LABOUR
BRIEFING
40p FORTNIGHTLY
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40p

South African elections: as whites bicker...

BLACK WORKERS UNITE!

General Election day in the Republic of South Africa.

White voters (14% of the population) stream into the polling booths to decide which party is to preside over the death-throes of apartheid.

By CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN



Namibian workers were in the spotlight earlier this year: now the Azanian working class is stepping up its activities.

In contrast, only a small number of "coloureds" and Indians trickle into the segregated polling booths to elect representatives to the stooge House of Representatives (coloureds) and House of Delegates (Indians).

The results are largely as anticipated.

The ruling National Party retains power with a reduced overall majority. The meagre turnout in the "Coloured" and Indian elections reflects the contempt in which these poorly camouflaged extensions of white rule are held.

White politicians have been stumping the country to bolster support for their policies — "play it again Sam" from H.W. de Klerk's Nationalists and "Back to Verwoerd and full-scale apartheid" from the Conservative Party.

Meanwhile, outside, in meeting halls, streets, townships, mining compounds, the real battle for the future of South Africa is raging.

Every major urban area has witnessed massive

Continued inside, page 14

By J. Naidoo & M. Morobe of the Mass Democratic Movement

More than three million workers and students together with churches and peace-loving democrats in South Africa demonstrated their mass opposition to the racist white elections on September 6th.

It is a reality that more people participated in our protest action than voted in the farcical election which excluded the majority of South African citizens on the basis of their skin colour.

The success of our peaceful protest must also be seen against the backdrop of intensifying state repression.

In the last few weeks the Defiance Campaign launched by the MDM has seen security forces brutally disrupting peaceful protests by workers, students, church leaders, and women.

Scores of leading anti-apartheid activists have been detained, meetings disrupted and banned, and offices and homes raided by security forces using Emergency laws.

This is the type of "democracy" the racist elections involves for our people. The National Party is only capable of one response to real challenges to apartheid rule: force or brute repression.

Our reports indicate that there were massacres of people demonstrating agianst the elections in Mitchells Plain and other townships around Cape Town. De Klerk enters his term of office with the blood of our people on his hands.

Despite all the election hype, despite the bribery, threats, and promises, and despite repression of organisations calling for a boycott, over three quarters of the registered coloured and Indian voters refused to vote in the elections for the tricameral circus.

The real moving force for change in our country remains the extra-parliamentary opposition to apartheid, in particular the Mass Democratic Movement.

The MDM will continue its Defiance Campaign until apartheid is totally eradicated. In the coming weeks organised workers in COSATU, a key component of the MDM, will intensify the struggle against the Labour Relations Amendment Act (LRAA).

At the same time the MDM has emphasised that its key priority remains the strengthening and rebuilding of democratic grassroots organisation. We will consolidate our mass organisation and spread our influence to the broadest spectrum of anti-apartheid forces even in the face of brutal repression.

In the light of an expected increase in brutal repression from the apartheid forces under the leadership of Mr de Klerk we call on the international community to intensify the isolation of apartheid on all fronts.

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, PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY.
Please send letters for the next issue to arrive by Wednesday, Sept. 20th if possible.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

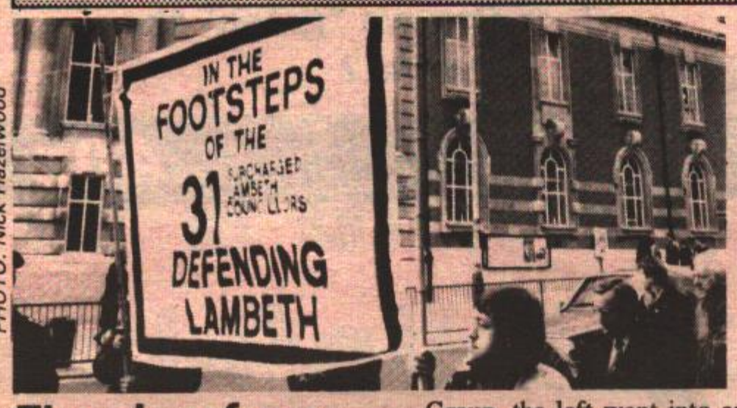


PHOTO: Nick Hazelwood

The view from the sidelines...

Dear *Briefing*,

Pete Firmin and Mike Phipps must have lost touch with reality to argue that a positive role still exists for the left in the Council chamber (*Briefing* nos. 86 and 87).

Even if we could get resolute anti-cuts comrades to stand for Council in 1990 and assume they managed to get selected and slip through the net of right wing dominated LGCs, they'd be standing on a manifesto they couldn't possibly support (and one the Council couldn't deliver).

This is a big "if" and I bet neither Pete nor Mike will be putting themselves forward. On top of this, many current left Councillors won't be bothering again.

And I wonder why neither of them made any mention of the left's role on Lambeth council? Was it because the tactics used there undermine the left argument for staying in office?

To gain control of the Labour Group, the left went into an alliance with a centre grouping. Comrades justified this on the basis of frustration of the Poll Tax.

Well, the new left leadership has fallen at the first hurdle, which of course was inevitable.

The saga over the Poll Tax computer is in itself insignificant. What is important is the principle at stake: whether the new left leadership was prepared to be surcharged.

It wasn't, of course. And we're not just talking about the centre grouping of eight; half the anti-cuts Councillors weren't prepared to risk surcharge either.

Staying in office inevitably means anti-cuts Councillors continuing to shift to the right. It also means increasing collaboration with the New Realists in implementing the Tory programme.

And no amount of exhortation from the sidelines for comrades to stand firm will make the slightest bit of difference.

Yours comradely,
John Turkie,
Hackney, London

Vincent's stuck in the back room...

Dear *Briefing*,

In reply to Vincent Johnson's letter (*Labour Briefing* no. 87) my earlier letter was solely addressed t the final line in his article, in which he said that PR may enable "a real socialist party to elect MPs".

I argued that this hankering after a new socialist party is a sentiment shared by some *Briefing* supporters and would completely marginalise the left.

That Vincent holds such views is evidenced by his assertion in his latest letter that socialism through one party is "Stalinist, repressive and muddle-headed".

Vincent unfortunately fails to explain why he thinks this and I can see no basis for such wild assertions. Indeed, he later stresses the importance of a Labour government.

I take it that Vincent believes that a Labour government cannot or should not be the vehicle for socialism — a sentiment I could understand from a member of the SWP, but a bit bizarre coming from a supporter of a paper which urges Labour to take the power!

Vincent's main argument is that a struggle for PR could be a positive, perhaps even revolutionary struggle for a reform which would, in part at last, benefit the working class.

But any system which denies the mass party of the working class any real hope of forming a majority government and therefore condemns the working class to permanent rule by bourgeois parties/coalitions cannot be of benefit to the working class.

A point made very strongly by the SWP who, according to Vincent, have been marginalised by the present electoral system and might therefore have been expected to support PR.

In existing conditions PR is not more "democratic" and is not a reform in a positive sense, since it would produce a situation of political stagnation and permanent pro-capitalist government.

Even in liberal bourgeois terms, an electoral system that leads to sordid backroom deals and unjustified influence for small centre parties is hardly more "democratic" than the present system.

From our perspective as socialists, PR means the maintenance of the *status quo*, the maintenance of the rule of the bourgeoisie. From a working class viewpoint this is neither democratic nor a reform.

The struggle for PR that Vincent wants to wage will simply serve to strengthen illusions within the working class in relation to notions such as "democracy" and "reform"; in other words, it will strengthen the grip of what are, in this context, bourgeois ideas and bourgeois ideology.

Yours faithfully,
Pete Willsman,
South East London

Would you drive a used car with this man?

Dear *Briefing*,

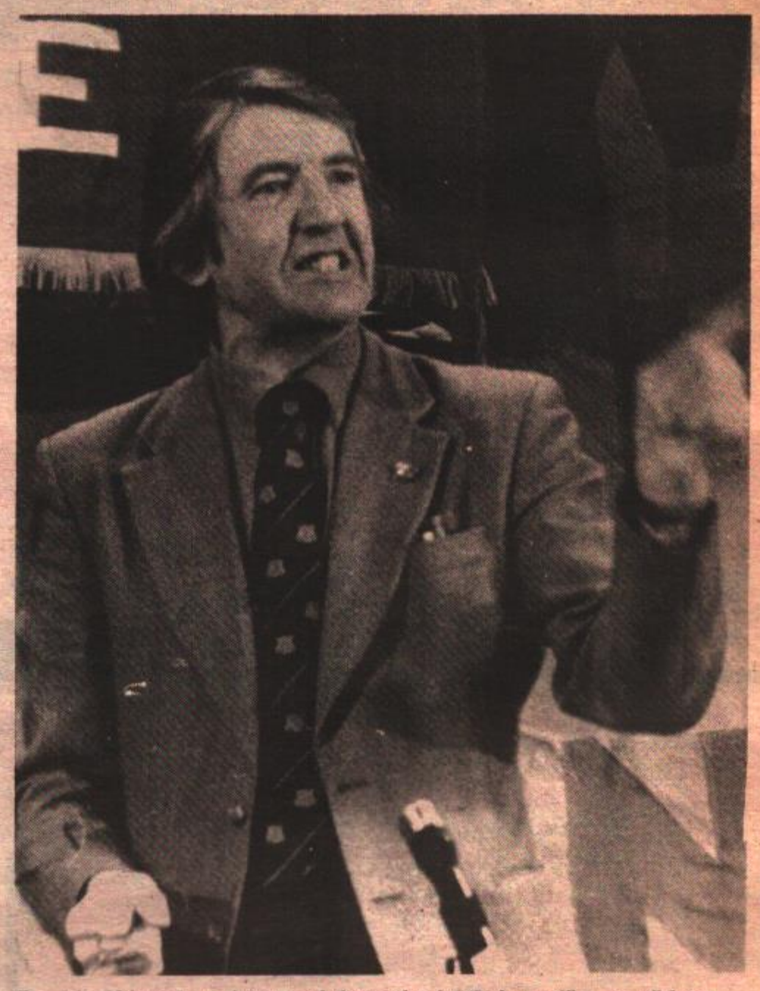
As a vehicle for Socialism on the Parliamentary road, the Labour Party was always something of a slow-coach.

Now its new model has been triumphantly unveiled, to a fanfare of "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change".

But on closer inspection it is revealed to be only the rusty remains of the old clapped-out Keynesian charabanc, with a rose-tinted respray.

Would a majority of the electorate buy a used car from Neil Kinnock?

Yours fraternally,
Richard Hanford,
Sussex.



Dennis Skinner: under attack from the LCC, but still a candidate behind whom the left can unite.

Erstwhile lefts are slated

Dear *Briefing*,

For a number of years now I have given full support to the left slate for the NEC elections, despite having reservations about some of the comrades on it.

This year the Labour Left Liaison slate includes Margaret Beckett and Clare Short, both of whom have been on the slate for the last two years and were elected last year with the support of the left in many constituencies, including my own.

Unfortunately, since their election both these comrades have sided with the right wing NEC majority more often than with the left. In addition, both failed to support Tony Benn in last autumn's leadership contest.

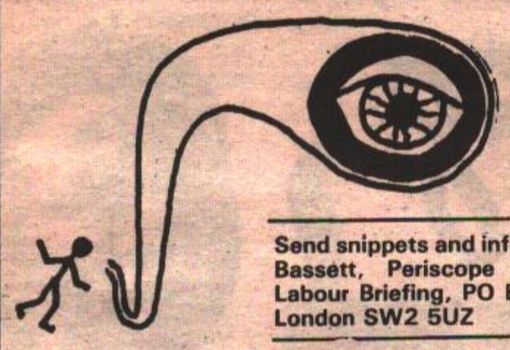
I am not advocating the necessity of complete "left" unanimity on all issues at NEC level, but in my view these comrades' record suggests that their commitment to the left is at best questionable.

For this reason I will reluctantly find myself unable to campaign or cast my vote for them this year.

Next year the various left organisations must ensure that a full consultation is carried out and that only candidates with a proven record of supporting left policies and resisting the authoritarian Kinnock leadership will get our backing in the elections for the NEC.

Yours fraternally,
D. Warren,
Reading

Periscope



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

Brit spending spree in US

In its annual report on British commerce, the Bank of England reports that combined profits of British corporations reached their highest level since 1954.

According to the Bank's survey, the high profits have triggered an overseas spending spree, with a huge increase in multinational buyouts by British bidders. British buyers acquired 21 foreign firms in 1986, 282 in 1987, and 444 in 1988.

The US seems the favoured market for British corporate shoppers. Indeed, the Brits are top of the league among foreign investors in the US with more than *$100 billion* currently tied up in the Home of the Brave.

However, watch out, the Japanese are now pressing the Brits hard for big stakes in the New World. Overall, foreign holdings in the US, at $329 billion, are now slightly higher than US holdings abroad, at $327 billion.

Dexter's hidden depths?

Ted Dexter's appointment of Graham Gooch as England Captain for this winter's scheduled tours of India and the West Indies may yet turn out to be a stroke of genius.

Gooch led the last unofficial England side in South Africa in the early 80s and last year had signed up for a lucrative season with Western Province when the call came from Dexter's hapless predecessor, Peter May.

The result: India cancelled the tour (apartheid-sponsored privateers not wanted) and England Test cricketers spent a quiet winter at home.

Gooch has never expressed any regrets about his well paid service to South Africa's racist rulers. His behaviour is that of a man who believes himself above criticism — especially criticism from black political activists.

Though he is not among those who have fallen to the lure of the Krugerrand this time around, his selection as captain will be regarded by many, in both India and the West Indies, as a slap in the face and deliberate provocation.

This impression will only be re-enforced by the choice of South African Alan Lamb as Vice Captain and Wayne Larkins (who toured South Africa with Gooch) as an opening bat.

Dexter and his colleagues preferred Gooch over *Briefing*'s choice — the admirable Peter Roebuck of Somerset.

Roebuck is not only an able opening bat, a first class strategist, and capable publicist and diplomat — he is also an open and determined opponent of apartheid and once declared, "Politics and cricket do mix — like whiskey and water."

It is unlikely that such sentiments recommended him to Dexter & Co.

After all, it would have put paid to their master strategy — inspired by Peter May's gambit last year — of picking a side so unacceptable to the host nations that the tour would be cancelled — and continued humiliation on the playing field averted.

Last call for...

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BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Industrial front: end of round one

Though this summer's wave of industrial struggles has abated, its root causes remain, and new struggles promise to break out in the coming months.

The overall outcome of this latest round of class conflict is contradictory. Different issues were at stake in different disputes.

On the docks, an industry which had already been systematically run down, workers fought a rearguard defensive action to save their jobs.

The prevarication of the TGWU leadership, and particularly Ron Todd's obsession with legality and the courts, gave the port employers invaluable time to finalise their preparations for the attack.

Using the tactics of British Coal, they then employed division, intimidation and mass victimisation to weaken the strike.

Beyond all else, the dock strike shows that Tory trade union laws have nothing to do with democracy — they are designed to sap the impetus from a dispute and hand the initiative to the bosses.

The mandate for all-out strike action secured by the TGWU in the first ballot was squandered in the courts. The result shows that staying within the law — on ballots, picketing, and secondary action — dooms a dispute to failure.

From the other disputes, however, some hope can be drawn. The strikes in rail, tube and local government were partly a response to high mortgage rates and rising inflation and partly to the attack on long held public sector collective bargaining rights.

But the tenacity of these disputes and the involvement of a wide layer of members — many for the first time — marked a new confidence in sections of the working class. July saw the largest number of women out on strike ever in Britain.

These contradictory processes were connected. As in the 1984/5 Miners' Strike, the government did not want other workers to make common cause with their strategic victim — the dockers.

Ministers were therefore prepared to make concessions to secure quick settlements, especially given the public support enjoyed by groups like the rail and tube workers, widely seen as fighting for a better transport system from which everyone would benefit.

Successive sections of workers, sensing the mood, took steps to get their share. The emergence of a new militancy and the possibilities for united front action across the working class were there for all to see.

Workers saw off attempts to impose strings on pay deals and maintained their bargaining rights and industry-wide conditions. But be warned, the bosses will come back on this front, with rejigged but equally dangerous packages.

And new fronts will soon open up: ambulance drivers, engineers, public sector manual workers are all preparing for action.

The rich experiences of the struggles just past and those soon to come must not be dissipated. They need to be brought into the Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference on November 11th.

TINA in Poland?

Though they come from widely different political traditions and represent different social bases, the Solidarnosc leadership and the Polish Stalinists appear to agree: for the Polish people, *there is no alternative* to austerity, marketisation (even privatisation), and credits from the West.

These two allegedly hostile forces share a common conviction — that Poland's nightmare economic crisis can only be solved at the expense of its working class.

So many of the things for which Solidarnosc fought in 1979-81 seem to have been forgotten. Workers' self-management, radical democracy (including the right to strike and the legalisation of political alternatives), higher living standards... all these have fallen victim to to the pernicious logic of TINA.

