LABOUR
40p FORTNIGHTLY
BRIEFING
NO. 91 OCT 25 ~ NOV 7
1989

INSIDE:

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40p

GUILDFORD FOUR RELEASED:

WHO'S GUILTY NOW?



Thatcher: presiding regally over a state conspiracy

The freeing of the Guildford Four is a major victory for Irish freedom, for the working class, and for all those oppressed by the might of the British state.

This was eloquently expressed by a group of building workers constructing an office block opposite the Old Bailey. On the afternoon of the appeal, scores of them spontaneously downed tools to await the prisoners' release.

With hard hats still on, they roared in welcome, but also in anger, as Gerry Conlon at last emerged, punching the air with a clenched fist.

The Irish community that many of these workers come from has long been aware of the Four's innocence. For every one of the Guildford Four, there have been 15,000 other Irish people arrested under the racist Prevention of Terrorism Act, abused and held incommunicado. Less than one per cent of these are ever charged with "terrorist offences".

Britain's black community, — with its own long history of police raids, frame-ups, media trials, and community criminalisation — also has cause to celebrate this victory.

By PIERS MOSTYN

The convictions of the Broadwater Farm Three, like those of the Guildford Four, were obtained by use of terror and uncorroborated confessions.

Pressure must also be applied to quash the convictions of the Birmingham Six and Judith Ward and to establish the innocence of the Maguire Seven (including Guiseppe Conlon who died in prison in 1980), whose convictions stemmed directly from the Guildford conspiracy.



Paul Hill and Gerry Conlon celebrate their release

The guilty ones

No wing of the British ruling class comes out of this nightmare with a shred of credit.

Never, not even up to and including the last moments of Lord Lane's judgement, were the rights of the innocent prisoners given priority over the need to quench the increasingly foul stench of corruption and conspiracy emanating from the state's criminal justice institutions.

The attempt to credit the DPP and the Avon & Somerset police with uncovering the "new" evidence is entirely eclipsed by the fact that *this evidence has been in police files for 15 years!*

The DPP admits to sitting on it since July, ostensibly to establish its veracity and significance.

Continued on centre pages:
The Collaborators;
The Conspiracy; The Cover-up;
The Political Ramifications

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. 18th if possible.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

"Green Tax" isn't enough

Dear *Briefing*,

I would have thought that the Socialist Environment Resources Association (SERA) would have produced a more coherent critique of the politics of "no growth" than that outlined in *Briefing* no. 90.

While criticising the idea that we should adhere to the capitalist concept of measuring growth in monetary terms, the article nevertheless does not propose an alternative.

The critique is not radical enough, leading to support for reactionary proposals such as an environment tax.

Furthermore, suggesting that the greenhouse effect is just a threat to future generations is vastly underestimating the problem, which is likely to kill millions by starvation and violent weather conditions within the next few years (if it hasn't started already).

It is agreed that global production of greenhouse gases must be reduced by 50% almost immediately. This implies a greater reduction in the imperialist countries, the main producers.

As far as control of CO_2 is concerned, as well as more efficient energy use, cleaner energy sources, the ending of wastage in production and use of commodities, it will mean the ending of private car ownership, its replacement by a free public transport system, etc.

Clearly capitalism cannot countenance this without the creation of massive unemployment, and major attacks on the democratic rights of the working class.

A workers' solution will demand not just the regulation of markets, but their suppression and the introduction of a planned economy, a shorter working week, the end of planned obsolescence, and more collective use of commodities.

In that respect — as well as others — it also represents a challenge to the bourgeois nuclear family.

This implies a massive reduction in "growth" — measured in terms of volume of production, but potentially an increase in the *use value* of commodities, as we move out of the "throw-away" society. That is what "sustainability" should mean.

Phil Ward,
Sheffield.

Justice for the Mineworkers

Dear *Briefing*,

I am writing, on behalf of the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign, to correct some errors in your report of the NUM Centennial Gala in Barnsley in June of this year.

Your article, printed in issue no. 87 (July 5th-September 12th) claims that "Arthur Scargill ordered the NJMC" to provide sacked men to lead off the march through Barnsley.

No so, I'm afraid, comrades. We were *requested* to provide 14 sacked men to lead off the procession.

It is also untrue, as you further claim, that no one was prepared to participate. In fact 15 turned up and led the procession off, taking it in turns to carry the national banner, and with a sacked miners' banner behind that.

The criteria for the choice of the men that we made was that they were all people who had rendered service to the cause of other sacked and victimised miners, either through the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign or their local Regional Justice campaigns.

And two of the men were jailed miners — Terry French, our National Organiser, and Dennis Pennington, who are our main speakers at Conference fringe and other meetings.

The sacked men and their families have enough problems as it is with an intransigent Coal Board and a labour movement supine from the effects of New Realism. We don't need ill informed articles such as this from comrades in the socialist world.

Arthur Scargill is our Honorary President and Peter Heathfield our Honorary Vice President.

They, almost alone among leaders of a major union, are attempting to halt the drift towards New Realism, calling as they do for trade unionism based on struggle, fight back and solidarity, rather than on a tawdry class collaboration with the owners of capital.

It is their names in our letterhead, and their presence on our platforms at major labour movement events and conference fringe meetings, that gives the Justice Campaign much of the standing that we have in the movement.

Ken Homer is not challenging for Peter Heathfield's position of National Secretary by the way, as your article also claims. He is standing as the Broad Left candidate for the *vacant* position of Vice President.

Please try to get your facts right first if you are going to criticise. You won't be taken seriously as a a socialist paper unless you do.

Don't substitute rumour and gossip for informed analysis. The better sort of socialists start their analysis from the world as it is, not as they imagine it to be.

If you are going to carry articles that launch their arguments with such phrases as "rumour has it", as this article did, the writer of those articles had better seek a position as a gossip columnist with one of the capitalist tabloids as better befitting his level of political awareness.

I was recently down in Birmingham on a speaking tour for the Justice Campaign, at the instigation of a comrade associated with *Labour Briefing*. Not only did he put me up at his own home for three days at his own expense but he spent a day off work taking me around union offices and making contacts for us.

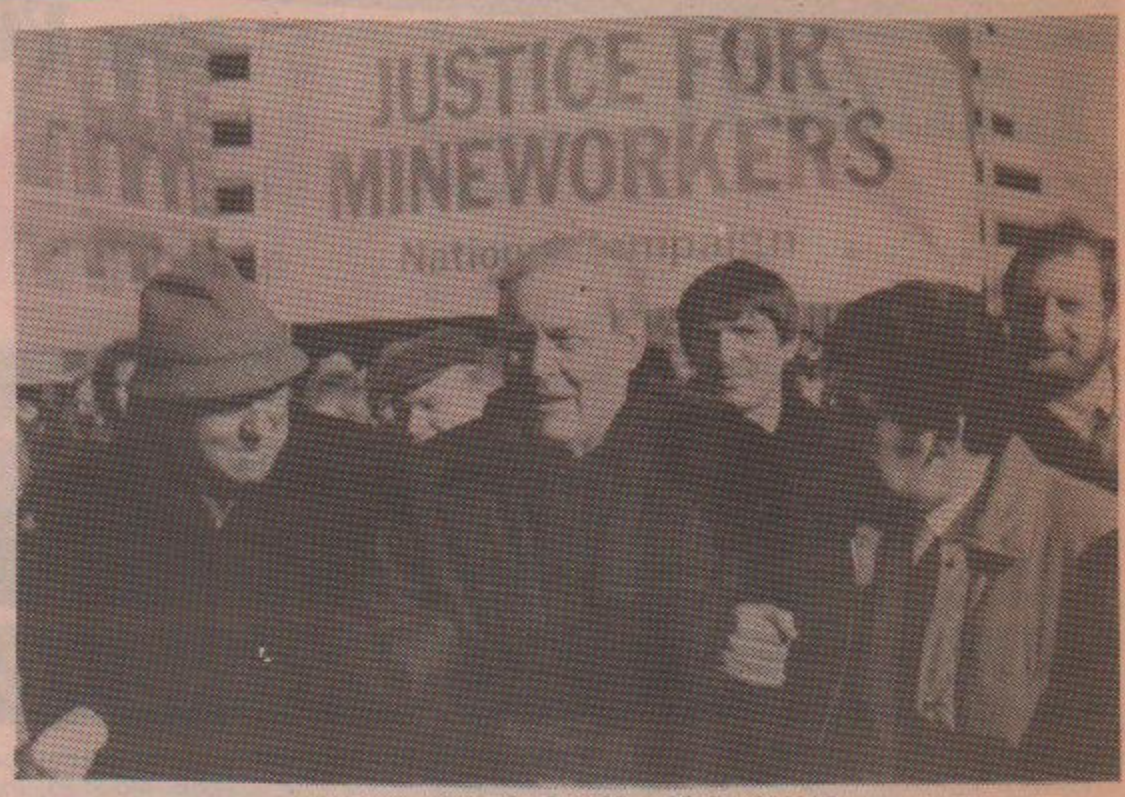
Fortunately I, and the Justice Campaign, judge an organisation by its better elements, not its worse.

If any *Labour Briefing* reader wants a speaker at any meetings, or even better, a speaking tour for two or three days, please contact us and they can find out the facts, and not the fictions, about the Justice Campaign.

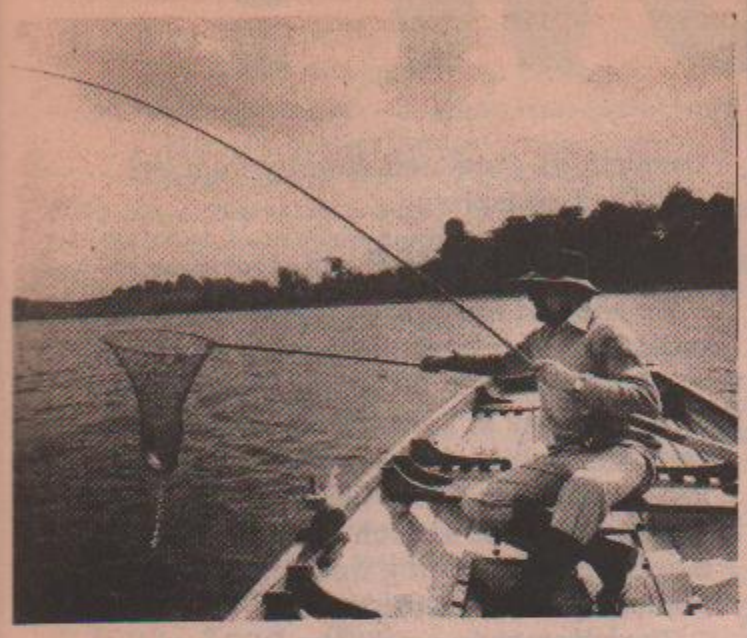
We'd particularly welcome a chance to address workplace meetings, shop stewards committees, Trades Councils, etc.

Write to the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign, c/o North East NUM, PO Box 6, Red Hill, Durham DH1 4BB, or telephone Durham (091) 384 3515 and we'll try to get you a sacked miner or an officer of the Justice Campaign to address your meeting.

Yours comradely,
Terry Norman,
Secretary, NJMC



Tony Benn leading the NJMC banner during the Great Miners' Strike of 1984/5.



Peaceful it is, fishing. No one to sell you a Labour Briefing...

Cat shits out of the bag?

Dear *Briefing*,

I was interested to see in the recently published Socialist Society pamphlet *Negotiating the Rapids: Socialist Politics for the 1990s* that proportional representation is explicitly seen as a means of encouraging comrades on the left of the Labour Party to leave the Party as an aid in setting up a new left party.

The pamphlet states, "In our view the Socialist Movement must be preparing the ground for an eco-socialist party."

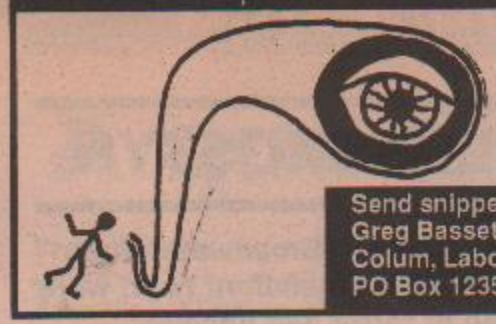
On the next page it goes on, "The introduction of a genuinely proportional electoral system would offer this movement a wider choice of vehicles for political representation."

I find this statement interesting given the months of "principled" arguments about democracy which we have been treated to in the pages of *Briefing* by supporters of PR, not least those in the Socialist Society.

I think the phrase is, comrades, "The cat's out of the bag!" or maybe, "The shit is about to hit the fan."

John Wilton,
Birmingham

PERISCOPE



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

For Sale: Rainforest

Scotland's young Tories want to sell off the Amazonian rain forests.

Martin Burns, chairman of the Scottish Young Conservatives Policy Unit, told a debate organised by the Green Society at Edinburgh University that the Brazilian government should be persuaded to sell the forest to a merchant bank who would then offer shares to people concerned about the environment.

He said: "The privatisation of the rain forests would be a further demonstration that only capitalism has the answers to the world's environmental problems."

And nuclear power is the cleanest, safest form of energy the world has ever known.

Tories' Fascist Fringe

Defence Secretary Tom King's attack on the left for inviting Gerry Adams to address a Labour Party Conference fringe meeting won him a predictable standing ovation at the Tories' own annual bash.

But one of the sideshows at Blackpool that day was a meeting organised by anti-communist group **Western Goals**, featuring speakers from France's National Front, West Germany's Republikaner, and South Africa's ultra-right Conservative Party.

Western Goals' sponsors include death squad chief Major **Roberto D'Aubisson**, principal organiser of the systematic murder of thousands of peasants, workers, and leftists in El Salvador.

"He's a good solid conservative," said Alexander North, Executive Director of Western Goals. "He knows how to deal with communists and liberals, which is what the Conservative Party is supposed to be about."

North allegedly told journalists that Major d'Aubisson's tactics would soon bring about a solution to the Irish question.

Dialogue or death squads, Mr King?

Not quite so many £££ for Tories

Company donations to the Conservative Party fell substantially last year, according to **Labour Research**.

Whereas 397 companies gave the Tories £5.25 million in election year, only 246 contributed £2.93 million last year.

The SLD and SDP seem to have lost out completely.

Labour Research failed to uncover *any* donations to either party, in comparison to 27 companies which gave £160,100 to the Alliance in 1987.

The City again emerged as the Tories' major funders with a total of £939,885, a third of all Tory donations.

The top ten company donations include some familiar names (Taylor Woodrow, P&O, Allied Lyon, Trusthouse Forte, United Biscuits, Glaxo) but Tories may be a bit worried that Hanson, the sixth largest donor, recently took over Consolidated Goldfields, the seventh largest.

No Bias here!

How nice to see the September/October issue of Labour Party News (the Labour Party magazine mailed directly to each Labour Party member's home address) explaining to members the workings of Labour Party Conference.

One aspect of Party Conference explained by LPN is the elections. The blurb runs:

"An important function of conference is the election of a new National Executive Committee.

"Much interest will centre on the seven representatives elected by local Parties. John Prescott is expected to make a strong challenge in this section. John Smith, the victor of the Vale of Glamorgan by-election, is also standing for the first time."

Election campaigns are, I suppose, inevitably conducted through the media. Goodness knows why these two should have been singled out from the many candidates for a special mention: maybe the editor of LPN just likes people called John.

Greg.

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Freedom for the Guildford Four — no triumph for British justice

There are no words for the injustice perpetrated against the Guildford Four. And though they can never be compensated for the years behind bars, for their brutal treatment by police and prison officers, for the endless lies told about them in the courts and the media, they deserve every penny that can be squeezed out of their persecutors.

Meanwhile, the cover-up has begun. The decision to release the Four was clearly part of a damage limitation exercise by the DPP. There will now be an attempt to confine blame to relatively low ranking police officers.

This will never satisfy those who have been fighting for the Guildford Four and other victims of state frame-ups, who *know* that responsibility for these outrages reaches the highest levels.

We remember all too well the hysterically anti-Irish climate in which these convictions were obtained and the mobilisation of all the resources of the state and the media to obtain them.

The media conveniently forget this. They also fail to recognise that the Irish connection is not incidental.

Judicial safeguards failed not by accident or because of the misdeeds of maverick cops. They simply could not withstand the harsh imperatives of British imperialism in Ireland, with its ever present outriders, anti-Irish racism and state terror.

