates on the basis of one per 600 members.

It has yet to be seen whether this mutant formula will add up to anywhere near the specified 800 delegates.

The NEC will continue to be elected on a sectoral basis, according to a formula which is so complicated that it is not understood by many existing NEC members, let alone by the rank and file.

There will be four reserved seats for women elected, paradoxically, by a ballot of the whole membership.

We must all now try to make the union work,but it is inevitable that further major struggle will be necessary to knock it into more democratic shape.

Left activists in MSF need a period of discussion, joint work, and joint campaigning which will allow questions of organisation and programme to be worked out in practice.

NUCPS

"Secret left" lose control

The internal politics of trade unions are complex and the National Union of Civil and Public Servants is no exception.

The results of the first elections conducted by full postal balloting were announced at the NUCPS Conference in Bournemouth.

By Mike McGrath British Library, Boston Spa; Broad Left candidate for NUCPS President

Nine sitting "secret left" supporters were thrown off the National Executive.

For years the union has been controlled by this disciplined but politically disparate group.

They range from unreconstructed Stalinists (popularly known as the Scottish mafia, although including the odd comrade from south of the border) to soggy left camp-followers.

The obvious reason for the ballot upset was the publication of an opposition slate of 17 candidates, including some independent left wingers and establishment Labour figures, but dominated by "progressive anti-communist candidates".

All but one were elected, and that one only narrowly failed because he didn't produce a CV or election address!

The explanation for the secret left's defeat is simple. In their complacency they failed to appreciate the scale of mobilisation required by postal balloting.

Far more important, however, was their criminal sell-out on pay, which demoralised their own supporters and infuriated their opponents. A motion ensuring them for this failure was carried overwhelmingly.

The NEC had disregarded an explicit commitment to place long term pay proposals before a conference and instead went straight to a ballot of members.

In addition, their secret mode of organisation prevented them from campaigning openly and made them vulnerable to a "reds under the bed" vendetta. The viciousness of this should not be underestimated.

Two activists have been sacked on political grounds in the last two years.

One of the newly elected right wingers insisted inquisatorially that other candidates sign a management document stating that they have never been a Communist or a sympathiser or "susceptible to Communist ... pressure."

In one sense the damage has been irrepairable. The pay deal is along term divisive and demoralising factor that will seriously weaken the left.

A silver lining may be that the influence of the Broad Left within NUCPS will now grow. It stands for openness and a campaigning rank and file perspective.

Though none of its candidates were elected to the NEC they polled well and one Broad Left candidate did win election to the Women's TUC delegation.

At a lively fringe meeting attended by 75 delegates, three secret left supporters spoke and a comradely discussion took place.

If a serious campaign for workplace registration takes place in response to postal balloting then we should be able to kick out the right wing next year.

Readers interested in the NUCPS Broad Left should write to Trish Hampton, 197 Sherwood Park Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 1NJ.

The Broad Left magazine *Open Left* appears five times a year (price 30p) and is available from Mike McGrath, 11 Region Drive, Leeds, W. Yorks LS7 4CR.

CPSA Conference

Members stand firm

This year, CPSA Conference showed that CPSA member are prepared to fight against attacks on their jobs and conditions, whether these attacks come from the government or our own right wing leadership!

By John Lee Branch Secretary British Library Document Supply Centre (personal capacity)

Certainly the mood of 1989 Conference was very different from last year.

Members have seen the rampant apathy, glaring inability and outright betrayal of union policy over the year by our right wing National Executive Committee.

The Conference represented a clear shift to the left, reflecting the general mood of resistance in the wider labour movement. This mood ensured that time after time, Broad Left motions won the day.

The emergency motion relating to pay was supported by a huge majority, giving the NEC clear guidelines on their role in any pay negotiations whilst reiterating CPSA policy opposing regional, flexible, or departmental pay bargaining.

Motions opposing Employment Training and YTS were also carried with huge majorities, with the NEC rightly being censured for its disgraceful attempts to bounce CPSA members into accepting the introduction of "slave labour" YTS Schemes.

Opposition to the introduction of agencies in the Civil Service, threatening our pay and conditions, spelling future privatisation, was also clearly expressed by Conference.

Right wing attacks on union democracy and on particular branches and individuals have increased dramatically over the last year, with the union's biggest branch at Newcastle Central Office, with some 5,000 members, suspended for over a year pending investigation.

Overwhelming support for a motion condemning the methods of the right wing in silencing opposition voices showed in the clearest terms how CPSA members views the witch-hunts currently taking place.

How far out of touch our National Officials are with the membership was also demonstrated by the glaring absence of right wing speakers on almost all the key motions; time after time the only opposition to Broad Left policy came from the top table!

The annual elections also provided some positive results, with a marked swing to the left in our Section Executive ballot and major gains elsewhere.

With 11 seats on the DHSS Executive (compared with none last year), with the Department of National Savings SEC being won by the Broad Left for the first time ever, with Steve Ion being elected onto the National Executive Committee, and with 29 out of 33 block vote election successes, the Broad Left can claim that ordinary CPSA members have shown that only a determined response form our leadership will safeguard Civil Service jobs and conditions.

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

Dockers waiting for strike call

Todd dithers as docks burn

TGWU lawyers won the day in the High Court at the beginning of June, blocking moves by port employers to have the dockers' strike ruled illegal.

