LABOUR
40p FORTNIGHTLY
BRIEFING
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40p

Drive through the legal roadblocks:

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS!



PHOTO: John Doble

As we move into the summer, NALGO workers join all the others agreeing with Arthur Scargill: the only thing this government listens to is direct action.

Arthur Scargill was right!

Speaking on the eve of the NUM's centenary Conference in Scarborough on the need for industrial action to fight the latest round of pit closures being proposed by British Coal and the Tories he said that railworkers, dockers, and local government workers were once again proving that the only thing that this government listens to is *direct action*.

Hardly had "government sources" firmly scotched any notion of ministerial intervention in the rail strikes than news came through that Thatcher had established a special inner-Cabinet committee to deal with the situation.

No sooner had the dust settled on the first devastatingly successful 24-hour strike on British Rail and the London Underground called by the National Union of Railwaymen than Transport Secretary Paul Channon was on TV demanding (or rather, pleading) for negotiations.

One might almost have felt sorry for BR's Personnel Director Toolan — until one remembers what he did to tens of thousands of workers in the old British Leyland Rover Group.

Closely following established Thatcherite management practice he had imposed a below inflation rate 7% pay "increase" into the pay packets of BR's hourly paid workers and at the same time announced the end of national pay bargaining.

Then he had gone along to a charade of "talks" at ACAS with the sole purpose of informing the NUR that BR had successfully sought leave to get an injunction in the High Court declaring the first one-day national strike illegal.

But the courts refused to oblige. In a pre-eminently political series of moves the judiciary took a tactical step back from outlawing strikes in the docks and railways. For the House of Lords to have confirmed the banning of the docks strike would have made strikes in Britain *de facto* illegal.

By Trade Union Briefing

As *The Economist* noted, there are other weapons available. They call for introducing "more competition". Translated, this means destroying national pay rates by buying off certain indispensable sections of the workforce in the South East with increased payments, thus preparing for privatisation.

The only answer that all public sector workers have is unity in action across the grades within each sector and solidarity between workers in different services and industries. This must be built locally and nationally.

The dockers' fight remains key. It is wage rates and conditions in the Scheme Ports which determine rates in the whole industry. The Tories hope to split registered dockers by threatening cancellation of large severance payments and mass sackings if they strike. A defeat for an all-out dockers strike would weaken the whole movement.

If the dockers strike and try and secure their own work then of course the courts will be utilised straight away to outlaw secondary picketing and solidarity action from unregistered ports. Defying the law remains the central political roadblock to turning back the current Tory offensive.

Nevertheless, even the limited action taken by workers to date has severely wrongfooted the Tories, the courts, and the employers.

Escalation to all-out action can secure some desperately needed victories.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Letters

WRITEBACK!

We welcome your letters!

Disagree with something? — write in.
Agree with something? — write in.
Want to raise a new idea? — Write in.
Let's hear your views!

Write to: Writeback, Labour Briefing, 39 Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB.
Please send letters for the next issue to arrive by Wednesday, June 28th if possible.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

Reformist or revolutionary?

Dear *Briefing*,

Peter Willsman (*Briefing* no. 85) replied to an article I didn't write rather than one I did.

The issue is not one of splitting off and forming a new party, though I suspect that should this occur it would have more support than Peter suggests.

The issue is one of *representation*, and how working class people can best achieve it.

Organisations like the CP or the SWP have become marginalised as much because of the present electoral system as their own policies.

Socialism through one party is as Stalinist, repressive, and muddle-headed as "socialism in one country".

Parts of Peter's letter suggest that this is what he believes in.

True, PR has reformist aspects. But so does the present system, which denies representation to hundreds of thousands of workers. To struggle for reforms need not in itself be reformist; in some situations it can be actively revolutionary.

So with PR, and organisations like Charter 88, we can point out major short-comings, whilst taking from them that which benefits workers.

None of the above can be achieved without a Labour government, which has to be struggled for. Any difference I may have with Peter, and especially with John Wilton, is over strategy, not goals.

Fraternally,
Vincent Johnson
Birmingham



Green coverage after the Euro-elections: see centre pages.

Red for go with greens

Dear *Briefing*,

The Green Party's performance in the European elections was spectacular. It surprised the Party's leading spokespeople as much as the rest of us.

With this new electoral success has come a great deal of media attention mostly aimed at discrediting the Greens' programme.

Newspapers, television, and Tory politicians have described the Greens as extreme left wingers, adding that people who voted Green were not aware of their policies.

The response of some on the left has been very inadequate, dismissing the Greens as single issue cranks and a flash in the pan. I do not share these attitudes.

The Greens drew some support from Labour voters disenchanted with the Party's drift towards the Thatcherite consensus, as well as some uncommitted people genuinely concerned about our environment.

The Greens' distinctive programme and insistence on principled politics will remain attractive to many who see the established parties as unprincipled vote catchers who do not represent their aspirations.

The Green Party was alone in campaigning for a non nuclear defence policy, taking Britain out of NATO, and opposition to the Single European Market because it would enable big business to exploit workers and cause more environmental damage.

This approach commands support on the left, but because of the right wing grip on the Labour Party did not find expression in the Party's campaign.

The Green Party manifesto in 1983 stated "Green politics is the single most significant international movement since the birth of socialism at the end of the 19th century".

Since then, the environment has become an issue of greater concern as the effects of capitalism's destructive policies become ever more obvious. This concern has helped increase support for the Greens in many countries.

Although the first past the post system denies the Greens in Britain any significant representation, they are still outpolling the centre parties in local and European elections as well as in recent opinion polls.

Socialists must respond positively to the Greens, working with them to defend the environment and seeking to persuade them that a fundamental transformation of society is necessary in order to save the planet.

Dave Warren,
Reading

But how do we *build* the Socialist Movement?

Dear *Briefing*,

Now that the third Socialist Conference is over, I feel it would be useful to make some comments about the tensions apparent in the Socialist Movement.

Most of the people I know who are active in building the movement on the ground came away for the second conference feeling that it had spent too much time discussing policy and too little planning action.

Nonetheless, we understood the importance of the adoption of the "Aims and Objectives" as an "action programme" which could be used to publicise the demands of the Socialist Conference, and particulary the decision to promote the building of local groups.

In communications with the "central leaders" of the movement, we were given to understand that the third conference would be of a different character.

There would be more emphasis on building the movement, discussion about membership rights and obligations, structure, and detailed appraisals of how we should related to struggles against the Tories.

Somehow, the wishes of those of us who want to know *how to build* the Socialist Movement as a class struggle force in the labour movement have been completely ignored.

Instead, the not-very-hidden agenda of those forces who want to invent a "party" according to their own preconceptions — rather than join the revolutionary movement as it exists now — was forced on us.

Are we to spend every year discussing the programme of this putative party, while New Realism rides roughshod over the labour movement?

Are we to become the laughing stock of the sectarians as we thrash around endlessly discussing details of a policy we know we cannot agree on?

I went to what was probably the worst workshop of the weekend, on democratic rights, which captured in microcosm the problems the movement faces.

The introducer presented proposals for a convention on democratic rights, asking for ideas on what kind of demands and alliances such a convention should be based on.

The SWP opposed the proposal, but failed to make any constructive suggestions that we could act on.

They hid their ultra-leftism on democratic rights behind (some valid, some invalid) criticisms of the policy document on democracy drawn up largely by members of the Socialist Society.

Basically they were saying "we don't agree with this document, so we are going to destroy this workshop", which they duly did.

The point is, the door was opened by those people in the Socialist Society who are using their control of sections of the Socialist Movement apparutus to impose their programme and project.

We urgently need to establish democratic structures, with membership restricted to those committed to building the movement.

We must publish a Socialist Movement journal (independent of both the *Morning Star* and the Socialist Society's *Interlink*) that we in the localities can use to build the movement.

We can use this to bring class struggle politics into the fight against the Poll Tax, the green movement, the campaign to defend the NHS, etc. We can also start on the long haul of constructing a base in the unions.

This is the only way of preventing the dissipation of the goodwill the Socialist Movement has up till now deservedly engendered.

Comradely,
Phil Ward,
Sheffield

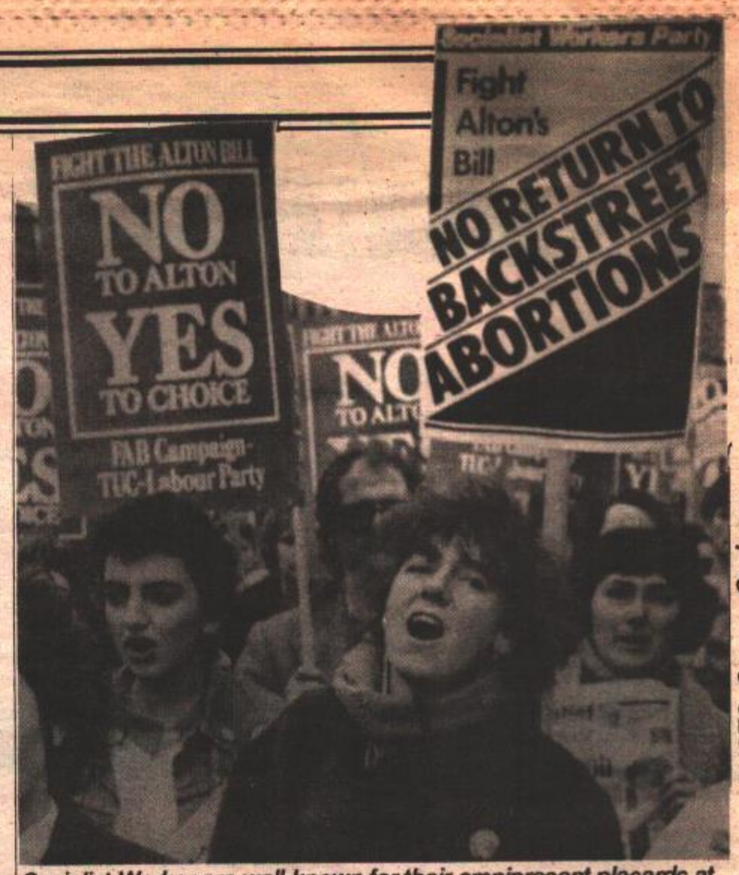


PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

Socialist Worker are well-known for their omnipresent placards at demos. But what else are they up to? (Apart from ruffling Briefing readers' feathers).

SWP must end soujourn

Dear *Briefing*,

The SWP, the largest far left group in Glasgow for much of the 70s and 80s, has now been eclipsed in size by *Militant*.

The main factor in this switch has undoubtedly been *Militant*'s leading role in the anti-Poll Tax campaigns.

The SWP seem unable or unwilling to extend beyond their usual routine of weekly propaganda meetings to grasp the opportunity which the mass opposition to the Poll Tax provides.

The Glasgow experience is likely to be repeated over and again unless the SWP leadership can learn the lessons and reorientate the group.

They must, for example, stop counterposing action by NALGO and/or Labour Councillors to work in the communities. In practice, broad community support can only assist Councillors and unions fighting the Poll Tax.

A complete overhaul in method of organisation and political intervention is required if the SWP is to end its long sojourn in abstract propagandism and to become once more an organisation capable of playing a leading role in the key political campaigns of the day.

As the anti-Poll Tax campaigns spread throughout England and Wales, we need the positive support of the SWP to counteract the Labour bureaucracy's defeatism.

Yours,
N. Hanlon,
Glasgow.

Challenging the "Socialist Wreckers Party"

Dear *Briefing*,

The Sheffield Conference, was, overall, an inspirational event. Excellent speeches were made, and, most importantly, a plan of action to build the new Socialist Movement was outlined.

However one thing marred the weekend for me during one of Sunday's "campaigning priorities workshops" on democratic rights.

Mike Marqusee introduced the topic, suggesting we mobilise a national convention in defense of democratic demands based on activist sources, like the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign.

Mike's strategy was crystal clear. He want to avoid a sterile division between those who back the Charter 88 style approach and those who reduce everything to "working class struggle".

People from all sides had a great deal of sympathy for this stand.

As a member of the Socialist Society, I felt that Mike's views were well worth our support. Unfortunately we were unable to discuss this project. No less than nine members of the SWP rose to speak, one after the other.

In tactics which remind one of 30s Stalinists, they made the "single transferable speech" over and over again. Their solution to the problem of defending democratic rights lay in a kind of fascistic cult of "action".

So appalling was their behaviour that people left the meeting in droves. In effect they smashed the debate as surely as a gang of organised wreckers. At the end we were left frustrated and full of rage.

I ask myself if it is worth being in the same grouping as these disrupters. I hope that the Socialist Movement can overcome these problems.

In solidarity,
Andrew Coates
Ipswich

Briefing AGM

As we hope you saw in last issue's slightly smaller announcement, we've postponed the AGM until the autumn.

As yet, the Briefing EB has been unable to agree on a new date. We hope the Steering Committee on July 16th will be able to agree one. Phone 01-809 3927 for details — or to lobby for your favourite date!

(We think we're probably the only left paper which would dare to postpone its AGM on the grounds that everyone's tired out and it's hot. We await suitable rejoinders in the diary colums of other papers; meanwhile, responses suggest it's a popular decision).

There's a Briefing Editorial Board meeting on July 23rd which will be attempting to lay down some broad planning for the autumn papers; so if you have any ideas for feature material or other coverage, please contact us before then.

The copy deadline for issue 88 will be September 5th; but please try to submit articles before the deadline where at all possible.

Please will paper distributors use the next couple of weeks to collect in all outstanding monies and forward them to 39, Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB before everyone goes away on holiday. The office is aiming to clear ALL outstanding paper debts down to zero; so please help out. See you in September!

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BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Looking forward to the summer

The current industrial scene looks set to ensure that the next weeks will not be marked by the usual summer lull in the class struggle. On the contrary, action on the railways is likely to escalate and a national dock strike is still on the cards.

Pressure on the pay front will continue as mortgage rates stay high and government inflation estimates are increasingly discredited. Anger over pay will be fuelled by recent reports that company directors, asked by the government to "set an example", have helped themselves to increases of between 25% and 73%.

Elsewhere too there are encouraging indicators. Official estimates in some inner city Boroughs suggest that *under half* of the Poll Tax forms sent out have been returned. Some London Councils believe that an 80% registration is the very best they can achieve. In Scotland, one million people have so far not paid.

With all these opportunities for activity and involvement, it may seem off that this is to be your last *Labour Briefing* until September 12th. There are good reasons for this, however.

First, many regular *Briefing* sales occur at Labour Party, trade union, Trades Council, and similar meetings, many of which just do not meet in August. Also, many *Briefing* sellers are on holiday in this period. Producing *Briefing* in a period in which sales slump is not a viable option on financial grounds.

Second, those who work on *Briefing* need to recharge their batteries. The vast majority of the people who help on *Briefing* — writing, editing, pasting up, organising sales and distribution — do so voluntarily, giving unpaid labour weekend after weekend to meet the newspaper's deadlines. No other socialist paper of this scale is produced on a comparable basis.

The absence of the *Briefing* newspaper for a few weeks, however, does not imply an end to *Briefing* activity. Supporters are strongly encouraged to produce their own material, and to organise local meetings and support groups around the current industrial situation. Send us reports of what you do and any leaflets you produce, which will be relayed in a round-up in our first autumn issue.

End all immigration controls

Massive demonstrations will greet Geoffrey Howe on his visit to Hong Kong to justify the Government's racist attitude to the right of abode in Britain in the aftermath of the massacre in Tienanmen Square.

For 140 years Britain has ruled Hong Kong as a colony, allowing no democracy and exploiting the sweated labour of millions of Chinese, including hundreds of thousands of children.

The fruits of the labour of the workers of Hong Kong have filled the pockets of the British ruling class, but the people themselves are being denied any right to live in the country which has taken so much from them.

The Hong Kong government — unelected and unaccountable to the Hong Kong people — has been pressurised by the million-strong demonstrations of the past month, and by considerations of financial and political stability, to demand of the British Government the right of abode in Britain for the colony's 3.24 million holders of British Dependent Territories Citizenship (BDTC).

Socialists in Britain should argue for an end to immigration controls in general, and for the rights of all Hong Kong Chinese to settle in Britain, in particular.

