LABOUR BRIEFING
40p FORTNIGHTLY
NO. 89 SEPT 27 - OCT 9 1989

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40p

REJECT RENEGADE "REALISM:"

UNCHAIN OUR UNIONS!

As Labour's Conference meets, a new star rises on the "realist right". Pontypridd MP Kim Howells has given advance notice of his bid for a place in the Shadow Cabinet.

In a month which has seen the jobs of South Wales miners cut to pieces, ex-NUM official Howells used the first edition of *The Sunday Correspondent* to urge Labour *not* to repeal the Tory trade union laws which have shackled our movement for the last ten years.

"People in the South of England... will reject any party which promises to abolish those laws completely," prophecies Howells. "They no more favour unbridled trade union power than they do boss power."

"And," he adds, ominously "I don't blame them."

But there are millions who would disagree — not least in the trade union movement, which for Howells has served its purpose as a stepping stone to parliament.

Every time workers have fought to defend jobs and conditions, the Tory laws have been used against us, outlawing our picket lines, seizing our assets, and blocking solidarity action.

Labour owes at least part of its lead in the polls to the new confidence felt by workers — and expressed in widespread industrial action. As a result, more and more workers have seen for themselves the iniquity of Tory union laws and the urgent need to get rid of them.

Labour must pledge itself *now* to untie *all* the chains. Anything less, such as Howell's "reasonable reform", will simply not generate the support needed for the return of a Labour government.

By the *Labour Briefing* Editorial Board

Howells' outburst is not the cry of a lone wolf. It is part of a co-ordinated move by the Labour right to make the Party more acceptable to the bosses and detach it from its traditional base in the organised working class.

Labour must not only repeal the Tory union laws, it must take steps positively to empower the unions, to enable them to deal with the huge shift in power to the employers under Thatcher — on bargaining, health and safety, information, discrimination, victimisation.

Howells and others may throw up their hands in horror at the prospect of unions having their "immunities" restored. But under Thatcher it is the bosses who enjoy near total immunity — freedom to sack workers, close factories, and increase exploitation.

We must be given the legal freedom to fight these moves. The call for a total repeal of Tory anti-union laws amounts to this — no more and no less.

Howells jibes sneeringly at "Labour's walking consciences" who have "human debris around their well- heeled feet." But the most well-heeled feet at Labour Party Conference belong to our trade union leaders. Will they vote for the best interests of their members? Indeed, how many of them have even consulted their members on the union law issue?



P&O seafarers weren't the only strikers to find their right to take effective industrial action stopped by the Tory anti-union laws.

PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

It should never be forgotten that the unions created the Labour Party and finance it to this day. Socialists want Labour to stand up for its real, *proven* supporters — and ignore the editorial writers of the millionaire press.

If trade union leaders short-sell our movement when casting their block votes on this part of the Policy Review, Margaret Thatcher will sleep peacefully, knowing her work will remain intact long after her government has gone.

The fact that this decision rests in so few hands is not another argument against the block vote. It underlines, rather, the need to hold our union leaders to account and for the democratising of the block vote. It is indeed long past time for union members to have a real say in what is done in our name — and with our money.

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, Oct. 4th if possible.

Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

Meet the challenge: change the make

Dear *Briefing*,

The extent to which the Policy Review document "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change" has misjudged the changed public mood is truly staggering.

Concerned for the NHS, sickened by privatisation, pollution and Poll Tax, more and more people are becoming receptive to socialism.

The Cold War has thawed — yet now we are to keep nuclear weapons! Green consciousness is growing — yet now we are to keep nuclear power!

Incredibly, the leadership of the Labour Party has outgrown its obsession with the Swedish model only to embrace the corrupt, cut-throat capitalism of Japan and South Korea!

These nations apparently exemplify the kind of treatment with which Labour would favour British wage-slaves in our "talent-based economy".

Relying upon "regulation" by an amazing assortment of quangos, the Policy Review plan involves using social ownership/share ownership as a sort of surgical support for the market system, instead of using common ownership as a springboard for socialism to replace the market system.

There is no positive, practical programme to be found in this 88-page "New Agenda for Britain". People will vote *against* Thatcher, but many are searching for something to vote *for*.

It is comical to see Kinnock parading this pathetic package around, like the Emperor's new clothes. But the consequences could be grave indeed.

Yours fratemally,
Richard Hanford,
Haywards Heath

Poland: God's own country

Dear *Briefing*,

Now that Poland has its first "Catholic government" (the phrase comes from the Papacy itself) socialists should look a little closer at its Catholic heritage.

Cardinal Glemp has declared that opposition to the existence of a Carmellite nunnery next to Auschwitz has been orchestrated by an "international conspiracy" of Jewish organisations.

The official Solidarity papers have criticised this stand — much to the distress of some of their readers.

Lech Walesa has declared himself a "friend of the Jewish people", yet he too calls for some sort of "compromise" by constructing an inter-denominational "place of prayer" outside the death camp.

Poland has a viciously anti-semitic past. Many anti-communists involved under the banner of Solidarity have claimed that the communists are victims of a "Jewish plot".

While these ideas are rarely translated into English they do turn up in French publications, where I have encountered sentiments of the kind expressed by the villagers next to the concentration camps interviewed in the film *Shoah*: "They had it coming to them."

Small wonder that as few Jews have returned to Poland as to Germany.

For how long can the British left ignore this side of the new "Catholic" government?

In the justified revolt against Stalinism many old hates are being spewed out. Most of the old nationalisms of Eastern Europe are thoroughly infected with anti-semitism. Can the genuine democrats stand against the tide?

Yours,
Andrew Coates,
Ipswich

Capitalism? "We've Cracked It!"

Dear *Briefing*,

The section on economics in the Policy Review is one of the most barren, conservative and fateful documents to be produced by the Labour Party since "In place of strife".

It effectively commits a future Labour government to a wage-cutting, conditions-worsening, tax-hike assault on the working class people of this country. All this in the name of making industries and services more "competitive".

Sadly, many Labour Party members feel inhibited about even reading such economic policy papers, let alone criticising them. Yet, at the heart of politics is economics.

If the left absents itself from rank and file economic debate then the Policy Review is what we will get.

In Windmill Hill in Bristol we have tried to break down this barrier by producing our own guide to the economy for rank and file members called (ironically) "We've Cracked It!"

We sent a copy of the manuscript to Tony Benn and his response was: "This is just what we need. It explains it all in words everyone can understand."

Dennis Skinner's view was that it "exposes the exploitation and excessive waste of the capitalist system in uncomplicated language."

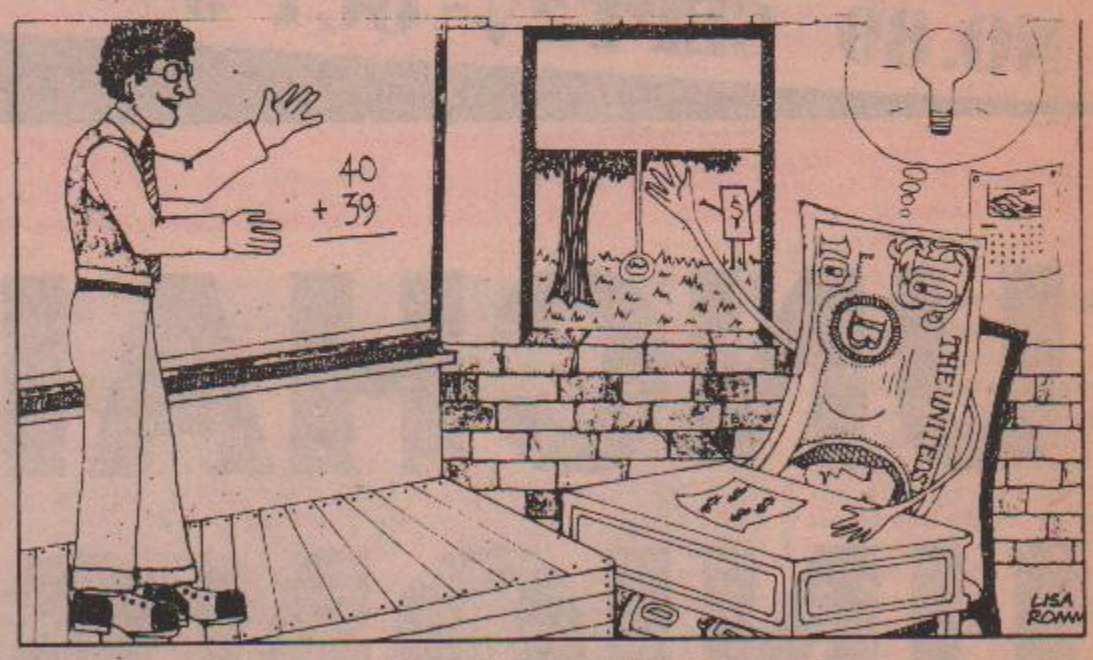
In Bristol we have sold over 600 copies. Since publishing we've been asked to address other ward parties on the ideas in "We've Cracked It!".

As a spin-off, a "Women Against Capitalism" dayschool was held with 30 local women debating economics.

If your ward or constituency could use a down-the-line, street level pamphlet to get your comrades discussing economics and taking a stand against the anti-socialist economic policies being promoted by the Labour Party leadership then you should order "We've Cracked It!" from Windmill Hill Labour Party, c/o 277b St John's Lane, Bedminster, Bristol BS3 5AX.

Cheques should be made payable to "Windmill Hill Labour Party". Cost is 50p plus 25p post and package for each copy. For orders over 10 copies forget the post and package.

Yours comradely,
Phil Smith,
Secretary,
Windmill Hill Labour Party



Keep the *links*; break the *chains*!

Dear *Briefing*,

There has been debate for many months if not years over the role of trade unions in the Labour Party. I feel, however, that the left has failed to grasp the full significance of what is going on. Certainly the lack of a concerted response is a big problem.

The breaking of direct trade union links to the Labour Party is central to bourgeois strategy. Consequently, the defence of the link must be at the core of left strategy.

To understand the importance of the issue we have to appreciate certain facts:

- the Tories do not have a guaranteed electoral majority; they win as a result of our two-and-a-half party political system;
- centre party politics have probably collapsed, leaving Labour as the sole governmental alternative;
- Kinnock is moving to the right to make Labour acceptable to the bosses.

The bourgeoisie learned many lessons from the so-called winter of discontent of 1978/79, including that pay restraint made Labour unpopular in its own heartlands.

More than that they saw Labour move to the left in 1979-83 — making it unacceptable as a government party.

All this would be largely irrelevant if it didn't need a safe alternative party to run the country when the Tories become too unpopular. This is a basic fact in a two-party bourgeois democracy.

Now we come to the crunch.

Full-scale attacks on trade unions and workers pay and conditions are at the very heart of bourgeois strategy. How then can they tolerate these same unions and workers having a direct structural say in the decision-making process of the alternative government party?

This might sound a bit simplistic and I accept that there are many complex factors and considerations that I've not mentioned.

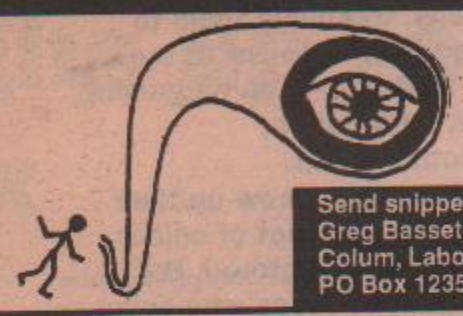
Nonetheless we have to see beyond the media presentation which uses the alleged electoral unpopularity of the block vote as a cover for the real motivation for its attacks on Labour's links with the unions.

This year the key debate for Labour's conference will be unilateralism. Next year it could well be the block vote.

Union lefts need to address the issue and take a collective lead. Such events as the Socialist Conference's Trade Union Conference need to place the block vote at the centre of their concerns.

Yours faithfully,
Chris Jones,
Manchester

PERISCOPE



Send snippets and info to:
Greg Bassett, Periscope Colum, Labour Briefing,
PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY.

Vox Pop

Some interesting gleanings from the recent *Guardian*/ICM poll on political attitudes:

- 54% of those polled in what psephologists like to call social classes AB (the nobs) support the Tories; 61% of those designated social classes DE (the dispossessed) back Labour.
- The proportion of voters in favour of giving the unions more say in the running of industry and the economy has gone up by ten percentage points since last year. The proportion against is down by nine.
- 71% of all voters agree with the proposition that "There is one law for the rich and one for the poor."
- 38% agree that "more socialist planning would be the best way to solve Britain's economic problems." Only 29% disagree.

Policy Review? Finger on the pulse? Farewell to the working class?

Ex-*Briefing* supporter hits Big *Times*

Nigel Williamson, former *Briefing* supporter and contributor, former editor of *Tribune*, former editor of *Labour Party News* and *New Socialist*, has just been appointed Political Editor of *The Times*.

With a political and career trajectory of such classic shape, Nigel should soon enter the textbooks as a model case — a case of what, we leave to your imaginations...

PS: Vacancy for a journalist at *Labour Briefing*.

Qualifications: Ideological flexibility, naked ambition...

The Cookie crumbles

At the NEC meeting which refused to include a commitment to equalise the ages of consent for heterosexual and gay sex, Robin Cook explained his opposition to equality as follows:

"I moved to lower the age of consent to 18 once and a lot of thanks I got for it from the gay community... if you let them do it at 16 pretty soon they'll be doing it at 14."

Outrageous accusations!

First Gould, then Meacher. Radical rumblings from the unlikeliest quarters keep cropping up in the daily papers.

Of course, only the most heartless cynic could attribute these outbursts (Gould on share dividends, Meacher on anti-union laws) to vote-seeking in the forthcoming NEC elections.

After all, Gould and Meacher are intelligent



men. They couldn't possibly expect a few ambiguous and belated remarks to wipe the months and years of Kinnockite toadying from the minds of left wing CLPs.

Could they?

Contact Briefing

Congratulations this issue to DAN CARTER of South London and RICK HATCHER of Birmingham, who win last week's prize for Most Avid Reader of the Small Print in Briefing. These two comraes were the only two to respond to our plea in the last issue to note our change of address, and send their articles for this issue to our new PO Box number.

Just in case either of them writes any more articles, a reminder: articles, correspondence and money should now be sent to Labour Briefing, PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY. You can telephone Briefing on 01-809 3927.

The next *Briefing* may be a little late, as most of The Team will be in Brighton all week, and will only have four days to prepare the paper instead of seven! Phone in for updates on progress.

Next issues:
No. 91: Deadline for articles 3/10; distribution 11/10.

Published by Labour Briefing:
PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ.
Printed by East West Graphic, 01-354 3827

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Labour Party Conference: time to rock the boat!

This year's Party Conference meets amidst more favourable circumstances than for some years.

The summer of discontent showed the potential power of the organised working class and the mass hostility to Tory policies. It also showed that significant sections of the working class are prepared to take action in defence of their living standards and bargaining rights.

The worsening economic indicators, soaring interest rates, and high inflation have begun to allow Labour to break into the Tory heartlands — and this is now clearly reflected in opinion polls.

On the policy front the Tories are in serious trouble on the environment, the NHS, and the Poll Tax. In this context Labour, and in particular the left, should be facing Conference with confidence and optimism.

Instead, we are being offered what Tony Benn has called "policies conceived in the winter of despair and published in the springtime of hope."

