LABOUR
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40p

As "British media betray Chinese students"...

UNITE FOR DEMOCRACY!

In May, when we heard that thousands of students were on the streets in Beijing and that they were soon joined by some two million workers, we thought real change — socialist democracy — was at last on the way in China.

Then on June 4th we heard the news of the brutal massacre of students and workers at Tienanmen Square by the 27th Army.

Perhaps numbers are not important, but the distortions coming from the Chinese government — claiming that only 300 were killed — are grotesque.

The Chinese students asked Western journalists to bring the truth about what happened to the world. But the British media keeps saying that what happened in China shows that socialism can't work. They say that the students were demanding capitalist democracy. This is not true.

The students were demanding a genuine socialist and democratic government. They were calling for an end to corruption and for a fair dialogue between students workers, citizens in general, and the government about guaranteeing the rights to free speech and association which are written into the Chinese constitution.

In their demands and their speeches there was not a single word about socialism not working. We have all seen the thousands singing the *Internationale* in Tienanmen Square. On the bottom of every leaflet given out in the Square were the words of the Communist Manifesto: "Toilers of the world unite..."

The answer of the Chinese authorities to these demands for socialism with democracy has been massacres not only in Beijing but also in Chengdu and Shanghai. Arrests are just beginning and no one knows how far they may spread. But this week, as death sentences were pronounced, British companies signed a £3 million electrical contract with the Chinese government.

BY JABEZ LAM
Chinese Solidarity Campaign

And the British media, which had promised the students to tell the truth to the world, have instead turned their attention to the 3.2 million British passport holders in Hong Kong and the alleged threat they pose to Britain. In whipping up racial hatred and diverting attention from the real issues, these journalists have betrayed the students.

For the British working class there can be no real liberation until all colonies have been returned to their own peoples. The British government likes to talk about the lack of democracy in Beijing but for 140 years there has been no democracy in Hong Kong. Supporting the struggles of people in Hong Kong for democracy is the most important task for British socialists.

Whenever there is no channel for people to express their grievances and aspirations they must and will create one themselves. This is true in both Beijing and in Hong Kong.

Twice last month there were demonstrations of over one million in Hong Kong — one quarter of the entire population. These people were not just asking for democracy in China but for democracy in Hong Kong itself. And these two issues are deeply linked — because the future of Hong Kong lies with China.

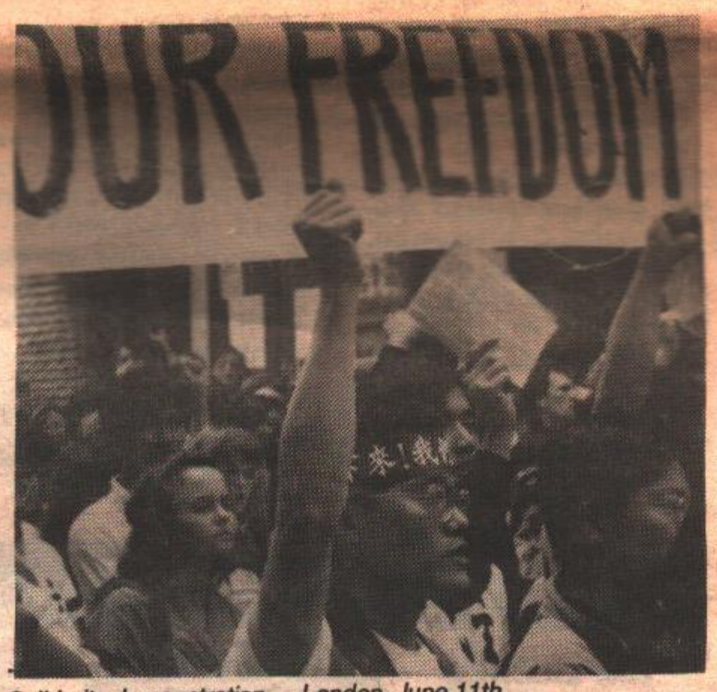


PHOTO: Tim Nolan

Solidarity demonstration — London, June 11th

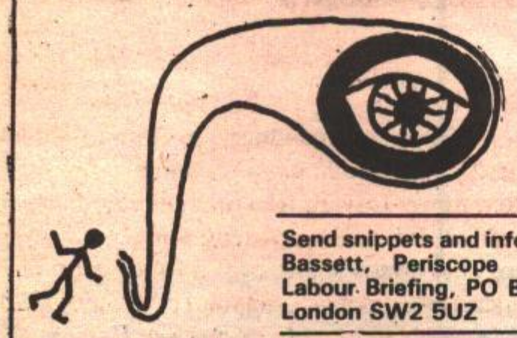
Under Mao's regime, the guiding theory was the Stalinist one of "socialism in one country", which led to repression, economic stagnation, and relative equality. But in the last ten years Deng has thrown open the door to foreign capital — with a resulting 70% inflation rate and increasing inequality.

So for many people in China there seem to be only two models: socialism in one country or the mixed economy, both of which betray the spirit of socialism and of democracy. But in the students' and workers' protests, we have begun to see a third possibility: that of international socialism.

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Letters

Periscope



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

Out-takes from Sheffield

- *Guardian* correspondent Michael White appears to have garnered most of his information about the Socialist Conference sitting around a table with Socialist Society luminaries at an Indian restaurant in the heart of Sheffield.

In his report of the Conference, he did acknowledge that the well-mannered brains of the Society had been joined at the Octagon Centre by the boorish "Dave and Deirdre Spart" allegedly selling copies of *Socialist Worker, Briefing,* and *Militant.*

Delighted as *Briefing* is to be plugged in *The Guardian,* we are a little worried about Michael's powers of observation.

After all, in line with the Tendency's unmitigated hostility towards the Socialist Conference, there were *no Militant paper-sellers* on the premises.

- All participants in the Socialist Conference received a free copy of the *Morning Star* with a headline which read "Chinese CP admits error" (on the massacres).

The tenor of this article was hardly in harmony with the mood of the conference, which greeted the uncompromising speech given by the representative of the Chinese Solidarity Campaign with thunderous applause.

- One *Briefing* supporter managed to chair the "green economy" workshop while tactlessly stuffing his gob with a sausage roll. Protests have been lodged.
- Playwright and *Marxism Today* fanatic David Edgar attended the workshop on "Constitutional Reform" where he managed to misunderstand completely what had been (until his intervention) a quite sophisticated, subtle, tolerant, and honest debate.

He denounced everyone who queried the wisdom of Charter 88-style reform as "old-style proletarian class warriors" who failed to recognise the values of pluralism and the new self-organised social movements (women, black people, etc.).

He also seems to be labouring under the bizarre illusion that civil rights were granted to black people in the USA by a wise and just Supreme Court and not by their own long and bitter struggle.

LSE bottles out

There is further evidence that the liberal establishment is growing ever more reluctant to stick to its noble declarations of support for Salman Rushdie.

The Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI) had organised a public meeting on the Rushdie affair — with the participation of a wide range of British and Iranian writers and speakers — for June 23rd and accordingy booked a room in the London School of Economics.

A mere 48 hours before the meeting was to take place Dr IG Patel, Director of LSE and self-proclaimed Rushdie supporter, cancelled the booking.

It appears that the LSE powers-that-be got cold feet when local police advised them that it would be difficult to guarantee the public's security at such a meeting.

CARI organisers had informed the police weeks before the meeting of its subject, venue, likely attendance, etc.

Police subsequently denied they had ever been told about it and insisted they could not provide sufficient officers to protect the meeting.

Luckily nearby Conway Hall was available at short notice and the meeting went ahead as planned.

The LSE cancellation follows a previous incident at a polytechnic in London.

A NALGO *branch meeting* was to be addressed by a speaker from *Voices for Salman Rushdie,* but poly authorities stepped in and prohibited the meeting at the last minute — even though it was a meeting organised by and for *bona fide* union members.

NUPE members cool on Sawyer

A question for those who claimed that candidates preferred by Vauxhall CLP members were vote-losers without widespread support:

How come one of those who vetoed the local Party choices at Labour's NEC — one Tom Sawyer — has just been re-elected Deputy General Secretary of NUPE with the support of a mere 8% of the membership?

A massive vote of confidence, Tom?

Left-winger Nick Bradley, without the benefit of Sawyer's machine and near constant media exposure, won 30,856 votes (39%) to Sawyers's 48,713 (61%).

Bending the figures...

1988 port throughput statistics for Boulogne make interesting reading.

Remember P&O's repeated claims that the year-long dispute with the NUS in Dover did them little commercial harm?

In fact, P&O lost 73% of its passengers compared to the previous year. If daytrippers are excluded, this rises to 82%.

Commercial vehicle crossings fell by 66%; while P&O's rival Sealink carried 158% more truck trailers.

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 28th if possible.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

For a serious Green debate

Dear *Briefing,*

The Association of Socialist Greens (a group of socialists within the Green Party) feel that the result of the European elections fundamentally changes the face of radical politics in this country.

No longer will unilateralists, feminists, and others who oppose the military/industrial complex have to look to the Labour Party as their sole vehicle of change.

The Green Party represents not only a challenge to the establishment but to the traditional left as well. We are keen to open up a dialogue with other socialists to explore both common ground and differences.

Our 9% average vote in the recent County Council elections has been consolidated and increased in the European elections, where we took third place in many seats with many of our candidates getting at least 15% of the vote.

It is likely that next year the Green Party will start to win seats in the Council elections. This will provide us with a good base form which to launch our General Election campaign.

The attempt by the other parties and the media to ignore us is now likely to turn into an attempt to ridicule our politics, which is another reason why we wish to debate our views in magazines which take their politics seriously.

Yours in solidarity,
Ian Wingrove,
London SW12

Confused of South West (P)london

Dear *Briefing*

As a member of a union branch which nominated Martha Osamor as Labour candidate in the Vauxhall by-election, and as an activist in the Lambeth area, I have followed your coverage of events in Vauxhall with some interest.

However, I was a bit puzzled by Mark Seaton's article in *Labour Briefing* no. 85.

After listing quite correctly the scandalous chain of events, he omits to argue which candidate socialists should vote for!

If Mark believes, as I do, that we should argue for a Labour vote despite what has happened, then I think he should set out the reasons why.

If he thinks that these arguements are so obvious as to not require stating, then I wonder who he has been talking to recently.

Many previous Labour voters I have spoken to are now advocating voting for just about anyone *but* the Labour candidate.

Comments Mark? Anyone else?

Clive Hopkins
North Lambeth SWP

Where's the scum gone?

Dear *Briefing*

Breifing continues to provide the best socialist left coverage of events on the local government circuit and in local Labour Parties in London and elsewhere.

It must be a depressing job reporting on the class retreat of the Labour Party at a national level and in many local Labour Parties.

But grim as it is, I strongly encourage *Briefing* to keep up the good work of informing non-retreating socialists of events in Labour Parties outside their own. You're the only paper that does.

Incidentally, there does not seem to have been any reports from Councils or Labour Parties in Newham and Tower Hamlets for some months.

I used to work for both these Councils many years ago and am always interested in following how the right-left battle is going on in these parts of London.

There used to be some real right-wing scum running the local Labour Parties in Newham and Tower Hamlets and I'd love to know what these vandals are up to now.

Keep up the good work.
Yours for socialism
David Lee
London N9

Shadow in the Vale

Dear *Briefing,*

I must disagree with Bryn Griffith's optimistic assessment of the Vale of Glamorgan by-election ((*Briefing* no. 83).

In no way is it an expression of a "new mood" in the working class in Wales.

The Labour victory was a product of several factors:

- doctors' notices in surgeries advising patients not to vote Tory;
- the debacle of the "centre" parties and their consequent collapse;
- the (impressive) constituency record of the previous Tory MP, whose high personal vote was not passed on;
- the absorption of Barry into the constituency — an area with a high Labour vote;
- the open split in the Tory ranks, with Welsh Secretaries of State denouncing each other.

The efforts to equate Labour's improving electoral fortunes with the bubbling strike wave are laudable, but misplaced. The political consciousness of working class voters is a product of industrial struggles only in a general sense.

The link is neither directly causal nor immediate. It passes through a whole range of media before it takes the form of crosses on a ballot paper.

Perhaps it would be more instructive to look at the Labour Party's Welsh Conference in Swansea in assessing the extent of any "radicalisation".

The huge weight of the Labour bureaucracy in South Wales makes the Conference a tedious and routinist affair as a rule. This year was no different.

The politics of the Kinnockite Policy Review were adopted with very little opposition. Significantly, the NUM also backed the move to multilateralism — despite their own (unilateralist) conference decisions.

The discovery of massive shifts in the balance of class or party forces in every by-election is best left to the crude bourgeois politics of *Newsnight* and University of Essex lecturers.

We desperately need a few working class victories, political and industrial, before we can talk about a "new mood": anything else is just wishful thinking.

Wales remains very much in a "post-Miners' Strike" situation. The tremendous defeat which the strike represented for the whole class is still evident.

The militants are demoralised, many in the NUM have accepted redundancy without a fight, the pit closure programme continues, the bureaucracy has become entrenched and strengthened.

Pockets of opposition to this trend remain: the recent Newport NALGO strike and British Aerospace strike, for example. The possibility of a turnaround is there. Nothing is impossible.

But we should not underestimate the capacity of the Labour misleaders to demoralise their membership, or the effect of several years without victory to rank and file confidence.

The evidence of a change in this pattern is starting to emerge, thankfully. But it remains a promise — not yet a reality.

Simon Kennedy,
Swansea West CLP

Contact Briefing

500 Club Winner

This week's winner of the £25 prize draw is the holder of share no. 150: P. Chambers of Surrey. Well done, P., and co-holder J.

By the way, please remember to notify the Briefing office if you move — or you could be losing out on your lucky prize!

For details of how to join the Briefing 500 Club, contact the Briefing office.

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. 87: Deadline for articles 26/6; distribution 4/7.

No. 87 is the last scheduled issue before the summer break. 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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☞ READ THIS

We regret to announce that we have had to postpone this year's Briefing AGM till the autumn. The EB is too exhausted to organise the meeting; and a consultation with Briefing groups reveals that the weather and the recent heavy round of events would have meant a very low attendance.

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Election results: the tide turns against Thatcher

Labour's good results in the European elections — and the pummelling taken by the Tories — are the latest and most graphic symptom of a groundswell of popular hostility to Thatcher's regime.

Even before the elections, this groundswell has been visible in resistance to the Poll Tax and the Housing Act, and above all in the wave of industrial disputes and successful strike ballots.

The strong Labour vote will only bolster working class self-confidence. For the first time in ages, Thatcher looks vulnerable. Her government is wracked with splits, stupidities, and a mounting catalogue of failure. In coming months, we will see more disputes, strike, demonstrations, and protests.

And here's where the warning lights should flash for the Labour leadership.

Labour's job ought to be to capture and co-ordinate this tide of opposition and transform it into a movement that can remove the Tories at a General Election and provide a mass base for a socialist government. Does anyone seriously think Kinnock and his team are either capable of or even interested in doing this?

Instead, they will turn their backs on the wave of struggles — and denounce many of them — in an attempt to gain credibility not with the Thatcher-hating masses but with the increasingly nervous representatives (in the media and elsewhere) of Britain's crisis-entangled ruling class.

The truth about the Euro-campaign, which every Labour activist knows, is that it was poorly organised, patchy, and politically vacuous. We were lucky, this time, that the Tory campaign was even worse.

Activists know how difficult it was to mobilise members on the ground to carry out the basic tasks of electoral politics. Active participation is being squeezed out — and even passive membership is falling.

In Glasgow Central the Tories were obliterated, but it is significant that Kinnock and Dewar find comfort in having kept the swing from Labour to the SNP to "only" 15%.

In Vauxhall a poor turnout and a below average swing to Labour can hardly be seen as a massive vote of confidence in either Kate Hoey or the way in which she was imposed as a candidate.

It has demonstrated yet again, however, that the Labour Party remains *the* political home for black people and working class people in general. The fringe candidacies, sparked by understandable anger at the NEC's racist arrogance, inevitably failed — not least because their potential constituency simply does not see them as a serious political intervention.

The questions raised by the Vauxhall scandal — about black representation and Party democracy — will not go away.

Along with questions posed by the Poll Tax, the economy, the industrial upsurge, Scottish nationalism, the environment (the high poll for the Greens was the election's least surprising surprise) and nuclear disarmament, they will increasingly haunt the Kinnock leadership, especially as it proves itself incapable of consolidating Labour's lead over the Tories and turning it into a decisive General Election victory.

If the Labour Party does not respond to Thatcher's multiplying crises with clear, radical alternatives, it will quickly find political opportunities turning into a succession of embarrassments.

In these balmy post-Policy Review days, Kinnock must be delighted with the support from the media (support which he always enjoys when he attacks the left). But as a General Election nears, and the pressure on all fronts increases, the media will doubtlessly rally round the Tories and give Kinnock a pasting. What price Policy Reviews and an inactive, decimated membership then?

Courts, Todd strangle docks action

With Britain's railways at a halt and London suffering its greatest transport stoppage since the 1926 General Strike, transport workers across Britain have shown a determination to oppose Tory attacks on their standards of living, working conditions, and bargaining rights.

The Tories are now on the ropes over a wide range of issues. The working class power glimpsed in the transport strikes could be harnessed by a willing Labour Party and trade union leadership to put an end to ten years of Tory misrule *now*.

Instead, these leaders appear only too anxious to capitulate to the laws of the market — and the laws of the state as interpreted by Tory judges.

Ron Todd's obeissance to the courts, asserted in advance of any actual court decisions, was the green light for the Court of Appeal ruling which made the dock strike — and by implication almost any other strike — illegal.

The Law Lords, undoubtedly influenced by the derisory Tory vote in the Euro-elections, have now reversed that ruling, but the damage has already been done. The momentum for an all-out strike on the docks has been lost.