Far from being a "triumph for British justice" the case of the Guildford Four is further proof that the judiciary is a subservient and entirely political institution acting in the interests of the ruling class.

The release of the Four is, however, most definitely a triumph for all those grass roots campaigners who struggled so hard for so many years against such huge odds to force this issue onto the political stage. Only last month the Labour leadership refused to allow a motion on the Guildford Four on to Conference agenda.

Meanwhile, the Birmingham Six, the Maguire Seven, and the Tottenham Three are still rotting in British gaols, victims of the subordination of justice to political expedience — and of the acceptance in British courts of uncorroborated confessional evidence, a standing license for police torturers and liars.

One member: *no* vote

No one should be fooled by the "democratic" veneer of the Edmonds proposals and the current NEC consultation on Conference structures.

Edmonds is mapping out the latest stage in the leadership's long term drive to sever the Party's historic links with the trade unions, remove once and for all any danger from a resurgent rank and file, and make Labour a "safe bet" for the ruling class in perpetuity.

This is not a technical or constitutional issue. At its heart is the very nature of the Party and its capacity to act as an instrument of socialist advance.

The trade unions created the Labour Party in order to secure a political voice for the organised working class. However muted or distorted that voice has been in succeeding decades, to lose now even the possibility of it being made effective would be a tragic setback for all workers in this country, one from which the struggle for socialism would not recover for many years.

The Edmonds attack will not result in an immediate break with the unions or indeed any reduction in the power of the union bureaucracy at Party Conference. In the short run the "reforms" are likely further to bureaucratise trade union influence in the Party, making it even more the preserve of unaccountable full-timers and even less responsive to the rank and file.

This package will also lead to a further erosion of the rights and powers of CLP members. With Conference gutted and reduced to a rally for the greater glorification of the Parliamentary leadership, with policy in the hands of elitist "expert" committees, and with the NEC reduced to a self-perpetuating machinery for the domination of the Party by the PLP, the Walworth Road apparatus, and the trade union bureaucracy, it will not be so much a question of "one member, one vote" as "one member, no vote".

The left must respond to this attack with a positive agenda. We cannot allow ourselves to be seen as the defenders of a status quo that is hardly the last word in participatory democracy.

We have to set out radical, far-reaching demands for the empowerment of rank and file trade union and CLP members and for the acountability of the PLP and full-time officials.

We have to offer a vision of *socialist democracy*, based on unrestricted debate, an active and informed mass membership, and collective decision-making at all levels.

We can only effectively defend the trade union link — and the trade union voice at Conference — if we also take up the basic question of trade union democracy. We have to fight to retain *and* democratise the block vote.

Just how this can or should be done is a matter of urgent debate for the left. Indeed, the best first step in the defence of Party democracy and the trade union link is for the left to initiate that debate *as of now*.

In the coming months *Briefing* will make this debate a priority — as part of our effort to organise with others the defeat of the Edmonds proposals.

Behind the headlines

Socialists on telly:

Who's using whom?

My relationship with the media has changed dramatically over the past 18 months.

I started off, like many activists, talking to the local press, issuing press releases, and responding to enquiries.

The left locally had to work hard to get any space in the media, and we thought we were lucky if we got a two minute slot on LBC, one of London's local radio stations.

Then, thanks to Larry Whitty, I hit the big time and received the dubious honour of being doorstepped by the *Sun*.

The feeling of total panic when you open your door and realise you can't leave the house without confronting people whose sole aim is to humiliate you is not one I'd wish on any comrade.

But in the long run the publicity did serve a purpose: it created a media profile for me, albeit, not the one I would necessarily have chosen.

The media create "images" and "personalities" — but they cannot always control them. Not all *Sun* readers consume their paper passively.

Once something or someone has a national profile other sections of

By Mandy Mudd
Tottenham CLP

society and the press respond. The constructed images can be quite volatile and open to manipulation.

Ken Livingstone was once portrayed as a fire-breathing monster. Now he's "cuddly Ken". Some might say that the softening of his image went with a softening up of his politics!

Another view would be that by making himself available and visible people could see he didn't eat babies for breakfast. It became harder for a false image to be constructed.

This gave him the space to speak out on "unpopular" issues such as Ireland and lesbian and gay rights.

Capitalist

Of course, as socialists, we can never completely win with the capitalist media. The time and freedom we are allowed to get our message across remains minimal; they will always try to distort and discredit what we say.

But the press and TV are also driven by the need for new stories and new faces and this means that opportunities do arise.

My experiences on chat shows have taught me that programme makers want "controlled confrontation". They want sparky people who can air "controversial" views.

The programme makers have to produce to a weekly schedule and secure an audience. Within those limits they are sometimes prepared to be flexible.

Participants

In that sense we are no more "set up" than other participants. The most insidious part of it all is that *all* issues are reduced to "entertainment factors".

The positive part is that any message we manage to get through reaches millions.

And people do listen. They day following my appearance on *After Dark*, the Saturday before Party Conference, a number of people in Brighton stopped me not just to say they'd seen me on the telly, but also to talk further about the issues raised in the programme.

The media can also be a source of income for socialists. After a certain point people expect to pay you for a story or appearance and we should always claim our fees.

Socialists only become "personalities" because of what they represent. All money raised in this way should go back into the labour movement, where it can be used to finance our own press and publicity.

The skills needed to be interviewed or appear on TV are minimal: the ability not to freeze in front of a camera, and to be able to talk interestingly and sincerely on a range of subjects.

Mind you, the rule of thumb does seem to be that you have to be hated and reviled before you can be loved — so a thick skin comes in handy too.



PHOTO: Jenny Hodgart

Mandy Mudd, seen here addressing the second Socialist Conference in Chesterfield, has not always been an accomplished public speaker — but it comes with practice, and conviction in your politics!

Socialist Movement

The Socialist Movement in the Labour Party

Rebuilding the Labour left

At Labour Party Conference the Socialist Movement held a fringe meeting for its supporters to discuss their activities within the Party.

The meeting gave delegates an opportunity to discuss the implications of the Policy Review and the spectre of the Edmonds proposals to weaken the membership and sever the Party's trade union link.

Many of the speakers from the floor were CLP and union delegates concerned with the restricted space available for socialists to argue and organise in the Party.

However, the balance sheet was not totally negative.

Delegates pointed out the positive achievements of the lesbian and gay comrades' struggle for an equal age of consent.

Tony Benn made an impromptu appearance at the meeting to offer his support for the idea of organising the Socialist Movement within the Party.

In a frank and positive contribution, Benn outlined the need for the left to link up with those fighting outside the Party structures, warned against a strategy based on simply seizing the Party machinery, and predicted that even those left policies passed by Conference would be ignored by the leadership.

There was, he insisted, "no mechanistic answer to a political problem."

By Bryn Griffiths
Tottenham CLP

Events since Conference have borne out Benn's view. During the parliamentary debate on defence estimates Benn, using as a model the resolution moved by Bruce Kent at Conference and passed by a large majority, tabled a resolution to reduce defence expenditure. The Labour Front Bench spoke against him!

Benn's contribution was made doubly important by the intervention of Labour Left Liaison members at the Campaign Group's Conference assessment fringe meeting.

These comrades argued that the Socialist Movement's "twin track" approach had taken left activists out of the Party and attempted to scapegoat *Briefing* and other SM supporters for all the left's failures at Conference.

Subsequently

Anne Pettifor of the Labour Women's Action Committee (LWAC) has subsequently taken to the pages of *Tribune* to launch a similar sectarian attack.

Pete Willsman of CLPD put their argument bluntly in the last issue of *Labour Briefing*: the left, he said, should remain completely silent outside the structures of the Party



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Tony Benn

and not waste its time in any attempt to build wider popular support for socialist policies.

On October 14th, Socialist Movement supporters met in Birmingham to discuss how we should organise within the Labour Party.

There was a great deal of agreement amongst those present on the need to relaunch and rebuild the Labour left on a new basis.

The focus of the meeting was organisational. Reg Race introduced a draft founding statement on behalf of the Socialist Movement national officers.

There was a strong feeling that it was important to get the statement right so the draft is to be widely circulated for consultation and amendment before it is adopted or published.

The aim of the statement is to allow us to engage with all those Party members dissatisfied with Kinnock's direction.

After discussion and possible redrafting, the statement should be used to launch and gain sponsorship for a major national conference of the Labour left early in 1990. In this forum the detail on policies and structures will have to be hammered out.

One area that will need particular attention is the need to both defend and democratise the block vote.

Whilst it is important to avoid unnecessary division at this stage it is unlikely that any organisation of the Labour left could survive with a fudged position on this crucial question.

A serious debate on *how* to fight the Edmonds proposals will be near the top of the agenda at the Conference.

Debate

With this debate in mind, the last *Briefing* Steering Committee set up a working party to draft a pamphlet outlining a positive, democratic alternative to Edmonds.

On many questions the Labour left has appeared conservative and reactive in its outlook. On the Policy Review the left knew what it was against but wasn't so clear what it was for.

The Socialist Movement's Socialist Policy Review provides us with a resource to develop alternative to Kinnock, Gould, Edmonds, etc.

One comrade at the Birmingham meeting stressed the need to repoliticise Labour Party structures and revive real policy debates at Party meetings. Here, too, the Socialist Movement can make a positive contribution.

The development of this new initiative within the Party is of crucial importance to *Labour Briefing*.

Not only does it allow us to develop a broader audience for our approach but it will also allow us to place the Labour left's concerns at the centre of the Socialist Movement as a whole.

The Birmingham meeting established an interim organising committee to work up proposals and come back to another meeting to be held in London on Saturday, November 18th.

It is an open meeting and all *Labour Briefing* groups or supporters should make sure people attend from their areas.

Diary of activities and events

Nov 11/12.
Socialist Movement National Trade Union Conference.
Ring Will McMahon, 01-281 6225.
Nov 18.
Welsh Socialist Conference, ring Janet, 0443-224378.
Nov 25.
Socialist Movement Organising Committee, Birmingham
Mar 17/18, 1990.
National Green/Socialist Movement Conference, London.

Other initiatives:

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

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

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

Economic Notebook : Behind the Stock Market Collapse

Junk Bond chickens come home to roost

The era of the junk bond came to a spectacular close on Friday, October 13th.

Nearly two years to the day since the great crash of October 1987, the long-predicted denouement of the whirligig of debt-financed take-overs and buy-out deals finally arrived.

The merry-go-round of speculation was based on gigantic take-over deals "leveraged" on average at a ratio of borrowing nine to ten times higher than the amount of capital put up by the take-over bidders involved.

Banks, finance houses, corporate executives, legal advisors, and speculators reaped the largest, quickest profits in world history in a rapacious auction that has dominated Wall Street in the 80s and pushed US Stock Market values up and up.

With its collapse, US banks find themselves dangerously exposed — up to $10 billion having gone into some very shaky LBOs.

Junk bonds are a form of second rate IOU used in cases where more conventional finance is not obtainable. They offer very high interest on the basis of high risk, i.e. they have last call in case of financial problems.

They have secured a seemingly endless supply of deficit financing for buy-outs and take-overs.

It has long been predicted that heavily indebted US corporations would become unable to finance their loans if economic slowdown caused earnings and profits to fall.

The effects of defaults and bankruptcies would first be felt amongst the "funny money" players of the junk bond market and would in turn feed through into a destabilisation of the conventional financial markets.

The warnings signs have been around for a long time — a third of the junk bonds issued since 1977 have run into trouble.

By Dave Palmer
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

This summer a whole range of heavily indebted companies began to default on junk bonds interest payments and attempted to "roll over" their debts by issuing still more and even high yield junk bonds.

Then, in September the junk-backed Campeau retail empire collapsed.

$10 billion was slashed from the value of the junk market in a matter of days. The US Securities and Exchange Commission launched an urgent inquiry.

The possibility that a series of debt-saddled corporations could go bankrupt in the worsening economic situation — and leave the banks with hundreds of billions in unredeemable debt — sent the jitters into the Stock Market and brought the LBO frenzy to an end.

The share collapse was triggered by news that the financing of the $6.75 billion LBO of United Airlines was in trouble. The airline business is notoriously vulnerable to the ups and downs of the business cycle.

Japanese banks pulled out of the United Airlines package being put together by Citibank and Chase Manhattan.

Their concern was that a heavily indebted United would be unable to earn sufficient profits in a tightening economic climate to repay the high levels of unsecured debt (subject to sharp interest rate fluctuations) required by the LBO deal.

Japanese banks' enormous funds now dominate the world financial markets. The ideas that they were pulling out of the LBO game cause panic on Wall Street.

There was a flight from shares of take-over targeted firms like United and stock of other debt-burdened firms.

When the markets reopened on Monday, would there be a repeat of the October '87 crash? The US Federal Reserve pledged itself to pump liquidity into the financial system to restabilise the markets. It had already done this successfully in October 1987, albeit at the cost of high world inflation.

In the event, the Federal Reserve — backed by a co-ordinated international effort — was able to rescue the markets. In both the US and Japan financial institutions took concerted action to support share prices.

The Japanese markets opened first and did begin to fall, but ended the day just 1.5% down (compared to a 15% fall in 1987).

The City, next to open, predictably fared worst and plunged £40 billion before lunch.

When Wall Street opened it fell by 67 points,then rallied to end the day *up* by 86 points, the second largest daily increase on record.

The US rise buoyed London and the City ended the day with shares down by only £20 billion.

It remains to be seen how lasting this recovery is. One of the primary reasons that "Black Monday" was not repeated was the current strength of the dollar which ensured that there was no massive flight of Japanese capital from US-based financial assets.

Yet it is precisely the current strength of the dollar which has exacerbated the US trade deficit.

The announcement of the August US monthly trade deficit at $10 billion ($2 billion worse than expected) caused Wall Street and the City to fall once again.

Clearly none of the fundamental causes of instability in the financial system — at root an overaccumulation of capital seeking speculative profits — is likely to go away.



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

Nigel Lawson's resignation confirms no one has any confidence in Thatcher's economic policy. Will ex-Stock Exchange Chair Nicholas Goodison (above) sa-y-es to calls for the government to resign?

Corporate America's debt crisis remains as deep as ever and can only become worse when interest rates rise or growth slows further.

The methods used to stave off the Stock Market crisis — the central banks pumping in greater liquidity — can only increase the inflationary pressures they have been trying to damp down.

The City of London has once again shown itself to be the most unstable, weakest, and most dependent of the financial markets.

Lawson now has to deal with this as well as a falling currency, an unmanageable deficit, rising inflation, and high interest rates.

The City's anti-inflationary rigour soon goes out the window when its own neck is on the line.

Expect the juggler to drop another ball soon.

PS: I'm sure *Briefing* readers will be pleased to know that Maxwell personally lost at least £144 million in the latest crash.

Beating the Broadcast Ban



PHOTO: Frankie Quinn

Speaking out in Belfast

Success for day of action

The first anniversary of the British broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein and other groups from the North of Ireland was marked by protests across the country.

Buoyed by the unexpected release of the Guildford Four, activists demonstrated outside broadcasting offices throughout the country.

On the previous day, Gerry Adams MP held a press conference in London.

He pointed out to the numerous representatives of the international media present that they, unlike their British colleagues, were allowed to report his words (a BBC crew was also present but could make little use of the film they shot).

Adams urged journalists to come to the north of Ireland and see the war for themselves. He compared their attempt to cover the war from London with an attempt to cover the Vietnam war from Washington.

In London, October 19 — one year since the impositon of the ban — was a day of varied activity.

Some 1000 media union members marched from Portland Place past BBC, ITV, and Channel 4 offices, led by the General Secretary of the three main broadcasting unions, NUJ, BETA, and ACTT.

A rally at the Dominion Theatre featured music and comedy as well as speeches from Paul McGill, NUJ President, Clare Short MP, and Roy Hattersley, who was booed for his predictable efforts to put a "safe distance" between himself and Sinn Fein.

A petition against the ban organised by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom with 5,000 signatures was handed in at Downing Street.

Protest pickets were mounted outside the main broadcasting offices in London Sheffield, Birmingham, Leeds, Brighton, and elsewhere.

The Troops Out Movement (TOM) organised a demonstration outside the Houses of Parliament. Three protesters chained themselves to the railings. Nine people were arrested and two charged.

A TOM spokesperson called the day of action a success and said the purpose of the ban was to distort the truth about Ireland in the eyes of the British public — and prevent the demand for self-determination for the Irish people from being raised through the British media.