Arguments against immigration are based on the idea of "British culture" and the need to preserve jobs, housing and social services for "British" workers.

"British" culture in this context equals racist, sexist, capitalist culture, while the ruling class's "loyalty" to jobs, housing, and social services is characterised by exploitation and cutbacks.

Our loyalty is to the international working class and the culture of socialism, which means fighting racism and against racist immigration controls, be they against Kurds, Ugandan Asians, or Hong Kong Chinese.

The government's response on Hong Kong has been to make minor concessions on the right of "privileged groups" to come to Britain after 1997. These groups include civil servants, policemen and people with "loadsamoney".

In other words those groups which have proved their loyalty to the capitalist system in Hong Kong and can be relied upon to perform a similar role in Britain.

The British media has joined the Government in trying to whip up a climate of racist fear over "swamping" similar to that inspired by Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech in 1968.

And in a similar reaction to that shown in previous immigration debates, the Labour front bench has found itself even to the right of the SLD in agreeing that Britain cannot possibly "accommodate" the people of Hong Kong.

All of Hong Kong's 5.5 million ethnic Chinese — and not just the 3.24 million with BDTC status — have the right to settle in a country of their own choosing.

Britain has a special responsibility to grant abode to all Hong Kong citizens because of its 140 year long history of exploitation and dictatorial rule of the colony.

From the Opium Wars on, the British ruling class has played a role in creating the conditions of underdevelopment and consequent bureaucratisation which underlay the events in Tienanmen Square. It is now the responsibility of the British working class to ensure that demands of our Chinese brothers and sisters for the right of abode in Britain are met.

To demand the right of abode for Hong Kong Citizens means acknowledging that although the future of Hong Kong is linked with that of China, its past is the responsibility of the British state and the long history of British colonialism.

The Madrid Summit and the Delors Report on European Monetary Union

Thatcher fought Delors; and Delors won!

The discussions at the EC Madrid summit centred on the report on European Monetary Union produced last April by a committee of bankers chaired by Jacques Delors, the President of the European Commission.

The Delors report outlines a three stage process to build economic and monetary union on the foundations of the existing European Monetary System.

By Dave Palmer
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

Its implementation is the central pillar around which European states are to become economically integrated within the 1992 Single Market.

Stage One is for all member countries to join the European Monetary System (founded in 1979).

Under E.M.S. rules, member states intervene on foriegn exchanges to keep fluctuations in their currencies within 2.25% of agreed rates (6% for Italy and Spain).

Realignments are still allowed for at present (there have been 11 so far).

The aim is for fluctuations to be progressively reduced, to be achieved by co-ordination of members states' national fiscal (budgets) and monetary (interest rates) policy within existing EC institutions.

Remaining exchange controls are then to be removed and financial markets fully liberalised.

At stage Two, an independent Federal European System of Central Banks (like the U.S. Federal Reserve) would be formed out of existing Community monetary institutions. It would start the transition from co-ordinated national monetary polices to a common monetary policy.

The margins of fluctuations in E.M.S. would gradually be narrowed. Macroeconomic guidelines, including precise but not yet binding rules on the size of national budget deficits, would be adopted by a majority decision of the Council of Ministers.

This would begin, in the words of the Report, the "transfer of decision-making power from member states to the Community as a whole" over monetary policy and macroeconomic management.

Stage Three would begin once exchange rates were irrevocably locked.

The rules governing macroeconomic and budgetary policy would become binding and the Council of Ministers, in some form of co-operation with the European Parliament, would be empowered to interfere directly with national budgets.

At this point the ESCB, now managing the Community's pooled reserves, would become fully "reponsible for formulating and implementing monetary and managing the Community's exchange rate vis à vis third currencies," primarily the dollar and yen through the Louvre Accord system.

The European Currency Unit, which is based on a basket of European currencies and exists at present only as an accounting unit between banks, would be transformed into a real currency. Economic and monetary integration would be fully completed.

Thatcher heads opposition to E.M.U. and the split in the Tory Party over the future of the EC may cause the most significant ruptures with it this century.

France is most keen on its introduction and firmed up support from West Germany before Madrid.

Most of the smaller E.E.C. countries, Ireland, Denmark, Holland, Greece and Portugal, occupy a position between Thatcher and the pro-Delors camp.

Just before the Madrid summit Spain joined the EMS, leaving Britain, Greece and Portugal the only states who have not fully joined.

With West Germany, France, Spain and Italy united against her, Thatcher seems to have followed Lawson's advice and given ground (at least diplomatically) on Britain joining the EMS, in order to gain a better position from which to oppose full European monetary union.

Thatcher, Lawson and the Treasury are all united in opposition to the overall process of monetary union.

Britain will join the EMS provided two main conditions have been met:

- when UK domestic inflation has been reduced to a reasonable level (3-4%);
- when other European countries fully abolish exchange controls on the free movement of capital and the EMS has proved its resilence to the shock.

Crucially no precise timetable or criteria has been set for the U.K. fully joining.

The British government interprets agreement on Stage One of Delors as opening up Stages Two and Three to reformulation. The Commission regards commitment to Stage One as implying commitment to the whole package.

Further progress on monetary union will require convening a special inter-governmental conference to reshape the Community's financial institutions.

Such a conference could be called by a majority decision of member states. However any decisions taken would entail revision of existing EEC treaties, for which unanimity is necessary — hence Britain's approval is required.

The joint communiqué after the Summit agreed Stage One of monetary union will commence in July 1990 and "the organisation of an inter-governmental conference to lay down the subsequent stages" only after "full and adequate preparation" by a special commission.

Thatcher refused to endorse the Delors plan and says her government regards it as only "one option" for dicussion on economic and monetary union.

Mitterrand made it clear he intends to convene the conference either at the next bi-yearly summit in Strasbourg or the one in Dublin next summer.

The hurdles to be superceded to the formation of a "ECU bloc" are immense.

The idea of member states voluntarily abrogating virtually all "national sovereignity" over their own budgetary and monetary policies to a new supra-national state are historically unique (though Keynes would have approved).

The Delors report hopes for "a high degree of compatibility of economic policies and consistency in a number of other policy areas, particularly the fiscal fields".

There would then be convergence in economic performance and exchange rates. In other words: cut state budget deficits and inflation rates will equalise.

But the UK now runs a budget surplus and has by far the highest inflation and interest rates in the Community.

Maintaining the EMS means adopting policies dictated by the strongest economy, West Germany, and interest rates set by the Bundesbank.

Differences in inflation rates and growth rates, long term trade imbalances, and divergences in exchange rates reflect fundamental disequilibrium between countries which show no sign of becoming less intense (that is why the post-war Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates collapsed).

Thatcher opposes monetary and economic union not only because of the divergent interests and orientation of U.K. capital.

It will be impossible to proceed towards full monetary and economic union in the Community unless that process is accorded political legitimacy. This can only be done by granting real decision making power to the European Parliament, as Delors well knows.

Granting such tremendous political power to such an "untested" supra-national democratic structure, however bourgeois, is a real gamble in anybody's game.

Campaign!

Open Letter

ILP condemn Adams

The Socialist Movement has received the following letter from Gary Kent of Independent Labour Publications, which we print for *Briefing* readers' information and as part of the ongoing debate about building the Socialist Movement. *Labour Briefing* does not endorse the views contained in this letter.

The ILP strongly deplores the decision to invite Sinn Fein MP, Gerry Adams, to the recent Socialist Movement conference in Sheffield. This wrongly identified socialists with those who justify the murder and maiming of opponents.

We condemn Adams' comment to the conference that those who fear a bloodbath if the troops are withdrawn and who ask what will happen to the Protestant working class, should mind their own business.

By the same twisted nationalist logic, socialists would have had to remain silent about butchery in China or in Chile.

But socialists must never give up their right to comment upon international affairs. Even though we are very conscious of Britain's oppressive historical role in Ireland, we still have the right to be concerned about what happens there.

Since Sinn Fein approves the murder or ordinary citizens, including socialists, it deserves no political respect and support. Instead, the ILP urges all those who wish to see justice and an end to discrimination to renouce the use of violence so that the province can be demilitarised.

This means the eventual withdrawal of the army, the disbandment of the UDR, a fundamental reform of the RUC, and the repeal of repressive practices and laws.

We also feel that a bill of rights plus a democratic, devolved government, and a massive inflow of public expenditure to improve employment, housing, and other social conditions, are some of the ways to begin to undermine sectarianism and to unify the working class.

These reforms must precede any unification of Ireland if we are to avoid risking the lives of thousands of Catholics and Protestants. Such a bloodbath could lead to repartition and it would set back the prospects for secular and democratic, let alone socialist, progress for many decades.

It is tragic that the organisers of the Socialist Movement event, like to many on the left, chose to ignore those political forces in Ireland, such as the increasingly significant Workers Party, which put class unity before nationalism.

Unless the left begin to recognise these forces, it will not be able to play its part in securing peace and progress in Ireland.

Socialist Movement

Building a movement to stop the Poll Tax

July 1st's Poll Tax march in Manchester, called by the TUC, epitomised the contradictions in the movement.

Whilst it attracted over 20,000 people, no lead was given on how to stop the Poll Tax.

The demonstration itself was fairly quiet (perhaps because of the downpour) and the Scottish campaigns were at the back, rather than leading from the front.

The Labour and trade union leaderships are clearly unprepared to provide any leadership and seem happier attacking those advocating non-payment than challenging the Tories.

With the partial exceptions of NALGO and the FBU, non-payment positions are being defeated at the round of union conferences.

Whilst the Manchester demo was muted, the discussion at the Poll Tax workshop in Sheffield was very positive.

There was an enthusiastic response to a rousing contribution from Brian Slocock from Stirling Against the Poll Tax, who outlined in some detail the development of the non-payment campaign in Scotland.

The workshop, attended by nearly 200 activists, illustrated the determination to build for non-co-operation and refused to be diverted by the SWP's dismissal of community action in counterposition to non-implementation by trade unionists.

The workshop was clearly committed to working for a recall conference which would involve the broadest possible anti-Poll Tax forces.

By Terry Conway Islington Against the Poll Tax

The Socialist Movement has therefore taken the initiative in calling an open meeting for anti-Poll Tax activists and seeking sponsorship from Poll Tax groups and labour movement bodies.

The meeting aims to develop our ideas about fighting the Poll Tax, including what lessons the movement can learn from the campaigns around registration.

It will also be a focus for developing the much needed co-ordination between Poll Tax groups at a regional and national level.

Unfortunately, when the proposal to work with the Socialist Movement to build a recall conference for all Poll Tax groups was raised at the Oxford Steering Committee, no progress was made.

Despite the fact that the Oxford Conference was small and unrepresentative, with no involvement from Scotland, and very little from the North, the majority of the Steering Committee insists that it is the authentic voice of the anti-Poll Tax movement.



PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

The Steering Committee also seems to have conveniently forgotten the Oxford conference's mandate to work with the Socialist Movement on the Poll Tax.

Briefing supporters will continue the fight to build the strongest possible opposition to the Poll Tax through a united movement. In our view this means making the September meeting as big and successful as possible.

Raise the meeting in your local Poll Tax group, tenants association, and workplace. Propose sending delegates and sponsoring the meeting. For more details contact Terry on 01-800 7460 or Jane on 01-801 6041.

Calling all anti-Poll Tax groups!
NATIONAL MEETING
Sunday September 3rd, 11.30am
Polytechnic of Central London, Marylebone Road, London W1
(nearest tube Baker Street)
Sponsored by the Socialist Movement

No more deportations!

Sam Manna will stay!

Sam Goodys Manna is a Jamaican who has lived in Moss Side for 17 years.

All his family except his mother live here and have a legal right to do so. Technically, Sam has overstayed.

The problem began earlier this year when he was returning form Jamaica after going back to help his aged mother to rebuild her house after Hurricane Gilbert.

Same had been out of the country before but had no trouble getting back in on those occasions.

On trying to return to Britain this time he was refused entry. He was granted a month to sort out his affairs. A support group has developed and done a lot of work on Sam's behalf, managing to grind more time out of the Home Office.

The situation at present is that Sam has lost Appeals for a review of his case and Tony Lloyd his MP is waiting to hear if Timothy Renton, Home Office minister, will accept a delegation of MPs on Sam's behalf.

For more details contact: Sam Manna Support Group, The Hideaway, Moss Lane East, Moss Side, Manchester 16.

Stand by the Kurds

With new visa restrictions coming into force, the attitude of the British government towards Kurdish political refugees can only harden.
The Kurdish people, from a country in which all the major European imperialist forces have meddled, need your support to avoid savage repression.
Support from labour movement organisations is particularly important.
Join the demonstration on July 29th; 12 noon from Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, London.

Contact the Kurdish Refugees Support Group, c/o Hackney Trade Union Support Unit, Liberty Hall, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8, tel. 01-249 8086.

Interview: Karen Mendis

Don't let Viraj Mendis be forgotten!

When Viraj Mendis was arrested in his sanctuary and was deported to Sri Lanka, his longtime companion Karen went to Sri Lanka to stay with him.

They have since married and are still trying to get to a European country to settle down.

Karen has just returned to Britain on a visit. She spoke to FINN JENSEN.

When Viraj was deported I had no choice but to go to Sri Lanka — despite the danger of living in a country with a civil war.

More than 3,000 people have been killed just this year!

The situation in Sri Lanka has intensified recently. A state of emergency has been reintroduced and a curfew has been in force.

Viraj has not been able to get a visa to a European country. We think the British Home Office is blocking it.

The Dutch Embassy in Sri Lanka had indicated twice that Viraj should be able to get a visa to Holland; but suddenly he got a refusal.

The same day a journalist from the BBC World Service came to interview Viraj about the Dutch refusal. How did a British journalist know about it so quickly?

It is very dangerous to live in Sri Lanka. Viraj can never go out on his own. When he has been out, when it has been necesary, he has been recognised.

There is no way Viraj can take a job; partly because of the danger, and partly because he cannot read and write Sinhalese.

The Viraj Mendis Defence Committee has tried to send enough money for necessities, so we can go on fighting and keep the British people informed about the situation in Sri Lanka.

Nor will we let what the Home Office did to Viraj, and is trying to do to hundreds of others, be forgotten.

Viraj and I encourage British people to get involved in anti-deportation campaigns.

People must know that sanctuary is still an option. More churches will now support sanctuary, including the Church of the Ascension, where Viraj stayed for two and a half years.

The Church of the Ascension has an office which can be used as a base for all campaigns.



Viraj and Karen Mendis at their wedding in Sri Lanka.

While I am in Britain I will be speaking to Labour MPs like Tony Benn, to bishops, to people who are engaged in anti-deportation and anti-racist struggles, and to any individual or organisation who supported Viraj.

One of the things I want to remind Labour Party members is that Labour Party Conference gave its support to Viraj's right to stay in Britain. I expect that the next Labour government will give him the right to enter Britain again.

Viraj is now writing a book about his life since he left Sri Lanka as a 17 year old student, how he got involved in political work in Britain, and how he was deported back to Sri Lanka. We hope to see the book published in Britain.

Voices for Rushdie

Fundamentalism: a trade union issue

Support for *Voices for Salman Rushdie* is now coming in from around the country.

The campaign is now making plans to get the vital arguments about Rushdie, racism, and fundamentalism out of small, beleaguered enclaves and into schools and colleges,

By MARK SEATON

local communities and workplaces, and the structures of the labour movement.

As part of this initiative, *Voices* is sending out the following letter to trade unionists.

A message to trades unionists: Why you should be worried about fundamentalism

Dear fellow trade unionist,

We are writing to bring to your attention some of the issues raised by the Salman Rushdie affair — issues which we feel are of urgent concern to the trade union movement.

Religious fundamentalists have used the Rushdie affair to promote themselves as the political leaders of Britain's black communities.

They have exploited the deep and justified resentment felt by large numbers of black people, young and old, towards racism which is wide-spread and deep-seated in British society.

But rather than directly challenge racism, they hope to channel this resentment into a reactionary political movement deeply hostile to the values and goals of trade unionism.

After all, if a famous writer, with the support of a major publishing house, can be silenced, what hope will there be for an ordinary trade unionist?

Women, in particular, are under threat from fundamentalism, which seeks to restrict women's role in society and deny women self-expression and self-organisation.