With a renewal of industrial action by trade unions (and of public support for unions), what a time to insist that unions must continue, even under Labour rule, to be shackled by Tory anti-union laws.

With Gorbachev setting the international pace on peace through unilateral initiatives, what a time to reject nuclear disarmament — and insist on increased weapons expenditure.

With popular disgust at the effects of capitalist anarchy on the environment, on public transport and public health growing daily, what a time to jettison the principles of socialist planning.

Worse yet, any dissent — even timid outbursts from Gould, Prescott, or Meacher — is slammed by a Walworth Road machine which increasingly sees itself as *the* Labour Party — and all those dues-paying, leaflet-delivering, door-knocking activists out there are clearly dispensable.

Kinnock wants a quiet Conference; we must do our best to ensure that he is disappointed. We must bring the anger against Tory policies into the Conference Hall.

We must make it clear that the struggles which are shaping our world — and which are the real impetus behind the welcome improvement in Labour's opinion poll ratings — will continue, whether or not Neil Kinnock acknowledges them.

As socialists, we will be working flat out to bring those struggles into the Labour Party — and to expose the inert politics of the Policy Review to the dynamic power of the class struggle.

Double-talk on refugees

"We're free!" they cried as they crossed the border into West Germany. But were they?

Undoubtedly, West Germany can claim a higher level of political liberty than its Eastern neighbour. The Stalinist GDR remains one of the most repressive regimes in the world. And, for many, the Western standard and style of living (as seen on TV) seems a great improvement over their own.

However, despite 40 years of the Stalinist closed-door policy, only 20,000 GDR citizens have chosen to walk through the (momentarily) open door to the West. This is no apology for Stalinism — or for its sham-socialist East German state. But it indicates that many East Germans are well aware that Western "freedom" means different things to different people.

Those East Germans with professional or scientific skills will clearly be better placed to exploit it. For others, it is nothing but the notorious "freedom" to sleep under Westminster Bridge.

Capitalist politicians are using the stream of people leaving East Germany as a photo-opportunity in the long propaganda war against socialism in general. They do not show the same concern for other peoples who wish to choose where they live.

Behind all this there is a fundamental difference of principle. For capital, human beings are merely potential labour, to be sucked in or spat out by a particular national economy at its convenience. Hence the central role of racism in justifying whatever immigration controls capital chooses to impose.

The very West German government now accommodating the East Germans had no compunction in throwing out literally millions of Turkish *gastarbeiter* (migrant workers), who had sought economic advantage and political "freedom" in the Federal Republic, when capitalist economics demanded.

East Germans who seek a "better life in the West" are feted. Vietnamese refugees are told by the British government that they are doing the same thing — and that this is the reason why they will be compulsorily repatriated.

This British government is, of course, a past master at fanning the racist embers to avoid domestic trouble over their economic policies by deporting Sri Lankans, Kurds, and others to anything but "freedom" — often unlawfully.

Socialists do not have the hypocritical double-standards of Britain's headline-writers. We fully support the right of East Germans to live in the country of their choice; just as we back the right of the hundreds of thousands of Germans deported from the Ukraine by Stalin during World War II to return to their chosen home.

For socialists, international solidarity — based on the concrete recognition of the common interests which bind together all working people — dictates an end to *all* immigration controls and freedom of movement for *all* the world's peoples.

Behind the headlines

Shades of Green

Mainstream media coverage of the Green Party Conference was a clear cut case of quantity exceeding quality.

Having allowed their staff journos to trivialise and ridicule the proceedings in Wolverhampton, the leader writers got stuck in — pompously lecturing the Greens on the need to stop being so trivial and ridiculous.

The Guardian, in particular, showed chutzpah in its patronising sermon on the necessity of the Greens making themselves as much like all the other parties as possible (especially by suppressing internal debate).

This po-faced approach was particularly unnerving from a paper which unleashed on Wolverhampton the witless [illegible] Hattersley, a political sketch writer whose main qualifications appear to be [illegible] of politics and cuteness.

"Non-leaders" Porritt and Ecke were quoted and photographed at every opportunity — while the real debates and indeed the sharp power struggle within the Greens were either grossly misrepresented (growth, population) or simply ignored (energy, travellers, health).

While the centralising, anti-socialist faction currently in control of the Party's head office managed to push through some of its "reforms" (i.e. adaptations to "normal" bourgeois political practice) it didn't get its way on everything.

By Mike Marqusee
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

Members of the Association of Socialist Greens fared reasonably well in the ballots for Green Party Council (the closest the greens come to an NEC).

Ideological

For the moment, the ideological and organisational shape of the Greens remains up for grabs.

In recent months injunctions to the socialist left to "green" itself, to "take on board" green perspectives have become commonplace.

The sentiments are laudable, but exactly how does one act on them?

It was all too easy for people at the Green Party Conference to score points against the shallow opportunism of other parties on this issue — and unless we find a better way of linking "red" and "green" than the arithmetical whimsy of electoral pacts, there will be little to choose between Labour and Tory "greenery".

Useful

What seems to me more useful is for socialists to intervene sharply in what promises to be a long-running, deep-cutting battle of ideas within the Green Party and the much wider green movement(s).

While socialists rightly claim that you can't really be "green" unless you are also "red", many powerful voices within the Green Party do not agree.

Sara Parkin, for one, whose middle class sang-froid (down to the calculated catch in the throat) and shameless self-aggrandisement make her (for my money) one of the most repellent creatures to have graced the British political stage for some time, is an avowed follower of right wing eco-guru Edward Goldsmith.

Rainforest

"Teddy" is the brother of Sir James, whose recently announced plan to save the rainforest and resolve the debt crisis through his "Foresteco" initiative showed that eco-rhetoric can serve big capital (and massive profits) as well as anyone.



Rank and file inspiration at the Green Conference

"Teddy" himself has some pretty disturbing ideas, believing as he does that "social stability" (modelled in some mysterious way on "the internal balance of the ecosystem") is the be-all and end-all of green politics.

He preaches the virtues of various defunct "traditional" civilisations — where the family unit was sacrosanct, women knew their place, and foreigners were excluded.

In a quite unnerving essay called the "Ecology of War", Goldsmith advocates perpetual low-grade tribal warfare as a regulatory mechanism — it keeps the population down while ensuring sufficient spatial separation between intrinsically antagonistic societies.

Needless to add, "Teddy" is also tough on "permissiveness", public spending, and Karl Marx.

The point here is not that there is an eco-fascist lurking behind the friendly smile of your local Green Party activist, but that a serious ideological and programmatic battle needs to be fought out over green politics.

That battle will have many sites — including both the Labour and Green Parties — but it cannot be avoided.

At its core will be the questions:

- *How* do we save ourselves from environmental catastrophe?
- At *what* price?
- And (above all) *who* will be expected to pay that price?

Socialist Movement

Looking at the Labour Party

A new agenda for the Labour Left

The Socialist Movement will be making a big impact at this year's Labour Party Conference.

A major fringe meeting will take place on Monday night and an open meeting on Thursday will discuss how Socialist Movement supporters should organise within the Party.

This discussion will be continued in Birmingham on Saturday, October 14th.

The majority of participants at all three Socialist Conferences to date have been Labour Party members, but as yet no attempt has been made to organise them.

At the last Socialist Conference one supporter of the left wing CLPs Conference suggested that the Labour left had been far too bashful in putting forward its views within the Socialist Movement. He certainly had a point.

SOCIALIST MOVEMENT
Labour Party Members' Meeting
Saturday October 14th, 11.30-5.00pm
Key Books, 136 Digbeth, Birmingham
Details from: Davy Jones, 13 Moreland Mews, London N1 1HN. 01-607 9579.

By Bryn Griffiths
Tottenham CLP

Left organisation is certainly needed within the Labour Party. The Campaign for Socialism, established in the aftermath of the Benn-Heffer leadership challenge, has floundered amidst acrimony on various issues, notably how it should relate to struggles outside the Party.

At the *Labour Briefing* fringe meeting at the Sheffield Socialist Conference, Reg Race criticised the exclusively internal Labour Party approach.

He described the following scenario: the left fights to get the Party to adopt a policy through resolutions at constituency level, then at Conference, then persuading the NEC to adopt the policy — only to see it all ignored by the Parliamentary Labour Party when, together with the NEC it draws up the manifesto.

Even in the early 80s, when the CLPD tacticians played such an important role in the left's advance, our success rested on the anger of the public sector union rank and file, who forced their leaders to demand a better deal from the Labour leadership.

Today the Socialist Movement advocates a "twin-track" approach: fighting the internal Party battles, but at the same time extending our horizons to the myriad of struggles taking place in the outside world.

This is *not* a one-way process in which we recruit people from mass campaigns into the Party; it also involves re-examining our own political agenda.

Too often we have allowed ourselves to be portrayed as conservatives defending the status quo.

Only now, for example, is the Labour left beginning to discuss the need to green our class politics. To its credit, the Socialist Movement had already organised a series of Red-Green events in conjunction with the Socialist Environmental and Resources Association (SERA) and the Association of Socialist Greens.

By participating in these events, the Labour left will equip itself to take on Nuclear Jack Cunningham and the Labour front bench.

Through the Socialist Policy Review, the Socialist Movement provides us with the mechanism to develop positive alternative policies and thereby escape the trap of always appearing to simply say "no" to whatever Kinnock comes up with.

On democracy and civil liberties, we have allowed Roy Hattersley and Charter 88 to make the running. But through our campaigns on deportations, Ireland, lesbian and gay rights, and police harassment we have entered areas on which liberals and the Labour right are all but silent.

We need to articulate this experience — and take it into the Labour Party in the form of a bold and radical democratic programme.

Women

Women for Socialism has become the first nationwide socialist-feminist current in a long time; it has a lot to say to Labour Party members.

In organising Labour Party supporters in the Socialist Movement we will have to place the concerns of Women for Socialism at the forefront.

The Labour left will not be effectively rebuilt whilst it is dominated by men and stymied by male trade union bureaucrats.

The Labour left will also be able to draw strength from the Socialist Movement trade union conference in November. In the past,the left has failed to organise its trade union supporters.

Even during the 1981 Deputy Leadership Campaign we failed to appeal directly to stop stewards and ordinary trade union members and relied instead on influential friends within the bureaucracy.

This approach made it easy for those same "friends" to abandon us when rank and file anger at the Callaghan experience began to ebb.

The Socialist Movement should also embark on the much needed debate on how the trade union link with the Party should be democratised.

To date such a debate has been squashed for fear of annoying our few remaining "friends" within trade union officialdom. We can no longer afford such conservatism.

Equipped

Equipped from the start with a commitment to work with those in struggle outside the Labour Party, the Socialist Movement provides us with an opportunity to renew the Labour left both numerically and ideologically.

Inform your local Labour left, *Briefing* or Campaign Group of the forthcoming meetings and make sure you come armed with ideas for action.

Across Europe radical green parties have been blossoming outside the existing workers' organisations.

The task of Socialist Movement supporters in the Labour Party is to make sure that this radicalisation finds its expression within the labour movement.

We must forge a new Socialist agenda which is green, democratic, and relevant to workers', including women workers', real struggles and experiences.

Economic Notebook

Market forces meet cocaine:

Time to legalise?

Drugs are now the number one domestic political issue in the United States.

The crack epidemic has added a demonic twist to the despair and poverty of the ghettoes.

The "overspill" effects (AIDS proliferation, crime, crack babies, overloaded public health facilities), ignored by white America when confined within ghetto boundaries, have forced the drug problem to the centre of the political agenda.

Following the assassination of US-backed Columbian Presidential candidate Luis Galan by the Medellin cocaine cartels, Bush announced a $7.86 billion "war" against drugs.

As part of the package, the State Department is sending $65 million in emergency aid and 100 military advisors to Columbia to deal with the "supply side" of the cocaine crisis.

Few believe this latest crusade by the US state can possibly win. Alternative proposals are now emerging.

The Economist — which dubbed Bush's war against drugs "Mission Impossible" — applies neo-classical economic logic to conclude that prohibition is a useless remedy.

It calls for the complete decriminalisation of the consumption of hard drugs *and* all trade in them, under regulation (and taxation) by the state.

As for the left, we seem mainly to mirror the traditional dichotomy — authoritarian moralism on the one hand, freemarket libertarianism on the other — which is clearly inadequate to deal with the current hard drugs crisis.

The economies of Peru, Bolivia, Columbia are now totally dominated by an export trade in cocaine worth an estimated $60 billion a year.

The Andean peasant can earn maybe $150 from an acre of maize or £5,000-10,000 an acre from a crop of coca.

Dangerous

In the US young, black, inner city youth face a similarly rational, if highly dangerous, career option: starve on welfare or earn thousands dealing crack.

According to *The Economist* coke was wholesaling in New York at $60,000 a kilo in 1980 when it was the height of fashion in yuppiedom.

Third world producers responded to high levels of First World demand by planting new acres, building more laboratories, and recruiting a suitable sales force (drug armies, airforces, couriers and dealers).

Imports of coke into the US soared, prices dropped, and wholesale dealers were forced downmarket to offload excess supplies.

Thus emerged the "marketing device" of the $10 crack hit, bringing coke within reach of the poorer "consumer".

By Dave Palmer
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

By the end of 1988 the New York wholesale price for a kilo had fallen to $12,000-8,000 dollars. Even at that price huge profits can be made in crack form: a kilo can fetch $40,000 on the streets.

The glut in supply in the US may force coke distributors to turn to European markets, where the wholesale price is still three times that in the US, and the Medellin cartels can exploit their Spanish connections while the Mafia engages in coke/heroin barter deals.

For *The Economist* this proves that "The drug trade is a fine specimen of unrestricted competition which efficiently brings down prices and pushes up consumption.

"Governments refuse to limit the trade by regulation, taxation and discouragement. Instead by national laws and international conventions, they try to prohibit it."

Spending

In 1980 the US spent under $1 billion to stop drugs imports. Though by 1988 it was spending $4 billion, the price of drugs was still falling and their sales volume rising. State prohibition cannot counterveil market forces.

A recent Senate sub-committee valued global trade in drugs at $500 billion a year ($300 billion in the US). The US coke market alone is worth around $100 billion.

Estimating production costs at $200 a kilo, transportation another $200, and additional costs (bribes, enforcement) at $1,000 means that the total cost of US cocaine imports is only 3.5% of turnover or a mere $3.5 billion, a total tax-free profit of $96.5 billion (a profit rate of 2,850%).

Faced with such enormous entrepreneurial incentives no wonder state probibition has failed.

The Economist proposes that in "legitimate commerce, their sale controlled, taxed and supervised, their dangers proclaimed on every packet, drugs would poison fewer customers, kill fewer dealers, bribe fewer policemen, raise more public revenue."

The argument is tempting and it is clear why this radical course is being seriously considered — the prospect of the total breakdown of the social fabric of a substantial proportion of US society.

Moreover, the vast untaxed profits of the drug consortiums pour into the world banking system. Any attempt to attack those profits would mean, *The Economist* warns "attacking the banks that big countries protect."

Far better, then, to turn those profits over to state regulated, quality controlled and "socially responsible" capitalists.

But *The Economist*'s argument falls flat, ultimately, because of its refusal to tackle the demand side of the equation.

According to free market theory, individual consumers should be allowed to order their own preferences in the light of the fullest information and appropriate taxation.

Without coherent measures to ameliorate its multiple social and economic causes, legalisation would undoubtedly lead to a massive *increase* in hard drug abuse.