Unofficial action was sabotaged by Todd's repeated calls to obey unelected judges and disregard the democratically expressed wishes of the membership. And the 28-day period for calling official strike action has now expired.

The law requires reballoting. Any call to action by TGWU leaders will almost certainly come only *after* parliament has abolished the National Dock Labour Scheme.

These issues will be hotly debated at TGWU Conference shortly after we go to press. The lessons of the struggle on the docks must be learned. Unjust laws must be broken and precious opportunities must be seized.

The abolition of the NDLS — and in effect the unilateral imposition of job losses and changes in working conditions by management — raises issues that cut to the heart of the whole labour movement.

Whatever the courts may say, whatever excuses are offered by trade union leaders, industrial action will remain the only realistic way of dealing with such threats.

Socialists in the TGWU should continue to press for strike action while working with others to build local support committees to defend and offer support to any dockers facing victimisation.

Economic Notebook: Debating an economic policy for the left

Why Livingstone's economic strategy will not work:

The British road to Japan

Ken Livingstone's contribution to the Labour Party "Productive and Competitive Economy" Policy Review, excerpted in the last *Briefing*, offers a useless strategy for socialists in Britain.

Livingstone argued the need for two key policies:

•To lower military expenditure, at least to the Western European average level — something every socialist would support.

•To steer investment by British firms into Britain, by stopping further overseas investment and possibly by forcing British firms to sell overseas assets and bring the money "back" into Britain.

The usefulness of this suggestion depends, as we shall see, on what else you do with the money.

The problem with Livingstone's submission is not its specific proposals in isolation. But the *analysis* they are based on and, above all, the *wider strategy* they are supposed to serve are misleading — even allowing for the fact that the paper was written for the Labour Party NEC.

Livingstone's strategic aim is *to increase the competitiveness of British capitalism, by making it more like "competitor" countries.*

The British economy's lack of competitiveness, particularly in manufacturing, is attributed to two particular features.

By Jamie Gough
Holborn and St Pancras CLP

The first is high military spending, which does now (though it did not historically) damage the domestic economy. It requires higher taxation; it benefits principally British (and other) capitalists investing in the Third World.

Secondly, Livingstone argues that:

"our economic competitors have concentrated on investing in modernising their economies whilst the UK has invested abroad at the expense of its domestic economy. *This explains the lack of competitiveness of the economy...*" (my emphasis).

This is "proved" by two graphs: one with overseas investment going up, the other with domestic investment going down.

But this is, at best, half the story. It says nothing about *why* British firms have preferred to invest abroad (a preference which they have had, in fact, for the last 100 years!).

The immediate reason for this preference is that *the rate of profit in productive investment in Britain has been too low.* Since the early 1950s, in particular, it has been much lower than the rate of profit in the other major capitalist countries.

This is *partly* to do with cumulative under-investment, but it is *also* a result of *over-investment.*

British capital has gone abroad because it has run into the effects of its own investments here: high concentration of production, overcapacity, strong trade unions, bottlenecks.

For exactly the same reasons, Japanese capital — which Livingstone regards as so "successful" — is currently pouring out of Japan and de-industrialising it.

Contradictory

Unfortunately, capitalist investment is much more *contradictory* than Livingstone's schemes would like.

One practical result is that if Livingstone were to "bring back" British investment to Britain, it would be unlikely to invest itself productively. There would be an enormous surge in speculative investment.

So would it not be necessary to control what was done with that investment, to bring it under public, popular control? It could then be invested "productively", and, even better, in production that benefited workers.

Livingstone has one, rather vague, sentence about public ownership in a 12 page paper.

Elsewhere, he simply argues that if "defence" spending were reduced by £9 bn p.a. and overseas direct investment reduced by £7 bn p.a., then:

"no substantial obstacle to Labour's programme would exist, providing clear decisions on priorities are taken." There's not much popular control there...

"Repatriating" British capital will achieve little and is *pointless* unless it is put under workers' control.

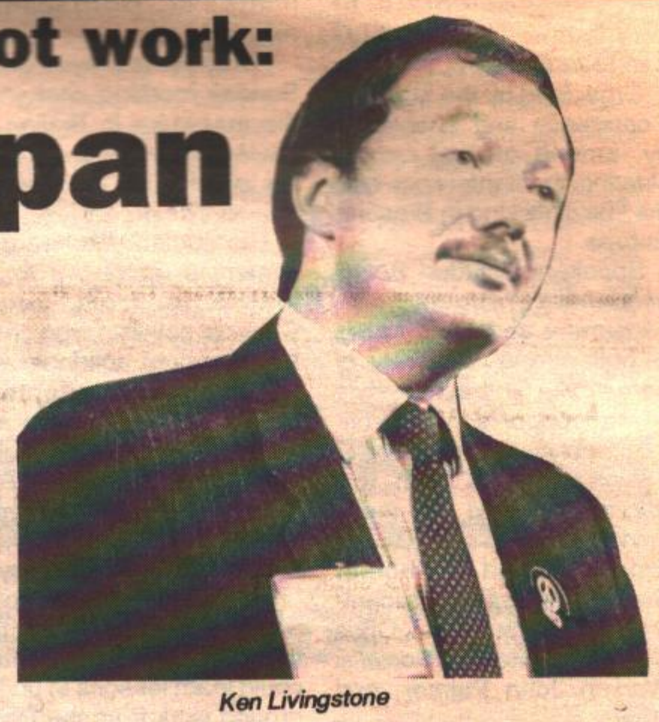
In fact, without this, it becomes a *chauvinist* demand: jobs for the British, not for "foreigners".

Livingstone is glowingly optimistic about what British firms would achieve if only they invested productively and were not burdened with military expenditure.

Away would go the Tory sweatshop economy. High tech industries would prosper. "Millions" of women and black people would be trained in new skills. The economy would shift "upmarket"; "employers would be forced to end low pay."

Illusion

This capitalist paradise is a ridiculous illusion. Even in the marvellously "competitive" West Germany and Japan, women, blacks and immigrant workers have crap jobs and there is endemic low pay.



Ken Livingstone

PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

In Japan sweatshops are an integral part of the economy. *Capitalism is always uneven.*

Livingstone's programme is in fact one that has been put forward for the last hundred years by reformers of different stripes.

Since the 1930s it has been argued by left and not-so-left Keynesians. "Make Britain like Germany, the USA" (they used to say!) "or Japan" (they now say) "and everything will be all right."

Not only is this proposal reactionary, it is also utopian.

The overseas orientiation of British capital, and the military spending that goes with it, are *dyed in the wool.* They are not merely a quirk of a *particular section* of British capital, "the City".

All the large British industrial and consumer service corporations are masssively involved in overseas investment and in financial and speculative operations. Even many small firms are dependent on this orientation.

Two conclusions flow from this. First, British capital would use every weapon, which are considerable, to sabotage moves to "domesticate" it. The labour movement would have to mobilise against this sabotage.

Livingstone however presents this domestication as a purely technical question.

Secondly, in order to "domesticate" British-owned capital you would have to *completely control* it. But that is the same as saying that you *abolish* it as private capital. Here, too, Livingstone is silent.

Campaign!

The third Socialist Conference

Sweltering in Sheffield

The Third Socialist Conference, held in Sheffield over the weekend of June 17-18th, was a more sober and low-key affair than the previous two, and perhaps all the better for that.

Twelve hundred people registered for the Conference, which included major speeches in plenary sessions, workshops on policies, and campaigning priorities, and a wide range of fringe meetings and activities.

The turnout was gratifying to the organisers, given stiff competition from the Time To Go Show in London, the Yorkshire Miners' Centenary Gala, Glastonbury, Euro-election exhaustion, and spectacular sunshine.

Sweltering heat failed to prevent sharp debate in a number of workshops. Nonetheless, for the most part discussion was calm and there was less of the sectarian hectoring which had alienated people at previous conferences.

By Mike Marqusee Haringey Labour Briefing

There were strong speeches at the opening session by Reg Race, Martha Osamor, Sarah Roelofs, John Palmer, and Jabez Lam of the Chinese Solidarity Campaign, and powerful appeals from both Tony Benn and Gerry Adams at the closing plenary.

In between people swarmed in and out of workshops on dozens of different topics and fringe and caucus meetings.

The basis for discussion was the Socialist Policy Review which had been published in the week before the Conference and contained a major strategic statement as well as proposals from various policy groups.

Problems arose because no one had been able to see the papers until just before the Conference and no arrangements had been made for amendments to them and no opportunity provided for votes on the major issues presented in them.

Indeed, while the separate workshops were mostly models of participatory socialist politics, there was no way people attending the conference could contribute to or amend the agenda or formally raise objections or queries.

The only opportunity for collective discussion involving all the Conference participants came at the fag-end of the second day, when half an hour was given over to speeches from the floor. It was too little, too late.

Obviously, the organisers were under tremendous pressure and unavoidable practicalities meant some decisions had to be made in haste. But the absence of mechanisms for democratic participation was both wrong in principle and in the event damaging to the Conference itself.

In the first place, it presented those sectarians who only come to the Conference to flog their own particular line on each and every issue with a handy stick with which to beat the organisers and stymie moves to generate unity in action.

Secondly, it disturbed many Labour Party members embittered by the top-down Kinnock Policy Review.

Thirdly, it leaves a number of key policy areas — notably the economy and the question of — democratising the state" — in limbo. How *will* policy be decided on these issues?

Fourth, it inhibits mobilisation of the grass roots of the Socialist Conference behind the Conference's many vital practical initiatives.

This last points the key to the future development of the Socialist Conference — and will determine whether or not the decision to rename it the Socialist *Movement* was mere wishful thinking.

Supporters of the Socialist Conference — which remains the only significant, open, non-sectarian national left current — must take it upon themselves to bring the Conference's many projects to fruition.

The trade union conference planned for November, the National Convention on Democratic Rights, campaigns on coal, electricity, and water privatisation, health, nuclear disarmament, and an attempt to convene a national meeting of local anti-Poll Tax groups — all these activities need and deserve support.

If they yield positive, concrete results over the next year, the fourth Socialist Conference, wherever and whenever it is held, will be by far the biggest and best yet.

But if they are left to wither on the vine of good intentions, the Socialist Conference will be in trouble — and the left will have squandered a major opportunity.

At a lunchtime caucus of Labour Party members on Sunday (attended by some 50 comrades) a discussion on our strategy inside the Party produced general (though not universal) agreement that a new national body of some kind was needed to co-ordinate the Labour left and that all the previous or existing bodies had failed.

Supporters of the CLPs Conference argued that their organisation was a sufficient base for a new Labour left, but most of those present felt something else was needed, though obviously the CLPs Conference should be part of any new initiative.

Unfortunately, time allotted to this meeting was hopelessly truncated, and a great deal more discussion and consultation will be needed on this matter.

In fact, many Labour Party members (who make up the vast majority of Socialist Conference supporters) felt that not enough time had been given to consideration of our strategy within the Party.

The Socialist Conference could play a vital role in establishing the new political agenda — and new organisational methods — which the Labour left desperately needs in the wake of the Policy Review.

Finally, a packed *Briefing* fringe meeting on Saturday evening heard speakers address a wide variety of questions: Ai Meun Lim on China, Anna Wagstaffe on the Pergamon dispute, Alan Thornett on the dockers and the courts, a CARI speaker on Rushdie and post-Khomeini Iran, Reg Race on the situation in the Labour Party, and Martha Osamor on defying the Poll Tax.

Mandy Mudd chaired with aplomb and dealt well with an orchestrated demand from the SWP for a speaker from the floor.

Prominent SWPer Peter Alexander was given five minutes in which he added little to what had come before, except an extraordinary statement to the effect that "most Muslims in Britain support Khomeini" over Rushdie and that therefore the only way to defend Rushdie was to fight racism.

Similar points had been made by the SWP earlier in the day at the *Voices for Rushdie* fringe meeting.

Along will all the other non-SWP comrades at Sheffield (and, I suspect, many rank and file SWPers as well) I remain utterly confused about whether or not this means the SWP is prepared to join in any practical activities to defend Rushdie and oppose the growth of fundamentalism.

Gorbachev Conference

Looking beyond *perestroika*

More than 300 people packed Oxford University's St. Cross building on the weekend of June 3rd/4th to discuss recent developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Organised by the Socialist Conference and sponsored by, among others, *Labour Briefing*, the conference was the first of its kind in Western Europe.

Speakers included Soviet academics Yeugeny, Ambartsumov and Ottis Latsis — both strong advocates of *perestroika* Gorbachev-style — and oppositionists from Yugoslavia and Hungary.

Perspectives from the West European left were provided by Tony Benn, Ernest Mandel (author of *Beyond Perestroika*, recently published by Verso), Chris Harman (editor of *Socialist Worker*) John Palmer, and others.

Debates ranged over such issues as market versus plan, and the scope and limits of Gorbachev's reforms.

By Richard James

Participants arrived on the Sunday morning shaken by the massacre in Biejing. At the last minute a major plenary session on the Chinese events was organised.

The conference heard an immediate response to the massacre from young Chinese activists who called for maximum solidarity with workers and students in China. The conference also heard from a British socialist, recently returned from Beijing, who stressed the revolutionary character of the mass movement for democracy.

A comrade from the Polish Socialist Party argued that the democratic movement could learn lessons in underground work from the Polish opposition.

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

No more deportations!

Darnett and Laura must stay!

Darnett Barnett, a West Indian woman resident in Manchester is facing deportation by the Home Office.

Darnett lives in South Manchester with her two and a half year old daughter, Laura.

The Home Office say that she lost her right to return to this country in 1984 at a time when she was in Jamaica nursing her grandmother who was seriously ill. She looked after her grandmother until her death in 1986.

She returned to England in 1988 and applied to the Home Office to restore her permanent residency status. The Home Office are ignoring the following facts:

•that she had to stay in Jamaica to look after an elderly relative;

•that her family ties are here in Britain as all the members of her family live in Manchester or elsewhere in England.

What you can do

•Write to Timothy Renton or Douglas Hurd, the Home Secretary, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London W1 asking for Darnett and Laura to be allowed to stay.

•Write to Keith Bradley MP and/or your MP at the House of Commons expressing support.

•For further information contact: Wythenshawe Law Centre, Fenside Road, Sharston, Wythenshawe, Manchester M22 4WZ.

Keep the Cifticiogullari family together!

Sue and Ali Cifticiogullari were married in 1987.

She and their son Lucas were born in Liverpool.

Now they have to choose between staying together as a family or leaving Liverpool beause Ali is facing deportation to his native Turkey as an "illegal entrant".

Support their call for the Home Office Minister to exercise compassion and allow the Cifticiogullari family to stay together in Liverpool. Their campaign is supported by Liverpool City Council.

For further information contact: Alan Gayle, Liverpool 8 Law Centre, 34-36 Princes Road, Liverpool L8 1TH; tel. 051-709 7222.



Kurdish refugees

Political asylum now!

The number of Kurdish refugees seeking political asylum in Britain since May 2nd has now risen to over 2,000.

Most are sleeping in church halls and community centre. Some have been placed in bed and breakfast accommodation.

By Jim Thain Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

Others have been less "fortunate". Some 150 refugees are being held in jails and detention centres, 70 in Gloucester prison, where a hunger strike is in its fourth week.

Thus people who have survived up to 11 years of state-sponsored torture and repression find themselves imprisoned by a country they regard as a model of human rights and democratic freedoms.

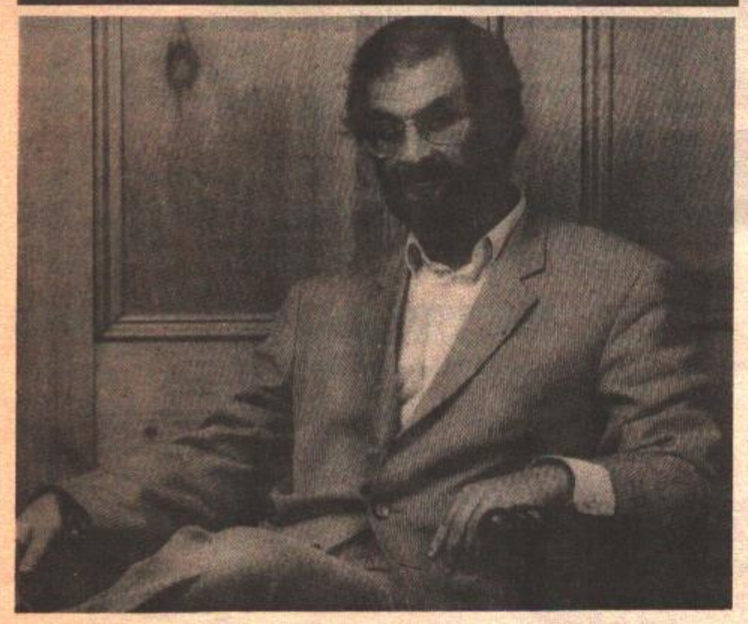
Support organisations are now building for a demonstration which will assemble at Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, at 12 noon on Saturday July 29th.

Sponsors for the demonstration are needed: please contact the Kurdish Refugees Support Group, c/o Hackney Trade Union Support Unit, Liberty Hall, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8, tel. 01-249 8086.

Kurdish representatives have addressed over 20 trade union meetings in recent weeks. Any organisation requiring a speaker should contact the Support Group.

It is anticipated that many more Kurdish people will flee Turkish state repression as the imposition of new visa regulations by Britain looms.

Rushdie latest



Voices get louder

By MARK SEATON

The recently formed *Voices for Salman Rushdie*, which is campaigning against fundamentalism and for the right to dissent, is undertaking a demanding programme of local public meetings, fringe meetings at trade union and Party conferences, leafletting, letter-writing, etc.

Initial *Voices* statements in *The Guardian*, *Spare Rib* (and of course *Labour Briefing*) have drawn an encouraging response from organisations and from isolated individuals up and down the country.

Make sure you speak up for Rushdie *now* by affiliating to *Voices*.