Fundamentalists believe that the interests of workers should be subordinated to the interests of the worker's religion — as defined by the fundamentalists!

Under Iran's fundamentalist regime, workers have no legal right to strike or to organise.

Only state-sponsored "Islamic Associations" are permitted in the workplace. Their role is not to represent workers but to prevent any action against employers and ensure that workers obey the diktats of fundamentalist clergy.

Despite eight years of 35% plus inflation (according to official figures), workers in Iran have been told by fundamentalist leaders that in the interests of the Islamic Republic they must not ask for wage increases.

This compels workers to take on two or even three jobs in order to make ends meet and forces women and children into the workforce as casual, low-paid, super-exploited labourers.

In Britain, the fundamentalists want to see a major boost in state funding for religious schools. The values of solidarity, equality, and democracy which are so important to trades unionists are unlikely to be fostered in such schools.

If fundamentalism continues to grow in Britain, it will have dire consequences for black people in the workplace.

Divisions between black people of different religious backgrounds will be emphasised. Pressure will be placed on some workers to conform to fundamentalist demands. Racism and in particular harassment will increase.

Above all, open, honest discussion and debate will be restricted and with it the capacity of the trade union movement to inform, organise, and mobilise.

The complex questions raised by the Rushdie affair need to be addressed by the trade union movement. We will be happy to provide a speaker for any union meetings and copies of our founding statement for distribution.

We urge you to affiliate to *Voices for Salman Rushdie* as an individual and to get your trade union branch, shop stewards or district committee to affiliate and contribute (minimum £5).

Contact 01-809 3927 (Mike) or Trade Union Voices for Rushdie, BM 2706, London WC1N 3XX.

Contact
Voices for Salman Rushdie
at
BM Box 2706,
London WC1N 3XX

Chinese Solidarity Campaign Founding Conference

Work with us!

The Chinese Solidarity Campaign was set up initially to co-ordinate international support for the occupation of Tienanmen Square by the Chinese pro-democracy demonstators.

The campaign has since organised several marches and rallies to voice the anger and grief of the Chinese students and community in Britain and the British public at the brutal massacre and persecution of these demonstrators and their supporters.

The Campaign continues to maintain a 24-hour picket of the Chinese embassy and to build grass roots support for the Chinese democracy movement.

However, it is recognised that the Campaign must be based on longer term strategies and permanenet structures. We are therefore holding our *Founding Conference* on Saturday July 29th, from 10am to 5pm, at County Hall, London.

It is hoped that this conference will draw together a broad spectrum of organisations and individuals who support the struggle by Chinese students and workers for greater democratic rights and equality in China.

This Conference aims to establish some broad principles with which to guide the future activities of the Campaign and elected bodies to oversee the running of the Campaign.

We urge all organisations and union branches to support the Chinese Solidarity Campaign by sponsoring this Founding Conference and by sending one delegate plus observers to particpate in it.

In addition, all individuals who have already registerd with the Campaign before June 12th 1989 will be eligible to vote in a separate electoral constituency. All others are of course welcome to attend as observers.

All organisations and voting members are invited to submit motions to be discussed and voted on by the Conference. Motions and resolutions should be received by July 24th 1989 at the latest.

Registration fees for Conference will be £15 for union branches, £5 for small organisations. Further donations towards the cost of the Conference would be appreciated.



PHOTO: Martine Stead

Preparing solidarity demos means work! Join the CSC!

The finalised programme for the Conference, including lists of speakers and workshops, will be circulated at a later date. All interested organisations and individuals should contact the Chinese Solidarity Campaign immediately.

Contact the CSC at 68 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1; tel. 01-836 8291.

**Taken from a Chinese Solidarity Campaign press statement*

Lesbian and gay liberation

Which revolution? Whose liberation?

It is perhaps fitting than in an article to mark the 20th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, Peter Tatchell should resurrect many of the political ideas of the "Gay Liberation Front" which was born out of the late 60s' tumultuous events.

This renewed talk of liberation and the attempt not just to describe the symptoms of heterosexism but to analyse its causes is most welcome.

However, many of the criticisms of this brand of politics from socialists and from the dwindling number of lesbians involved in the GLF still stand today.

It is important that political analysis is not submerged under wistful nostalgia for the excitement and flamboyance of those trailblazing days.

The predominant politics of the GLF can perhaps best be described as radical feminism in drag, mixed with a great deal of the libertarianism characteristic of the era.

Borrowing heavily from ideas and analyses developed on the other side of the Atlantic the GLF Manifesto published in 1971 explained:

"The reason why gay people are oppressed in so many societies is basically because we deviate from the gender system of masculine and feminine.

"This gender system is a cultural way of dealing with the biological base of male and female, and with species reproduction."

This did not preclude building alliances with other oppressed groups, including the working class.

Indeed it was an integral part of the strategy, and the banners of the GLF were prominent on the various marches against Heath's Industrial Relations Bill.

But it did exclude an explicitly class analysis.

As Aubrey Walter says, "...the Manifesto...stated quite clearly that class and sexual oppression are two different things. One is based on production, the other on procreation...".

By REBECCA FLEMING

Another contribution to *Coming Together* (the GLF magazine) went as far as to say "capitalism is another word for male supremacy".

The analysis of the GLF leaves us with the old myth (itself a product of heterosexism) that the oppression of lesbians and gays is based on the need for the species to reproduce.

Their version is just more complicated and mediated by the "gender system".

Peter Tatchell's assertion that "the cult of heterosexual masculinity...underpins all relations of oppression", is not only circular but also leaves key questions unanswered.

The "maintenance" of all oppressions is put down to "specific economic and political structures" and the socialisation of "a mass of aggressive male egos".



Cath Tate cards from PO Box 647, London SW2 4JX.

But exactly why those oppressive structures developed at all, and what forces led to those structures and cause men to be socialised in this way, remains, crucially, a mystery.

Both results are fundemental-ly unsatisfying to socialists. And, paradoxically given the origin of the analysis, both are fundamentally unsatisfying to feminists.

For the idea that "women and gay people are both victims of the cultural and ideological phenomenon known as sexism" (*Coming Together* no.2) and that the meaning of the word "masculinity" is changed by the prefix "heterosexual", led to conceptions that gay men did not oppress women because they "didn't fuck them".

The GLF had from its very inception been very male dominated.

The continued blatant chauvinism in both theory and practice led lesbians to formally leave the organisation in February 1972 and move into the new space opening up for them in the Women's Liberation Movement.

Moreover, the concommitant idea that "Gay showed the way out of the gender trap", that gay men were really in some way "effeminate", and that this was entirely laudable, left lesbians in a rather uncomfortable limbo.

For the other side of this coin is surely that lesbians are somehow "masculine" and therefore counter-revolutionary.

The debt owed by all lesbians and gay men growing up "after Stonewall" to the GLF should not be underestimated.

Its explicit challenge to the existing order, its openess and mass activity, its pride and defiance ushered in a new era of struggle for lesbian and gay liberation.

But recognising its many achievements does not mean accepting its political doctrines.

The roots of lesbian and gay oppression and the means of liberation are not to be uncovered by conflating gender and sexuality, but by a historical materialism informed by the insights of feminism, particularly lesbian feminism.

Labour Party in local government

Taking office...

Part of a broader fightback

The debate in *Briefing* on the role that socialist Councillors should play — and whether they should even run for office in the first place — is not a new one.

It has recurred each time the Tory government has further eroded local autonomy.

Over ten years, however, these attacks on local democracy amount to a *qualitative* curbing of what left wing Councils are able to do.

Rate-capping, the abolition of the GLC and the Metropolitan County Councils, the use of the courts, and the introduction of Poll Tax all combine to restrict the political and economic options for local government in an unprecedented way.

Does this mean that socialists should now abandon office and refuse to run for Councils?

To pose the question this way is to overestimate what could be achieved from within the Town Hall even *before* the last decade of Tory attacks.

In fact, local government has always been subordinate to central government, which in the last 20 years has increasingly usurped its functions. Socialism in one Borough has always been a utopian perspective.

What can be done inside the Council Chamber is very

By Mike Phipps
Woolwich CLP

directly related to what is going on outside it.

More concretely, socialist Councillors are at their most effective when they have strong support within an active community and good relations with a militant workforce.

In these circumstances, taking office can actually help weld together the resistance to the Tory attacks on local communities.

Without this base, socialists can very quickly become hostages to right wing Labour Groups — even if they vote against every cut in service, every rent and rate rise, and every attack on working conditions, as they clearly should.

But protest voting alone is worth little, unless it is combined with efforts to mobilise the broadest layers outside the Council Chamber against such attacks.

The chief reason that socialists might be wise to think twice about taking office in current conditions is that there has been a long and largely negative experience of campaigning in local government over the last decade.

This has produced considerable demoralisation and a decline in combativity.

In the early days of Thatcher, some left Councils like Ted Knight's Lambeth sought to maintain services by jacking up the rates, and ended up dividing the community whose unity would have been the key to success.

Then there was the *Militant* leadership of Liverpool Council's utter failure to build a united front with other Authorities against Baker in 1984-85.

Lurch

Ken Livingstone's rightward lurch in the last year of the GLC severely damaged the possibility of a mass campaign to defend it.

These experiences all make the conditions under which socialists operate today more difficult.

The New Realists have taken over the Town Halls and are applying intense pressure on left Councillors to accept their packages of cuts and redundancies.

In these conditions, only a strong base in the communities and workforce can provide a sufficient counterweight to such pressure and enable socialists within the Town Hall to play a leading role in a counter-attack outside it.

The possibilities and the methods for building such a local base will vary considerably. But given the earlier fiascos of national united fronts that never were, there is no short cut to patient work inside the community, unions, and Party.

Running for office in itself does not automatically conjure such support into existence, but should be an integral element within this broader strategy.

Rebuilding strong local Labour lefts is an obvious first step in this process. Unfortunately, the municipal Labour left has grown smaller after the mid-80s rate-capping campaigns were betrayed and many left Councils moved to the right.

One knock-on effect of New Realism is that some local borough lefts now include many in the Party who feel that a certain level of cuts can be tolerated if really unpleasant attacks on the working class are "the alternative".

Wrong

This position is *wrong in principle* for all the reasons stated by Pete Firmin in *Briefing* no. 86.

Socialists may feel purer not working in left caucuses which harbour such people, but they would be foolish to cede this ground to their opponents.

Building a united front locally — the precondition for successful action — means building a unitary Labour left and fighting to re-establish total opposition to all cuts as the central plank of its platform.

In this way, *Briefing* supporters an help isolate cuts supporters who seek a veneer of left credibility and provide a focus for principled unity in action.



The left dutifully marches to County Hall in defence of the GLC; but rightward lurches by Ken Livingstone and other Borough and Metropolitan County leaders leave the fight to fade.

Bristol Labour Group

Changing the guard

In May, ten Labour Councillors in Bristol withdrew from the administration of Council affairs.

The decision followed an attack on the left of the Labour Group by its centre-right leadership in which all Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs who were committed to Party policy were removed.

Here, HEDLEY BASHFORTH puts forward a new perspective for how socialists in the Labour Party should relate to the Council in Bristol.

In Bristol, the task of the left is to continue to work with those people who are beginning, in an organised way, to make demands and to challenge Tory policies.

Insofar as these demands are directed at the local Councils, we should do all we can to support them. The demands will relate to housing, planning, leisure services, education, social services, and the rest.

If the left accepts the Tory argument that public services had to be paid for in full at the point of use, and are ultimately best provided by the private sector, then we may as well pull out of local government altogether.

As long as we are still in there, our task is to put the arguments for public services which meet people's needs and which are available to all.

The current split in the Bristol Labour Group has to be seen in two ways.

First, it is a response to the failed internal politics of the Group, which cannot accommodate the demands for a different kind of response to the Tories.

Second, it is part of a more general trend within the Labour Party to push socialism out in favour of a more right wing set of policies.

If the Labour left in Bristol is to advance, it should not address itself to the endless rows about who is best to do the jobs inside the Council administration.

It should involve itself more deeply in all those struggles against the Tories which go on outside the Council, and which will finally bring the Tories down.

Black Section Councillors

New threats to black people in local government

A year ago Black Section Councillors met in Islington to set up an organisation to represent our interests within individual Local Authorities.

About 30 Councillors attended this first historic meeting.

Following a long discussion and lively debate, agreed to set up the Black Section Councillors organisation, operating within the National Black Section organisation, with representation on its Executive Committee.

Since this first meeting, three other meetings have been held in London, Birmingham, and Leicester, where we publicly launched the new organisation.

The new organisation is a welcome replacement for the defunct SCACAC (Standing Conference of Afro-Caribbean and Asian Councillors) which ceased to exist some time in 1985.

Black Section Councillors is now fully established as the only forum at national level for black elected members of Local Authorities.

Black Section Councillors have taken up the matter of Hounslow's Race Equality policies and the abrupt dismissal of Bennie Bunsee, a member of the National Black Sections, and formerly Principal Race Adviser of Hounslow Council.

By Talal Karim
Islington Councillor

A number of letters have been written to Dave Wetzel, Leader of Hounslow Council, and we have also had a meeting with the new Chair of Hounslow Council's Equal Opportunities Committee, Arjun Dhillon, and John Connolly, until recently Deputy Leader.

It is quite clear that the leadership of Hounslow Council are not interested in a negotiated settlement on this issue.

We are now giving our full support to Bennie Bunsee in his challenge to Hounslow Council, and have helped organise public meetings in Hounslow on this issue.

We have also written to Margaret Hodge, Leader of the Association of London Authorities (ALA), on Hounslow and the Bennie Bunsee matter, and have asked for a meeting to include leaders from some other Boroughs.

Although she gave a verbal undertaking to meet us, no dates have yet been suggested, and we have sent her a reminder.

Following abolition of the ALA's Race Equality Committee, the newly elected Chair of Islington's Race Equality Committee, Eddie Niles, organised two meetings with Chairs of Race Equality Committees of Labour Boroughs, and has taken up this matter separately with the ALA.

Black Sections Councillors face some difficult challenges in the future.

The Local Government and Housing Bill, if it becomes law, would mean that there will be fewer Black Councillors in Local Authorities, as many of us hold jobs working in other Local Authorities.

Gutter

This is not through "arrangement" or "twinning" (as termed in the gutter press) but through choice: we *choose* to work in local government because of our skills and experience.

With the added legislative implication, as from next year, of banning co-options to Council Committees, this would mean that the racist Tory government will deny democratic participation to black people in local government.

Similarly, there are plans by the government to abolish special assistance that has been made available to Local Authorities since 1966 through S11 funds.

These are used for the employment of staff to combat racism and racial discrimination, and losing them would threaten job security and livelihoods of thousands of black staff employed by local Councils throughout the country.

Many Local Authorities will use this to justify abolishing Race Equality Committees.

We are up against the colonial and racist mentality of our leaders in the Labour Party at national level, as demonstrated in their attitude in the recent Vauxhall by-election.

In the coming months, we must ensure that we act together as a united and collective force and aim to increase the numbers of Black Section Councillors at next year's local elections.

Euro results in Scotland

Who will challenge Westminster?

The Scottish people expressed their feelings very clearly in the Euro-elections.

They elected seven Labour MEPs, one Scottish National Party MEP (Winnie Ewing) — and again voted to be nuclear-free and Tory-free.

Unfortunately, after the crescendo of electioneering dies down, we are left with the nuclear bases, with a Tory government in Westminster, with the Poll Tax — and without a Scottish Parliament.

The SNP are now quite clearly the second major party in Scotland, with the Tories relegated to third place.

As well as winning the Highlands and Islands seat, the SNP came second in five of Scotland's eight Euro-seats. Two of these second place were in Labour's traditional heartlands of Strathclyde and Central.

The Tories could only come second in three seats. The Greens polled substantially higher than the Democrats in all eight seats.

Two women MEPs were elected in Scotland: Labour's Janey Buchan, a long time anti-Marketeer; and the SNP'S Winnie Ewing.

Two of Scotland's MEPs support the Campaign Group of MPs: Alex Falconer and Alex Smith, both former TGWU shop stewards with long track records in broad left trade union politics.