Of course, we welcome the crumbling of Stalinism and the prospects for the emergence of a genuinely socialist politics in Poland heralded by the decision forced on the bureaucracy to abandon its monopoly of power.

But we reject the notion that the only alternative to the gross bankruptcy of Polish Stalinism is the "free market".

After all, it is not only Stalinism which is in world crisis. Small matters like mass unemployment, chronic financial instability, environmental destruction, and the threat of recession continue to blot our Western utopia.

Again and again, in country after country, a single question arises: what is the relation between democracy and the market?

For Walesa, as for Kinnock and many others, East and West, the answer is the same as Thatcher's: you can't have one without the other. But for us, this is the great myth of the age.

We know from our own experience that democracy and the market are not only not the same, they are increasingly opposed in practice. Genuine socialism will be a fulfillment and extension of democracy.

But to millions of workers in Poland and elsewhere socialism is identified with repression, bureaucracy, and economic chaos. Inevitably, in their struggles against Stalinism, many will look to the West, even to Thatcher.

Many, but not all. *There is an alternative* to market austerity and it is being advocated even now by groups like the Polish Socialist Party, Fighting Solidarnosc, and others on the left wing of the Solidarnosc movement.

As the coalition government imposes ever harsher measures on its own supporters, these groups are bound to attract greater forces.

Socialists in Britain and other capitalist countries need to support these forces, to listen to and learn from them.

Developments in the non-capitalist world are opening a space in which democratic socialist ideas can and will grow — but this growth will not be easy, unbroken, or without disfigurements. The long historical experience of the suppression of democracy and national aspirations makes this inevitable.

Immense, contradictory forces are now being unleashed in the USSR, in China, and even in Poland. No one can say precisely what the outcome of their many and complex struggles will be, but we should be in no doubt that the stakes are high — for the fate of socialism and therefore the fate of humanity.

Management and the "human factor", or:

How to pull a fast one on the workforce

There's a nice little business out there: training managers to help workers feel more involved, more part of the team, and of course more productive and less troublesome.

For instance, if you had the money you might like a little jaunt to Honolulu this winter to learn about "Human Aspects of Advanced Manufacturing and Hybrid Automation".

Of course, naughty cynics might ask why P&O continues to resist workers' demands for better safety standards on cross-channel ferries — surely a suitable case for employee involvement?

They might ask the Institute of Directors why top management give themselves pay increases of 40% and more, while allowing employees only minimum "involvement" in higher productivity and profitability gains (i.e. pay awards of less than 10%).

By FRANK SCOTT

One wonders, what *did* managers learn at the recent "Effective People Management" conference? How to destroy a few more thousand jobs in the coal industry?

One of the many organisations involved in this business is the Involvement and Participation Association, whose main claim to fame is its successful efforts to get the 82 Employment Act to require some companies to include a statement on employee involvement in their annual reports.

No doubt workers are grateful for those 200-odd words in annual reports, and equally reassured to know that their managers have been attending conferences with titles like: "Managing Human Resources" and "Human Resources Profiling".

A dedicated manager could go to at least one conference a week (usually in pleasant surroundings) in an ongoing attempt to make us "part of the team".

One of the latest wheezes is to use sophisticated psychotherapy-based techniques to bamboozle us into thinking they're doing us some good while they pursue the usual management ends.

For example, there's a forthcoming conference called "Psychoverbal Communications" which uses a powerful technique officially called "Neuro-Linguistic Programming".

This sinister development is already employed by several transnational companies.



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

"It's not that I like poking my broom into dark corners, it's just that's where the dirt is..."

"Simpler folk" like us who've never had the benefit of these training conferences could of course tell our managers about much better ways of securing employee involvement and making us "part of the team".

The trouble is we'd be telling them to give up their unaccountable power and accept re-education and training for a socialist economy.

However, as we wait for that day to dawn, keep your guard up against the latest trend in managerial psychobabble.

Socialist Movement

Socialist Movement!

Political initiatives, democratic structures

Becoming a Socialist Movement means a major transformation of the loose network of supporters we have been since the first Socialist Conference.

We have to change into an activist, reflective, democratic membership movement.

Politically, we must play a more positive, interventionist role — not, to be sure, to substitute for or clash with existing campaigns, but rather to identify key political issues and then work with anyone and everyone who wants to make campaigns on them a reality.

A number of key areas have been identified: the Poll Tax, water and electricity privatisation, public health, unilateralism and a socialist foreign policy, etc.

Two themes in particular pull many of these threads together. These are the struggle for a socialism that is truly green and that for democratic rights.

We need to deepen the work begun by the First Green and Socialist Conference and by our Green Policy Group.

In particular we intend to take a long cool look at the areas traditionally in contention: what role do we see for what kind of economic growth, how do we protect jobs and the environment, how can we win the unions to green politics?

As part of this we are preparing for a Second Green and Socialist Conference in March 1990 and intend to work closely with the Association of Socialist Greens.

At the same time we should not ignore the simmering constitutional crisis facing the "United" Kingdom, expressed most clearly in its Scottish dimension. Resistance to the Poll Tax has now combined with resistance to Whitehall and the demand for a Scottish Assembly, Bills of Rights, etc., threatens the whole edifice of centralised control which characterises the British state.

By Richard Kuper Socialist Movement Organising Committee

Here it is important to make progress with the idea of a Democratic Rights Convention. We intend to consult widely with existing campaigns and organisations and to circulate firm proposals in the autumn.

Our trade union conference in November provides the opportunity to establish a broad-based trade-union steering committee to coordinate serious campaigning amongst activists in the unions. In the wake of the resurgence of rank-and-file activity this is the priority for the Socialist Movement over the next few months.

We are working closely with existing left currents in the unions and with the Solidarity Network.

Women for Socialism has been extremely successful at bringing together feminists from within the Labour Party, the unions and various campaigns to develop a socialist feminist current. We are planning to give them every support we can.

In the Labour Party we aim to bring left activists together in a non-sectarian forum to discuss the way forward. We will be holding two fringe meetings at Conference and hope to make a substantial impact.

There is clearly an enormous potential among students for a non-sectarian left current. We are planning to work with the Green students, London Broad Left and others to organise a college speaking tour in the autumn and to encourage the creation of a layer of student activists allied to the Socialist Movement.

Our Socialist Policy Review document for the Third Conference was a major step towards building a radical policy alternative. It now has to be linked into our campaigning and conference projects.

As a first step, we must encourage our Policy Groups to become involved, where appropriate, in campaigning and educational work as well.

We are also intending to work, wherever possible, with the large number of individuals, groups and currents which are actively developing ideas and analyses for the 90s — whether about local economic strategies, multinationals, anti-racism, ecology, social policy etc.

To achieve our political goals we must pay particular attention to building our own organisation and to its democratic structures and processes.

First and foremost we need to increase our membership.

We are producing a new general membership leaflet and more targetted leaflets for trade unionist, Greens, etc. We will be actively seeking to win new members and encouraging those we work with — in Women for Socialism, through the Policy Working Groups, in the Labour Party, etc. — to join the Socialist Movement.

Membership rates have been set at £8.00 p.a. (£4.00 unwaged) and £15 for organisations. Membership will run for 12 months from the date of payment.

Having a large, activist membership rather than a loose coordinating committee requires a democratic organisation. There was clear concern at Sheffield about our apparent lack of democratic structures. A new Socialist Movement will not survive unless its members perceive it to be democratic.

We are going to produce a bimonthly newsletter for our paid-up members (becoming monthly as soon as possible). But we must begin to consider whether our movement can develop its own public voice — which probably means a fortnightly or monthly newpaper — in the medium-term.

To achieve everything laid out above depends crucially on the resources and the person power available.

Our structures need to develop as the movement does and currently we have a national Organising Committee which meets bimonthly with officers meeting on a more frequent basis. The Organising Committee has an open structure and functioning regional and local groupings automatically have a place on it.

Diary of activities and events

Sept 16.
Socialist Movement Organising Committee, Sheffield
Sept 16.
Education for Socialism Day Nottingham
Labour Party Conference Events: Ring 01-348 9573.
Oct 2. Women For Socialism LP Fringe
Oct 2. Socialist Movement Fringe
Oct 4. Socialist Movement/Marxism Today/-
Labour Party Northern College Fringe debate.
Oct 5. Socialist Movement supporters in the LP Fringe
Oct 7.
Women for Socialism Women in Education Dayschool, Wesley House. Details: Ann Potter, 01-639 7684
Oct 19.
Day of Action on Irish Media Ban, sponsored By SM, etc.
Oct 21.
Regional Reps meeting, ring Colin Lindsay, 0203-714070.
Nov 11/12.
Socialist Movement National Trade Union Conference. Ring Will McMahon, 01-281 6225.
Nov 18.
Welsh Socialist Conference, ring Janet, 0443-224378.
Nov 25.
Socialist Movement Organising Committee, Birmingham
Mar 17/18, 1990.
National Green/Socialist Movement Conference, London.

Other initiatives:

Lesbian and Gay Working Group: is aiming to produce a Lesbian and Gay agenda to develop and broaden the work of the group and to enable it to take its work and policies into the wider Socialist Movement and beyond. If you want to get involved ring Rebecca Flemming, 01-354 1402.

Students: We are beginning to organise a series of public meetings at universities and colleges and a fringe at the NUS Conference. Ring Geoff Ellingham, 01-250 0955.

Media Strategy: We are developing a Media Strategy team to give us a national profile in the media. Ring Alan Slingsby, 01-274 9182.

The Green And Socialist Conference Organsing Committee

The committee is an ad hoc group, open to all, with the aim of organising a second green and socialist conference and a network of campaigning groups. It was formed after the first conference held in London in March 1988. The second conference will be held over the weekend of 17 and 18th March 1990, in London.

The committee is currently defining the themes and workshops for the conference. Central themes in the conference will be red/green politics in Europe, local action and red/green alliances in elections and in campaigning work. For further information contact Barney Dickson, 9 Poland St, London W1, or Paul Gannon 174 Leighton Road, London NW5 2RE, tel. 01-485 6241.

Economic Notebook

How green is the market?

The Dutch Conservative government has announced what is probably the most ambitious environmental programme ever proposed by a state.

In of its aims, in response to Holland's appalling air pollution, is to reduce traffic on the roads by 70% — an aim which should be welcomed by all socialists.

Traffic cuts of this size are essential, not only to relieve perceptible pollution but also to halt the greenhouse effect.

The *means* by which the Dutch conservatives propose to carry out this plan are less welcome: *taxes* on car purchase and on petrol.

Taxes have become the conservatives' answer to the environmental crisis. Nicholas Ridley, while he was still Environment Secretary, proposed a tax on the production of carbon dioxide.

The new minister, Chris Patten, has more or less endorsed the recommendations of a government-commissioned report on the environment by David Pearce, which recommends "social taxes" on polluting products.

Taxes are attractive to conservatives since they do something about the environment but by using markets, albeit markets "distorted" by the state.

This seems to square the circle of a "green Thatcherism". Pearce can say, "radically", that "unfettered free markets will not solve environmental problems — they will make them worse."

Meanwhile *The Economist* can say, of the very same policies, "what better argument for a market economy?"

By Jamie Gough Holborn and St Pancras

Pearce's other main recommendation is that *all environmental assets should have a money price placed on them.* The environmental impact of particular economic activities, and of the economy as a whole, could then be measured in hard cash.

The change in the total value of the environment over the year would then be added to the official figure for the Gross National Product. And environmental "cost" would provide a guide to setting environmental tax rates.

The Pearce report has been welcomed not only by the government but by the Friends of the Earth and the Green Alliance.

The proposal to put a price on the environment may also seem very attractive to socialists, who often argue that capitalism neglects its social costs.

Imposing a money price — something capital understands — appears a good, hard way of making social costs "real".

There is a long tradition of liberals and the left using invented prices as a way of taking into account social costs, e.g. "cost-benefit analysis" of major projects like airports, and "social audits" of the effects of plant closures.

The demand for "wages for housework" is similarly intended to give capitalist society's ultimate recognition, money, to something which has been "undervalued".

But we should reject both the approach of the Pearce report and the use of taxes as the *major instrument* for greening — for many reasons.

Taxes on consumer goods hit the poorest most. Taxes should be decreased on the working class and shifted onto capital.

Prices are a weak means of getting capitalists to invest. Taxing coal and oil burning, for example, does not necessarily induce capital to make risky, long term, and massively expensive investments in alternative sources of energy.

The effects of taxation are extremely unpredictable. There is no way of knowing how high a tax on carbon dioxide production would need to be to reduce it by a target amount. Yet it is a life-or-death matter that these reductions are achieved.

The Economist concedes this difficulty, in proposing *permits* for the production of *fixed amounts* of pollutants. (But the market is preserved, because the permits would be auctioned!)

For these kinds of reasons, David Blunkett for the Labour Party has criticised the tax proposals. He proposes instead *subsidies* to green alternatives, and *direct controls or prohibition* on pollutants.

This is good as far as it goes. The problem is that, *if Blunkett is serious about environmental problems*, his policy contradicts Labour's economic policy.

If pollution and resource exhaustion were adequately tackled, whether through taxes, subsidies or direct controls, the impact on capital would be massive.

The greenhouse effect, for example, requires a decimation of the world car industry (unless an alternative fuel like hydrogen is developed), and of all the industries that feed off car use, from the oil companies to out-of-town shopping centres.

The firms involved, a good slice of the most powerful firms in the world, are obviously going to resist this. If the workers in those firms aren't offered any alternative, they will resist it too.

But the Labour Party has already ruled out *control* of the car and oil companies, and it has ruled out the planned economy that could convert industries without hitting workers' employment.

All serious environmental policies will hit two fundamental problems. First, they increase firms' costs and requirements for capital (including indirectly through increased consumer goods prices tending to raise wages).

Second, the inevitably extremely unequal *distribution* of these costs between firms creates massive resistance from particular sectors of capital.

Pearce's proposals for environmental costing suffer from the same problem: if they are *serious* then they are *utopian*.

The prices that could be put on parts of the environment are quite arbitrary, and in some cases are infinite. Capital will never agree to be saddled with a whole lot of costs which have been conjured up by professors.

Capitalist history demonstrates this. The results of the major cost-benefit analyses undertaken in the 1960s were ignored by the state. This was in spite of their costings being quite cautious, and in many ways regressive.

Pearce and Patten certainly have no intention of *imposing* these costs on capital. On the contrary, their reason for proposing pricing of the environment is to try to maintain market mechanisms. That's why Pearce's proposals are utopian.

On the other hand, in a *system* of production for *need*, socialism, investment decisions can made on the basis of environmental needs, whether considered directly or represented by prices.

This would not mean that change would necessarily be painless. It would mean that it was possible.

Briefing AGM

Fed up with New Realism, Kinnockism, Post-Fordism, and Why-botherism? Wanna talk about it? Make a date now for the...

Labour Briefing Annual General Meeting 1989

Saturday, October 28th

11am-5pm (Registration at 10:30)
Durham Road Community Centre (near Finsbury Park, London)

OPENING DEBATE:
Priorities and prospects for the Left
Panel discussion with Ken Livingstone MP, Cllr. Martha Osamor, Tessa Van Gelderen (NUR) and Graham Bash.
Contributions from the floor will be welcome.

WORKSHOPS on Labour Party, Local Government, Green Politics, Democratic Rights, Trade Unions.

INTERNATIONALISM, 1989:
session with speakers from struggles around the world, chaired by Jeremy Corbyn

***LABOUR BRIEFING* IN THE COMING YEAR:**
proposals and debates on the fortnightly paper, local Briefing Groups, political positions, etc.
Plus: elections to new National Steering Committee.

FINALE: RALLY FOR SOCIALISM with Reg Race and Mandy Mudd.

*** *BRIEFING* RAFFLE PRIZE DRAW! The draw will now take place at the October AGM. Please advise ticket purchasers. Tickets may still be sold: please change the date of the draw. Please return any outstanding tickets, or any new tickets sold. Tickets still available from the *Briefing* office.**

Top prizes! Good cause!
Creche, food, stalls.
For more information call the Briefing office (01-809 3927)

For free speech on Ireland

Petition against the Ban

A mass petition against the broadcasting ban on Ireland will be presented at 10 Downing Street on October 19th, the first anniversary of the introduction of the ban.

Already the petition is being backed by the Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom, the NCCL, BETA, Information on Ireland, MPs Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, Ken Livingstone, and many others.

Copies of the petition can be obtained from and returned to Petition Against the Ban, c/o CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG. Donations (as above) are urgently needed.

March and rally against the Ban

October 19th

October 19th is a year to the day since the Home Secretary imposed the ban on broadcasting interviews with members of Sinn Fein and other organisations in Northern Ireland.

It was the first use of these government powers to censor broadcasting since the last world war.