The High Court refused to declare the strike ballot illegal — either on the basis of its wording or on the basis that any such strike would not be a legitimate trade dispute.

Yet, despite this victory, the dockers' magnificent three-to-one strike vote has yet to be implemented.

Instead of seeing the court decision as a signal for action, Ron Todd promptly sent a letter to all dockers urging them to withold strike action until after the result of the Appeal hearing granted to the employers.

By Alan Thornett Trade Union Briefing

That hearing began on Thursday, June 1st.

The employers are arguing that the dockers have no right to strike under the terms of employment as set out in the Dock Labour Scheme. They claim that they can only strike legally if they resign from their jobs first.

The whole appeal procedure is, of course, a cynical attempt to play for time in the hope that the dockers' will to strike will fade.

If the employers lose in the Court of Appeal they will seek leave to bring their case to the House of Lords. To do this they will need to raise a point of law, but the Court of Appeal may give them one.

What will Ron Todd do then? Send out another letter urging dockers to stay at work while the weeks and months fly by?

Todd has assured the TGWU National Docks Committee that in the event of the employers losing the appeal, the result of which is expected any day now, he will immediately call an all-out strike in the registered ports, using powers he has already been given by the Executive.

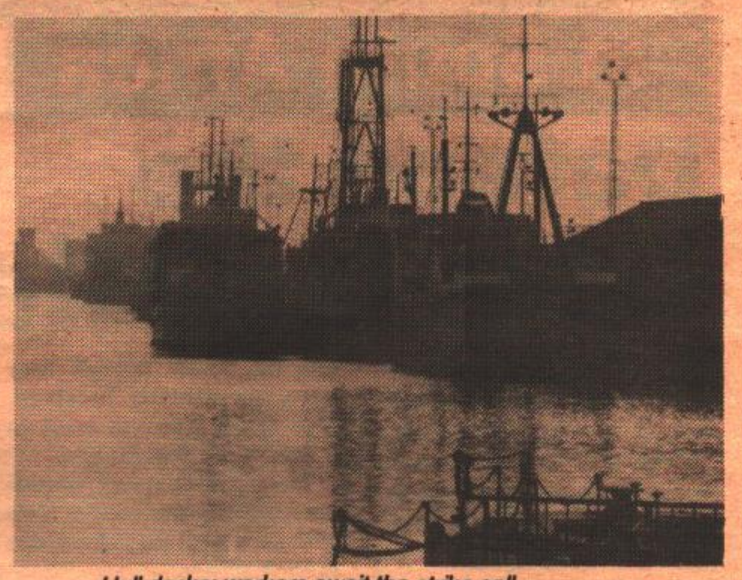
But this is not the first time Todd has made these noises. Everything he has done up till now suggests it is unlikely he will call a strike in the next few days.

Even if the employers are refused right to appeal to the Lords, Todd could still find ways of delaying a strike call.

He could call meetings of the NEC or a national committee or a delegate conference. He could even call for more talks with the employers — although for their part they have made it clear that negotiations are at an end.

If a strike is not called soon, the dockers' unity will be in serious danger. The 28 days of the strike ballot run out on June 16th. It will then take a month to rerun the ballot. By that time the scheme will have been abolished.

It will then be up to the National Port Stewards Committee to take the initiative, give the necessary leadership, and organise an all-out unofficial strike.



Hull docks: workers await the strike call

Chapel takes on media megalomaniac

Maxwell sacks NUJ members

On January 4th, an overzealous section manager at Pergamon Press in Oxford picked on someone she presumed was a defenceless NUJ member and threatened her with summary dismissal.

Little did the maanager realise that she was going to spark a major dispute between Robert Maxwell and the NUJ.

Experience shows that Maxwell is prepared to use his mighty union-busting machine to bludgeon into submission anyone who stands in his way.

The current dispute started as a run-of-the-mill industrial incident.

However, even after local management admitted it had sacked the NUJ member without following agreed procedures, Maxwell saw the opportunity of nipping swelling rebellion in the bud.

His minions soon adopted their master's tune; the NUJ is not recognised in these sections and therefore cannot represent the sacked member.

After failing to make any progress with procedures under the house agreement, the Chapel began to gear up for industrial action — something 95% of the members had never before contemplated.

A ballot in support of the NUJ's right to represent, organise and negotiate on behalf of journalists was carried overwhelmingly.

The 28 days' life of the ballot passed without any real progress.

This was not a sign of weakness on the Chapel's part but a mature attempt to turn Tory anti-union legislation on its head, to use it to put pressure on management and create the best possible conditions for struggle.

When the ballot expired, the Chapel held another one. This time the company was given a deadline — the life of the ballot would expire on May 10th.

By a Briefing correspondent

The Chapel used the 28 days to launch a campaign in the local labour movement, with backing from local MP Andrew Smith. The company responded with sinister threats of sackings.

Nevertheless, cracks started to appear between local Pergamon Press management in Oxford and Mirror Group News in Holborn, which not only houses Captain Bob himslf but also his "Chief of Staff" Peter Jay, his financial consultants, legal department, and "public affairs" office.

Local management realised it had no interest in a confrontation with the NUJ and seemed keen to avoid it.

Why should Maxwell, who allows the NUJ to organise editorial staff throughout his empire, want Pergamon Press to recognise the NUJ in some sections but not others?