By Rowland Sheret Scottish Labour Briefing

Dominance

Two years after the General Election, Labour continues to hold onto its electoral dominance in Scotland. However, it would be a mistake to assume that events in Scotland have settled down.

The Govan scenario was not repeated in the Euro-elections or in the Glasgow Central by-election. Labour held onto its share of the vote; but the SNP have consolidated a substantial 26% of the vote throughout Scotland.

The long-awaited constitutional crisis has not happened because the power of Westminster has not been effectively challenged — not because issues have been resolved.

Scotland's working class and unemployed are looking to both Labour *and* the SNP to give a lead in the fight against the Tories. Labour's "feeble 50" failed the test — and paid the price at Govan.

Since then, the SNP has withdrawn from the Constitutional Convention and were seen as putting party before people. They too, then, have paid a price — seeing their momentum come to a stop.

The fight against the Poll Tax continues to be central to Scottish politics. At the end of June, demands for payment of the full year's Poll Tax went out to non-payers.

By September, Regional Authorities will be well embroiled in extracting the Tax from a reluctant population. Next year, all Regional Councillors face elections.

In Labour Party strongholds the disaffected Labour voter is the rule rather than the exception. Many abstained; many voted SNP in the Euro-elections — hence Labour's failure to increase its vote despite making gains from the middle ground.

The Socialist Movement can play a role in Scotland by taking a non-sectarian position, strengthening socialist arguments both within the Labour Party and within the SNP, and pulling together other Socialist groupings.

The priority must be to strengthen the anti-Poll Tax Unions and to reopen the arguments for a Scottish Parliament with the powers to adopt socialist policies for Scotland.

The Political Parties in Scotland

	1984 Euro-elections	1987 General Election	1989 Euro-elections
Labour	46%	42%	42%
SNP	15%	14%	26%
Conservative	26%	24%	21%
Green	00%	00%	07%
Democrats/Alliance	14%	19%	04%

Lambeth Council



PHOTO: Chi Chan

Leader Joan Twelves starts off a non-payment charter as one part of the Council's defiance.

Surcharge or Subcharge?

Lambeth's Director of Finance has involved powers under Section 114 of the 1988 Local Government Finance Act to call Lambeth Council to account — for its refusal to buy a computer!

The Finance director has written to all Lambeth Councillors and the District Auditor claiming that this constitutes a dereliction of the Council's statutory duties.

It is ironic that the Tories' laws on Council spending are being used to threaten a Council that is *refusing to spend* £2 million to facilitate Poll Tax collection.

The Finance Director alleges that this will mean a future loss of Poll Tax revenue. Lambeth's Labour leadership argues that, with only a £1 million grant from the government, it cannot afford this outlay.

By Greg Tucker Lambeth Councillor

When the new left leadership took over two months ago, it found that much of the work on Poll Tax was already underway.

Poll Tax registration had been given to private contractors, new buildings were being prepared, and recruitment had started.

Whilst the Council leadership cannot halt this process, it is urging a campaign of defiance. Many Councillors are saying that they will neither register nor pay the Tax.

"Government funding for local services is well below needs," explains Council Leader Joan Twelves, "and we don't see why resources should be redirected and services suffer in order to pay for a Poll Tax computer.

"We are bitterly opposed to the government's Poll Tax, and being threatened and instructed to find the money for the government to imposed it only adds insult to injury."

As we go to press, Lambeth's Policy and Resources Committee is due to meet on July 6th to consider this latest threat.

Manchester

Hands off District Parties!

Manchester City Labour Party has for many years had direct delegates from trade union branches. It is one of the few parties in the country that still has this right. It has over 150 delegates from both wings of the labour movement.

Its decisions are respected and in the main acted on by the ruling Labour Group on the Council. It provides a powerful base for campaigning in Manchester.

CLPs, trade unions, and other affiliated organisations are happy with the way things are.

There has been no demand for change, yet it seems clear from meetings with Regional and National Officers that the National Executive are planning to put a rule change to this year's Annual Conference to stop direct trade union delegation to District Parties.

In effect the unions will be disenfranchised.

This attack on District Party organisation is part of the leadership's drive to make the Party safe for them.

They want to exclude the unions, which they don't control, from decision-making. They want to weaken local Party organisations to prevent them from being able to campaign on socialist policies.

Manchester City Labour Party is calling on all labour movement bodies to join in our campaign to maintain the right of District Parties to organise in the way they see fit.

We are asking you to send resolutions opposing these moves to the NEC. If this rule change comes to Conference, mandate your delegates to vote against it.

Contact us c/o Marilyn Taylor, 178 Burnage Lane, Manchester M19 1EF.

Labour and mental health

Has Cook found the right recipe?

A unique meeting took place on June 20th in the House of Commons.

Labour's Shadow Health Minister, Robin Cook, and MPs Harriet Harman and Keith Vaz held a meeting to consult users of mental health services on the question of policy.

Over 40 mental health service users were present, representing most of the mental health action groups, including many local groups from around the country.

Users made their contributions under three main headings: "User involvement in planning and management of services", "Types of service", and "Political issues (minority groups, ideology of services, etc.)".

In the last category, users comments included:

"Thatcherism is damaging to people's mental health — cutting benefits, running down housing, increasing poverty, increasing unemployment — all these are major contributions to stress, and are directly causing or contributing to people's breakdowns.

"Tackling these social causes of mental distress must be a major priority."

Robin Cook stated that users of mental health services should be involved in the real issues of governing their hospitals and influencing treatment.

He added that the demands listed at the meeting would make a good programme for a Labour government.

Lisa Haywood, Chair of the MIND Consumer Advisory Panel, said after the meeting:

"We are so used to being dismissed as 'mental patients' and having our legitimate complaints about how we are treated perceived as symptoms of our supposed 'illness'.

"The voice of the mental health user movement is finally being heard."

Dr David Hill, from the London Alliance for Mental Health, who had chaired the meeting, added:

"The Labour Party has shown today that it takes seriously that group of people to which the Tories pay so much lip service: the consumers."

Socialist Greens

Watered down policies don't work

Labour Briefing interviewed PENNY KEMP, an active member of the Association of Socialist Greens (ASG) and one of the Green Party's three current co-chairs.
She stood as the Green Party's candidate in Kent East, where she polled 36,931 votes — 19% of the total turnout.

***LB:* Can you tell us about the origins of the ASG and its relation to the Green Party and other forces?**

PK: The ASG came into being after the first Chesterfield Conference in 1987.

A number of Greens attended the Conference and while we enjoyed the Green and Socialist Workshop we were disturbed by the sectarianism and the failure of the conference to make significant headway on green issues.

We therefore decided, as a group of like-minded people within the Green Party, to form the ASG, which is not a "party within a party". Shortly after, with Peter Tatchell and others, we helped organise the Green and Socialist Conference.

Since then we have been working to make contact with people inside and outside the Green Party, including people on the Labour left, radical Liberals (whose tradition is close to ours), and nationalists like Daffyd Ellis Thomas.

"...you can't have a market economy and protection of the environment...

"...you can't have a Kinnock type economy and ecology."

***LB:* What are your priorities within the Green Party?**

PK: Any Green Party member can attend, vote, and submit motions to the Green Party Conference, which will be held this year in September in Wolverhampton.

The ASG will be promoting the question of social justice within the Green Party, forging trade union and other links, and generally arguing that market forces are not compatible with ecology.

Market

Thatcher's policies show that you can't have a market economy and protection of the environment. But it's also true that you can't have a Kinnock-type economy and ecology. For us, Labourism is not socialism.

The Labour Party has let down many socialists and the Policy Review does not seriously address the question of creating ecologically *appropriate* — not unrestricted — growth.

***LB:* What do you see as the sources of your recent electoral success?**

PK: It's difficult to say. There was clearly a lot of recycling of votes. SDP votes went to Labour; Labour votes went to us. Some Tories also voted Green.

But fundamentally, our vote was a sign that people have realised all the material goods in the world are useless if we can't continue to live on the planet.

People *did know* what they were voting for. In my campaign we gave a high profile to unilateralism and stressed the necessity of global co-operation and global social justice.

People may not yet have taken the whole message on board, but a good deal of it is seeping through.

In safe Tory or Labour seats, people feel free to vote for what they really believe in, and our vote was especially high in those areas, except in Scotland.

Kinnock's decision to drop unilateralism was a dreadful tactical mistake and the Green Party benefited from it. The watered down policies on the Policy Review have taken away from people the chance to vote for many of their basic beliefs.

It is important for the Greens to resist pressure from the media to turn respectable and move to the right.

The ASG will be arguing at Wolverhampton that our vote grew because Labour was not seen as significantly different from Thatcherism and because of our anti-leadership policies.

Dropping those policies and promoting national leaders suitable to the disgraceful British media would be a major mistake.

We hope the ASG will act as a counterweight to right wing media pressure. After all, our success so far is based on honest politics. We will continue to make progress if we stick with those politics.

***LB:* Is there a division emerging in the British Greens similar to the one that has split the German Greens?**

PK: There is obviously an argument between people in the ASG and others who would like to soften some of our positions, between a "pragmatic" and a "fundamentalist" approach.

The Green Party is a broad church and should remain so. But talk of "green capitalism" is nonsense.

Our '87 manifesto was very clear on the international monetary scene and the ASG will be arguing that we got 2.5 million votes this year because we stood up for what we believed in.

The Kinnock approach to politics will always fail. Our job is to put forward an a alternative radical view and say to people, "this is our goal. This is how we see it." If you water it down, you only create confusion.

***LB:* What is your attitude towards current industrial struggles?**

PK: We strongly support the transport workers and the dockers. Ten years ago, Thatcher promised us that if we tightened our belts, accepted unemployment, everything would be all right.

Now the poor are in a worse position than before and even many of those in the middle classes who had taken on board the Thatcher myth are getting rid of it.

We fully support the right to strike and the right of trade unions to organise. An emergency motion on GCHQ was passed at a Green Party Conference with hardly any dissent.

***LB:* And the Poll Tax?**

PK: Don't pay it! We believe people should register in order not to lose their votes, but we're in favour of people blocking the system as much as possible.

I think people should pay their old rates instead of the Poll Tax — because so many people depend on local services. Just send in the equivalent of last year's rates bill and let them figure it out.

This will clog up the system more than total non-payment.

The Green Party is clearly on record against the Poll Tax and we have set up the Campaign for Real Democracy to take up this issue and others, including electoral reform and abolition of the House of Lords.

***LB:* What is your attitude towards joint work with the Labour left?**

PK: We already work with people like Peter Tatchell and we look forward now to closer collaboration.

The ASG will now be able to collaborate on a more equal footing with others in the Socialist Conference, because of our showing in the Euro-elections.

Mind you, we're not interested in electoral pacts. We're interested in pursuing common ideas and practical co-operation.

Environment

Workers' control

Many newspapers and journals of late have been quick to contrast the "greening of Margaret Thatcher" with the timidity of Labour's response to environmental issues.

In reality, Thatcher presides over some of the most lenient laws on pollution in the western world, and her so-called "concern" is merely a shallow play to win votes.

But what of Labour's longstanding silence on these questions?

Labour's traditional low profile on things green has often been viewed as a result of its links with trade unions, manufacturing industry, and the "white heat" of modern technology.

By Mike Phipps
Woolwich CLP

But it is obviously a myth that trade unionists have no interest in preventing environmental pollution — especially as those who work with harmful chemicals, for example, are more likely to suffer the consequences than the public at large.

In fact, Labour's historical apathy on these questions stems from its bipartisan approach to maintaining the profitability of British industry and national "defence".

The latter helps account not only for the right wing's insistence on maintaining nuclear weakens about also on its full-blooded commitment to nuclear power.

SERA

SERA, the Socialist Environment and Resources Association, has done some useful work in providing detailed proposals for a labour environment policy.

Their *London Environment Charter*, for example, identifies a number of issues for inclusion in Labour Borough Council manifestos — from transport and planning to environmental health.

However, whilst many of the central issues concerning the food we eat and the air we breathe have a local expression, they do not necessarily have a local solution.

Problems

The abolition of the GLC and the Metropolitan County Councils further accentuates the difficulty of a Borough-by-Borough, District-by-District approach to these problems.

There is a broader problem inherent in the "Labour will legislate" solution to environmental destruction.

First, there is no Labour government, very little Labour regional government, and a massive crisis of resources in inner-city Labour Councils.

Second, there are big limits to what a Labour administration can actually do. Food companies and manufacturing firms already flout the existing law, knowing that health inspectors are over-stretched and under-resourced.

The courts are lenient on any company which is eventually prosecuted.

Lifestyle

If there are weaknesses in the traditional parternalistic approach of Labour, there are equally big problems with the widely held view that the solution is an individual moral one, based on changes in personal lifestyle and consumption.

Here again the failed tactic of the consumer boycott is vaunted — but such a boycott will not eradicate CFC-based products any more than it bankrupted the scab Murdoch newspapers or stems the flow of South African imports into Britain.

Between the "leave it to us" approach of labour and the principled but often ineffectual individual stand of many green activists, there is a third possibility: linking the knowledge of green socialists to the organised working class.

The fact is that thousands of workers work in water, food, and areas of manufacturing which pollute the environment. They are invariably in the best position to identify the health and safety aspects of any part of the work process.

In terms of monitoring the end-product of the labour process, however, rather than the actual process itself, this means the establishment of some form of basic workers' control.

Water workers could themselves monitor the levels of aluminium in the water they process. Workers in manufacturing could determine the real levels of environmentally hazardous material they produce.

The proposal is quite simple and environment-friendly; but of course totally unpalatable for capitalism.

Application

This approach has a very direct application, but is not a panacea for all industries. Nuclear power under workers' control is not recommended.

Here it is not just a question of the nuclear authorities cheating on safety or misleading the public: there is also the fundamental problem of a general absence of research or knowledge of long-term effects, safe disposal methods, etc.

Nuclear power should be totally discontinued.

Taking these issues into the workforce and unions is

The "gre

Red-Green

The Labour Party has announced that by the next election it will be a "red-green" Party.

It is surprising that the Labour Party leadership still regards itself as red; but it is predictable that Labour should address itself to winning over the ecologist vote.

By Steve Potter
East Dulwich CLP

What should the left be saying?

The two and a quarter million votes won by the Green Party in the Euro-election are an extraordinary development.

Not only was it the highest vote ever recorded by a Green Party in Europe, it also marked the centre of British politics shifting to the left. Hundreds of thousands of liberal and ex-Tory voters switched to the Greens.

They regarded the Greens' environmental platform as not only crucial to their lives but also best pursued on a European-wide basis.

The emergence of the Greens as the chief amongst Britain's centre parties turns the political tables dramatically.

Before now, the centre parties have siphoned off support that Labour needed to form a government. Now the Greens have significantly contributed to the Tories achieving their lowest proportion of the vote this century.

But what of Labour responses to the Greens? The arguments against taking the Greens seriously are manifold and were used by Labour spokespeople throughout the Euro-elections.

They argued that the Greens were a single issue Party; that they could not succeed in a national election; that their platform was economically naieve, etc.

While it is probably true that the environment is seen particularly as a pan-European issue, it is self-deluding to see the environment as a single issue.

Many people are coming to see ecology as the main issue for the 21st century political agenda.

And the Green programme, if implemented, would radically change the face of British society and the nature of its economy.

It is for that reason that *as a programme* it is strongly resisted by capitalist interests.

Labour's programme has nothing like the radical cutting edge of the Greens. Labour's measures on the environment are cut from the same cloth as the Tories' timid measures of environmental protection.

The boldest approach for Labour to adopt would be to take over the Green programme as a whole. What are the

al destruction

can stop pollution



PHOTO: Nature Conservancy Council

How to dealing with the detruitus of capitalism: by legislation from the top; or by workers', consumers', and residents' committees taking action?

not easy under current conditions, but in the longer term this approach is likely to have more effect than individual gestures or appeals to cash-starved Local Authorities.

But neither should its limits be ignored, as such an orientation does not even begin to tackle global problems like the greenhouse effect or deforestation.

Permanent

On these questions — indeed, on the *permanent* place that the environment now occupies in world politics — socialists have to begin a real process of creative thinking.

They also have to approach the experiences of the green movement with a willingness to learn and a readiness to co-operate.

ening" of Labour

by '91?

obstacles to this?