Censorship means people cannot be told the whole truth about what is going on in Northern Ireland. An elected MP and dozens of local Councillors cannot be properly reported.

October 19th

12 noon: assemble outside BBC, Portland Place, London W1 (Oxford Circus tube). March to rally.

1pm: rally at Dominion Theatre (Tottenham Court Road tube).

2.30pm: Lobby of Parliament, St Stephen's Entrance, House of Commons.

Free speech means free reporting!
Lift the ban!

Kurdish refugees

Stop detentions! Stop deportations!

On Saturday July 29th 5,000 people marched through Hackney in East London under the slogans:

"Kurdish refugees: they're welcome here!"
and
"Stop detentions, No deportations!"

The demonstration, called by the Kurdish Refugees Support Group, was in support of the 3,700 workers and farmers who fled to Britain from the Kurdish region of South East Turkey at the beginning of May.

Its success augurs well for what will be a difficult battle against the Tory government, who are determined to throw out all the refugees.



PHOTO: Chi Chan

The Tamils' campaign against government treatment won wide support; can Kurds issue win similar backing?

By Mark Metcalf
Kurdish Refugee Support Group

When 24 Kurdish refugees arrived at the tiny offices on the Kurdistan Workers Association (KWA) in the early hours of May 3rd there were few who could have envisaged what would happen over the next few weeks.

By the time the British government closed the escape route, with its introduction on June 24th of visa regulations for anyone coming from Turkey to Britain, a highly successful network of support had been built up to feed and clothe the impoverished refugees.

In this, as with all the other activities, the role of Hackney Anti-Deportation Campaign and the Trade Union Support unit were vital.

Pressure applied by MPs, especially Jeremy Corbyn, obtained a guarantee form the Home Office that they would reimburse all expenses by local community groups and Councils.

This is possibly the first time very that this Tory government has been forced to concede that it has a responsibility to help refugees who flee to Britain.

With over 20 million Kurdish people split between Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, the Kurds remain the single biggest grouping of people without a nation-state.

In this Britain bears a very heavy responsibility because it was Britain in the 1920s that divided the region to suit its interests.

The Kurdish Refugees Support Group is demanding that *all* the refugees be allowed to stay and that they should have the right to bring their families over to join them.

We also demand the release of the 150 who are being detained in the prisons of Gloucester, Winchester, and Exeter.

One of the disappointing aspects of the July 29th demonstration was the low turnout of trade unionists and union banners. This was not for want of trying; we spoke at over 30 trade union branch meetings as part of our mobilising effort.

You can help in the following way:

•Send for copies of our model resolution and our petitions. Use them at your workplace, branch meeting and/or in your local community.

•Send a letter to the Home Office demanding that all the refugees are allowed to stay and that those in jail are released.

•Invite a speaker to your next branch meeting or any other gathering.

•Make a donation.

The Kurdish Refugees Support Group can be contacted on 01-249 6930 or by writing to KRSG, c/o Liberty Hall, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8 4AU.

Leicester TGWU members need support

Sacked for opposing apartheid

Leicester TGWU members Ross Galbraith and Gary Sheriff have been sacked by their employer for refusing to work on an order for South Africa.

They were employed by Granby Plastics making Nyloil.

They were about to start work on an order from South Africa. Appalled by this, they went to talk to the owner of the company to explain that they did not want blood on their hands by working for apartheid.

By Leicester & District Trades Union Council

The owner said that he would consider their position. Two days later they were given a week's notice and sacked.

For taking a stand on behalf of the oppressed people of South Africa, they have been made jobless and cannot claim unemployment benefit for the next six months.

The South Africa Solidarity Committee calls on the labou rmovement to give maximum support to our TGWU brothers and to fight for a total boycott of *all* South African goods.

Ross and Gary are now suffering great financial hardship. If you or your trade union, Labour Party, or organisation can make a donation it would be most welcome.

Please make any cheques payable to the Trades Council Defence Fund. All donations will be acknowledged.

Contact: South Africa Solidarity Committee, c/o Leicester and District Trade Union Council, 138 Charles Street, Leicester LE1 1LB.

Labour Party

Local government

Lambeth: shifting the deckchairs on the Titanic

On Friday July 21st, Lambeth Council voted to buy the computer necessary to administer the Poll Tax.

Only three Councillors (French, Harrison, Tucker) voted against at the Policy and Resources Committee.

The new Twelves administration had defeated the LCC in the Parties by rejecting the idea of "taking political control of the Poll Tax". The current administration's practice now appears to be no different.

Initially, the administration had refused to buy the computer but when faced with a "Section 114" and the threat of surcharge they caved in.

The fact that Lambeth was buying the wrong computer was only a minor delay, and vague attempts to sugar the pill were to no avail either.

When asked if a motion to protect civil liberties and refuse to levy fines was legal, the Chief Executive said it made no odds, as officers could ignore it.

By Steve French
Lambeth Councillor

The Leader now offers a strategy of marching up the hill and then back down again at the first threat of opposition. Every time it becomes impossible to hold the line in Group, we have to "shift" to a new issue.

This is a recipe for posturing, then retreating. It will give no one confidence in our willingness to take a stand.

When we bear in mind the positive coverage in the press up to now, it will only succeed in creating apathy and cynicism as people see rhetorical gestures followed by meek compliance.

There is nothing more useless than fighting half heartedment. There are no longer any ly. You let your allies down whilst only irritating your enemies.

There remains the threat of surcharge for poor implementation of the Poll Tax.

Without the political support outright opposition could help build, we run the risk of failing to defend those in need of Poll Tax rebates without being able to stop the Poll Tax being levied.

We should not take the threat of surcharge lightly, but we have to be bold.

With growing industrial unrest, the Tories losing in the polls, the massive unpopularity of the Poll Tax, and low registration levels in Lambeth — a clear stand could inspire clear and resolute support.

We must fight to defend services or comply with the decimation of local government clever tricks. The question of surcharge will arise again and again.

Only mass opposition will defeat the Poll Tax — but that is not an excuse for Councillors to do nothing.

Councillors Tucker and French have informed their CLPs they cannot take part in an administration that is irreversibly implementing the Poll Tax.

The administration has now shifted to moving the deckchairs on the Titanic. Reg Race has been called in to complete a management review, and the reorganisation of the community affairs division is a key issue at Group.

These things may be necessary, but not in isolation from a real stand against the Tories.

Campaigns against privatisation and the Housing Bill have not been effectively built. Recruitment is improving, but the target of filling 1,000 vacancies will not be achieved.

A new sickness/disciplinary procedure is to be imposed on the workforce (without support of Chair of Management Services, Greg Tucker).

Arguments that it should be withdrawn in favour of negotiation were rejected, because this would "weaken management's position".

Events in Lambeth clearly show the lack of thought put into the basis for a left-centre administration and the failure of the Labour left to respond to the upswing in the class struggle.

The line is now "keep quiet in the build up to the 1990 elections; we can manage the Council better than the LCC."

The minimum that needs to be done is to refuse new officer demands for £500,000 more to implement the Poll Tax.

Candidates for the 1990 election must stand on a platform of non-co-operatio and non-payment of the Poll Tax and against cuts. These demands must be central to the manifesto.

With the new attacks on housing and education, with Compulsory Competitive Tendering, coupled with the Poll Tax, only a real stand by the left in the Party, together with the unions and the community will be effective.

There will be no managerial solution to the crisis of local government.



Joan Twelves, Leader of the Left/centre Lambeth administration

A programme for Labour

Democracy in Europe

As Labour approaches its Conference, still searching for "popular policies", PETER TATCHELL puts forward his ideas for a vote-winning stance on European democracy.

The Labour Party is not campaigning for greater democracy and public accountability within the European Community (EC).

Instead, it remains committed to defending the anti-democratic *status quo* whereby the unelected and secretive Council of Ministers decides EC policy and the European Parliament remains virtually powerless.

This rejection of parliamentary democracy at the European level is a monstrous betrayal of democratic principles by a supposedly democratic socialist party.

It also wastes a golden opportunity to fight for a policy which is both radical *and popular* (opinion polls show that two thirds of the British people want the European Parliament to have more power).

Apparently, empowerment of the European Parliament is seen as a threat to the authority of the House of Commons.

But this authority is *already* undermined; many of Westminster's powers were long ago assumed by the Council of Ministers in Brussels.

The empowerment of the European Parliament would therefore merely ensure that already existing EC decision-making powers were exercised by democratically elected and accountable representatives.

During the 1990s the EC is likely to evolve into an embryonic European government and most of the laws affecting people living in its member states will probably be decided at European level.

In order to prevent the EC's development into a centralised, secretive and authoritarian West European superpower, Labour urgently needs to work with the rest of the European left to put democratisation at the centre of the EC agenda:

- the transfer of decision-making to the European Parliament;
- the decentralisation of power to the regions;
- the opening up of the EC to all of Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals.

As a matter of fundamental democratic principle, it is totally unacceptable that policies affecting 320 million EC citizens are decided in secret by 12 government ministers.

The European Parliament should have full and exclusive legislative rights based on majority voting; the Council of Ministers should be downgraded to an advisory and consultative body with limited delaying powers on parliamentary legislation.

This reform is critical to a strategy for the *socialist transformation* of the EC.

Anti-Marketeers argue that the EC can never be an instrument for socialist advance because it would require the simultaneous election of socialist governments in all 12 member states in order to scrap the Treaty of Rome and enact new progressive legislation.

This is true under the current system which demands unanimous voting within the Council of Ministers on major issues.

If, however, legislative powers were transferred to the European Parliament and decision-making was by majority vote (as in the House of Commons) a left majority in the Parliament could radically revise the whole basis of the EC.

At present, the Socialist, Communist, and Green/Alternative Left parties control over 40% of the Parliament.

With European-wide left co-ordination and the construction of a broad-based Euro-Left alliance, these parties would almost certainly win a majority in the European elections.

They would then be in a position, in an empowered European Parliament, to reshape the EC around commitments to economic democracy, non-provocative defence, ecological sustainability, and global justice.

The second aspect of EC democratisation involves decentralisation. Some powers obviously need to be centralised at EC level to tackle continent-wide problems (environmental pollution, the arms race).

However, to enhance popular control and accountability, most powers would be best devolved directly to regional assemblies, by-passing and ultimately rendering redundant existing national governments and nation states.

The transformation of the EC into a decentralised and federated "Europe of the Regions" would help to break down the nationalism which has set Europeans against each other, and undermine the exploitation by Europe of the rest of the world.

It would strengthen local democracy, and could grant autonomy to hitherto suppressed peoples such as the Scots, Welsh, Basques, and Sardinians, and act as a major constraint on the emergence of a new European superpower.

Thirdly, EC democratisation requires the surrender of its West European exclusivism.

Instead of a "Fortress Europe" we must call for an "Open-door Europe" which positively welcomes the participation of *all* Europeans and the establishment of justice and equity in the EC's relations with the Third World.

The membership of neutral and non-aligned countries (including those currently in the European Free Trade Association) would help shift the balance of power within the EC towards a non-nuclear and de-aligned policy.

Participation by East European nations, perhaps initially as associate EC members, would contribute greatly to healing the division of the continent and promoting East-West reconciliation.

The democratisation of the emerging European state is crucial to any future project for socialism in this country and the EC.

It is also a vote-winning policy which would enable Labour to campaign as the champion of European democracy.

Rally for a nuclear-free future
CND at Brighton
Sunday October 1st
Assemble 12 noon, "The Level", Lewes Road
March to Rally, 1pm,
Brighton Beach, outside Conference Centre

CND believes that a Labour goverment must:
- **cancel Trident;**
- **remove all Britain's nuclear weapons from service, and dismantle them;**
- **cut Britain's defence spending (currently one of the highest in NATO) and spend the money on social services;**
- **remove all US nuclear bases from Britain;**
- **refuse to participate in NATO's nuclear "modernisation" programme — especially plans to bring more nuclear weapons to Britain;**
- **cut Britain's arms exports — now the second highest in the world.**

CND has put nuclear disarmament on the agenda. The tide has turned our way. Be there on October 1st to keep the Labour Party on the right track.

Meetings for a Socialist Alternative

•Labour's Socialist Alternative

Pre-Conference Rally. Friday September 15th, 7.30pm, Sheffield City Polytechnic, Totley Hall Lane, Totley, Sheffield. Speakers: Alice Mahon, Audrey Wise, Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, others invited from NEC Left Slate). Organised by North West Campaign for Socialism & CLPs Conference; supported by Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, CLPD, Socialist Movement.

•Planning for Victory!

One day seminar. Saturday September 23rd, 11.30-17.30, Red Rose Labour Club, 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7. Constitutional problems (Tony Benn MP); Economic strategy (Ken Livingstone MP); Social & environmental matters (Audrey Wise MP); Defence & International (Harry Cohen MP/Jeremy Corbyn MP). Organised by the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour Members of Parliament. Conference fees: £2.00. Source Paper: "Policy Review Critique". Registration: Jeremy Corbyn MP, Red Rose Centre, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG.

NEC Elections

Left slate

The only check on Kinnock's dominance within the Labour Party over the last year has been the small but determined minority of left-wingers on the NEC.

Again and again, Benn, Livingstone and Skinner, along with the YS representative, have stood up for the rights of grass-roots Labour Party members, for workers and others in struggle with the Tory government and the employers.

They have been strong supporters of internationalism and a socialist economic policy.

Alone, they systematically opposed the Policy Review — not just the odd (though important) detail but its whole clapped-out, defensive, irrelevant drift.

They defended Party policy on unilateral nuclear disarmament and voted against the continuation of nuclear power.

By MARK SEATON

Alone, they fought for the right of Vauxhall CLP to select a candidate of its own choice — and helped expose the racist manoeuvres that, in the end, kept all black candidates off the short list.

Now Benn, Livingstone and Skinner are under concerted attack from Kinnock and the LCC. As the LCC's Summer 1989 Mailing says:

"Ken, Benn and Skinner

"It's time CLPs started to ask what these three individuals contribute to the work of the NEC. On most voting issues, they have been in a hard left rump..."

It seems that no voices of dissent are to be tolerated on Labour's highest democratically-accountable body.

We must make every effort to maximise their vote and to see that they are joined in the coming year by three other candidates standing on the Socialist Campaign Group slate:

Diane Abbott, Alice Mahon, and Audrey Wise, along with Gavin Strang for Treasurer and Anne Pettifor and Anni Marjoram in the Women's Section.

The *Briefing* National Steering Committee discussed the question of this year's left slate at some length at its July meeting.

We decided in the end that we could not support Jo Richardson, Clare Short, and Margaret Beckett because of their support on the NEC for the main tenets of the Policy Review and their refusal to vote for Martha Osamor's re-inclusion on the shortlist for the Vauxhall by-election.

Purity

The problem here is not one of political purity. After all, there are several people on our slate this year with whom we have had major disagreements.

For us, the point is that if slates are to have any meaning they must have a coherent poltical basis.

If they are simply lists of individuals who may or may not have various qualities to recommend them, how and why should a rank-and-file Party members (who after all do not know them personally) decide to support them?

This year the two key issues which are mentioned above (Policy Review and Vauxhall) marked a watershed.

We feel there is no benefit to the left in offering its support at Conference to people who have so comprehensively spurned it over the last year.

Patchy

Of course, a further problem remains. Despite a patchy consultative effort by the Campaign for Socialism, which now appears to be defunct, this year's left slate was once again drawn up without the democratic involvement of rank-and-file Labour left-wingers.

Not surprisingly, little in the way of aggressive campaigning on its behalf has followed.

For the left to improve its fortunes in ballots of this kind, it must make itself more democratic, more accountable, more political.

SUPPORT:
CONSTITUENCY SECTION:
Abbott, Benn, Livingstone, Mahon, Skinner, Wise.
TREASURER:
Strang
WOMEN'S SECTION:
Pettifor, Marjoram
NCC:
Slater
CONFERENCE ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE, CLPS' SECTION:
Willsman

Black Sections



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

The black community knows years of long and bitter struggle in Britain, years when the organised labour movement often stood on the sidelines. Is the Labour Party about to make the breakthrough and recognise black self-organisation?

On the brink of victory?

At long last, the aspirations of Black people for some form of self-organisation and self-representation within the Labour Party appear to be close to becoming a reality.

Composite 5, passed at last year's Party Conference, called on the NEC to bring forward rule changes to the 1989 Conference to establish a "socialist societies structure" to represent Black people.

The NEC established a Working Party (fully reflecting the current political balance of the NEC and therefore presumably hostile to the left and to Black Sections in particular).

The Working Party recommended the formation of an affiliated black socialist society — in essence the same proposal put forward by Bill Morris of the TGWU some years ago.

The Working Party, whose recommendations were endorsed "in principle" by the NEC in July, calls for the setting up of a single socialist society, along the lines of NOLS.

It would have local branches, regional co-ordinating groups, and provision for representation on the NEC.

