LABOUR
40p FORTNIGHTLY
BRIEFING
No. 93. November 22nd-December 5th 1989

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40p

EAST GERMAN WORKERS REVOLT

POST-WAR ORDER CRUMBLES!



PHOTO: Peter Tatchell

The view into the East...

The recent events in East Germany are the product of a genuine mass mobilisation. They were not initiated by reformers from above.

In their scale these mass actions have been the biggest on German soil since the revolution of 1918, totally eclipsing the workers' uprising of June 1953.

In the week of November 4th there were demonstrations of nearly one million in Berlin (pop. 1.1 million); 500,000 in Leipzig (pop. 564,000); 80,000 in Schwerin (pop. 100,000); 60,000 in Halle (pop. 232 000); 50,000 in Karl-Marx Stadt (pop. 310,000), with demonstrations on a similar scale in all other major urban centres.

This was also clearly a mass mobilisation of workers. Although there have been reports of threatened strikes, the workers have mainly showed their strength and confidence on the streets.

This confidence is evident in the fact that of the more than one million who crossed the open border during the 24 hours after the night of November 9th, only 1% didn't return.

The entire base of the party (the SED has 2.3 million members; 18% of the adult population) has been drawn into the mobilization against the bureaucracy.

The discipline and high level of consciousness of the people has also been demonstrated by the complete absence of violence.

BY GUS FAGAN
Editorial Board of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*

The demands of the demonstrators and organised groups have been for greater democracy and freedom. There is a notable absence of any kind of right-wing current.

This political revolt of the East German workers is of immense historical significance for the future of Europe and for the prospects of socialism on this continent.

This movement's achievements in the short period between mid-October and mid-November have been staggering.

On October 18th, Honecker was forced out of office. In the first week of November the entire government and Politburo resigned.

Travel restrictions were eliminated, the media were liberalised. Opposition groups were officially recognised. Political prisoners were amnestied.

The SED promised "free, general, democratic and secret elections" and the party leadership was forced to publicly recognise what Krenz himself called the "revolutionary popular movement".

A SOCIALIST GDR?

The political revolt of the the East German workers is of tremendous significance for the fight for socialism in Europe.

A victory for socialist democracy in East Germany, a country with a developed economy, well-developed social services, a high level of culture, and proliferating links with the rest of the European economy, would change overnight the contours of the political and social struggle in Europe, East and West.

Gus Fagan's analysis continues inside on the centre pages.

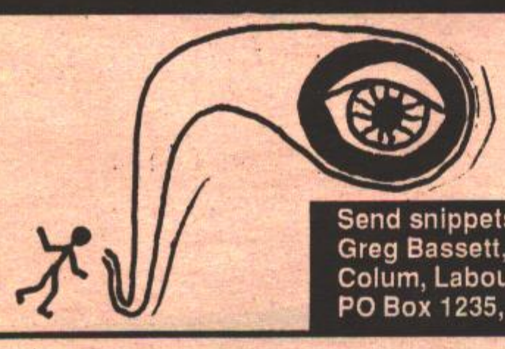
Victory to the FMLN!

In violation of international law, government forces in El Salvador are indescriminately bombing civilians.
As the civil war reaches its climax, government death squads are murdering those who oppose the extreme right-wing ARENA regime.
The FMLN desperately needs resources to continue the political struggle against the regime.
Send cheques payable to ELSOC, marked FMLN on the back, to 20, Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN.
See inside, p.15

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Letters

PERISCOPE



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

Denning eats his words

Remember those famous comments from mad Lord Denning when he dismissed the Birmingham 6 appeal in 1980? Something along the lines that it was better for the innocent to stay in prison than for the police and courts to be seen to have been in error.

Following the release of the Guildford 4 he's been forced to eat his words and apologise for these comments. Denning has also admitted that there are similarities between the Guildford 4 and Birmingham 6 cases, that fabrication of evidence by the police could have occured in both cases, and that the Birmingham 6 case should now be considered by an "independent, high-ranking board" – with powers to examine police evidence and the validity of confessions.

It's hard to imagine how some people sleep at night.

PowerGen junk journalism

The Novemberissue of *Gen*, house magazine of PowerGen, one of Thatcher's new private electricity generating companies, features an extraordinarily embarrasing piece of arse-licking by David Hughes, chief political correspondent on *The Sunday Times*.