In the first place, the programme would be too radical for Labour's current leadership — not only on nuclear power and "defence", but also on the measures proposed on environment and industry.

For the left this should pose no problem. Indeed, Tony Benn greeted the Greens' results as being "2,000,000 to the left of the Labour leadership."

One can question this judgement, but there is no doubt that the adoption of the Green's programme would mark a substantial step by Labour towards an anti-capitalist programme.

But where the majority of the left of the Labour Party would find common cause with the Labour leadership would be on the question of "growth".

While the Greens' programme does not formally espouse zero growth, its spokespersons easily slip into that rhetoric.

Growth

But this is parallelled by the response of the labour movement, who likewise adopt the Keynesian rhetoric of growth to resolve social problems.

Some sections of the left have attempted to break out of this polarisation. At its recent conference, the Socialist Movement advanced the idea of "ecologically sustainable growth".



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Will Kinnock point out the green stem underneath his new red rose?

Such a concept highlights growth in those sections of the economy which meet basic human needs — housing, infrastructure, education, and health.

But "ecologically sustainable growth" does not avoid the need to tackle the question of ecologically damaging sectors of industry: posing the need either to replace them or drastically inhibit the damage they inflict.

The latter course could not be carried out under private ownership.

Such a policy would directly challenge the ecological tokenism of the Labour leadership; but it would also be an important element in the growing polarisation in the Greens.

The British Green leadership is antagonistic to a red-green perspective believing with Antoine Wacchter, the leader of the French *Verts*, "that red and green don't mix."

On the left of the Party, the 200-strong Association of Socialist Greens has been developing policies in collaboration with eco-socialists in the Labour Party.

Between them and the leadership lie dozens of shades and variants from anarchists to individuals with pronounced far-right tendencies.

Not only does the work being done by the ASG act favourably to influence the future of the Greens, but potentially is the most important contribution to the problematic renewal of the labour movement being carried out anywhere.

Today the left of the Labour Party should demand that if Labour is to be a red-green Party by the next election that they should adopt the policies of the Greens.

The work of refining a real eco-socialist perspective for the Labour Party should be hammered out in the course of this battle.

Parties and Movements

The different shades of Green

The Green Party made a major breakthrough at the polls in the Euro-elections. But is the Green Party representative of every shade of green thinking in the UK?
In a text taken from a discussion paper originally written for the Socialist Society Green Working Group, ANDY PORTER, Convenor of the Green & Socialist Policy Group for the Socialist Conference, takes a look at the green movement in the UK.

There is a sense in which there is not a Green Movement in the UK.

There is on the one hand an increasingly popular Environment Movement; and on the other a very specific, self-defining political current of Green Politics.

The Environment Movement encompasses groups ranging from Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, whose origins lie in the radical optimism of the late 60s and early 70s, through to long established conservation bodies, such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

Membership of environmental groups can be counted in hundreds of thousands (FoE's national membership is approximately 100,00,); its passive support in millions.

The Environment Movement has created an increasingly popular "common sense", now reinforced by the media, that the immediate physical environment is hazardous to health and that the global environment is seriously under threat.

Hijack

The Environment Movement, despite Thatcher's recent attempts to hijack it, has been drawn during the last decade into conflict with the Tory government over a whole range of issues.

Not only is it undefeated, it is also optimistic, confident, and sometimes even successful. It is not, however, on the whole socialist.

It allocates blame more generally to the excesses and problems of modern industrial society, for which we are all held responsible, rather than to capitalism, for which the ruling class could be held responsible.

But although not *socialist*, the Environment Movement runs in direct contradiction to the ethos of capitalism since it argues for criteria other than profit to be considered in decisions about production and the use of resources.

It is currently a focus for campaigns and protests across a wide range of regions and issues.

The Environment Movement is increasingly referred to as "green", so in that sense there *is* a green movement.

But it has to be said that Green Politics *as it defines itself* is quite a different phenomenon to Environmental Politics.

"Green" — for the Greens — implies a complete philosophy embracing all aspects of human life on earth.

Holistic

It is a holistic approach to the world ecology and to the interface between human populations, their socio-economic systems, and their ecology.

Green Politics implies a smallness of scale; an emphasis on self-awareness, planetary awareness, and non-violence; a sustainable economy based on renewable or recyclable resources; and an overall commitment to harmonious human relations and a complementary relationship between society and the environment.

Aspects of these political views can be found amongst peace campaigners, feminists, anarchists, and libertarian socialists — who would not necessarily describe themselves as "Green".

The British Greens are relatively small in number but significant. The Green Party has a membership of approximately 12,000 and has been growing fast since the Euro-elections.

Its periphery and sympathisers make its influence much wider. Certainly it is far bigger than any of the left splinter groups that we as socialists can become preoccupied with!

Green

Like Environment Politics, Green Politics is not necessarily socialist. Indeed, the majority on Green Party Council in recent years has been described as "liberal and anti-socialist" (by socialists in the Green Party).

In the local groups, Green Party members range from anarchists to eccentric ex-Tories with a wide swathe of liberal Greens in the centre.

There is a strong tendency within UK Green Politics to play down class struggle and to see change as coming instead through a major shift in perception and through an unprecedented development of consensus across and over-riding class divisions.

Nevertheless, the Green Party is a radical force.

There is strong pressure from within to drop the "neither left nor right" approach of the early 80s.

It is argued that in relation to the political climate set by Thatcher, the Green Party is a party of the left — a view backed up by the increasing influence of socialists and socialist ideas within the Party.

There is a desperate need to develop a *green and socialist politics* but this will not happen through falsely seizing on Green Politics here or elsewhere as a model to be followed uncritically.

We need to develop our own approach to ecological issues and to the wider socialist issues raised by Green Politics. There will be much common ground, but we can only gain by being confident in our analysis and approach.

Green Socialist Politics is incredibly weak and fragmented in the UK. SERA, the established socialist environment group, has a fairly low profile — except in relation to one or two campaigns and in particular areas.

Labour

It has traditionally focused its limited resources on lobbying the Labour Party at national level, and is currently suffering the shock of having hard-won policy commitments wiped out by the Policy Review process.

The Association of Socialist Greens, small by comparison, is newly formed and striving to establish an identity within the Green Party.

The Socialist Conference process and the Green and Socialist Conference is the other main area where a green socialist politics has found an opportunity to develop.

Briefing's role in all this has been marginal. Yet *Briefing* ought to be the section of the Labour Party best placed to take the lead in developing a radical Green Socialist Politics in the UK.

To do this will present us all with personal an well as political challenges. Time will tell whether we have the resources to meet this task.

Contact the Socialist Conference Green Policy Working Group c/o Andy Porter, 124 Ditchling Rise, Brighton, Sussex.

The Women's Page

National Labour Women's Conference

Not bigger and better, but boring in Bridlington

Those women lucky enough to remember LPYS conferences in Bridlington, will remember how the Young Socialists leadership always claimed that this year was "bigger and better" than ever before.

This year's Labour Women's Conference, held in Bridlington, was certainly not "bigger and better".

For many women, it was probably the smallest and most depressing Conference for many years.

This was the new model Women's Organisation — partial block vote, giant red roses, and all.

The affiliated trade unions now have 50% of the votes, so there is actually less incentive for them to send their full quota of delegates.

Fell

Many of the 103 resolutions submitted fell because women couldn't attend compositing meetings. To arrive in Bridlington by 2.00pm on Friday would involve losing a day's pay and leaving home at the crack of dawn — an impossibility for many Constituency delegates.

In the Defence composite, only the MSF had been present — but pressure from constituency and trade union delegates led to a re-convened compositing meeting on the Saturday. The debate was also moved from Monday morning to Sunday afternoon.

Debates

Saturday's debates — taking up issues like childcare, transport and health — were fairly tame. However, any mention of nationalisation or support for industrial action would inevitably lead to a card vote. Most of these were lost by the left.

The left did hold its ground in the health debate, carrying a composite calling on the Labour Party "to commit itself to unconditional support for all health workers taking action against the White Paper" and for the "re-nationalisation of all privatised hospitals and services".

By Jane Connor
Tottenham Women's Section

NUPE and COHSE bureaucrats had argued, rather unconvincingly, against this composite because it "contravened [their] emergency cover guidelines".

The key debates at conference were on unilateralism, the Poll Tax, and the further reorganisation of the Labour Women's Organisation.

NEC

Because of the Euro elections, many Women's Sections had not discussed the NEC Women's Committee recommendations.

These included the proposed merger of the National Labour Women's Committee (elected at Regional Women's Conferences) with the NEC Women's Sub-Committee (not elected by anyone in particular). This was carried, along with the proposal to establish a 40% quota for women on the NEC whilst (at least for the time being) maintaining the five women's seats.

The merger of the two committees finally removes any remaining autonomy from the Women's Organisation. Its proposed structure will ensure an inbuilt majority for the NEC and trade unions, although this was remitted for further "consultation".

Partial

Worse was to follow when the NEC proposal *not* to allow the five NEC women's seats to be directly elected from Women's Conference was carried — even though this had been the implicit "trade-off" for the introduction of the partial block vote.

A composite calling for the implementation of Women's Conference policy on direct elections to the NEC and the submission of five resolutions direct to Party conference *was* carried, by a margin of 1%! But will the NEC and Party Conference take any notice?

The major success for the left was the defence of unilateralism, winning over 50% of the vote for an MSF composite (which implied an increase in conventional weapon expenditure) and winning a much firmer composite by a much smaller majority.



Lambeth women on the London Day of Action, March 1988: we'll probably still be waiting for a lead from the top of the Labour Party in 2088!

The left was less successful in the Poll Tax debate. Whilst most of the conference had been excellently chaired by Jill Page, vice-chair Rosinna McCrea allowed the debate to be stage-managed, leaving a virulently anti-non-payment USDAW official to speak last.

She wound up many of the union delegates into what can only be described as a frenzy. But the voices of resistence were not silenced, with delegates from Scotland articulating the anger and strength of the non-payment campaign.

Conference also passed an emergency resolution in support of the dockers, and collected nearly £200 — although this was given to TGWU officials, not direct to the dockers.

If Conference was fairly depressing, the fringe was enlivened by a brilliant Women for Socialism meeting, by far the biggest fringe meeting of the weekend. The meeting allowed women to voice their anger and frustration, as well as raising morale.

Eclipsed

Women for Socialism has clearly eclipsed the Labour Women's Action Committee as the focus for left women in the Party and was able to reach out to new layers of women in the Constituencies and unions.

On the elections to the Conference Arrangements Committee, *Briefing Women* supporter Slyvia Gilbert came two votes short of election, squeezed between a *Militant* supporter (whom Women for Socialism and *Briefing* voted for) and the two LWAC candidates.

Briefing Women fully supported Women for Socialism activities at conference; handing out leaflets, building the fringe meeting, and signing women up to join. *Briefing* produced our own leaflet, but between intervening on Conference floor and building Women for Socialism our own profile was a little muted.

Briefing Women will be calling a meeting over the summer to discuss how best women in *Briefing* can organise, both within *Briefing* itself, and in the wider movement.

Although much of the Conference was pretty depressing, and the left lost on many issues, a strong layer of socialist women is still there, fighting back and campaigning.

However the NEC tries to "re-organise" us, our best response is to continue supporting women in struggle, recruiting women to the Party through campaigning on the Poll Tax, health, racism, and refusing to be silenced.

BOOK REVIEW

Diversity amongst the shower scenes

***Serious Pleasure: Lesbian Erotic Stories and Poetry*, edited by the Sheba collective, *Sheba Feminist Publishers*, £5.95.**

The publication of this book is very much to be welcomed.

The very seriousness with which the subject of sex and pleasure has been taken by the lesbian movement over the years has led to a degree of self-censorship, reflected in an absence of writing about this integral part of lesbian experience and identity.

It is perhaps surprising to learn that this is the first book to be published in this country specifically about lesbian sex and sexuality.

This is not to deny the book a political content. That it operates within a particular political framework is explicitly recognised and discussed by the Sheba Collective in the introduction.

The collection has received varied responses, ranging from being vigorously denounced as "pornographic" and "women-hating", through cautiously constructive criticism, to being heralded as a major breakthrough for lesbian literature.

By Rebecca Flemming

These responses show that the great debates about what constitutes erotica and what pornography, about sado-masochism and role-playing, will continue — though perhaps in a more tolerant, reasoned, and productive atmosphere than previously.

Mixed

It is in the nature of an anthology to be mixed and diverse. It is perhaps particularly true of a collection of erotica that individuals will react differently to the different stories and poems.

What one woman finds enjoyable and exciting may leave another yawning!

However, there are definite themes running throughout the book; a certain similarity of subject and sameness of texture that reflects the fact that we are all products of the same social order.

Nothing is immune to society's dominant forces — even that which we hold most personal and private.

This thematic recurrence is represented not just by obvious repetition (such as the remarkable predominance of shower scenes) but underpins the whole essence of the erotic as expressed in this book.

It is a kind of surging and overwhelming mutuality of passion.

"We decided to publish a book of lesbian erotica because, quite simply, we wanted to read it and we knew that we were not alone..." It seems their assessment was entirely correct.

Hilarious tales of the pitfalls of using a vibrator; a story that demonstrates that crushes on PE teachers are not something you grow out of; sensitive, poetic explorations of love for a disabled woman...

If you think it sounds interesting, then that just goes to prove the point.

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

State, class, party in modern Britain

Politics in Britain, By Colin Leys, *Verso*, revised edition, £9.95.

By Mike Phipps Woolwich CLP

The best part of this ambitious book is the chapter on the British state.

"Until the mid-1970s," the author writes,

"few books on British politics referred to the state, because the most influential theories of the state were incompatible with the tenets of pluralism."

He goes on comprehensively to redress that balance.

Many critiques of the British state have been content to focus on the social background of key pillars of the establishment.

However, Colin Leys's analysis goes further, taking us into the rationale behind the formation of British state structure.

Nonsensical notions about the neutrality of the civil service, for example, go out the window when one looks at the intentions of those who set it up.

Robert Lowe was the politician chiefly responsible for creating the modern civil service (in 1870), with its rigid stratification between lower functionaries and policy-making mandarins.

His aim, in his own words, was to secure "that sort of freemasonry which exists between people who have had a certain grade of education" and "whose associations and ideas should belong to the class with whom they will have to deal."

There are similarly revealing insights into other aspects of the British state, many of which are today passed off as more decorative than functional.

In fact, Britain's constitution is deliberately and consciously archaic, argues Leys, in order to veil some of the undemocratic sources of real power.

Hence parliament continues to be presented as an effective policy-making body by political scientists and media alike, whilst in fact is is little more than a rubber stamp for predetermined government actions.

This section of the book hammers home the point that any discussion of British politics which leaves out a full consideration of the state structures is hopelessly incomplete.

However, Leys is less successful when he opts for a sociological discussion of class, leaving out any consideration of how the working class achieves political unity when it fights for its objectives.

How does this relate to the current problems facing the Labour Party?

Leys's discussion contrasting Labour's promises in opposition to its record in office is familiar. However, the conclusion he draws — that Labour should get off the defensive and make its programme more radical and modern — is problematic.

A deeper discussion of the relation between Labour and the class it purports to represent would show that Labour has *never* championed the demands of the mass of workers.

It has been, programmatically and organisationally, the expression of a narrow conservative section of the class; the labour aristocracy.

But with the end of empire, industrial decline, de-skilling, and the new pauperisation of workers, the national social base for an organically reformist party is being eroded. Labour's decline is a historic, not a momentary, phenomenon.

Leys's contrasting of Labour's structure with the Conservatives' "organisational apartheid" is useful, but needs to go further.

The super-centralisation of the Tories has one major obvious consequence — that, in a party where every major political and organisational decision is made by the leader, a colossal crisis cannot be avoided when the leadership changes.

This is especially the case with this leader, Margaret Thatcher, who has been in post 15 years and has moulded the Party's structure entirely to her own needs.

The breadth of Colin Leys's *Politics in Britain*, taking in class and state theory, history, economics, and sociology, remains the source of its weakness.

However, even if it does not answer all the questions it raises, it is worth reading for getting those questions in perspective.



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

"The super-centralisation of the Tories... a colossal crisis cannot be avoided when the leadership changes."