By Narendra Makanji
Chair National Black Sections

Proposals

At a meeting of national Black Sections in August we agreed that these proposals were "positive and constructive" and an excellent basis for further discussion at Conference.

We remain concerned about some of the undefined areas in the Working Party's proposals.

In particular a provision for "associate membership" of local groups and a reference to the proposed organisation being "black led" need to be clarified.

The purpose of this organisation must be to ensure self-representation by black people. If whites are allowed power within it, it ceases to fulfill its stated function.

Nonetheless, we regard the Working Party proposals as a major victory for Black Sections.

In a period when the left in general is in retreat, especially within the Labour Party structures, the advances made by Black Sections are especially striking and should be enthusiastically supported by all socialists.

Of course, we are not complacent. We know that Roy Hattersley, in particular, will be out to sabotage any hope of Black self-organisation.

The September NEC meeting may prove crucial. If right-wingers torpedo the Working Party's proposals (by insisting, for example, on white membership of the new society) we will campaign vigorously against any sham alternative they may come up with.

We will not not relent in our campaign for black self-organisation and representation in the labour movement, a key componeny, we believe, in the struggle for black liberation in Britain.

Briefing goes to Brighton

Briefing is planning a host of activities at this year's Party Conference in Brighton.

As usual, we will be holding a major fringe meeting on Sunday evening following the close of the first Conference session. This year we have an all-women platform which will sketch out a new agenda for the Labour Left.

We will be working hard to build the Socialist Movement's various meetings, especially the open session for left delegates on Thursday evening.

We will also be producing, once again, a sharply-written, attractively designed daily bulletin for conference delegates.

It will carry reports from conference debates and fringe meetings, analyses of major issues, voting recommendations, and of course all the nasty truths about the backstage manoeuvres which others refuse to print.

As before, we will place ourselves and our facilities at the disposal of a wide variety of campaigns.

We will be working flat out to build the LCLGR lobby on the Monday of conference, the Voices for Rushdie fringe meeting on the Wednesday, and the activities planned by the Pergamon strikers, to name but a few.

If you're a delegate and you need accommodation or just some friendly assistance, get in touch.

If you're a *Briefing* supporter and you've got some time free during conference week — well, what are you waiting for? We need all the help we can get for what promises to be a hard-working but exciting week.

LABOUR BRIEFING FRINGE MEETING
Sunday evening, October 1st
(after close of conference session)
A NEW AGENDA FOR THE LABOUR LEFT: WOMEN SPEAK OUT!
with
❖ Alice Mahon MP ❖ Martha Osamor ❖
❖ Mandy Mudd ❖ Rebecca Fleming ❖
and others
Brighthelm Centre
North Road, Brighton.

LCLGR

Lobby for full equality!

LCLGR has called a mass lobby in support of our emergency campaign for the reinstatement of the commitment to full equality for lesbians and gay men in the Policy Review.

Delegations of supporters have already pledged to attend from Leeds and Manchester, with larger numbers expected from London, the South, and Brighton itself.

Speakers at the lobby will include COHSE union official Tracey Lambert.

Brighton Stop the Clause Group is organising a social in the evening for everyone who has attended the lobby.

As a result of its emergency campaign LCLGR has secured a Conference debate on the lesbian and gay rights paragraph in the Policy Review.

A number of LCLGR members have also been elected as delegates to the Conference and LCLGR plans to have a lesbian proposing and a gay man seconding the composite resolution.

LCLGR members were busy lobbying leaders of the main trade unions — TGWU, GMB, MSF, NUPE, and COHSE — at the TUC Congress in preparation for Labour Party Conference.

**Taken from LCLGR press release*

Mass lobby of Labour Party Conference
12 noon to 2pm
Monday October 2nd
Brighton Conference Centre

El Salvador

FMLN strength still to be tested

El Salvador has the most advanced political and military revolutionary movement in Latin America.

Late last year, this movement, the FMLN, seemed on the crest of a wave and openly warned that if political negotiations weren't held, a mass insurrection would follow.

Since then we have seen the death squad party, ARENA, come to power on a very low vote in fraudulent elections marked by mass abstension in favour of the FMLN. The situation remains tense.

ARENA doesn't have the power it hoped for, and has had to postpone its plans for a fascist-style constitution. Mass activity by the workers movement continues, but the FMLN have shelved their plans for an insurrection.

ARENA's trumpeted "Anti-Terrorist Law" was to be pushed through on the premise that:

"Universal Declaration of Human Rights are prime duties of the State... obliges us to prevent and sanction attempts against the lives, personal integrity and freedoms of individuals in this historical time for the Republic."

ARENA intended to impose a five-year prison sentence on people convicted of, for example, sending visits, delegations or messages abroad for the purposes of seeking international solidarity ("intervening in matters concerning El Salvador").

By Gareth Mostyn

Similarly, graffitti or even renting a house "in order to produce/distribute such propaganda", i.e. propaganda meant to "subvert" the public order, could carry a two year sentence.

The "Anti-Terrorist Law" has been defeated for the time being, by the sustained public opposition of large sectors of the population, including the trade union movement and even some right wing parties.

But the government has raised no protest against public adverts placed by the likes of "The Ghost Busters Command", a death squad which publishes its intention to kill leading left wing politicians.

Public sector unions demanded substantial wage increases and reinstatement of sacked workers and campaigned for these demands through regular demonstrations and strikes for a period of nine months.

They have now won their demands and other unions have also forced concessions from their bosses on basic trade union rights.

The ARENA government can obviously not fight on too many fronts at once and is weaker than many expected it to be.

With their proposals to privatise utilities, ARENA have earned the admiration of Thatcher. She has nominated them for membership of the Conservative International Democratic Union.

Although membership of a Tory International is not one of our primary concerns, we must nonetheless campaign (with or without Kinnock) against Thatcher's attempt to befriend this paramilitary death squad government.

Meanwhile, the FMLN is feeling confident, so confident that it feels that it can win without a mass insurrection. They have publicly "dismantled" their military and political plan for insurrection.

Instead, they now say that "the Salvadorean people are already exhibiting insurrectional behaviour" and that the "FMLN is winning the war by every criterion imaginable."

Behind the new FMLN emphasis is their view that the Bush administration is less ideological and more practical than the Reagan one.

They believe that the US government wishes to de-emphasise Central America, and that the threat of direct US invasion is "absurd at a time when the Vietnamese are withdrawing from Cambodia and the Soviets are leaving Afghanistan."

So far, both sides of an increasingly polarised society are reluctant to allow their own positions to reach their ultimate conclusions.

The new government has not unleashed open total war on the people and the FMLN are not yet leading those people into an uprising. But none of the underlying social contradictions has been removed and there is still all to play for.

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign

Peace Agreement

The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign welcomes the recently signed agreement between the presidents of El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Nicaragua regarding the demobilisation of the Nicaraguan *contras*.

We believe that the agreement holds out a hope for lasting peace in the region and could provide the basis for Nicaragua to step up the urgent work of rebuilding its war-shattered economy.

However, our welcome is qualified by caution. There are still those who would seek to destroy the prospects for peace and progress in Central America.

We must note with anger that the US government continues to support the *contras* financially, in violation of the peace agreement.

We must also remember that the *contra* leaders are drawn directly from the ranks of Somoza's brutal National Guard. As such, they have demonstrated little regard for democratic decisions in Nicaragua or anywhere else.

Both the *contras* and their US backers have shown in the past that they are prepared to flout both national and international laws in pursuit of their aggression against Nicaragua.

In these circumstances we feel that it would be unwise to assume that the US and the *contras* will fully accept the agreement, even though the Nicaraguan opposition parties have recently joined the government of Nicaragua in calling for the disbandment of the *contras*.

Even with an end to the war in sight, the US has shown no sign of letting up in its economic and political hostility. This policy has included a complete trade ban (renewed this year), a ban on aid, and attempts at internal destabilisation by the CIA.

US interference in Nicaragua has also extended to the elections due to be held in Feburary 1990, through support and funding for the opposition parties.

The US is taking advantage of Nicaragua's openly democratic system whilst denying that such a system exists!

Although the US is now virtually alone in the intensity of its hostility towards the Nicaraguan government, that hostility is severely undermining all that Nicaragua has done and is trying to do to develop its society and economy.

The NSC organises practical and political solidarity work in Britain. For details of activities, contact NSC, 23 Bevenden Street, London N13 6BH, tel. 01-253 2464.

Forward with t Central Ameri Ex-Revolution

There is a feeling in the air that peace may be breaking out all over Central America.

Meeting in Tela, Honduras, on August 7th, the five Central American presidents agreed to complete the "voluntary" demobilisation of the Nicaraguan *contra* rebels by December 8th, under joint UN and OAS supervision.

Days before the Tela meeting, President Bush was reportedly on the blower to President Arias of Costa Rica and his closer allies in the region,urging a reprieve for his predecessor's "freedom fighters".

It was all to no avail.

With Soviet new thinking changing the shape of international relations, one more regional conflict, the one closest to Reagan's heart, seems to be heading for a "political" settlement.



Sandinista troops parading in the capital

By STUART PIPER

According to the *Financial Times*:

"Sandinista Nicaragua is an impoverished nation, incompetently run by a group of relative well-intentioned ex-revolutionaries desperate to obtain the benefits of a capitalist world in a peaceful Central America."

Many on the left would agree, though they might be reluctant to spell it out.

The Sandinistas are imposing austerity measures even harsher than any dictated by the IMF. The FMLN in El Salvador is apparently turning its back on insurrection in favour of an electoral path.

Could the casual observer not be forgiven for deducing that revolution in Central America is a bit of a dead duck?

But this line of thinking gravely underestimates the seriousness of the threats still facing Nicaragua, its economic strangulation and the consequent possibility of a "democratic counter-revolution".

This possibility has been made more plausible by the decision earlier this month by 14 of the 23 opposition parties to unite behind Violeta Chamorro as presidential candidate.

It also wildly overestimates the possibilities of compromise in El Salvador.

The net effect is to demobilise international solidarity when it is more vital than ever. The *forms* of the conflict in Central America are indeed changing dramatically, but the underlying stakes are not.

In January (coincidentally, just one week after the FMLN had announced its readiness to stand in elections) Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega announced a policy of economic "concertation" (the unkind translation would be "collaboration").

The immediate objective of the policy is to tackle the 20,000% hyper-inflation and to regenerate production, especially in the agro-export and basic grain sectors, by redirecting credit and investment.

It is an extension and readjustment of the austerity packages of February and June 1988, which tried first to attack the black market and rampant speculation through monetary reform and then to slash the public deficit by removing subsidies and laying off public employees.

Paradoxically (some would say cynically), that June package was accompanied by the first ever public assertion by FSLN leaders that the revolution that took power in 1979 was and had always been a socialist one.

All these measures have had dire effects on living standards, above all in the towns.

The far left inside Nicaragua is represented by the small, former-Maoist Popular Action Movement and the even smaller Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers Party (aligned with the international current of the Argentinian MAS).

The far left believes the FSLN is heading ever further down a bourgeois path. Undoubtedly, many Sandinista militants and sympathisers have similar worries.

At least a part of the FSLN leadership seem to see the new course as a necessary evil, the only practicable way of saving the economy from total collapse.

At the end of May, after an 8-hour face-to-face meeting with 1,400 teachers, many of whom were on strike for derisory wage increases, Ortega insisted that whilst in other countries IMF-type measures are applied to keep power in the hands of the bourgeoisie, "We do it to defend the people's interests."

Some, like Tomas Borge, seem to see the measures as a temporary interruption, after which

Useful Addresses

Central America Week
83 Margaret Street, London W1N 7HB. 01-631 5173.

El Salvador Solidarity Campaign
20-21 Compton Street, London N1. 01-704 9849.

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign
23 Bevenden Street, London N13 6BH. 01-253 2464.

Guatemalan Working Group
1 Amwell Street, London EC1R 1UL. 01-278 2829.

Latin America Bureau
1 Amwell Street, London EC1R 1UL. 01-278 2829.

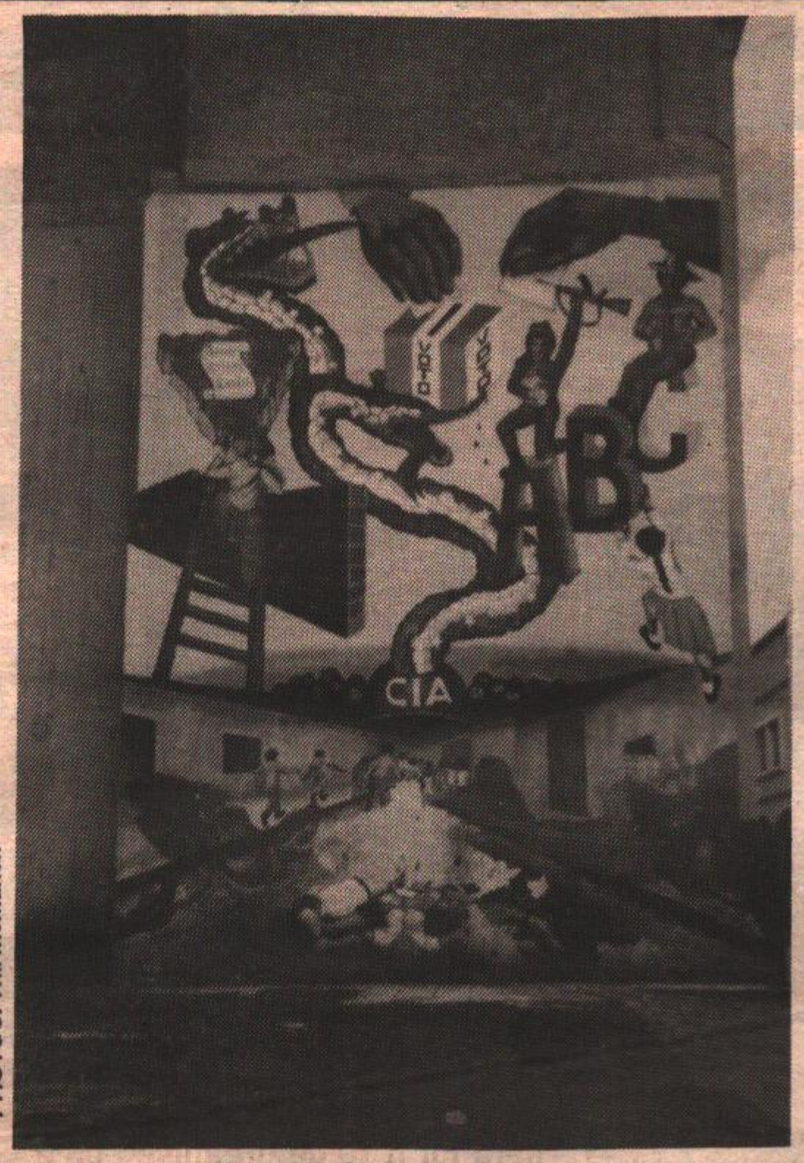
El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduran Human Rights Campaigns
82 Margaret Street, London W1N 7HB.

Trade Union Support for Guatemala
C/o CARILA, 29 Islington Park Street, London N1.

the can ?



PHOTOS: Will McMahon



Revolutionary snakes and ladders

old model will be restored.
He adds, a little disingenuous-
that concertation does not
an renouncing the class strug-
: "thisis an objective factor; it
ists outside of our will."
Whether the proposals for
rkers' management put for-
rd to the National Assembly
the Sandinista trade unions
ll fall into the category of class
uggle or concertation, remains
be seen.
There is also a more sophisti-
ted view, which could be
scribed as "radical-Gor-
chevite", most coherently ex-
essed by the Jesuit-based think-
k at the Central American His-
ical Institute.

Democratise

This sees the measures as
ginning a Nicaraguan transi-
n to a "non-statist" socialism,
ing market mechanisms to
mocratise production, in ac-
rdance with the peculiarities of
caragua's dependent, mainly
al society.
For example, they claim that
new "real" prices paid to basic
in producers, by reducing the
rofits" of the state purchasing
thority, will mean that ad-
nistration of the state silo net-
rk has to be devolved to the
oducers' co-operatives them-
ves, i.e. democratised.
By such means, power will be
fted away from the agrarian
urgeoisie, which has proved it-
f inefficient and therefore will
t qualify for credits.
It will be shifted as well as from
arasitic" state sectors and the
ban informal economy, in
vour of the more efficient
asantry and other petty com-
dity producers.

The urban proletariat (which as they correctly point out is rather small) will suffer in so far as it has come to rely on the informal economy for most of its income; but in the medium term, it will benefit from the revaluation of its wage labour.

All this will create the material basis for survival and "simple reproduction" of the economy "so that production can later be expanded without domestic or foreign subsidies."

Without endorsing any of these one has to recognise the seriousness of the debates underway. But there is certainly room to quarrel with the mechanisms by which policies are decided.

The FSLN's total membership is tiny, believed to be only about 5,000, including candidate members, and its internal workings are extremely opaque. It has not had one congress since taking power ten years ago.