The Campaign Against Repression in Iran held a "Defend Salman Rushdie" meeting on Friday June 23rd in London (see *Periscope*, p2, for background!).

Voices is planning its own fundraising evening on Tuesday July 4th entitled "An unholy night: a celebration of doubt and dissent" with Kathy Acker, Pauline Melville, Caryl Churchill, and other writers from many backgrounds and countries all contributing blasphemous readings, with something guaranteed to offend everyone.

"An Unholy Night" promises to be a bracing occasion — with plenty of surprises. It will be held at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, at 7.30pm. Tickets are £3/£1.

With the anti-Rushdie Muslim Action Front having received permission from the courts to determine whether or not Rushdie has committed an offence under British law, and with pressure building upon Labour Authorities to give money to Muslim schools, the Rushdie affair promises to run and run.

Find out how you can get involved in *Voices for Salman Rushdie* by calling 01-809 3927 (Mike, Tuesdays and Thursdays only) or 01-571 9595 (Gita) or writing to BM 2706, London WC1N 3XX.

Labour Party

Stop press resolution

We have just received the following resolution from Vauxhall CLP, which they hope other constituencies will consider submitting to Labour Party Conference.

Conference deplores the insensitive, undemocratic, and unconstitutional way in which the Labour candidate was imposed on Vauxhall CLP.

In particular, it notes:

1. That the main criteria for selection used by the NEC Subcommittee was agreement with the Policy Review, not the policies of this conference.

2. That the events have angered many Party members, confused Vauxhall's local community, and are widely perceived as racist. They have resulted in demoralisation, division, and hostility to the national Party among Party members, and a lacklustre election campaign.

Conference believes that the actions of the NEC were wrongly dictated by the needs of the media and the wishes of some to "test" the Policy Review rather than the wishes and needs of the community in Vauxhall.

Conference resolves to instruct the NEC:

1. To permit Vauxhall CLP to select its own parliamentary candidate to stand in the next General Election in accordance with the rules.

2. To draw up a code of practice in respect of its powers to select a candidate in the event of a by-election which includes the following:

a. all branches, sections, and affiliates to hold meetings to interview and nominate candidates and that only members of that CLP shall be entitled to vote at such meetings;

b. shortlisting and selection to be done by the CLP GC in liaison with the NEC;

c. all shortlists to include at least three candidates with the highest number of nominations from branches, sections, and affiliates;

d. in constituencies where the electorate includes over 15% black voters, all shortlists must include at least one black candidate, if one is validly nominated;

e. the rule in respect of one woman on every shortlist must also apply to by-elections.

Lesbian strength; Gay pride

A revolutionary contribution

Lesbian and gay liberation is of critical importance to human emancipation as a whole.

It is not merely a minority issue, nor purely a question of civil rights or sexual freedom.

Ultimately, its aim is a cultural revolution to end heterosexual supremacism and the concommitant cult of heterosexual masculinity which underpins all relations of oppression.

This fundamental transformation of personal relations is possible, it has been argued, because heterosexuality and masculinity are culturally constructed and malleable, rather than biologically determined and immutable.

By PETER TATCHELL

That was the *revolutionary* agenda of the lesbian and gay liberation movement which emerged 20 years ago following the Stonewall riots in New York in June 1969.

In contrast to earlier liberal-oriented movements for homosexual equality, the lesbian and gay liberation movement did not seek to ape heterosexual values or secure the acceptance of homosexuals within the existing conventions.

Repudiated

Indeed, it repudiated prevailing sexual morality and institutions, including heterosexual masculinity with its oppressive predisposition to rivalry, toughness, and aggression, symbolised by the rapist and the queer-basher.

In contrast, the "radical drag" and "gender-bender" politics of the Gay Liberation Front glorified male gentleness. It was a conscious, if sometimes exaggerated, attempt to renounce and subvert the oppressiveness of masculinity.

By challenging heterosexual masculinity, the politics of lesbian and gay liberation has profound radical implications for oppressed peoples everywhere. It is absolutely central to revolutionary change and human liberation in general.

Successful

Without the successful social construction of a cult of heterosexual masculinity and a mass of aggressive male egos, neither sexual, class, racial, species, nor imperialist oppression are possible.

All these different forms of oppression depend on two factors for their maintenance. First, on specific economic and political structures.

And second, on a significant proportion of the population, mainly heterosexual men, being socialised into the acceptance of harsh masculine values which involve the legitimation of aggression.

The embracing of these culturally conditioned *macho* values, whether consciously or unconsciously, is what makes so many millions of people able passively to acquiesce or actively participate in repressive regimes.

(This interaction between social structures, ideology, and individual psychology was a thesis which the communist psychologist Wilhelm Reich tried to articulate nearly 60 years ago in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*.

Fascism

In the case of German fascism, what Nazism did was merely awake and excite the latent brutality which is intrinsic to heterosexual masculinity in class societies.

It then systematically manipulated and organised this unleashed masculine violence into a fascist regime of terror and torture which culminated in the holocaust.

Given that this internalisation of masculine aggression within the male population is a prerequisite for injustice and tyranny, sensitivity and tenderness amongst men ceases to be a purely private matter or simply a question of personal lifestyle.

Instead, it objectively becomes an act of subversion which undermines the very foundations of oppression.

Hence the Nazis' vilification of gay men as "sexual subversives" and "sexual saboteurs" who, in the words of Himmler, had to be "exterminated root and branch".

By challenging the cult of heterosexual masculinity, lesbian and gay liberation politics are about much more than the limited agenda of human rights. They offer a unique and revolutionary contribution to the emancipation of the whole of humanity from all forms of oppression and subjugation.

A 20 year revolution

This year's Lesbian Strength and Gay Pride March marks the 20th anniversary of the Stonewall Riot.

It was on the night of June 27th 1969 that customers at the Stonewall bar in New York began to fight back against police harassment, and so the story goes, gave birth to the "Gay Liberation Front".

It is perhaps more accurate to characterise Stonewall as lesbians and gay men playing their part in the 60s revolt.

It was a decade that had seen the emergence of the Black Civil Rights Movement in the US; colonial revolutions and solidarity movements worldwide; a wave of major industrial unrest in Western Europe, and a generalised radicalisation of youth.

The nascent lesbian and gay liberation movement owed something to all of these struggles and forces, and to the material conditions that allowed them to develop. Even its name was borrowed from the NLF in Vietnam.

The real significance of the occasion and movements which grew out of it lies in the break made with the discrete, "respectable" group that had been gently campaigning for homosexual (meaning gay men) rights previously.

By REBECCA FLEMMING

Typical was the Homosexual Law Reform Society founded in London in 1958, whose Secretary wrote in response to an exhortation to set up local groups and generally broaden the work of the Society:

"Our work is so valuable, we do not want to endanger it in any way by taking risks."

Stonewall marked the eruption of a new, radical, combative lesbian and gay liberation movement out of the closets onto the streets.

The movement declaimed in its manifesto:

"Gay liberation is a revolutionary group of men and women formed with the realisation that complete sexual liberation for all people cannot come about unless existing social institutions are abolished."

It is the essence of this message that we should take on the Lesbian and Gay Pride march this year: the revolutionary nature of lesbian and gay liberation and its inseparable links with the struggle for socialism.

Football Supporters Association

Winning real power for fans

The Football Supporters Association was formed in 1985 following the Heysal Stadium disaster. Its primary aim was to gain representation for supporters on the bodies that run football.

The success of the organisation has been phenomenal, with the voice of supporters being heard within football and through the mass media more clearly than ever before.

By an FSA member

With its role and importance in the game having outgrown its existing organisation, the FSA is now at a turning point.

Apart from the routing day-to-day issues which the FSA has to tackle, this year it has also had to organise the anti-ID card campaign and respond to the Hillsborough disaster.

Of necessity the FSA is concentrating on its external relations but, by its officers' own admission, it is neglecting its own organisation. If this neglect is not checked, many of the FSA's achievements to date could be squandered.

The FSA has won credibility within the football world, and more importantly, on the terraces, but to make use of it, and to use the relationships that have been developing between the football authorities and supporters, to win real decision-making power for fans the FSA must concentrate more on building and extending its own organisation.

The FSA is disproportionately middle class, and although it has a sizeable female membership, its national committee of 22 rarely has a woman in attendance. The Merseyside branch has only just recruited its first black member and other branches are 100% white.

The FSA secured a place at the table at Lancaster Gate (FA HQ) largely because of its high media profile and campaigning ability (useful to the FA during its anti-ID card campaign), but its lack of numbers, and inability to mobilise what members is does have, makes it too dependent on this high profile and on support from organisations like the Football Trust and the Professional Footballers Association.

Many members are wary of alienating this support by attracting a "political" label, or by adopting positions that may appear to be too radical.

However, the FSA's ability not only to be heard but to force the powers in the game to act in accordance with supporters wishes will in the long run rest on the consciousness, organisation, and determination of its members.

The FSA Annual Conference will be held on June 24th at the Sheffield United Bramhall Lane ground. This conference will seek to address many of these issues.

Motions on the agenda cover a variety of organisational and policy issues, including ticket allocation, catering, facilities at grounds, as well as more controversial topics such as "undermining the Football Spectators Bill" (when and if it becomes law).

This will be a delegate conference with representatives elected by the FSA's 17 branches, but all football supporters are welcome to attend as observoers. For details ring the secretary of the South Yorkshire branch on 0742 554453.

Labour Party in local government

Stay in...

...and vote against!

The debate in *Briefing* on whether the left should continue to stand in local government elections has hardly touched on the essential issue of what left Councillors should do if elected.

As someone who believes we cannot abandon the interests of the working class to the Tories and the Labour right, and who therefore believes we must stand, I feel we must confront this difficult issue head on.

This is especially true in the current climate, following the isolation and defeat of many local government struggles.

Left Councillors need to send out a clear, unequivocal message not only that they are opposed to cuts, rent and rate rises, attacks on trade unions, and collaboration with the Poll Tax, but also of their willingness to organise against them with those affected.

That is why left Councillors should, *as a first step, vote against* any such New Realist proposals — not only in Labour Group, but also in full Council.

Anything else can only blur that message, leading others to believe that our opposition is tokenistic.

For us the decision to vote against should be *a matter of principle*, not one dependent on the scale of the cuts or of the rent and rate rises. Otherwise we are like straws in the wind, blowing this way and that under different pressures.

Our accountability is first and foremost to the working class, not to Labour Groups which have rejected every vestige of socialism in their attempt to maintain the illusion of "power".

But such votes, while crucial, are only the first step. Left Councillors, even if they formed a majority on the Group or Council, cannot win on their own.

By Pete Firmin
Brent East CLP

Cuts and rent and rate rises an only be defeated by mobilising mass opposition to them — through strike action, rent and rate strikes, occupations, etc.

Left Councillors can play an important role in helping to initiate, organise, and publicise such actions.

Of course, all this will being disciplinary action against left Councillors and many will feel the pressure to "toe the line" rather than risk expulsion from the Labour Group or even the Party.

Decision

Militant supporters appear to have taken the decision that it is better to stay in the Labour Group than risk expulsion by voting against cuts budgets, as in Birmingham.

While we should not court a witch-hunt, we should not tailor our policies to the limits laid down by the bureaucracy.

We need to demarcate ourselves clearly from those Councillors making cuts, and line up with those fighting them. If we are disciplined for doing this, then so be it.

Not to oppose cuts outright is a slippery slope. We soon become prisoners of Council leaderships and find our principles increasingly compromised. The right see it as a sign of weakness rather than strength.

It also sends a confused message to those outside the inner circles of Council machinations.

The small minority who actually manage to discover that we really opposed the cuts but felt we had to vote in favour or abstain — for whatever reason — will not understand the subtleties.

Majority

The majority of those affected will not even be *aware* that any Labour Councillors "opposed" the measures.

It has been argued that this is all right when there is an active local anti-cuts campaign, but is merely a "posture" if such a campaign doesn't exist.

But unless we set down markers we won't assist in developing this campaign and will undermine the efforts of those trying to build it.

Where left Councillors make up the balance of forces on a Council (meaning that if they vote against it,the Labour Group's cuts budget will not command enough support to get passed), they will come under particular pressure.

There is always the possibility that the Labour right will vote for a Tory budget or under new legislation Council officers will put forward a package of larger cuts.



The struggle outside the Council Chamber: successful lobby of Southwark Council against closures.

But this ends up simply repeating the unacceptable choices the right have made in the first place.

The right argue that Labour cuts are "caring" and that a fight involving the only serious alternative, a deficit budget, "would hand the Council over to the Tories."

By preferring one set of cuts over another, or massive rate rises over massive cuts, we confuse and demobilise opposition and give credence to the "don't cut us, cut someone else" perspective.

Confusion amongst the left will hinder any fightback.

The right are willing to make cuts partly because they have no faith in the ability of the working class to fight. What makes us different is that our horizons are *not* restricted to the Council Chamber.

Coucillor comrades have been put under pressure to support, for example, rate and rent increases in order to prevent job cuts.

Alternative

While we understand why some trade unionists might advocate this alternative, we must oppose it as a variant of the "cut someone else, not us" line.

Briefing supporters in the unions who are trying to organise against these measures need clear support from left Councillors.

There are, of course, many people, including Councillors, who are against cuts and against implementing the Poll Tax, but are unsure about alternative strategies or unwilling openly to oppose the Labour Party.

I am not arguing that we should have nothing to do with these comrades, or that we should denounce them because they feel unable to go the whole way with us.

We can form alliances with them around particular issues, involve them in anti-cuts or Poll Tax campaigns, and attempt to win them over in the long run.

What we shouldn't do is trim our policies in order to maintain a bloc with them.

Quit office now!

Peter Chowney's article (*Briefing* no. 85) illustrates the left's untenable position in the Council chamber and the need to get out — quick.

The recent tactics of some leading anti-cuts Councillors, which have been key to events in three London Boroughs, represent a shift away from a non-negotiable position — that of opposition to cuts.

At Camden's rate-making meeting, anti-cuts Councillors split into three groups: those who voted for the LCC budget; those who abstained; and those who voted against.

Camden comrades justified abstaining on "a thorough reactionary budget" on the grounds that because the scale of the attack is not as great as last year, it would:

"not provoke a militant response similar to last year's cuts... [and therefore] ...many felt it would be tactically inept to risk expulsion."

As a Camden NALGO member said: "They perceive the lack of activity outside the Council chamber as a reason for hanging on within it."

Seven anti-cuts Councillors in Haringey abstained on the LCC's budget — under heavy pressure from local union leaders — to avoid one far more severe. Risk of expulsion was not an issue for them.

By John Turkie
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

The comrades summed up their untenable position: "...effectively, the budget vote was an impossible choice — oppose it and cuts would result, not oppose it and rates would go up dramatically [56%]."

And they could have added that "cuts would nevertheless result."

Much as I sympathise with their position, not only does it underline the futility of "staying in office", it is in danger of accommodating the New Realist line of better Labour cuts than Tory cuts.

The tactics in Lambeth were different again, but no less contradictory.

At the Group elections in May, the left went into an alliance with a centre grouping to take control of an LCC budget which contained a rate rise, a rent rise, and cuts which the left had opposed at the rate-making meeting a few weeks earlier.

This centre grouping of eight, it should be remembered, when in control of the Council not so long ago, were on the other side of the struggle when they brought in cuts of £60 million over two years.

The justification for this tactical alliance is to frustrate the Poll Tax and the Housing Bill, but is it likely that this bunch of opportunists will now do a U-turn and go illegal over the Poll Tax and the Housing Bill?

Opponents of resignation, who have 101 different positions, are now accusing us of being ultra-left and wanting to abandon local government to the Tories.

Yet 18 months ago, when I first pushed for a positive tactic of mass resignation, I was accused of being right wing.

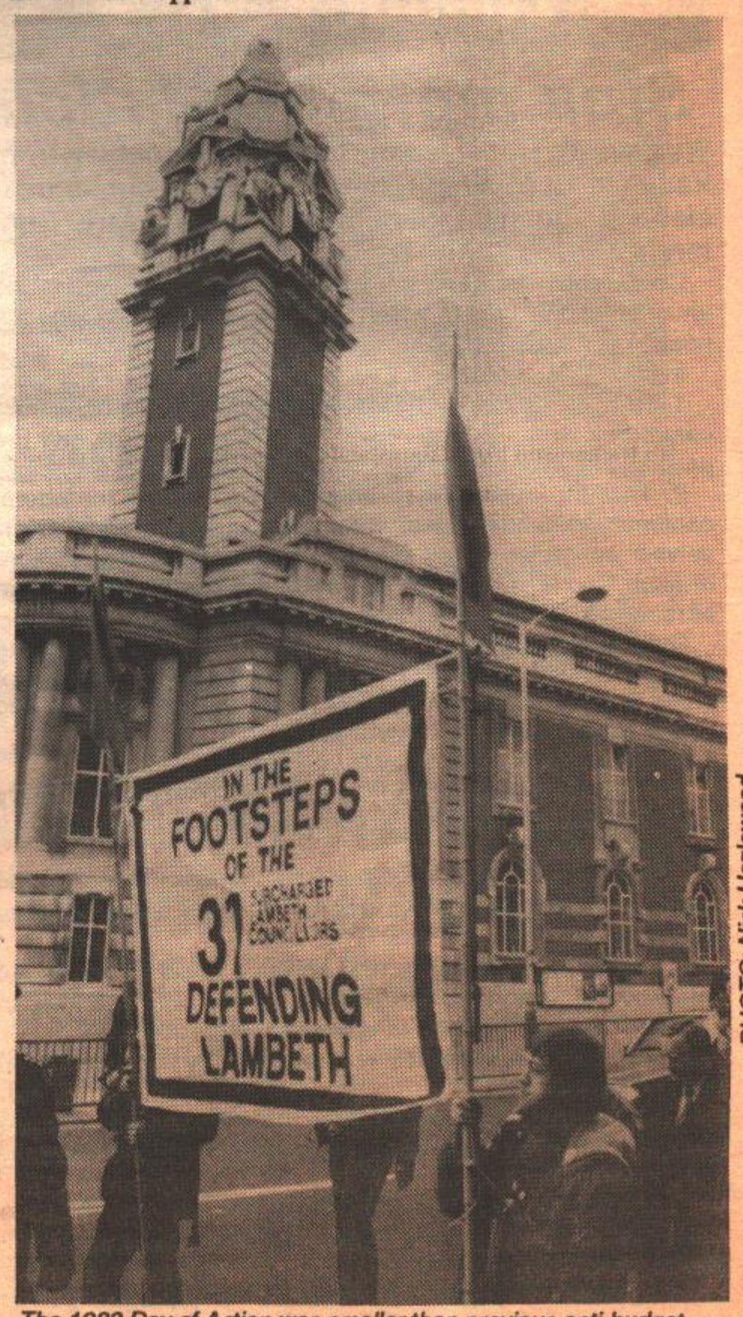
I have not shifted my position. I still believe that no left platform can ever be credible unless it is based on a deficit budget position.