Eleventh-hour negotiations produced a settlement that was subsequently endorsed by the Chapel.

It provided for financial compensation to the sacked member (she did not want to return to work at Pergamon), and agreement to hold an independent, ACAS-supervised ballot of all NUJ-eligible staff on whether the NUJ shuld negotiate minimum pay and conditions on their behalf.

Two days later, Robert Gregory, one of Maxwell's industrial advisers, quashed the deal. He said no to compensation and recognition and even declared that it was now company policy to sack workers who strike.

This left the Chapel with no option. Despite heavy intimidation it voted for a third time to take industrial action. The fight was now with the corporation itself.

The Chapel called on the NUJ General Secretary to issue an instruction for a 24-hur strike. An instruction was promptly issued for a withdrawal of labour on May 24th. On that day, letters of dismissal were sent to strikers' homes.

The following day, strikers presented themselves for work on two sites, Headington Hill Hall and Nuffield Press, and found themselves locked out.

As we go to press, one week into the strike, the Chapel has shown a remarkable degree of organisation.

The resilience and maturity of the Pergamon 23 will serve as a solid foundation for what promises to be a bitter fight against a mighty corporation.

Futile

It would be futile for this to remain a David vs. Goliath epic.

It is the responsibility of the labour movrment to come to the aid of the Chapel, and turn our struggle into a a clash of the titans — a direct confrontation between Maxwell and organised labour.

The strike could be won tomorrow if NUJ members at the Mirror Group in Holborn and Glasgow were to come out in sympathy, if only for 24 hours.

Difficult as that may be to achieve, basic day-to-day political pressure remains vital.

Trade union branches, shop stewards or district committees, Labour Party branches or Labour Groups should write to Maxwell and to the Chapel making clear their support for our cause.

Ultimately Labour Party conference, the National Executive Committee, and the TUC must also come down on our side.

What is at stake is not just recognition of a trade union, important as that is. but the viability of all media unins in Maxwell's empire.

A victory here could trigger a fightback by the print unions. It could also act as a catalyst for building a coherent joint strategy for media unions here and abroad.

Already an Executive meeting of the Intemational Federation of Journalists has condemned the sackings and pledged the support of its 150,000 members worldwide.

We now need to hack away at Maxwell's multiple tentacles: his bid for satellite broadcasting, his influence in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, his influence in the labour movement and the imposition of his political ideas on the overwhelmingly Labour readership of the *Mirror*.

He is already using Tory anti-trade union laws to smash the strike, seeking a six-point undertaking from the unions through his solicitors:

1. That any picket comprise only former Pergamon employees and paid NUJ officials;
2. That those formerly employed at one site will not picket the other;
3. That there will be no more than six pickets at either site;
4. That pickets will not threaten, abuse or intimidate persons seeking to enter or leave the premises;
5. That there will be no attempt to prevent persons delaing with businesses other than Pergamon Press;
6. That the NUJ will use its best efforts to dissuade any other persons from joining the picket.

This dispute may not be as important as the dock strike; it may not involve hundreds of workers. It is nevertheless of strategic importance for the NUJ, the print industry, and the labour movement. It deserves to be a priority.

Power workers

Squandering rank and file militancy

Power workers decisively rejected an offer of 7%, despite a ballot paper that tried to steer workers into voting for action *short* of a strike.

There was an overall majority for strike action (25,000 to 21,000) and a huge majority for action up to a strike (34,000 to 6,000).

By Combined London Association of Supply Stewards (CLASS) – Exclusive to *Labour Briefing*

This gave the negotiators a clear mandate to argue for a big pay increase and exploit to the full the power workers' industrial muscle.

In previous years votes for limited action were always abandoned at meetings called shortly before the action was due to start, and an extra half to 1% accepted without a further ballot.

This time the obvious militancy of the rank and file required a slight modification of that tactic.

Under strong pressure from the government (who would not want to face a national electricity strike at the same time as dock and transport strikes), the employers raised their offer to 9.2%.

This included a joint statement on changes in working practices that gives managers *carte blanche* to alter local working practices.

The union negotiators, led by the EETPU, accepted the deal and cancelled the industrial action; only this time they were forced to put the decision to a ballot, with a strong recommendation to accept.

That ballot is now taking place. Most stewards in London are asking members to reject the deal. The result may be close.

This will almost certainly be the last national pay negotiation before the industry is split up into at least 15 different bits.

Given the overwhelming mandate from the members, the union leaders in general and the EETPU in particular have failed miserably.

9.2% with inflation at 8% and rising, is an increase in real terms of 1.2%, less than £2.50 a week for the average power worker, with all the dangers of attached productivity strings.

Union leaders call the deal a victory, but in reality they have settled for the absolute minimum that they think they can get the membership to accept.

Power workers have immense industrial muscle and this year they had committed themselves to using it.

The union leaders could have followed their members' lead, refused to settle for less than 15%, and given the whole labour movement new impetus by becoming the first manual workers in Europe to secure a 35 hour week.

Instead, they chose to snatch a squalid draw from the jaws of victory.

Even if the ballot goes against the deal, power workers will have little confidence in their union leaders to pursue their demands.

It's time our negotiators were elected by and paid the same as the people they negotiate for.