Producer

Third World producer countries might become more stable and less "corrupt", but even more dependent on the trade.

Legalised drug capitalists would, of course, promote their product in the usual way, and distribution through legal channels would inevitably increase availability in previously untapped markets.

An end to prohibition of hard drugs might reduce some of the associated crime, but it would do nothing about the social roots of the drug crisis in the ghettoes — unemployment and ever increasing social despair — any more than Bush's "war against drugs" will.

Moreover, small dealers, cut out by legal outlets, would be forced to look to other income generating activities. The creation of alternative opportunities for these people is not on the agenda of the US government or *The Economist*.

*Incidentally, this writer is in agreement with *The Economist* on at least one point. There is no justification for the continued illegality of cannabis, which is a mild narcotic bearing no relation to cocaine or heroin.

Lea Bridge Branch Labour Party
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

Labour Councils: Don't Collect the Poll Tax!

BIRMINGHAM LABOUR BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Voices for Salman Rushdie
Against fundamentalism and racism
For the right to dissent
Labour Party Conference Fringe Meeting
Wednesday October 5th, 1pm
Brighthelm Centre, North Road, Brighton
"Socialism, Free Speech, and Anti-Racism"
WITH:
Southall Black Sisters
Campaign Against Repression in Iran
Narendra Makanji (Black Sections)
Mike Marqusee (Labour Briefing)

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.

❍ Creche ❍ food ❍ stalls ❍

•*Briefing* Raffle Prize Draw! The draw will now take place at the October AGM.
Tickets still available from the *Briefing* office.
Top prizes! Good cause!
For more information phone the Briefing office (01-809 3927)
or write to PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY.
All *Briefing* readers welcome!

Ireland

Labour silent on UDR/RUC terrorism

Collaboration between British "security forces" and loyalist terror groups in Ireland has been official policy since at least the mid '70s.

It has combined the drawing up of Central America-style death lists and the assasination of prominent political militants with a policy of arbitrary killings aimed at terrorising the nationalist community.

In 1980 Miriam Daly, Noel Lyttle and Ronnie Bunting of the Irish Republican Socialist Party were murdered in their homes.

In 1981 Bernadette McAliskey and her husband Michael nearly died after a violent attempt on their lives. Gerry Adams escaped with his life in an attack soon after his election as MP.

More recently Sinn Fein Councillor John Davey and nationalist lawyer Pat Finucane have been victims.

Countless others have died — many with no record of political involvement. The perpetrators acted on very accurate information or operated with impunity due to the unexplained absence or inactivity of security forces.

This collaboration is not an atypical phenomenon. It flows directly from British rule in the Six Counties.

The "RUC" — formed after the partition of Ireland in 1921 — was simply the Royal Irish Constabulary under a different name.

The RIC was a militarised colonial force which played a central role in Britain's attempts to crush republicanism in the war of independence.

By PIERS MOSTYN

Not satisfied with the RUC, however, the new unionist regime lobbied for guns and money to establish militias.

The most important, the B Specials, represented the effective legalisation of the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) founded in 1912 to resist the Home Rule Bill.

In the late '60s the RUC and B Specials were openly involved in anti-Catholic progroms in which thousands of families were forced out of their homes and entire streets burnt down.

Under pressure to disband the Specials, the Labour government of the time instead incorporated them into the army and called it the Ulster Defence Regiment.

It remains a totally sectarian force — with a 98% loyalist composition and 100 convictions for terrorist offences.

The recent disclosures pose a dilemma for the government.

Britain's rationale for its war in Ireland is the need to defeat "terrorism" and establish "law and order". British involvement threatens to be discredited if it is based on forces that are themselves terrorist.

Since the 1985 Accord, Britain has aimed to regroup the southern establishment, the constitutional nationalists and international opinion behind partition and continued British rule by claiming it is committed to addressing nationalist grievances.

The revelation of UDR/terrorist links undermines the collaboration of Haughey and the SDLP with the British government.

Britain's strategic aim, since the late 70s, of "Ulsterisation" has involved the replacement of the British army with an expanded UDR.

For example, it has recently been announced that the UDR is to be armed with plastic bullet guns — giving it a "public order" function for the first time.

Despite the Stalker affair and the shoot-to-kill controversy, the Anglo-Irish Accord helped to overturn some of the nationalist resistance to the RUC and UDR. The revelations of UDR/RUC terrorism may threaten this.

Throughout the debate on RUC collaboration with terrorists, the Labour front bench has remained silent.

When pushed for a response, Labour spokesperson McNamara called for the RUC's role to be upgraded in view of its record of "non-sectarianism" and "upholding the rule of law"!

The labour movement must challenge this collaborationism and expose the realities behind the Accord and British rule.

Ulsterisation must be discredited as any kind of alternative to a total and immediate British withdrawal. A campaign is needed for the disbandment of the RUC and the UDR, as well as for troops out.

For free speech on Ireland

March and rally against the Ban

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!

Anti-Deportation Update

This column features short updates on anti-deportation campaigns featured in previous *Briefings*. Please take up campaigning requests.

•**Victoria and Stephen Apetor.** Victoria abandoned when on visit from Ghana. Stephen's father deported. Appeal against deportation lost; Victoria and Stephen in sanctuary since August 10th. Defence campaign delegation now in Ghana collecting information about problems if Victoria returned. Deportation currently being delayed on medical grounds; Home Office may change its mind. October 7th: Benefit, 8pm, Church of the Ascension, Hulme, Manchester.

Contact: Victoria & Stephen Defence Campaign, Chorlton Workshop, Chorlton Central Church, Barlow Moar Road, Chorlton, Manchester M21. 061-226 4137.

•**Francis Okanlami.** Home office appealling against ruling that deportation order was illegally served and thus invalid. May issue fresh order. Backing from NALGO. Letters to MPs and Home Office needed.

•**Sam Manna.** Refused reentry into Britain after brief visit to Jamaica. After public campaign, Home Office backed down. CASE WON.

•**Ali Cifticiogullari.** "Illegal entrant", subsequently married to British citizen; one child. Despite broad campaign backed by Liverpool City Council, deported. CASE LOST.

CATALYST
MAGAZINE OF THE INDEPENDENT LEFT
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Bimonthly magazine
Published by the Socialist Society and the Conference of Socialist Economists
First issue (October/November) now available.
£1.20. Annual subscription £7.20 post free.

Springfield School

The real issues

The responsibility for the events at Springfield Junior School lies squarely with Birmingham Council's Labour leadership.

Fatal flows in their policies on racial equality gave rise to the dispute, and their refusal to recognise black parents' concern — that there is no language barrier to involvement in their children's education — is preventing its resolution.

The appointment of a white, non-Asian language speaking teacher to a Home Liaison post at Birmingham's Springfield School provoked protests from parents and the community. For many reasons, the affair showed up the racist approach of the City Council Labour Group. RICHARD HATCHER, Ladywood CLP, reports.

The *laager* mentality that surfaces when black people make demands on Labour's professed anti-racism came out in Chair of Education Les Byron's references to "mob rule" and Council Leader Dick Knowles' remark that "people wanting to set up apartheid in education would be better off in South Africa."

Racist reactions like these are guaranteed to reinforce trends towards ethnic separatism as well as providing fuel for the Tory press.

Dick Knowles has tried to shift the blame onto a small group of anti-Labour Party activists stirring up the community.

They may well exist, but the only reason they have any purchase is that they recognise the genuine concerns of a large section of Asian parents. The Education Department doesn't.

The Springfield dispute has revealed three fundamental weaknesses in its policies, apart from its notoriously low spending record.

•Procedures for consultation and negotiation with parents and the community, black and white, are non-existent. Consequently policies and practices are imposed from the top down.

•School governors (and others involved in appointing staff such as heads and advisors) often don't have the training or support to ensure that they address racial inequality and respond to community concerns.

•The need for more bilingual teachers still isn't met. Birmingham's new policy document on community education, while full of rhetoric on "partnership", makes no mention of the language issue in home-school relations.

In six months' time, Local Management of Schools will be phased in. This doesn't mean an end to the Council's responsibilities for these matters — though they would undoubtedly like to wash their hands of them.

But it does mean that questions of the rights of parents and school employees, the appointment of teachers and policies on racial equality, will be decided solely by school governors.

This has explosive implications which governors on the left need to address if future Springfields are to be avoided.

How can the immediate dispute be resolved?

Birmingham Community Relations Council are demanding that the teacher be removed from the post. But this is not the answer.

She was appointed according to the agreed procedures for teachers having Protected Teacher Status (which gives priority to teachers facing redeployment) and bilingualism was not a condition of the post.

Unilaterally over-riding procedures which safeguard employees' jobs would set a precedent which would rebound on other teachers, white and black.

The Council should immediately open negotiations, including with the parents, on a new and constructive basis, including the offer of an *additional*, bilingual, home-school liaison teacher for the school.

It should also begin wider negotiations with the Asian community and the teachers' unions on home-school liaison posts, based on the principle that if parents want bilingualism stipulated in the job specification, it should be.

A resolution along these lines was passed on September 13th by Birmingham District Labour Party. Only Dick Knowles voted against.

The Women's Page

NAC Conference

Choice has a fighting future!

On October 28/29th the National Abortion Campaign holds its annual conference.

The past year has been a quiet time for the campaign, with only Ann Widdecombe's failed attempt to reintroduce the David Alton Bill to worry about in Parliament.

By Leonora Lloyd
NAC

Internationally, however, it has been more exciting.

My trip to Washington to take part in the historic March for Women's Equality on April 9th led to a strengthening of international links, not just with women in the United States, but from all over the world.

At a Women's Health Conference in Madrid at the end of July, it was agreed that closer links between campaigns working on abortion rights were needed.

As a result a new international journal is to be produced, which will supplement the existing journal of the Women's Global Network on Reproductive Rights. The first edition is being produced by NAC.

The main organisers of the April 9th March, the National Organisation of Women, are sending a speaker to the NAC Conference.

She will talk about "Operation Rescue", the anti-abortion groups who attack clinics and clinic workers and users.

This is no longer an abstract discussion for us here in Britain.

A group calling itself "Rescue" has been set up in Scotland, reports of pickets outside clinics have been reaching us from all over Britain, and leaders of "OR" have been touring the country recently.

NAC has invited clinics and advisory services to attend our conference to discuss the best way of dealing with this situation and how we can learn from the US experience.

This is just one of the topics being discussed by panels of speakers and in workshops.

Other issues include the new early abortion method, RU486, how to deal with the media, working in the pro-choice Alliance, the trade unions and Labour Party, and how the NHS changes will particularly affect women.

Perhaps the most important discussion will be on how we approach the next series of attacks. The government is introducing a Bill dealing with the proposals of the Warnock Committee on embryo research (see last *Briefing*).

Initially it will go to the House of Lords. The committee stage, on the open floor of the Lords, will provide plenty of time to discuss any amendments.

Anti-abortionists will almost certainly try not only to ensure that the Bill prevents any use of embryos at any stage, but also to introduce an abortion time-limit clause.

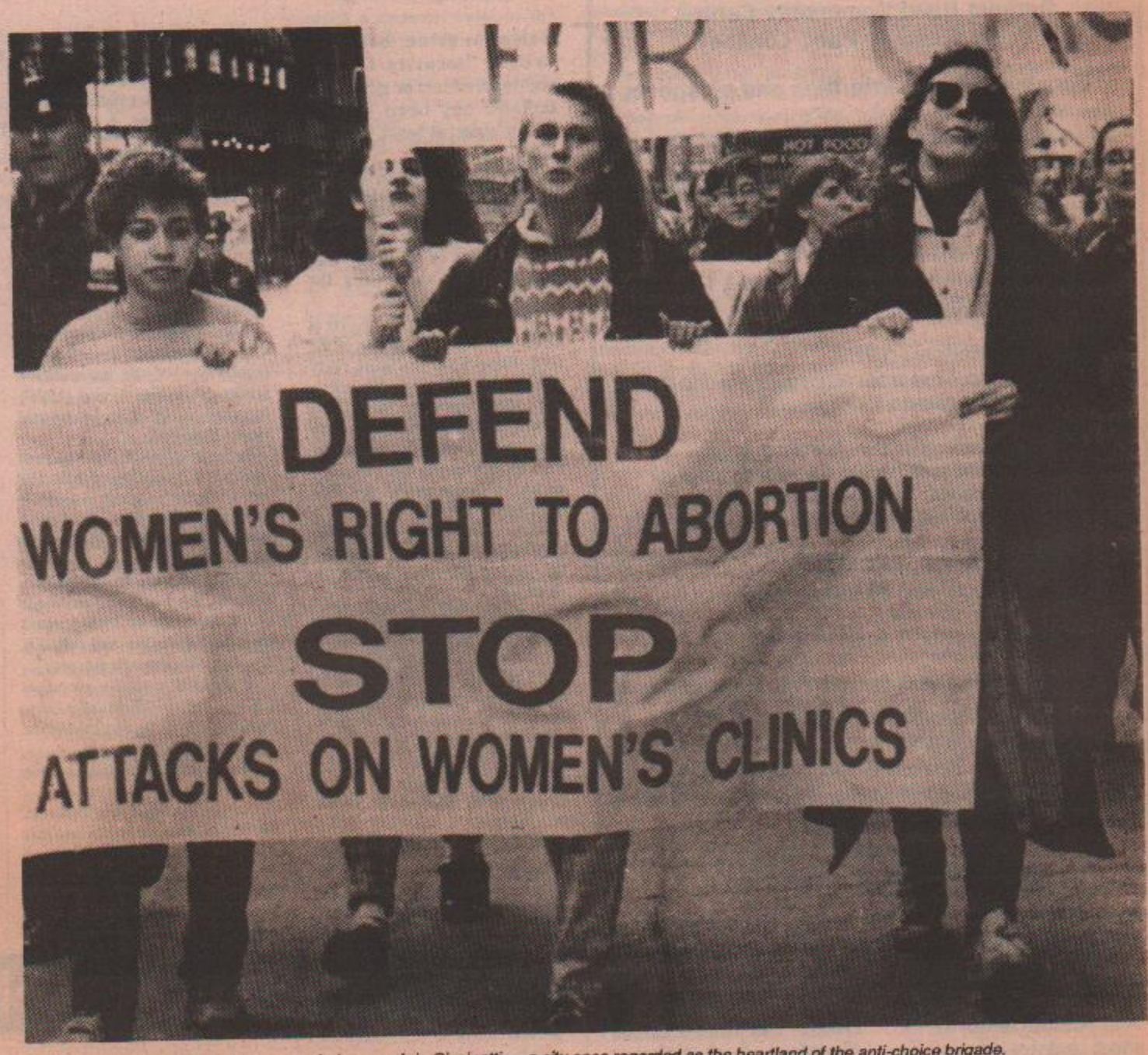
The latest information is that the government intends to leave this to private members, as usual.

We also know that the anti-abortionists want a private member's bill to change the way such Bills are dealt with, to make it easier for attacks on the Abortion Act to succeed.

The debate at the annual conference will centre on the best way of dealing with all this.

In the past, every time there has been a major attack, NAC has set up a specific campaign to deal with it — like the very successful FAB. Our membership doubled as a result; but having a separate campaign meant we lost much of the initiative.

Now two co-ordinating groups — one to defend the existing law and the Pro-Choice Alliance — already exist. We must look at how we can work through them and retain our role as the leading campaigning group to maximise the benefit to NAC.