"Communities of Resistance"
A National Conference
Saturday November 11th, 10-6
Hackney Town Hall, Mare St, London E8
Organised by Hackney Council, Refugee Forum, Anti-Fascist Action, Local Groups to look at the implications facing black workers in 1992.

Details from: Tony Panayiotou, Hackney Town Hall, Mare St, London E8, tel. 01-986 3123 ext. 3353.

National Black Students Alliance and Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign
Black struggle and the fight against racism: a conference for the student movement
London School of Economics Students' Union, Houghton Street, London WC2
Saturday November 11 10.30am-6.00pm
Speakers include: Stafford Scott; Unmesh Desai; Families of the "Tottenham Three"; National Black Students' Alliance; Labour Party Black Sections
Workshops on: Policing the Community; Immigration and Refugees; Racist Attacks and Fascist Violence
Details and registration from: Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, 79, Tangmere, BWF, London N17 6NB

Disability

Tories stonewall on comprehensive income

"A national shame of gigantic proportions" was how Peter Townsend, Chair of the Disability Alliance, reacted to two major reports on disability in Britain.

Published by the Office of Population, Censuses, and Surveys (OPCS), the reports confirmed that disablement exists on a much greater scale than previously admitted by any government.

They also clearly confirm that poverty is widespread amongst people with disabilities.

Altogether, OPCS have produced six reports on disability in Britain, covering prevalance of disability, employment, services, etc.

They were meant to be followed by a comprehensive review of disability benefits — or so the government promised back in 1984 when it commisioned the reports.

The last one came out in July this year and, no, you haven't missed the news about the review, because the government is simply refusing to make public any plans for benefits for disabled people.

Disability organisations, which have come together to form the Disability Benefits Consortium, are insisting that there must be an independent, open review of disability benefits.

It should include disabled representatives with knowledge of social security and its evidence and findings should be made public.

The last social security review was the infamous Fowler review of 1984, notable for the absence of claimant representatives and for the inclusion of businessmen whose knowledge of social security was limited, to say the least.

Above all, the disability organisations do not want the disability benefits review to be constrained by a nil-cost remit, i.e. where no new money is put in and any gains for one group have to be paid for by cuts for others.

This is exactly what happened with the Fowler Review, which resulted in the 1986 Social Security Act. Implemented in April 1988, over a million disabled people (amongst others) lost out as a result of massive cuts in means tested benefits.

According to OCPS, there are at least 6.5 million disabled people in Britain, excluding Northern Ireland, which was left out (belatedly, a survey has been set up there but will not report for a couple of years).

The findings showed that the unemployment rate is more than twice as high amongst disabled people as the rest of the population. Where disabled people are in paid jobs, their average earnings are substantinually lower than those of non-disabled workers.

By Linda Lennard
Disability Alliance.

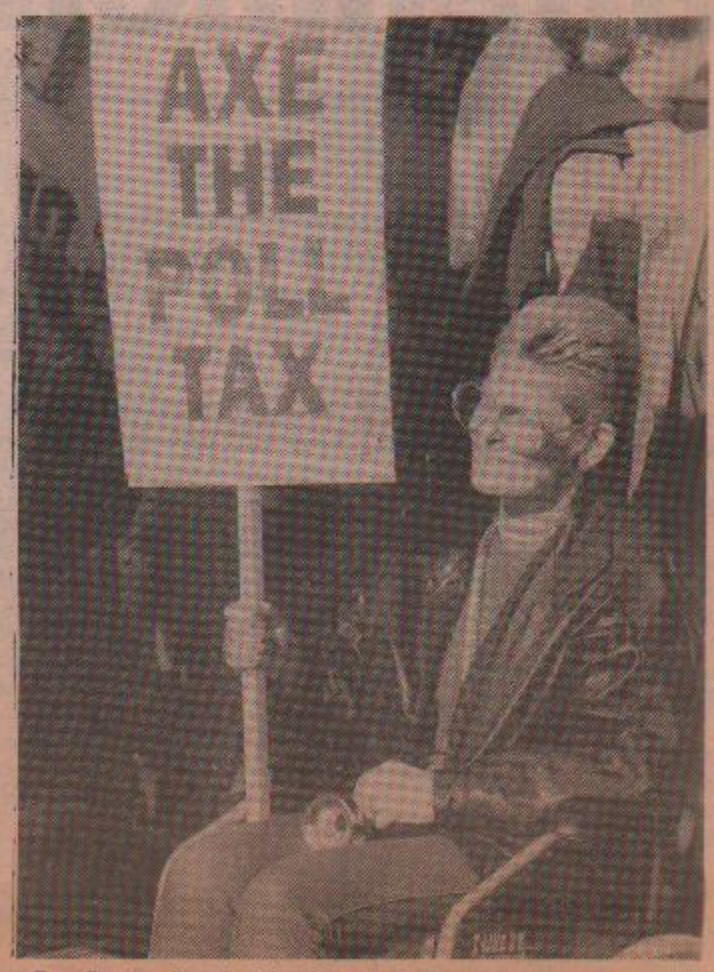
Three quarters of people with disabilities — or 4.3 million people — rely on state benefits as their main source of income.

The average income for people with disabilities was £39 less than average income for non-disabled people at 1988 prices. This amounts to an £8 billion per year shortfall.

Over and over again, the OCPS reports show the extent of hardship and deprivation amongst disabled people. But the authors duck the responsibility of drawing the obvious conclusion from their own findings. Nowhere can the word "poverty" be found in the reports!

The government's amazing justification for refusing to set up an independent review along the lines proposed by disability organisations is that it cannot have an *independent* review — as it is the government which has to make decisions and find resources!

What we are left with is deep anger amongst disabled people.



Benefit cuts will make it hard for disabled people to bear the extra expense of the Poll Tax — an extra incentive to get out protesting!

The OCPS findings are, if anything, an underestimate of the current crisis. This is because of the methods used, the ommission of Northern Ireland, and the fact that the financial data was collected in 1985 — *before* last year's massive cuts in benefits.

According to the Disabilities Alliance — a federation of over 120 organisations — a comprehensive disability income is needed.

This would consist of a disability pension paid at a decent rate to people unable to work because of their disability, and a disability costs allowance for people in and out of work, towards the extra costs of disability, on a sliding scale.

This would have to be complemented by action to ensure disabled people have access to education, properly paid jobs, transport, etc.

Any day now, there will be a White Paper on Care in the Community. How are people with disabilities supposed to live in the community and participate fully in everyday life without enough money to get by, let alone pay for the extra costs of disability? What price community care?

For more information on the campaign for a comprehensive disability income, contact the Disability Alliance, 25, Denmark Street. London WC2 8NJ.

Whose finger on PULSE?

Extreme right attacks DLOs

The government is threatening to disband Direct Labour Organisations in Bristol and Hillingdon.

This comes in direct response to pressure from former far-right ex-student activists now exerting a strong influence on mainstream Tory policies.

Local Government Minister David Hunt has alleged that the two Councils rigged compulsory competitive tendering in favour of their own DLOs.

These allegations came just one working day after the Departmemt of the Environment received a dossier from the free market pressure group Public and Local Service Efficiency Campaign (PULSE).

PULSE were alleging anti-competitive behaviour over tendering on the part of 14 (mostly Labour) Authorities.

PULSE supporters include Mark MacGregor and "campaign director" David Saunders, who were Chair and Vice Chair respectively of the Federation of Conservative Students when it was disbanded for vandalising Loughborough University during its 1985 conference.

Saunders sent PULSE'S complaints to the DoE in a letter dated Friday September 1st, pointing out that this was a:

"great opportunity to make political capital out of the fact that many of the most blatant cases come from Councils controlled by political opponents."

Bristol is the only Labour controlled Council in the South West. Hung Hillingdon only awarded a vehicle maintenance contract to its DLO when the SLD voted with Labour instead of the Tories as it usually does.

On Monday September 4th Hunt formally complained to Bristol and Hillingdon. PULSE had prepared press releases — embargoed until Tuesday — before Hunt's letter had even landed on the Councils' desks.

All this, Saunders argues, is coincidence.

But PULSE is more than uppity ex-FCS student politicos. It has important backers and big bucks behind it.

Twelve Tory MPs allow their names to be used on the campaign letterhead, including Teresa Gorman, Monday Clubber Teddy Taylor, and Neil Hamilton, a man with documented links to Italy's neo-fascist MSI.

They are joined by the Freedom Association's Norris McWhirter.

Sponsor Robert Jones MP is a former marketting consultant with Servisystem and Cleanaway, two of the most important bidders for privatised council contracts.

PULSE admits to having received funding from companies which tender for Local Authority contracts. It also claims 1,500 subscribers at £500 a head. This tots up to at least £750,000 in hard cash backing.

Saunders once proposed an FCS conference motion to denationalise money. That one fell. Now it looks as though he's found a licence to print it.

Labour Party

"Eco-Socialism"

For a Red-green alignment

PETER TATCHELL argues that a new "eco-socialist" politics is central to left renewal, popular radicalisation, and human survival. What do *Briefing* readers think? Please write in.

The ecological crisis and the rise of green politics represents the biggest challenge to socialism since it first emerged as the driving force for human emancipation nearly 200 years ago.

This challenge is all the more serious because it comes at a time when the left is in profound turmoil. Its vision has become blinkered; it has been routed and marginalised within both the Labour Party and wider society.

Forced onto the defensive, much of the left has responded either by retreating into socialist fundamentalism or falling in behind the Labour Party leadership.

Both responses have effectively drawn the curtain on socialism as a project for human emancipation at the very moment when the ecological crisis makes the renewal of this project both urgent and possible.

There can be little doubt that the escalating ecological crisis poses a real danger to the survival of humanity.

Rampant industrial productivism and unrestrained economic growth, the deadly dogmas of both traditional capitalism and orthodox socialism, threaten devastating climatic and genetic changes and the destruction of the Earth's finite natural resources.

Because of this potential catastrophe, the ecological crisis is now the central political issue of our time.

On a global scale, the principal contradiction is not now between capital and labour, but between humanity and nature.

In the name of technological and social progress, the endless process of economic expansionism is dramatically undermining the biological foundation of all living things.

Without a sustainable environment and resource-base to support human life, no social order of *any kind* is possible.

This is also now an essential precondition for the resolution of all the other contradictions, between capital and labour, men and women, and North and South, etc.

Put bluntly, there is no point even beginning to contemplate a socialist future unless we have a planet capable of sustaining human life.

The response of political parties to the ecological crisis is therefore the litmus test of progressive politics.

Refusing

At present, the left is refusing to remould its policies around a radical green agenda. If left parties persist with their shallow environmental reformism, they will end up transforming themselves into their opposites.

As defenders of the productivist status quo, they risk becoming the New Conservatives, holding back the struggle for environmental preservation and human survival.

What is therefore needed is a radical redefinition of socialism to put the *ecological transformation* of society at the heart of the socialist project (something to which no section of the left is currently committed to).

Redefinition

A radical redefinition, modernisation and realignment of socialist politics — as opposed to the social democratic repositioning advocated by the LCC, *Marxism Today*, and the Labour leadership — demands a convergence of the most emancipatory elements of ecology and socialism.

This involves not simply the arithmetical addition of ecology to socialism, but the transformation of socialism itself into a higher synthesis — *eco-socialism* — geared towards a resolution of the ecological crisis based on social justice for all.

The potential for mutual reinforcement between the struggles for sustainability and socialism is becoming clearer all the time.

While the capitalist imperatives of private ownership, production for profit, and competitive free market economics are a prime cause of the ecological crisis, socialist measures such as common ownership, economic planning, and public acountability have a key role to play in its resolution.

Furthermore, the embrace of green politics offers the left an opportunity to renew its radical vision.

By moving to the forefront of the movement for ecological survival, the left could enlarge its base and enhance its appeal among the millions of people concerned about environmental issues, but who have hitherto not identified with the traditional labour movement.

In the process, many of these millions could be radicalised and won to a green *and socialist* commitment.

This radicalisation is possible because the ecological crisis strengthens the case for social planning and through it more efficient use and fairer distribution of resources.

Ecology and socialism are equally fundamental to the refoundation of a project for human emancipation. That project is eco-socialism and it opens the door to socialist renewal and popular radicalisation.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Peter Tatchell

Labour Committee on Ireland

Building the withdrawal movement

Debate on the LCI's future direction has raged within the organisation for more than two years since the decision to launch the "Time To Go" initiative.

There is real concern on the part of many LCI members that the organisation is disappearing into "Time To Go".

The LCI's effective work in advancing the case for British withdrawal and self-determination within the Labour Party and the wider labour movement could, in this way, be lost.

Disturbing signs are already present. Hopes that the 20th anniversary of British troops being sent on to the streets of the North would be marked by a flood of resolutions to Labour Party Conference were completely dashed.

There were only six, most of them moved through CLPs by *Briefing* supporters.

Organisational decline, as ever, goes hand in hand with political retreat. The LCI magazine, *Labour & Ireland*, has virtually become the house-journal of "Time To Go".

Apart from carrying a very restricted debate on "Time To Go", there was the "20 Wasted Years" cover, complete with photograph of British soldiers carrying a coffin draped in the Union Jack.

By Padraig Finn
Secretary, London LCI

When questioned about this concession to British chauvinism, a member of the Editorial Board replied that the cover could equally be seen as a concession to Republican militarism.

Briefing supporters have consistently backed initiatives such as "Time To Go" which seek to broaden the basis of support for British withdrawal.

At the same time, we have argued that such a broad movement will encompass a wide variety of different positions, including those who support self-determination and those who support British withdrawal for other reasons.

The main complaint about "Time To Go" is that its undemocratic structure blocks open discussion. This is exacerbated by its attempt to impose its particular politics on the whole withdrawal movement.

This has led to the exclusion from "Time To Go" of significant forces campaigning for withdrawal, including the Troops Out Movement and the Irish in Britain Representation Group.

The continuing shift to the right in the Labour Party means that there is likely to be immense pressure on the LCI to adapt to this shift, especially in the run up to the next election.

Clearly, it is important that we don't allow ourselves to become isolated and that we continue to work around issues like the broadcasting ban with all those in the Labour Party willing to do so, including Roy Hattersley.

Distinction

However, there is a distinction between working with the Labour leadership around such issues as strip searching and the PTA and capitulating to them on everything else, as some elements in "Time To Go" have done.

"Time To Go", despite its intentions, has clearly failed to mobilise wider forces beyond the "traditional" withdrawal movement. Getting names on paper is not the same thing as *building a movement* to get Britain out of Ireland.

The turnout on the August 12th rally was at the very most 6,000. Only by adding those numbers to the Irish Freedom Movement march the previous week do we get the number which turned out on the tenth anniversary in 1979.

The end result of the "Time To Go" approach is a section of the left with rightist slogans posing as something larger than itself and winding up in the pocket of the Labour Party leadership, which is not interested in withdrawal except on terms dictated by the British ruling class.

The LCI must resist attempts to make it merely a wing of "Time To Go". We should also defend LCI support for the right of the Irish to self-determination.

Whatever the public utterances of "Time To Go", its basic thrust is to suggest a settlement in Ireland on terms favourable to the interests of the British.

As we go to press, the London LCI AGM, which would have been the place to start this urgent debate, has been postponed. However, the discussions must still be held in London and in other regions in the run-up to the LCI AGM on February 24/25th next year.

Birmingham

City Centre for sale!

By Birmingham Labour Briefing

Having made an almighty mess of the City Centre, Birmingham's right wing Labour Group leadership seem to have decided the best thing to do is to privatise it.

Their latest hair-brained scheme is to encourage the setting up of private sector associations to "help" maintain and develop Birmingham City Centre.

Based on US models, these associations would represent commercial interests in various quarters which make up the City Centre. We can look forward to a financial quarter association, an entertainment quarter association, a Broad Street quarter association, etc.

These would be accompanied by a overall forum to look at the City Centre as a whole. Quite who elects this unaccountable forum is not known.

The whole idea was one of the main proposals to emerge from the recent Highbury Initiative Symposium, jointly sponsored by the City Council and the Tories' City Action Team.

Apparently more than 100 people from Britain and overseas took part in the two-day Symposium — the (small) brain-child, we understand, of the "Tory Manager" of the City Council Development Department, Albert Bore.