The state wants to chain the workers without jobs
To do the jobs without wages
Action against workfare!
Stop ET!
Demonstration:
Thursday, June 15, 2pm
Camden Town Hall
Bidborough Street, London, WC1

Death sentences in South Africa

Defend the Upington 26!

There was uproar in court last month when a white South African judge sentenced 14 black trialists to hang for a murder which even he recognises that they did not commit.

The 14 are among the Upington 26, 25 of whom have been charged with the murder of a South African policeman.

By Mike Phipps
Chair, Greenwich & Bexley Anti-Apartheid

The charges arise from an incident in Paballelo township near Upington in the northern Cape on November 13th 1985, when a policeman opened fire on an open air protest meeting about high rents, wounding an eight year old boy.

The crowd chased the policeman and killed him.

Twenty-six members of the local community were singled out and charged under South Africa's notorious law of "common purpose".

Under this law, the defendants may all be fund guilty of murder, even though they were not directly involved. This same law was used to frame the Sharpville Six.

The trialists are of various ages and backgrounds. Two of those sentenced to hang are in their sixties.

Paballelo township, a centre of unrest in 1985, remains under siege. One third of the community is unemployed. Police harassment and brutality is common. The latest victim was 12 year old William Diebin, shot dead by an off duty policeman.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement has now issued a leaflet on the Upington case, but otherwise continues to give the case a low profile.

Activists in the A-AM left caucus are supporting the Friends of Upington campaign, which has produced background material and profiles of the accused and is calling for the widest possible movement for their release.

The Friends of Upington can be contacted c/o Azania-Namibia Forum, Greenwich Resource Centre, MacBean Street, Woolwich, London SE18.

South Africa

Inkatha terror

Jabu Ndlovu, the most senior of the "Sisters of the Long March", was attacked by Inkatha vigilantes on Sunday night, May 21st.

She died several days later.

The attack took place at midnight, as Jabu was returning home to Imbalian Natal from a NUMSA Congress.

It started with a gas cylinder being thrown into her house, which exploded and set the house on fire, and was followed by gunshots.

Jabu's husband, a member of the Food & Allied Workers Union, was killed immediately. Her two daughters were seriously injured and one has since died.

Neighbours report that Inkatha vigilantes were responsible for the attack. The Inkatha movement, based on tribal affiliation, has a history of collaboration with the apartheid regime and violent attacks on the labour and liberation movements.

There is now widespread fear amongst other union activists and people are fleeing the township.

Jabu's husband and daughter have not yet been buried because a local Inkatha boss has publicly declared that if the funerals go ahead local COSATU and UDF activists will be wiped out.

Letters of condolence and support can be sent to: NUMSA Head Office, Cnr Rissik & Anderson Streets, Johannesburg 2001, PO Box 260438, Excom 2023.

For more information contact: NUMSA Support Network, PO Box 328, Cambridge CB1 3RQ, tel. 0223-467473.

*Information from NUMSA press release.

Sinn Fein

Councillors national tour

Sinn Fein Councillors will tour England & Wales as part of the Troops Out Movement's contribution to the Year of Action on Ireland. The broadcasting ban means there is little opportunity to hear their views first hand. There will be public meetings, meetings with Councillors, and with community, black, & women's groups, etc. The July 3rd-8th tour includes parts of London, Birmingham, Coventry, Nottingham, Cardiff, Swansea, Leeds, Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle. For further information contact the Mary Pearson, Tour Co-ordinator, Troops Out Movement, PO Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

Iran after Khomeini

Opportunism rules

Even before Khomeini's death, the end of the Iran-Iraq war and the plans for reconstruction had brought to a head political differences within the Iranian government.

By the Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI)

The dismissal of Khomeini's designated successor, Ayatollah Montazeri, whose nomination had ended years of internal squabbles, and the shake up within the Foreign Ministry were signs of a serious power struggle inside Iran's ruling circles.

Hundreds of government officials and senior executives have been dismissed. With the death of Khomeini, a question of his succession has obviously become the prominent concern of the Islamic regime.

Khamenei's appointment doesn't resolve this question. He doesn't have sufficient political or religious status.

Over the last few years the British government and sections of the media have insisted on a simplistic and often false division of the Iranian clergy into radical and moderate factions, with hopes of better relations invested in the moderates.

However, Montazeri, now hailed as a "moderate", was only two years ago branded as a radical, when his office was associated with the leak of what became the Irangate scandal.

The Lebanese journal *Alsheraa*, which broke the news about Iran's secret deals with the US administration, was closely linked to Montazeri. In the aftermath of the scandal many of Montazeri's close associates were detained and executed.

On the other hand, Ayatollah Rafsanjani, who only a few years ago played host to Oliver North and used the good offices of the Israeli government for mediation with the US, is today advising the Palestinians to kill four or five westerners for each Palestinian killed in the Occupied Territories.

These two principle figures, far from reversing having reversed their previous positions, are simply outstanding examples of the dominant trend within Iran's ruling circles: opportunism.

Rafsanjani, who hopes to be elected to President, needed the approval of Khomeini, and in line with the prevailing mood at Jamaran (where Khomeini kept his household) has decided that a hardline position will win support in the forthcoming elections.

On the other hand, Montazeri has little option but to hope that by adopting populist positions he can distance himself from the increasing hatred felt by ordinary people towards the Islamic regime.