Women on the 3,000-strong pro-choice march in Cincinatti — a city once regarded as the heartland of the anti-choice brigade.

nac news

Pro-Choice Video

NAC has obtained the distribution rights of a video made in the US by the Feminist Fund for the Majority, called "Abortion: For Survival".

Made as the answer to "The Silent Scream" and "The Eclipse of Reason", it is a hard-hitting, moving, and powerful account of how access to safe, legal abortion is important to all women, world-wide.

It opens with an abortion which, unlike that featured in the two anti-abortion videos, concentrates on the women and her reactions.

The video, which will be shown at the NAC Conference, is available for hire or purchase.

Details of the Conference, video, and international journal can all be obtained from NAC, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC2B 5AU (01-405 4801).

Conference Greetings from
Women for Socialism
Fighting for a socialist feminist future:
Join us!
WIS, c/o 7 Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY

USA action grows

Following the appalling Supreme Court decision which has made abortion effectively illegal in many states, US pro-choice campaigners are hitting back on all fronts.

Already, in the state primaries, they have secured the election of a number of sympathetic candidates — both Republicans and Democrats. They are preparing for another Washington demonstration on November 12th.

Expectations are that November 12th will far outdo the previous march, which in turn was even bigger than the 1963 Civil Rights March. As on April 9th, there will be simultaneous marches all over the US.

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.

Conference Preview

Socialism, not software!

I used to look forward to Labour Party Conference.

The cut and thrust of debate,the left gains on the NEC; the mighty T&G casting its votes against the leadership, the victories for Party democracy, nationalisation, disarmament.

But Brighton 1989 will be sheer misery: a further shift to the right, isolation for the left, triumph for Kinnock.

Why, then, are we going?

First, because the Draft Agenda shows no less than 45 resolutions and amendments calling for democratic debate and amendment to the Policy Review. Indeed, the resolution booklet shows little significant shift to the right among the CLPs.

Second, because increased action by trade unionists is slowly being reflected inside the Party. This will particularly show itself in the debate on Employment Rights, where the TUC line *against* sequestration of funds and *for* legal secondary picketing should win the day.

The other knock-on of the TUC will be on nuclear power, where the Policy Review sell-out is likely to be reversed.

Hornsey Vale Branch Labour Party

Conference Delegates: Support Black People's Right to Self-Organisation in the Labour Party! Support Black Sections!

By DAN CARTER

Alas, unilateralism will be ditched at Conference, despite a clear majority of resolutions in its favour. We should be aware of this now, so demoralisation doesn't get worse than it already is.

Most CLPs will vote in favour of existing policy, along with the TGWU. We have lost and regained unilateralist policy in the past and have every hope of winning it back again in the future.

Lesbian and gay rights (where the Policy Review came out with the Orwellian idea of "greater equality" while dumping actual equality on the age of consent) can be reaffirmed.

But the whole left will have to give this issue a higher priority if we are not to face a similar fight every year.

A historic compromise on Black Sections looks set to be reached.

Briefing will back an affiliated socialist society for black people with local and national representation. We certainly won't back the Hattersley camp's insistence that white worthies be allowed to join and thereby reduce the representative power required by black people.

As expected, there are plenty of resolutions on the environment (though a lot of local government and rural motions have also been lumped into this section).

We need to differentiate between the genuine radical green movement, which has the potential of bringing hundreds of thousands of young people into the political arena, and the flash-in-the-Euro-pan of the Green Party, already reduced to 5% in the opinion polls.

So, as far as I'm concerned, it's *no* to Red-Green Alliances and electoral pacts, but a resounding *yes* to giving environmental issues their rightful place in a socialist programme.

On the Poll Tax, we will be backing motions for a mass non-payment campaign tabled by Brighton, Liverpool, and London CLPs.

On Ireland, the political failure of the "Time To Go" Campaign is indicated by the fact that there are fewer resolutions than in recent years and no chance of a debate.

An increased vote for CLPs at Conference is a likely gain. But don't expect the GMB to back this without strings.

Its next move will be to wipe out the delegated power of General Committees and introduce postal balloting (as advocated by the drinking clubs-NULSC), presumably as a pull-out section of *Labour Party News* (on the page after the Leadership tells you which way to vote):

In fact, watch out for a power battle for control of *LPN* following the departure of editor Nigel Williamson, one of the few pockets of resistance to the ever-expanding empire of Peter Mandelson at Walworth Road.

On other organisational questions, you may have wondered how Kate Hoey would escape certain — and democratic — deselection in Vauxhall.

No problem; just change the rules so no reselection takes place when by-elections have been held more than 18 months after the previous General Election!



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Ron Todd and Bill Morris scrutinise the order paper: how long before all we scrutinisie is Labour Party News?

The complete failure of the mass membership campaign (recruiting only marginally fewer members than we lost last year) shows we were right to argue that real mass membership will only be won by radical policies that inspire people and not purely organisational methods. Socialism, not software, will build the mass party!

You've got to laugh. Keith Vaz, selected on a left wing ticket in Leicester and a former advocate of Black Sections, has nominated for Deputy Leader — yes, you've guessed it — the Asians' friend Roy Hattersley. Shadow Cabinet elections must be coming up.

The defeats we will suffer this year reveal conclusively the failure of the left to work seriously to build a base in the unions. Gaining control of CLP General Committees was always a "short cut to socialism" and never a sufficient strategy in itself.

The left may be weakened in size, but its resolve has strengthened. *Briefing* will provide a focus in Brighton for those socialists who still realise there's a class struggle going on out there.

Lesbian and gay rights

We *can* win at Brighton!

Given what's happened to the other progressive Labour policies, it is not surprising that the Policy Review should have dropped the Party's commitment to full equality for lesbians and gay men.

The debate at the National Executive Committee saw the explicit refusal to include a commitment to an equal age of consent. And it replaced "full equality" with "greater equality" — whatever that means.

It seems that the statement earlier in this section of the Policy Review, that "A Labour government [will make] the promotion of equal opportunity and equal rights one of its major priorities" does not apply to lesbians and gay men.

The betrayal — largely the work of the right led by Roy Hattersley — was carried by only 17 votes to 11.

The damage done to Labour amongst lesbians and gay men has been immense. Every paper of our community carried outraged articles and Democrats and Greens were quick to exploit their opportunity.

Neither did Neil Kinnock's full page article in *Gay Times*, calling on lesbians and gays to vote Labour, assuage the anger. If anything, feelings were inflamed by the hypocrisy of his call.

There is powerful support for full equality, built up by years of campaigning at all levels of the Party. Many large unions are also committed by policies adopted at their own conferences over recent years.

The TGWU recently held its first full debate on lesbian and gay rights this summer.

Despite strong pressure to follow the leadership line, there is also a good prospect of passing the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR)'s resolution which reinstates full equality and an explicit commitment to an equal age of consent.

The first ever debate took place at the 1985 Conference. The NEC then advocated remittance on the age of consent.

However, LCLGR, which had organised the forces to win the debate, overturned the National Executive. At the following Conference, the policy won a two-thirds majority.

By Peter Purton and Debbie Epstein LCLGR and Conference delegates

This was the high tide. Progressive Labour Councils, like the GLC, had been popularising the question and the fantastic response of the miners to the backing offered by Lesbians and Gays opened doors to traditionally unsympathetic unions.

The Tories finally woke up to the significance of lesbian and gay rights, and used it against Labour in the 1987 general election.

The Party's response — a few words in the manifesto and silence everywhere else — merely played into the hands of the bigots.

The continued work of a handful of Labour councils led to the infamous Section 28 at the end of 1988, banning the so-called "promotion of homosexuality" by Local Authorities.

The initial response of the Labour front bench was, scandalously, to support it, and it took a massive mobilisation to reverse this stance.

At the 1988 Party Conference, a majority of 84% was won to reject Section 28 and to reaffirm the Party's commitment to full equality. The NEC, as in 1986, was unanimous in backing the resolution.

LCLGR has fought a long campaign to commit Labour to a policy which commits a Labour government to repeal all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men, to outlaw such discrimination, and to encourage the adoption of policies of offering positive images of lesbian and gay sexuality, so as to challenge the deep-rooted prejudice that we are inferior beings.

Inevitably, such a policy challenges deep-seated homophobia, which exists both in society and the labour movement.

There are two levels of opposition.

The bigoted element, led by Hattersley, does not believe that lesbians and gays should be equal.

The others are simply terrified of any public mention of the issue on the grounds that it would harm Labour's electoral prospects.

LCLGR has always argued for Labour to be public in its support for our rights. Recognising the level of public prejudice, we know that it is as necessary to struggle against homophobia as it is against racism and sexism.

To hide the policy is merely to surrender to the bigotry! LCLGR's current campaign is for the party to deliver on its policy. That means reinstating it first!

We call for the strongest possible turn-out for our lobby of Conference, 12-2pm on Monday October 2nd, to show that lesbians and gay men and their supporters are not prepared to accept this sell-out.

Islington North CLP's Executive Members send greetings to Conference:

Oscar Abrams
Bob Crossman
George Durack
Talal Karim
Eddie Niles
Jan Schling
Mick Sullivan
Gerard Tierney
Keith Veness
Valerie Veness

Red and Green

A Labour-Green electoral pact?

Fresh from addressing a fringe meeting at Green Party Conference, PETER TATCHELL enters the debate on Labour's electoral way forward with a controversial new plan for Labour to consider.

The victory of the left and Green parties in the European elections has opened up new opportunities to challenge the right wing 1992 project of "Europe plc" with the alternative vision of a "Red-Green Europe" committed to economic democracy and ecological sustainability.

Despite the real obstacles to co-operation, there is much common ground among Socialist, Green, Communist, independent left and radical regionalist parties such as the Basques in the European parliament.

During the 1984-89 European parliament, the Green-Alternative European Link (GRAEL) group of MEPs brought together a working alliance between:

•the West German and Belgian Greens;

•the Italian revolutionary socialists from Democrazia Proletaria;

•and the Dutch Green Progressive Alliance (itself a four-party electoral pact between the Greens, Radicals, Communists, and Pacifist Socialists).

Despite their differences, the member parties of GRAEL co-operated closely to set a radical agenda within the European parliament.

In so doing, GRAEL pointed the way to the kind of pluralistic politics and broad based alliances which are critical to Green and left advance throughout Europe.

Within Britain, the Green Party's spectacular result in the European elections indicates that Left-Green co-operation would become increasingly relevant to the advance of progressive politics at Westminster.

Our most urgent task is to establish a radical consensus to oust the Conservatives and set Britain on a course of social renewal.

Despite Labour's improved electoral performance and opinion poll ratings, it is still far from certain that Labour can win an outright majority in the House of Commons.

Labour's previous mid-term opinion poll leads were later dramatically reversed and resulted in massive defeats in 1983 and 1987.

Rather than risk a fourth Tory victory, it would seem sensible for Labour and the Greens to put aside any inclination to political vanity.

Instead, they should seriously consider an electoral agreement which would involve standing a *single* Labour or Green candidate against the Tories in marginal constituencies.

This candidate would fight on a political programme of enviromental protection and social justice, plus proportional representation.

This agreement would encompass the 50 parliamentary seats in the six Euro-constituencies where the Greens came second to the Tories, plus a comparable number of Tory-Labour marginals elsewhere.

If the transfer of votes from Green to Labour and vice versa was successful in winning one third of these 100 seats, such an electoral pact would make the difference between a Labour victory or defeat.

It would give the Greens their first representatives at Westminster, who might well support Labour in forming a minority government, if Labour failed to secure a majority.

The possibility of success for this strategy would be further enhanced if similar deals could be struck with the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru to make both Scotland and Wales "Tory-free zones".

Far from being a sell-out of either Socialist or Green principles, a Labour-Green electoral agreement could, at last, give radicals from both parties the long overdue and much needed parliamentary power to begin the ecological and egalitarian transformation of British society.

LABOUR BRIEFING FRINGE MEETING 1989
A NEW AGENDA FOR THE LABOUR LEFT:
WOMEN SPEAK OUT!
with
Alice Mahon MP
Martha Osamor;
Black Sections; Haringey Councillor
Rebecca Fleming;
Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights
Anna Wagstaff
Pergamon strikers
Mandy Mudd
Labour Briefing National Steering Committee
Chair: **Pauline Purnell**
Women for Socialism
SUN., October 1st; (at close of conference session)
Brighthelm Centre, North Road, Brighton.
Admission: £1 waged; 50p unwaged
All welcome!

The new careerism

Mandelson: myth and reality

"Reorganisation" in administrative bureaucracies can have many hidden meanings — and unpredictable consequences.

Those who work in town halls, trades unions, or indeed in the Labour Party itself have learned to view the word with suspicion.

Within the hallowed walls and byzantine corridors of Walworth Road, "reorganisation" has brought with it a new spectre to haunt Party workers and send shivers through those who cherished the idealistic notion that perhaps they were working within some kind of democratic body.

That spectre is Labour's new broom, Peter Mandelson.

Following the reorganisation of the Party into four directorates, Mandelson was catapulted into the administrative heirarchy as Director of Communications

By our mole in the Rose Garden

This new Directorate was placed firmly under LCC control, with Mandelson quickly assembling the Policy Review in line with his views of the Labour Party as a middle-ground vote-catchimg machine.

Having emerged from the brash world of the commercial media, he soon began to establish a reputation as a difficult autocrat, with a management style pitched somewhere between Sky Television and the Tirana Politburo.

Mandelson has had few links with the ordinary Party members and trades unionists whose views he is supposed to reflect; to him, grass roots are just something to dig up and concrete over.

Yet any Party worker who dares to question his seemingly arbitrary pronouncements on policy is told that Mandelson has "the Party" behind him.

"The party", in this case, is presumably the private one he went to with Kinnock the night before.

Mandelson is clearly close to Kinnock. Speculation about tails and dogs is tempting, but since both seem to be wagging in such close harmony it's difficult to tell which end is leading.

But since Mandelson is clearly the one with the brain, this doesn't leave much for Kinnock.

Co-operation between Neil and Peter does not end with a cosy stitching up of Party Policy for the endorsement of LCC minions. Peter has his eye on higher things.

The Party bureaucracy has lined him up for selection in two seats — Hartlepool and Stoke on Trent. Both are safe Labour turf and both have retiring MPs.

Party workers report that Mandelson has been busy buttering up regional organisers from both areas.

But why should a careerist power broker like Peter Mansdelson be interested in a parliamentary seat, removing him from the centralised structures which now dominate the Labour Party?

There seems little doubt that he has been offered somewhat more than just a Parliamentary seat. If his selection and election goes according to plan, we could be seeing a good deal more of Peter Mandelson... in the next Labour Government.

In Mandelson, we see the emergence of a new and disturbing kind of Labour politician, the apparatchik-come-cabinet minister designate, with no history of grass roots Party or trade union work.

The process by which unelected officials have come to dominate policy making at the expense of democratic participation is bad enough.

But when these officials use their authoritarian powers to step into safe seats and potential governmental office, the whole basis of the Labour Party as a democratic socialist party is called into question.

Mandelson must be stopped. If personal entrepreneurialism is allowed to triumph over collective choice, then the future for democracy within our Party looks bleak indeed.

Vote for Socialism
Dennis Skinner MP

Labour Briefing Left Slate for NEC Elections:

Constituency Section: Abbott, Benn, Livingstone, Mahon, Skinner, Wise.
Treasurer: Strang.
Women's Section: Pettifor, Marjoram.
NCC: Slater.
Conference Arrangements Committee, CLPs' Section: Willsman.