The difficulties in gaining control of a Council on this basis have led some comrades to begin to shift away from our bottom line, instead of understanding that we cannot, for the moment, play any role in the Council chamber in preventing the Tory programme for local government.

Our opponents argue that a logical extension of our argument must be that there's no difference between Labour and Tory governments, and that we may as well argue for leaving the Labour Party.

This is nonsense. The struggle does not — and should not — include a role for Councillors at *every* moment in history. This should always be a tactical question.

Some comrades will not face up to the fact that *at the moment* there is no progressive role for the left in the Council Chamber.



The 1988 Day of Action was smaller than previous anti-budget cuts actions: can left Councillors still link up with Council workers?

PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

Glasgow Central

The new challenge to Labour

The sighs of relief in Walworth Road could be heard even in Glasgow Central when Labour won the by-election despite a 15% swing to the SNP.

The Tory vote collapsed to fringe-candidate proportions.

After Govan, the stakes were high. And though Labour has won through this time, its long-term problems must still be addressed.

It might be useful to remember the symbol of this year's Glasgow Mayfest (a three week festival of socialist theatre, music, and comedy): an 80 foot paper boat constructed by sculptor George Wylie.

It represents an ironic statement on the decline of shipbuilding on the Clyde and is accompanied by a song, the last chorus of which goes:

"So now that we're building a paper boat,
A paper boat, a paper boat,
Don't be surprised at the way we vote."

In the *post mortem* discussions after the June 87 General Election, it was suggested that Scotland rejects Thatcherism because we are more egalitarian, have different values, are less materialistic, etc.

Wylie's artistic contribution shows a more profound understanding of the core issues.

An absurd vision comes to mind whenever I recall this illusion of Scottish egalitarianism.

Fifty Labour MPs are walking through George's Square in the centre of Glasgow, but instead of litter in the gutters there's fivers everywhere, because the less materialistic Scots can't be bothered to pick them up!

By Jim Niblock
Glasgow

Gone are the days when these same MPs were seriously discussing another silly notion: sending a mission to darkest London with the purpose of converting the "loony left" to moderation.

Govan changed all that. Labour was beaten by a candidate to its left.

Jim Sillars became *de facto* leader of the SNP and pulled his party sharply leftwards on a programme for independence within the EC, won by gaining the leadership of the Scottish working class.

The victory of Sillars' team over the traditionalists means that far from Scottish Labour MPs preaching moderation to the London left, it's the left which must now teach these same MPs the importance of class struggle politics.

Whether they listen is another matter.

Most view Kinnock as TINA between now and the General Election. However, a minority will presumably understand that the Scottish dimension is now crucial to British Labour's future viability.

The relative autonomy of Scottish politics requires a new symbiosis which is quite impossible under the present bureaucratic centralism of Walworth Road.

Scottish conference must become the sovereign body of the Party in Scotland, with its own elected leadership and a federal relationship with the British Party.

Scottish Tories have spent hundreds of thousands of pounds re-equipping their Party organisation in the last two years.

However, over a whole month of the Glasgow Central by-election campaign, *not one single* Conservative poster could be found in a constituent's window!

Huge parts of Scotland are effectively no-go areas for Tory hopefuls. No amount of cash will solve their problem.

Kinnock's TINA-line holds water when there is, in fact, no alternative. In Scotland, however, the SNP has clearly become a credible alternative to the New Realists.

One of the main factors in choosing June 15th for the by-election was to stretch the SNP resources by combining it with the Euro-elections.

They were indeed very stretched. Labour had a greater presence than the SNP on the ground, with five offices throughout the Constituency, full-timers, computer link-ups, and many activists doing the leg-work.

Mike Watson is Mr. Clean: handsome, articulate, energetic, and moderate. Labour's introductory leaflet to the campaign confirmed some fears about the politics of the campaign:

"Why you should know
this man —
He's Bright, He's Dedicated,
He wants to work for you,
He's Mike Watson.



Election addresses we have known: You know he's Mike Watson, but who is she? Answer on page 2.

In contrast, the SNP's leaflet called clearly for mass on-payment of the Poll Tax.

Not all went to plan. One day the national news showed Cunningham in Vauxhall campaigning against the Poll Tax, while Mike Watson astounded everyone by declaring that he had not found the Poll Tax to be a major issue!

Despite the victory on June 15th, Scottish Labour can no longer march in step with Kinnock when the main opposition is not Thatcher to the right, but Sillars and the SNP to the left.

The SNP is unilateralist, for withdrawal of US bases, and for Scotland out of NATO.

When asked where he stood on defence, Watson declared that he was a gut unilateralist, but when asked if this meant he had the guts to oppose the Policy Review he declined to accept the challenge.

Under normal conditions the central by-election should have been a walkover for Labour with a massive 17,000 majority in June 87 and a much improved standing in the polls since then.

Since Govan, however, normality has been suspended. Kinnock absolutely *had to win* in Glasgow Central if his ambitions were to survive. He scraped home, but the challenges raised by the SNP will not go away.

Lesbian and Gay Rights

Anger fuels equality campaign

The Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) is planning a mass protest lobby of Annual Conference.

This is part of the emergency campaign for the reinstatement of the commitment to full equality for lesbians and gay men in the Policy Review.

LCLGR will be mobilising trade union supporters and affiliates, particularly in COHSE, NUPE, TGWU, GMB and MSF (who have all been supportive in the past) to campaign in support of LCLGR's Conference resolution.

Special meetings with leading Labour Party members are also being organised.

Jo Richardson MP, a longstanding supporter of LCLGR, and Chris Smith, the only out gay MP, will be among the speakers at LCLGR's fringe meeting.

LCLGR members are aware that the anger and bitterness lesbians and gay men feel at the NEC's latest betrayal of Conference policy could easily turn into cynicism.

Instead, LCLGR are trying to turn that anger into a full mobilisation for full equality, drawing hope from the show of strength of the anti-Section campaign. Already many Labour Party branches have pledged their support to LCLGR.

*Information supplied by LCLGR.

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.

Vauxhall By-election

Victory for the Council; defeat for the government

JANE CONNOR from *Labour Briefing* spoke to Lambeth Councillor GREG TUCKER on the morning after the Vauxhall by-election.

The Tories said Vauxhall was a referendum on Lambeth Council; but it ended up a referendum on the government.

The Labour Council won — and the Tories lost.

However, Labour's vote showed only a small improvement on the 87 result. It was a poor show compared to the gains made by Labour in the Euro-elections.

The real losers were the Tories, dropping by 10%, and the Democrats.

In fact, both centre and right were trounced. On these figures, the Democrats would lose *all* the Council seats they currently hold in Vauxhall. So much for the Bermondsey effect.

Whilst the lower than usual turnout and the collapse of the Tory vote helped Labour maintain its share of the vote, the lacklustre campaign did nothing to break through the general apathy.

All the campaigns were slow getting started. Labour's was slower than the rest, mainly due to the alienation of local Party activists.

Whilst the Tories focused on the Council, and the Democrats resorted to dirty tricks and smears, the Labour candidate and the Walworth Road machine downplayed the Policy Review and concentrated on "safe" issues such as the NHS and the Poll Tax.

Even the Greens, who doubled their previous best result, produced little literature — thus saving a few trees along with their deposit. Like Labour, they played it safe and chose not to highlight their unilateralism.

The two local black candidates, Rudi Narayan and Hewie Andrews, failed to make an impact. Vauxhall's black electorate obviously didn't respond favourably to Rudi "action man" Narayan's call for a return to national service.

One of the two NF candidates produced a leaflet quoting extensive from American black separatists.

Labour's campaign had its moments of desperation. One Labour Party leaflet credited the LCC ex-Deputy Council Leader with saving some libraries from closure — even though he had publicly voted *for* them to be cut.

The Democrats said *they* had saved the libraries. The truth, of course, was that left Labour Councillors had stopped these cuts.

The count itself was livened up by fighting between the two wings of the NF over the right to be recognised as the legitimate standard bearer of British fascism.

At previous elections the left has had to unite to defend people from fascist threats, but for once the left could enjoy watching the spectacle of the fascists slugging it out between themselves.

Kate Hoey was elected without ever meeting the Vauxhall CLP General Committee, and most Party members still have no idea what her politics might be.

Previously a supporter of Irish self-determination, Hoey merely stated that she now supported the leadership's position — on everything.

Insomniacs who were unlucky enough to witness Kate Hoey's emotional post-election performance on TV will have seen her close to tears as it dawned on her that her long-cherished ambition to win a transfer to the boys' club across the river was finally to be fulfilled.

No doubt, her wild and incredible claims to have been well supported by local Party members and to have recruited untold numbers of new *black* members can be charitably attributed to the lateness of the hour.

Martha Osamor on the Vauxhall result:

Of course, I welcome Labour's victory. It is testimony to the deep and growing hatred of Thatcher felt by black and working class people in London.

But in the low turnout there are long term warnings for the Labour leadership.

Democracy is the lifeblood of any socialist party. Without the active participation of grass roots members in all phases of decision-making, we will fail to take full advantage of the current anti-Tory mood.

What Labour's leaders must understand is that black people's struggle for representation in and through the labour movement cannot be ignored forever.

In this respect, the questions raised by the way in which the Labour candidate was imposed in Vauxhall remain to be answered.

China: Issues behind the news

Beginning a new era



PHOTO: Tim Nolan

Led by Chinese students in Britain, protestors remember the ideals raised in Tienanmen Square.

The world is watching

There seems little hope of immediate successful resistance to the state terror now descending on the people of China. It will take almost unimaginable sustained brutality to suppress.

An entire nation has been aroused by the crushed peoples rising in Beijing — but the Pinochets of Chinese Stalinism evidently possess sufficient tanks and bullets.

The Chinese Communist Party will now be purged from top to bottom. Tens of thousands of arrests will be made. Pro-democracy army officers will be court-marshalled and shot. Broadcasters will have guns at their backs as they pictures of tortured dissidents making "confessions" and implicating "accomplices" in "counter-revolutionary crimes."

Flashback

It will be like a nightmarish flashback to Stalin's show trials of the 1930s — to the mass executions of Bolsheviks, to the pictures of tortured, broken men and women pitifully "confessing" their "Trotsky-fascism" to the world.

Already we have seen the familiar techniques of Orwellian thought-control: the doublespeak ("The Peoples Army Loves the People" ... "Not one student died in Tiananmen Square"), the falsification of photographic evidence (reversing the sequence of video-footage so as to claim that the students and workers resorted to violence first), the sudden donning of "proletarian" outfits by Government ministers anxious to conceal the fact that they are filthy-rich profiteers and plunderers of the peoples wealth.

Yet this is not the 1930s, and China is not the Soviet Union of that horrific decade. Stalins paranoid mania was buttressed by years of imperialist aggression against the Soviet state, by endless catastrophes and defeats for the international working class, by the rise of Hitler in Germany and the gathering threat of imperialist war.

By Chris Knight
Lewisham East CLP

When Stalin slandered and exiled Leon Trotsky, outlawed internationalism and raised the slogan "Socialism in One Country", his treachery did at least seem somewhat in tune with the times.

Deng Xiaoping, Yang Shangkun, Li Peng and their blood-stained henchmen have none of that history of containment and despair to sustain them. Try as they may to frighten the masses with the threat of "foreigners", the people perceive no such threat.

On the contrary, in an era of mass pressure for reform in Gorbachevs USSR, with the electoral victory of Solidarnosc in Poland, stirrings throughout Eastern Europe and with new hope for an end to the Cold War, the Chinese masses know that it is the whole world — and not just China — which is ripe for revolutionary change.

Paralysing

The students and workers who shed their blood so fearlessly along the Avenue of Eternal Peace were part of a new generation, uncontaminated by the paralysing nightmares of the past.

This generation feels itself to be part of a beautiful nation of vast potential wealth on the very verge of a new dawn of industrial and social development — a dawn, however, which will comeonly to the extent that China is allowed to sing the *Internationale* and really mean it.

China's potential can be realised only to the extent that this country of a billion people can share in the technological, scientific, and intellectual advances of the whole planet.

On the night of June 3rd, as hundreds of our comrades gathered around the Monument to the Revolutionary Heroes in Tiananmen Square, they sang the *Internationale* as volley after volley of machine-gun and automatic rifle-fire ripped into their young bodies.

Linked up by satellite television as if we were spectators in a global amphitheatre, socialists across the planet sang with them.

Stirrings

This revolution will not go away. We are now witnessing what Trotskyists world-wide have been waiting for since the late 1920s — the first stirrings of the political revolution in the East which will vindicate Lenin, Trotsky and the ideals of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Karl Marx described the Paris Communards as "storming the very Gates of Heaven". The old Chinese dynasties used to fight over the "Mandate of Heaven". By spilling their blood in rivers under the Gate of Heavenly Peace, our comrades in China assumed the leadership of the international working class.

Even in apparent defeat, they have gained a popular mandate such as no emperor, no monarch, no premier and no politburo on earth has ever before enjoyed. Equalling Hungary in 1956, equalling the Russian Revolution of 1905, perhaps even equalling the Paris Commune of 1870 — this revolution will light up the world.

Hong Kong: a socialis

Deng-Thatcher stitch-up unrave

The racist ideology underpinning British immigration law and practice has been highlighted by the arguments surrounding the right of Hong Kong people to live in Britain.

Thatcher's hypocrisy on democratic rights has been stripped bare by this controversy.

On the one hand, the government rebukes the Chinese authorities over Tienanmen Square and boasts of Britain's commitments to protect "democracy" in Hong Kong.

On the other, it deliberately spreads racist fears about Chinese immigration and insists on pursuing its top-down handover of Hong Kong to the Beijing government as scheduled.

The right wing Adam Smith Institute has responded to the crisis by proposing that an area of West Scotland be allocated to refugees from Hong Kong.

The *Sun* issued a "rivers-of-blood"-style warning and tried to conjure up "yellow peril" type fears amongst its readership.

How should socialists respond?

As internationalists, we remain strongly in favour of the ending of all immigration controls. People have a basic right to choose where they want to live and not to be *forced* to live in any one place.

We also, of course, fully support the right of asylum — without which talk about a commitment to democracy in other countries is mere demagogic waffle.

For these reasons we should unequivocally support the call to issue a British passport with full citizenship rights to everyone in Hong Kong who wants one.

This is not because we believe the British state can act as the saviour of the Hong Kong people, but because it is an immediate way for them to claim the right of asylum and abode.

We should use this unequivocal demand to expose the hypocrisy of the Tories, shame Labour out of its disgraceful silence, and directly challenge racism on the ground.

But in itself this is not a way forward for the masses of Hong Kong. The right to *leave* is a necessary fallback; but it is no substitute for a sustained struggle for democracy and self-rule — in Hong Kong and in China as a whole.

By KIM KEATING

Hong Kong has been under absolute colonial rule throughout its existence. It is run directly by the British-appointed governor, who appoints an Advisory Council of prominent Hong Kong residents to assist him.

The Falklands/Malvinas has similar arrangements — except that in the South Atlantic the colonial subjects are permitted to *elect* members of their Council. The racist rationale behind this is obvious.

In the run-up to 1997, when the colony will be handed over to the Chinese government, the British government has talked a great deal about making the Council more "representative" — by which it clearly means more representative of local industrialists and financiers.

The agreement which Thatcher and Howe struck with Deng (and which they are keen to maintain) involves handing over Hong Kong without threatening either the interests of the local bourgeoisie or their own colonial-imperial interests.

And the Chinese Stalinists, for their part, have agreed only too willingly to take back Hong Kong on those terms: preserving *both* capitalism *and* the absence of democracy.

Through long and bitter struggle the Chinese masses overthrew the imperialist powers and their agents on the mainland.

But by entering into negotiations with the British imperialists, and agreeing to their terms, the Chinese leaders have made a mockery of that struggle — and denied the Hong Kong masses a potential lever in their fight for self-emancipation.

There has, in effect, been a conspiracy between the British

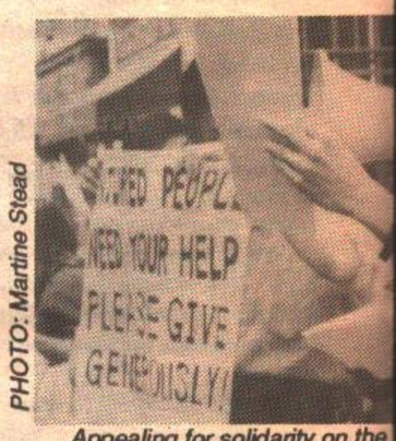


PHOTO: Martine Stead

Appealing for solidarity on the

Solidarity in Britain

"It's not time for tea

Large demonstrations have taken place in cities across the world over the past ten days against the violent supression of the Democracy Movement in Beijing and elsewhere in China.

Sunday, June 11th saw 15,000 Chinese students and their supporters take to the streets of London to protest against the repression.