BOOK REVIEW

A militant Orwellian

Prepared for the worst, by Christopher Hitchens, *Secker and Warburg*, £15.95.

By Woody Haut Hampstead and Highgate CLP

A renegade from class and country, Christopher Hitchens is an upper middle class British journalist who, after public school and Oxford, gravitated to the US.

The atmosphere in the US is supposedly more conducive to temperaments restrained by an Official Secrets Act and narrow minded editors.

It's certainly easy for emigrés like Hitchens to become, once in the US, part of its amorphous left — a commentator rather than an activist.

Having said that, Hitchens, like his compatriot Alexander Cockburn, nontheless produces some of the most incisive critiques of US politics and society presently being written.

Prepared for the Worst recycles articles from a variety of periodicals (*Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, *The Spectator*), and covers a wide range of subjects: Chomsky, Camus, Orwell, Paine, Watergate, Contragate, Central America, the Lebanon...

More literary than Cockburn, there are times when Hitchens, flaunting his Oxbridge vocabulary, falls prey to his own cleverness.

But Americans seem to like such flashiness, and in the vapid world of journalism, Hitchens has been able to corner a particular market.

A kind of militant *Orwellian*, Hitchens reckons bad writing and faulty logic are the correlative of faulty politics and plain stupidity.

On the US lecture circuit, this makes Hitchens a prized commodity, the intellectual equivalent of a foreign born wrestler who, as the villain with superb technique, inevitably loses to the simple home grown hero.

Hitchens is nonetheless able to attract a sizeable audience, not all of whom are there to boo the villain.

With post-colonial superiority, British writers have always been willing and able to criticise mainstream US politics. But Hitchens goes further than his predecessors.

His essay on Chomsky is so conclusive in demolishing the farce behind the facade that's denied one of the US's most important critics access to the mainstream press that one wonders why Hitchens is able to publish in a cross-section of periodicals while Chomsky is not.

One wonders why Hitchens wastes his venom on Michael Foot or Michael Meacher, though some of the targets in these essays deserve the abuse:

•Reagan ("...there's been evidence that his body is beginning to catch up with his mind");

•Kissinger (C.H. vows to "never read another work by H.K. until the publication of his prison memoirs");

•Pat Robertson ("One only had to look at the peerlessly fatuous face... to realise that the human race must be the product of evolution. None but the most heartlessly irresponsible deity would have created him like that").

Hitchens has an ear for the politics of language:

"*terrorist* is not... being abused; it is an abuse. It disguises reality and impoverishes language and makes a banality out of the discussion of war and revolution and politics.

"It's the perfect instrument for the cheapening of public opinion and for the intimidation of dissent...".

However, I was disappointed he failed to put the boot into phrases like, "If we didn't do it, someone else would," as used by Thatcher to justify dealing with South Africa, or selling arms to foreign governments (and by Labour Councils to justify cuts).

What lies behind this phrase is a monetarist equivalent to the Nazis' claims that they were only following orders.

His section on the Reagan era, entitled *In the Era of Good Feelings*, is probably the best of the book. Though now old news, Hitchens sets his sights on Reagan's military wing, showing:

•how it was put together before his election, thus enabling a pre-election deal to be struck with Iran in exchange for a post-election delivery of weapons;

•that their theft of Carter's debate notes gave them information on the debate and the possible release of hostages;

•that Oliver North was in charge of patrolling the Iran-Turkey border when the *bungled* hostage rescue occurred, was responsible for carrying Reagan's nuclear *football*, and for drawing up a plan to suspend the Constitution and impose martial law;

•and that, as the people involved in Reagan's *secret* war against Nicaragua, the military, along with the CIA, mugged drug barrons and used their profits to buy arms for the *Contras*.

Though Hitchens is good at diagnosing the illness, he leaves the remedy to others. But with a while to go before the final days of capitalism, *Prepared for the Worst* is a worthy book.

BOOK REVIEW

Words, words, words!

The New Oxford English Dictionary, prepared by JA Simpson and ESC Weiner, *Clarendon Press*, Oxford, £1,500 for set of 20 volumes[!].

By William West Haringey Labour Briefing

***Acnestis* (the part of the back you can't reach to scratch) is my favourite word in the new, 20-volume Oxford English Dictionary.**

The 21,728-page O.E.D. weighs in at eight stone and defines over half a million words in a text of 59 million.

It is the ultimate "acnestistic" text: however many words you use to scratch the back of meaning, there's always a bit you can't reach.

Look up the meaning of any word and you're faced with other words; look up the meanings of those words and all you get is a whole lot more.

The history of the O.E.D. is the history of capitalism; and, like capitalism, it is strewn with tragedy.

James Murray, who published the first volume of the New Oxford Dictionary in the positivist haze of the 1880s, originally intended to define *every* word in the English language.

After five long and painful years, he had reached "ant-"; he died before he reached "mortality".

One of the problems he encountered was that the language just wouldn't stand still.

This problem was shared by the new publishers, whose budget of £15 million and multitude of computers and experts on both sides of the Atlantic were still not enough to guarantee up to the minute coverage of English as it is used today.

So much money is being spent on this venture because Western society now needs — as at no other time since the turbulent 1880s — to arrest meaning, to pin it down once and for all, to capture society's language and stop it slipping from meaning to meaning.

Our world appears unchangeable because the words we use to describe it seem natural. Why search for alternatives when the world is so self-evidently how it is, and how it will always be?

Unfortunately for the O.E.D. (and for capitalism), words are *not* natural or static. There is no reason why "cat" rather than "tac" should always refer to a small, furry creature.

Similarly, words mean different things to different people: what is "terrorism"? What, bearing John Moore in mind, is "poverty"?

Language is not static, but contested by opposing classes through history. New words are formed daily by people struggling against their environment.

Despite its valiant and expensive efforts, the O.E.D. shows, like no other text, that language, like life itself, is materialist; meanings — particularly political meanings — are not solid or natural, but open to change, to melting into air.

I would urge you, in the true spirit of book reviews, to "buy this book!" But, at £1,500, it is probably too dear. Beside, the New O.E.D., having taken five years to complete, is already old and out of date.

Trade Union Briefing

TGWU Conference

A shift to the right

Sticking to principles over unilateralism; deciding to comply with the law in the docks dispute.

That was typical of the contradictory decisions reached by the TGWU conference, held in Brighton at the end of June.

By the end of the week, with the very important exception of the "defence" debate and policy on lesbian and gay rights, the Conference had kept the union within the framework of New Realism.

Overall, policy shifted to the right, in line with the Policy Review.

With delegations of dockers in the gallery, Ron Todd opened the Conference with a ringing statement of support for the dockers.

He warned the port employers that sacking the registered dockers would mean "a dispute the like of which they have never seen".

It was soon clear, however, that he was not talking about a *big* dispute, bringing other parts of the TGWU out in support of the dockers, but a *long* dispute in which the union would continue to give official support:

"Be it three months or six months, there will be no resolution of our dispute until every dockworker is reinstated and an agreement is negotiated nationally."

The Executive statement on the docks was introduced by Ron Todd the next day. It gave full support for the dockers but stipulated that the dispute must be kept within the law.

"We have to defend the dockers," he said, "but we have to defend the rest of the union as well."

Conference had to recognise the reality of the new situation: "We are not going to put ourselves in a position where our union funds are sequestrated and they take away our offices and our [sic] cars."

By ALAN THORNETT

Todd went on to predict another big majority for strike action on the second ballot.

Several docks delegates speaking in the debate stressed the crucial importance of the docks dispute to the TGWU. Others called for action which would clearly be illegal such as the involvement of the unregistered ports.

Tony Richardson, Austin Rover delegate, said the docks dispute was the TGWU's "Waterloo". He called for the union to be prepared to defy the law in order to defend the dockers if necessary:

"If we stick within the law we will be asking the dockers to fight with their hands tied behind their backs," he said.

The union had defied the law in the past and should not change its position now.

To stick within the law, he said, would mean no support from the unregistered ports, no boycotting of scab cargos, and pickets at the gates of registered ports being limited to six.

"Let us put the whole union behind them whatever it means for the assets of the union," he urged.

The adoption by Conference of the Executive report creates a big problem for the dockers.

They *needed* Conference to give them the union's support irrespective of the law; they *got* a Conference endorsement of the Executive policy of keeping within the law.

The parallel with the SOGAT Conference during the Wapping dispute is too close for comfort. It also expressed "full support" for the sacked News International printers, but "within the law".

That decision ensured that the rest of the industry could not be involved and led to isolation and defeat.

Having supported an Executive backed motion changing union policy from opposition to support of nuclear power Conference moved on to the key debate on "defence".

Stark

In stark contrast to his stance on the anti-union laws, Todd made a strong and effective speech in defence of the union's 28-year old policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

He said he had marched alongside Frank Cousins for this same policy. "You cheered me then," he said, "because I was carrying out the policy of the union; are you saying that I am wrong now?"

He argued it was a matter of principle then and remained one now. To support unilateralism, Todd quoted Pope John XXIII: "When the evil you use is greater than the evil you oppose it is time to examine your morality."

The resulting narrow vote in favour of existing TGWU policy on unilateralism was the Conference's one clear stand against New Realism.

Neil Kinnock, speaking two days later, lectured Conference on the errors of its ways.

In a speech aimed at the media, designed to demonstrate his independence from the trade unions, and the TGWU in particular, he stridently defended the Policy Review; dismissing unilateralism as a "yesterdays policy" which would lose the Labour Party the next election.

His speech gained a standing ovation from two thirds of the delegates, and hostility from the rest.

Todd and the Executive backed the weaker of the two resolutions on offer on the repeal of the anti-union laws.

The selected resolution called for the repeal of the anti-union laws within the context of support for the Policy Review document *People at Work*.

This means a failure to call for the repeal of the laws on balloting or for the restoration of trade union immunities.

Todd surprised many delegates by strongly opposing the repeal of the laws on balloting, telling the conference "We are in favour of balloting aren't we?"

The Executive also recommended a change of union policy on the acceptance of Governement money for carrying out compulsory ballots under the anti-union laws.

In sharp (and rather bizarre) contrast to his arguments on unilateralism, Todd argued that the union must move with the times and recognise the realities of today's situation.

This was accepted by Conference after a heated debate in which Region One delegate Mick Connolly described the acceptance of the money as "30 pieces of silver."

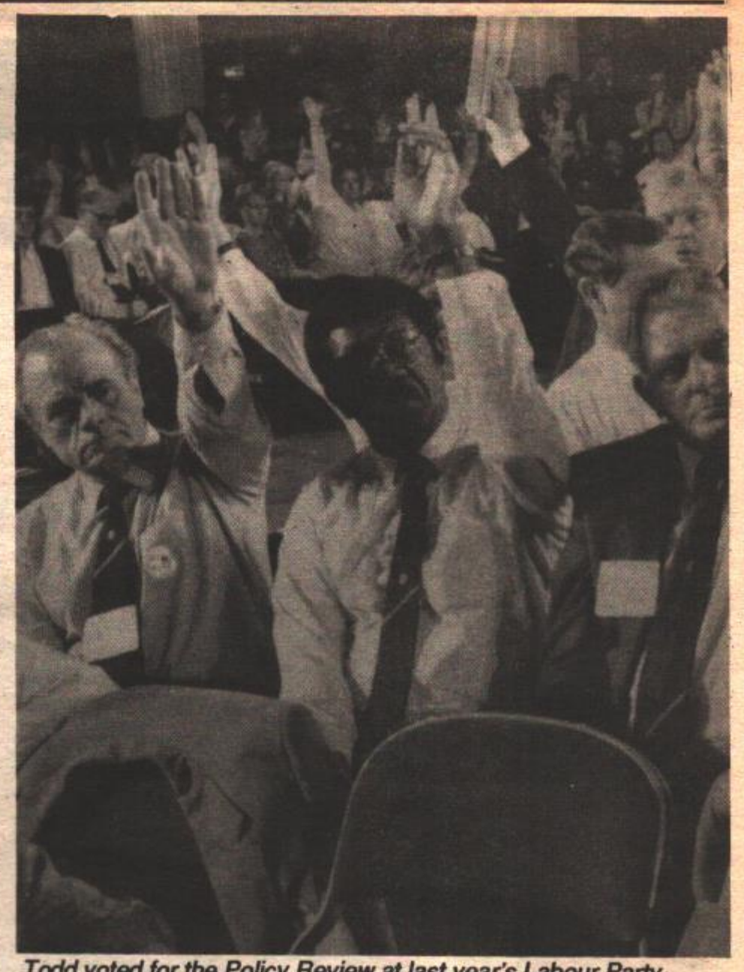
Policy

Mick Gosling, from Ford Dagenham, said that to change policy would take the union down the same road as the EEPTU and the AUEW.

Conference also changed policy on paticipatory management techniques, such as Quality Circles and team leaders. Every speaker from the floor supported the existing policy of keeping out of these bodies.

Whilst saying it remained opposed to such techniques, the platform argued there was no principled objection to going into them. Where trade union organisation was weak, it said, or where the membership felt there was no alternative, the union should go into them.

Effectively this leaves any decision on whether to become involved or not to local branches and committees, many of which have already become involved anyway.



Todd voted for the Policy Review at last year's Labour Party Conference; and the T&G's given him a mandate to do mostly the same again.

PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Critical

Conference went on to reverse its position on the EC, by adopting a resolution which states that whilst being critical of the EC, withdrawal is no longer a "realistic or sensible" option.

This was followed by a rejection of a resolution calling for non-payment of the Poll Tax.

In the first "debate" on Ireland ever held at T&G Conference, a motion calling for a negotiated political solution to achieve a United Ireland and for support for the Time To Go campaign was rejected, on the Executive's advice.

Irish Regional Secretary John Freeman said, "Support for Time To Go is support for Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA."

Arguing for the Time To Go, motion, under continuous barracking from right wing and loyalist delegates, London delegate Chris Green said, "Northern Ireland is a British problem. Britain created it, Britain runs it, and it needs a British response."

Conference agreed, instead, to campaign around Peace, Work, and Progress. A resolution supporting the McBride principles was defeated by a similar margin.

Apart from unilateralism, there was only one other exception to the policy slide to the right: on lesbian and gay rights.

A resolution on positive action and positive images was adopted for the first time ever by TGWU Conference, with the support of the platform, but with opposition from some delegates.

The weakness of the policy is that it comes from the top down and does not reflect much real development within the union itself.

This was clear from the widespread homophobic remarks being made amongst the delegates after the debate. But it was an important start which needs to be built on.

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

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

Miners' Gala

MFGB centenary Gala

The Mineworkers Federation of Great Britain (MFGB), the forerunner of the National Union of Mineworkers, was founded 100 years ago.

On Saturday June 17th, Barnsley hosted the first national NUM Gala.

The choice of venue was seen as bestowing prestige on the Yorkshire NUM barons. Ken Homer from Yorkshire is running for Pete Heathfield's job as National Secretary.

It was supposed to be a display of 100 years of mining trade union history and solidarity — warts and all. Well, the warts were visible, abundantly so.

Rumour has it that Arthur Scargill ordered the National Justice for the Mineworkers Campaign (NJMC), whose main aim is justice for sacked miners, to produce a dozen sacked miners to lead the Gala March.

This was a comendable idea. Sacked miners from the 84/85 strike leading the march would have provided a focus for the media, easily identifiable at the front with a banner proclaiming that these men had been victimised for four years.

By Davy Lampe

But they failed to get them, even though they offered £25 a head.

The march set off through Barnsley at about 10.00 am with all the Yorkshire pits still open represented and proudly carried their banners behind colliery bands playing militaristic tunes.

Following behind in seperate sections were miners from Wales, Kent, Notts, and Lancs.

Women

Relegated to the rear were the Women's Support Groups — Women Against Pit Closures, Barnsley Miners' Wives, etc. The only people behind them were a few Trades Council banners and an ice cream van impatient to get to the Gala grounds.

Where were all the banners from the mines that have closed under Thatcher? Surely if these banners had been displayed they could have spoken volumes about the devastation that Thatcher and McGregor have done to the industry and the union?

Arthur Scargill and Dennis Skinner were the main speakers. Skinner was very entertaining as only he can be.