According to Hughes, Thatcher's exchange with the man from Greenpeace at the end of the Kuala Lumpar Commonwealth summit over CO2 emissions was a triumph for the Prime Minister.

She described nuclear power as "the only large energy source which did not pollute the atmosphere". This assertion, according to Hughes, clealy demonstrates that the Thatcher government is committed to "an expanding role for the nuclear power industry in a post-privatised world ... the government does not believe that a private sector will inhibit nuclear expansion..."

Ah, well, that's the thing about journalist's deadlines. Anyone can get caught out. Our man from *The Sunday Times* just couldn't see the government's withdrawal of nuclear power from its privatisation programme coming.

Too much radiation, we guess.



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

COHSE bureaucrats: little to they know what the TUC is planning in their support

Health demos can damage your bureaucracy

A confidential report to the TUC Health Services Committee reveals what *Briefing* always suspected – that our leaders at Congress House are working flat out organising massive resistance to the Tory attack on the NHS.

The eight-page paper includes three pages reprinting the NHS composite carried at the 1989 Congress and three other pages explaining why the "NHS Day" called for in the composite should *not* include a mass national demonstration.

Whatever *is* organised, the report advises, "should not, as far as possible, be capable of giving publicity to disruptive minority groups... " A mass demo would be a mistake because of "the close proximity of the previous march" (two years!) and "the opportunity that such events offer to disruptive groups".

Instead, "a delegate lobby of Parliament with a rally in Central Hall" is recommended. Its "advantage" is that "potential numbers are pre-determined and unions are able to send delegations on the basis of allocated places... "

This type of event is "less likely to attract the kind of activity practised by far left groups at demonstrations."

No, they're not kidding

At what passed for its annual "strategy" meeting on November 16th, Labour's Shadow Cabinet, freshly elected (by the PLP) and appointed (by Kinnock) decided to face up to current realities by:

- opening "dialogue" on economic policy with top industrialists so that, according to John Smith, Labour can "set out ist stall for a wider range of opinion".
- Warning the Party (and the public) that it will not make "excessive" spending commitments. John Smith wants "maximum flexibility" when he arrives at No.11 and his new stooge, Margaret Beckett, echoed the sentiment: "All members of the Shadow Cabinet will come under tremendous pressure over spending but that pressure must be resisted."
- rejecting the Party's policy of cuts in defence spending and warning *against* the break-up of either NATO or the Warsaw Pact, which could lead to instability. "The German question is not only a German question. Neutrality would create a vacuum right in the centre of Europe," said Neil Kinnock.

Labour yuck!

Claiming to be "the INDEPENDENT voice of Labour's young members", *Labour Youth*, a badly written, badly designed right-wing broadsheet, is the most blatantly sectarian piece of toadying-to-the-leadership yet to emerge from the anti-left-wing hacks who form the new Praetorian Guard at Walworth Road.

Labour Youth claims to be directed at ordinary young Party members, providing an alternative to the one-sided propaganda formerly put out by the *Militant*-run LPYS.

These ordinary young members are treated to one diatribe after another: "The left-wing in the Party has learned nothing over the last ten years. They are sticking to out-dated, irrelevent policies that no floating voter would consider let alone vote for";

"It is time for real Party members to assert themselves against the loud, trouble-making minority";

"Most GCs should back centre people rather than 'Trots'."

It calls for "sound" and "loyal" delegates to come to the Party Youth Conference on 17-19 November and for explicit opposition to *Militant*.

It has a whole page justifying ditching unilateralism (courtesy of *Labour Party News* and Gerald Kaufman). It urges people with "complaints" about *Militant* to ring Neil Usher, national youth officer at Walworth Road.

At no point does it even mention two of the key issues of concern to youth today – the Poll Tax and the environment.

Public burnings of this document should be organised as soon as possible.





Smash the workers, says the bank

According to November's *Bank Briefing* (no relation), the newsletter of the Bank of England,

"The slowdown in the economy has had only a limited impact on inflation. Financial pressures on companies and the desire to restrict stock levels are likely to restrain prices, but pay settlements are raising costs across the economy as a whole.

"If slower growth is not to risk turning into recession it is essential that settlements begin to fall."