But the fact remains the debate is being conducted at least partly in public in a situation where independent action by the mass organisations for and against different positions is still possible.

This is something which has not been seen in any post-revolutionary society since the Soviet Union in the 1920s.

As a contest between alternative lines within the revolution, it is more advanced than anything which has yet emerged from *glasnost* in Eastern Europe.

Intertwined

The debates in the Salvadoran movement deserve an article in their own right. Here I would like to make three brief points.

First, the debates over immediate tactics and strategies for taking power are intertwined with longer range programmatic ones about the policies to be applied once power is achieved.

FDR leader Ruben Zamora commented last year that the front was locked in debate between those who, as he put it, wanted an open revolution, and some who wanted a closed one.

Second, it is mistaken to believe that the FMLN has abandoned its insurrectionary perspective.

It is true, as Salvador Samayoa, a leader of the FPL (one of the two largest component organisations of the FMLN) has admitted, that the FMLN decided to dismantle the immediate preparations for insurrection which it was pushing forward last year.

It may be that the FPL, with its overwhelming strength in the urban mass movement, was never so convinced of the immediate viability of these plans as the more military based ERP (the other main FMLN organisation).

Indeed, the ERP itself acknowledged that an insurrection would only become possible if a qualitative leap was made in mass consciousness from one of generalised struggle to one of generalised rebellion.

ERP leader Joaquin Villalobos is now clear that one of the principal functions of the electoral proposal is to open space for greater mass participation.

It is this "question of the masses" which has long been the key to the conflict in El Salvador.

Villalobos explains that if the electoral route, backed by an expanded mass movement and with the revolutionary armed forces waiting in the wings, runs into a definitive brick wall, then popular insurrection will be the next and only alternative.

Finally, it is worth contrasting the ERP's vision of the regional nature of the conflict with that of the Central American Historical Institute.

The latter talks of "the establishment on the continent of relations of a new type, based on dialogue and a renunciation of the use of military strength."

September

The former, in a document prepared when they were in full pre-insurrectionary flight last September, spoke of the great social upheaval in the continent engendered by the debt crisis.

"This... will unleash revolutions in major Latin American countries, and in such conditions... Nicaragua and El Salvador will no longer be the North Americans' main counter-insurgency effort in Latin America."

Both positions look set to coexist in the Central American revolution for the foreseeable future.

Women in Nicaragua

Extending gains of the revolution



PHOTO: Will McMahon

Nicaraguan women in the frontline.

Since the 1979 Revolution, great changes have taken place for Nicaraguan women.

There is a deep effervescent process of change, promoted by women themselves.

By bringing into the open subjects which were previously taboo, like abortion or child abuse, or considered to be a "normal" part of life, such as domestic violence, the women's movement in Nicaragua has brought the "personal" onto the political agenda — and to good effect.

Nicaragua has a history of independent women's organisation, known in the 60s as the Patriotic Alliance of Nicaraguan Women.

In 1977, the FSLN promoted the formation of AMPRONAC, which in 1978 became the Luisa Amanda Espinosa Women's Association (AMNLAE), bearing the name of the first woman to be killed fighting against Somoza.

At the time of the insurrection 38% of guerrilla forces were women.

This gave them a great deal of creditability and enabled women to come to the fore when the new government was created. Thirty-one per cent of government leadership positions are now held by women.

Nicaragua is the only country in Latin America to have a Ministry for Women — something for which Labour Party women in Britain have been fighting for years!

By Marta Rodriguez Holborn & St Pancras CLP

The Ministry of Women is serviced by the Women's Secretariat (research department) and the Women's Legal Office.

As a result of their work a series of progressive new laws which are of direct benefit to women have been passed by the General Assembly:

- equal pay for equal work;
- twelve weeks' maternity leave;
- child maintenance;
- equal rights over children for mother and father (the father is no longer automatic head of family);
- adoption rights for single women.

Women, for the first time, were allowed to own land-titles and become co-operative members in their own right.

All of these were pioneering efforts in Latin America.

The new Media Law prohibits the use of women's bodies for commercial purposes (i.e. in advertising). Topics such as domestic violence, child abuse, and rape are being discussed openly.

Such concerns are reflected in one of AMNLAE's aims for 1988/9:

"To fight through a massive education campaign... for the eradication of all forms of violence and aggression against women, the physical, psychological, and moral abuse of women, and the use of women as sexual and commercial objects."

The fact that abortion remains illegal, although it is government policy not to prosecute anyone who has or performs an abortion, is a controversial subject.

The FSLN itself is divided over the issue and fearful of a political backlash organised on religious grounds.

The government has directed its efforts towards ensuring that contraception is more widely available and promoting a national programme of sex education.

For the feminist lobby which has developed within and around AMNLAE this is not enough. Lea Guido, AMNLAE's general secretary, said at the last National Assembly of the Women's Section of the Agricultural Workers' Union:

"Rape sentences are minimal — five to 12 years...

"we want sentences to be harder, longer, not only to punish but to dissuade offenders — because we want to teach that the relationships between men and women, between parents and children must be relationships of love and not of violence.

"So what we are asking for is to penalise domestic violence, so that we can eliminate power relationships and we can begin to establish relationships of respect.

"And to conclude, we are demanding an end to clandestine abortions. Why? There are two things here, either we advocate that women should have as many children as they want or we are for clandestine abortions.

"AMNLAE is for sexual education, that is why we want contraception accessible to women...

"we also want those women who have decided to have an abortion to receive one free of risk at a hospital, and not to arrive at hospital only to die from a badly performed abortion...

"In this way women come together under common aims and can offer alternatives to existing social relations."

In the run-up to the 1990 elections, the right wing elements in Nicaragua, backed by the US, are gearing up to distort FSLN policies in whatever way they can, and are claiming that the FSLN is "destroying the family".

The government has made it clear that they need massive support from the people on the issue of decriminalisation of abortion.

"This law should not just be changed by decree. Discussion and education must first take place among the broad masses of women," said Doris Tijerino, Chief of Police. That debate has now begun.

The free elections in February will be an important challenge for the FSLN, after ten years of popular government undermined by eight years of US-inspired counter-revolutionary war.

Now that the *contras* are strategically defeated it is ever more crucial to maintain the achievements of the revolutionary process and this can only be guaranteed by a victory for the FSLN at the forthcoming elections.

The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign has launched a campaign to publicise the holding of the elections and to highlight the US intervention in the electoral process (which has already started).

The NSC is raising funds to go directly to the FSLN election campaign. Given the desperate economic situation in Nicaragua, international support is needed more than ever.

If you can donate money or assist in any way contact the NSC, 23 Bevenden Street, London N1 6BH.

The Women's Page

Tories legislate on Warnock Report:

Testing time for the nuclear family

It is now seven years since the government set up a Committee of Inquiry chaired by Baronness Mary Warnock to:

"...consider recent and potential developments in medicine and science related to human fertilisation and human embryology;

"consider what policies and safeguards should be applied, including consideration of the social, ethical and legal implications of these developments;

"make recommendations."

It is five years since that Committee produced its Report and two years since the government published its White Paper — Human fertilisation and Embryology: A Framework for Legislation. Now, finally, the Minister has promised that this autumn's Queen's speech will outline proposals for legislation, to be debated this Parliamentary Session.

REBECCA FLEMMING briefs us on the issues the legislation will cover, and explains why women will need to get campaigning.



The nuclear family oppresses all of us, whilst keeping the capitalist system going. Whatever changes new technology brings, the Tories will try to exclude women from having control over their own bodies.

The long delay in bringing forward legislation is due in part to an already massively overcrowded Parliamentary schedule.

But it has also been delayed by the diverse and contradictory nature of the matters considered by the Warnock Report: embryo research, surrogacy, and all kinds of infertility treatments.

The Tories have attempted to steer a course between people's overwhelming obsession with having *their own* children and the fact that the many new techniques developed during this passionate quest for biological parenthood could undermine the nuclear family.

It is the central justification of the oppressive nuclear family that it is "natural", based on biological ties and romantic love.

This ideology is entwined with the ancient concern with paternity and lineage for the purpose of passing on property and status.

In places it all gets too confusing and there is one (central) point where the government has simply said "pass": embryo research. Parliament is to have a free choice between a complete ban and very limited and tightly regulated research on embryos.

There are obvious scientific benefits of embryo research: improving IVF techniques, diagnosing genetic diseases, investigating causes of infertility and miscarriage and developing new forms of contraception.

But the Tories see that such research challenges the "natural order" of reproduction in the family and the ideas of the embryo containing the sacred spark of life.

Scientific

Scientific progress should not intrude on the mysteries of life necessary to maintain the social order!

The main (though not exclusive) motivation in government thinking for a complete ban on embryo research is the belief that the embryo is a human being, that "life" begins at conception, if not before.

More subtle, but potentially just as dangerous, is the debate on time limits for research, which are based on attempts to identify:

"a particular stage at which it could definitively be said that an embryo had the potential to develop into a person".

This raises the possibility of giving embryos some sort of protection in law. Both motivations will be seen as backdoor attempts to outlaw abortion and a further erosion of a woman's right to control her own body.

A compromise similar to the one over embroy research is proposed to deal with surrogacy.

The White Paper concludes that legislation should make it clear that any contract drawn up as part of a surrogacy arrangement will be unenforcable in all aspects of the UK courts.

Criminal law will not be involved, however, except in the cases of commercial agencies; and the situation will be kept constantly under review.

Default

Thus, almost by default, the government has come up with the most sensible suggestion possible in the circumstances. Legal unenforcability of a surrogacy contract means that no woman who has carried a child can be legally forced to surrender it.

However, this reasoning is not based on any idea of women's rights or welfare.

It is based on confusion over the conflict between biological ties outside marriage (which legal precedent has always resolved in the mother's "favour") — plus a healthy dose of pragmatism.

Other areas of the Report are more helpful to those who wish to shore up the heterosexual, patriarchal, nuclear family — most clearly the section dealing with infertility treatments, especially Artificial Insemination by Donor (AID).

AID is used increasingly by lesbians who want to have children without the distasteful business of sleeping with a man.

The White Paper proposes that a Statutory Licensing Authority (SLA) is set up to "regulate and monitor practice in relation to those sensitive areas which raise fundamental ethical questions". This specifically includes AID.

Code

The SLA (the membership of which will be appointed by the Secretary of State for Social Services) will license centres providing infertility services and draw up a Code of Practice on the provision of regulated infertility services.

It will be a *criminal offence* to "use gametes donated by a third party to create, by artificial means, an embryo inside the body (e.g., using techniques such as AID) without an appropriate licence from the SLA."

The White Paper consistently assumes that all the "couples" referred to are heterosexual (if not married!).

It does not go as far as the Warnock Report itself which explicitly states that infertility treatment should be available only to long-term, heterosexual couples, but Section 78 of the Paper ominously concludes:

"In considering whether to grant a licence the SLA will be required to take account of centre's procedures for deciding whether to offer treatment to particular couples."

Lesbians

Lesbians and other groups of women, e.g. black women, who have historically struggled for the right to *have* children, are clearly to be excluded from access to infertility treatments.

Indeed, a dominant theme of the whole White Paper is the complete denial of any control to the women involved. Decisions and control rests with the medical profession, the SLA, the State... never the woman!

A major campaign is going to have to be mounted around the legislation which will follow the White Paper. Women's rights will be once again under attack.

However, it will not be as straightforward as recent campaigns around reproductive rights have been, and we must discuss what kinds of demands to raise.

One line of thought within the women's movement completely rejects any sort of reproductive technology as it is controlled by men and used exclusively in their interests.

These women would oppose embryo research even though this puts them in the same camp as Enoch Powell, albeit for very different reasons.

However, for socialist feminists the fact that reproductive technology is currently controlled by men and overwhelmingly used to strengthen the nuclear family does not mean that it can never be otherwise.

The socialist feminist response is based on three central principles:

- opposition to any attempt to give embryos or foetuses rights;
- a fundamental insistence on a woman's right to control her own body;
- the demand that *all* infertility treatments should be freely available to *all* women, regardless of sexuality, race, class, disability, age or marital status.

Women for Socialism...

...has developed from the Socialist Conference as a broad, non-sectarian, autonomous women's organisation.

It aims to:

Fight...

...for a socialist-feminist future, free from exploitation at work, from racism, and from male violence. We want a future where we have the right to work, the right to health, to education, to childcare, where lesbian mothers are not denied custody of their children, and where we have the right to control our own bodies.

Develop...

...an active anti-racist and anti-imperialist feminism that is inseparable from the struggle for socialism.

Contribute...

...to practical and supportive alliances amongst women including between women inside and outside of the labour movement.

Build...

...support for feminist ideas and actions particularly in the labour movement (the trade unions and the Labour Party).

Women For Socialism is organising many activities and providing space for socialist-feminists to discuss their ideas on a wide range of issues. All members receive the W4S Newsletter free.

If you would like more information about Women for Socialism or to join please write to:

W4S, c/o 7 Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY.

Briefing Women

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

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

I am particularly interested in:.....

.....

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

FILM REVIEW

Doing the right thing?



Sal's famous Pizzeria burns

***Do the Right Thing* was written, produced, and directed by Spike Lee, a 32 year old African American film-maker, who has already made two popular movies on Black-oriented topics.**

The motivation for his latest film was the death of Michael Stewart, a graffitti artist who was killed by transit authority officers in New York City for allegedly resisting arrest.

The subsequent events in Howard Beach, New York, in which a black man was killed by a gang of white racists, further crystalised Lee's concerns about the state of race relations in the US's largest city.

Set in a black and Hispanic neighbourhood in Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant area, the film's events take place during one hot summer day on one city block.

Lee presents a series of black low income characters — under-educated and jobless, but with a real sense of dignity and humanity.

The characters include:

•two black elders, excellently portrayed by Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee;

•Bugging Out (Giancarlo Esposito), the local would-be activist who is upset by the lack of black ownership in the community;

•Radio Raheem (Bill Nunn), a huge young man with an equally huge ghettoblaster;

•Smiley (Roger Smith), a young man with a speech defect who nevertheless represents the most politically advanced character in the entire film by his advocacy of the ideas of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.;

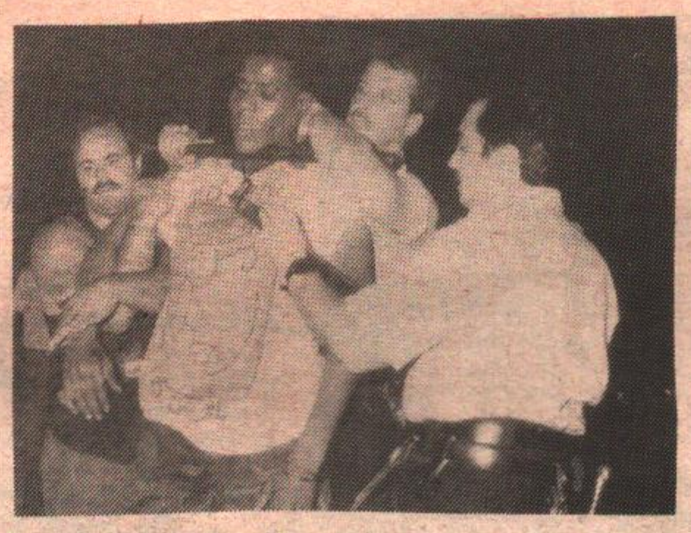
•and Mookie, played by Lee himself, an unmarried father who works at an Italian American-owned pizzeria in the heart of the black community.

By MANNING MARABLE

The central antagonism develops when Bugging Out complains to the owner of the pizzeria (Danny Aiello) that there should be photographs of prominent African American artists, athletes, and political leaders in his shop, which is almost exclusively patronised by blacks and Hispanics.

When the owner refuses, Bugging Out organises a small, inept boycott which leads to a confrontation. Radio Raheem's ghettoblaster is smashed by Sal, the pizzeria owner, and a fight ensues.

The police are called and in typical fashion respond by choking Radio Raheem to death. Mookie leads the outraged residents to attack and destroy the pizzeria.



Radio Raheem is choked to death by police.

A dialectical tension underscores the whole film: between hopes for inter-racial peace and non-violent change and the need for group solidarity, empowerment, and armed self-defence against racist brutality.

This is the reason Lee uses Public Enemy's *Fight the Power* and the National Black Anthem *Lift Every Voice and Sing* at the opening of the film and quotations from Malcolm and Martin at the conclusion.

Politics and power are at the heart of Lee's film. We are shown black men and women who are out of work or marginally employed, living in neighbourhoods which are controlled economically by non-blacks.

The police treat African Americans with contempt, functioning like an occupying army in enemy territory.

To ensure the property, businesses and lives of white occupiers, the police make selective examples of non-whites through the utilisation of extreme coercion.

Radio Raheem's execution is not accidental, but typical of the pattern of white political domination and black oppression.