Regime

This regime has functioned on the basis of:

- the state, comprising the cabinet, the parliament, and the official organs of the regime, headed by President Khameneii, and the Speaker of the Parliament, Rafsanjani;
- the religious revolutionary organs who followed the directives of the Imam, (and his son Ahmed), irrespective of the decisions taken by the organs of the state.

The binding and uniting element was Khomeini, who did not "govern", held no official "state positions", but who intervened in social and political issues on religious grounds, gave directives, and more importantly dealt with the state of Islam throughout the world.

Volunteers from various Islamic organisations heeded the Imam's obsure directions and took part in various terrorist activities, from taking hostages in Beirut, to bombings in Europe, to hijacking planes.

Such actions could not be directly linked to the Iranian regime and the Foreign Minister. However, the Imam consulted the key figures in the goverment and took notice of the "needs" of the Iranian state by preaching "moderation".

The so-called moderates had no essential disagreement with the aims and objectives of terrorist operations. However, they did at times question the timing or details of such actions, especially if these embarrassed the Iranian state.

With this division, the Iranian Foreign Ministry and the Islamic Republics' embassies abroad could not be directly implicated in illegal or terrorist activities.

However, over the last few months, and especially since the death threat against Salman Rushdie, the demarcation between the two forces of the Islamic establishment has disappeared, resulting in confusion and the unveiling of the true nature of the Islamic state.

This is in itself a clear sign of the desperate situation facing the regime in the aftermath of the defeat in the war.

The bitter internal struggles of the Iranian clergy, seen mainly within the Iranian parliament, reflect the inevitable contradictions bewteen the realities of a capitalist economy forming an integral part of an international system and the pretensions of a religous state.

These contradictions deal principally with the determining the extent of state interference in the economy and have caused bitter arguments between the Bazaar (which is in favour of free market) and sections of the government and parliament (which insist on maintaining an effective role for the state in the day to day running of the economy).



Khomeini: a stop-gap solution may have quelled immediate problems; but the succession is not yet clear.

Such differences inevitably influence the attitude of the various factions towards external markets and governments.

However, rather than reflecting any simple split between supporters and opponents of the West, these divisions arise as contenders for power within the ruling circles compete for allies in variable combinations.

Khomeini's death will be greeted with relief by millions, but it does not yet spell the end of the brutal repression meted out by Iran's increasingly unstable Islamic regime.

Spain

Basque strike against privatisation

One hundred and fifty hospital cleaners affiliated to the CNT trade union federation have been on strike for one month against CLM and INSERGTRIG cleaning contracting companies in Vitoria.

They were originally employed by Osakidetze (the Basque health service).

This is their first strike. They have shown exemplary bravery in the face of attacks by company thugs armed with sticks and chains, and from police "protecting" Red Cross volunteers who have to clean up after the scabs.

The Basque government has passed a decree making hospital cleaners strikes illegal — a measure ignored by the CNT.

The strike is going through a tough period and the striking women have approached workers throughout Spain and abroad for support.

Send the following letters of complaint to the Basque govenrment:

- Gobierno Vasco dpto de trabajo, cc/Duque de Wellington I Vitoria/Gasteiz:

Contra decreto atentatorio derecho fundamental huelga solidaridad trabajadoras limpieza osikidetza.

- Gobierno Vasco dpto de Sanidad, cc/Duque de Wellington, I Vitoria/Gastiez:

Exigamos solucion conflicto limpiezas osakidetza solidaridad trabajadoras. Igual trabajo igual salario.

Send a letter of support and financial assistance (international money orders or pesetas from Travel Agents in registered letters) to: Comite Huelga Limpieza Osakidetza, Residencia Ortiz de Zarate (Txagorritxu), c/Jose Acho — Tegui s/n Vitoria/Gasteiz.

Time To Go

Time To Go Show
June 17-18th

City University, Northampton Square, London EC1
A weekend brainstorm of politics and culture stimulating discussion about *how* British withdrawal from Ireland can be accomplished.
In more than 70 sessions, over 100 guest contributors from all over the world and from all points on the political spectrum, will look toward a positive conclusion to this seemingly intractable problem. It will be a unique and historic gathering of minds.
Sessions range from lectures to dramatisations; roundtables, panels and interviews; to videos and practical workshops. They will try to reflect the diversity of opinion current on Ireland, yet provide a relaxed, informal atmosphere in which to discuss. Whether you think of yourself as a beginner or an expert, we guarantee a weekend to make you think again.
Weekend tickets £15 each (£12.50 concessions) c/o Clare Short MP, Time To Go! Show Registration, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

Time To Go
March and Rally
August 12th; 11am; London
Whittington Park
(Holloway Road)
to
Carnival
Finsbury Park

China in revolution

Socialist democracy or neo-colonial capitalism?

This report has been written by GREGOR BENTON on the basis of discussions (held before the army massacre) with veteran Chinese revolutionary and long-time Trotskyist leader WANG FANXI, who has worked for many years with Marxists in Hong Kong, now in close contact with activists directly involved in the protests in Beijing.



PHOTO: Tim Nolan

The first London demonstration in solidarity with the occupiers of Tienanmen Square.

China today is in the throes of revolution.