Funny how the capitalist class always takes the credit for growth but blames the working class when things start to go wrong...

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, Nov. 29th if possible.
Letters over 300 words may be cut for reasons of space.

Odd on *Militant*

Dear *Briefing*,

I was somewhat disturbed to read in the "Battle of the Poll Tax" in the Stirling article (*Briefing* no. 91) Tommy Sheridan described as Secretary of the new British Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

Aside from the fact that such a body will not come into existance until November 25th, Sheridan hasn't yet been elected.

The fact that he undoubtedly will is not an expression of the quality of leadership he and his comrades have been giving in Scotland, but is due to *Militant's* manipulation and wrecking tactics.

My experience of *Briefing* supporters in Lewisham has been that they stand for and are willing to fight for a broad, democratic, open and fighting anti-Poll Tax campaign.

It therefore seems a little odd that their paper should give credence to Tommy Sheridan and his cronies.

Almost any activist in the anti-Poll Tax movement will be able to recount their own horror stories of *Militant*.

Yours in solidarity,
Martin Howard
Deptford Direct Action Movement

Contact Briefing

Articles and correspondence should be sent to Labour Briefing, PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY; as should payment for invoices (including subscriptions) and money for paper sales in the "London" area.

Payment for paper sales outside the "London" area (i.e. papers sent on the train and national-only papers sent by post) should be sent to 39 Talia House, Manchester Road, London E14 9HB.

You can telephone Briefing on 01-809 3927.

Next issue:
No. 94: Deadline for articles 28/11; distribution 6/12.
No. 94 will be the last issue before the Xmas break.

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

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

East Germany: new vistas open

The world has become a very different place in the last month — thanks principally to the East German working class.

The mass revolt in the GDR has shaken the whole post-war order. With the collapse of the Cold War rationale — as seen on television screens everywhere — the NATO and Warsaw Pact military blocs have been profoundly undermined. New and unexpected prospects for radical social change may soon open throughout Europe. This should excite all socialists.

The suddenness of the unprecedented mobilisation in one East German city after another caught all the pundits on the hop. What they failed to foresee (as usual) was the explosive power of the masses — their capacity utterly to transform the social and political landscape.

Of course, the GDR uprising is inextricably connected with developments in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in the non-capitalist world. Undoubtedly, the East Germans were inspired by the example of the Chinese workers and students.

They were also aware that Soviet intervention was inconceivable and that Gorbachev himself wanted Honecker replaced.

A Beijing-style "solution" to the revolt was clearly not a possibility in East Germany. And restoration of capitalism is out of the question in the foreseeable future.

Of course, years of Stalinist misrule have discredited many socialist ideas, and in these circumstances no social upsurge of this kind is without risk. But unlike Poland or Hungary, there is little mass base for reaction in East Germany.

Here, unlike in many societies shaking off the shackles of Stalinism, workers really do have something to defend — material gains in housing, transport, and childcare which would vanish if extensive "marketisation" was pursued.

In addition, the political character of the opposition — rooted as it is in one of the world's best educated, most highly skilled working classes — is *not* anti-socialist. Ambiguous, inchoate, of course: but here at last is a social movement with at least the potential to renew socialism and realise the vision of socialist democracy.

All this means that the plethora of media obituaries for "socialism" and "communism" are premature, to say the least. What is happening in East Germany (and in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria) is an essential precondition for the long term renewal of international socialism.

It is no wonder, then, that Thatcher and Bush seem so disturbed. Suddenly we hear them calling not only for the maintenance of NATO, but the Warsaw Pact as well!

Pity that Neil Kinnock should feel required to join in, with his blather about "stability" and the danger of a "vacuum" in central Europe.

Of course, the Policy Review committing Labour to increased spending on the British Army of the Rhine now looks even more anachronistic than it did at the Brighton Conference.

The possibility (still extremely remote) of German reunification has been the occasion for all kinds of chauvinist, anti-German twaddle in the British media.

However, there is no reason for the left, in mirror-image style, to make a fetish of *demanding* unification. That, in the end, should be up to the East German workers, who should be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination.

In the meantime, what we want — and what Labour should be calling for — is *demilitarisation* of the whole region, a demand which has suddenly become eminently achievable.