Alf Lomas MEP

For Peace and Socialism

Greetings to Labour Party Conference

South Hornsey Tenants' Association

Defending Council Tenants' rights: Fighting for low cost, good quality housing

Greets all socialists attending the 1989 Labour Party Conference

Labour must support Council Tenants' Organisations
— not attack them!

Hackney Labour Briefing

Defend Council Services!

Towards socialist policies in local government!

Hackne Union

Pay Per Pensi Third Averag

President:
Secretary:

Black Sections

Racism: a major challenge for Labour

The NEC meeting on Wednesday, September 27th, will be a crucial one — not just for Black Sections but for the Labour Party.

It will consider three options.

One is the existing recommendations of the Working Party (see last *Briefing*) for an affiliated Black Socialist Society.

The other two are associate membership for white people and some kind of anti-racist committee.

If the NEC decides to put all these to the Conference the Black Sections will add a fourth — our original proposals as backed by numerous CLPs and several unions.

The notion of associate membership for white people is a nonsense. Is the NEC really going to set up a black-based body in which white people are welcome — but only as some kind of second class citizens?

As for the anti-racist society, it utterly fails to address the key issues of self-organisation and direct representation.

If the NEC goes down this road we will argue that it has acted outside the remit given by Conference last year. But more importantly, Party members must understand that these kinds of false solutions have been tried and found wanting in the past.

The Labour Party Race Action Group and, going further back, the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination floundered exactly on this question of white participation and black representation.

Conference deserves more than a shoddy compromise which simply won't work in the heat of political action.

The Working Party recommendations as they currently stand do meet most of our requirements and could form the basis for further development.

Representation

It would represent a major step forward for black representation and indeed for black people.

After the formation of a Black Socialist Society, Black Sections itself would not vanish. We will be even more necessary as a pressure group within the new Society, within the labour movement and beyond.

By Narendra Makanji Chair, Labour Party Black Sections

We would continue to campaign as we've done over the last six years — trying to push the affiliated society in the right direction, constantly updating the Black Agenda (and supplementing it with local Black Agendas and a Black Women's Agenda), and taking up the wide variety of issues which are of pressing concern to Black people — and therefore to the labour movement.

The Policy Review for the most part fails to address these concerns.

It does mention racial attacks but once again is unsatisfactory on immigration — which remains a basic test of the Party's attitudes towards black people.

For many sections of the labour movement and for other oppressed people 1992 seems like a major opportunity. But for black people it is a major threat.

Restructuring

We are the ones who have most to lose out of the current restructuring of the European economy.

Black people in other European countries suffer even worse conditions and more intense discrimination than in Britain. Any "levelling down" process will be devastating for us.

Already I note that East Germans are welcomed into West Germany and get jobs right away while Turks and Algerians are expelled.

In addition we see the rise of racist parties in France and Germany and the disturbing response of the mainstream parties.

The Trevi Group of Home Ministers has already declared that it doesn't want to see the easing of movement across internal EC borders lead to an easing up on "terrorists, drug pushers, and immigrants."

That last phrase tells us a great deal.

Other key areas which Labour must deal with are democratically accountable representation for Black people (in all areas of life, on all kinds of public authorities), the liberation of Azania (not just lip service but immediate direct practical assistance), and the Poll Tax.

We see this Tax linked to the introduction of "pass law" type restrictions and the creation of a dual labour market which would intensify the exploitation and vulnerability of black people.

Resistance

We have called for a long term campaign of resistance to the Tax. What is needed is sustained civil disobedience — for as long as it takes.

Our target of 30 black MPs is a long-term one — rather like Mrs Thatcher's "zero inflation", but infinitely more serious!

The first step in getting 30 MPs must be to get at least 30 candidates — and in the coming months there will be hard fought challenges by black candidates in numerous CLPs around the country.

Finally, Labour's strategists must break decisively with their fears of losing the racist vote.

Until Labour decides to campaign openly against racism and says clearly to the racists, "we don't want your votes; go somewhere else", it will always be vulnerable to racist campaigns staged by the Tories and the media.

As long as Labour fails to address the key questions I have outline above it will be all too easy for our enemies to unleash a racist propaganda onslaught (like the "loony left" stories about Labour-controlled Councils) and Labour will find itself back on the ropes.

Defence Policy Review

Media polls before principles

August's *Labour Party News* gives the game away:

"Labour's Policy Review has made it a credible alternative government in the eyes of many of the Party's natural supporters who in recent years abandoned it."

In other words, policy is dictated by opinion polls — not by socialist principles.

In the same issue, Gerald Kaufman explains "why Labour has changed its defence policy."

This is before the Conference has even discussed the issue!

Gerald Kaufman says we need a new policy for a new international situation. What is new is that Gorbachev has *unilaterally* reduced the Soviet arms budget and thus become the most popular politician in world opinion polls. There is a lesson here for the pollsters at Walworth Road.

Kaufman and Kinnock say they should not go naked of nuclear weapons into the Conference Chamber. Haven't we heard this before somewhere?

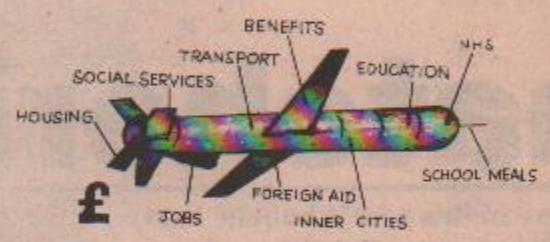
Echoing Nye Bevan thirty years on shows it is not a new policy at all but the same old line of Gaitskell, Wilson, and Callaghan.

Election

What is perhaps new is that the right turn has been done *before* the election and not afterwards.

Labour has won previous elections on unilateralism in 1964 and 1974. Socialist Parties in Spain, Greece, New Zealand, and Australia have also won on a unilateralist policy.

The section on "Defence" in the Policy Review is narrow and contradictory. It talks throughout of "defending our country" and "the security of our islands", but against whom it doesn't say.



Earlier it discusses the new international situation with changing world patterns of power, where disarmament in the USSR and USA will come about by economic necessity.

But apparently this necessity does not apply to the UK economy! Instead, money will be switched from Trident to a hunger-killer submarine and conventional arms.

By Dave Spencer Chair, Coventry CND

"In a world bedevilled by poverty, deprivation and massive international debt the piling up of arms is an obscenity," the Review continues.

£600 million *a day* is spent on arms on a world scale — more than on Health and Education combined.

But, it concludes, *"there will be economic problems if we stop producing arms."*

Particularly, one could add, if we reject any socialist planning and accept the market economy outright.

Money saved from Trident and arms production should be spent on public works to get rid of unemployment — a far more popular policy. Yet in the last election, Kinnock said the defence budget would stay the same under Labour.

This was not real unilateralism, but the worst of all words. It accepted the likelihood of war, and proposed the building of quite useless weapons.

No wonder people didn't vote for it.

Labour's election broadcast on "defence" at the last election provoked a mixture of horror and embarrassment.

To say that unilateralism lost us the last election is a lie put about by people who never believed in unilateralism.

Defence policy cannot be separated from domestic and international goals. The UK is the world's second largest supplier of arms.

Labour's foreign policy should ban all arms sales and support all oppressed people struggling for national liberation.

Plans for industrial conversion must be drawn up so that workers in the arms industry produce socially useful products instead of weapons of death.

The links between nuclear power and nuclear weapons must be spelt out. As more nuclear power stations are being built throughout the world, so more countries are able to make nuclear weapons, increasing the dangers of deliberate or accidental use.

The question of unilateral nuclear disarmament and a commitment to not pressing the button is centrally linked to socialist domestic and foreign policies.

A defeat at Conference on this issue is not an isolated matter — it means a swing to the right on all fronts.

Kinnock & Co. are signalling their credibility to govern not to the electorate but to the White House and the international bankers.

y Trades Council

sioners a on Two s of the e Wage!!

Erik Rechnitz
Tony Cordell

Islington North Black Sections say:

Support the motions on Black Sections!

Socialist Campaign Group of Labour Members of Parliament

☆ Reject the Policy Review!
☆ Cut the arms bill!
☆ Spend on social needs!
☆ No legal shackles on Trade Unions!

Tony Benn MP **CHAIR**
Jeremy Corbyn MP **SECRETARY**

Interview: Tony Benn

The end of 25 years of Thatcherism?

On the eve of this year's Labour Party Conference, *Labour Briefing* spoke to TONY BENN.

***Briefing*: How do you see the prospects for the left at this year's Conference?**

Tony Benn: The Policy Review is going to be pushed through on the simple basis of being for or against the leadership. The fact that the NEC has refused to permit any amendment of the Policy Review makes the whole thing really just a ritual.

In Britain we are seeing political choices obliterated in favour of a common view that is shared by all the political parties — on NATO, Europe, Ireland, market forces and control of trade unions.

So at the very moment when in Eastern Europe choice is breaking out, in Britain choice is being throttled. To put it in a nutshell, there is a major crisis of representation.

Political debate becomes what Hugo Young thinks of Peter Kelner's recent view of Alan Watkins's latest article. This is an extraordinary development at a time when the prospects are absolutely open.

You've got the end of the Cold war, the break up of military alliances, new possibilities of co-operation in Europe and of a major reduction in defence expenditure.

There's the breakdown of the Anglo-Irish Agreement following the exposure of the government's responsibility for a system which hands over suspects to hitmen killers.

The whole thing is absolutely crumbling and yet at this moment they're trying to freeze us into immobility.

So I think it's a time of optimism but the Brighton Conference as such doesn't look to me as if it's going to be more than just a rubber stamp of policy written in the winter of despair and published in the springtime of hope.

***Labour Briefing*: After Conference we enter a pre-election period. With Party structures increasingly closed to left activists, what should those activists be doing?**

Tony Benn: First, everyone must want to get rid of the Thatcher government. You have to recognise that the electoral machine has to be sustained and that in itself creates a united electoral front within the Labour Party.

But I think you have to see the election campaign as now being increasingly separate from political questions.

Second, you have to ask yourself how do we really go about changing opinion? The rhythm of change in public perceptions may be quite quick or long but doesn't necessarily relate to the electoral cycle.

There's no doubt whatever that what is now called Thatcherism won the argument and shaped public perceptions from the mid 60s. So we've had 25 not ten years of Thatcherism.

But just as the Tories were able to win when we were in office so we can win while they're in office. New arguments are opening up across the whole front and these arguments can be won.

Third, how do you organise to do this? Our base has to be in the labour movement, which is going to be critically important in the 90s with a shortage of labour that will put labour in the saddle against capital.

There'll be more women than men in the workforce. Therefore women are going to need trade unionism and all this repudiation of trade unionism that has gone on since the winter of discontent has got to be completely reversed.

Of course trade unionism has got to modernise itself, but the idea that there could be a future for socialism without the working class movement is an absolute illusion.

I think it's a time of optimism but the Brighton Conference as such doesn't look to me as if it's going to be more than just a rubber stamp of policy written in the winter of despair and published in the springtime of hope.

***Labour Briefing*: We appear to have come to the end of a period. A whole series of so-called reforms have been imposed which restrict Labour Party democracy. How does this influence our current agenda?**

Tony Benn: After 79 — indeed from 71 — the left including CLPD and others set itself the task of building Party democracy and we did secure considerable gains. Undoubtedly it contributed to the radicalisation of the Party.

But when I look back on it now I realise that you can have a marvellously democratic system but if the Party has lost its radical impetus then the right wing rump will always force its way through.

So you can't think of the problem only in terms of capturing the Party machinery.

I used to think the right's idea was to win power by getting rid of the left, then to win power by distancing itself from the unions. I now think the idea is to win power by getting rid of the Party!

The Party isn't really wanted any more except as a mailing list (which is what the national computer system is), a uniform body of people who will salute the leadership but whose thinking and campaigning processes are being deliberately strangled.

***Labour Briefing*: This is the heart of the problem for many Party activists who now find themselves frozen out of any useful role. They are asking, why should I stay in the Labour Party under these circumstances?**

Tony Benn: I suppose the standard answer is that the Labour Party is the instrument of the British working class movement and the first function of any new party on the left would be to destroy the Labour Party in order to establish the case for itself, to destroy the instrument of the working class.

When public opinion changes on certain questions — peace, jobs, civil liberties — then the mechanism in the Labour Party does exist for expressing it.

This will happen and therefore we've got to be very careful we don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

The 90s are going to be very different and if we waste our time trying to destroy the Labour Party to make a space for ourselves we will regret it.

***Labour Briefing*: Where does the Socialist Movement fit into all this?**

Tony Benn: It's central. Before the 1987 election a few of us realised that win or lose there was going to be a need for an independent socialist presence.

The Chesterfield Conference was called and was a tremendous success. It offers people a home where they can discuss things that are not discussable in the Labour Party.

And the times are propitious for the development of socialist ideas. The break-up of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, which the Tories are hailing as the end of socialism could very well become a renewing process.

I don't know what shape or form it will come in but the idea that the opening up in the Soviet Union is inherently anti-socialist is quite the opposite of the truth.

My only anxiety is that some people might be going for market forces which would be a mistake. But the opening up of political choices in the Soviet Union is a marvellous thing.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Tony Benn addressing the Socialist Conference.

***Labour Briefing*: Sectarianism has bedevilled the left for years. How do we go about overcoming the kind of divisions that scuppered the Campaign for Socialism?**

Tony Benn: It's difficult. You have to look at the different groups as schools of thought. The mistake that is made is to think of them — or for them to think of themselves — as embryonic political parties.

I think the desire of some of them to assassinate each other is a shame. Anyway there's a little bit of empire building which is human but corrupting in itself.

***Labour Briefing*: What about the Green Party?**

Tony Benn: The Greens are now seen as a very serious threat to capitalism and so they're getting hammered.

They keep trying to buy public support by saying we're not socialists but of course their offence is not that they're socialist but that the inescapable conclusion of their policies is anti-capitalist.

There are many Greens, such as those in the Association of Socialist Greens, with whom we work in the Socialist Movement.

We can build a progressive alliance at the bottom, but I wouldn't go in for any Labour-Green electoral pact. It's a chimera, a substitute for winning the argument.

***Labour Briefing*: You've rejected proportional representation. What do you say to the people on the left, many in the Socialist Movement, who are keen on PR in order to address what you yourself called the crisis of representation?**

Tony Benn: If people want to set up a new socialist party in Britain then PR would be a way of going about it.

I'm not personally of the view that breaking up the Labour Party would be an advantage for the left but for those who say openly that this is their aim I understand their adherence to PR.

But the first effect of it would be total centralisation of power in the Labour Party. The NEC would select every candidate.

If I were persuaded that the possibilities for parliamentary change in Britain were extinguished then I would say let's have a powerless parliament that might be more representative.

But don't think that out of it could be formed a government that could do anything at all.

Under PR you could end up with a government policy that no one had voted for because you wouldn't know until after polling day what the policy of the government was going to be.

There is also a valuable tradition of locally elected and accountable representatives. Democracy does not fall clearly on one side of this argument.

***Labour Briefing*: What will your role and priorities on the NEC be in the coming year?**

Tony Benn: It's primarily a platform, unquestionably. At the moment there is no evidence that anything you say is listened to at all.

The classic example was in May during the debate on the Policy Review when I moved that we repeal all the anti-trade union legislation which is both TUC and Labour Party policy. All hell broke loose.