People were flown from all over the world, and wined and dined at the Council's expense for 48 hours simply to work out a scheme to privatise the City Centre and keep the "riff-raff" out of the heart of Birmingham — the "business city", as the Labour Group leadership chose to call it at a recent Association of Metropolitan Authorities conference.

Hammond's Week

Brighton on the rocks

DAN CARTER gives his considered response to a week spent in a well known South Coast resort — and what it heralded for the Labour left.



Dan Carter looks back fondly to years like 1987: when the press was rushing to interview Jeremy Corbyn on the seafront...

PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Labour Party Conference wasn't as bad as we predicted. It was worse.

Fortunately the Labour Party is presently so divorced from the class struggle that its rightward rush will have little reflection in the real battles going on — over Poll Tax, wages, working conditions, anti-deportation struggles, or nuclear weapons.

One victory to be singled out is the commitment to lesbian and gay equality. With *Briefing* supporters proposing and seconding the resolution, a card vote backed by the TGWU, NUPE, and other major unions ensured the NEC sell-out was overturned.

We now face a battle to ensure its inclusion in the Party manifesto.

The platform contributions were marked by a stay-within-the-law, minimalist, media-conscious social democrat approach which would have fitted into the German SPD, French Socialist Party, or even the British SDP with equal ease.

I don't like to say it, but the loss of Ken Livingstone from the NEC was clearly a blow to the left. Livingstone was clearly identified with heartfelt criticisms of the Policy Review and for that reason his removal is a real loss.

The fact that the other two targets of the Kinnockite LCC — Benn and Skinner — remain firmly in place shows that it may have been a vote against Livingstone's opportunism more than a vote against the hard left.

The simultaneous dumping of Gwyneth Dunwoody from the Women's Section led to rejoicing amongst socialists and small furry creatures threatened by her sponsors in the fur trade.

Conference this year was marked by even deeper immersion in the world of Public Relations. For the first time, more tickets were issued to PR firms than to Constituency visitors.

Kinnock's speech was another case of the bland leading the bland. The *Briefing* Daily Bulletin reported the US Ambassador's reaction: "Very impressive. We see his approach to disarmament as the best route... He's talking language we can understand."

We should draw some comfort from the fact that somewhere we are winning the underlying arguments on issues like black self-organisation and women's representation — often indicated not in what we won (very little) but in defeats for the NEC or for right wing proposals.

The real boosts came at the fringe events:

- the Irish meeting with Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein MP for West Belfast, attracting around 800 people;
- the lesbian and gay lobby;
- the picket of Maxwell's junket at the Grand Hotel by supporters of the sacked Pergamon 23;
- the launching of the Socialist Movement Labour Party Members' group.

With its daily bulletin, *Briefing* played a major part in organising the left presence and was singled out for a Channel 4 News feature.

The passing of the GMB composite (the "Edmonds proposals") will mean the beginning of the end for any kind of policy-making Conference.

I've seen ups and downs since my first Conference in '78, but until now Constituency delegates have at least had the chance to get up and speak in opposition to the tide of reaction sweeping down from the leadership.

Unfortunately, Brighton will be most memorable for the words of Eric Hammond of the EETPU:

"I don't know what you're moaning about. It's the best week of my life."

Nuff said.

Labour Party Conference

How unilateralism wasn't defended

Kinnock's victory on defence was probably the biggest single defeat for the left at this year's Labour Party Conference.

Unilateralism was the last major policy commitment remaining from the left advance of the early 80s.

Yet no one can say they didn't see it coming.

The Policy Review was intended from the start as a two year exercise in ridding the Party of all vestiges of left policy, *in particular unilateralism.*

Though Kinnock would have liked to have dumped it last year, 1989 was always the target date. Last year's Conference setback only made him more determined to succeed in the final push this year.

In response to this theat, *Labour Briefing* took the initiative early this year of writing to all organisations in the Labour Party which support unilateral nuclear disarmament, inviting them to a meeting to discuss a common campaign aimed at maintaining Party policy.

By Pete Firmin
Brent East CLP

We had hoped that these diverse organisations, or at least some of them, could unite around this one single issue, setting aside important differences on other policies in the interest of winning on disarmament.

It was not to be. Although the first meeting, on the February 2nd, was well attended, two crucial organisations were adamant that there could be *no* common initiative.

Tribune editor Phil Kelly said he was not willing to have a common campaign with those who wished to use unilateralism as a stick with which to beat the Party leadership.

He said we should all simply support each other's campaigns, including the *Tribune* petition.

The Labour Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (represented by Secretary Carol Turner) which we hoped would be keenest on a united campaign, was also against joint initiatives.



Kinnock: victorious over a divided left.

In response to suggestions that by working collectively the various organisations could be far more effective in taking the issues into union branches, CLPs, and the affiliated organisations, LCND was remarkably complacent about both their own ability to do this and the likelihood of retaining unilateralist policy.

Without these key organisations, little was possible, and after a couple more meetings — at which there was essentially no change — the initiative petered out.

There was no high profile campaign; the LCND AGM in March was poorly attended; and we lost in Brighton.

There is of course no guarantee that we could have defeated Kinnock at Conference however good a campaign we had mounted. But the left wasn't even willing to try.

Sectarianism and sectional interests were put above fighting for something we all claimed to believe in. We watched a historical triumph overturned without any effective opposition.

If we are to have any hope of winning policy in future the left needs to look at its failure this time round and not repeat its mistakes.

Leeds

District Party double standards

By a Leeds *Briefing* supporter

Leeds District Labour Party (DLP), meeting on October 18th, voted to campaign against the Poll Tax.

But an amendment proposed by a *Tribune* supporter was also carried.

This committed the Party to oppose non-registration and non-payment and other unlawful acts and rejected the original resolution's proposal for working with existing anti-Poll Tax groups, in favour of co-operation "where appropriate".

The mover of the amendment explained in his ward the Poll Tax groups were "not serious"... because they campaigned for non-registration! On this basis the Party will find few groups to co-operate with.

The hypocrisy of the argument against breaking the law was exposed a few minutes later.

Leeds Poly, like other now privatised polys, is proposing to implement a "single union deal": only NATFHE will be recognised for teaching staff, only NALGO for clerical staff, and only NUPE for manual employees.

GMB delegates proposed a resolution calling on Leeds Council to withdraw financial support for and other co-operation with Leeds Poly.

Opposition to the resolution came from Cllr Geoff Driver, Leeds Council representative on the Poly's Governing Body, and from the District Party Secretary, who complained that the resolution would be unlawful.

Nonetheless, it was passed overwhelmingly.

Evidently, trade union delegates, who dominate Leeds DLP, are prepared to contemplate unlawful action by the Council to defend their members — but not to defend those people who won't be able to pay the Poll Tax.

Democracy and the British State

Socialists and the struggle for 'democracy'

As a word, "democracy" has been largely emptied of meaning in recent years.

It is a universal panacea, something that everybody supports but defines differently.

Its main usage in the corridors of power and hallways of the media is as a synonym for capitalism. The level of democracy is proportional to the level of capitalist development in any given country.

For the soft-left in the Labour Party and student movement, democracy means moderation, or more specifically a pathological hatred of Trotskyism.

The "democratic left" is patently neither democratic nor left but rather a euphemism for (slightly) critical Kinnockites with a hostility to other forces.

But for socialists the concept of democracy is or ought to be clear. It is not about being able to cast a vote once every five years or about free markets. It is about *everybody* participating *equally* in society as a whole.

Our definition of democratic rights flows from that.

Democratic rights are therefore all-encompassing. They do not peter out when things get controversial, as many liberals seem to think. Immigration and the PTA, for instance, are both fundamental democratic rights issues, as well as questions of racism and imperialism.

By Rebecca Flemming

Likewise, the left must not be dismissive of causes seemingly far removed from the sphere of economic strife. Appearances are often deceptive and frequently a product of traditional conservatism and vested interest.

Ten years of Thatcher have been ten years of attacks on democratic rights. A legislative landslide of repression has been combined with increasingly coercive state practice and reactionary ideology.

The Immigration Acts, the anti-trade union laws, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, the Public Order Act, Section 28 and the media ban on Sinn Fein are the most obvious testament to the profoundly anti-democratic vision of the Tories.

Football ID cards, the threats to the "right to silence" and the renewed activity of the anti-abortionists lurk ominously in the wings.

These measures are not merely paper additions to the already weighty statute books; nor is state coercion merely an abstract concept.

These developments have a very tangible and sometimes terrible impact on millions of peoples' lives: people who are deported, wrongly convicted, queerbashed, murdered in police custody, strip searched in prisons...

There are many lessons to be learnt from our experiences under Thatcher: about the deeper meanings of democracy, about the importance of democratic rights, about the alliances that can and cannot be built on these issues.

The Thatcher years have also completely exploded the myth that history is an evolutionary process and that the passage of time inexorably brings social progress. Many things have got very much worse over the last decade.

This is not to say that any particular segment of history can be characterised simply as a period of regression or progression. Life is a complex and contradictory business.

For instance, the passage of Section 28 into the law of the land is undoubtedly a step backwards. It is a law that encourages and endorses prejudice and discrimination against lesbians and gay men and has had an intimidatory effect on local authorities in particular and the public sector generally.

However, the mass campaign against Section 28 succeeded in winning more support for lesbian and gay equality than ever before, especially in the labour movement, and played a big part in changing public attitudes.

Moreover, it was precisely the fact that the situation seemed to be improving for lesbians and gay men in this country that provided a central impetus for Section 28.

A handful of left local Councils were beginning to take their responsibilities to their lesbian and gay communities semi-seriously; the public perception of lesbian and gay sexuality was shifting; the lesbian and gay community was continuing to grow and diversify.

Section 28 is an attempt to halt the advances of the twenty years since Stonewall and if possible turn them back.

These advances were themselves the product of the struggles of the lesbian and gay movement, not the spontaneous result of the passage of time or the gift of a benevolent system. They were fought for tooth and nail.

It is essential that socialists are not coy about socialist democracy and do not allow the right (outside or inside the Labour Party) to continue to usurp the moral high ground on democracy.

Let's confront them at every turn with a clear, alternative vision of complete, all-embracing concept of democracy, which will expose their partial and often rhetorical commitment to the genuine article.

Fighting for asylum rights

Kurd's death panics Home Office

On Thursday October 5th, Siho Iyiguya and Doga Arslan set fire to themselves in their prison cells.

They were Kurdish refugees fleeing oppression in Turkey only to find themselves detained by the Home Office for four months while the Secretary of State considered their fate.

Siho has since died in hospital.

Their desperate and courageous actions, in conjunction with demonstrations, hunger strikes, and constant legal intervention, all organised by the Kurds themselves, have forced the Home Office to review detention policy.

Within days, several refugees were released. Many of those held in Gloucester prison were diagnosed as clinically depressed.

Home Office policy is notoriously fickle, however, and it may not be long before detentions become once more the order of the day.

Home Office procedure is intimidating even for those refugees at large on temporary admission. The attitudes of individual Immigration Officers and interpreters (the Home Office will only use its own) vary enormously.

By a *Briefing* legal correspondent

While some are patient and sympathetic in eliciting information from a memory possibly damaged by torture, traumatised by grief or simply fazed by the interviewing situation itself, many are hectoring, patronising, and arrogant.

The basic problem for Kurdish asylum applicants is that, despite the mounds of evidence, the government chooses not to believe that Kurds are oppressed as a nation.

This is a cynical manoeuvre to enable Britain to get round the 1951 International Convention on Human Rights — which Britain signed and which has been central to British propaganda on its own human rights record.

Thus Kurds have to *prove* their own *individual* oppression and political activity to show that they have a "well-founded fear of persecution" if they are returned.

This presents many with a painful dilemma: most have been members or sympathisers of illegal revolutionary organisations where secrecy and discipline are imperative.

So political asylum applicants either have to divulge secret information, and possibly expose comrades back in Turkey to danger, or damage their chances of obtaining asylum by keeping silent.

Moreover, many are semi-literate, low-level political sympathisers, active in resisting oppression but often without the range of knowledge or the vocabulary necessary to establish credentials as a political refugee in Home Office, terms, though that is exactly what they are.

Very few Kurds are being granted full refugee status.

Most (it is too soon to give a percentage) of those who can stay are merely given one year's "Exceptional Leave To Enter", after which they have to go through the process of applying all over again.

Most of those who are deported will be arrested by Turkish police on arrival: the Turkish government likes to see Kurds emigrate, but takes a dim view of those who expose its state terrorism.

It is obvious that the deportees from Britain haven't simply been on holiday, because most of their passports have expired.

The plight of Kurdish refugees in Britain proves that immigration laws are not only inherently racist, but racist in administration and murderous in execution.

The labour movement has a role to play in campaigning for the rights of the Kurdish asylum seekers. We must demand that the British government:

- **releases all detainees;**
- **ends the deportations;**
- **grants all asylum seekers the right to settle.**

SIHO IYIGUVEN FUNERAL MARCH
Saturday October 28th, 11am
From:
Loyola Hall, 56 High Road, Tottenham, London N15
To:
Downing Street, London SW1

GUILDFORD

WHO'S G

Continued from front page

A more likely cause of the delay was to ensure that the conspiracy which put the Four behind bars could be extended into a carefully stage-managed damage-limitation exercise dressed up as an appeal court hearing.

In sheer contempt of the Four's rights and dignity as innocent prisoners, the existence of this evidence was not communicated to them till a couple of days before the new appeal. Its contents were not revealed until ***an hour*** before.

At the appeal, the prosecution went to great lengths to exonerate the establishment. This appeared to be more important than determining whether or not the appeal itself should be quashed.

The DPP presentation was peppered with statements denying in effect that the Metropolitan Police (including Peter Imbert, now its Commissioner), the DPP at the time, prosecution counsel (Sir Michael Havers, subsequently Solicitor General), and the trial judge Donaldson (now Master of the Rolls) had any knowledge of or were involved in any way in this conspiracy.

Given that there has not yet been a criminal investigation or a judicial inquiry, one wonders how the DPP's office felt able to make such statements with confidence.

Its approach was mirrored by Lord Chief Justice Lane, who also insinuated that there may be explanations for the conspiracy and perjury compatible with the Four being guilty.

There was no apology, no hint of regret or humility, not even a mention that a miscarriage of justice had occurred.

Brutality

The vindictive brutality of the system was such that right up to the point of their release, the Four were treated as Category A prisoners and "terrorists", surrounded by guards and strip searched ***four times*** **before** the appeal hearing.

The Surrey officers whose testimony has now been shown as bogus also testified at the trial that resulted in Paul Hill's other conviction, thus providing strong appeal grounds.

Under the Northern Ireland 50% remission system, Hill would probably have finished that sentence several years ago.

All this would have been obvious to the DPP well in advance of the appeal, yet he had the gall to state in court that he "didn't know" whether the DPP for Northern Ireland had been informed and that no attempt had yet been made to process the documentation necessary for a speedy appeal or at the very least for bail pending it.

Hill's re-arrest by the RUC after being denied access to his lawyers, his extra day in prison and subsequent appearance in court in handcuffs were undoubtedly planned in advance — all part of a continuing effort to discredit the victorious prisoners and forestall the inevitable crisis of confidence in the criminal justice system.

The collaborators

The media have focussed on the handful of church leaders, MPs, lawyers and journalists who supported the Guildford Four in an attempt to show that some integrity can be found in at least a *wing* of the establishment.

But the public would be forgiven for being ignorant of its existence until the day before the release.

The supporters of the Guildford Four (even in the final year) did *not* include any of the following:

- a single parliamentary party;
- a politician currently leading these parties;
- a currently serving senior judge;
- a currently serving senior police officer;
- a senior prosecution lawyer;
- a single national daily paper, radio or TV station;
- or any of the NATO governments so fond of criticising human rights abuses elsewhere.

From day one, all these institutions and individuals were jointly responsible for the hysteria and terror that helped keep the conspiracy under wraps for so long.

Indeed they mounted a systematic campaign of vilification against any who dared to back the Four.

Only last year the IBA banned a Pogues song because, in suggesting that the Birmingham Six were innocent men, it "encouraged support for terrorism."

Paul Hill's uncle Errol Smalley was protesting right up to the final appeal that Neil Kinnock and the Labour leadership had failed even to answer letters concerning the issue, let alone declare their support.

In the days following the DPP announcement the Labour leadership still had nothing to say. Hattersley summoned up the courage to say he had "mixed emotions", congratulated the police and suggested there should be an inquiry.