The lesson is clear. Yesterday's "utopian" and "ultra left" proposals can rapidly become today's common sense. With the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, we can all see much further than we could before.

Insurrection in El Salvador

A war for freedom and national liberation has broken out in El Salvador. The workers and peasants have joined the FMLN in an attempt to overthrow the military government supported by both Margaret Thatcher and George Bush.

What we are witnessing in El Salvador is a fullscale insurrection.

This crisis began with the fraudulent election of the ARENA party in March of this year and its taking office in July, a signal for the military to begin violent repression of the trade unions and people's organisations.

On October 31st the office of a left wing trade union federation, FENESTRAS, was bombed by the military causing the death of eight union members, including the general secretary of FENESTRAS who was the most prominent female trade unionist in El Salvador. The response of the FMLN was to launch its offensive.

The urban population has moved to support the offensive by building barricades and staging widespread strikes. As a result, the FMLN, the UNTS (the largest trade union federation) and FENESTRAS have called for a general strike and the overthrow of the government.

In all major cities and towns there has been insurrection and military confrontation between the FMLN and the Salvadorean military.

Already direct US intervention is taking place. US pilots have been leading bombing raids on working class areas of San Salvador. The Guatemalan army has sent the special *Cabiles* regiment to fight the FMLN.

US warships have been stationed off the coast of El Salvador and the Honduran army has been mobilised.

All socialists should raise the crisis in El Salvador in their workplaces, colleges, and Labour Party meetings.

Behind the headlines

"Major" recession on the way

Prepare for the crash landing!

They must be getting desperate.

New Chancellor John Major's "low key" Autumn Statement was issued against a backdrop of slowing growth, high inflation, a mounting trade deficit, and a potential sterling crisis.

By Dave Palmer
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

This didn't stop the popular press greeting the revised public expenditure plans with whoops of tabloid delight.

The "huge" £5.5 billion increase represents a revision upward on previous plans of £4.3 billion.

The "extra money" will go on health, social security (mainly due to an expected increase in unemployment), transport infrastructure, higher education, housing, the arts, and environment (with small offsetting cuts in other areas).

"Santa Major" squeaked *The Mail*.

The "quality" press was more dour. "Major forecasts bleak year ahead," headlined *The Guardian* and "Major warns of tough year for the economy" according to the *Independent*.

A cursory look at Major's spending plans and the Treasury's gloomy new economic forecast reveals the real picture.

Though in national terms the increases are the largest since the early Thatcher years, they are merely an attempt to cover higher than expected inflation.

Despite the sharp growth in the economy during "Lawson's boom", public spending has remained flat in real terms since 84-85, due to the Treasury's underestimation of inflation and the government's success in holding spending within cash total targets.

This has led to a sharp drop in public spending as a percentage of GDP (from 46% in 84 to 38.5% in 88).

As the relative share of public spending in the economy has declined (historically unprecedented, economically useless) government budget surpluses — estimated at £12.5 billion this year — have been glorified as the great triumph of the Thatcher regime.

If the Treasury projection for inflation — 7.5% in the last quarter of this year falling to 5.5% by the end of 1990 — is taken into account the real increase in 90-91 planned spending is all but non-existent.

But given the continued resilience of inflationary pressures — the underlying rate (i.e. excluding mortgages) rose in October to 6.1%, its highest level in seven years — the Treasury's record of persistent underestimation of inflation, even this minimal increase may not be achieved.

Similarly, the projected tiny rise in the ratio of public spending to GDP from 38.75% (89/90) to 39% (90.91) is not due to any real increase in public spending but to the gloominess of the Treasury's new economic forecasts, which predict the worst year since 79-81.

As the overall economy stagnates, so the relative proportion of public spending will rise, as it did from 78 to 82, even while the Tories continue to hold the purse strings tight.

In his Commons statement Major emphasised the need to keep public spending under tight control.

These new Treasury forecasts — a big factor in the timing of Lawson's resignation — reveal an economy teetering on the edge of recession, growth at its lowest since the early 80s, and continued high inflation.

Growth, excluding North Sea oil output, is projected to slow to 0.75%, which is certain to cause a marked rise in unemployment.

The deficit is expected to fall from this year's £20 billion to £15 billion next year. But Treasury forecasts on the trade balance have been consistently over-optimistic in the past.