The march followed the route taken the week before, just after the massacre in Tiananmen Square, from Garrard Street, the heart of London's Chinatown, to the Chinse Embassy in Portland Place.

Both at the start, with the whole of Garrard Sreet listening, and at the finish outside the Embassy there were speeches from Chinese students, their supporters and prominant British politicians.

When the marchers arrived at the Embassy, after a militant demonstration calling for an end to repression and martial law, students attempted to present a petition to the Embassy.

The door remained closed and so the whole march turned its back on the Embassy and stood in silence for three minutes facing the shrine to the dead of Beijing.

Despite attempts by the NUS Executive to undermine support for the march — they managed to persuade Oxford Student's Union to cancel five or six coaches on the basis that the organisers of the march were "not representative" — it was a very successful event, the most militant demo organised in London for some time.

By JANE KELLY

After the march there was a rally in Conway Hall. Despite the mess up over the time — it took place well after the advertised time — and the loss of some of the main speakers (including Tony Benn and Tariq Ali, who were unable to wait) it was also a militant and useful meeting of over 200 people.

Perhaps the most moving speaker was Linda from the Chinese Solidarity Campaign (organisers of the march). She said:

"I think of my brothers and sisters in China and urge your support for our comrades in China. A village woman, on seeing the troops firing on the students said: 'It's not time for tears, but time to fight back.'

"We agree. The Government has betrayed the people; the people are not disillusioned, but angry. This can be turned to greater strength; it will be a long road but we won't give up.

"Thousands have died but the fight for democracy will never die. We will fight for a society where the people decide, not dictators."

She then led the meeting in the singing of the *Internationale*, sung by the students as the tanks fired on them, in Tiananmen Square

Other speakers included:

•Amnesty International,

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els



treets of London

bourgeoisie and the Chinese Communist Party to continue to deny both socialism and democracy to the Hong Kong people.

It is obvious that the Hong Kong territories belong to and with mainland China. Not only will this unity rid the area of one of the last vestiges of foreign domination, it is also demanded by geographical, economic, social, and historical logic.

But this does not mean the Hong Kong people should be compelled — by the Chinese Communist Party leadership any more than by the British imperialists — to accept a system and method of government that they do not want.

The huge demonstrations in Hong Kong were demanding democracy and self-rule for themselves as well as for their comrades on the mainland.

Socialists in Britain and elsewhere should support *both* parts of this demand. We should do everything possible to aid the Hong Kong masses in determining their own future.

This certainly rules out any return to or extension of British colonial rule.

On the contrary, it implies in the first place immediate direct elections to the Legislative Council and the taking of full administrative powers by the Council (which is currently largely appointed and only consultative in function).

The Legislative Council must become the democratic ruling body for Hong Kong — a demand the British imperialists are frightened to concede.

Not only do they not want the masses upsetting British rule: the British imperialists have promised the Chinese leaders they will hand over a capitalist enclave with a docile workforce — and they must keep their promise.

A necessary precondition for establishing a democratic legislative body is the legalisation of all political activity in the colony and in particular the creation of political parties.

Political formations of various kinds are rapidly emerging in any case, particularly amongst the bourgeoisie, which knows it must corral the anger of the masses and which is trying to establish itself as *the* representative of all Hong Kong people.

What is needed in Hong Kong is the formation of a workers' party which can give independent representation to the masses.

A democratised Legislative Council must take on the task of determining the governmental system of this region within a united China.

Here is where the demands for democracy in Hong Kong become inseparable from the demands for democracy on the mainland. This is not just "kith and kin" emotionalism but a direct, concrete, political link which cannot be broken.

It is also why the Chinese Stalinists will not support the Hong Kong masses against imperialism. To do so would be to undermine their own attempt to smash the democracy movement at home.

The Chinese Stalinists and the British bourgeoisie have conspired to stitch-up the future of the colony over the heads of the masses of people who live there.

This stitch-up is rapidly unravelling because of the mobilisations for democracy — or "people's rule" in Chinese — in both Hong Kong and Beijing.

Socialists everywhere should welcome this new opening up and use it to expose and oppose the hypocrises of Thatcher and Deng.

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who called for people to collect as much information as possible so that the suppression of information by the Chinese Government could be exposed;

•Emma Colyer from the NUS Executive (in a personal capacity);

•and Paul Foot who quoted from Shelley's poem *The Mask of Anarchy* "Rise like lions after slumber... We are many they are few."

Ai Meun, from the chair, spoke about the campaign and the need to keep up support for the 24 hour picket of the Chinese Embassy.

The Chinese Solidarity Campaign plans to hold a conference at the end of July.
Discussion papers and information will be available.
There is an urgent need to provide support for students and visitors from China in Britain and to collect money to prevent hardship.
Local supporters' groups should be established.
The situation in China itself needs to be monitored constantly.

For news, speakers, information, etc. contact the Chinese Solidarity Campaign, 68 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1.

A look into the past



PHOTO: Martine Stead

Solidarity demonstrations in London before the massacre.

The long march for freedom

In 1949, after a 20-year military struggle against both the right wing nationalist Guomintang and the Japanese invaders, the Chinese Communist Party came to power.

It had already, for many years, controlled and administered large areas of the country.

These "red bases" had been run in a dictatorial way which presaged the methods used following the 1949 revolution.

The Party that came to power in that year, although it had ignored Stalin's advice to compromise with Chiang Kaishek's Guomintang, was deeply influenced by Stalinist ideas about the nature of "socialism".

Following the 1927 massacre of Shanghai workers by the Guomintang, the main base of Mao Zedong's Communist Party had become the peasantry. From the beginning, the Mao regime adopted a suspicious and authoritarian attitude to the working class.

For over 30 years there have been continual struggles in the Party leadership and among the masses over economic construction and the appropriate form of political rule.

In 1956 Mao started the "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom" movement which for a short period allowed free debate in the Party and among intellectuals.

But a year later Mao decided the movement had gone "too far". He and Deng Xiaoping mounted the repressive "anti-rightist campaign", in which hundreds were executed.

Alarmed

In 1958, alarmed by the slow development of agriculture and manufacturing industry, Mao launched the "Great Leap Forward".

Millions of peasants were coerced into massive "People's Communes", some of them tens of thousands strong. In the cities and the countryside thousands of backyard steel production units were set up.

The Great Leap was an attempt to force the pace of history by voluntarist and authoritarian mass mobilisation. This method became typical of "Mao Zedong thought".

It also led to continual struggle inside the Party leadership, which was not resolved until Mao's death in 1976.

The Great Leap was a major disaster for both agriculture and industry.

Mao's commandist voluntarism was opposed by a faction led by Liu Shaogi (a veteran of the Long March), Peng Dehuai (a key Marshal in the People's Liberation Army), and Peng Zhen (then mayor of Beijing and today an 87 year old member of Deng's Central Consultative Council).

By PHIL HEARSE

Heavily influenced by Khruschev in Russia, they argued for more stable and gradual economic growth.

This struggle was fought out within the bureaucracy by "left" and "right" factions. The result was that while the Great Leap was abandoned, the reins of power remained in Mao's hands.

The Communist Party apparatus in the regions had always resisted Mao's "politics in command" methods.

In 1965, the once powerful pro-Beijing Indonesian Communist Party was crushed by an army coup. Mao was widely blamed for this disaster.

He knew that he could command the support of only a minority in the Party, and therefore launched the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution", which mobilised millions of high school and university youth. The aim was to smash Mao's factional opponents.

The Cultural Revolution was widely seen by the western left as an "anti-bureaucratic" movement. In reality, it was a gigantic inter-bureaucratic conflict, which plunged China into three years of virtual civil war.

Mao's "Red Guards" mobilised and organised by the People's Liberation Army under Lin Biao, persecuted and murdered tens of thousands alleged "capitalist roaders".

Only when the "revolutionary committee" which had seized control of Shanghai declared a Paris Commune-style administration did Mao decide to put an end to the movement.

The PLA was then used to suppress the Red Guard movement which it had once organised.

By 1969 the tide of the Cultural Revolution had receded. Of Mao's leading opponents, Lui Shaogi was dead, Pen Dehuai in prison (he died there in 1974), and Deng Xiaoping in disgrace.

The Party's structures had collapsed. Gradually, over the next five years, they were revived.

The turning point in the long factional struggle in the Chinese CP came when Mao and Prime Minister Zhou Enlai both died in 1976.

The continuity of Cultural Revolution-style Maoism was represented by Mao's widow Jiang Qing, who led the infamous "Gang of Four". A month after Mao's death they were arrested by the Beijing PLA garrison.

Uneasy

The Party leadership then passed on to an uneasy alliance between the semi-Maoist Hua Guofeng and the rehabilitated Deng Xiaoping.

By 1978 Deng and his then lieutenant Zhao Ziyang had the upper hand. They proposed a new way forward, a radical departure from Mao's adventures in bureaucratic mass mobilisation.

This involved the de-collectivisation of the peasantry, a radical marketisation of industry, and an attempt to secure investment from capitalist states.

For ten years the Party leadership has pushed forward these economic reforms, which have undoubtedly led to major economic growth, especially a dramatic revival of agriculture.

But at the same time they have engenderd markedly increased social inequality and massive corruption in the CP leadership.

Deng and Zhao Ziyang (now overthrown) never proposed radical democratisation to accompany the economic reforms. Thus China has enjoyed *perestroika*, but no hint of *glasnost*.

From 1978 to 1981 a major "democracy movement" seemed underway, symbolised in the famous "democracy wall" near Tienanmen Square.

At first Deng and Zhao tolerated this movement, and even tried to exploit it for their own factional purposes.

But by 1981 they had decided it was a danger; it was ruthlessly suppressed in a purge which resulted in executions and long terms of imprisonment.

But the memory of that movement remained. Many of its activists had developed revolutionary socialist demands for an end to bureaucracy and the establishment of socialist democracy.

They found the same demands taken up by the December 1986-January 1987 student movement, which emerged in part as a response to the student demonstrations then taking place in France.

The democracy movement of May and June 1989 has taken these two previous waves of protest to new levels.

Not only has it been much larger in scale, but the mass involvement of the working class and the emergence of autonomous trade unions has made it a qualitatively greater threat to the bureaucracy.

The brutal suppression of this movement cannot put an end to the long fight for socialist democracy, any more than the 1981 military coup in Poland destroyed Solidarnosc.

Spontaneity

Lenin was fond of saying that spontaneity was the initial form of organisation.

The anti-bureaucratic movement in China now faces dark days of repression, arrests, and executions.

New forms of organisation, around a coherent anti-bureaucratic political programme, will be needed to continue the Tienanmen Square movement in conditions of illegality.

If the movement fails to recreate itself in such new forms, China will face regression into Stalinist barbarism or even the restoration of capitalism.

Four decades ago, the Chinese masses defeated imperialism. A new phase of their long march — towards an anti-bureaucratic political revolution — is now underway.

The Women's Page

Women for Socialism

Women and the environment

Around the world ecological issues hold great importance for women.

In India the Chipko women have campaigned long and hard to protect their tree cover.

By Mary Mellor
Green Liaison Network

Women in Micronesia have had to face the appalling effects of nuclear testing and fought a courageous battle against the establishment of an American trident base in Belau.

The Kenyan Green Belt movement has planted millions of trees.

Western women have exercised consumer choice over bleaches in sanitory products and disposable nappies, CFCs in aerosols, cruelty-free cosmetics and additive-free food.

Areas dominated by male consumers have been much slower to respond, e.g. lead-free petrol.

However it would be dangerous to argue that women have a special relationship to the environment, that they are "closer to nature", less aggressive, less competitive.

Claims that women are more "natural" play straight into misogynist hands; women have suffered too long from male-defined views of our nature.

Green issues are central to women for clear socio-economic reasons. The relative benefits of industrial capitalism have accrued to men rather than women through the "family wage", skills and careers (sometimes in the labour movement).

Women's lives and work have always had a secondary relationship to production under industrial capitalism, in terms of their unpaid domestic/caring role and their low-paid waged labour.

However, the worldwide restructuring of capital has pushed women to the forefront of economic struggle. Women are increasingly replacing men both in manufacturing and service industries as cheap and expendable labour.

This is happening both in this country and in countries such as Korea and Taiwan, where the health of young women is ruined in the micro-electronics industry.

The traditional caring role that women have played is exploited both in low-paid work and "free" work in the home and community.

Slaves

Women are imported to richer countries as sex "toys" and domestic slaves or used to service sex tourists.

Racism means that Third World women and women of colour are doubly exploited, both at work and in the environment.

They are exposed to atmospheric nuclear testing, dangerous factories or toxic dumps. They bear the deformed babies or are sold dangerous drugs and unsuitable milk products.

A degraded environment affects the availability of food, clean water and health, particularly that of children and the elderly. All of these are the responsibility of women.

If the desert encroaches it is men who make for the city, leaving women and children behind.

Land

If the land is polluted, eroded or loses fertility women are the first to feel it. Often it is they who eat last, if at all. Men and children come first.

Women are primarily responsible across the world for subsistence agriculture and their overall contribution to agricultural work is high: 60-80% in Africa, 40% in Latin America.

Women are at the forefront of both the socialist and environmental challenge to industrial capitalism because they have nothing to lose but their chains, in the home, office, factory, shop, field and street; and everything to gain.

Socialism can no longer ignore the ecological issue, nor can it ignore the central role of women in the political economy of industrial capital.

Some headway is being made. The Socialist Conference has a thriving Green and Socialist Policy Group and a very successful Red-Green conference was held in collaboration with Green Party members in 1988.



PHOTO courtesy Third World First

"Women are primarily responsible across the world for subsistence agriculture and their overall contribution to agricultural work is high..."

Women for Socialism, coming out of the Socialist Conference has built a very large national membership and part of that is the Green Liaison Network.

Links are being built between Third world and European and American women such as Women Working Worldwide and peace and environmental networks.

Women can only be totally exploited by capital with the collusion of men. The exploitation of the planet is achieved with the collusion of those who live in the richer countries, including women and the working class.

We have to recognise that capitalism, industrialism, and patriarchy are all enemies in various ways of the planet, of women and of the survival of the human race as a whole.

For futher information, contact the Women's Environment Network at 287 City Road, London EC1 1LA.

Socialist Conference

Rebuilding the women's and socialist movement

From the opening session of the third Socialist Conference to the contributions in the final plenary discussions, women speakers demonstrated the way forward in building a movement for a new decade.

By Jane Connor
Tottenham CLP
Women's Section

Throughout the weekend women in struggle brought their lived experiences to bear on developing alternative socialist policies and building a movement capable of putting those policies firmly on the political agenda.

The conference attracted over 400 women, an increase on previous years that must be mainly due to the impact made by Women for Socialism.

At a packed, women-only plenary session Jane Kelly from the Women for Socialism steering committee outlined the successes and future plans of the organisation.

In the last year Women for Socialism has:

- organised a national conference, the first socialist feminist conference for a decade;
- built a national network with hundreds of members;
- set up local groups;
- supported activities like the Women Against Fundamentalism picket;

Union

- sponsored meetings at labour and trade union conferences;
- organised around parliamentary re-selection;
- and produced a national newsletter.

The Women for Socialism workshops were geared towards planning future activities as well as providing a space for discussion and debate.

As with the rest of the conference there wasn't enough time for discussion, partly because socialist *feminist* women (the majority) had to take up the anti-feminist polemic of SWP women (the minority).

This division, between an analysis and practice that understands the specific oppression of women in class society and one that denies this specific oppression was highlighted in the sexuality workshop.

There, the SWP put forward their crassly simplistic explanation of male violence which left many women upset, angry and frustrated.

Women

Concretely, Women for Socialism is planning conferences on education, anti-imperialism, and sexuality as well as building links with women in Britain and internationally in the fight against racism, imperialism and for a safer environment.

There is a danger in the success of Women for Socialism, that as it develops and shows its ability to organise and lead women's struggles the Socialist Conference itself could become a *de facto* Men for Socialism.

Creche

Inadequate creche hours also meant that many women were excluded from fully participating in all the discussions.

It is worrying that only three of the regional organisers at the conference were women, and that a majority of the workshops and policy groups were led by men.

However, women have been ghettoised for long enough in the socialist movement and the strength, confidence and autonomy displayed by women at Sheffield will make it very hard to marginalise us.

Next weekend sees the national Labour Women's Conference in Bridlington — Women for Socialism, fully supported by *Briefing* women will be there, taking on the new realists and fighting for socialist feminists policies.

Why don't you join us?

**To join Women for Socialism, or for further information, write to:
Ruth Clarke, 7 Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY.**

Briefing Women

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

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

I am particularly interested in:.....

.....

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

BOOK REVIEW

Tintin's revenge on the yuppies!

Breaking Free, by Jack Daniels, *Attack International*, £2. Available from BM Box 6577, London WC1N 3XX.

Remember the adventures of Tintin and his intrepid partner Captain Haddock?

They travelled the world, righted wrongs, found hidden treasure, thwarted criminals...

Now they're back, in an exciting yarn that original author Hergé definitely did *not* write.

By Mike Phipps Woolwich CLP

Jack Daniels of *Attack International* has ignored all considerations of copyright and produced *Breaking Free*, a 170-page cartoon story of how Tintin's investment in a building workers' strike tends to a national insurrection.

Fantastic? So was Red Rackham's Treasure. In fact much of *Breaking Free* is highly realistic, exploring the psychology that leads to industrial action and the relationship of union officials to rank and file workers.

Tintin and Captain Haddock are essentially popular vehicles for raising central questions about racism, sexism, the united front, and the class character of the state.

Hergé's Tintin wandered around the world sorting out the problems of whole peoples who were apparently incapable of doing anything for themselves — the original cartoon cultural imperialist.

In Jack Daniels' revolutionary anarchist version there is still plenty of room for individual heroics (Tintin undertakes a bit of arson on a building site) but the emphasis is different, to say the least.