Unlike previous waves of dissent, which never succeeded in bringing large numbers of industrial workers onto the streets, the current uprising has spread to all social classes.

Nonetheless, the most likely short-term outcome remains the continuation of the present regime: either through repression, in which case Li Peng and Deng Xiaoping will stay in power; or through negotiation with the protest movement.

If the latter is the case, a "reforming" section of the leadership, grouped around Zhao Ziyang and Wan Li, will take over.

The revolution cannot yet overthrow bureaucratic rule in its entirety mainly because it lacks strong leadership and a comprehensive political programme that could provide the basis for an alternative government.

Bush in Washington, Lee Teng-hui in Taiwan, and Gorbachev in Moscow have all welcomed the protest movement for different reasons. For Bush and Lee it is a call for capitalist restoration and for Gorbachev a popular demand for *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

But all three are *afraid* of the crowds on the streets in China; none can be sure what the turmoil will produce if allowed to run its full course.

There are three main causes of the present crisis. The first is the great tide of corruption that has swept China since Deng started his reforms, and the increasingly intolerable burden it has imposed on ordinary Chinese.

When Deng took power after the fall of the Maoist "Gang of Four" in the late 70s, his plan was to create a class of prosperous businessmen which would act as a cushion for his government.

By "letting some people get rich first" he hoped to unleash the spirit of free enterprise and encourage wealth accumulation.

Instead, he has created a class of speculators and parasites who get rich by "hegemonising the market" through manipulation of Party ties.

China today has an economy that is midway between state control and the market. There are two sorts of prices: fixed state prices, which are low, and market prices, which are high.

Party and government profiteers take advantage of the differences by buying goods cheap in the state sector and reselling them dear on the market.

Not all Party members are in on this fraud, and not all government functionaries get the chance to milk the system.

The corruption grows in proportion to the opportunity: it is greatest among relatives of top leaders, such as the children of Deng Xiaoping and Zhao Ziyang.

Most Party members and officials, following the lead from below, back the protests against nepotism, bribery, corruption, and the outright theft of public goods.

According to a recent survey, even before the present protests, 42% of Chinese saw corruption as the number one problem in their society. Today this view is held by an overwhelming majority.

For some leading intellectuals, the solution to corruption is to abolish the two track system and introduce unqualified capitalism, thus cutting away the breeding ground for fraud.

But there is no sign that the majority of younger protesters have lost faith in a socialist future.

On the contrary, many young dissenters see capitalism and "complete Westernisation" not as the way out from but as the way in for greed and immorality.

This is why they responded so warmly to Gorbachev, who represents for them the possibility of reform and renewal within socialism, even if Gorbachev himself considers them "hotheads".

The second main cause is the thirst for democracy.

This is particularly great among students and intellectuals, but demands for free expression, press, assembly, and the right to strike are also relevant to the wider movement, and closely connected with the fight against privilege and corruption.

The third main cause is the apparent indifference of the present regime to issues of national sovereignty.

When Deng began his reforms, he said that by opening doors to the West, China could learn new methods of management and production; sorely needed funds would flow in to help modernise China's industry.

Seventy years ago, on May 4th 1919, a movement of radical students grew up in protest against Japan's claim to part of Shandong province.

Today it seems to many Chinese that their rulers are prepared to give away whole chunks of the country; indeed, parts of Hainan (an island-province the size of Taiwan) are being leased to Japan for 80 years.

"What a loss of sovereignty," students told *The Guardian's* John Gittings, "when we used to make such a fuss about little scraps along our borders."

For Party officials, the open door is seen as a big chance to get rich by acting as modern day compradors for the foreigners, especially the Japanese, who are past masters in the art of corrupting governments.

For many ordinary Chinese, it amounts to "slavish subordination" and is viewed with patriotic contempt.

Deng's reforms have failed. Already the government has instituted an economic freeze in an attempt (probably vain) to halt inflation, now running at nearly 30%.

Farmers unable to afford fertiliser and feed grain at inflated prices are producing less grain and slaughtering pigs. Eighty million Chinese face severe food shortages; 20 million face starvation.

Fifty million people squeezed out of agriculture by the earlier rapid growth in rural productivity now constitute a "floating class" that grabs what work it can in the cities.

This consists mainly of jobs to which urban workers are no longer prepared to stoop, mainly in building, transport, and sanitation.

Now, with Deng's new freeze, these former farmers are being chased back to the villages, where they will find it hard to make ends meet.

Zhao Ziyang has been touted as a champion of reform and favourite of the students, but there is no evidence that he can provide a fresh direction for the Chinese economy and society

He lacks Gorbachev's charisma and competence, and is China's best known nepotist. Even in the Politburo he has been criticised for allowing his relatives to engage in profiteering. He is responsible for many of the reforms which have now turned sour.

For a time Deng and Zhao's policies worked, and were popular. China's national income doubled. People enjoyed more personal freedom.

But where Mao created a China that was poor but largely equal (except at the very top, where people lived in fabulous luxury), Deng and Zhao created a China that is less poor, and a little freer, but outrageously unequal.

Both strategies produce strains and tensions in Chinese society that may be contained for a few years, but must eventually explode.

When Mao took power, he told the world that China would create socialism on its own terms, and after the split with Moscow he repeated Stalin's dictum that socialism is possible in one country.