Given the effects of the marked decline in domestic demand (due to high interest rates) on industrial production, this target will require industry to increase its exports at the same time as total output declines — an unlikely scenario.

As demand crumbles and output continues to drop, cutting interest rates may be the only way of avoiding a slump. But if inflation does not move clearly downwards and the trade deficit fails to shrink, a collapse in sterling is a real likelihood.



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

Is Major just Thatcher's poodle?

Indeed, the pound came under heavy selling pressure immediately following Major's statemet. A fall in the pound would in turn force up inflation and even the Treasury's modest targets for 90-91 would become fantastic.

The unresolved policy dilemmas at the heart of the Thatcher/Lawson EMS split can only exacerbate the possibilities of a "crash landing" for the UK economy.

Britain is sliding into recession at a time when the economies of the other major capitalist countries are continuing to enjoy generally higher growth rates. That is the real story behind the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

Socialist Movement

NEGOTIATING THE RAPIDS
Socialist Politics for the 1990s

A Public Meeting organised by The Socialist Society

Post-Fordism at Work?
Tuesday 28 November

John Chowcat (MSF National Officer)
David Harvey (Author 'The Condition of Post-Modernity')
Ursula Huws (Writer and Research Consultant)

Place: Covent Garden Community Centre,
46 Earlham St, WC2 (all meetings)
Time: 7.30pm
Admission £1/50p concs. All welcome.

Diary of activities and events

Nov 25.
Socialist Movement Organising Committee, Birmingham
Mar 17/18, 1990.
National Green/Socialist Movement Conference, London.

Other initiatives:

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

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

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

The Socialist Movement
Oxford Conference
Saturday November 25th
9.30-5.30
Oxford Polytechnic
with
Jeremy Corbyn
Martha Osamor
Nadine Finch
Trade Union Speaker
Scotland/Poll Tax Speaker
PLUS Workshops

Economic Notebook

The cost of water privatisation
Flushed with our money!

Hard on the heels of the Tory decision to take nuclear power out of electricity privatisation comes the great water sell-off.

It comes with the share price announced by SAS troops performing synchronised swimming in an unnamed reservoir.

Between now and December 6th we will all have a chance to buy our way into the ten new water plcs.

But hang on — don't we already own it? Indeed, haven't we all already given over £110 a piece in debt write-offs to get the companies in shape for the market?





Different Tory views of water: the site of luxury housing, a major feature in the docks strike — and now a source for extra revenue.

By FRANK SCOTT

These monopoly companies own over £20 billion worth of assets. Even so, the government has had to write off £5 billion of debt and pay out a £1.2 billion "green dowry" to help them clean up their act.

£6.2 billion of our money allows the PLCs to start off with an aggregate £750 million surplus on their balance sheets. And that's just one aspect of the *real* cost of privatisation.

For five years following privatisation the companies will be able to charge consumers between 5% and 8% above the retail price index. At present this means that water bills can be increased by 13%-16% a year.

All this is designed to ensure that the plcs make a pre-tax profit of around 8% above the rate of inflation. These monopolies are thus being *guaranteed* an exceptionally high rate of profit for the five years. Nice work if you can get it.

But that's not all. There is something called the "cost pass through" mechanism — which allows them to charge us more if and when the EC comes down hard on water quality and pollution standards.

They can also charge us more when they decide to spend £1.5-£3 billion on installing water meters in our homes.

Independent economists estimate that over the next decade average increases in water prices will be at least double that of the last ten years.

Water disconnections resulting from people's inability to pay have already quadrupled over the last four years.

Prices may also have to be hiked in order to pay for dividends and interest charges — the PLCs are expected to borrow over £20 billion in the next ten years in order to maintain standards.

The Water Industry Unions Committee has identified ten additional cost areas which could also push up bills.

As a result, average household bills in the Southern area (currently the cheapest) could increase from £2.38 to £3.96 a week, whilst those in Wales are likely to rise from £2.68 to £6.54 a week.

For someone on Income Support, water charges could take 13% of weekly income, compared to 6% at present.

The water companies' response is to say they will refer people on low incomes to Social Security — but they seem unaware of the fact that water charges are specifically *excluded* from the benefit system, including the Social Fund.