We asked for a recorded vote and they moved the suspension of standing orders to prevent it. The tragedy is that there is a sea change in public feeling which is not reflected at all in the front bench statements of the Labour Party.

I think the 90s will be quite different, not least because of the insecurity of the Western economic system.

This will narrow down Thatcher's room for manoeuvre and will mean that we will inherit a much more difficult economic situation than at the moment. We won't be able to just walk in and take over the helm.

People's expectations will be high. The pressure on Labour will be enormous. We shall have to do more than what's on offer in the Policy Review.

But it's not a time to be gloomy. There aren't grounds for it. There are options opening up. If we address people in the language of hope, I think you'll be surprised at the response. The 25 years of Thatcherism are coming to an end.

Of course trade unionism has got to modernise itself, but the idea that there could be a future for socialism without the working class movement is an absolute illusion.

BOOK REVIEW

Ken... take the power?

Livingstone's Labour: a programme for the 90s, by Ken Livingstone, *Unwin Hyman*, £12.95.

Ken Livingstone's most endearing feature is his ambition.

He wants to lead the Labour Party and become Prime Minister.

He would then like to Gorbachevise Britain, extend *perestroika* across Europe, abolish NATO and the Warsaw Pact, help save the rainforests and the whales, and prevent the human species from becoming extinct.

He announces these ambitions in his new book, a personal manifesto entitled *Livingstone's Labour*.

The book opens with a wittily devastating account of how in 1987 Hattersley (promising to tax the very sections of the community he was most anxious to woo) and Kinnock (outbidding Tebbitt in denouncing Labour Councils as "loony left") made the case for the Tories and snatched humiliating disaster from the jaws of what might otherwise have been mere creditable defeat.

Livingstone then proceeds to assess Britain's economic predicament, which he believes stems from our imperial history.

In a contribution bearing the imprint of *Socialist Action's* John Ross, it is argued that for well over a century, Britain's industrialists have been oppressed by a succession of governments dominated by international financiers.

Ken seems to believe we should emancipate the honest, productive industrial capitalists by organising them into a GLC-type alliance with feminists, greens, black activists and militant trades unionists — in opposition to Thatcher and the bankers.

In the next chapter — Glasnost UK — Livingstone's genuine radicalism and political courage come to the fore.

With scholarly detail, the author documents the extent to which Britain has become a multi-millionaires' tax-haven run by the military establishment, MI6, and MI5.

The book spells out the ruthless role of the security services in Northern Ireland, up to and including the deliberate massacre in 1975 of the Miami Show Band in order to smash the cease-fire negotiated between the IRA and the then Labour government.

Ken also documents MI5's monitoring and sustaining of systematic paedophile abuse by Northern Ireland judges and other worthies in the Kincora boys' home, and Thatcher's high-minded cover-up of the issue.

Livingstone shows that far from being comical fools, the *Spycatcher* conspirators were extraordinarily successful.

They and their successors in the security services treasonably conspired against the Wilson Government, got Wilson replaced by Callaghan, smeared Heath on the grounds that he was gay and a "traitor", worked to get him replaced as Tory leader by Thatcher — and (through Airey Neave) pulled out all the stops to get Thatcher home and dry as the occupant of No. 10.

By Chris Knight
Lewisham East CLP

Chapters on sexism and racism are followed by a discussion on Ireland, which couples an indictment of the British ruling class's bestialities over the centuries with a warmly sympathetic account of Irish republicanism's refusal to be broken by such savagery.

In the chapter on the Soviet Union, what shines through is an almost-unbounded enthusiasm for *perestroika*, making one realise that it is only slightly far-fetched to classify Ken as Britain's would-be Gorbachev.

"The Soviet reformers," he writes, "are trying to find their way to achieve the irreversible intertwining of socialism and democracy which is also the elusive holy grail of Western socialists."

The book ends with a confident assertion that contrary to the Eurocommunists and Britain's "Marxist" academics and soft left, power is something which the left throughout Europe can realistically aim to capture in the period of rapid change now opening up.

Central to Livingstone's clarion-call is the notion of a Europe in which *perestroika* extends to the west and democracy spreads through the east, producing a "common European home" capable of acting as a counterweight to the global military hegemony of the United States and the economic dominance of Japan.

Taken as a whole, *Livingstone's Labour* is not as good as some of its individual chapters — it was evidently assembled in a hurry.

Unlike Ken's earlier book on the GLC, this one does not flow very well, and lacks the gossip and humour with which Ken makes his political points when speaking or being interviewed.

The final impression left by the book is of a potentially major figure who is probably better at living politics than writing about it.

Ken makes no claims to be part of the revolutionary left. If you call him an opportunist, his face lights up in agreement!



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Ken enthralled at 1987 Party Conference.

On the other hand, he wants power rather than the mere trappings of office, understands that to get anywhere he must for the moment ally himself with the hard left, and aims to change the world in accordance with whatever opportunities happen to open up for his own personal intervention.

Given his principled integrity on Ireland, racism, sexism and many other issues, I admire such ambition. It seems to me a million times healthier than the cringing, babbling servility of a figure like Kinnock.

Anyone in politics should want power, should be open about wanting it — and should know what to do with it when entrusted with it.

We can work to empower Ken on the basis that a Livingstone-led administration under conditions of rising class struggle would open up immense opportunities for the revolutionary left.

BOOK REVIEW

Beyond the Casino Economy

Beyond the Casino Economy, by Nicholas Costello, Jonathan Mitchie and Seumus Milne, *Verso*, £8.95 (paperback).

This ambitious new economic programme for a radical Labour government is a wide-ranging attempt to update the 1970s "Alternative Economic Strategy".

It does this from a viewpoint sharply critical of attempts by Kinnock and previous Labour governments to make peace with capitalism. It was submitted to the Labour Party Policy Review by CLPD and, of course, rejected out of hand.

In an effective swipe at the "Post-Fordism" and "New Times" arguments of *Marxism Today*, the authors examine the *facts* about modern capitalist production trends.

The *facts* don't bear out the sweeping claims that mass production has been replaced by "flexible specialisation".

In an era of near-universal celebration of the market the book's trenchant defence of planning, public ownership, and the necessity for the state to mobilise investment in manufacturing industry is refreshing.

The most original and creative part of the book is a sustained discussion of the benefits of planning for the development and application of information technology as a crucial component of regenerating the British economy.

By Phil Hearse
Islington North CLP

This stimulating discussion develops a convincing argument in favour of a national (and nationalised) optical fibre grid, capable of carrying a "broad band" of electronic communications.

The authors show that lack of standardisation of information technology — for example, the dozens of computer firms producing almost identical hardware in non-compatible form — is an obstacle both to linking up existing systems and to the more widespread and democratic diffusion of this technology.

Obviously, national planning and public ownership in this field could produce spectacular steps forward.

This is a rich and detailed discussion, containing lots of material which will help socialists of many hues update their conceptions of how a socialised economy would work.

But *Beyond the Casino Economy* contains serious strategic flaws.

The authors argue for nationalisation of the top four clearing banks, the top dozen or so insurance companies, and the top merchant banks.

They also argue for the nationalisation of perhaps 25 "strategic" companies which have disproportionate weight in their particular economic sectors.

They do admit that it would be preferable to nationalise the whole of the finance sector (together with perhaps the top several hundred industrial companies) but argue that such proposals are:

"unlikely to be politically practical in current conditions" and "highly unlikely to be a viable political option for a Labour government."

The programme outlined by the authors is, as they admit, not necessarily incompatible with the continued existence of capitalism. But it is, obviously, highly incompatible with the wishes of the British ruling class and international capitalism in general.

Any attempt to carry out this programme would meet with a furious and sustained attempt to bring down the government by legal and extra-legal means. It would involve widespread financial and industrial sabotage.

Such ruling class resistance could only be overcome by a mobilisation of the working class of truly revolutionary proportions.

The strategic issue here is whether a programme for radical social change in the direction of a socialised economy can be accomplished without a revolutionary clash between the classes.

Contrary to misconceptions based on the final episode of a *A Very British Coup*, Harry Perkins is in fact alive and well.

Political history from Allende in Chile to the Socialist-Communist coalition in France tells us Harry got it wrong. In the real world, he won't be getting a huge loan from Russian banks to bail him out!

VERSO,
6 Meard Street,
London W1V 3HR

Dear Neil,

Re: Amendments to Policy Review

Our suggested reading list:
Roy Bhaskar (*Reclaiming Reality*)
Alex Cockburn (*Corruptions of Empire, The Fate of the Forest*)
Raphael Samuel (*Theatres of Memory*)
Boris Kagarlitskey (*The Thinking Reed, Dialectics of Change*)
Rajar Anwar (*The Tragedy of Afghanistan*)
"*Questions for Feminism*"
Beyond the Casino Economy, by Nicholas Costello, Jonathan Michie, Seumas Milne.
Plus a selection from our backlist:
Paul Buhle, Ernest Mandel, Kim Moody, Manning Marable, Mike Davis, Colin Leys, Ellen Meiksins Wood...

It's never too late to change,
Yours sincerely,

VERSO

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 taking place. Socialists have to regroup and reorganise and start to come to grips with 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 (TU), PO Box 118, Chesterfield, Derbyshire.

Solidarity Network AGM/Conference

Saturday October 14th
12.30-5pm (Registration from 12)
Mandela Room, Sheffield Poly
(opposite BR station)

Agenda includes: Speakers from recent struggles, including docks, rail, tube, NALGO; balance sheet of last year's work; development of the Network and its Bulletin; Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference; election of officers.
Creche facilities available only if booked one week in advance.
Credentials: £2 waged, £l unwaged, strikers free.
To register, send your name, address (and organisation if applicable) with a cheque to John Lang, 74 Kingsland Road, Plaistow, London E13, from whom further details and leaflets for the Conference can be obtained.

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.

The Construction Safety Campaign

is organising a

National Lobby of Parliament

to demand better laws on health and safety in the construction industry, and to demand that the law is enforced on sites.

Thursday October 19th, 3-6pm

Assemble St Stephens Gate, House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1
3.30pm: Meeting with MPs in the Grand Central Committee Room
Building employers kill workers through negligence and greed — there were 160 deaths last year alone. Yet fines on employers are a measly few hundred pounds and no employer has ever been imprisoned for causing the death of a worker.
This deadly trend in the construction industry is growing worse. Help us put an end to this unnecessary suffering.
Join the Lobby of Parliament.
Support the Construction Safety Campaign.

Lessons of the docks struggle

A look back in anger

Within days of the government announcing its intentions to abolish the National Dock Labour Scheme, solidarity was being organised in East London by what became known as the East London Dockers Support Group.

Several people who were to become active in the Group had been attending meetings of the Solidarity Network held in different parts of the country.

At these meetings we were kept up to date by delegates from various areas, such as Hull, of the threat to the NDLS and the dockers' preparations to defend the Scheme.

These preparations included a series of mass meetings called by the National Port Shop Stewards Committee. One such meeting, attended by 500 dockworkers, was held in Newham in the East End of London in January and laid the foundations for the East London Dockers Support Group.

There were many rousing speeches from the dockers on that day, but one speech from a T&G official was particularly significant. He supported future action, but warned of the problems of breaking the law.

This ruled out any hope of the T&G calling out the dockers at the non-Scheme ports, a vital move if the dispute was to be successful.

The day after abolition was announced, dockers from several ports walked out on strike. The T&G told them to return to work.

Amongst those walking out were the dockers at the key port of Southampton, who, as the dispute progressed, were not to show the same level of commitment again.

Returned

The dockers returned to work and on April 11th the T&G's National Docks Committee agreed to ballot for strike action, but Ron Todd immediately intervened to prevent the ballot taking place by announcing that he first wanted talks with the Port Employers.

This decision was ratified by the T&G Executive on April 14th. Many angry dockers lobbied that meeting. The move away from confrontation had begun. Attempts by the T&G to turn the situation into a legal trade dispute were seen as a sign of weakness by the government and the employers, who rebuffed attempts by the T&G to get ACAS to intervene.

A strike ballot was eventually agreed to on April 20th. The Tilbury stewards pointed out to us that the ballot would not take place until after the local Council elections and a by-election in Wales had taken place.

There were strong feelings amongst them that the Labour Party leadership did not want a dock strike taking place at the same time as these elections.

The dockers eventually began to vote on strike action on May 10th, some 34 days after many had first walked out on strike.

The Port Employers had been using this time to intimidate individual ports and develop their propaganda campaign.

On the day the ballot started, the Port Employers announced that they were going to use the courts to have the ballot declared illegal. The ballot result itself was announced on May 19th, with 75% in favour of strike action.

During this period the East London Dockers Support Group was meeting, but we still lacked a focus for practical solidarity work.

We were, however, able to prepare literature outlining the dockers' case and the reasons why they should be supported. A successful fund-raising social also took place.

By an activist in the East London Dockers Support Group

The ballot was declared legal by the High Court on May 27th, but the Port Employers immediately announced that they would appeal against this decision.

The T&G stated that it would stay within the law and so there was still no strike. Behind the scenes there were heated debates at the ports with fears that individual deals would be struck to replace the Scheme. The main arguments, though, centred on whether to toe the official line and remain within the law or to take immediate action. The official line held.

Upheld

On June 7th, the Appeal Court judges upheld the employers' appeal on the ground that a strike would not be in the public interest, the employers interest, or the national interest. **This decision basically meant that *all* strikes would be illegal.**

On that same day the Support Group held a public meeting with speakers from the docks,the London Underground, London Buses, and the Passport Office.

All of these groups of workers would be directly affected by the Appeal Court decision.

The response from the well-attended meeting was a firm commitment of support for the dockers and all of the other struggles. This meeting drew in many new people to the Support Group.

The following day, "unofficial" stoppages began at many ports including Tilbury, Bristol, and Liverpool. Significantly, Hull and Southampton remained at work.

The T&G called on the dockers to return to work and wait for the next stage of the legal procedure, an appeal to the Law Lords. On June 10th, the National Port Shop Stewards met and recommended all-out action from Monday June 12th.

Ignored

The call for action was ignored by ports such as Hull and Southampton and by the middle of the week there were clear signs that the action was crumbling. No attempts were made to "picket out" the larger ports.

On June 19th all dockers returned to work. The following day the Law Lords overturned the Appeal Court judges decision.



Liverpool Walton MP Eric Heffer visits the Royal Seaforth Container Terminal. Not all Labour MPs were keen to support the dockers.

Discussion at the Support Group suggested that this decision was inevitable as it would have led to official strikes being illegal and a rise in wildcat rank and file action, thus taking strikes out of the hands of the union officials.

This had already been shown in the London Underground strike.

But the dockers had to reballot as the 28-day period for taking action after the first ballot had expired. The Support Group continued to carry out practical support with street collections, fundraising events, and leafletting. One of the weaknesses of the Group was that no dockworker was able to attend our meetings on a regular basis. This meant that we were unable to obtain first hand information and that political discussion took place without the involvement of anyone directly affected.

This situation also revealed a weakness within the Tilbury workforce when the strike eventually began.



Keith Stuart, Chair of Associated British Ports – management held the trump cards.

Vast numbers of speaking engagements and considerable administrative work were required. This all fell on a few shop stewards who were to find themselves inundated and with little back up from the rest of the rank and file who were not brought forward to take up the workload.

This was later to leave hundreds of dockers inactive at a time when they needed to be involved to enhance their morale.