The families were equally critical of the inaction of successive



The demand to free all political pris victory has been won: but now we

D FOUR RELEASED:

GUILTY NOW?

Dublin governments. Even the most ardent backers of the Anglo-Irish Accord have yet to claim that the release was somehow attributable to any post-Hillsborough commitment to justice and civil rights.

This is hardly surprising given that the only party to the Accord that could have used it to raise the issue, the 26-county state, singularly failed to do so.

The supporters of the Dublin establishment in this country are equally culpable. In recent years the organisers of the main Irish event of the year, the Roundwood Park Festival in Brent, have prevented the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six campaigns from booking stalls to distribute information.

The conspiracy

The first question is: how far did the conspiracy extend?

Whereas minimal evidence is usually required to convict defendants on conspiracy charges relating to Irish "terrorism" (as with the Winchester Three) the courts are unlikely to accept as sufficient the considerable evidence that might be available of a widespread police conspiracy in the case of the Guildford Four.

Michael Havers accurately predicted the outcome of the final appeal at the time of the original trial. Referring to the prisoners' arguments in their own defence, he said:

"Accusations of the most appalling kind have been made against the police during this trial.

"If true, there has been a really gigantic conspiracy between the two police forces — the Surrey police and the bomb squad — through officers of all ranks.

"If the allegations are true, there has been a most appalling perversion of justice."

Havers knew that the chances of participation (let alone mere *knowledge*) in the affair being restricted to a few Surrey police officers was highly improbable.

Most likely he knew because *he himself was involved.*

It appears clear now that the DPP and prosecuting counsel may have denied the defence access to key alibi statements and detention records.

Can they and Peter Imbert have been unaware of the existence of a nine hour interview or of its subsequent suppression, given that it fell within the single week that all the other interviews and statements were made?

Imbert was involved in interviews involving what are now shown to be false confessions.

Can he really still claim to be unaware that these statements were being dictated by police? That prisoners were being beaten up? That their families were being threatened? All in order to accomplish what in other interviews was achieved through straightforward fabrication?

A second question is: **how long have the powers-that-be been aware of this and why should it all come out now?**

It is especially strange given that the remit of the Avon & Somerset investigation did not include Surrey police procedures and records.

It is suggested that the diligence and commitment to truth of the newly established and "independent" Crown Prosecution Service's is responsible.

This seems unlikely. The CPS is not imbued with any new policy regarding such investigations. It is staffed by broadly the same type of people at senior level as before.

Why should it suddenly decide to look at this aspect of an old case?

It is far more likely that the police, successive DPPs and their staffs, and the judiciary involved in processing appeals have been aware of the Guildford Four's innocence at least since 1975 when the Balcombe Street Unit was arrested.

The unit were never charged with the Guildford and Woolwich bombings, despite having voluntarily confessed to them.

For 15 years the volunteers of an IRA active service unit have been consistent and honest, to their own detriment, whilst the contrary has been true of the police, the prosecution lawyers, and probably members of the judiciary.

The cover-up

Conspiracy theories should generally be avoided. But in this case it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the conspiracy which gaoled the Guildford Four is now continuing in the form of a cover up.

Several factors point to a conspiracy of mammoth proportions and now an attempt at a cover-up:

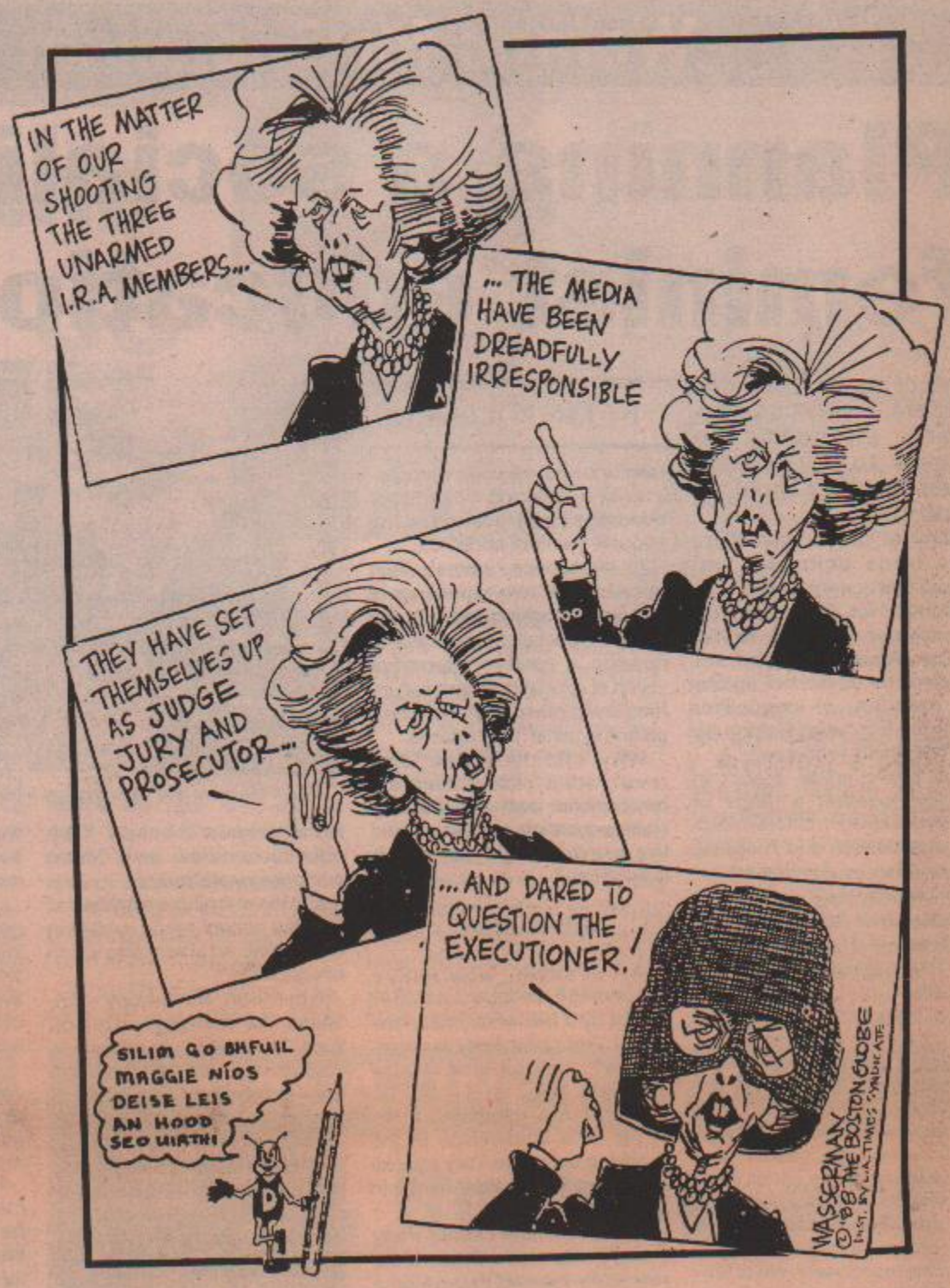
- the unanswered questions about how such vital evidence can lie undiscovered in police files for 15 years and what triggered its "discovery" this year;
- the senior positions now occupied by the leading figures concerned;
- the five month period between the "discovery" and its announcement;
- the exclusion of defence access till the last minute;
- the stage-managed manipulation of the appeal.

A political decision must have been made at a certain stage that a crisis couldn't be avoided and a damage limitation exercise was needed.

In the context of the Stalker Affair and revelations about MI5 assassinations and bombing campaigns in Ireland in the 1970s, it is easy to see why the establishment was under increasing pressure and had to find a way of containing it.

The political ramifications

The Guildford Four scandal must be seen as the most recent sign of a weakening of the ruling consensus on Irish policy.



Cartoon from the "Doodlebug", c/o Conway Education Centre, 5-7 Conway Street, Belfast BT12.



PHOTO: Jim Thain

oners has long been seen on demonstrations in Britain, as in this Irish in Britain Representation Group march. One must expose the cover-up over the Guildford Four, and step up the battle to free other political prisoners.

This has been evident for several years now over issues such as Stalker, Gibraltar, and the media ban.

In a way it resembles the Watergate and Contragate scandals in the USA. It expresses, as they did, a political crisis within the state erupting in the wake of defeats for imperialism.

Watergate followed defeat in Vietnam. Contragate followed defeat in Central America and the Middle East. The Guildford Four scandal follows the long-term failure of the British to inflict military defeat on Irish republicanism.

British rule in Ireland remains of central importance to the apparatus of the state.

It is revealing that many of the ever-mounting list of police forces currently under official investigation for malpractice and corruption have Irish connections: the Surrey police, the Metropolitan, the RUC, the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad.

The Broadwater Farm squad is also now under investigation over very similar arising out of the difficulties in imposing social and political control over the black community.

Class peace in this country has long been dependent on the cultivation of the ideological assumption that the police, the courts and the legal apparatus are "independent" and "neutral".

It is on this basis that Britain remains one of few countries that will allow convictions based on uncorroborated confessions.

If these confessions are later retracted, but the prisoner cannot prove what was done to her or him to get it, any conviction must rest purely on the *credibility* of the police.

The judiciary and the legal profession actively collaborate in promoting this credibility. The Guildford Four revelations expose the fragility of this set-up and undermine the public confidence it is based on.

In the North of Ireland 80% of Republican political prisoners have been convicted solely on the basis of confessions.

These convictions occur in juryless courts after detentions based on "draconian" legal powers and interrogation procedures that have been repeatedly denounced by Amnesty and other human rights organisations.

Detention

Without the denial of legal rights and torture and abuse in detention there would be no confessions. Without confession-only evidence being acceptable there would be no convictions.

The only person considering the facts on which the charge is founded is the judge. These facts consist solely of a confession, the credibility of which rests entirely on confidence in the RUC.

Take away any one prop of this system and the whole lot will collapse like a house of cards.

The Guildford Four scandal should be used to force a major public debate on the injustices in prisons and courts on which British rule in Ireland is so dependent.

The function of this set-up is purely political. It is an extension of the military-security apparatus which seeks to contain and if possible eliminate mass resistence to British rule.

Process

It forms part of a process of terrorising the community. Ordinary people are made to feel that to stick their heads above the parapet is to risk life and liberty.

Prisoners are held as political hostages — collectively punishing the whole community for the activities of those brave enough to make themselves visible.

In effect, an ultimatum is issued: *this* will be the community's fate unless it ceases to give political support to resistance and actively collaborates with imperialism.

The collapse of the Guildford Four case is a fundamental body blow to this strategy and threatens to seriously discredit the ideological assumptions that go with it.

Many of these points were made in the statements issued by Hill and Conlon during their first few minutes of freedom.

It is a testament to their determination and strength of mind that after 15 years of hell they remain unbroken.

It was also a testament to the ultimate and inevitable failure of the British strategy on Ireland.

As socialists we salute these four working class heroes, their families and the small band of activists who struggled for so long to get them free.

The Women's Page

Women for Socialism

Planning a socialist feminist education

A mix of students, schoolteachers, parents and lecturers attended the Women for Socialism Education Dayschool on October 7th.

Many of the women there were trade unionists and Labour Party members.

Women for Socialism, the autonomous women's section of the Socialist Movement, planned the dayschool against the backdrop of inequalities which the Education Reform Act has drastically reinforced.

The event made a start in bringing together a range of women involved in different sectors of education and in ending our isolation by developing our ideas collectively.

Papers had been written on "A decade of Thatcherism" and on "Different feminist views on education".

The introduction to the day was given by Caroline Benn, who pointed out that the education system was not equally accessible for all.

Education has always been riddled with class, gender, and race privileges. The Tories were now reinforcing these patterns.

A speaker from Women Against Fundamentalism talked about the reactionary role of fundamentalism — especially as regards women — in all

By JAN POLLOCK

religions and religious schools.

WAF's demand for secular education for all received strong support from the audience.

In workshops, women then talked of their own experience of education, looking towards the need for socialist femininsts to develop a positive alternative vision of education which can inform and motivate defence campaigns against Tory attacks.

Why should those who received a racist, sexist, heterosexist and anti-working class education rush to defend the previous system which failed them?

Alternative

A positive alternative programme must be developed — not by a few white, male "experts", but collectively by community groups and trade unionists.

So far, the response of the white male leaderships of the teaching unions to Tory attacks has been to bury their heads in the sand.

Meanwhile, the Labour Party Policy Review has also resolutely refused to develop a socialist or feminist alternative in education. It merely promises to implement the new Tory education model in a "more compassionate" way.



Brent teachers and campaigners lobbying the Council against cuts.

But the morning workshops at the day school made a start in developing an alternative vision of education.

Afternoon workshops continued the morning's explorations by looking at attacks in compulsory and post-compulsory education. The post-16 workshop concentrated on access to education as a key issue.

The compulsory education group brought some of their ideas to the plenary, including the need to develop an alternative manifesto in education. The whole dayschool agreed this was the necessary next stage.

After a report on the dayschool has gone out to those who attended, there will be a meeting to discuss an alternative manifesto.

If you're interested in this meeting (with creche) to be held in North London, write to Women and Education Collective, c/o 46 Arthur Road, London N7, or phone 01-272 7649 for more information.

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



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Under the Tories, the kind of educational standards we'd like to see are going into a slide: how can we reverse the trend?

Pro-Choice Video

NAC is distributing 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).

Sports Extra

Manchester United

Psst! Wanna buy a Football Club?

Many football fans consider ticket-touting to be one of the game's greatest problems, but the rich and powerful are going one better.

They now tout the clubs themselves.

For £30 million you can even get the once great Manchester United FC.

Unfortunately the urge to own this bit of footballing nostalgia, and with it the associated media attention and ego inflation, can lead even the rich to bite off more than they can chew.

However, if you want control of Manchester United and have just a few million pounds, as opposed to tens of millions of pounds, there is still a way in.

This involves the Knighton method, better know to Labour Party activists as "caucus democracy".

Instead of putting up the £30 million, (£10 million to the majority shareholder, £10 million to the other shareholders, and £10 million

By Eric Warbing

to the club), set up a new company with (say) £5.5 million and get a few other people to stump up an additional £4.5 million.

Then get this company to to buy out the majority shareholder.

Cross your fingers and hope that the multitude of minority shareholders want to hold on to their bit of nostalgia rather than exchange it for cash, promise the club its money on the "never never", and bingo, Man Utd FC is all yours.

Unfortunately, this method means finding people to put up large amounts of money for very little in return.

If such people are not forthcoming, then the only result at the end of the process is humiliation, a large phone bill, audible laughter from as far away as Anfield and Highbury, and a place on the Board in return for keeping quiet about the club's private financial affairs.

The financial situation at Old Trafford has always been interesting. Originally bought by the Edwards family as a sideline, with the collapse of its meat business Manchester United eventually became the family's major investment.

To this day Manchester United remains the only football club to pay regular dividends to shareholders, the majority of course going to Martin Edwards, current chair"man" and full-time paid Chief Executive.

Criticism

It was probably recent criticism of Edwards's position, allied to continuous envy of Liverpool, who not only win everything in sight but also sign the likes of Beardsley and Barnes while United have to do with Mal Donachy and Steve Bruce, that led to the attempted sale.

Knighton was seen by some as the herald of a new dawn, the man who would turn the club around. The League Championship, not seen at Old Trafford since 1967, was round the corner. Glory days were here again.

But at the end of it all, after the hype, all we were left with was a very wealthy man trying to sort out a business deal with another very wealthy man.

As far as the fans are concerned, it shouldn't really matter who owns the club, unless of course it's the fans themselves. But one of football's major problems is that it has always been dependant on heroes.

This may be fine on the pitch, where anyone with talent might end up playing for Manchester United. But when it comes to the administration and management of the game, money buys power and, apparently, instant hero status.

At the moment, it seems that there are large numbers of people in football and the media who think that the wealthy are the only able people when it comes to running the game.

This view is not borne out by the horrific experiences of many football supporters in recent seasons.



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

Psst... got a spare £4.5 million?

BOOK REVIEW

The struggle for the 8-hour day in the US





In the US in the early 19th century there were as many strikes for shorter hours as for wages.

The problem was often intensified by employers "shaving time" by manipulating factory clocks, which often set time for a whole town.

In 1828 the community of Pawtucket fought back by raising $500 to build their own town clock. Other towns purchased huge bells.

In the 1840s, women millworkers fought against the bosses' practice of "lighting up" — fixing hours from before sunrise to after sunset. From then on, strikes became the central means of forcing cuts in the working day.