Do the right thing also presents the contradictions of black-white relations by examining the personal ambiguity between the white storeowner, his two sons, and Mookie.

Though one of these sons is bitterly racist, the owner himself is proud of his cordial relations with most of his black patrons.

Though Mookie initiates the looting of the store after Radio Raheem's death, on the morning after, Sal is still prepared to pay his former employee twice what he was owed.

The film strikes a responsive chord here because race relations *are* complex. Whites who are profoundly racist frequently and hate an entire group of people do make exceptions with individuals.

Sal's failure isn't personal; it's political.

Bugging Out doesn't want to marry Sal's daughter or to force him to sell the pizzeria. He only wants Malcolm's and Martin's pictures on the pizzeria's wall as a symbolic recognition of the heritage and humanity of its patrons.

Sal's refusal is fundamentally the refusal of white racism to reeognise that human rights go beyond property rights.

A number of confused critics, black and white, have attacked Lee for making a film which supposedly advocates violence.

If they really lived in the inner city, they'd understand that if anything Lee's film actually understates the race and class tensions in contemporary America.

***Manning Marable teaches politics at the University of Colorado.**

***MIKE MARQUSEE adds:**

Since Manning Marable wrote the above, a young black man was murdered in an out-and-out racist assault in the Bensonhurst neighbourhood in Queens, New York.

The Italian pizzeria owner in *Do the Right Thing* comes from this neighbourhood — only a small example of the prophetic power of Lee's film.

At the murdered boy's funeral, Lee accompanied the grieving family, racist New York Mayor Ed Koch was booed, and his black opponent David Dinkins was cheered.

An anti-racist protest march through Bensonhurst drew 7,000 — and was greeted by local residents displaying watermelons, a symbol of their racist contempt for black people.

For more on the racial situation in New York City and the Mayoral election there, see the next *Labour Briefing*.

New South African publications

Workers' Revolution

This new, up-to-the-minute journal of revolutionary Marxism, while written to intervene in the debates and initiatives in South Africa, provides an invaluable source of information and ideas for British activists.

The first issue, hot off the presses, leads with an in-depth assessment of the struggles of the last five years, and goes on to map out the tasks of revolutionary socialists in South Africa today.

Particularly valuable is the section on the "Economic Crisis", which takes the reader through the less well known detail behind the better known generalities.

Other articles expand on the struggles in Namibia, the Soviet Union, and China.

Setting its analysis and demands unashamedly in a Trotskyist context, Workers' Revolution appeals for contributions from readers, so that it can act as a platform for discussion of the burning issues of the day.

Copies of *Workers Revolution* can be ordered from the Labour Briefing office, PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY. £2.35 for 1 copy; £11.50 for 5 copies; £22.70 for 10 copies (including postage and packing). Please make cheques payable to *Labour Briefing*.

Frontline Worker

The first issue of *Frontline Worker, a journal for a socialist movement in South Africa* contains 48 pages of discussion and analysis of recent developments, including prospects for a negotiated settlement, the unification of the workers' movement, and the problematic "constitutional guidelines" of the ANC.

Frontline Worker, an amalgamation of *Azania Frontline* and *Azania Worker* adheres to the revolutionary tradition of characterising the oppression in South Africa as one of racial capitalism and identifying the Black working class as the central agent of revolutionary change.

Frontline Worker no. 1 reproduces many fascinating documents of the liberation movement previously unavailable in this country. It also contains an obituary on CLR James by veteran South African Trotskyist (and *Briefing* contributor) Charlie van Gelderen.

Frontline Worker is available at £2.00 from BM Box 4863, London WC1N 3XX.

BOOK REVIEW

Critical vs. New Realism

***Reclaiming Reality*, by Roy Bhaskar, *Verso*, £8.95 (paperback).**

***Reclaiming Reality* is one of the most important and lucid works of socialist philosophy to have appeared in this otherwise barren decade.**

Roy Bhaskar is well known as an organiser of the Socialist Movement's philosophy group.

A rarity amongst "Oxford Dons", he has tried to combine his views on highly abstract questions regarding the nature of science with socialist political activity.

Bhaskar has stressed the central place of science and rationality in socialist strategy.

His call for a new socialist "Enlightenment" has been welcome at a time when the forces of obscurantism (religious, "post-modernist") have been gathering strength.

Briefing readers will be particularly interested in the book's first essay "Criticial Realism, Social Relations" in which Bhaskar writes,

"the so-called new realism merely reflects and accommodates to the new and rapidly changing surface forms of contemporary capitalism."

In contrast, the realism advocated by Bhaskar focuses on *underlying structures* that generate classes and exploitation.

Where Neil Kinnock's New Realist stance "empties the social world of any enduring structural dimension," *critical realism* works for fundamental transformations of social relations.

It searches out the sources of determination that are needed to overthrow oppression.

By Andrew Coates

It looks for the "real" structures of society, the relations which Marx described as "independent" of human volition.

In "Scientific Explanation and Human Emancipation", Bhaskar shows how such an understanding can be used to advance the "possibility of emancipation".

The world would be a better place, he states, if people could come to grips with the forces that control their lives by virtue of their apparently natural place in society.

Fans of Bhaskar (amongst whom I count myself) will be particularly pleased to read in *What is Critical Realism" a comprehensive account of his philosophical development.*

Marxists will enjoy his analysis of dialectics, one of the best pieces I've seen on this difficult topic.

And sociologists will find much to mull over in a chapter devoted to the vexed problem of the relationship between social "structure" and human agency.

If there is one criticism I can make of this collection it is that these articles are not at all an "introduction" to philosophy (as claimed in the subtitle) but an active engagement with the main debates in contemporary theory.

Important

Gramsci once wrote that it was important for people to know that somebody "out there" was defending their point of view on a high philosophical level. The most ignorant Catholic is reassured by the existence of learned Jesuits.

In a sense Bhaskar fulfils this role for the left. He is "out there", defying the irrationalist trends of post-modernism with verve and rigour.

His call for a socialist Enlightenment is delivered with beauty of prose and logical analysis, and with a range of references that is a perpetual challenge to the imagination.

I look forward to his next work: on the "new idealists".

Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture

Boris Kagarlitsky speaking on "The Importance of being Marxist"

Monday, September 18th, 7.30pm

New Theatre, London School of Economics

Houghton Street

London WC2

Trade Union Briefing

Defeat of the dockers; a step forward on wages:

Industrial action lives again!

The recent industrial struggles have been seen as a breakthrough on the wages front.

They have put industrial struggle back on the agenda and shown that the Tories wrote off the organised working class too soon.

The new wave of militancy was shown first in a remarkable series of strike votes, and then in a high level of militancy in the strikes themselves.

The rail workers were 100% solid; the unprecedented strike of 500,000 NALGO members was 90% solid and involved more women in strike action than ever before in this country.

TUC leaders presided over a conference at the beginning of September which lined the unions up for Kinnock's Policy Review — despite some ambigious resolutions on the repeal of Tory anti-union laws and defence.

But even these leaders talked enthusiastically about the recent wave of struggles and described the unions as "on the up and up".

This new mood of confidence is there and it is very important. But these positive developments go along side a crushing defeat of an important section of the British trade union movement — the registered dockers.

By ALAN THORNETT

They were targetted as part of a long term Tory strategy aimed at traditional sectors of the trade union movement in key sectors of the economy. They follow the miners, the printers and the seafarers.

The dockers were defeated by the Tory anti-union laws and the determination of the leadership of the TGWU to work within them.

Their confidence was undermined by three months of vaccilation in the courts, intimidation by the employers, and the manipulation of redundancy payments.

They were forced to fight with both hands tied behind their backs and defeated when the government defused the industrial upsurge which coincided with their strike with an extra 1% on current wage offers.

The Tories took a major gamble with their decision to abolish the National Dock Labour Scheme — an important achievement of the post war trade union movement and greatly valued by a dock labour force with a history of struggle going back to the great strike of 1889.

The dockers have faced challenges of this scale before, under the Labour government of Harold Wilson and the Tory government of Edward Heath — and has fought off the attack.

In 1973 they dealt a decisive blow to Heath's Industral Relations Act in the struggle against the proliferation of unregistered ports which culminated with the arrest and release of the Pentonville Five.

So why were they defeated this time?

Liverpool

The militancy and determination of the majority of registered dockers was not lacking. They voted over 70% for all-out strike action in two ballots. Most of the main ports struck twice unofficially before being ordered back to work by TGWU leaders.

Their strength was shown in Liverpool, where dockers stayed out until the end, and it took a visit by Ron Todd to get them back to work on a two to one majority.

Nor was the strike ineffective. Scheme ports handle 75% of cargo and much of it could not be easily diverted. A prolonged strike of the Scheme ports would have had a damaging effect on the economy.

During the strike the Port Employers, the government and the media played down the impact of the strike. Three weeks after it ended they were blaming it for the one of the worst ever set of trade figures.

Ron Todd's line did not only make the strike ineffective — although by allowing the movement of scab cargo it hampered the strike's effectiveness.

Worse, Todd's line seriously undermined the solidarity of the dockers and their confidence that they could win.

The dockers were thus split wide open from the outset, with the non-Scheme ports not only working normally but handling scab cargo diverted from striking Scheme ports. The strikers could do nothing about it within the law.

Alternative

This was compounded by a weakness at the unofficial level in several key ports, in particular Southampton and Hull, where the employers' pressure drove the dockers back to work at the crucial point.

Ron Todd's line was not challenged politically on the Executive Council: nor was there an organised alternative put to the TGWU conference.

The expected mass picket failed to materialise, and Ron Todd was able to do what Brenda Dean did at the SOGAT conference during the print strike. He pledged full support to the dockers, providing this was within the law.

In contrast, the Government knew exactly what they wanted and what their priorities were.

When the industrial upsurge escalated with docks, rail, London tubes, and NALGO all taking action, they took half a step backwards on the wages issue in order contain the situation and deal with the dockers.

Employers in rail and local government were give clear instructions to make improved offers and to seek settlements — "at any price".

In the middle of all this the dockers were ordered back to work by 18-12 votes at the T&G National Executive, on Todd's recommendation.

The sell-out came soon afterwards, with the sacking of 150 dockers at Tilbury (including all 16 shop stewards) and the de-recognition of the trade union movement in the port of London.

Todd had told the T&G conference a month earlier that if the port employers resort to sackings "there will be no return to work whilst a singe dockers remains sacked."

The dockers, as one section of the T&G, were never the Tories' sole target in this. It was the T&G as a whole, seen as one of the more militant and left wing unions, and even Ron Todd himself, as the leader of this union.

The political nature of Todd and the T&G is, of course, more complicated than that. Nevertheless, after the setback of the dockers' defeat, the leadership is likely to "sober up", and return to the New Realists' ranks.

The defeat in the docks and the de-escalation of the industrial upsurge put confidence back into the employers generally.

Confident

Victimisations were threatened on London Transport. Striking British Airways cabin crews were threatened with the sack.

British Coal felt confident enough to tear up the pit review procedures which had survived the Miners' Strike and closed Betteshanger in Kent and two South Wales pits with three days notice.

On the docks themselves, the betrayal of the strike is having devastating effects. Now there is no Scheme and no national agreement it will be illegal in future for one port to strike in support of another.

The port employers are putting in the expected boot, with further attacks on shop stewards and redundancies in a number of ports. The dockers have had difficult conditions in which to attempt to negotiate local agreements.

The Tories paid a price and beat the dockers. They conceded pay increases of 1% more than they wanted and 0.5% above the official inflation figures (which are well below the true inflation rate).

The effect of these increases on the economy, particularly the inflation rate, will be seen in the coming months. They will also influence the new wage round in the autumn.

Unlike the dock strike, the pay strikes were not defeated.

•The result of the six national rail strikes was a shabby compromise, winning an 8.8% increase, but with the matter of national negotiating rights still ambiguous.

•The NALGO settlement was much more of a victory, with a shift by the employers from 7% to 8.8% and the dropping of all strings.

Others were less successful.

•BBC management managed to get through a deal which sold the workforce short.

•On the London Underground, management dropped the strings to their existing offer, which was then accepted over the heads of the membership.

None of these settlements has done much to tackle low pay in the industries concerned and they were below what could have been achieved. They have, however, been perceived as an advance for the trade unions.

Is the industrial upsurge over?

No, it isn't: not while all the factors which created the summer's strike wave are still present: rising inflation, the pressure of higher interest rates being felt on mortages, and a general swing of opinion aganst the Tories, with particular individual Tory measures highly unpopular.

The "summer of discontent" demonstrated that industrial struggle is back on the agenda, and must still be taken into account.

For the many wage claims now in the pipe-line, 8% is now the bottom line for most negotiations.

The Enginering Confed claim for a "substantial increase" on the basic rate and a reduction of hours to 35 could be a key struggle in the autumn. Claims are coming up in the mortor industry and from local government manual workers.

Any new round of struggle will take place under conditions where New Realism is still in control of the bulk of the trade union movement.

Some of the New Realists have been prepared to concede to pressure from below and allow a certain amount of challenge to the employers, but only as long as it does not go too far.

For the working class, New Realism remains the barrier to realising our aspirations. It is up to the left to work out a strategy for leading the working class over that barrier.



Exxtor's busy Immingham Terminal at a standstill

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

Pergamon Dispute

23 NUJ members are still on official strike for union recognition.

Contact the strike office on: 0865-819162

Transport

● British Rail

Railworkers won an 8.8% pay increase, but the status of national bargaining rights remains involved.
Six one-day national strikes — costing BR £30 million a time — showed a new level of militancy among railworkers and forced BR to improve their pay offer.
Whilst ASLEF caved in, the NUR struck again, rightly insisting that both pay and national bargaining issues had to be satisfactorily resolved.
Finally under pressure from the other rail unions, the Labour leadership and the NUR hierarchy, the NUR Executive called off the action and accepted the offer.
But having flexed their muscles to such useful effect, NUR members remain confident and ready to defend themselves against any further management attacks.

● London Underground

The tube settlement was also a mixed result. United strike action by drivers and guards forced London Underground to drop their sinister productivity strings.
But the pay deal, accepted by the NUR Executive over the heads of the members, fell well short of the original claim. Drivers will get an extra £7 a week instead of the £64 increase they had been demanding.
LT branches of the NUR passed resolutions of no confidence in the leadership and secured the resignation from the NUR Executive of one key negotiator.

New pit closures

Hard times for South Wales miners

In August the local Coal Boards announced the closure of three more pits in South Wales and the last remaining pit in Kent — on the flimsiest of excuses.

The Kent pit, Betteshanger, was closed because insufficient miners turned up on the first shift of the new six day working week! In South Wales, the excuse offered was financial.

But behind the closures the real issue is preparation for privatisation and the destruction of militant NUM lodges.

In all three pits, miners voted not to fight the closures.

In the largest, Oakdale, with over 700 miners, the voting was close, but even here men who voted to close the pit also requested to be put on the transfer list to work elsewhere.

Without doubt, the payment of "transfer" money has had a serious effect on miners earning miserable rates of pay.

Others, who voted to keep the pit open, including many lodge officials, are taking redundancy; although most received only £4-10,000 in redundancy pay, they are fed up with the industry and refuse to travel to other pits.

Before the closures were announced, national NUM leaders were asked to visit the area to breathe spirit back into the workforce. Neither President Arthur Scargill nor the Secretary managed to turn up.

When the closures were announced, the miners had two days to make up their minds.

Having to fight on their own against an inefficient and vindictive management while working in an increasingly dangerous environment plainly has taken its toll.