My favourite bit was the not particularly political episode in which Tintin and some of his friends from the football terraces completely wreck a wine bar in a frenzied reaction to the destruction of working class communities by yuppie invaders.

This story may not be politically perfect — what work of fiction can be? — but it is more compelling than some of the *Socialism for Beginners* series.

BOOK REVIEW

Look out labour!

Facing the Threat; Fascism and the labour movement, available from *Tyne & Wear Anti-Fascist Association*, 4 Cloth Market, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, price £1.

This pamphlet will be welcomed by all anti-fascists and trade union activists.

It begins by looking at the National Front (NF) today, describing how it is potentially more dangerous now that it has adopted "left" fascism, or "strasserism", than it was in the 70s.

By David Parks Exeter AFA, Devon Labour Briefing



PHOTO: Martine Stead

The NF march openly to the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday last year, protected by the police. It's up to the labour movement to defeat this threat.

Instead of the old anti-trade union position the NF (both factions) has taken a stance of "supporting" trade unions and (white) workers in struggle with the aim of winning over sections of the working class.

The pamphlet goes on to show how fascist movements on their way to power have become involved in the labour movement, with the ultimate intention of crushing working class organisation and unity.

For example, in 1928 the German Brownshirts, with their "radical" fascism, launched an "Into the Factories" campaign, encouraged by the NAZI leadership.

Otto and Gregor Strasser were brownshirts from whom the term "strasserism" came.

As Hitler began to win more backing from the industrialists, he inevitably became less keen on the "anti-capitalist" wing of the movement. Soon after he came to power they were eradicated in the "night of the long knives".

The true class nature of fascism rapidly became apparent.

All labour movement organisations were smashed and the trade unions "co-ordinated" into the NAZI's Labour Front, control of which was handed over to the employers' Confederation of Industry.

Profits soared by up to 300% per annum — as a result of a greater level of exploitation of the workers.

The pamphlet gives examples of attempts by today's NF to exploit workers' struggles, and shows how trade unions can, and have, stopped the NF in their tracks.

Trade union successes include the sacking of Paul Kingsley, the fascist organiser of British Friends of Ulster, from his administrative post with NALGO and the industrial action by DHSS staff to remove Malcolm Skeggs.

The pamphlet calls for a more determined approach to dealing with racism in the trade union movement.

The 1981 *Black Workers: A TUC Charter for Equal Opportunity* is quoted, to show how black workers are excluded from their own unions.

There is low black representation in union structures; and low union involvement in campaigns around immigration, police harassment, and racial attacks.

A powerful example of the failure of trade unions to tackle racism was the 1974 Imperial Typewriters dispute in Leicester.

On discovering management cheating on the bonus scheme, the workforce, two thirds of it Asian, walked out. The local TGWU staff refused to make the strike official. In a tide of racism, white workers began to break the strike.

The NF moved in, and co-operation between white workers and management broke the strike. Later that year the factory was closed, with the divided workforce unable to mount any effective resistance.

The fascist movement in Britain may be small at the moment, whilst Thatcher makes the running on the right. However, the labour movement cannot afford to be complacent. Local trade unionists would do well to arm themselves with this pamphlet.

BOOK REVIEW

Some "sisterhood"!

Maids and madams: Domestic Workers under Apartheid, by Jaclyn Cock, *Women's Press*, 1989: ISBN 0-7043-4165-4.

***Maids and madams* is a study of the relationship between domestic servants and their "madams" in South Africa.**

Author Jaclyn Cock and her field worker, Nobengazi Mary Kota, interviewed 225 domestic workers and their female employers in the Eastern Cape during 1978 and 1979.

By Debbie Epstein Selly Oak CLP

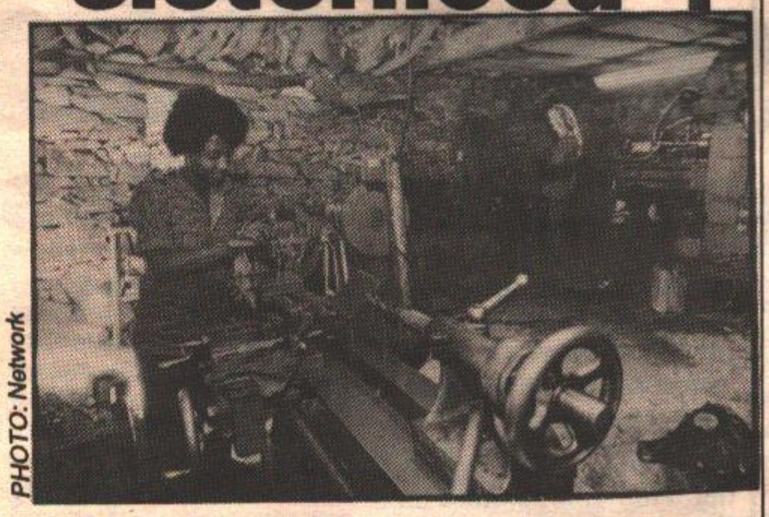


PHOTO: Network

An Eritrean woman makes new parts for trucks in a workshop at Sheb, Sahel province. Life is different for her black sisters in apartheid South Africa: but they're still organising for their rights.

The book has been updated with a chapter on "Struggles", which discusses the foundation and work of the South African Domestic Workers' Union (SADWU), founded in 1986 and now affiliated to COSATU.

For me, as a white ex-South African, the book was often very near the bone.

My parents were liberals, opposed to the oppression of black people in South Africa and had black friends and acquaintances.

Nonetheless, the exploitation and oppression described in this book was as much a part of my childhood as it would have been for a white child growing up in a family of fervent supporters of apartheid.

The strength of the book is that it allows both black and white women to speak for themselves, quoting from the interviews to reveal the different perceptions of the "maids" and the "madams".

Even on an issue subject to objective assessment, such as wages, there was a difference in the responses.

According to the employers, the average monthly wage of their servants was £8.31 per month (!), while the servants reported an average of £7.82.

What the book shows clearly is that far from passively accepting their lot, domestic workers in South Africa are very much aware of their exploitation — though many feel powerless to do anything about it.

Unionisation of domestic workers is notoriously difficult because of the atomisation and isolation of the workers. The success of SADWU in organising even 0.5% of such workers is a tribute to the women involved.

As Jaclyn Cock says, "The situation of black and white women in South Africa presents a challenge to any over-simplified feminist notion of "sisterhood".

This book should be read by anyone interested in the daily lives of black South Africans.

'Shakespeare' vs. the developers

Rose, thou art sick!

Can you imagine Nicholas Ridley preventing developers from demolishing a hospital? Or a community centre? No, nor can I.

Then how have a handful of demonstrators managed to persuade the Environment Secretary to save (at least for the moment) the crumbling remains of the Rose Theatre in Southwark, London?

William West Haringey Labour Briefing

Partly because those demonstrators are not ordinary local people but middle-class liberal thespians. And partly because capitalist ideology relies on some notion of a national culture.

Shakespeare has been fashioned into a transcendental genius who stands at the heart of not only "our" culture but also the culture of the whole world. Britain colonised lands in the 19th century armed both with military cannon and the canon of Shakespeare's plays.

So, why do the thespians want to save the Rose? Because, of course, "Shakespeare once trod the boards there" and "it is a shrine to our cultural heritage".

But saving the Rose has nothing to do with culture. It is merely an attempt to pluck Shakespeare out of the Elizabethan period and reconstitute him in our own, as if the intervening 400 years history can be simply erased.

This view of culture — not as a living process but as a static and deadening "shrine" — has been directly expressed by Kenneth Baker, Ridley's colleague. The Education Minister's notion of "learning poetry by heart to give children a template of artistic and moral standards" is not a million miles from the thespians' view of Shakespeare as the embodiment of timeless truths.

The issue of the Rose is interesting because it dramatises the classic battle between two strands of capitalism. On one side are the thespians clinging desperately to a bourgeois view of culture, and disdaining the murky business of money and the march of time. On the other are the developers who just want to make a fast buck and couldn't really give a Puck about some bloke called Shakespeare.

Poor old Ridley is caught in the middle, wanting to side with the developers (they are, after all, his Party's benefactors), but unable to let go of the powerful ideological weapon of "Shakespeare".

It would be an outrage if the developers built an office block on the Rose's remains. Equally, it would be an outrage if the thespians' bourgeois view of culture remained unchallenged.

What is the socialist answer? Any suggestions?

NALGO Conference

A *Star* that gives no guiding light

This year's NALGO Conference took place against a background of a new wave of struggles.

This created a change in mood amongst the delegates to one of greater confidence to defy the NALGO NEC on a whole number of issues.

•NALGO will now affiliate to the *Time To Go* Campaign and submit a resolution to the TUC.

•The new NALGO Women's Conference will have real powers.

•Postal ballots will be carried out at work, not at the home address as the NEC had wished.

•An open election for the General Secretary will be held, not a "confirmation" of the NEC's choice.

Despite the NEC's verbal support for positive action, it attacked self-organisation as divisive and separatist.

The resolution giving a place in the Union's official structures to the self-organised groups of black, lesbian and gay, and disabled members, was narrowly defeated after Rita Donaghy, the new President, made a speech pandering to racism and homophobia.

Briefing supporters in NALGO have always supported self-organisation as a way of bringing oppressed groups into activity in the union.

The increasing used of the law by employers and the defeats of the recent years meant that delegates were still not confident enough to defy the NEC on issues which meant a real confrontation with the government and local employers.

By Fred Leplat
Islington NALGO

The NEC won Conference to a very cautious and timid attitude on central issues affecting pay, conditions, and services.

The NEC blamed the members for this approach being necessary: they are not ready or confident to take strike action, and the union would therefore certainly lose.

However, a third of delegates supported a Lambeth amendment calling for no-co-operation on the Poll Tax. The minority prepared to fight back is certainly a substantial one.

The responsibility for the lack of a fighting strategy for the union must largely lie with supporters of the *Morning Star*. Although verbally denouncing New Realism, they sided with its proponents.

NALGO strategy is now so cautious as to leave members and branches virtually defenceless.

•There is no strategy of national industrial action against the cuts and privatisation. Branches such as Camden, Birmingham, and Gateshead, where members are on strike, are left isolated.

•The Poll Tax will be implemented as members are *not* being called upon to refuse to collect, issue fines, arrest wages, or supply confidential information.

•The campaign for the local government pay claim is low key. Although the leadership is calling six days of national strike, the eventual need for all-out action is not being explained.

The lack of democratic and fighting left organisation allowed the New Realists on the NEC and their apologists to get away with their inaction. The forthcoming elections for General Secretary must be used as a focus to set up such a left.

The new *NALGO Action* journal which would include news of struggles and debate on strategy can also play a part in this process.

Council pay claim

Six days for starters!

NALGO has recently rejected a 7% pay offer along with a package of strings including:

•scrapping national grades;

•removing grading appeals beyond the local employer;

•imposing "flexibility" on working hours.

Members in local government are now being balloted (until June 26th) on a programme of six days of national strike action in July to force the employers to meet the claim.

By LEN FRANCIS

A demonstration and lobby of the talks with the employers on July 6th in London is also being planned.

The employers' offer is a real kick in the teeth for low paid Council workers who are expected to endorse the programme of industrial action.

The NALGO leadership is also keen to win the ballot as it would be totally discredited after losing a pay ballot on the last two occasions.

Jim White, chair of NALGO's Local Government Committee, made a rousing speech at the Local Government branches' conference on Monday June 12th.

However, Conference voted (against the leadership) for advertisements in the national press calling for a "yes" vote, as it did not feel the campaign was sufficiently geared up to guarantee success.

A quarter of delegates considered that the rolling programme of six days' strike would not shake the employers and voted for a ballot for an all-out strike to be held during the forthcoming July strikes.

Socialists in NALGO should put all their efforts into winning the ballot for the rolling strike action.

Shop, departmental and branch meetings must be organised to explain the issues, and steps must now be taken to prepare for the strikes and the lobby.

Socialists should also make clear that the rolling strikes will not be enough. Only all-out strike action will force the employers to meet the claim in full.

Demonstration
and
Lobby of NALGO Pay Talks
July 6th
Assemble 11.30am, Hyde Park
March to Belgrave Square

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

Offshore Workers

Rig workers flex their muscles

The past few weeks have seen the biggest upsurge of industrial urest in the North Sea since the beginnings of offshore oil and gas production over 20 years ago.

More than 1,000 workers, employed by 19 different companies on 21 different platforms, have been holding 24-hour strikes and sit-ins.

These actions took the employers by surprise, and are unprecedented in an industry notorious for victimising and blacklisting workers who stand up for their rights.

Many previous attempts at industrial action have ended in defeat and victimisation, with strikers being helicoptered off platforms and replaced with new crews, or simply not being re-employed once they are ashore.

This time the action has been solid, making reprisals by the companies difficult.

Many factors explain the increased militancy of sections of the workforce, particularly construction workers, who played the main role in the recent strikes.

These include the effects of the Piper Alpha disaster, and the fact that working offshore is now seen more as a long-term job.

OPEC is beginning to flex its muscles, following the end of the Iran/Iraq war. The British government is easing restrictions on production as the balance of payments deteriorates.

Thirty-four per cent of North Sea capacity is down at present due mainly to accidents such as Piper Alpha and the Cormorant explosion. Many ageing platforms are severely in need of rebuilding.

By Graham Sullivan
Aberdeen

New techniques of oil recovery are being employed, such as the Forties gas-lift, which employs 1,000 construction workers.

All these point to a huge increase in construction work, and therefore the power of construction workers, and this will continue to grow rather than decline.

The strikers' demands centre around pay, and health and safety.

On pay, the major demand is for the Offshore Construction Agreement to apply to all construction work.

At present this agreement only applies until "first oil" is struck. Work not covered by this agreement is paid at around £2 per hour less.

In practice, this means that the majority of work now being done in the North Sea (i.e., refurbishment, platform strengthening, etc.) is not covered by it.

The application of the OCA to all construction work would be a major step forward in offshore workers' conditions.

On health and safety the major demand is that the Health and Safety at Work Act should apply offshore.

The oil companies have persuaded successive governments that the HSWA is unnecessary offshore, that the oil companies can be trusted to look after it. They still claim this after Piper Alpha and the series of other accidents.



BP Refinery at Grangemouth: covered by Health and Safety laws only because it's onshore.

Application of the Act would at least mean trade union accreditation for Safety reps, and statutory Safety Committees.

It would also mean responsibility for safety being placed in the hands of the Health and Safety Executive, rather than the Department of Energy (also responsible for oil production!) as at present.

The action being taken by the construction workers shows the way forward for all offshore workers.

It shows the way in which the power of the oil majors and the sub-contractors can be taken on, to provide decent wages and conditions and prevent further Piper Alphas.

STOPPRESS: The five platforms in the Brent Field (involving some 400 contracted workers) have voted to hold a 24-hour strike every three days. They are contacting other rigs to argue that workers there take similar action.

AUT

Learn the lessons!

At the start of June, the Association of University Teachers (AUT) voted by 55-45% to accept a pay deal.

The deal, proposed by the Vice Chancellors in May, is worth 6.5% plus a lump sum. With inflation at over 8% and the deal covering two years, this represents a pay cut of some 10%.

It also introduces the principle of local pay bargaining and different pay awards in different universities. Acceptance is a climbdown in the face of hardline management from the Vice Chancellors.

The tragedy is that one of this need have happened. The membership had already rejected a broadly similar deal and this one could have been rejected too. Yet, the National Executive voted to accept the latest offer.

It has become clear that vital information on the Vice Chancellors' willingness to shift in the face of a united AUT opposition was withheld from the National Executive.

Three days later furious delegates met at the AUT Council in Cardiff. In particular there was anger at the acceptance of local bargaining which undermines the very nature of a national pay structure.

The Council rejected Executive advice and voted to ballot members with a clear recommendation to reject the offer. However, the Executive decision had already done its damage.

By Steve Reicher
Exeter AUT

The Vice Chancellors, seeing AUT divided, hardened their position. Members lost confidence in winning a fight when their leadership had capitulated. The vote swung towards acceptance — even if only by a narrow margin.

The final settlement is clearly inadequate and next year we must fight for a substantial rise.

Throughout the five months of the recent action there was a clear division between the anger of the membership and the timidity of the leadership. Members have shown a determination and a unity never seen before in AUT.

At various times Vice Chancellors threatened mass dismissals and docking of pay. With a solid response from the members not a single one of these threats was realised.

On the other hand, the General Secretary and the Executive consistently sought ways of scaling down and ending the action — often announcing changes before they had been agreed by delegate meetings.

We must learn the lesson for next year's fight. The left in AUT must organise for a strong and accountable leadership. We cannot afford to be sold out again.

TGWU Conference

Don't desert the dockers!

By TGWU Conference delegate

Hanging over the whole TGWU Biennial Delegate Conference is the question of the dockers' dispute.

Long established union policy of official action in defence of the National Dock Labour Scheme has now been cast aside.

Long established union policy from previous Biennial Delegate Conferences that the union would support free collective bargaining despite the law has been broken.

When Ron Todd persuaded the TGWU Executive to support the dockers but only "within the law", the dockers were effectively ditched. This action was a virtual incitement to the Appeal Court to go as far as they needed.

The attempts by rank and file dockers to strike themselves were split by the actions of Ron Todd who continuously went on TV calling for the dockers to go back to work.

This failure of Todd and the Executive puts the responsibility directly onto the shoulders of this Biennial Delegate Conference — as the higehst body of the union.

It should reverse the line of complying with the law and vote to give full support to the dockers for a national agreement equivalent to the Scheme, whether or not a strike would be legal after the law lords have made their decision.

Emergency resolutions on these lines will be in front of the Biennial Delegate Conference. Delegates should give them full support.

While the dockers' dispute is the most important issue facing the TGWU Biennial Delegate Conference, delegates must also make sure they are in their seats for the debate on unilateralism.

As yet, Todd has shown no sign of going back on his commitment to unilateralism. Delegates must make sure the TGWU stands by this policy, and takes it forward to Labour Party Conference in the autumn.