This book provides a detailed and absorbing account of how the working day was gradually reduced in the US over many years.

By Mike Phipps
Woolwich CLP

Mass immigration in the mid-19th century had complex effects on the workers' struggle, as did the Civil War, which removed the threat of slave labour being used to break strikes.

Deep rooted racism and sexism weakened and defeated struggles. In 1877, a general strike which had shut down St Louis, a city of 300,000 people, was lost when white workers tried to negotiate a separate deal against the more militant backs.

The book examines the effects of large-scale state repression following the Haymarket events of May 1886 and the subsequent rightward drift of the American Federation of Labour.

We want to feel the sunshine;
We want to smell the flowers;
We're sure that God has willed it.
And we mean to have eight hours.
We're summoning our forces
From shipyard, shop and mill;
Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest,
Eight hours for what we will.

It charts the relationship between the political and industrial struggles and how employers adapted workers' demands to meet their own interests.

Henry Ford, for example, initiated an eight hour day in order to run his mechanised production lines on a continuous three-shift system.

The Great Depression of the 1930s increased pressure for a cut in hours — and pay.

When the Fair Labour Standards Act was passed in 1938, regulating minimum hours and wages at national level, one employers' association denounced it as "a step in the direction of communism, bolshevism, fascism, and Nazism."

Roediger and Foner's valuable study has two weaknesses.

First, it's not always possible — or useful — to separate struggles for fewer hours from the broader agenda of labour demands at a given moment (an issue relevant to the current 35-hour week campaign). The book often filters out other working class battles of the period.

Secondly, the last 50 years are dealt with in just 30 pages!

Nonetheless, it gives a fascinating insight into the development of workers' struggles against exploitation.

***Our Own Time: A History of American Labour and the Working Day*, by David R. Roediger and Philip S. Foner, *Verso*, 1989.**

BOOK REVIEW

'Executions solve nothing'

***Hangmen of England*, by Brian Bailey, *WH Allen*, £12.95.**

Brian Bailey's book, written from an anti-capital punishment viewpoint, shows the brutalising effects of being an executioner.

In the personal histories he recounts, the hangmen invariably end up as hopeless drunks, in the workhouse, or as religious fanatics.

Being an Official Executioner was not a full-time occupation and the wages were for piecework.

By A.L.

One executioner, James Berry, complained in the 1880s that he was forced to scour the papers to discover when he was likely to be employed again and would much prefer to be on a salary.

However, there were perks attached to the job. As the hangmen supplied their own rope they were entitled to sell it off in short lengths after the execution. They were also entitled to the clothes worn by the condemned on the scaffold.

The social origin of the hangmen was similar to that of police officers. Berry was once assisted at an execution by a member of the landed gentry, a magistrate in Essex, Sir Claude de Crespigny.

This was so outrageous to the social sensibilities of the day that questions were raised in Parliament.

Autobiography

The last hangman was Albert Pierrepoint, who is now against capital punishment. In his autobiography he wrote:

"I have come to the conclusion that executions solve nothing, and are only an antiquated relic of a primitive desire for revenge which takes the easy way and hands over the responsibility for revenge to other people."

This is a well written book, not at all sensationalist, although quite graphic in parts.

Part of the book's purpose is to show that capital punishment is no deterrent. Most of the case histories that Bailey gives us are pathetic, astonishing in their lack of foresight or planning.

Murders have always been committed casually and for such trifles as another man's overcoat or to remove an unwanted spouse (remember, divorce was extremely difficult and expensive before 1971).

A typical literary murder, true to the spirit of those homicides which led to the gallows is in *Tess of the D'Urbevilles* where Tess kills her seducer and is subsequently hanged.

If judicial execution was any sort of object lesson, then such killings as these would never happen.

MAGAZINE REVIEW

Kipling, Rushdie, and the imperial armour

***Race and Class — Literature: Colonial Lines of Descent*, Institute of Race Relations, £2.50.**

This special issue investigates the relationship between imperialism and the literature it generates.

It argues that colonial ideas are reproduced in ever changing forms, even after the passing of the Raj and Rudyard Kipling.

In a provocative article, "Cosmopolitans and Celebrities", Tim Brenan examines the work of writers such as Salman Rushdie, Carlos Fuentes, Bharati Mukherjee, Mario Vargas Llosa and Isabel Allende.

Straddling the First and the Third Worlds, they create an image of the latter for consumption by the vast western literary market.

He notes their ability to collapse the boundaries between the popular and the "serious" bourgeois novel, and inflect it with the "isolated intellectual's disillusionment and weariness."

It may be a literature of combat, laced with vengeful sarcasm, but Brenan asks whether it ultimately tends to tap off the subversive spirit of peoples' struggles in the Third World.

[illegible]ling's Children and the [illegible] Line"; S. Mohanty reveals how Kipling's writing for children was underpinned by the assumptions of Imperial Rule.



It was also an unacknowledged cultural response by the Raj to anti-colonial rebellion and the problems encountered in containing it.

By Shahid Tilley
Tottenham CLP

Closer to home, in Britain's oldest colony, Northern Ireland, Bill Rolsten examines the images of women in mass, paperback fiction.

In "Mother's, Whores and Villains", he argues that old sexist stereotypes of Irish women are continuously churned out to provide a backdrop for stories set in the Irish conflict.

This is a valuable edition of *Race and Class* which explores the historical interplay of literature and imperialism. It also reminds us that the imperial armour consists of more than just the money and guns.

South African magazine

Workers' Revolution

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

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

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

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

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

Copies of *Workers Revolution* can be ordered from the Labour Briefing office, PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY.

Send cheques (payable to *Labour Briefing*) with your order: £2.35 for 1 copy; £11.50 for 5 copies; £22.70 for 10 copies (including postage and packing).

SOCIALIST MOVEMENT TRADE UNION CONFERENCE

How can we beat New Realism?

The Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference in Sheffield on November 11/12th will clearly be a watershed in the battle against New Realism, as hundreds of socialists meet to discuss an alternative to the positions currently dominant at the top level of the unions.
Here we reprint the introduction to the policy statement which is to be discussed at the Conference, and which will form the basis of future campaigning.

Socialist ideas and traditions in trade unions, and the position of trade unions in society, have been weakened not only by the Thatcher onslaught, but also by attacks on shop floor organisation which began under the Labour Government of 1974/79.

On a global scale, international capital has been reorganising, restructuring and attacking the trade unions worldwide.

In 1979 the Tories declared war on the working class, a war they have since pursued by attacking trade union organisation, social services, education and the NHS; and by selling off public assets to give tax cuts to the rich.

But the tide is turning aganst the Tories. The unions, though battered and weakened, are alive and kicking and the time is now ripe for a long overdue regeneration of a trade union movement ready and able to take on the government, the employers, *and* new realism within the unions.

Trade unionism in Britain has often been perceived as being separate from politics, an idea that from their earliest years both the Labour Party and the TUC have tried to foster, principally by driving a wedge between the 'industrial' and 'political' wings of the movement.

One of the aims of this conference is to show that trade unionism *is* political.

We want to show that trade union struggles can give rise to some of the most dynamic and modern ideas on the current political scene – ideas about the potential of automation and planned production, and ideas about the genuine democratic principles hidden away at the grass roots of trade union organisation.

Some sectors of today's trade union movement are receptive to this kind of political development; others are stuck in the compromise, collaboration and sectionalism which have always been the bane of the British trade union movement.

On the one hand, the five years of retreat which followed the miners' strike has now given way to the more confident mood as expressed in this summer's industrial upsurge, with its series of remarkable strike votes expressed in the strength of the strikes that followed.

British Rail workers were 100 per cent solid, NALGO workers in their first national strike were 90 per cent solid (with more women on strike than at any other time in Britain), and rail workers and London Underground workers organised impressive official and unofficial action.

But on the other hand, recent struggles show that many of the features which have been so destructive in the past are still present.

The London Underground strike, in classic fashion, ended with a deal agreed over the heads of the rank and file by their leaders, the British Rail strike could have won much more by getting completely rid of the strings that were attached, and, in our view, the defeat of the dockers was due, in major part, to the failure of TGWU leaders to adopt a policy of defiance of the Tory anti-union laws.

The dockers' defeat is a serious setback for the labour movement, but it will not have the same dulling effect as the miners' defeat had.

The dockers represent a comparatively small section of workers and their fate is not tightly bound to that of the labour movement as a whole, which is in a period of upswing. All the factors which created the recent upsurge are still there – inflation, mortgage rates and disenchantment with the Tory project – in particular their attack on the NHS and the privatisation of water and electricity.

We have to reject compromises and rebuild trade union strength on the basis of militant struggle to improve the wages and working conditions of trade union members, and build solidarity with those in struggle and those victimised in the process.

But the TUC remains tied to new realism, preaching accommodation and retreat when solidarity and struggle could bring much needed victories.

Some union leaders have shifted away from these ideas to some extent, accepting that something can be done – as long as it is kept within strict limits – and does not challenge new realism overall. The Labour Party leadership remains wedded unflinchingly to the policy review. But they face a contradiction in shifting the party massively to the right at a time when there is a rise in militancy in the ranks of the unions. The pressure will be felt there as well.

Opportunities

Today, new opportunities exist alongside unresolved problems. But now, new people are emerging more confident and less moulded by the defeats of the last 10 years, and there are also signs of new self organisation at rank and file level.

There also exists an increased awareness in the general population of the need for trade unions and the right of trade unions to express themselves freely.

Women are gradually changing the structures of the trade unions, by forcing them to come to terms with the fact that the white male domination of the unions has to be challenged because women will soon be a majority of the workforce.

The needs of the large black workforce have to be reflected in the structure of the unions. Positive action has to be applied – not just for women workers – but for black, lesbian and gay workers as well.

Matters such as the environment, reproductive rights, free abortion on demand and Poll Tax must be seen as mainstream trade union issues. It is time for the unions to take a lead on such issues and not just respond to pressure.

There must be more women at every level of the trade union movement, but we reject the new realist formula of 'quotas without power' designed to 'supposedly' win womens' votes.

Both TUC and Labour leaders hope that the issue of effective power – an issue that Labour and trade union women have spent years campaigning for – has been pushed off the agenda.

We have to reassert the need for a radical programme for socialist change.

We are in favour of an economy which reverses the priorities of previous Tory and Labour Governments and makes its priority the serving of social needs rather than the maximisation of profits.

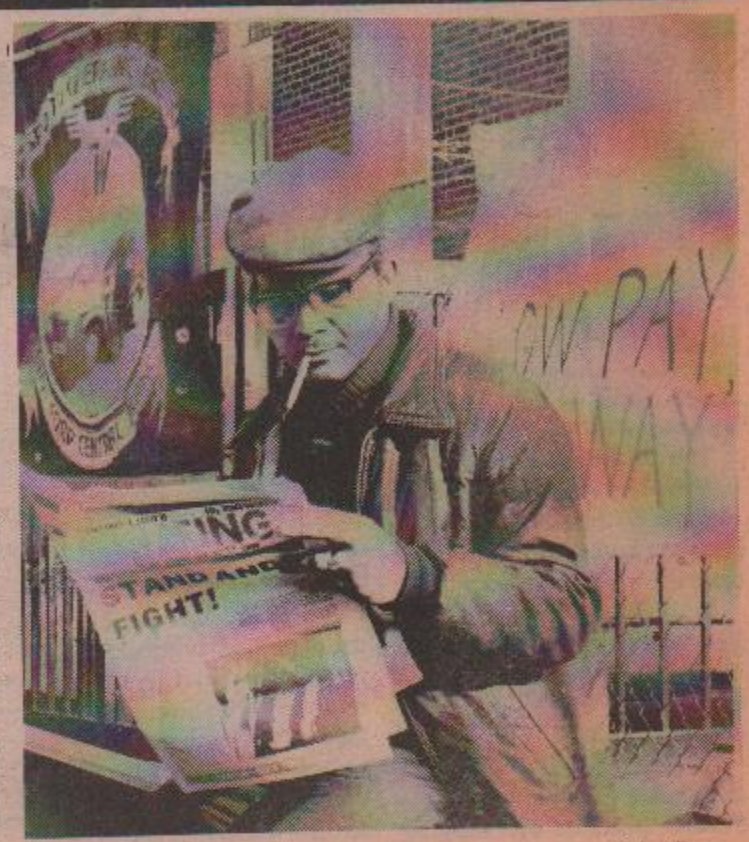


PHOTO: Martine Stead and Jim Thain

Striking Fords workers bring a solidarity banner to nurses' picket line.

Our policies are for the major financial institutions and private companies to be taken into public ownership; for control over the distribution of investment and of profits, and for powers to control multi-nationals including their investments and surpluses.

This conference sets out to highlight four main areas of direct relevance to trade unionism today:

- The struggle against new realism.
- Solidarity with those in struggle.
- The fight against the trade union laws.
- Trade union democracy and building the unions.

Solidarity or 'secondary action', is now illegal under the series of trade union laws introduced since 1982. Yet solidarity is needed now more than ever before.

We have seen in the series of strikes typified by Silentnight, Wapping and the seafarers' dispute that the Tory Government has managed to get right to the heart of the collective meaning of trade union action – with a series of vindictive measures preventing trade unionists from doing what they need most – taking action in support of each other.

Perhaps the most tragic example of this was during the P&O dispute. Seafarers up and down the country clearly showed that they were prepared to come out in support of the sacked P&O workers, only to be eventually beaten back by their national leadership's fear of the law.

Legislation

Industrial relations legislation in Britain has now become so oppressive that it has been roundly condemned by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a United Nations body which deals with employment matters.

They identified eight areas where Britain lags behind minimum requirements accepted by over 100 countries. Among them are: the ban on unions at GCHQ, the denial of negotiating rights for teachers, blacklisting, the ban on 'secondary action', and the right of employers to sack workers when they are on strike.

Labour laws in Britain are now the most repressive in Western Europe and recent experiences like the dock strike have shown that it's no good trying to get round the legal process.

The more concessions are made, the more laws the ruling class will invent to trip the unions up even more effectively next time.

Union members, and in particular their leaders, are often held back from defying the law through a fear that the courts will intervene and 'destroy the union' by seizing its asset.

However, the greatest asset a union has is not bricks and mortar or money in the bank, but its members and their ability to struggle. The miners showed how the movement as a whole can keep workers in struggle afloat.

Underlying this is the issue of trade union solidarity. Even before the current series of laws, trade unions in Britain were notorious for their failure to lend each other support in struggle.

Some of the greatest moments in British trade union history – the 1911 'Triple Alliance', the General Strike, the dockers' release under the 1972 Industrial Relations Act, the miners' victory at Saltley Gate – have all been examples of the effects of solidarity.

But, more often than not, they have ended with further potential being thrown away by the leadership.

One of the essential tasks of socialists within trade unions is to build and extend solidarity by all means possible. The Solidarity Network, set up two years ago to co-ordinate practical solidarity, has already made a start in that direction.

Trade union solidarity and defence of grass roots interests is not a moral luxury, it is a necessity.

Another task of socialists within trade unions is to build on that impetus towards struggle in order to try and make sure that, next time, workers learn from their own experience and lend vital support to their fellow trade unionists in struggle.

That way, we can build a united awareness based on the shared working class interests of all trade unionists – in whatever section of the workforce.

The main purpose of this conference is to strengthen opposition to new realism at every level and to begin to rebuild the unions through successful struggle against the employers and the government.

The key to this is the democratisation of the trade union movement itself, particularly through the maximum involvement and participation of trade union members.

Black Sections

Getting organised

The Black Section has been in the forefront in raising issues of quality for black trade unionists within the labour movement.

Even a quick scan across a sample of trade unions indicates the important influence that the Black Section has had in placing these issues firmly on the agenda.

The trade union bureaucrats now realise that piecemeal approaches to redressing the huge imbalances in representation in the movement will not be tolerated by black workers.

This same officialdom also now realises that not showing a commitment to removing racism from the workplace is completely unacceptable.

This has come about not by chance or through any sudden remorse on the part of the trade union leadership, but through organised pressure by black workers ourselves.

More and more pressure continues to be applied across a number of unions by the Black Section.

Most recently MSF has been targetted by our movement as a key focus for action — for a number of reasons.

By Roger Mckenzie
National Trade Union Organiser, LP Black Sections

One of these is the apparent influence of Ken Gill (General Secretary) in TUC corridors as Chair of "Race Relations".