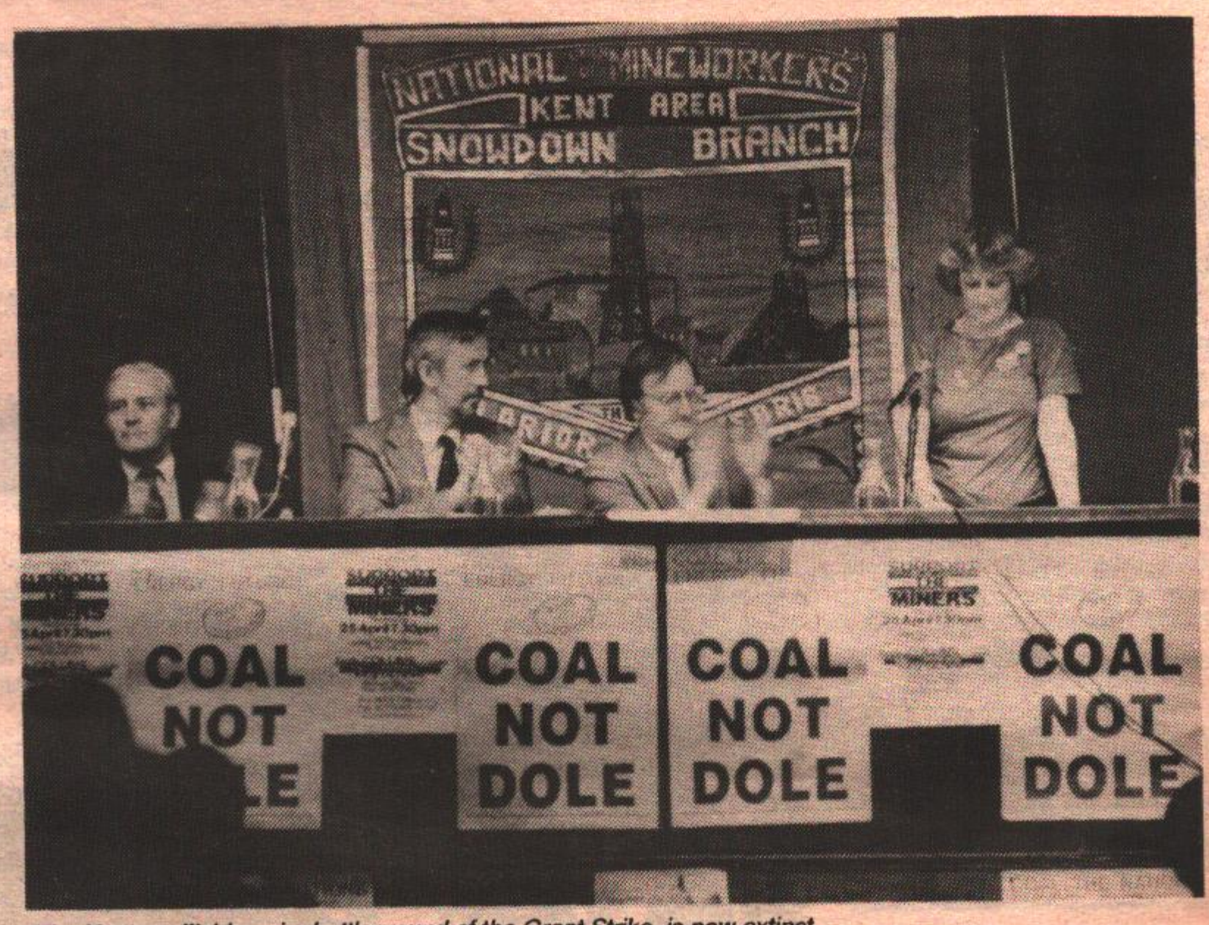
By John Calderon
Hackney South CLP

There have also been problems with national negotiations strategy. Scargill is adamant that no discussions on six day working can take place; meanwhile, other issues vital to saving jobs are being ignored.

The national NUM wants to resolve its membership crisis by merging with the TGWU. South Wales has opposed this sleight of hand, which won't stop the dismembership of the regions.

Lancashire, Scotland, South Wales, Kent, and Durham are about to disappear or have already disappeared. The national union may soon be reduced to a regional power within the TGWU.

The coal fields of South Wales are now being gobbled up by open cast mining companies who lay waste the green hills and boast a frightening accident record.



The Kent coalfield, major battleground of the Great Strike, is now extinct.

It is only a matter of time before the private companies start to mine the huge reserves bricked up in the closed pits.

South Wales miners now talk with fear of unemployment, of losing their free coal, of defeat for their union.

Emigration abroad or to other parts of Britain where the economy is more buoyant is now openly discussed by many miners without families, though no one wants to leave the tight-knit valley communities, despite the hardship.

For the two miners still imprisoned, Russell Shankland and Dean Hancock, the imminent demise of the South Wales NUM came as an unpleasant shock.

They have spent five years in jail and are still awaiting parole. Without the South Wales NUM, who will be left to support them?

The Oakdale pit leadership is pressing for a public enquiry into the way the pit was managed and closed down. Kinnock has been asked to back this demand, which could be used to slow down the Coal Board's overall closure programme.

A few months respite is desperately needed.

Even in the ashes of defeat rank and file leaders are working to build fresh resistance.

Letters of support can be sent to: Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland, Channings Wood, Denbury, Newton Abbot, Devon.

NALGO Strike

A victory for national action!

NALGO's first ever national strike has resulted in a clear victory.

8.8% is in line with pay awards for other workers such as the NUR. The pay settlement does not recover the losses of recent years but it does stop the rot.

Looking a little closer, though, the inequity of percentage deals is starkly exposed (£500 at the bottom, £2,000 pa at the top) and anger at this must be used to campaign *now* for a flat rate claim next year.

By Doug Thorpe
Islington NALGO

The most significant victory lay in the dropping of the strings.

The tremendous response of members to the national strike over six days, with a turnout of 90% on average, had forced divisions among the employers into public view.

These divisions were clearly exposed once the NALGO leadership signalled its willingness to accept 8.8% (publicly abandoning the 12%/£1,200 claim).

A clear, decisive strategy of escalating the action could have finished the employers off at this stage. But the employers were assisted by the leadership's call for a finite six day action. This meant a second ballot was required to continue.

The NALGO leadership's lack of accountability and the employers' greater negotiating determination meant the employers were able to sit out the six day national action and "wait and see".

Fortunately the eagerness and speed with which branches (outside London) took to selective action proved the membership's determination and broke the employers' resolve.

It came just in time: the NALGO leadership had been making no effort to win the second national ballot.

Had the selective action gone on much longer its weaknesses would have been exposed by the victimisations and organised strike breaking, already initiated by some Authorities.

The vitriolic response of the government to the settlement shows that the attack will be resumed.

Ridiculed

The union must use the new found confidence in strike action, and prepare for further attacks by building up stewards committees and strike funds.

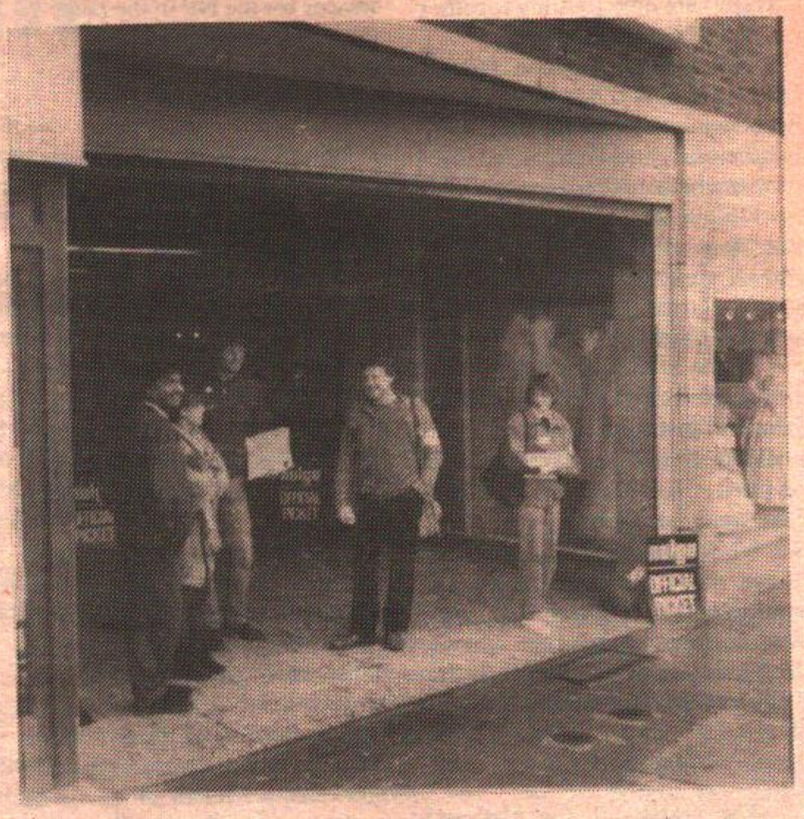
The employers will not be taken by surprise or beaten by partial action again. The arguments for all-out action must continue to be made.

The national leadership should be using its increased authority to campaign for a national strategy against co-operation with the Poll Tax and against cuts.

Instead, they ridiculed motions which called for this at the national delegate conference that endorsed the settlement (brought about by that same ridiculous concept — national strike action!).

The only upset for them at this meeting came when delegates voted by 1,000 to 5 to defy the Tory anti-union laws and expel scabs.

Activists and branches recognising the need for national action against future attacks, particularly the Poll Tax, must co-ordinate their efforts, building on the basis laid by the pay strike before the leadership can squander our victory.



NALGO members on picket duty.

Socialist Lecturers Association
1989 Pay Claim:
EMERGENCY ACTION CONFERENCE

To bring activists together to discuss how we can achieve effective industrial action and how we can put pressure on the NATFHE leadership to organise such action.

October 7th, 1989
New Imperial Hotel, Birmingham
Contact: Barry Lovejoy, 25 Philip Victor Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B20 2QB

South Africa

Black workers unite!



Stop the Tour! Boycott Apartheid Cricket!

Contact Stop the Tour Campaign, Anti-Apartheid Movement, 13 Mandela Street, London NW1 0DW. 01-387 7966

Continued from front page

...confrontations between the police and forces fighting under the united front banner of the Mass Democratic Movement.

Protests of all kinds preceded the elections and on election day itself millions of black workers went on strike.

The apartheid state's answer was brutal and bloody. At least 23 were killed.

Significantly, in the weeks leading up to the vote, some of the most militant actions took place in the predominantly "coloured" and Indian areas in the Western Cape and Johannesburg.

By CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN

This re-emphasised the rejection of the Three-Chamber Parliament demonstrated in the first elections five years ago, when "successful" candidates only gamered the support of one third of registered voters.

By their abstention at the polls, by their massive participation in the anti-apartheid movement, the "coloured" and Indian masses have shown that they refuse to be segregated — by the Group Areas Act, the Separate Amenities Act, and similar measures — from the mass of black people.

In the anti-apartheid camp there has been increasing unity in action. Organisations which for years have been openly hostile to each other (such as the UDF and Azapu) are now fighting together against the common enemy.

The two trade union federations, COSATU and NACTU, issued a joint call for the massively successful general strike and stay-away which marked the elections.

Despite the employers' threat of "no work, no pay", millions of black workers took part in the biggest strike action in South Africa's history.

Trains which normally carry workers from Soweto to the industrial towns of the Rand were empty; mines, so important to South Africa's beseiged economy, stood idle.

While the anti-apartheid forces have moved decisively toward unity in action, just the opposite has happened among the whites, reflecting the crisis in which the ruling class finds itself.

Realists

The realists in the National Party (MP), represented by new President H.W. de Klerk and Foreign Minister Pik Botha, know that a return to Verwoerdian total apartheid would bring the country to the brink of civil war.

They know that it would also alienate apartheid's closest allies, principally Thatcher and Bush, to say nothing of the Frontline states to which de Klerk has been making overtures, not without success.

His biggest pre-election coup was to get the implicit endorsement of President Kaunda of Zambia, hitherto regarded as one of the staunchest opponents of apartheid.

The biggest challenge to the NP, who have dominated Afrikaaner politics for four decades, came from the Conservative Party (CP), who played on the fears of the "swart gevaar" (black danger), always a vote-winner for the NP in the past.

Inheritor

The CP, in fact, is the inheritor of the old-fashioned, pre-Botha National party, as shaped by Malan, Strydom, and Verwoerd.

But the very virulence of the CP's racist campaign, with its undertone of anti-semitism and its emphasis on Afrikaanerdom, frightened some of the white electorate, especially the English speaking section, but also a growing number of "liberal"-minded Afrikaaners.

In the event, the Conservatives managed to double their seats while taking only 25% of the vote.

The biggest surprise was the substantial gains made by the Democratic Party with its declared policy to remove racial discrimination and enfranchise blacks in a system of devolved central government power ("to protect white interests").

The votes cast on September 6th may have decided which white party occupies government offices in Pretoria. But the ballot box will prove an irrelevance in deciding the future of South Africa.

The battlefield has now moved decisively into the streets of Soweto, Mitchel's Fields, Alexandra, and Guguleti; to the factories and mines, the powerhouses of apartheid.

The masses are in motion and it will take more than mouthings about "reforms" from a new NP President to stop them.

The two trade union federations have announced plans for continuing nationwide industrial action. A month-long consumer boycott was scheduled to start on September 13th.

The action is aimed at bringing about the abolition of the Labour Relations Act, the repeal of apartheid laws, and the dissolution of the tri-cameral parliament.

The current campaign should be compared to the defiance campaigns of the 1950s and the protest politics of 1984/86.

These embarrassed the government; the brutal methods used to crush them outraged world opinion and strengthened the call for sanctions. But they did not provide the means for the overthrow of apartheid and the seizure of power.

It is the strategic approach to this question which still divides the various components of the liberation movement.

The ANC and UDF see the current pressure campaigns as a means of forcing the government to the negotiating table.

Azapo, groups to the left as well as a substantial element inside the ANC and the UDF want to give more emphasis to organisation at the grassroots, raising consciousness before launching a final challenge.

The election results, with its gains for the Democratic Party, despite ferocious attacks on it by the NP during the election campaign (linking it with the ANC and the defiance campaign), will undoubtedly give encouragement to the pro-negotiation lobby.

This was clearly voiced by one of the principal leaders of the UDF, Rev. Allan Boesak. In an interview in *The Independent* he said:

"Negotiations are going to be the important issue now in South Africa. We wanted to show our strength so as to make clear to F.W. de Klerk that he has to come to terms with *our* preconditions, with *our* agenda."

Chinese Solidarity Campaign

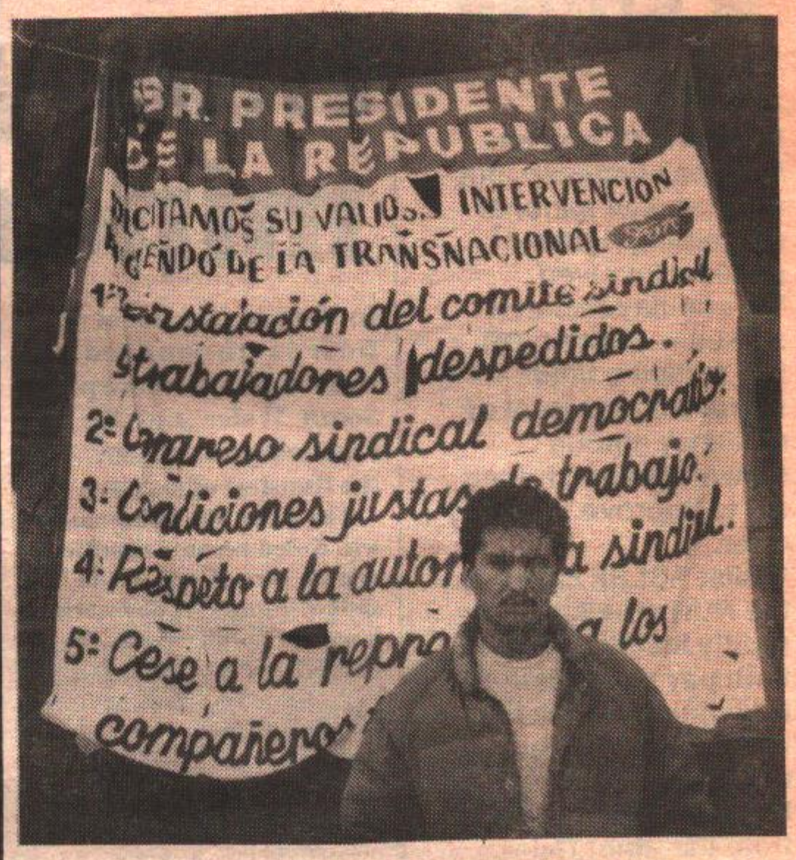
Model Resolution

Please pass the following resolution through your student, trade union, or Labour Party branch, women's organisation, or other labour movement bodies or campaigns.

This ..... :

1. Condemns the June 4th massacre in Beijing of the Chinese students and workers fighting for democracy and the subsequent wave of arrests, executions, and harsh jail sentences;
2. Calls for the release of Quian Yunin, Bai Dong Ping, Shen Yi Han, and other arrested union and student leaders;
3. Notes the reply of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions to the official request from NALGO, in which the ACFTU refuses to condemn the massacre, and in view of this calls for the breaking of all links with the official Chinese unions and the establishment of direct links with the autonomous workers federations;
4. Agrees to affiliate to the Chinese Solidarity Campaign.

MEXICO



Juan Ramon Ramírez in front of banner demanding: 1. Reinstatement of the sacked shop stewards; 2. A democratic trade union; 3. Just working conditions; 4. Respect for trade union autonomy; 5. End the repression against the comrades.

Fords sack militants over union democracy call

Marco Antonio Jimenez has been on hunger strike since August 11th. He is protesting against his sacking by the Mexican Ford management.

By DAVE KELLAWAY

Had he sabotaged the plant, led a walkout or held a meeting during work time?

No, he had simply led 3,300 workers at the Fords Cuautitlan plant (30 minutes north of Mexico City) in a call for the democratic election of their national trade union leader and a democratic congress of the whole union.