Solidarity

Wildcat or paper tiger?

Over a hundred people attended a Solidarity Network rally in support of the dockers in central London on Wednesday June 14th.

The rally was organised by the Socialist Conference and the Solidarity Network, and sponsored by the Tilbury Docks Shop Stewards Committee.

Speakers presently involved in industrial struggles included:

•Anna Wagstaffe, sacked NUJ journalist from Pergamon Press, Oxford (part of the Robert Maxwell empire);

•Peter Gibson, TGWU, from the London Buses;

•Pam Singer, NUR, a traindriver involved in both the official and unofficial disputes;

•Sue Haynes, striking P&O worker; and Micky Fenn from Tilbury Docks.

Although Dennis Skinner was scheduled to speak, he was unable to attend. The audience recovered from the disappointment when Tony Benn showed up to take his place.

Benn opened the meeting by setting out the political context of the current disputes and showing the inadequacy of the response of the New Realist Labour Policy Review.

Sue Haynes spoke of the anger of those NUS strikers who had wanted to be able to continue the P&O dispute, recently called off after a ballot.

By a *Briefing* reporter

She argued that the decision of the Strike Committee to call a ballot was wrong and that no one had the right to vote for others to end the dispute.

Other speakers represented a wide range of disputes, but one common theme emerged from their experiences: the trade union movement must fight against the present Tory labour legislation.

The experience of the dockworkers and the Underground workers has shown that any potentially successful strike will be thwarted by the courts.

The union leaderships cannot simply bow down and bide their time while waiting for a Labour government to change the laws (which, in any case, is not guaranteed).

Mickey Fenn spoke from Tilbury, where the dockers had been out solid, of his anger at Todd's capitulation to the courts.

Summing up the mood of the meeting he said: "I'd rather be a wildcat than a paper tiger."

British Rail

Make or break for NUR

As the NUR prepared for its first national strike on British Rail in seven years, it came to as no surprise that the British Rail Board went to court.

In the middle of "negotiations" with the union at ACAS, BR announced that the ballot was invalid, claiming some members had not had the opportunity to vote.

By Toni Matthews

They came up with 300 members who claimed they had been disenfranchised from a ballot which had been decided by a margin of thousands.

It would be laughable if the implications were not so serious — not just for the NUR but for the whole of the trade union movement.

BR has broken every agreement in the book during this dispute:

•refused to negotiate nationally over the future of the bargaining machinery;

•went to arbitration having said it was not prepared to abide by any decisions of ACAS;

•obstructed the ballot proceedings by not releasing NUR members in certain areas.

The basis of the injuction obtained by BR is obviously to create yet more case law finally to nail the coffin of the trade union.

Not content with the TGWU result in the dockers' dispute, this injunction is a blatant attempt to stop workplace ballots.

The NUR has resisted postal ballots for industrial disputes. Workplaces ballots involve local organisation, meetings of members, involvement of new activists — all the things that the Tories' anti-trade union legislation is designed to do away with.

But if the law now decides that if one single member has not been given the opportunity to vote then the whole national ballot is invalid, then the trade union leaderships' hands will be even more tied than they are now.

All these developments mean that the dockers who have taken unofficial action were right and Ron Todd was wrong. Staying within the law is weakening the collective strength of the trade union movement.

The NUR at this time has no choice: the issues facing the union threaten to break up its national structure.

BR, in preparation for privatisation, is dividing the industry into up into sectors. Pay will be decided locally.

If BR's proposals go through, it will only be a short time before one worker is paid less, with worse conditions, than another doing exactly the same job, simply because s/he works in a different area or because the local manager likes her/his face.

It is make or break time for the union. The membership will be there if the union leadership is prepared to stand up and fight.

The newly formed Broad Left within the NUR is giving full backing to those EC members who have fought for the union to break the law, both in the London Underground dispute and now with BR.

The Broad Left will be building support for unofficial action and campaigning for the NUR to break the law where necessary. As the NUR begins its two-week annual conference, the next period will be crucial.

Employers use the courts because they can get the results they want. The unions have no choice: only all-out action by the members can start to turn the tide of a decade of Tory rule.

Unless the NUR is prepared to stand up to the courts we won't have to wait another seven years for action. The union as a national force will be finished.



All station and no train: the future for BR?

Sinister links with the Right?

BR is almost certainly working hand in glove with the Freedom Association in "finding" members who have claimed they have not been given the opportunity to vote.

During the 1982 NUR strike, the Freedom Association was involved in forming a scab union on the railyway, particularly among members who by the nature of the job are isolated.

The Freedom Association raised its head again when the NEC elections two years ago were challenged, and a postal ballot was forced on the membership.

During recent official industrial action taken by the Signal and Telecommunication members, a large number of members in the south left the union after intervention by the Freedom Association, the EETPU, and the scab union which had been lying dormant over the last seven years.

It appears that some NUR members have held "dual" membership and have been instrumental in playing a scab role in the present.

All this is part of a developing practice within BR. It has started to use the services of the Economic League and at least one NUR member, Denny Fitzpatrick, has been sacked for his previous trade union activity at Fords and at British Telecom.

The Pergamon Press 23

Fighting the enemy within

When Robert Maxwell sacked 23 members from Pergamon Press for staging an official one day strike it did Kinnck no favours.

Only two weeeks previously the Labour leader had publicly defended the fundamental right of workers to withdraw their labour with the strength and conviction of a man trying to make up for dodging any commitment to the repeal of the Tory anti-trade union laws.

By a *Briefing* correspondent

He did this only to find the Editor of the *Daily Mirror* — he who must be obeyed — ruthlessly depriving 23 of his workers of precisely that fundamental right.

The *Daily Mirror* is the only mass circulation daily paper that supports the Labour Party.

Maxwell, who is ideologically on the extreme right wing of the labour movement, has always used its pages as a powerful tool for pushing the Party leadership ever rightward on unilateralism, black self-organisation, and of course, anti-union laws.

Michael Meacher asserted a month ago that there could be a case for lifting the Tory ban on some forms of "secondary action".

He was attacked in a *Daily Mirror* editorial that was no doubt aimed at securing the demise of the Shadow Employment Minister and whipping the NEC into line.

Kinnock duly distanced himself from Meacher's comments and stated that the policy of the Labour Party was that which was about to appear in the text of the Policy Review.

This duly appeared, giving no commitment on the Tory anti-union laws, but there in the middle was the commitment to the right to strike.

And now Maxwell has sacked 23 people for going on strike and the question is inevitably posed as to what the Labour leadership is going to do about it.

On June 26th, all going well, the Labour Party NEC will take a resolution on the Pergamon Press dispute "regretting" the sacking of the 23 NUJ members and calling for their reinstatement and full recognition of the union.

The issues involved could not be more fundamental, nor more clear cut: yet it must be accepted that there is not much chance of that resolution getting through unscathed.

If it falls, that must not be the end of the story.

The fact that it commits the NEC to campaigning for the rights of the 23 sacked NUJ members must be taken throughout the Labour Party and into Party Conference.

If the Labour Party leadership is allowed to get away with denying support over the one issue of union rights it has consistently proclaimed its commitment to, there can be no hope of ever winning it to the support of other groups of workers in struggle.

Pergamon Press NUJ Chapel is accordingly asking at this late moment that CLPs prioritise the following resolution for this year's Party Conference.

"This Conference condemns the sacking of the 23 NUJ members at Pergamon Press, Robert Maxwell's Oxford-based publishing company, for staging an official 24 hour strike in defence of union recognition.

"In the light of the Charter of Rights for Employees as laid down in the Policy Review which legitimates the rights of workers to belong to a trade union and to take industrial action, this Conference calls upn the NEC to campaign for the immediate reinstatement of the sacked NUJ strikers and for full recognition to be given to the NUJ to represent all its members at Pergamon Press."

If your CLP decides to send the above resolution to Conference please let the striking NUJ members know on 0865 819 162. Further current information about the dispute can also be obtained from this number.

Polish elections

35% democracy is not enough

The recent elections to the Sejm and the Senate in Poland have been hailed as a great victory for Solidarity and a humiliation for the Jaruzelski-Rakowski regime.

And indeed they were — embarrassingly so.

The scale of the rejection of regime candidates, who were unopposed but still failed to achieve the 50% vote required to be elected, was not forseen either by the regime or by Solidarity. Discreet appeals by Lech Walesa to vote for the "acceptable face" of the regime were ignored.

Solidarity is now in the embarrassing position of cobbling together a formula whereby the 65% representation in the Sejm (lower house of parliament) guaranteed to the regime and its allies can be foisted on an electorate which has decisively rejected its rule.

Leading Solidarity representatives, such as Professor Bronislaw Geremek, probable leader of the Solidarity deputies in the Sejm, have not yet made it clear whether or not they will enter the government.

Geremek could become premier for the asking. Why is the regime so keen to co-opt the opposition? There are three main reasons.

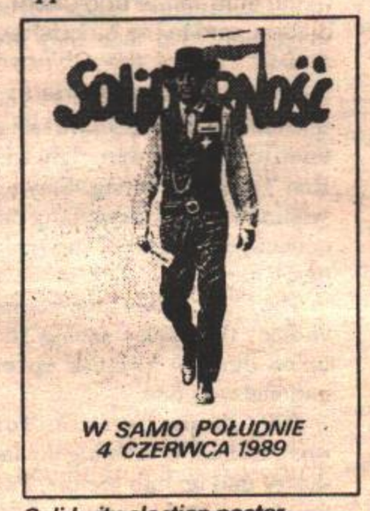
First, the two mass strike

By Dave Holland International Office PSP (DR)

waves of 1988 showed that the country could be made ungovernable without some kind of deal with the opposition.

Secondly, Poland's western creditors, holding around $40 billion worth of foreign debt, could only be persuaded to part with fresh credits if Solidarity was recognised.

Thirdly, the project of imposing a Thatcherite rescue plan on the Polish population can only be achieved with the active support of at least a section of the opposition.



Solidarity election poster

A desperately immiserated working population, suffering an inflation rate approaching 100% annually, will now be invited to accept the imposition of market discipline with all that it implies: the return of large-scale unemployment, factory closures, and the sell-off of national assets at knock-down prices to private entrepreneurs.

A section of the ruling Party is already exploiting its links with private capital (through the granting of licences, etc.) and turning itself into a bourgeoisie proper, on the western model.

The new leaseholder of the Gdansk Shipyards (operating through an Anglo-Polish company) explained recently that only 10% of the present workforce would be retained under the new management and that workers joining unions would face the sack.

It is scarcely surprising then that Jaruzelski's plans won Margaret Thatcher's approval, along with promises of substantial financial aid, during the General's recent visit to Britain.

In an interview with the *Independent* he explained that temporarily unpopular policies similar to the British government's treatment of the miners were now needed in Poland.

The Solidarity leadership has no alternative to offer. It also supports marketisation as the only way forward. The 1981 programme of the "Self-Managing Republic", adopted by the only democratic congress of Slolidarity ever to be held, has been shelved.

There is, however, another side to the coin. It will be extremely difficult to force the Polish working class to accept this future.

Section

A section of the opposition, led by Militant Solidarity and the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution), and grouped in the Congress of the Opposition Against the System, has broken with the Walesa leadership.

The radical opposition, insisting that 35% democracy is not enough, boycotted the recent elections. The 62% turn out at the polls lends support to the view that a substantial minority of the Polish population have no faith in the agreement with the authorities. If these really were the first democratic elections for forty years a turn-out of over 80% could have been expected.

The coming months will see a struggle between Polish Thatcherism, represented by Jaruzelski and Walesa, and a desperate and alienated working class. Small radical currents like the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) will have the opportunity to greatly increase their influence.

The PSP(DR) demands that workers themselves should decide the future of their workplaces. It calls for the "decorative" new Senate to be replaced by a Chamber of representatives of workers' self-managing bodies. It demands an early congress of Solidarity to democratically decide the union's policy.

The International Office of the PSP(DR) and its UK Support Committee can be contacted at: The Basement, 92 Ladbroke Grove, London W11. Its information bulletin *Socialist Messenger* can be obtained for an annual subscription of £5.00 (individuals) or £20.00 (institutions). Cheques to "Polish Socialist Party Appeal".

STOP PRESS: Jozef Pinior, PSP-DR activist, has been granted a passport by the Polish authorities after pressure on his behalf from the labour movement internationally. He will be addressing fringe meetings at this year's Labour Party Conference.

Solidarity with Chinese students and workers

Statement by the "Congress of the Opposition Against the System" on China

The participants in the COAS send best wishes to the Chinese workers and students stuggling for democracy in the political and economic life of their country. We are united in a struggle against the communist bureaucracy's system of exploitation and domination. Like our Chinese colleagues we demand: 1. Freedom of association, speech and assembly. 2. No repression against political activists. 3. An immediate halt to the sell-off of national property and the treatment of society as a cheap labour force.

STOP PRESS: On the 13th June a week-long hunger strike involving 70 people outside the Chinese Embassy in Warsaw came to an end. The strike was in solidarity with the murdered and repressed workers and students of China.

Privatisation

"Congress of the Opposition Against the System" statement on privatisation plans (introduced by Jaruzelski with support of Walesa).

"The reckless sale of Polish national property will lead to unemployment and to the treatment of working people as cheap labour.

"The current decisions on the dissolution of work-places are certainly the result of the anti-wo. king class course of Premier Rakowski.

"The examples of the Gdansk Shipyards and the MPK in Plock testify to the dominance of political over economic considerations.

"The political line of the group around Lech Walesa's Citizen Committee, by introducing undemocratic mechanisms into union structures and through adding a codicil to the Solidarity statute, has disarmed the fundamental social force able to oppose the communist dictatorship.

"Participants in the COAS consider that only the workers have the right to decide about the future of their workplaces. Participants in the COAS feel obliged to organise assistance for workers struggling for their rights.

USSR Congress

Party allows debate and keeps control

The Congress of People's Deputies, the democratic rabbit pulled from Gorbachev's hat at the 19th Party Conference last June, proved to be very much alive and kicking when it met in Moscow in May and June.

The Congress is a major plank in Gorbachev's attempt to establish a socialist "legal" state with competitive elections, a clearer division between Party and State, and a legal foundation to their activities.

But Gorbachev has made it plain that democratisation of the state's higher echelons will go no further in the foreseeable future. Rights and freedoms must be matched by duties and responsibilities.

While the Party suffered a number of embarrassments in the elections to the Congress, 87% of all Deputies were Party members.

The apparatus was able to wield big majorities against radical proposals to increase the Congress's limited powers and make it an authentic decision-making body.

The Congress, which will meet annually, has two principal functions:

- to elect the two-chamber Supreme Soviet which, from its previous purely rubber-stamping role, is now to be the Soviet Union's supreme legislative organ;
- to elect a Soviet President, now with greater powers than the previous figurehead.

By Rick Simon

The Congress can re-elect 20% of the Supreme Soviet every year; but given the Congress's composition it would seem unlikely that this will lead to much variation in its political composition.

Despite his built-in majority, Gorbachev allowed the radicals to have their say, resulting in the USSR's most outspoken debate for decades.

Industrial production nose-dived, as people throughout the Soviet Union absented themselves from work to tune in to TVs and radios.

In an opinion poll 87% of Muscovites said they were following the proceedings and only 5% thought it was boring — figures which will probably be reversed in Britain, after the sanitised television coverage of parliament we are promised.

Soviet viewers witnessed a grim confirmation of the reality of *perestroika* after four years. Speaker after speaker, and not only the radicals, decried the lack of improvement in the supply of food and consumer goods.

Gorbachev, elected President (1 7 against, 11 abstentions), himself made kn. n the exten: of th massive Soviet budget deficit (some 100 billion rubles).

He also revealed the degree of "defence" spending — 77.3 billion rubles, due to be slashed to 40 billion by 1995.

Boris Yeltsin was again the major thorn in the side of the apparatus.

He initially failed to win sufficient votes to be elected to the Supreme Soviet — a decision reversed only after big demonstrations in Moscow and a Siberian Deputy standing down to make way for him.

Privilege

Yeltsin's speech continued his major theme of attacking bureaucratic privilege.

He called for the abolition of the *nomenklatura* system of central appointments, for the authority of Congress and the Supreme Soviet to be strengthened, and for the President to be subject to annual referenda of confidence.

He argued for an early Party Congress to elect a new pro-*perestroika* Central Committee and for an emergency economic programme involving a new five year plan, a cut in capital expenditure and foreign credit if necessary to buy sufficient consumer goods for the domestic market.

Yeltsin also proved the most outspoken in condemning the actions of the Chinese bureaucracy as a crime against socialism.

Few Soviet "sacred cows" remained untouched, including the KGB, attacked by Deputies for being beyond public control.

Against a background of rising nationalist tensions, the commander of the forces involved in the Tbilisi massacre was grilled by Deputies. A special commission, including some radicals, was formed to investigate the circumstances.

A Baltic Deputy read out the text of the notorious secret protocol of the Hitler-Stalin Pact which had brought the Baltic states under Soviet influence. Again a special commission was formed to examine the matter.

One raw nerve was hit: Afghanistan. Andrei Sakharov was pilloried by Afghan veterans and military top brass for his views. One Deputy said Sakharov was lucky not to be back in exile in Gorky (old habits die hard!).

Despite the airing of massively divergent opinions, the Congress still remains essentially a toothless body.

Radical historian Yuri Afanasyev called the composition of the Supreme Soviet "Stalinist-Brezhnevite", a view echoed by 62% of those surveyed in an opinion poll.

The radicals have little influence in the Supreme Soviet.

A further problem is that there is a world of difference between a Yeltsin, a Sakharov, and a radical "monetarist" economist like Nikolai Shmelyev, whose response to the budget deficit is to cut foreign aid and attack workers' living standards.