Also, there was the policy conflict that arose after merger between the ASTMS position of support for the principles of self-organisation by Black workers and the TASS position opposing this.

After excellent work by comrades inside and outside MSF (led by Black Sections supporters) the union now has a National Committee decision supporting our aims.

This indicates the results that can be achieved through the development of our organisation within individual trade unions.

Here is the key to our future development. Not only is it necessary to develop organisation within individual unions, but also across the movement as a whole.

The Black Section will be calling a Conference for Black workers organised by Black workers, due to take place in early 1990.

Its major aims will be the mobilisation of Black workers across the movement and the creation of our own networks of organisation.

We hope this will result in the establishment of a powerful force within the trade union movement, enhancing still further the national campaigning work carried out by the Black Sections.

Anti-union laws

New victimisation rights for bosses!

The Tories want to give employers new powers packed with the full force of the law to:

•sack individuals or groups who take part in unofficial strikes;

•ban such people from the right to appeal to an industrial tribunal against unfair dismissal

•ban all forms of secondary industrial action

•abolish the pre-entry closed shop.

Announcing the Green Paper outlining the proposed legislation, Norman Fowler, Secretary of State for Employment, referred to strikes earlier this year on the railways, on London Underground, by North Sea Oil workers, and by steel erectors in central London.

By an LT Worker

Unofficial action, he said, cost jobs and undermined Britain's international competitiveness.

The real concern of the Tories, and the bosses is that as the economy heads for deep recession — which will be made dramatically worse in Britain by the latest Stock Market plunge — the unions are coming back into active life.

Far from being smashed, "the enemy within" is alive and kicking. And the fight (not surprisingly) is coming from the rank and file. Last year, unofficial action accounted for 40% of the days lost through strikes.

During and after the strikes this summer press speculation — and in some quarters press hysteria — centered on calls to make strikes in the essential services totally illegal and to force unions to discipline members taking part in unofficial action.

The Tories have side-stepped all the complications this would entail and have instead summoned up their most trusted allies — the trade union and Labour Party leaders.

Why bother trying to define what is and what isn't an "essential service" when all one has to do is to impell the union to repudiate unequivocally any official action — or risk sequestration.

Every strike since 1979 — with the exception of the miners — has seen effective action by members curtailed and finally stymied by the overwhelming drive of the full-time officials to comply with the law.

(The union full-timers have thus been able to defend their right to large salaries, free private health care, cheap mortgages and generous pensions).

Just in case any union tried to make a strike in support of workers sacked for participating in unofficial action legal by holding a retrospective ballot, that too will soon be illegal.

It could be argued that the mass sackings of striking P&O workers or print workers at Wapping makes most of this legislation and the arguments about it irrelevant.



PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

Striking P&O workers

After all, the Tilbury shop stewards were sacked after two ballots and after the highest court in the land had declared their strike official.

Of course, it's true that the outcome of all struggles is dependent in the end on unity of action and solidarity with other workers. That remains the best defence for strikers both individually and as a whole.

But to pooh-pooh the legislation (as does the London Underground "wildcat" train driver quoted in the *Guardian*) is ultra-left nonsense.

As one of the so-called co-ordinators in those strikes, I want to make it known that a key argument in motivating the unofficial strikes in the first place at the early mass meetings and in the depots was that there was a loophole in the legislation — that unofficial strikes weren't illegal!

That's why both ASLEF and NUR officials overlooked the action.

Now, with the new found strength of the strike experience, activists have a healthy contempt for things legal, but no-one should underestimate the potential hesitancy of the bulk of the members.

This legislation will be dressed up as a curb on the "mad militants" and "left-wing officials", but management will use it to sack *anybody* who speaks for his or her rights and the rights of fellow workers.

In the real world the suspension, let alone the sacking, of a known activist will quite rightly lead to spontaneous walk-outs. There's your unofficial action.

But once one person has walked off the job under this proposed legislation *there can be no ballot.*

Immediate action against victimisation is essential. Waiting for a ballot takes weeks and the fate of the individual, however strong their base, can soon seem a minor issue — ask Mick Gosling.

Even with large scale action and a ballot, reinstatement fights are hard — ask Derek Robinson, or Alan Thornett, or Mickey Fenn.

Therefore, the campaign against new anti-union legislation must start now.

The Solidarity Network is proposing a national inititiative centered on the victimised activists of the Thatcher years. When it's launched it must be the centre of a campaign aimed at the total repeal of all anti-union legislation.

UCW

Postal workers reject Sunday working

A special UCW delegate conference has rejected a draft agreement on bringing in Sunday postal collections.

The Union Executive had recommended acceptance but delegates argued that if the Post Office wanted to improve its image it should do something about implementing existing agreements which could help provide better weekday service..

General Secretary Alan Tuffin later said that no criticism had been levelled at the Executive for reaching the agreement: the vote was, rather, a reflection of the lack of trust postal workers have in their employer.

By a UCW *Briefing* supporter

Maybe the vote really reflects the lack of confidence postal workers have in their union leaders!

The Conference also voted on an agreement to separate the Parcels business from the rest of the Post Office (undoubtedly the first step towards privatisation), rejecting the part concerning a new disciplinary procedure.

Now the agreement will have to be renegotiated.

The UCW leadership is in an increasingly untenable position over new agreements. Workers have not forgotten past sell-outs, and are growing in confidence in making new demands after some successful disputes.

Clerical staff in the Counters Business have rejected a 7% pay offer; those in parcels and letters have rejected a six month interim pay deal designed to bring their settlement dates in line with uniform staff.

It is now very likely that Counter staff will be balloted on industrial action, while negotiations begin over a 10% claim for other staff.

Capitalist crisis:



The Hangers strikers and supporters refused to work as private profits dictated...

ONTO THE OFFENSIVE!

The current financial crises in the US and Britain and the coming rececession pose a major challenge to the labour movement.

The Wall Street mini-crash of Friday October 13th and the subsequent instability are signs of the fundamental weakness of both the US and the world capitalist economy as a whole.

The Wall Street collapse was sparked off by concern about companies with high borrowings. Behind this concern lies fear of a recession in which even more of these companies would go under.

For the last two or three years the strategy of all the major capitalist governments has been deflationary. This strategy has accelerated write-offs of capital, of which the stock market declines of 1987 and 1989 are just the most spectacular examples.

But it has also contributed to a slowing down of the world economy. Short of a major offensive by the world working class, deflation will continue and lead inevitably to a world recession.

In decrepit Britain, it is not a question of whether there will be a recession next year, but how deep it will be. This recession will mean a new wave of attacks on working people.

But we have the capacity to fight back. There does not have to be a re-run of the trade union collapse in 1979-81.

Then we were faced with a newly elected and confident Tory administration, riding high on the demoralisation created by the 1974-9 Labour government.

But now the yawning trade deficit and the weakness of sterling show clearly that ten years of Thatcherism have done nothing to resolve economic problems in Britain, any more than Reaganism has in the US.

Both internationally and in Britain the ruling class is divided on what to do next. ***The current disarray among the Tories is the ideal opportunity for a labour movement offensive.***

The recent wave of industrial militancy shows that the will is there. This militancy has an economic base. Several years in which unemployment has not risen further, rapid wage rises for some groups, and rising inflation have all encouraged workers to take action against wage erosion.

But this situation will not last for ever. If there is a major recession and no fightback has taken place, the economic effects of the recession are likely to once again undermine trade union militancy. ***We must grasp the moment!***

By Jamie Gough AUT, Holborn and St Pancras CLP

Labour Party and trade union leaders draw the opposite conclusion. For them, the worsening economic situation means that the labour movement must ***further subordinate itself to capital.***

Bill Jordan, as usual, is the clearest. He says that the AEU's demand for a 35 hour week must be dropped, because it would harm firms at a time when they need help.

The Labour Party's economic policy is just an elaborate version of the same idea. Bryan Gould's reaction to the current crisis is to support deflation, but by using credit controls instead of the interest rate. Thanks, Bryan, see you on the dole queue.

But the present mood among workers means these leaders need not have it all their own way. We should build for a united front of the labour movement against austerity.

To do so we need to put forward demands which meet the needs of *all* workers, which help to *unite* the class around common objectives. The key issues are:

•***Employment.*** A further rise in unemployment looms. A shorter working week is the immediate answer. Solidarity with the engineers' fight for a 35 hour week is crucial. And this should be used to popularise the idea of a cut in hours for all. The available work offered by the capitalists needs to be shared out between all those seeking it.

•***Wages and benefits.*** The already high inflation rate will increase, due to a falling pound and the US government's bail-out of financial institutions.

Wage increases, even for stronger sections of workers, are now running only slightly ahead of inflation.

The employers are now preparing for generalised wage austerity. We should demand that all wages and all benefits be increased *monthly* to compensate for inflation.

The low wages and benefits which now impoverish a huge layer of the population must be ended with a substantial guaranteed minimum income for all. This would be a bedrock for preparing ***united*** demands for ***common*** rises in real income.

•***Intensification.*** We must not allow the employers to bargain wage rises and cuts in hours for further worsening of working conditions, as the engineering employers want to do.

For most workers, conditions are bad enough already; for many they are intolerable. Improvement in the conditions of work must be an integral part of a united fightback.

The economic crisis need not mean surrender to capital's demands. It is the moment for a united labour movement offensive.

International Briefing

EYEWITNESS HUNGARY

Grim scenario for socialists



Towards the social market?

Amidst much international fanfare and a good deal of domestic scepticism, the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party has held its first democratically organised and national conference.

Hungary's Stalinist ruling party for over 40 years emerged, after much factional intrigue and ideological confusion, as a "new" organisation, the Hungarian Socialist Party.

In the run up to the country's first free elections in decades, the Stalinists are desperate to avoid Polish-style humiliation at the polls.

But the only thing the founders of the new party could agree on was that it would represent the traditions of "European socialism".

This was a deliberately vague formulation designed to cover up splits within the old HSWP, notably between the Reform Association (backed by Poszgay and Nemeth) and the People's Democratic Platform (backed by Nyers) and the old Stalinist conservatives, who were easily outmanoeuvred by the "new" forces at the Conference.

For the Reform Association and Poszgay and Nemeth, the new Hungarian Socialist Party is on its way to becoming a classical West European social democratic party.

Party chief Nyers, on the other hand, wants the new formation to distance itself from *both* social democratic pragmatism and anti-democratic Stalinism.

In fact,the ideological battles at the conference were extremely confused.

Most of them were little more than thinly disguised tactical manoeuvres by factions or individuals seeking to improve or retain their positions within the apparatus.

By a *Briefing* reporter in Budapest

Nonetheless, it should be remembered that the conference was a novel experience for party members raised in a very different tradition.

Suddenly there were motions, amendments, debates, points of order, votes... and deals stitched up in smoke-filled rooms: not, in fact, all that different from party conferences in the West, though slightly more chaotic.

This is a new and different party, but one with its roots in an old order whose power base is battered but still intact. The key question is what happens to the Stalinist *nomenklatura* after the elections? The HSP is anchored in the state structures. It won't just go away because it loses seats in the new parliament.

The round-table agreements between the ruling party and the opposition groups which set in train the election process and the new multi-party system did not provide for the dismantling of the Stalinist state apparatus.

It left in place the army of bureaucrats, the huge assets the Stalinists have appropriated through their control of the state, and the "workplace cells" through which the HSP exercises all kinds of undemocratic influence.

Because of this the more progressive opposition block made up of the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSD) and the Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) refused to sign the roundtable agreements, though they also declined to exercise their veto over them.

Agreements

In contrast, the other main opposition block, the National Centre, dominated by the Hungarian Democratic Forum, signed the agreements, which also include provision for a new style of presidency, with wide executive powers, to be elected on November 25th.

The HDF not only went along with this, but will be standing a weak and virtually unknown candidate, allowing the HSP's Poszgay a free run.

For the HSP and Poszgay this is a big break. Poszgay's popularity is dwindling rapidly and the HSP clearly hopes the presidential elections will in effect pre-empt the results of the more open parliamentary elections, enabling them to maintain control of the state apparatus.

The SZDSD is trying to head off this manoeuvre. It has collected over 140,000 signatures demanding a referendum on the presidential issue and the related questions of the maintenance of workplace cells and the People's Militia, the paramilitary wing of the HSP.

In effect, the petition is an attempt to rectify the shortcomings of the round-table agreement. The constitution requires only 100,000 signatures to force a referendum. If this provision is honoured, it could well put paid to Poszgay's plans.

Whatever happens with the Presidency, the HDF is likely to emerge as the largest party in the parliamentary elections in the spring,and will then form a government with the support of a number of smaller parties.

The HDF is a heterogeneous organisation containing classic liberal democrats and extreme right wing nationalists and anti- semites.

It has nothing that could be called a political or economic programme and will rely mainly on an emotive appeal at the elections. Afterwards, in government, it could well break up under the pressure on economic crisis.

All the parties are now in favour of "the market", though there remain significant differences in approach.

The HSP advocates what it calls "the social market". The HDF is eager for wholesale privatisation and complacent about the likely short-term effects on employment and prices.

The SZDSD is at least engaged in a debate on economic policy and wants a transition to the market that is controlled and gradual.

Opposes

It opposes simply selling off huge chunks of the economy to foreign capital, which will in effect be the policy pursued by both the HDF and Poszgay's wing of the HSP.

Alas, only the discredited rump Stalinists of the old HSWP (who enjoy no support whatsoever among the general populace) advocate any kind of alternative to the market.

As for Gorbachev, he will live with far-reaching economic change in Hungary as long as the country remains in the Warsaw Pact.

This is accepted by both the HSP and the HDF but not the SZDSD which questions the value of the Pact and raises the possibility of "non-alignment".

What seems to be happening in Hungary is a re-emergence of the pre-war lines of political divide: between nationalist and traditionalist currents based largely in the rural areas (and expressed through the HDF) and the cosmopolitan, secular currents based in the cities (represented largely by the SZDSD and FIDESZ).

As for the HSP, its new name and even its new approach are unlikely to resolve what is now clearly a long-term crisis of identity.

No one yet quite knows just what a "post-Stalinist" party will or can be.

German Democratic Republic

Honecker goes: will *perestroika* follow?

The resignation for "health reasons" of Erich Honecker, General Secretary since 1971 of East Germany's ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED), can be interpreted in several different ways.

Initial reactions from the burgeoning East German opposition movement suggested a manoeuvre purely designed to buy the SED leadership time, without any serious intent of reform.

Others claimed that the appointment of a successor, Egon Krenz, who recently made the headlines for his extravagant praise of the Chinese regime's bloodbath in Tienanmen Square represented a victory for the hardline Stalinist faction in the SED.

Either view can be well argued. Krenz is a rather colourless figure who can hardly be considered as anything but a stopgap leader until the power struggle within the Party is properly resolved.

Nor has he ever given any inkling of reformist leanings.

Honecker had been under attack from a pro-Stalinist faction in the SED for some time for his relatively restrained dealings with the informal opposition groups and the Protestant church and his ever-increasing reliance on close links with West Germany.

There is, however, a third possible explanation for the switch in leadership.

When Gorbachev was chosen to succeed Chernenko, the first reaction from many Western and Soviet observers was that little could be expected from him, given his undistinguished previous record.

By GÜNTER MINNERUP

Time and again leadership changes in Eastern Europe have shown that it is a mistake to attach too much importance to such biographies: the "new man" would never have been considered as successor had he conducted himself in anything but a loyal fashion.

It cannot therefore be excluded that Krenz, the youngest member of the Politburo, could surprise everyone with a new turn, bringing the GDR more in line with Gorbachev's USSR.

But the fact that Krenz is viewed with a great deal of mistrust by the opposition and the population at large, as well as the reformist currents in the Party, will ensure that the emigration, the demonstrations, and the independent political activities will continue.

Inclinations

What really matters is not the personal inclinations and the psychological make-up of one Egon Krenz, but the relationship of forces both inside and outside the Party.

It is clear that the pressure for reform is now so strong that the new leader could only resist it by resorting to the most vicious repression in the history of the GDR.

An East German Tienanmen Square, however, can be firmly ruled out. It would bring about the immediate collapse of the GDR's economic lifeline to the Federal Republic, and completely isolate East Berlin from the rest of Eastern Europe.

The ensuing conflagration would probably destroy the Party and state apparatus.

A use of armed repression, in other words, would be tantamount to Krenz signing his own political death warrant.