Mexico operates like a Stalinist state on union matters. Bosses, state, and union bureaucrats work hand in glove.

Once Ford was informed of the union bureaucrats' displeasure, it sacked Marco and another nine leading shop stewards and conference delegates. Another sacked Ford shop steward, Juan Ramon Ramirez, joined the hunger strike on August 18th.

The hunger strike tactic was discussed and agreed by mass meetings. Juan pitched his hunger strike camp in front of the plant and Marco placed his at the foot of the Independence monument in front of the Ford headquarters in Mexico City (see picture).

On August 24th, 90% of the workers in the plant boycotted the canteen and fasted for a day in solidarity. On August 26th, thousands marched from the plant to the Independence monument.

Like Mick Gosling, the Dagenham shop steward sacked by Ford in Britain, Marco and Juan have been victimised for standing up to speed-up, dangerous conditions, and wage cuts.

In July 1987 Ford Mexico closed Cuautitlan only to reopen it a few weeks later when it re-hired labour on lower wages and worse conditions.

The new radical plant leadership developed as a reaction to this sort of attack and to the union bureaucrats' collaboration.

When *Briefing* talked to Marco on August 29th, he was bearing up well after 18 days but was experiencing gastric and kidney pains.

He was optimistic about the possibility of winning concessions from Ford and was already talking about the possibility of an overtime ban.

The case has been widely reported in the press and even forced the biggest bureaucrat of them all, Fidel Velasquez, 89 years old and 50 years the leader of the Mexican version of the TUC, to pay a public visit to Marco.

Velasquez offered vague promises of legal help in exchange for an end to the hunger strike. "No deal" was the comrades' reply.

Many local union branches have sent delegations to the hunger strikers.

The hunger strikers particularly asked *Briefing* to publicise their struggle among Ford workers and other trade unionists in Britain.

The Mexican government is very sensitive to foreign pressure as it tries to carry through its "transition to democracy".

Send messages of support to: Xola 181, Colonia Alamos, Mexico DF.

Send messages of protest to: Ford Motor Company, Paseo de la Reforma 333, Mexico DF.

COLOMBIA

No military solution to drugs crisis

Civil war is breaking out in Colombia.

President Virgilio Barco's crackdown, following the assasination of his protegée and likely successor Luis Galan, has already led to over 11,000 arrests.

The drug lords have responded with a declaration of "total and absolute war" — and a host of political bombings and murders.

The US State Department is supporting the crackdown with $65 million emergency aid and 100 military "advisors". Medellin, Colombia's second city, is under curfew.

Colombia was already one of the most violent and lawless places in the world. In response to *20,000* killings last year, there were a mere 300 arrests and *75* convictions.

Strike

Just last month, 4,600 judges went on three day strike following the murder of one of their colleagues.

The first response of every socialist to the latest developments should be to oppose US military intervention in Colombia's affairs.

But many will also be tempted to see the state's declaration of war on the drugs trade and its murderous masters as no bad thing.

In fact, in a war of this kind it will be the ordinary Colombian people who will pay the highest price. The Colombian government is incapable of winning a war against the drug barons.

There is *no military solution* to the problem. To deny this is to close one's mind to the vast wealth of the cocaine cartel and its many connections with the Colombian state and bourgeoisie.

By Mike Phipps
Woolwich CLP

Bush's $65 million may sound like a lot of aid. But four years ago the drug lords offered to pay off all of Colombia's *$14 billion* foreign debt in return for an amnesty and the right to produce cocaine legally.

The government turned them down.

The cocaine barons now have major interests in Colombian big business through investments made with their laundered money. They also collaborate closely with rural landowners and sections of the army.

This collaboration goes back to the long term refusal of the cocaine growers to pay protection money to Colombia's rural guerrilla bands as other farmers did. Instead, they built up private armies to wipe out the guerrillas.

Today, these death squads work closely with the armed forces to suppress developing trade unions, labour unrest, and peasant movements.

Victims

Many of the victims of this paramilitary terror have been socialists, democrats, human rights and union activists.

The Colombian government was happy to tolerate this "marriage of convenience" between the army and drugs mafia until diplomatic embarrassment and US pressure became too great.

The drugs crisis began to jeopardise other exports and the country's appalling human rights record was deterring foreign investment.

US pressure to stem the supply of cocaine will not produce the desired effect.

Profitable

The Colombian peasants grow coca because it is the most profitable crop available to them and a ready-made infrastructure exists for it. No one would fly out a *coffee* harvest in a private aeroplane from isolated mountain plantations.



Scene in the shanty town of Barrio, N. Bogota

Herbicidal bombing is not going to change this economic reality. Massive funding to permit viable food production might be the start of an alternative.

In the meantime, even senior US observers recognise that the Colombian government would be better employed in negotiating to bring the drugs economy into a legal setting, where it can be properly taxed and controlled, rather than waging a war it can't win.

Cocaine, after all, has medicinal uses.

A realistic solution to the drugs trade has to begin by tackling not supply, but demand. For many unemployed in the US's urban ghettoes there is a stark alternative: sell drugs or go hungry.

US government money would be better spent on funding jobs and urban regeneration rather than financing a civil war in Colombia.

But this would mean challenging the very basis of US capitalism, which has fostered a society and culture in which drug addiction is endemic.

Poland

Solidarnosc embarks on Polish-style Thatcherism

The unthinkable has happened.

A Solidarnosc-led government is taking office in Poland.

It is supported by an unlikely coalition of forces.

Lech Walesa and General Jaruzelski, cheered on by Margaret Thatcher and George Bush, are agreed that the only solution to Poland's economic crisis is a free market programme, involving large scale privatisation and further austerity for the already emiserated Polish working class.

A sign of the times is the news early this month that the right wing Adam Smith Institute is to organise a conference on "privatisation in Warsaw".

It will do this with the full consent of the Polish Communist Party (the Polish United Workers Party — PUWP).

A section of the Party bureaucracy is scrambling for positions as owners and managers of newly privatised sections of the economy.

The basis of the round table agreement between the Solidarnosc leadership and the Jaruzelski regime was essentially common ground on the need for the introduction of free market mechanisms and discipline.

The agreement has born fruit in the formation of a government led by Solidarnosc, rather than as a junior partner, as the regime had originally intended.

In this sense, the formation of a government headed by Tadeusz Mazowiecki will be greeted as a victory by all sections of the opposition.

The choice of Mazowiecki is an extremely shrewd one. He represents the tradition of constructive moderate nationalism.

By David Holland
International Office, PSP-DR

A Catholic intellectual, he was one of the founders of the clubs of Catholic intelligentsia following the wave of reform and workers' councils in Poland in 1956.

He was a parliamentary deputy in the 60s for the independent lay Catholic Znak group — that is, a sort of tolerated moderate opposition.

In 1980 he was a senior adviser to the strikers in the Gdansk shipyard and in 1981 he edited Solidarnosc's weekly newspaper.

Widely respected, anti-communist and deeply Catholic, he is nevertheless imbued with a spirit of pragmatic compromise with the Soviet Union and its epigones.

At the time of writing, the shape of the new cabinet has not yet been finalised.

The general outline seems to be that Solidarnosc will control the Ministries of Labour and Industry and possibly Finance, thereby taking responsibility for the economic restructuring of the country and labour relations.

It is also likely to take the powerfully symbolic Ministry of Education and direction of the media.

The PUWP will retain control, at the very least, of Internal Security, Defence, and possibly Foreign Affairs. With the Party retaining control of the police and army, it also retains a suspended veto over the new government.

It should also be recalled that Jaruzelski occupies the powerful Presidential office, and that Solidarnosc is in a minority in the lower House of Parliament.

Its majority is provided by the Peasants and Democratic Parties, both until very recently compliant satellites of the PUWP.

The PUWP itself is a powerful trade union of millions of office holders and managerial staff, occupying all the key positions in the country. There are therefore very sharp constraints on the Mazowiecki government.

This government is caught in a trap partly of its own making. It is set on a course which will bring it into collision with large sections of the Polish working class.

Mazowiecki's main resource in carrying out his programme is the prestige of Walesa and Solidarnosc and the absence of a credible alternative.

Walesa has estimated the new government has a year to produce tangible results.

Assistance

Without massive Western assistance of Marshall Aid proportions, there is no possibility of significant improvement in the Polish economy in this time — nor is there any indication that aid of these proportions will be forthcoming.

Apathy and economic desperation are extremely widespread in Poland.

The future of Solidarnosc as a trade union is questionable. By entering government it has virtually declared itself as a political party.

It currently claims membership of 2.2 million — a fraction of the 10 million members of 1981. By comparison, the official trade unions, staffed by Party hardliners, claim more than seven million members.

Alfred Midowicz, the leader of the official trade unions, has ample capacity for demagogic posturing in defence of workers' living standards.

Attitude

The attitude of the more left wing and radical currents in Solidarnosc will be a little similar to the attitude of the left in Great Britain to the return of the Labour government.

We will support it against the available alternatives, whilst having little confidence in its ability to meet the needs of working people.

We will expect to support working class struggles against the policies of that government, while fighting for an alternative programme.

This will be the sort of attitude adopted by the PSP-DR. The activity of this party, while open, is still not legal. An elementary demand on the new government will be legalisation of political organisation in Poland.

While Walesa calls for a year's moratorium on strikes, PSP-DR will support struggles by workers against falling living standards, factory closures, and unemployment.

There is already a constant rash of local economic struggles. They can only be expected to escalate as the effects of what is essentially an IMF style package to deal with a Third World debt crisis begin to bite.

PSP-DR will shortly publish a list of 21 demands on the Mazowiecki government, echoing the 21 demands of the 1980 strikers in the Gdansk shipyards and underlining the abandonment by the Walesa leadership of the democratic and radical ideas of Solidarnosc in 1980/81.

PSP-DR continues to fight for those ideals in the form of a new socialist alternative, based upon workers' self-management, social control of the economy, and a government extension of democracy from below.

The PSP-DR can be contacted at The Basement, 92 Ladbrooke Grove, London W11.

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Poll Tax

For a united, democratic anti-Poll Tax movement

This summer has proved to be a watershed in the development of the anti-Poll Tax movement in Scotland, Wales and England.

The enormous unpopularity of the tax has been demonstrated by the one million non-payers in Scotland and the very high level of initial non-registration in urban areas of Wales and England.

Some London boroughs received back as few as 20% correctly filled-in forms from their first demands. Although more people are now registering, the level of resistance to registration surprised many campaigners.

Over the summer the number of active anti-Poll Tax groups has mushroomed and a growing number of areas have formed city or county-wide federations to co-ordinate activity.

It is clear that the overwhelming majority of activists in the campaign are increasingly convinced of the need for a strategy of non-implementation, i.e. building for mass non-payment, non-collection by workers and non-co-operation by abour Councils.

Such an understanding is fuelled by the level of anger demonstrated by the many working class people attending public meetings, signing petitions and asking questions at street stalls.

By JANE CONNER and TERRY CONWAY

The Tories are under mounting pressure from within their own ranks to provide more money to "soften the blow" and were forced to remove the much-despised Ridley from the hot seat.

However, this is no time for complacency and we need to be realistic about the extent to which the movement has taken on mass proportions. Whilst the level of non-payment in Scotland is tremendous, the majority of non-payers are not as yet organised directly within the movement.

Whilst groups in Wales and England are certainly growing they involve only a tiny proportion of those opposed to the Poll Tax. Whilst the support of NALGO and other unions for non-payment is positive, workers involved in Poll Tax implementation don't yet have the confidence to take decisive action.

Over the summer many activists have realised the need for greater co-ordination if the movement is to develop. A number of initiatives have been taken at local and national level which have on the whole been positive.

Terry Fields MP, with the support of 14 other Labour MPs, called a meeting on September 1st which brought together representatives of 20 federations throughout Scotland, England and Wales to call a National conference against the Poll Tax to be held in Manchester on November 25th.

Such a move is positive, as is the fact that the MPs sponsoring the meeting have also endorsed the call for non-implementation.

On September 3rd, a meeting of 150 Poll Tax activists from over 80 groups called for support for the Manchester conference while expressing concern about certain aspects of its organisation.

This concern is a function not of disagreements over non-implemenation, but rather of worries about the way that supporters of *Militant* — the dominant force at the September 1st meeting — have been behaving in the campaign.

In a number of local areas, supporters of *Militant* have been reluctant to work with others active around the Poll Tax, including forces equally committed to non-implemenation, and have chosen to set up rival groups.

Organising

At the meeting on September 1st itself, the organising committee that was elected was comprised solely of *Militant* supporters, despite a number of attempts to broaden it.

But whatever the doubts raised by such practices, it is clear that unity in the fight against the Poll Tax is desperately needed.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Selling Militant at Labour Women's Conference: now the left and new activists need to work together.

In such a spirit, the September 3rd meeting made a call for the November conference to become a two-day event: to give the movement a real opportunity to debate out the lessons of the campaign so far, develop effective on-going co-ordination and map out concrete national iniatives for the next period.

It also elected a Steering Committee which, it is hoped, will become involved in the planning of the November 25th conference, along with the structure set up on September 1st.

It is to be hoped that everyone concerned will accept that democracy and open debate are necessary preconditions for building a mass movement to sink Thatcher's flagship.

A step forward in building unity was taken on September 7th at a meeting of the Steering Committee elected from the Oxford anti-Poll Tax conference last December.

Tentative steps were being taken by that group to organise a recall conference in October. However, it was agreed to pospone this event, build for Manchester and then rediscuss the situation.

It was further agreed to use the newsletter produced by the group to open up a debate on strategies for the movement. It is clear that within this group, differences do exist on the question of non-implementation, and an open debate on these differences would be positive for the movement as a whole.

The November 25th conference will be vital not only to the movement against the Poll Tax but to the future of the overall opposition to Thatcher.

We must call on MPs, Councillors, and trade unionists at all levels to sponsor the conference and support the statement agreed on September 1st on non-implementation.

It must be built for in every Poll Tax group and in every trade union branch.

We must use this opportunity to take forward the debate over non-co-operation in the trade unions, trying to win support for this policy in new areas and concretising it in those where it exists but so far only on paper.

The decision to exclude delegates from Labour Parties from the Manchester Conference is unfortunate, but we should continue anyway to try to deepen the anti-Poll Tax struggle inside the Party, pressing Labour Councils and individual Councillors on the issue however we can.

But most of all, we must take confidence from the level of non-payment in Scotland and of non-registration throughout England and Wales to strengthen our resolve to build a genuine mass and democratic movement the like of which has not been seen in this island for a very long time.

Barrow

Ready and willing to fight!

On July 18th, John Wilton from the *Briefing* National Steering Committee spoke in Barrow, Lancashire, on the need to build a mass campaign of non-co-operation with and non-payment of the Poll Tax.

The meeting was a boost to socialists in Barrow, attracting one of the biggest attendance at a local public meeting in memory and a good mixture of young and old, women and men.

Most people in attendence were *not* members of political parties.

John began by outlining the general economic crisis: increasing inflation, rocketing interest and mortgage rates.

He spoke of the growing hatred of Tory policies, especially the creeping privatisation of the NHS. He also pointed out the growing unrest in industry.

By Hyder Prodhan Barrow & District CLP

Against this background, John stressed, a real fight against the Poll Tax is vital and possible.

One million people in Scotland haven't paid a single penny of the Tory tax and while 110,000 in Lambeth have received Poll Tax registration forms only 30% have been returned.

The Labour Party and trade unions should be standing by the class they represent and leading it in a mass campaign of non-co-operation and non-payment.

John pointed out the labour movement's strength has always been in solidarity and collective action and that all rights for working class men and women have been achieved by breaking the law.

If enough people refused to pay and were backed with the collective weight of the unions and Labour Party the jails couldn't hold us all and wage and benefit deductions would be impossible.

John outlined the strategic importance of local government workers as they will be responsible for implementation of the Poll Tax.

He also noted the importance of building Anti-Poll Tax Unions, as in Scotland, and how vital it is that support is given to those who *can't pay* as well as those who refuse to pay.

John also stated that it's best not to enter into any dialogue with the CCRO, i.e. don't keep sending back the form asking questions; it's best to claim you never received it.

He also stressed the importance of learning lessons from Scottish comrades in the fight against the Tax.

Questions at the end of John's talk revealed just how willing and anxious the working class in Barrow is to fight the Poll Tax.

The local Communist Party interventions were at best laughable: apart from claiming no one has heard of *Briefing* and how vital the *Morning Star* is to the labour movement they had the audacity to say any campaign against the Poll Tax must be law-abiding as it is, after all, an Act of Parliament!

For local Labour Party activists in Barrow, John's meeting was a great experience.

Barrow has a Labour Council and while most local Councillors and Party members are opposed to Kinnock's selling out of socialism they are unwilling to begin any effective fightback.

DEMONSTRATE AGAINST THE POLL TAX!

Demonstration called by the Sussex Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Groups
Saturday 23rd September, Brighton