Scargill was as fiery as ever. This man never changes (neither does his speech). People sitting outside were holding on to the grass to stop themselves being carried away.

Scargill left in his black *Scirroco* at 3.00pm, whilst Ann Scargill, who had walked at the back with the other women, worked on until almost 6 o'clock staffing a stall, raising money for the sacked and victimised miners.

When will these women get the recognition they deserve? All miners, both working and victimised, owe an enormous debt to them.

Manchester Health Emergency

"Opt-out" Councillors run and hide

"Nowhere to run — nowhere to hide" was the slogan used to advertise Barry McGuigan's recent fight against Jim McDonnel in Manchester.

Labour councillor Ken Collis, Tory appointed chair of Central Manchester Health Authority, has clearly learned from McGuigan's defeat.

His strategy for dealing with opposition to his plans to take Central Manchester hospitals out of Health Authority control is to run and hide as much as possible.

Central Manchester Health Authority was scheduled to meet on June 27th.

By Geoff Ryan NUPE Steward, Central Manchester Hospitals branch

Local Authority nominees John Nicholson and Mike Kavanagh had submitted a resolution calling for the rescinding of the "opt out" decision taken at a closed session of the Health Authority meeting in March.

They pointed out that the resolution passed on "opting out" allowed the Health Authority to withdraw its "statement of interest" at any time.

A similar resolution has also been submitted by the TUC nominee on the HA.

But at the May meeting of the HA, Councillor Collis had already ruled out of order a resolution trying to rescind the "opt out" policy on the grounds that the HA could not reverse its policies within six months.

Arguments

To back up the arguments inside the HA, Central Manchester Health Emergency distributed 30,000 leaflets calling for a lobby of the June meeting. Support for the lobby came from NUPE, NALGO and MSF branches in the Central Manchester hospitals.

Councillor Collis' response was to cancel the HA meting at short notice on the grounds that there was not enough business on the agenda! This is despite the fact that there were at least two other important items on the agenda.

Despite the cancellation of the meeting, over 100 people turned up to lobby. Many more hospital workers, unable to take time off work, expressed their support by wearing Hands Off Our Hospitals badges.

As the Health Authority clearly no longer had any use for the Manchester Royal Infirmary Boardroom it had been booked by the Joint Staff Side in Central Manchester hospitals.

However we found the Boardroom locked and the hospital security staff were clearly under strict orders not to open it.

Councillor Collis and District General Manager Mike Ruane are so terrified of the support Health Emergency has been able to win they dare not even let us use a room they no longer have any use for.

Using the entrance hall of Manchester Royal Infirmary, we were still able to hold our meeting.

Speakers included Eddie Newman, Euro MP for Greater Manchester Central, a speaker from South Manchester Health Emergency and Mike Folliard, secretary of NUPE Central Manchester Hospitals branch.

Mike emphasised the important role Health Emergency had played in organising opposition to the "opt out" proposals.



We also received messages of support from Rodney Bickerstaffe, General Secretary of NUPE, Labour's health spokesperson Robin Cook, and local MPs Bob Litherland and Tony Lloyd.

The speeches were followed by a lively discussion after which we decided to take a message to Councillor Collis asking him to name a date when he would be prepared to discuss with Health Emergency and the hospital trade unions.

However, our way was blocked once again by security staff. When we were finally allowed up to Councillor Collis' office neither he nor Mike Ruane were anywhere to be seen.

Mike Ruane did manage to emerge some time that day to announce to the local press the opening of yet another joint venture with private medicine: this time a Health Screening centre run by Private Patients Plan.

Central and South Manchester Health Emergency campaigns have a whole series of events planned for over the summer, many of them organised jointly. On July 1st we had a stall at the national Poll Tax demo in Manchester.

We will be continuing to collect signatures for our petition againt Central Manchester Health Authorities hospitals opting out (nearly 10,000 collected already).

On August 31st we will be presenting the petition to Lord Mayor Yomi Mambu, a former nurse in Central Manchester, at a mass public meeting.

We have also established links with the Health Service Defence Campaign in Bury, set up by the Bury Pensioner' Association.

The next Central Manchester HA meeting on July 18th will be confronted by yet another lobby, this time organised by the Joint Shop Stewards in Central Manchester and supported by Health Emergency.

Councillor Collis and his friends will find that they too have "nowhere to run — nowhere to hide".

Trade Unions and the law

Victory takes us back to square one!

What lies behind the contradictory decisions by the courts on the use of the law against the unions?

The High Court refused the port employers an injunction to stop a dock strike, the Court of Appeal granted it, and then it was squashed by those defenders of working class rights — the Law Lords.

Part of the answer lies in the staggeringly far-reaching implications of the decisions the High Court took.

There were four elements in their judgement:

•Since the National Dock Labour Scheme itself required the dockers to work, it was illegal for them to go on strike.



PHOTO: Tim Rigby

The 80s have seen struggles in vain as the law wins out.

By Alan Thornett Trade Union Briefing

This implied that every strike the dockers had had since the Scheme was introduced in 1947 has been illegal and that it is illegal for anyone to go on strike since their contract of employment requires them to go to work.

•The strike would be against the public interest and therefore illegal.

This implies that most strikes are illegal, since most could affect the "public interest" in some way.

•The strike would affect the Port Employers more than the union, and is therefore illegal.

This must be the case in every strike.

•The strike would be against the national interest, and therefore illegal.

These decisions, or any one of them, would end the right to strike in this country at a stroke, providing the employers were prepared to go to the courts and use these criteria, which of course they would.

Ron Todd has described the decision of the Law Lords to overturn these rulings as a victory for the trade union movement, and in a sense it is: It was followed by the failure of British Rail to use the courts to stop the rail strikes.

But why did they do it? Were they afraid of the developing unofficial strikes which would take control from the official leadership, as *Socialist Worker* has suggested? Or does it reflect divisions in the ruling class?

All the indications are that there are divisions in the ruling class on this which is reflected now in contradictory statements over whether to ban strikes in public services.

First Fowler says they are considering such a move; and then it is denied. Then Thatcher comes out and says they are planning such a ban and Fowler is not so sure about it.

There is clearly a section of the ruling class who see this move, like the Court of Appeal decision on the dockers, as going too far too fast and that the trikme is not right for such total bans on strikes.

This does not mean that the Tories are not pushing forward with their anti-union laws.

The Green Paper presented to parliament this year further attacks the closed shop and prevents unions taking disciplinary action against members who refues to abide by a strike vote.

They are now preparing legislation against unofficial strikers which would require unions to expel them if they break the law, or the union would face sequestration.

There is now an "ombudsman" with a £4 million budget empowered to finance individual trade unionists who want to take action against their own union.

This fund was used last month to finance action against the NUR by two members who claimed they had not received ballot papers. The action was only lost on technical grounds.

Despite the Court of Appeal ruling on the dockers, the use of the law — and the fact that it is almost always complied with by the union leaders — is the biggest single problem facing the trade union movement.

The Court of Appeal ruling was a legal victory, but it has resoved nothing for the unions.

British Rail



London Underground have at last responded to the terrible rush-hour overcrowding: they're trying to increase fares to discourage travel... BR disputes add to the argument for workers' control of transport.

Strike tightens grip

June 28th's total rail stoppage was even more succesful than the previous week, with not a train running and fewer scabs going to work.

By Greg Tucker Secretary NUR Southern District Council

Carriage cleaners and other non-operating staff were out, as were EEPTU members in the workshops. Morale was high, with reports of local pubs and cafs offering the strikers free snacks and sandwiches.

BR's attempted publicity stunt of laying on a photo opportunity for reporters of running a train from Twyford to Henley failed miserably when the train had still not moved eight hours later!

BR's use of full-page newspaper adverts to put its case is more about grabbing media space than seriously meeting any of the railworkers' demands.

Following BR's use of the courts and scabs against the strikers, this latest ploy is widely seen as a shallow manoeuvre, as the NUR leadership have correctly pointed out.

The NUR AGM meeting during the dispute has helped solidify the action. It also voted by 2-1 to retain its policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

With ASLEF balloting as we go to press for an overtime ban, railworkers are in a strong position to press their demands against an increasingly beleaguered management.

Pergamon Dispute

Strikers win paper policy from Labour

By a special correspondent

The Labour Party NEC has voted unanimously to condemn the sackings of 23 NUJ members at Robert Maxwell's Pergamon Press and called for immediate reinstatement and full recognition of the union.

This vote was both unexpected and quite unprecedented.

Given Maxwell's long history of ties to the right wing elements in the leadership of the Labour Party and his powerful position as owner of the only pro-Labour, mass circulation daily newspaper.

The Pergammon Press chapel were delighted at the vote and believe it has given their fight an important boost. At the moment, however, it is only a paper position.

Having achieved this first step, it is most important to start building on it; particularly by sending resolutions and amendments to Labour Party Conference committing the NEC to campaign actively for the reinstatement and recognition that they formally supported at their last meeting.

Keep in touch with the dispute by phoning the strike office on 0865 819162.

Solidarity with the Chinese people!

Answer the call of the *Internationale*!

The drama of the recent uprisings in China was based both on their politics and in their militancy.

The uprisings represented a widespread challenge to the bureaucracy based on the principles and fundamental objectives of the Chinese revolution.

Through the events, a whole generation of students, workers, and Chinese communities worldwide have been introduced to the lyrics and the democratic and socialist message of the *Internationale*.

The political analysts were clearly thrown by the Chinese events taking place in an era when *glasnost* and even multi-party elections had become an accepted feature of the major Communist states.

The repression shocked the many whose faith in the revolutionary spirit was rekindled by the vision and discipline of the Tienanmen Square protesters.

We know, from looking at the historical development of the ever strengthening force of the Chinese people's democratic demands, and from the profound optimism displayed in the documents, tapes,

By Ai Meun Lim
Greenwich NALGO
(personal capacity)

and interviews smuggled out of China, that the struggle is far from lost.

We know that key student leaders and a great number of their supporters remain alive and defiant, possibly to fight another day.

We need to focus our attention on the work required in the coming months and years to ensure that until the bureaucratic structures and privileged layers in China and all other countries can be dismantled completely and irrevocably.

Struggle

It is difficult at this point to map out the best ways of supporting the struggle of the Chinese workers and students in the face of the steeliness with which the Chinese leaders have conducted their suppression.

The recent pro-democracy uprising has emphasised for the Chinese workers the lack of autonomy characterising their trade union organisations.

The autonomous organisations were a reflection of the people's disillusionment with Deng's and Zhao Ziyang's economic reforms which have led to growing income inequalities, high inflation, unemployment, bureaucratic privileges, and private sector exploitation.

Militant

China's long history of militant trade unionism, which organised the urban working class against imperialist advances and promoted the revolution, has alternately thrived and been mercilessly crushed by the Kaumin Tang, by Mao, by the Gang of Four, and now by the Deng regime.

Democratically run workers' organisations, independent of Party or state, operating at the level of the workplace as well as across whole industries, with the powers to decide on all production and management matters are needed to address the dissastisfaction of the students and workers.

These organisations would fulfill the Chinese people's calls for greater equality, democratic rights, and against bureaucratic corruption. Mass mobilisations are unsustainable without these structures in place and operating effectively.

The Chinese working class will require massive international support for full legal recognition to be accorded to such independently initiated organisations.

Their democratically elected representatives must be recognised, as must the activities these organisations have been pursuing in their members interests.

Existing workers' congresses fall far short of these demands.

Nevertheless, they are a concession offering Chinese workers some control over their working lives, a control which far exceeds that experienced by their counterparts in capitalist states or privately owned enterprises.

Solidarity

The solidarity required to further the aims of the Chinese democracy movement is one which recognises that the "patriotic Chinese students and workers" are seeking to further, not reverse, socialism.



PHOTO: Tim Nolan

Demonstrations of solidarity in Britain (like the one above, in London) have been organised by the Chinese Solidarity Campaign. For details of the CSC founding conference, see p. 5.

Many have fought and lost their lives for a genuine socialist system. Solidarity must therefore mean defending the gains achieved by the working class as a result of the overthrow of capitalism in China.

The labour movement in Britain and across the world cannot afford to let this movement be isolated.

The Chinese people's bravery shows that democracy is an all-prevailing principle for working class struggle as well as working class rule.

Building an effective solidarity campaign in Britain means drawing in all forces which support the Chinese peoples' claim to democratic rights.

It means exposing the Chinese leadership's lack of popular support whilst simultaneously exposing the collaboration of those governments.

The British government is a prime example of those who have cared little about the Chinese people's lack of democratic rights faced with the prospect of exploiting their labour and their potential to pay as consumers of foreign imports.

200 years of the French Revolution

New bandwagons and old debates

A flood of revolutionary literature is inundating Europe.

July 14th will see spectacular celebrations (and counter-celebrations) in Paris.

Newspapers, magazines, and television are full of the storming of the Bastille.

Once again, the nature of the French Revolution has become a major political issue. The mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, showed his colours by dragging his feet over organising the bicentenary celebrations.

Now he has jumped on the bandwagon and is competing with Mitterrand over who can stage the most gigantic — some would say meglomaniac — public spectacles.

This rivalry reflects real divsions over the political legacy of the Revolution. From his right, Chirac has had to contend with a newly emboldened Monarchist current, associated with Le Pen.

Mitterrand, for his part, is faced with those in his own ("Socialist") ranks, many of them close to Prime Minister Rocard, who want the Revolution "finished" and forgotten once and for all.

Others, like former advisor Rgis Debray, are keen to re-affirm the relevance of the value of the Revolution, including those of Robespierre himself.

Underlying these conflicts is

By Andrew Coates
Ipswich CLP

a long-standing historical debate. For Engels, the French Revolution was the foundation of capitalist property and an "attempt to carry bourgeois rule to extremes".

For French Marxist historians Georges Lefbre and Albert Soboul, the first stage of the Revolution, from the 1789 abolition of feudal rights to the Declaration of the Rights of Man, was about bringing the archaic state into line with economic development.

More recent historians, influenced by Alfred Cobban and Richard Cobb, have been sceptical about the alleged class unity of the bourgeoisie. They have stressed the complexities of the political and social forces at work.

Some, like Françcoise Furet, have seen in the second phase of the Revolution, the period of the Convention Nationale, the growth of an autonomous Jacobin "totalitarian" terror that became the model for both Bolshevism and Fascism.

Furet has gained fame and respectability from this thesis. His ideas influence the Rocardian "Second Left", which inclines towards "Girondian" support for decentralisation against Jacobin nationalisation and administrative control.

The "anti-Furet", Françcoise Dosse, has noted that the two sides of this debate reflect an opposition between Stalinist backers of Lefbre and those, like Furet, hostile to France's revolutionary tradition and wish to see its normalisation on an Anglo-Saxon model.

Furet's admirers exagerate the numbers of victims of the Terror (estimated at around 2,000) in order to preach the virtues of their own gradualist strategy of winning over "civil society".

Frightened by a re-emergence of a right that *never accepted the Revolution*, they wish to extricate the Rights of Man and the first French Consitution from the necessary repression of the Revolution's enemies.

Revolution

The Revolution and the Terror undoubtedly involved diverse class forces, dispersed insurrections, and ideological conflicts that cut into its "bourgeoise" character.

Hrbert, a radical who declared that the whole earth should be owned by all, was one of the first victims of the Terror in 1794.

The bourgeoisie was uneasy with popular attempts at de-Christianisation and with Robespierre's Cult of Reason.

Satisfied as it was with the end of feudal law and the Constitution's guarantee of private property, it was happy to drop Republican forms when these became susceptible to the influence of ideologues, egalitarians, and the dangerous urban artisans and poor.

Today the French Revolution stands as a unique symbol.

It saw the advent, as Alexis de Tocqueville noted, of a group of people who "•hate, not certain specific privileges, but all distinctions of classes; they would insist upon equality of rights in the midst of slavery."

The new Republic allowed class interests to be articulated and debated in the public sphere. Long hidden grievances were thrust forward.

The stultifying influence of the Catholic church was removed, permitting Jewish, Protestant, and non-believing minorities to hold full rights.

With its move towards greater equality of rights (though notably excluding women), its secularism, its willingness to exploit a huge *rupture* in social and political life, the Revolution accomplished one of the greatest changes in world history.