On July 3rd, the National Dock Labour Scheme was officially abolished. On July 7th the ballot result was announced with a three to one vote in favour of strike action.

It was now 91 days since the dockers first came out on strike to defend the Scheme.

The strike began on July 11th, with the Port Employers threatening sackings if the strike took place. Todd announced that if any docker was sacked then the strike would continue until he was reinstated.

The strike ran into problems almost immediately with some ports pushing for local negotiations and a recall National Ports Delegate Conference.

Outcome

On July 24th Southampton and Hull voted to stay on strike pending the outcome of the Conference. On July 25th the Tilbury stewards, along with over 100 other dockers, were sent new contracts and told they had to return to work within two days to a port that would no longer recognise their trade union.

The previously solid workforce at Tilbury was split and the sacking threats succeeded. A strong drift back to work began. Attempts to picket out Tilbury by Liverpool dockers met only limited success.

The recall Conference voted by 51 to 12 to continue the strike with a strong contribution being made by Todd. The euphoria after that meeting was short-lived.

The following day Southampton voted to return to work and Hull came to the same decision the day after. By July 31st the only major ports left on strike were Liverpool, Bristol, and Middlesbrough.

The T&G National Executive met on August 1st and voted 18-12 to call off the strike.

Refusal to break the law had led to a massive defeat for the labour movement. A once militant port was deunionised; hundreds of dockers were sacked. Further attacks on all ports — not just ex-Scheme ports — were being prepared.

There was plenty of support for the dockers but the dispute was never allowed to escalate. One of the positive aspects of the strike is that Support Groups that were formed in East, North, and South London have met and decided that they should continue on a permanent basis and link up nationally with the Solidarity Network.

One of these groups' first tasks will be to support the dockers sacked at Tilbury.

**This is an abridged version of an article printed in Solidarity Network Bulletin No. 6.*

Pergamon strike

Maxwell in retreat?

Nearly five months after being dismissed, the Pergamon strikers are entering a critical stage in their campaign for reinstatement.

Far from running out of steam, the strikers are now drawing up plans for the next stage of their struggle. They have every reason to be confident. All the signs are that Maxwell is softening under the blows.

The strikers were able to confront a vicious management with a high degree of confidence not just because they were highly politicised but primarily because the beginning of the strike coincided with the renewal of militancy among workers in a wide variety of industries.

The impact of layer after layer of workers going on the offensive to win better standards of living hardened the strikers' resolve and was an important radicalising force.

Maxwell's first reaction to the strike echoed the views of more than one Labour leader and would-be theoretician who had decided that workers' militancy was a thing of the past.

By a *Briefing* reporter

He described the strike as a "militant anachronism", a quirkish residue of something that happened eight years ago, barely sustained by a handful of political loonies!

The wave of industrial action that followed dealt a severe blow to Maxwell's political vision, which he nonetheless continues to peddle on the pages of the *Mirror*.

Maxwell remains a highly disliked figure in the labour movement. Thus, the strikers were not pitted against a faceless corporation, but against a man whose actions have left a distinct and unpleasant imprint on many workers in this country.

This explains the almost instant sympathy for the strikers that springs up everywhere.

Supporters do not even want to hear the tortuous details of the dispute in order to apportion blame. For most of them Maxwell's reputation as a union-basher is enough.

These factors helped the strikers resist the initial round of legal threats, after which they started shaping their counter-offensive.

Again, because of Maxwell's relationship and involvement with Labour and trade unions, the political campaign proved less problematic than it would be were they dealing, for example, with Murdoch.

Murdoch is simply a ruthless anti-trade union capitalist. Maxwell differs in that he is able to address Labour leaders as "Dear comrade" and sign his letters "Bob".

The pressure from the strikers was so great that even Maxwell's friends could not afford to be seen anywhere near him.

Labour leaders were lobbied relentlessly wherever they went. Since last May, the strikers have lobbied every General Council of the TUC, visited trade union conferences, and pushed articles in trade union journals.

They have carried resolutions to the appropriate trade group in the TUC.

All this work bore fruit at the September TUC.

First,the request to have a stall was agreed by the TUC General Purposes Committee — in recent years stalls have been allocated only to a small number of "approved" disputes (miners, Wapping, P&O Seafarers, GCHQ).

This was an indication that the General Secretaries were sympathetic to placing the dispute on the agenda.

Second, an amendment by the NUJ to the resolution on industrial relations legislation was allowed to be composited, even though it named Maxwell.

At Congress itself, the strikers were at the heart of the debate and the dispute made a big mark on the Congress agenda. A benefit for the strike was attended by more than 200 people and a petition gathered 600 signatures.

The strikers' success at Congress creates more favourable conditions for solidarity initiatives.

The strikers are asking the TGWU, GMB, and SOGAT to instruct their drivers not to cross picket lines or handle Pergamon products and NATFHE, AUT, and NUT to instruct members not to buy, contribute to, or use Pergamon and other related products.

NALGO-organised librarians in universities, polys, colleges, and TGWU-ACTSS bookshop workers, should also refuse to handle these products. The strike office will soon print thousands of consumer boycott leaflets, which will be made widely available.

Of course, the most crucial solidarity action would be carried out by NUJ members employed elsewhere by Maxwell and by print workers working on Pergamon products.

The strikers know that though such action would help them win sooner rather than later, their call is unlikely to be heeded, because no trade union leaderships —including the NUJ's — would want to risk sequestration of their assets by defying the law.

They also know that all they can do is pose the question — in the same way as the miners, the printers, and the seafarers did.

The strikers want to take this dispute to the heart of Labour Party Conference.

Unfortunately, amendments from four CLPs to the NGA resolution on workers' rights were ruled out of order. Thus, the only way to have reference to the strike in a composite remains a challenge to the Conference Arrangements Committee Report.

The strikers also hope to speak at fringe meetings, make collections, and gather signatures for their petition.

A victory at Labour Party Conference will push Maxwell further on to the defensive and pave the way for his defeat.



Strikers spelling out the message in front of Mirror Group offices.

Deindustrialising Scotland

A bumpy ride on the gravy train

The deindustrialisation of Scotland, coupled with its increasing exposure to world market forces, will not be news to anyone who follows current affairs in even a cursory fashion.

However, many will not be aware that the fierce factional struggle taking place within the ranks of the Scottish Tories is linked to this process.

Figures such as Rifkind, Laing, and Younger, who in the past were able to offer some protection to Scottish industry (witness Ravenscraig), were thoroughly discredited in the last General Election.

Since then, new Scottish Tory boss Forsyth and his aides, not above washing Ross Harper's dirty linen in public, have made the running.

The Tories' leading lights have now decided to abrogate any control over capitalism in Scotland. This can be easily illustrated by a seemingly insignificant decision.

The "analysts" have decided that George Younger's now exceedingly marginal Ayr constituency can no longer be protected by Prestwich's transatlantic airport status.

Rather than directly renege on their promises, the Tories encourage a fly-by-night air company no one has ever heard of (because it was set up to do that which it was not allowed to do, i.e. fly from Glasgow to New York) to take them to court.

Everyone purported to be highly surprised when the airline won its case.

Thus the freedom of this company to take off and land where it wishes takes precedence over any considerations of pollution,

By DAVID FOWLER

health and safety, or economic policy; it is a good example of old-fashioned "capitalist anarchy".

Just how anarchic this anarchy can be is demonstrated by the Caterpillar affair.

The company and government invested money in a highly automated plant to produce machinery that could be used in any Third World Country — and then closed it. The government didn't even get a refund.

This year has seen a rerun of this scenario when Wang pulled out of the Stirling Technology Park. It had £3.7 million in grants but apparently the Irish government was able to offer a better deal in Limerick.

Wang then sold the Stirling site to another company which plans to use it for maintenance work there.

Ian Laing, an industry minister, announced that since Wang had now fulfilled its obligations to secure some employment, he would not be attempting to recover the grants. All hail Silicon Glen!

Meantime, BP (who last year took over Britoil) has just announced 870 redundancies in Scotland.

BP promised at the time of the takeover that there would be *no redundancies*: one would therefore expect the government to use its "golden shares" to block the deal. But not a bit of it.

The latest scandal is Ferranti's takeover of an American-based arms dealer known as ISC.

Ferranti had decided that in order to secure its position as a "major player" in the field of mass destruction it would need to broaden their operations.

The firm chosen by Ferranti was based in the US but listed on the London Stock Exchange to take advantage of the UK's more tolerant attitude to companies of this kind.

ISC's main lines of business were the Rockeye cluster bomb, developed during the Vietnam war and electronic fuses. At one time ISC were producing 25,000 of the latter per week for the Iraq war effort.

Other major customers are alleged to have been UAE, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Taiwan, People's Republic of China, and Pakistan.

It is a tribute to Tory policies of the last few years that Ferranti with 8,000 employees in Scotland is now the largest remaining manufacturing employer.

What happens to these jobs is of course of great interest to the Scottish working class. But it is not enough for Labour's spokesperson on defence, Martin O'Neill MP, to demand that the government step in to guarantee Scottish jobs.

This position amounts to saying, if ISC had managed to continue — by the use of bribery — to sell military hardware to barbarous regimes throughout the world this would have been acceptable.

What socialists should be demanding, on the contrary, is "open the books". Let us see where the gravy train has come from and where it is heading. Or are Coopers and Lybrand the only people to be trusted with this information?

Ambulance crews

Pay emergency!

Ambulance crews are well into an overtime ban in response to management's derisory 6.5% pay offer.

The unions called the action in support of a claim of nearly 11%, needed to bring ambulance crews back in line with other emergency services.

The dispute dates back to 1986, when local deals were exchanged for a national agreement which promised parity with police and firefighters.

Settlements for both 1987 and 88 were below those for the other emergency services. Given the inflation rate, this year's offer represents a cut in levels of pay which are already too low.

The support for action is strong. The four to one majority in the ballot for the overtime ban showed the strength of feeling among crews who will resist management's demand that the industrial action is called off before any settlement can be reached.

By Kath Munby Branch Secretary, NUPE Oxfordshire Area

Although overtime payments are an important part of ambulance crews' wages, support for the action has been solid.

In London, in particular, overtime working has long been used by management to cover up staff shortages.

A call for "no shift changes" (which has been made successfully in Oxfordshire) would highlight such gaps in recruitment.

Public support for the ambulance crews is strong. A national call for strike action could take advantage of popular sympathy and build on workers' militancy to win a decent wage for all emergency workers.

Interview: Boris Kagarlitsky

Building a workers' resistance in the Soviet Union

BORIS KAGARLITSKY is a leading activist in the Moscow Popular Front and is now closely involved with attempts to set up a new independent Socialist Party in the Soviet Union and to build a federation of independent left-wing unions.
He was imprisoned under the Brezhnev regime for his participation in the socialist samizdat publication *Left Turn*.
His book *The Thinking Reed* (*Verso*) won wide acclaim when it was published in Britain last year and his next book *Dialectics of Change* (also *Verso*) will be out soon. Kagarlitsky, who will be the Moscow editor of the new joint Soviet-British publishing venture *Interverso*, was in London recently for the first time to deliver the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture. He found time out of his demanding schedule to talk to *Labour Briefing*.

***LB*: Our readers will be interested in how you, as members of a left opposition, organise. Can you begin by telling us about the Moscow Popular Front?**

BK: From the beginning the aim of the socialists within the democratic movement was to build their own party. We saw this process going hand in hand with the process of building militant trade unions — not just free trade unions, but militant trade unions which are always an important factor in the struggle for democratic socialism.

Of course, at the beginning of perestroika these ideas were not on the agenda.

First, there weren't enough activists to build anything serious. Second, there was the very low level of public political culture.

Our position, the position of the group called Socialist Initiative (the main pole of attraction for socialists in Moscow) was that the first task was to build a broad movement which would reflect the interests of the masses, and would be democratic and left-wing orientated.

This was very much a Gramscian idea. We felt there must be some kind of socialist hegemony within a broad democratic movement. And this would be one stage we would have to go through in building a new party.

And that was exactly what we did with the Moscow Popular Front.

***LB*: What specific role did you play in the Front?**

BK: It's important for people to know that without Socialist Initiative the Popular Front would probably not have surfaced. Of course, there was sharp criticism of Socialist Initiative for monopolising the Popular Front. But when people came to elect the leadership positions suddenly there were no other candidates except people from SI — because they were the only ones with the politics, the skills, the authority to do the jobs.

The greatest moment of the Front was during the elections and later during the Congress of Deputies. When the Yeltsin crisis broke people went into the streets. but the Yeltsinists were not even trying to lead the people who wanted to support Yeltsin.

So the only leadership, the only political tool available to them was the Moscow Popular Front, which in turn was able to channel the mass activity.

The crowds in the streets of Moscow were very aggressive and if there had been no organising force inside the crowds it could have led to bloodshed and even rioting without any political results at all.

At the Congress itself, the liberal deputies were talking and talking and nothing was happening and outside the people were getting angrier and angrier. They supported the liberal deputies but at the same time they felt the liberals weren't able to achieve anything.

So once again they went into the streets. At the highest point of the mobilisations we had 200,000 people in the streets.

But then we came to a problem. We managed to mobilise bigger and bigger crowds but this was an escalation that was going nowhere and even posed certain dangers.

People would say that the Central Asian deputies are always voting against our Muscovite progressives — so we must go up to see them in the night, wake them up in their hotels, and demand to know why they were voting in such and such a way!

We had to spend a lot of time and energy preventing this sort of thing. Sometimes the liberal deputies would refer to the thousands in the streets but it changed nothing — either on the liberal or conservative side.

At this point the younger activists in SI said now is the time to set up a party. And I must confess I was not the first at all to say that.

Many of us continued to pronounce the formulae which had been so effective for several weeks but which were in fact already out of date.

One of the good things about SI is it managed to reorganise itself and say now the conditions are ripe for the practical work of the creation of a socialist party and a federation of socialist trade unions.

***LB*: Does the new party have a programme?**

BK: We have a theoretical committee which must by the end of this autumn prepare a draft of a document which is now called "Revolutionary Reform".

This will be the first comprehensive alternative political programme prepared in the Soviet Union in decades. It will discuss the whole political and social agenda and set a strategy.

Paradoxically, it will also be the first anti-capitalist document in the Soviet Union for a long time.

We are very concerned about the attempts of the ruling strata of the Soviet Union to integrate our country into the capitalist world as a sort of new third world country.



We call it Third Worldisation: an attempt by the ruling strata to become respectable newcomers to the world ruling class.

Of course for them to achieve this will require the abandonment of any democratic pretence and the imposition of the new arrangements by authoritarian means. That is why I have called this phenomenon "market Stalinism".

***LB*: Is the work of building the new party all being done in Moscow?**

BK: Mostly. That is where the Committee meets. We have transformed SI into the Socialist Committee, as we now call it, and set up a structure for individual members and accountability of leaders and so on.

Interestingly, for a long time all the opposition groups were simply trying to bring in as many people as possible. Often therefore they weren't able to achieve much — they were so heterogeneous they got bogged down in endless internal struggles.

The new Socialist Committee is one of the few unofficial groups in Moscow where it's actually quite difficult to get a membership card!

***LB*: Is it legal?**

BK: It's neither legal nor illegal. Technically it's tolerated in the sense that people are not repressed solely for being members.

At the same time we are being attacked in the press, which is a good sign. They feel we are a threat and that means we are getting somewhere.