Today, with China beginning to throw itself open to the world, like India and the Philippines, many people look back nostalgically to Mao's era of self-reliance (though they also remember the crushing poverty, terror, and atrocities of the Cultural Revolution).

But for China's small number of revolutionary socialists neither self-reliance nor the open door can solve the country's basic dilemma, which is that socialism can only prosper on a world scale.

A strategy for revolutionary socialists in China has four main thrusts:

- to fight alongside workers and students against all top bureaucrats and to discourage illusions in any of the present leaders;
- to fight for socialist democracy;
- to fight against any attempt to restore capitalism in China;
- to fight for independent organisations of students, workers, and soldiers, and to work to bring them ultimately together in one body.

As the struggle against bureaucratic rule develops, this body would then form the basis for a new, independent National People's Congress, democratically accountable to the Chinese people.

Chinese Solidarity Campaign

Non-stop picket of Chinese Embassy

The student movement in China now faces bloody repression.

We are conducting a non-stop picket falling for:

- an end to martial law;
- no use of military forces against the students and workers;
- the release of various professors and intellectuals who have recently been arrested for their support of the students;
- the government to recognise the newly formed students' and workers' organisations in China;
- the government to agree to the democratic demands of the students' and workers' organisations.

We are appealing for your support.

- Invite us to send a speaker to your organisation.
- Send letters of protest to the Chinese Embassy at 41 Portland Place, London WC1, with a copy to us.
- Volunteer to join our non-stop picket rota.
- Send a donation to our campaign. Money is needed to enable us to spread news to a wider circle of people in the UK. (Make cheques payable to the Chinese Solidarity Campaign.)
- Write a letter to your MP and ask her/him to support the emergency motion already tabled in the House of Commons.

The Chinese Solidarity Campaign was set up after the demonstration in London of 5,000 people on Sunday May 26th.

We are a group of UK Chinese residents mobilising our community to support the democracy campaign in China. We are seeking the support of UK people.

The Chinese students in the UK from China and from Hong Kong are already organised.

We offer them our full support. We aim to complement their activity by building links between the UK Chinese community with people in the UK who wish to support democracy in China.

You can contact us at 68 Shaftesbury Ave, London W1, tel. 01-836 8291.

Hong Kong

The population of Hong Kong is six million. But on May 21st, one million people were out on the streets of Hong Kong, and a week later one and a half million, in support of the students and workers in Beijing.

The Chinese government said this was nothing to do with them: Hong Kong is under British rule until 1997. The Hong Kong British government said it was nothing to do with *them*: the people were protesting about the situation in China, not Hong Kong.

The fact is people in Hong Kong voted with their feet to demand a say in their own future. There are currently no proper channels for them to express their opinions and their anger at the way they have been treated by both British and Chinese governments over the "1997 issue".

The famous deal was sealed between bureaucrats without any prior consultation with people in Hong Kong.

The overwhelming response of the people of Hong Kong has raised serious questions for the labour movement in Britain.

I believe it is the responsibility of the labour movement here to do all it can to put pressure on the British government to withdraw from Hong Kong and have a referendum for the people there to decide their own future local governing body.

From the recent demonstrations, it is clear that the people in Hong Kong identify themselves as part of China, and place their hopes for the future not in any paper guarantee, but in the struggle for genuine democracy in China.

By a *Briefing* supporter

LABOUR BRIEFING

Don't register; don't pay

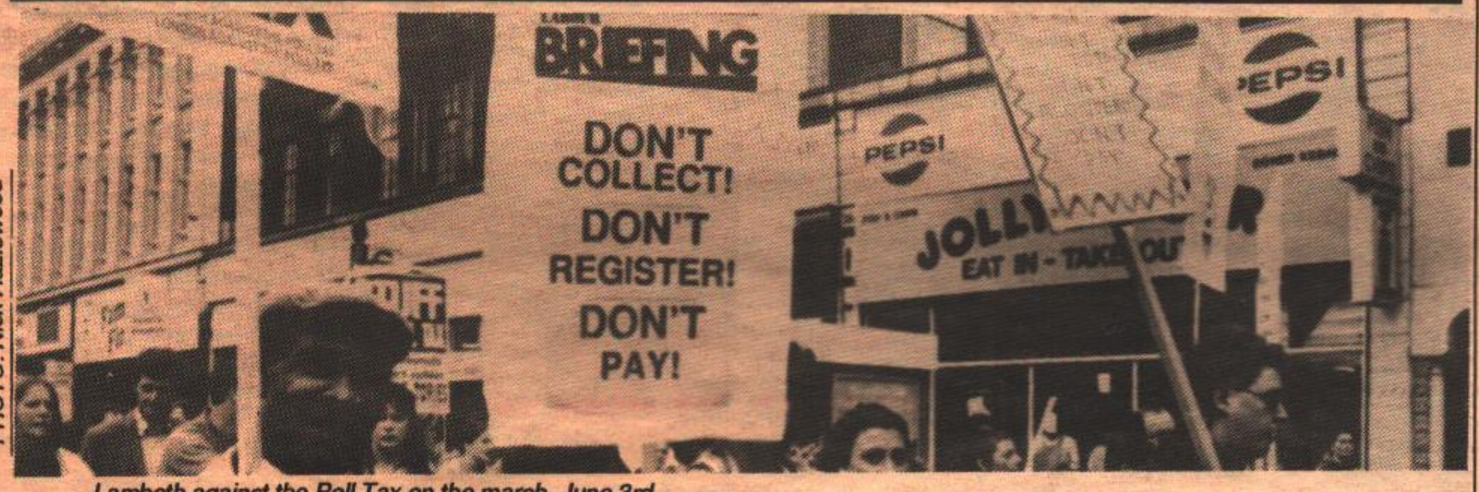


PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

Lambeth against the Poll Tax on the march, June 3rd.