We have moved on since 1789, but we can still learn a great deal from those who stormed the Bastille.

Note: Georges Rud's *The French Revolution*, London 1988, is probably the best introduction to this subject and debates about it.

Sri Lanka

Repression increases

Last month saw the Vesak full moon: the commemoration of the birth, death, and attainment of "nibbana" of Gautama Buddha.

The Sri Lankan government, in an opportunist effort to appear more "Sinhala Buddhist" than the insurgent Sinhala group the JVP, banned the slaughter of cattle a week before Vesak.

The bitter irony of this could not have been missed by many in Sri Lanka: while animals were not slaughtered, human beings were not to be spared.

Conservative estimates put the number of people killed for political reasons in the island so far this year at 3,000 — or 20 people a day.

In the north and east of the island, the viciousness of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) in their attempt to destroy the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) has been the subject of a new Amnesty International Report.

At the end of June, 20 Jaffna schools were closed as students protested at indiscriminate searches by the IPKF.

The same vicious methods are being used against the Sinhala opposition to the Sri Lankan government.

One newspaper reported: "Two bystanders were injured when security forces opened fire on a group of 'subversives' who were putting up anti-government posters in Ratmalana [near Colombo] on Monday [April 24th]."

By Viraj Mendis
in Sri Lanka

The LTTE are now engaged in talks with the government. During the talks, the anti-Indian JVP, while attacking the pro-IPKF Tamil group EPRLF for being agents of Indian imperialism, has refrained from attacking the LTTE.

The JVP could make this temporary unity of interests permanent and progressive if it would only drop its chauvinist opposition to Eelam.

As we go to press, latest news is that a major bus strike (for a minimum wage and withdrawal of the IPKF) is continuing, although probably with JVP involvement if not intimidation.

Workers, including hospital workers, are unable to travel to work, and the army is also involved in intimidation.

Bush, Thatcher, Kohl play waiting game

Will Deng's door stay open?

The governments of the imperialist countries are clearly having problems responding to the suppression of the Chinese democracy movement being carried out by their old friend Deng Xiao Ping.

The massacre in Beijing has disrupted the West's cordial relations with the bureaucratic regime which, under Deng and his Open Door policy, had developed close economic and diplomatic ties with the imperialist countries.

Ten years ago China had hardly any foreign trade. Now foreign trade accounts for nearly a third of national income — a high proportion for such a large country.

China's foreign policy since its detente with the US has been reactionary in the extreme.

By Dave Palmer
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

US spy installations sit along the Soviet border. China joined the US blockade of Vietnam and is the mainstay of the Khmer Rouge.

It allied itself with Zia's Pakistan against India, armed the Afghan Mujahedin, and has links with South Africa, Israel, and Chile.

Hence the US President's farcical attempts to telephone Deng (an old friend from Bush's time as U.S. Ambassador to China) and the British government's disarray in regard to the 1997 handover of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong is the key entry point for trade with China and its biggest trading partner, accounting for 30% of China's total foreign trade.

China

In 84-87 it was reponsible for half the foreign investment in all of China.

As always, repression and terror by the Stalinist bureaucracy is used by the bourgeoisie as evidence of the intrinsic totalitarianism of all post-capitalist and revolutionary regimes.

The liberal democracy of the imperialist countries is extolled as the only possible route of human development — to precisely those peoples excluded from joining the advanced capitalist nations by imperialist domination.

Probably the overarching dogma of the 80s, is that market relations and political democracy are synonymous. The recourse by bureaucratic regimes to "market mechanisms" is said to "prove" this great lie.

Hence the theme monotonously reiterated by Western journalists in Beijing throughout the blossoming of the democracy movement: that economic liberalisation must sooner or later bring political liberalisation along Western lines.

That marketisation and democratisation could possibly at times be in contradiction to each other, the most salient truth about Deng's regime, has been conveniently overlooked, along with Deng's own "special relationship" to Washington.

The two main components of Deng's "Four Modemisations" policy were:

•the wholesale importation of plant and technology via foriegn loans, joint deals with the multi-nationals, and direct investment;

•far reaching restructuring of the internal economy through the discipline of market mechanisms.

Together, these two "reforms" changed the Chinese economy out of all recognition. Gross domestic product doubled in ten years and China became a significant raw materials exporter.

Substantial sections of the working class and peasantry benefited whilst others did not. The leasing of land created a layer of quasi-private rich peasants whilst decollectivisation forced millions of poor peasants into the cities.

By the end of 1987, 30 million of China's 130 million non-agricultural workers were employed by the private sector. Five "Special Economic Zones" on the coast and 14 "open cities" offering financial incentives to foreign investors were established.

The result was increased inequality, severe regional imbalances, inflation (running over 30% for the past two years), unemployment, shortages of all consumer goods, negative trade balance and increasing debt, and systemic corruption.

Duel pricing — low state-fixed prices and high free market prices — has allowed government, party and managerial bureaucrats to enrich themselves by buying goods cheap at state prices and reselling dear on the free market.

With the deepening of the economic crisis the regime embarked on an austerity programme, with cutbacks in investment, and in trade deals with the West.

In 1988 UK exports to China totalled $412 million compared to $536 million in 1986. Direct Japanese investment has dropped from a peak of $470 million in 1985 to $200-300 million in 1986-88).

Price reform ran into severe trouble last year as the price of commodities soared and the party began to vacillate.

As the economic situation has worsened, corruption has grown. Shortages have increased the opportunities for making a killing on the free market.

It is clear that the anti-corruption demands of the democracy movements are intimately linked to the economic crisis.

The gathering chaos had increasingly split the bureaucracy between "nationalists" and "liberals".

The Zhao-led "liberals" who made overtures to the democracy movement are in favour of decentralising external economic links so that individual entreprises and regional and local economic agencies could manage their own relationships with multinational capital, in short a wholesale opening up to capitalist penetration from which there could be no going back.

A vital component of this strategy would have to be an attack on the "negative rights" (what used to be known under Mao as "the iron rice bowl") of the working class.

Introduction of wage differentials and individual incentives, increased managerial autonomy and a new experimental labour contract system have already been used to erode workers' rights.

Last year the government announced that the system would be extended to all state entreprises with the loss of an estimated 15 million jobs.

But working class discontent with the inflationary effects of the economic reforms brought a wave of strikes, stoppages, and go-slows throughout last year (even though the right to strike had been removed from the constitution in 1982).

Early this year industrial unrest was rampant in the port city of Tanggu and in Shanghai. This working class discontent precipitated the formation of the Autonomous Federation of Workers, which became a key component of the democracy movement.

The "nationalists" base themselves on maintenance of large scale heavy industry and state entreprises.

While accepting technological imports, joint ventures and direct foreign investment, they wish to keep capitalist penetration under some degree of centralised control and to ensure working class quiescence by maintaining what is left of "negative rights" and exercising greater caution on price reform.

The imperialist governments would prefer to see the Zhao "liberals" in the driving seat, for reasons that have nothing to do with their purported democratic leanings.

In the meantime, they aim for "normalisation" of relations and a commitment from Deng and his henchmen to the continuance of the market reforms.

Compared to the West's response to the 1981 declaration of martial law in Poland, the general attitude towards Tienanmen has been muted. Racism played its part here — Poles are "civilised" Europeans whilst terrible tragedies are simply part of the "usual" course of Chinese history.

Bush banned further US arms sales and official military visits and spoke of "reasoned, careful action" and "preserving relationships", sparing civilian hi-tech and other trade.

China is set to overtake the Soviet Union as the world's largest importer of wheat but there is little likelihood of a ban on US wheat exports. After all, China currently runs a $3.5 billion trade surplus with the US.

US corporations also have $3.5 billion directly invested in China, taking advantage of low manufacturing wages.

Thatcher talked of her "utter revulsion and outrage", and the need for a strong defence against Communism. Howe announced Britain would join the US in suspending arms sales and military contacts, and would also halt consultations over the 1997 Hong Kong handover.

Keeping the lid on the "problems" caused by the handover is the main priority for Britain, which has less direct trade with China than any of its major Western rivals.

Japan, China's largest trade partner after Hong Kong, accounting for almost 40% of foreign aid, was most cautious of all in its response to Tienanmen.

New Prime Minister Uno spoke of being "deeply concerned" and described the events as "regrettable". Only after domestic pressure did he step up criticism and declare a freeze on economic assistance.

France, Holland and Sweden all "froze" diplomatic relations.

West Germany is China's most important European trade partner and China is Bonn's largest in the Third World. Chancellor Kohl declared support for the students, and froze investment in China

The EC Commission suspended meetings of the EC-China Co-operation Committee. In a statement "deploring the brutal repression in Peking", it warned of an end to co-perative ties if...

"the Chinese government were to start on a course which put at risk the policy of openness and reform followed up till now."

Last year China exported £5 billion of goods to the EC and imported £4 billion worth under a special privileged access agreement.

The World Bank, with which China's development and modernisation programme has been closely co-ordinated, held up a $60 million loan, the first of a planned $700 million package.

China is one of the World Bank's main clients, receiving over $7 billion in loans in the past eight years. As part of the economic decentralisation policy, loans had just been made for the first time directly to individual cities and provinces.

Now a waiting game is being played as the West looks for reassurance that the regime will maintain the Open Door and marketisation.

With Zhao off the scene and Deng certain to die soon the direction which the narrow circle now in power will take is still in doubt.

The worry is that in pursuing the purges the regime may play the nationalist card too forcefully, retreat into old fashioned bureaucratic xenophobia, and get cold feet about the reforms.

The democracy movement is being portrayed in time-honoured Stalinist fashion as an "imperialist plot".

A further breakdown in relations may become inevitable as the bureaucrats embark on an orgy of bloodletting. Bi-partisan pressure is mounting in the US Congress for an extension of economic sanctions, forcing Bush to stall on the export of a $500 million nuclear power station to Shanghai.

Right wing and liberal members of Congress have joined forces to promote a bill banning hi-tech exports, suspending all US investment and trade, breaking diplomatic relations and vetoing further World Bank loans.

Capitalism abhors an unstable investment environment — and the jury is still out on whether Deng's butchers are able to return to imperialism's prescribed course.



Mass rally in Tienanmen Square before pro-democracy demos.

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Poll Tax news

Aberdeen leads the way!

On the night of June 14th, Sheriff Officers arrived at the home of Mr and Mrs Len Thomson to poind goods with a view to a warrant sale.

Mr Thomson had been fined £50 for being four months late in the Poll Tax. His bank account had already been arrested.

The Sheriff Officers had been harassing the couple for weeks, but their visit on June 14th was expected. Over 100 protesters lined the pavements as the officers left after the poinding.

The protesters followed the men to their car and stood around it changing anti-Poll Tax slogans, making no attempt to prevent the Sheriff Officers driving off.

The crowd was good humoured, but the Sheriff Officers radioed for police assistance. Only when the police arrived did the officers start the motor. As they left, the crowd dispersed.

This incident is only one of many in Aberdeen in recent weeks.

AAPT has had considerable problems keeping track of them, as many people are frightened by these "big brother" tactics and pay up or let them in to rifle through their possessions because they are afraid to do anything else.

One man involved in negotiations with Sheriff Officers had his house entered by the use of skeleton keys and furnishings poinded while he was at work.

The practice stinks. Harassment and intimidation will not go unchallenged, as long as AAPT exists to protect victims.

In May, a single pregnant mother of two found herself at the brunt of further bullying tactics. On no less than 12 occasions, neighbours of 26 year old Sue MacLeod reported seeing Sheriff Officers watching her flat.

AAPT organised a protest, and 70 people crammed into the tiny flat and prevented them entering.

But still too many people in the city are unaware of our existence due to the reluctance of the national media to cover our work. We are concerned about the people we cannot support.

The warrant sale procedure is both frightening and an infringement of rights — directed at the most vulnerable in society. It hits those who are standing up for what they believe in: non-compliance with the Poll Tax legislation.

By Carolle Smith for Aberdeen Against the Poll Tax



PHOTO: Carolle Smith

Poll Tax protesters surround car of Sheriff Officer in Aberdeen

For the first time in many of our lives we are prepared to break the law to make this government take notice.

They cannot ride roughshod over all of the people all of the time. There comes a time when we must say enough is enough: now is that time.

Aberdeen Against the Poll Tax is dedicated to a mass non-payment campaign. The group consists of individuals of all ages, from all walks of life, and from most political parties — with the one obvious exception!

The fight against the Poll Tax is in its infancy, but we *are* winning. As we enter July at least 36% of those eligible to pay the Poll Tax in Scotland have not paid anything.

We in Scotland are showing Thatcher what she can do with her Poll Tax. It is now up to the rest of the country to do the same. Have courage and take heart... we're behind you all the way!

*AAPT is happy to advise on all aspects of our campaign. We have a number of experienced speakers who regularly talk all over the region — and even down south. Contact Carolle at 0224-894057 or Charlie Lynch at 0224-874177.

Demo in Scotland

Join the one million non-payers!

The anti-Poll Tax campaign in Scotland is entering a crucial phase.

Since Poll Tax bills became payable, no April 1st, up to *one million* people have not paid a penny — even according to the figures provided by the Regional Authorities.

Now the three month "legal" delaying period is over, and "threatening letters" are due to be sent over the summer.

The Scottish Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions organised a march and rally in Glasgow on June 24th. Fifteen thousand people from all parts of the country turned up to give a timely boost to the Campaign.

It was the largest and liveliest demonstration against the Poll Tax yet seen in Glasgow, mobilised largely by the hard work of various local anti-Poll Tax groups and with a sizeable SNP contingent.

By Allan Green Maryhill CLP

Labour MP George Galloway praised the "magnificent army of one million non-payers." He declared:

"At this rally there are thousands of young people and I am standing with them against this Tax.

"I will not pay and if they want to come to my house and get the money they'd better bring a pack of Rottweilers and the SAS as a back-up.

There are no STUC or Labour Party representatives here today, and that makes me angry. The red Clydesiders would have been on this demonstration — the current labour movement leaders should have been.

"There is a real mood of change sweeping the country. The rail workers are in dispute, the dockers are primed for a strike, and the mood of the people is one of anger.

"There is a rising tide of feeling that it is time for Thatcher to go.

"With England and Wales joining the struggle against the Poll Tax, the one million non-payers can grow into an army of ten million. The Poll Tax could be the final nail in the Tory coffin."

SNP MP Jim Sillars referred to the recent European election results and said, "What is the point of Scotland being a Tory-free zone unless it is also a Poll Tax-free zone?

"If people are going to obey the law, it must be based on the consent of the people and on justice.

"With the Poll Tax we have a duty to break the law. The Poll Tax, like the Miners' Strike, is a red or blue litmus test. There is no in between.

"When is the STUC General Council going to come off the fence and lead this army of one million non-payers? If they did this, it would be two million before the end of July and the Poll Tax would be defeated over the summer.

"Thatcher has never been weaker during her ten year rule. We have to say to others: see the power and strength in the one million non-payment campaign and join us.

"If the Poll Tax is Margaret Thatcher's flagship, non-payment is the torpedo to bring her down."

The huge potential of the non-payment campaign is clear. Unfortunately, despite this successful demonstration, the Scottish Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions does not have the resources nationally to organise a million people.

It is therefore understandable that so much anger should be directed at the leadership of the labour movement for abdicating their responsibility to lead the campaign.

Labour Regional Councils will now be forced to come off the fence and choose between "fighting the Tories" and "fighting the non-payers".

It looks very much as if every Council will go down the road of obtaining Court orders to freeze bank accounts and to arrest wages or benefits.

This is ironic, coming just as the Tories' use of the law against trade unions is exposing the courts as blatantly anti-working class.

There is even the prospect of Labour Councils (against Labour policy in Scotland) introducing the hated Warrant Sales — a procedure which sends Sherrifs to take goods to the value of the debt.

This procedure (which does not apply in England or Wales) would be a disaster for Labour in Scotland.

The mood at the rally was very combative; but despite the euphoria being generated, much remains to be done. Tommy Sheridan summed it up not long before the speeches gave way to the local rock groups:

"Our campaign is winning but it is not finished. Don't just support the non-payment campaign — build it!"

❊ Euro-results in Scotland: see inside, p. 7.