***LB*: What kind of support do you think you have?**

BK: We have support in Moscow, Leningrad, and some industrial cities like Irkutsk. Also some miners from the strike areas — because we sent people there during the strikes and they found a number of miners wanting to join.

Our support in Moscow I would say is two or three hundred and in the country several thousands. But we are not trying to build up the membership for its own sake. It is an attempt to create a political elite — not in the sense of hierarchy and privilege but in the sense of the quality of political commitment and understanding. A vanguard.

We are not trying to build an electoral party in the western sense, nor are we saying we are building a Marxist party. We are not trying to bring people to a particular ideology but to a clear political agenda.

The new Socialist Party is about self-management, municipalisation of property instead of privatisation, democratic and minority rights, including national minority rights; our aim is to create a political organisation which is not just a radical wing of official perestroika or a socially conscious wing of the liberal intelligentsia but a clear alternative to both.

And we simultaneously organise the Socialist Party and the militants of the Federation of Socialist Trade Unions.

You may laugh, because it sounds like we want something with the structure of the British Labour Party!

The difference with Britain is that the trade unions were already huge and bureaucratised organisations when they decided to launch their party. We are starting from an entirely different base.

For the time being we want to build militant minority unions. At the moment we have some 5,000 people in the Federation.

***LB*: Who are they?**

BK: Mainly skilled workers. Some in the car factory in Moscow but mostly in other areas. In Karelia and in the mining areas there are groups. They were active in the strike but they were not and will not be for some time a majority in the strike committees. They have to play the role of pressure groups.

***LB*: What's their attitude to the official unions?**

BK: We don't oblige our members to leave the official unions. That's not because we accept the official unions but because we want them to shoot first; we want them to be the ones to begin hostilities.

The long term goal is to build a mass independent, democratic trade union movement. The Federation is just the seed of that movement.

***LB*: What sparked off the miners' strikes and what is the situation now?**

BK: In the West, when people go on strike, there are demands, meetings, committees, and *then* they go on strike. In the Soviet Union, *first* they go on strike, *then* they form committees, and *then* they begin to articulate demands.

They go on strike out of a sense of their own intolerable situation. The demands emerge in the process of going on strike.

Often the demands don't reflect either the real aims or the original sense of the strike.

At the miners' rallies the strikers were chanting that everything is terrible. We have to do this, this, this, and this... an endless list of demands.

Then finally there was an attempt to reduce the sense of social frustration and of hatred towards the ruling strata to a few material demands. But very few of these demands were met and the overall grievances which led to the strikes are still very powerful.

***LB*: What kind of help and assistance do you need from socialists in the West?**

BK: We need money and we are now trying to set up some kind of fund. But we also need information and experience.

In particular, we are concerned about the multinational companies which are now exploring all kinds of ventures in the Soviet Union. We want to know about their records in relation to the unions, conditions at work, the environment, and so on. This will help us build workers' resistance in the Soviet Union — and links with workers elsewhere facing the same enemies.

AZANIA-NAMIBIA FORUM

says

FREE THE UPINGTON 26!

Write to Azania-Namibia Forum, c/o Greenwich Resource Centre, Macbean St, London SE18.

East European socialists speak out

***Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* fringe meeting at Labour Party Conference**
5.30pm, Tuesday October 3rd
Brighton NALGO Club
164-7 Edward Street
Speakers:

Czeslaw Bobrowczyk
(President, Solidarnosc Commission in Wroclaw factory; Regional Committee, Polish Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution)

Oliver MacDonald
(Labour Focus on Eastern Europe)

Yuri Badzio
(Socialist member, Kiev Regional Committee Ukrainian Popular Movement)

Support Polish socialists fighting austerity and privatisation by the coalition government!

The UK Support Committee of the PSP-DR appeals for support for the petition below.
Please put the text of the petition to CLPs and other labour movement organisations, together with affiliation to the UK Support Committee and a subscription to our bulletin, *Socialist Messenger*, at a cost of £10.
Please make cheques payable to Polish Socialist Party Appeal, and send them to The Basement, 92 Ladbroke Grove, London W11.
Supporters of PSP-DR will be collecting signatures for the petition at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton.

"The coalition government in Poland plans to marketise the economy and sell off national assets to private interests at home and abroad. This will profoundly affect working people. It will deepen social inequality and provoke unemployment.
We, the undersigned, call upon the new Polish government:
·to legalise the formation of political parties in Poland by socialists, such as the Polish Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution (PSP-DR);
·to respect the right to strike by trade unionists as a basic human freedom."

Mexico



PHOTO: D. Kellaway

Rosario Ibana and PRT leaders address press conference.

PRT militant "disappeared" for nine months

Socialist militants have to face much sterner tests in Mexico than in Europe.

Over recent decades hundreds have been killed by secret death squads organised by local bosses and parts of the state apparatus. In the same period 558 people were taken out of circulation and never seen again.

Jose Ramon Garcia is one of these *desparacidos*. Last December his car was stopped by several men, one of whom was in uniform. He has not been seen again.

By DAVE KELLAWAY

His party, Partido Revolucionario de las y los Trabajadores (Revolutionary Workers Party) have campaigned long and hard alongside other democratic forces to force the government to mount a proper investigation.

There have been marches, petitions, and a 26 day hunger strike by PRT leaders. Meanwhile, the government or its local representatives have tried to prevent public opinion seeing this disappearance as a political kidnapping.

The most grotesque smears have been made — Jose is supposed to have disappeared because he: wanted to go to Nicaragua, was to join ETA, had personal problems with his companion, was part of an organised stunt to help the PRT win back its legal status, and so on.

On Tuesday August 29th the PRT called a press conference to report on a meeting with a government representative at which it submitted a detailed dossier on the case.

The press conference was attended by one TV station, all the mainstream dailies, and the left press (see picture).

As the *Briefing* correspondent was able to observe, the PRT commission dossier demolished all the specious smears regarding Jose's disappearance.

Two new elements were also provided by the PRT. First, eyewitness evidence proving that a uniformed person was involved in taking Jose away was produced.

Second, an official has admitted that a previous statement he had made to the investigator was a lie intended to divert enquiries.

These revelations provide hope that a "lead" on the kidnappers exists.

The key thing is to keep up national and international pressure. Salinas's government has said it wants to finally resolve the *desparecidos* problem. The campaign around Jose Ramon's case is an obstacle to that project.

Salinas has personally telephoned Jose's companion to commiserate but at the same time he lied about the case when on a visit to Spain, saying Jose has reappeared.

One can only speculate about precise government responsibility but clearly the government does have the power to get to the bottom of the affair.

Briefing readers can contribute to saving Jose's life by getting their organisation to support Amnesty International's action on this case.

Amnesty can provide full materials and protests should be send to: Presidente de la Republica, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Residencia Oficial de Los Pinos, Mexico D.F.

Eyewitness: Palestine

They can't shoot the sun!

Guns, rubber bullets, tear gas, torture, licence restrictions, imprisonment without trial, and rules and regulations beyond number...

At this moment all these are being vigorously opposed by a determined army of stone-throwing Palestinian children.

My recent visit to the West Bank convinced me that the Intifada is growing in strength, commitment, and organisation.

By Richard Woolven Brighton Labour Briefing

As part of an international workcamp organised by Birzeit University Students Council I stayed in a Palestinian village near El Kalel (Hebron).

I came to understand a little of what living under occupation really means and how the Intifada works.

"They can't shoot the sun," our host said, showing us his solar electricity panel, installed after the soldiers smashed the village generator.

Few Palestinians can afford such technology, but this hasn't stopped them from inventing new ways of fight back against oppression.

The military dominates the towns, cities, and refugee camps. In some rural areas "liberated" villages have appeared, proudly flying the Palestinian flag, if only temporarily.

Detention without trial is common and was recently extended to one year's renewable imprisonment.

Huge new desert prisons like the tent city known as Anoar 3 are notorious for abuses of human rights. Many detainees once released suffer from recurring illnesses such as eye problems (from sitting in sand storms) or rheumatism (from winter cold).

In addition to these blatant forms of repression, myriad bureaucratic rules affect all areas of Palestinian life.



PHOTO: R. Woolven

International student demonstration outside Western Embassy, Tel Aviv

Particularly damaging for the largely agrarian economy is the difficulty in obtaining export licences for the two major crops, grapes and olives. This has led to a sharp decrease in selling prices and hence a cut in small farmers' incomes.

The Intifada led to the declaration of the Palestinian state in Algiers in November 1988.

This in turn has spurred the growth of a variety of committees and co-operatives dealing with agriculture, health, women, etc., complementing the official charitable associations which provide nursery education and medical care in many areas.

An embryonic state is being born out of the sheer commitment of the Palestinian people, despite endless Israeli harassment and a severe lack of resources.

But as the Intifada nears the end of its second year, questions are being asked. How many more martyrs? How long can and should the tactics of the Intifada be sustained? Where is the diplomatic process going?

The PLO has done all that has been asked of it, including recognising Israel as a state, yet has little to show for it. There is a growing feeling that Palestinians will only get their own land by re-engaging in military struggle.

Solidarity with the Palestinian struggle must be pushed up the labour movement's agenda. We should demand recognition of the newly-founded state of Palestine and the PLO as its representatives.

Material aid and fund-raising for co-operatives is urgently needed. An effective boycott of Israeli products should be mounted and comparisons should be drawn with South Africa.

In the student and youth movements the political debate must be reopened and one of its major objectives must be to stop the thousands of British nationals working for Israel on kibbutzes.

outlook for socialism

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Gaza workers fight computer cards

In Israeli-occupied Gaza, one hundred thousand Palestinian workers took strike action at the end of August against the introduction of magnetic computer-coded identity cards.

Before crossing the "Green Line" to enter the state of Israel from Gaza, Palestinians must produce one of the new cards.

They are issued by the authorities only after all taxes, fines, and fees have been paid and they are not issued at all to people suspected of political involvement who are presented instead with green cards *denying* them access to Israel.

In response, the United National Leadership of the Intifada called for a week-long sympathy strike by West Bank workers currently inside Israel, a ban on West Bank workers taking jobs previously done by Gaza workers, and an indefinite strike by Gaza workers inside the Green Line.

Throughout the West Bank and Gaza this call was heeded with masked Intifada activists patrolling the roads.

Israel wants to impose the new identity cards in order to reassert its control of the population. Since 46% of the working population of Gaza have to travel into Israel to find jobs, this development will prove a key test of both the strength of the Intifada and its potential to damage the Israeli economy.

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Labour and the Poll Tax

Who's fighting back?

Despite over a million non-payers in Scotland and massive non-registration in England and Wales, the obvious widespread working class anger against the Poll Tax will find scant reflection on the floor of Labour Party Conference.

By Terry Conway
Islington North CLP



PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

An obvious sign of Labour Party members campaigning against the Poll Tax

Only nine Constituency Parties even bothered to submit motions on this vital question.

Many activists in Poll Tax groups up and down the country see the Labour Party and Labour Councils as an irrelevance to the real work of building a mass movement to challenge the Tories.

In contrast, Brian Wilson MP argues in *Tribune* that the Poll Tax can only be defeated at the ballot-box.

Such arguments were the basis of the sell-out at the recall Scottish Labour Party Conference in Govan last year — and of the ensuing defeat of Labour in the Govan by-election.

Wilson and his cronies show contempt both for the suffering the Poll Tax seeks to impose on the working class and its capacity to organise against it.

Wilson predicts that the existing levels of non-payment will not be maintained if the Tories tighten the screws. But the situation is more complicated than that.

First, it is necessary to involve all the individuals who have taken a personal stand against the Tax (those who have not registered or not paid, and those who hate the Tax but haven't had the confidence to take such a stand) in a mass *democratic* movement.

Collective activity will give confidence to people to continue to defy the Tories.

The National Conference against the Poll Tax on November 25th in Manchester will provide an important impetus in developing such a movement.

But resistance to the Tax in the trade union movement will also be crucial, as will getting Labour Councillors to take action against the Tax.

Support in both these areas is more likely to come when there is an attempt to arrest wages and benefits of non-payers. But the more groundwork that is done in advance, the better the chances of success.

Paper support for non-collection by trade unionists and non-implementation by Councils will not be enough. The existing movement is strong and vibrant in many communities, but its links with the labour movement remain weak.

Forces on the left of the Labour Party have a real responsibility not only to fight on the Poll Tax question within the Party, but also to develop close working relationships with local campaigns in order to demonstrate that there *are* Labour Party members committed to sinking Thatcher's flagship.

Central Region Scotland

Labour coughs up for Tory Poll Tax

In May 1988, with District Council elections nearing, the Labour Party in Scotland endorsed the "Stop It" anti-Poll Tax campaign.

Funded by the trade unions, this campaign printed a million leaflets on how to mess up the registration machinery.

The "Stop It" campaign left the task of organising non-payment to locally organised grass roots groups. Only the Scottish National Party and the Greens now openly advocate non-payment.

Disrupted

The Poll Tax has been disrupted at every level in Scotland. At this very moment, between 600,000 and one million people have still not made *any* Poll Tax payment.

"While endeavouring to anticipate many of the difficulties which would be incurred in implementing the totally new concept of Community Charges, the scale and range of the problems are much greater than the worst estimate," says a Community Charge Registration Officer in a report submitted to Central Region Council.

By Rowland Sheret
Scottish Labour Briefing

"The amount of necessary overtime worked in the Department is too high and is having a detrimental effect, not only on members of staff but also on the quality and quantity of their work.

"Members of staff have indicated they cannot maintain this level of overtime which has now continued for more than one year.

"It is not uncommon for an apparently simple enquiry to generate a four page letter in reply or for an appeal or objection to require ten man hours in order to prepare answers.

Resolved

"There are large areas of the legislation which the government has left to be resolved by case law."

This is an admission of defeat. The CCRO is clearly saying his department cannot cope.

How did the ruling Labour Group on Central Regional Council respond to this bombshell? They voted to give the Community Charge Officer an extra £250,000 per year to employ 18 extra staff.

They discussed the matter in secret session. As a member of the public, the Chair of Stirling Trades Council was asked to leave the Council Chamber. As an officer of the Council, the CCRO was allowed to remain.

Seven Labour Councillors voted against the extra money at the Labour Group meeting. Only four carried their opposition into full Council.

To rub salt in the wounds of dismayed Poll Tax activists the Tory Councillors voted against spending the extra money on the grounds that the CCRO should make his department more efficient.

Under no threat of surcharge, without any pressure from the Tories, Central Regional Council Labour Group caved in to a Tory policy opposed by 80% of the people in Scotland.

It must also be noted that a majority of the SNP Councillors went along with the Labour Group.

No Tory Poll Tax!

National Demonstration
in Brighton on the eve of
Labour Party Conference
Saturday September 30th

Assemble 1pm, The Level
March commences 2pm
Rally at Fishmarket Hard
Bring Trade Union and Community Banners!
INVITED SPEAKERS:
NALGO; CPSA; Brighton Labour Councillor; Dennis Skinner MP; John McCreadie (CPSA); Paul Foot (Daily Mirror)
Saturday Night Sept. 30th:
Anti-Poll Tax Benefit Gig at Brighton Polytechnic, Lewes Road, Cockcroft Building
Conference Fringe Meeting:
Monday October 2nd, 7.30pm, St Peters Church Hall, London Road, Brighton

For a mass campaign of non-payment!

Coventry
Labour Briefing

sends greetings
to Labour Party Conference.

No Poll Tax here
— or anywhere!

Printed by East End Offset Ltd (TU), London E3