Furthermore, the Party apparatus appears to be dominated by those who would dearly love to introduce the sort of reforms that would restore the GDR's international image and stop the flow of emigration.

The dilemma for the SED would-be reformers, however, is that any real step towards democratisation would threaten the survival of the East German state in a far more immediate way than any other country in Eastern Europe.

The East German Communist Party is haunted by the twin spectres of German reunification and social democracy.

Pluralism

Political pluralism and freedom to travel are the two most frequently voiced demands from below, but even the limited relaxation under Honecker has produced a massive wave of emigration and the reconstitution of an unofficial (i.e. not endorsed by the West German SPD) Social Democratic Party.

It must not be forgotten that the well publicised exodus via the West German embassies in Prague, Budapest, and Warsaw represents only half the number of those who left the GDR for the West through legal channels so far this year.

Furthermore, both figures are completely overshadowed by the estimated number of 300,000 applicants for exit visas.

Any formal permission for independent political organisation would immediately bring the SPD, the traditional majority party of the East German working class, on to the scene, instantly threatening the unity and cohesion of the ruling SED.

Both the hardline Stalinist and the reformist forces in the Party have very little room for manoeuvre. Neither severe repression nor radical reform appear very likely.

It is important to recognise, however, that the inability of either grouping to take decisive measures is, in the final analysis, the price to be paid for the creation of the "first German workers' and peasants' state" as an artificial creature of the Cold War and the division of Germany.



Well done, I'm fired

Demonstration: In Defence of Iranian Political Refugees
Saturday, October 28th, 2pm
Hyde Park Corner, London
Organised by CARI/Iranian Community Centre
Solidarity messages welcome:
BM Box CARI, London WC1N 3XX

Namibia

"The by-products of continued war..."

A UN mission to Angola and Zambia to investigate allegations that SWAPO is continuing to hold political prisoners has found no supporting evidence.

Although 315 people are yet to be accounted for there is no suggestion that SWAPO is responsible for these people.

When SWAPO released its political prisoners at the beginning of July, as required under the UN independence plan for Namibia, the ex-detainees told stories of torture, rape, and ill-treatment.

SWAPO leaders have stated that members of the organisation responsible for such crimes will be investigated and held accountable.

However, South Africa's proxies in Namibia seized upon the issue as a means of dividing the electorate in what had hitherto been a highly integrated movement for national liberation.

Accusations

The issue was kept alive by the right wing parties and media within Namibia by means of accusations that hundreds more prisoners still kept in detention by SWAPO.

Claiming the fate of disappeared persons as a UN responsibility, Ahtisaari, the UN Special Representative to Namibia, organised a mission to Angola and Zambia to investigate.

By David Clark
Namibia Support Committee

As a first step a database was created by systematically checking all available records. This eventually included details of 1,100 individuals, plus a list of alleged places of detention.

Mission

The mission then visited 30 sites in the two countries between September 2nd and 22nd. On October 11th the mission's first report was made public.

The mission found no detainees in any of the alleged detention centres or other places visited in Angola and Zambia nor any evidence that people may have been moved from the sites in the recent past.

At all the places visited virtually all the Namibians had been repatriated by the UN High Commission for Refugees except for small numbers who stayed behind to guard communal property. None of those that were interviewed were being held against their will.

A substantial number of the 1,100 records could be accounted for by the mission:

- 110 were duplications;
- 484 were identified as having been released and repatriated;
- 71, including current SWAPO officials, were reportedly never detained in the first place;
- 115 were reported or suspected as dead;
- 52 could not be traced at all because of insufficient information.

Remaining

Ahtisaari has said that he will not disband the mission until the 315 remaining names are accounted for, reminding the people of Namibia that they were dealing with the by-products of continued war.

He compared the 315 missing Namibians with the 1,600 Cypriots unaccounted for since the 1974 upheavals in Cyprus and the 2,300 US citizens who went missing in action in South East Asia.

Contact the Namibia Support Committee: PO Box 16, London NW5 2LW, 01-267 1941/2.



Armed Koevoet in Oshallati

De Cuellar criticises SWAPOL

In a comprehensive report to the UN Security Council on the progress of the implementation of the UN plan for Namibia's independence, UN Secretary General Peres de Cuellar has severely criticised the South West African Police (SWAPOL).

After stating that the recent demobilisation of Koevoet was "a step in the right direction", de Cuellar says that he is pressing for the demobilisation of those Koevoet still serving with SWAPOL (estimated to be at least 1,800).

According to de Cuellar, they "do not appear to understand... the role of civilian police officers."

Leading members of the DTA (South Africa's preferred party in the Namibian elections) have begun a campaign to resist any further attempts by the UN to reduce the role of Koevoet on the basis that removing Koevoet from SWAPOL would be tantamount to "victimisation".

The Secretary General also criticises SWAPOL for obstructing the work of UNTAG's police monitors.

Experience has taught UNTAG the importance of monitoring SWAPOL very closely but SWAPOL has not reliably informed UNTAG accurately of the schedules of its patrols; this has particularly been a problem with Koevoet members within SWAPOL who categorically object to being monitored.

UNTAG has difficulty in getting the right to visit detainees in the custody of SWAPOL or in being present when statements are taken from SWAPOL members accused of offences.

Most problematical for UNTAG itself has been SWAPOL's occasional refusal to share information on the security situation with UNTAG.

Such information is believed necessary by UNTAG in order to prevent repetitions of events such as the bombing of the UNTAG office at Outjo and the murder of the SWAPO official, Anton Lubowski.

Colombia

Thatcher's "War on drugs" fraud

The recent decision to send British warships to aid the Colombian government in its "war against the drug barons" follows President Bush's move to pour $65 million in military aid into the country.

This crusade against the drug barons began after the assassination of the leading presidential candidate, Luis Carlos Galan.

However, this crusade was undertaken against a background of close involvement between drug barons, government officials at all levels, high-ranking military personnel, and the traditional owners of the economy, all of whom benefit from the massive profits made in the drug business.

Since Galan's death two months ago not one single "drug baron" has been detained, despite massive arrests.

None of the government officials proven to have links with the mafia has been arrested. Not one of the military personnel known to be in the mafia's payroll has been questioned.

In fact, the government of Colombia is not interested in destroying the drug trade, its biggest currency earner ($1,000 million in drug money has *legally* entered the economy) and the one activity that prevents the country's economy from collapsing.

Despite the massive propaganda campaign, it is doubtful whether countries such as the US and Britain are really interested in putting an end to drug trafficking.

After all, drug money laundered and deposited in North American, Swiss, and British banks helps keep these economies afloat.

The mafia has an estimated $24 million in North American banks alone. Did not Oliver North and his CIA and industrialist backers trade with the mafia in order to buy arms for the *Contras*?

If the Colombian government and its friends here and in the US are not serious about destroying the mafia then what is going on?

In Colombia today, US and British money, military hardware, and military advisors are being used to strengthen what is already the second biggest armed force in Latin America in order to combat the increasing threat to the status quo from the armed opposition and the popular movements.

New laws (enacted under the pretext of the war against the mafia) are being used to control the civilian population through curfews, arbitrary detentions, raids, and the outlawing of strikes and public meetings.

All this comes at a time when the Colombian government was completely discredited both at home and abroad due to its "dirty war" against the left-wing opposition, the trade unions, and the popular movements — a war that produced 5,915 political assassinations last year.

Now more than ever the people of Colombia are calling for international solidarity with their fight for a just and democratic society. The British public must therefore reject Thatcher's moves to aid the Colombian government.

**From Colombia Solidarity Committee press release.*

India

The world's largest planned disaster...

On September 28th a demonstration took place in the town of Harsud in Madhya Pradesh in India against the plan to dam the river Narmada, flooding 300,000 acres of farmland and forest, and displacing at least 300,000 people.

Sadly, this issue is unlikely to become a key one in the coming elections, which will focus more on labyrinthine manoeuvring within the ruling Congress apparatus and the opposition coalition.

Rajiv Gandhi's government and the Narmada planners — backed by the World Bank — insist the project will bring prosperity to a drought-ridden area, taking drinking and irrigation water deep into large areas of Madhya Pradesh, Gujerat, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra.

They also claim to have set up "one of the best rehabilitation packages in the world" which, they say, will guarantee land grants and special assistance to the dispossessed.

By MARTIN WICKS

But Baba Amte, a prominent environmentalist, derides the plan and the promises. He says the project is technically and financially unsound, environmentally destructive, and will render hundreds of thousands homeless.

He points out that the dam would submerge a quarter of a million acres of arable land and forest: "Thus we have the unbelievable situation of a state having to spend thousands of millions of rupees to submerge as much territory as it is going to irrigate through the project."

Environmentalist Claude Alvares describes the project as "the world's largest planned disaster." He believes it will become the launching pad for the growth of an Indian green movement.

In a recent issue of *Illustrated Weekly of India* he writes:

"The Harsud meeting is expected to be a turning point in the country's experience of development. Participants intend to serve notice on the planners that such large, destructive projects, inhuman and anti-natural in their consequences, will no longer be permitted, whether supported by the World Bank or not."

In 30 other Indian towns there were rallies in support of the Harsud protest and against other development projects.

An action committee formed by several environmental groups has made links with those facing displacement by the proposed national missile testing range in Orissa and by a nuclear power project in Karnataka.

This is the first attempt to build a common platform for campaigns against "giganticism" in development, which is estimated to have forced 20 million Indians from their homes since Independence in 1947.

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Poll Tax Notes

Panic measures!

Desperate to be seen to be doing something to hold the rising disquiet in Tory ranks over the Poll Tax, the Tories put the order out to civil servants: "come up with something fast — you can leave the details till later."

It was then left to Minister of State David Hunt to make an announcement at Tory Party Conference of what was to come.

First, there was a grant of nearly £700 million spread over three years to offset the previous decision on safety nets.

Now the mainly Tory Authorities which gain from the Poll Tax won't have to help pay for the "losers" after the first year.

Second came the £100 million for extra rebates, so that in theory one and two person households won't have to pay more than £3/week more than they already pay in rates.

How any of these will work was not made clear. Ever since, civil servants and local government finance officers have been running round like headless chickens trying to figure out how to operate the system.

A tax that was already complicated and expensive to collect has now become even more confusing.

Even Local Authorities which have been going all out to implement the Poll Tax are now saying they can't be ready by April 1st next year.

Rebate forms, many of which had already been printed will require changing. More staff will be needed and, more crucially, computer systems will have to be prepared to compare Poll Tax Registers with existing rates.

What about the beneficiaries of this new rebate? Just like the existing income related rebate, most people will gain little benefit.

By Cllr Greg Tucker
Lambeth

For most single people the upper limit that they should pay no more than £3/week more than their existing rates bill will have little effect, as their Poll Tax was unlikely to be over £3 more than their rates bill. But £3/week more is more than enough to pay anyway — it still means unmanageable increases for many.

A significant number of two person households may end up being charged less with the new Tory grants.

But even then, the government keeps a trick up its sleeve. *The rebate will be based not on the actual Poll Tax level but on what the government considers would be reasonable.*

So households will be directly penalised for living in areas where Councils disagree with the government. To put it another way: people will be offered bribes to vote for Councils which agree with the government.

In fact, both changes announced serve the same function. Far from being measures designed to "cushion the blow" of implementation and lesson the problems caused by "irresponsible" high spending Authorities, they merely hide the reality behind the Poll Tax — that eventual levels of Poll Tax have more to do with government policy than anything else.

Precise formulations on how the government will draw up this year's grant to Local Authorities have yet to be announced. However, one set of calculations in one typical inner London Borough has shown that — using different formulae to determine government subsidy — the Poll Tax could be anywhere from £250 to £650.



Hmmmm... now let's see if they'll fall for this one...

Put forward by the Tories as the Tax that lets local people see what they are paying for, in reality the Poll Tax means even more central government control over local Council spending.

All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Organising Conference
☆ Mass Non-payment! ☆ Mass Non-implementation! ☆ Mass Non-collection!
25th November 1989, 11am-5pm
FREE TRADE HALL, MANCHESTER

Conference open to two delegates from every anti-Poll Tax Union, group, trade union, student union, Trades Council, Shop Stewards Committee, Tenants Association, community group, and youth organisation which is a bona fide group actively campaigning against the Poll Tax.

Send £10 delegation fee (cheques payable to All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation), name of organisation & secretary, delegates names & addresses, request for creche places to: Tommy Sheridan, PO Box 764, London E59 SX by November 18th. Documents will be circulated nearer the date.

Phone 01-533 5551 for further details.

642 REASONS TO OPPOSE THE POLL TAX

RALLY

Hornsey Town Hall
Tuesday November 7th, 7.30pm

Bus routes: 41, W7, W2.
For other transport ring: 802 9804.
Speakers:
★ Tony Benn MP
★ Bernie Grant MP
★ Local Anti-Poll Tax Group
★ Speaker from Scotland
★ Local Trade Union Speaker

Creche available: children welcome.
Sponsors so far: Haringey NALGO, Hornsey Vale LP, High Cross LP, Finsbury Park NUR, NCU

"Battle of the Poll Tax" in Stirling

A question of morality

Perhaps it was the presence on the platform of the Reverend Eleanor Muir, Minister at Fallin Parish Church, which gave questions of individual and mass morality — and the right to defy unjust taxes — prominence at a "Battle of the Poll Tax" rally held in Stirling on Saturday October 14th.

"Charity, given not to the needy, but to the greedy," was how Muir described the £1 billion government subsidy on the Poll Tax, designed to ease the pressure on Tory Councils and marginal seats in the South of England.

She made a general attack on Thatcher's refusal to recognise community as well as individual battles.

Dick Douglas MP, a Labour Party member of 41 years, who during his long parliamentary career has always been seen as firmly on the right of the Party, now advocates non-payment of the Poll Tax.

He cannot understand the attitude of his fellow Labour MPs and Labour Councillors who wish to implement the Tax while saying they are against it.

Dick quoted NEC member David Blunkett as saying that the Poll Tax "was not just unfair, but immoral," and that this is why Labour opposes it.

By Rowland Sheret
Scottish Labour Briefing

"What kind of misuse of language is this which describes the Poll Tax as immoral in one breath and then tells us to implement it in the next?" asked Douglas.

"If something is immoral it should be opposed all the way and that means non-payment."

"Is Labour saying Local Authorities should be living on immoral earnings?" he asked.

Kenny McAskill, SNP Executive member and candidate in the Euro-elections, had no doubt that this was what Labour was advocating. "Opposition to the non-payment campaign is coming not from Downing Street but from COSLA" (Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities, dominated by Labour).

"Scotland suffers from a poverty of aspiration," McAskill argued. "Non-payment of the Poll Tax gives everybody a chance to participate in a mass campaign."

As a lawyer he knew for certain that 219 Sheriff Officers in the whole of Scotland could not cope with collecting debts from hundreds of thousands of non-payers.

Tommy Sheridan, Chair of the Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation and Secretary of the new British Federation, has been witch-hunted out of the Labour Party. Speaking at the Rally he claimed there were over one million non-payers in Scotland.

He pointed out that Labour-controlled Local Authorities are laundering the figures to exclude from the published lists of non-payers those they have lost track of due to changes of address and those who are in correspondence regarding rebates with the Community Charge Officer.

There are also people missing from the register from the start and those who have made only one payment and then stopped. They too are excluded from official totals for non-payers.

Steve Kinsella explained how Stirling University students were refusing to pay despite the University authorities co-operating with the Community Charge Registration Officer.

Danny Burns, Secretary of the Avon Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions, explained how the fight against the Poll Tax was now being organised in England. His Federation covers Bristol and the South West and had found that people there were well aware of the unjust nature of the Tax, not least because of the struggle put up against it in Scotland.

Justified

Denis Canavan MP, opening the rally, said civil disobedience was justified. People had to stand up and be counted. In Scotland, warrant sales were being threatened and these would have to be stopped by all means necessary.

The rally was chaired by Lindsey McKell of the Stirling Anti-Poll Tax Union and sponsored by the Central Region Federation of Anti- Poll Tax Unions, Stirling University Students Association, and Stirling and District Trades Council.

The broad nature of the platform, and the way questions of morality came to the fore shows the depth of opposition to the poll Tax.

The failure of the leadership of the Labour Party, both in Scotland and in Britain, to give a lead to this opposition makes its position in the opinion polls look about as fragile as the Stock Exchange boom before October 1987.