While taking advantage of the openings afforded by such bodies and the elections to the local Soviets in the autumn, radical forces must continue to organise mass campaigns in defence of workers' rights and to elaborate a programme for genuine socialist democracy.

Solidarity with the Chinese people

Unite for democracy!

The Chinese solidarity Campaign aims to organise the strongest possible support for the students and workers movement in China.

This movement arose as a result of the mass mobilisations of Chinese people in pursuit of democratic rights and against corruption and bureaucratic privilege within the Chinese Communist Party.

We salute the very many who have lost their live in this struggle. We condemn without reservation their brutal massacre by the Chinese government.

The Chinese people's bravery is an inspiration to us all to defend the violation of democratic rights wherever and whenever they occur.

We must continue, as we believe the Chinese people will continue, to fight for their demands for:

•an end to government and Party corruption;

•the implementation of full democratic rights, including the right to free press, speech, association, and the freedom to demonstrate, protest and strike;

•legal recognition to all independent students' and workers' organisations. These organisations must be controlled by the students and workers themselves and have a full role in the management of China's political and economic affairs.

We must act now to defend those many who are in detention or hiding and those who fear for their lives and safety in light of the chilling reign of terror now unleashed in all parts of China.

Students

In particular, we must do all we can to ensure the safety and well-being of the Chinese students presently in Britain. We believe that the British government has not taken actions which accurately reflect the British people's support for the democracy movement in China and their revulsion at its violent suppression.

The British government must:

•extend the visas of the Chinese Mainland students by at least one year;

•give all necessary financial support to those students whose study grants have been cut off;

•provide work permits to those students who have completed their studies;

•put pressure on the Chinese government, to protest and express their strongest condemnation at the actions of the Chinese government.

This campaign calls for the breaking of all student and trade union links with the Chinese government and all bogus government backed organisations. Instead, we call on British student and workers' organisations to establish solidarity links with their newly formed counterparts in China.

We believe in the right of Hong Kong people to determine their own future through democratic self-government.

Support the campaign in building solidarity in Britain and internationally by joining us in demanding:

•an immediate and unconditional end to the bloodshed and purges of the Chinese pro-democracy supporters;

•the release of all political prisoners;

•an immediate lifting of martial law.

Support

The campaign resolves to bring together all individuals, community and trade union organisations, political parties, etc., who support the struggle by Chinese students and workers for greater democracy and equality.

This campaign welcomes and invites sponsorship and participation from all those who agree with the above statement. The Campaign is an independent, non-Party affiliated organisation which aims to be broad based, democratic and accountable, with political leadership by the Chinese students and community in Britain.

**From Chinese Solidarity Campaign press release.*

Non-stop picket of Chinese Embassy

We are conducting a non-stop picket calling 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.

The Chinese students in the UK from China and from Hong Kong are already organised. We offer them our full support.

You can contact us at:
68 Shaftesbury Ave, London W1, tel. 01-836 8291.



Action in Hull

Around 400 people demonstrated against the massacre in Beijing in Hull city centre on Wednesday 7th June.

A demonstration organised by Chinese students marched from the University to the centre of town, where local trades unionists, students, and councillors joined it for a rally and flower-laying ceremony.

The rally was largely organised by lecturer and writer Tony Topham and supported by the City and County Councils, student unions, and local Trades Council.

Student Union and Trades Council officers have called for the formation of a broad-based Hull Area campaign of solidarity with Chinese workers and students.

US intervention in Panama

You bought it; you built it; we're keeping it!

It verges on political absurdity that the US should be asking the world, particularly the nations of Latin America, to endorse and assist its intervention in Panama.

The US has been intervening in Panama's affairs since 1903, when President Theodore Roosevelt financed a revolution which turned the isthmus, then part of Colombia, into an artificially demarcated country — all to build a canal.

With US warships ensuring Panama's status as a US *protectorate*, the canal created new markets for the US: ensuring, by 1933, that over half US steel and cotton exports went to Latin America.

The canal may no longer be important to the US in terms of world trade, but it remains a symbol of US "backyardism", and is also of considerable strategic value, with a permanent US military population of over 12,000.

Already the world's second largest free trade area, Panama, along with Hong Kong, is also a major home for *flight capital*, with bank and corporation secrecy laws, offshore mutual funds, and "shell" companies.

Once Hong Kong becomes part of China, the financial interests that put Bush into the White House will want to ensure there's still a place where they can keep their money.

Accounting for some 9% of the country's GDP (more than the income derived from the canal's shipping revenue) finance is Panama's main industry. For countries like South Africa, Panama will always provide ships with flags of convenience.

By Woody Haut
Hampstead & Highgate CLP

Panama has been well situated to funnel funds to the *Contras* and Iran and stash money from corporations ransacked when the free marketeers took over Chile.

Part of Noriega's power comes from Panama's financial position, a strong bargaining chip in any capitalist card game.

Even with the highest per capita national debt in the Americas, Panama has avoided the restrictions placed on other debtor nations simply because it's a dollar economy supplying cheap credit and with abundant collateral from enormous financial inflows.

A treaty signed by Carter and Torrijos in the 70s states that in 1999 the canal will pass into Panamanian control. The canal had become a focal point for anti-US feelings, successfully exploited by Torrijos.

But the treaty also gives the US the right to take military action in defence of the canal, and gives the US Senate power to confirm the Panamanian nominee for director of the Panamanian corporation which will operate the canal.

Carter believed Panama was no longer of prime military importance. He therefore pursued a policy of economic rather than military intervention.

But hardline Republican Reagan, fearful of Torrijos's politics (his fatal plane crash, some say, the work of the CIA), had a simple view of the canal: "We bought it, we built it, and we're going to keep it."

When Noriega took over he was warmly received by Secretary of State George Schultz, who contrasted Noriega to the Sandinistas.

Should the US relinquish the canal, Panama would still be used as a US military base, and possibly as a launching pad for US military invasion in the region.

Failure

This is why the nationalists' slogan, "sovereignty by the year 2000", has such support, and why the recent general strike was such a failure.

Noriega, with his homegrown nationalism, has considerable backing amongst Panama's working class, and has been one of the few Panamanian leaders to stand his ground against the US.

How far will Bush go? Noriega's drug trafficking and CIA employment, both apparently with Bush's consent, make interesting reading for the US public; but losing Panama could seriously affect the state of cowboy capitalism.

Noriega's threat to produce evidence incriminating Bush has yet to be fulfilled. But Bush would still prefer Noriega out of the way, replaced by someone more amenable.

Having already imposed sanctions, Bush knows that if he squeezes any further Panamanians might demand redistribution of their country's considerable wealth, with consequences beyond Bush's control.

Once Noriega turned down Bush's offer to drop drug trafficking charges if Noriega would vacate office, Bush had no option but to press for extradition, and, by sending more troops, threaten military action.

The object of military action would have to be to eliminate Noriega: Bush dare not repeat Reagan's Libyan invasion.

Unlike Reagan in Grenada, Bush would need consent from at least a couple of Latin American countries, if not the Organisation of American States.

The risks make the remaining option — isolating Noriega while promoting and engineering, with CIA assistance, a coup from within the military — the more provident course for Bush at the moment.

Understandably, countries like Nicaragua and Cuba, with first hand experience of US intervention, have supported Noriega's move to annul the recent election and have rejected attempts to isolate the Panamanian leader.

It's the height of hypocrisy for the US to use the elections in Panama as an excuse to apply military pressure while ignoring the fraudulent election results in Mexico and refusing to recognise legitimate election results in Nicaragua.

Noriega was created by the US and it looks as though he'll be destroyed by the US. Nevertheless, his story can only be understood in the context of prolonged foreign occupation and the nationalism it has bred.

South Africa

Free Lybon Mabasa!

By Mike Phipps
Chair, Greenwich & Bexley Anti-Apartheid

With intensifying repression in South Africa today, more and more detainees are resorting to the only weapon left to them: the hunger strike.

There are more detainees on hunger strike today than even a few months ago, when mass hunger strikes captured the attention of the world's media.

One of these is Lybon Mabasa, Deputy President of the Azanian Peoples Organisation, now in the third week of his *second* hunger strike.

Mabasa, held in Johannesburg since the end of April, waged a successful hunger strike with eight others against the detention of 15 AZAPO leaders. After twelve days' fasting, they were released.

But Mabasa, a founder member of AZAPO and President in 1983-4, remains a prize catch for the apartheid authorities.

Despite his weak condition, which has meant repeated visits to hospital, he is being held in solitary confinement and his "interrogation" is continuing through the hunger strike.

Don't allow the apartheid authorities to break this man! Raise his case throughout the labour movement and send telegrams to the Embassy demanding his release!

Further information from: Azania-Namibia Forum, Greenwich Resource Centre, MacBean Centre, MacBean Street, London SE18.

LABOUR BRIEFING

"Unofficial" action stymied, but...

New chance for dockers!

As we go to press, the Law Lords have upheld the appeal by the TGWU and legalised a dock strike.

However, the ruling comes two days after the expiry of the 28 day deadline for the implementation of the strike ballot.

Presumably (since he has not yet said so) Ron Todd will now call another ballot for an all-out official strike — although if this is to take place before the abolition of the Scheme it will have to be quick.

Todd and the General Executive Council of the TGWU managed to break the unofficial dock strike (called by the National Port Shop Stewards Committee) following the outlawing of official action by the Court of Appeal.

The strike had involved over a third of Britain's registered dockers. Tilbury, Liverpool, Bristol, Ipswich, Great Yarmouth, and ports in Scotland, Wales, and the North East walked out.

But the disowning of the strike by the TGWU and the failure of key ports such as Hull and Southampton to join the stoppage (on the basis of support for the "official line") led to its quick fragmentation.

By ALAN THORNETT

On Saturday June 17th, the Port Stewards Committee was forced reverse its decision and advise the ports remaining on strike to return to work to avoid isolation. They had little alternative.

These events have inflicted damage of historic proportions, not just on the dockers, but on the British trade union movement as a whole.

By insisting from the outset that the the TGWU would only support the dockers within the law Ron Todd gave the go-ahead to the courts to launch new legal attacks on the unions and establish wide ranging new case law.

No sooner had the unofficial strike started to collapse (after being repeatedly attacked by Ron Todd in the media) than the port employers began to push home their advantage.

Employers in the Port of London have refused to accept dockers off the Tempory Unattached Register — directly flouting the NDLS even before it is abolished.

This example, which is likely to be followed by other port employers, shows clearly what their attitude will be if they win this battle. Few of the present registered dockers will survive and none of the militants.

The dockers' case, and with it their hopes for the future, was put back in the legal domain with the appeal to the House of Lords — hardly well known for their support of the working class. The task posed is still to break the law. The courts may have decided, retrospectively, not to ban the planned dock strike, but they have still managed to demobilise it and disqualify the ballot.

A fresh ballot opens the way for fresh legal moves from the employers.



The TGWU should now ballot the dockers, complete the ballot before the Scheme is abolished, and then give full backing to a strike — breaking the law wherever necessary to make it successful.

The TGWU's Biennial Delegate Conference, which meets at the end of June, is the union's highest body. It has the power to give full support to the dockers.

The issues involved — above all, the right to strike, and conduct a strike successfully — affect the whole union, and in fact the whole labour movement. That message has to be put across at the Conference.

Hull Docks

Officials sabotage strike

There was a set-back to the campaign for strike action over the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme in Hull on Friday, June 9th, as dockers voted to remain at work at a chaotic meeting.

By our Hull reporter

Despite a strong move to back the unofficial strike wave in Britain's ports, TGWU officials and a division in the dockers' ranks prevented Hull joining the action.

Prior to the mass meeting, North Sea Ferries — a P&O subsiduary — called T&G stewards representing North Sea Ferries' registered dockworkers to a meeting. NSF dockers are amongst the most highly paid on Hull docks.

They also have a bonus system which is in effect a "no strike" bonus payment (already lost this year).

Management promised a deal maintaining conditions for "their" dockers after abolition and informed stewards that the appeal would be in the House of Lords by Wednesday June 14th.

As the dockers' meeting began, one of the NSF stewards took the microphone and gave information about the meeting with management. A significant number of those attending the meeting were NSF dockworkers.

This was a higher proportion than normal because a large number (perhaps as many as 200) of the registered dockworkers had not turned up, thinking perhaps that the result of the meeting was a foregone conclusion.

The NSF dockers proceeded to barrack and disrupt calls for a strike. A letter from Ron Todd urging dockers to wait for the appeal to the House of Lords was read.

The meeting closed with a confused vote — in which even a T&G officer conceded that there was a "substantial minority" for strike action — in fact about 60/40.

The meeting ended a week where local T&G officials had made several moves against the Hull Port Shop Stewards Committee.

On the Thursday, an attempt to get a local delegate meeting off the ground had failed following a ruling from the local T&G headquarters that it was "against rule".

An attempt to provide a replacement delegate from Hull to the TGWU National Docks and Waterways Group (because the Hull delegate was on holiday) was vetoed by Bevin House.

Ploy

In the event, the ploy didn't work. The National Group reversed its previous policy and voted to back the unofficial action by 19 votes to nil, with three abstentions.

The stewards met almost every day last week, but the majority were not prepared to call a further mass meeting and put the recommendation from the National Port Stewards Committee for an all-out strike.

Behind enemy lines

Port bosses' "propaganda war"

The judges, the media, and the Tories smear the dock strike as "political".

Yes, the strike *is* political: as political as the campaign the judges, media, and especially the Tories have been waging against the dock workforce.

By Dave Osler

In 1987 the National Association of Port Employers (NAPE) conducted a highly confidential survey of 42 Scheme Ports employing 71.8% of registered dockers.

All those surveyed expected immediate all-out strike action when abolition was announced. Most expected a stoppage of at least six weeks.

The leaked NAPE document counsels what it calls "propaganda war" waged by an alliance of "NAPE and HMG".

This "war" was kicked off at last year's Tory Conference with a speech at a NAPE fringe meeting by Leon Brittain, in which he proposed ending the scheme on terms rather more liberal than those in the subsequent White Paper.

Within a week a "secret" NAPE document found its way into the trade press detailing the high average age (47) of the Scheme's workforce.

But as luck would have it, HMG had just announced voluntary severance payments worth £25,000 to dockers of 15 years experience.

Support the Dockers!
Public Meeting
With
Tony Benn
and
Hull Port Shop Stewards
Organised by Hull Trades Council and Hull PSSC
Monday 26th June, 7.00pm
Trades and Labour Club, Beverley Road
Tickets £1 & 50p

These would be funded on a 50/50 basis with the port employers until March 31st this year — which turned out to be six days before the Scheme's abolition was announced.

In November 1988 things moved up a gear with the publication of a Centre for Policy Studies pamphlet *Clear the Decks* by David Davis, Tory MP for Boothferry.

Davis had earlier introduced a "soft-option" bill which would allow the Scheme to "wither on the vine" by not extending its provisions to new employees.

Now he was arguing the flat-out NAPE line: immediate abolition and no concessions. Previously secret NAPE/CPS seminars went public with a CPS dayschool addressed by Davis on January 17th.

Senior TGWU officials addressed the meeting from the floor before having lunch — courtesy of the CPS.

In February a NAPE press release celebrated an early day motion signed by 129 Tory backbenchers — including Norman Tebbit and Michael Heseltine — demanding the end of the Scheme. Over 200 eventually signed up.

The CPS conference led to a meeting of some 500 rank and file dockers in East Ham which pledged strike action to defend the Scheme.

At the meeting, Michael Meacher was alleged to have promised Labour Party backing for industrial action, which he later denied in the House after being taunted by Norman Fowler.

An unsourced report in *The Guardian* of February 27th was headlined "Minister ducks dock conflict".

The government, it said, would not be abolishing the docks Scheme this year, but then warned:

"Mrs Thatcher is said to be prepared to set up a special cabinet committee to co-ordinate action against the strike." At least the latter proved correct.

A DTI circular dated April 6th, the day the abolition was announced, showed that the government were expecting all-out action within a fortnight and were preparing to invoke "procedures laid down in the Civil Emergency Handbook."

But ten weeks later the court battles go on and industrial action has been only sporadic. The ports and the shipping lines have had plenty of time to prepare.

Three container lies — Cosco, Norasia, and Lloyd Brasiliero — have switched from Scheme ports to non-Scheme Felixstowe.

Many shippers have now had ample opportunity to stockpile on the continent for transhipment via non-Scheme ports. He who hesitates may well be lost.

Bristol

Organising solidarity

By Dave Amos

In Bristol local dockers and their supporters have set up a group to co-ordinate solidarity activity.

The group was formed after a joint meeting of Bristol East CLP and the Solidarity Network National Committee, addressed by a leading docks steward.

Afterwards, an *ad hoc* group of Labour Party and trade union activists met informally with dock shop stewards and agreed on a number of initiatives.

First, a public launching of a Dockers Solidarity Group on July 10th at Shepherds Hall, Old Market.

Amongst other things the meeting will take a report on how the dockers' fare at the TGWU Conference.

Secondly, it was agreed to seek affiliations from local labour movement bodies. A model resolution was prepared to that effect, which also made general arguments about the employers' offensive on national agreements and the right to strike.

Thirdly, to spread awareness of the dockers' case and to build the public meeting a newsletter sponsored by a local NCU branch has been produced.

In addition, a specific edition of the newsletter has been prepared for the TGWU Conference. This calls on TGWU leaders to give full support to the dockers in defence of national agreements on basic trade union rights.

It is signed by two delegates to the Conference (one from the docks) on behalf of the Solidarity Group.

It was felt to be important to show to dockers that there were comrades in other industries backing their strike who could help resource it if their own national union leadership would not.

Finally, as the Bristol docks are owned by the local (Labour) Council it was agreed to put pressure on the Labour Group not to try to derail the dockers' national fight by a local agreement and to get them to issue a public statement along these lines.

***Briefing* comrades in other areas should take up the dockers' fight in similar fashion. Already Bristol dockers have spoken in Birmingham and Oxford, where support groups are being set up.**