"Bad laws are made to be broken"

Bad laws are made to be broken.

The Poll Tax is based not on ability to pay, but on the individual's right to vote, to claim benefits, to participate in society.

As a result of the Poll Tax, many people will lose their right to vote and have their basic civil rights denied or infringed.

These rights were not given to us — they were hard won over many years by ordinary people who fought and in some cases died for them. Black people, in particular, both under slavery and colonial rule, fought and died for these rights.

By Martha Osamor

During colonial rule, the same Houses of Parliament which have passed the Poll Tax imposed similar taxes on colonial subjects — taxes through which they hoped to break the masses' links with the land, and force them to work for the rich in order to pay the tax.

But over many years the colonial masses organised themselves and fought back — freeing themselves from the same evil tax which is now being imposed in Britain.

In South Africa, the black masses organised against the hated "pass laws" — like the Poll Tax, an attempt by the state to monitor and control the movements of ordinary people — through mass civil disobedience, mass burning of passes, with thousands sent to gaol.

Our leaders tell us we must obey the law and pay the Tax. But our experience tells us that the Tories only grow stronger when we comply with their unjust laws.

Today in Britain our trade unions are shackled by such laws. The refusal to break those laws has isolated and weakened those in the front line of our struggles.

Miners, dockers, local Labour Councils, and others have all been dragged down and left in the lurch by our leaders' failure to understand the power and necessity of mass defiance of oppressive laws.

We cannot wait for permission from the courts to exercise our right to demand better wages and conditions, better services, fairer taxation.

In China, the political bosses sit in smoke-filled rooms deciding how to use the state machinery — propaganda, police, military — to thwart the people's just demands.

But the magnificent resistance and determination of the Chinese workers and students is a lesson for us all. We should take a leaf from their book — and make the Poll Tax the turning point in our long struggle against Thatcher.

It is simply not enough for Labour leaders to say to people who cannot afford the Tax: pay up, be quiet, and leave the rest to us.

People want our support *now* — and they want to know that when we get rid of the Tories we will repeal *all* their unjust laws and introduce a fair tax, redistribute the wealth, and make the rich pay.

Many people will forfeit their right to vote rather than pay the Tax. These people will be forced underground to be exploited as low-paid, non-unionised, "unofficial" labour.

Combined with the scrapping of Wages Councils and new powers for employers, the Poll Tax will create a new class of rightless workers. It is our job to offer these workers a collective, political answer, not leave them to deal with this crisis alone.

But Labour's leaders seem ashamed to be associated with any kind of resistance. They wish it would just go away. They try to marginalise and villify those of us who do choose to take action. But we should not be intimidated.

I will not be paying the Poll Tax and I call on others to join me.

Putting a spanner in the works

Make *them* do the work!

What have you done with your Poll Tax Registration form?

Margaret and Dennis have returned theirs, and are looking forward to saving about £2,000 a year on their new home in Dulwich.

In Tottenham, Lewisham and Lambeth Councillors and punters alike are using registration forms to fuel summer fires.

By Gill Lee
Dulwich CLP

All over England and Wales thousands of people are screwing up the forms and putting them in the bin.

But can non-registration stop the Poll Tax?

To defeat the Poll Tax we will have to force Councils not to implement it, persuade unions not to collect it, and build a mass campaign of non-payment.

Some on the left have argued that while it may be possible to get thousands not to pay the Tax, it is impossible to mobilise anyone against registration.

But hundreds of thousands of people do not agree with the Poll Tax, and don't want to register.

Local campaigns which use this hostility to the Poll Tax to launch collective action on non-registration will put themselves in an excellent position for the next phase of the campaign — non-payment.

Campaigning against registration can be used to build local contacts, street committees, and support from trade unionists and Councillors.

Non-registration campaigns should involve collective action as far as possible. People will be more ready to defy the Tax if they know that others are doing the same.

Tottenham Against the Poll Tax has asked people to collect forms from their workplaces, family, and friends and take them along to a mass burning.

A system of street reps is being developed to collect forms and talk to people worried about the Tax. Street stalls are a useful way of making the Tax an unavoidable point of public discussion — and collective action.

Tenants' Associations can serve as a base for building anti-Poll Tax networks on housing estates.

But, at the end of the day, most people will find their names on the Poll Tax register anyway.

In a massive breach of civil liberties, sources other than registration forms will be used to compile the Register; for example, the electoral roll, DHSS records, library tickets, school and college records.

The importance of non-registration is not the extent to which it actually stops people's names going onto the list — although, as shown in Scotland, it can play some part in disrupting the Poll Tax process.

Mobilising people against registration is a major stepping stone in building support for non-payment, in raising the profile of local groups, and in drawing people into collective action against the Tax.

Don't fill in your form — make *them* do the work!

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.

Poll Tax Diary

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