People may be forced to go to charities to get help to pay their water bills, which takes us back to *pre*-Victorian times!

One obvious consequence is that people will underconsume water, leading to health hazards.

The preliminary report on the twelve metering trials around the country already shows that metered households cut down on water — even though their actual bills were not based on metering!

One exercise showed that families on low incomes in low rateable value properties in Wakefield are likely to see a seven-fold increase in bills once they are metered.

Environmental Health Officers are also worried about underconsumption by large commercial users such as food manufacturers and processors.

Even though the plcs are flush with potential profits (at our expense), 91% of investment fund managers are not setting aside money for investment in water.

They are put off by the potentially massive extra liabilities of repairing the 20% of critical sewers that are currently near collapse, and the unprofitable business of making water fit to drink.

Although capital knows that where there's muck there's brass, many are not dipping their toes into this particular pool — until and unless they know that the public will stomach a trebling of water charges.

Deportations

The Julius Alexander case

Julius Alexander is under threat of deportation. He has been in Britain since 1984, although his mother, two brothers and sister came here in the 1950's. He recently married Maureen, a British citizen, and they have a seven month old child, Julius.

Julius is the only father that Maureen's other two children, Beverley and Joanna, have ever known. Julius is being threatened with deportation because he does not carry a British passport.

Legally he is termed an overstayer. He has had two appeals against deportation and both have been thrown out. His case is now going to judical review.

Julius is one of the first people to be affected by a new ruling, made in August last year, giving immigration officers at inspector level and above the right to sign and issue deportation orders.

This ruling has resulted in an enormous increase in deportations in the last year. They are now at an all-time high of about four every day.

The courts here ruled that the Home Secretary acted lawfully in delegating his authority over the signing of deportation orders to immigration officers. in effect this is like giving police officers the right to issue terms of imprisonment without recourse to a jury.

Julius Alexander's deportation order had been signed by an immigration officer below inspector level, yet still the appeal was denied on the grounds that an inspector gave permission. So not only can the Home Secretary delegate power, so too can those to whom he delegates his power.

The adjudicators decision in the Julius Alexander case shows that the Home Office is intent on enabling immigration officers to impose deportation notices on those whom they consider to be illegal immigrants.

The British state allowed Julius' mother and two brothers to emigrate from st Vincent in the 1950's when labour was in short supply, but rejected his attempts to join them in the 1970's when the labour market was saturated.

"Small, but growing"

Greens in Scotland

Phil O'Brian, Scottish Green Party representative on the Scottish Constitutional Convention, was interviewed by Gordon Morgan of Scottish *Labour Briefing*.

***LB*: What's your attitude to Home Rule for Scotland?**

PO'B: We favour an independent Scotland with a confederalist relationship to the rest of Britain. Thus Scotland would cooperate with Westminster on matters of common interest but as an independent state.

***LB*: How does this differ from the Nationalists?**

PO'B: We view independence as part of a gradual process not a dramatic act. A Scottish Parliament would be a stepping stone towards indpendence. Thus we argue in the Convention to establish a Scottish Parliament or Assembly, maximise its powers, and see those powers entrenched so that they cannot be reversed by Westminster.

We argue that the Assembly should collect taxes and send a portion to Westminster, rather than the reverse.

***LB*: Why do you support Home Rule?**

PO'B: We believe that environmental and social issues can only be effectively tackled by maximising self-reliance and local control. We therefore believe it is important to break up the UK state, the old Empire state, which is highly centralised.

As regards Scotland, I consider the Claim of Right to be a very important expression of Scottish sovereingty. It is the first time a claim of popular sovereignty as opposed to parliamentary sovereignty has been put forward in Britain. This is a revolutionary development.

***LB*: The Convention has been boycotted by the SNP, who claim it is unrepresentitive as no direct elections were held and their proposal for an independent Scotland was not being discussed.**

PO'B: The SNP is sectarian and tactically in errro. If they had participated they could probably have won their demands. They would certainly have pushed for a quicker implementation than is likely.

In any event, even without their participation, the Convention is the most representative body Scotland has seen in a long time.



BP Oil Refinery in Grangemouth.

***LB*: What has it achieved?**

PO'B: Its main success is to stimulate a needed debate on the forms and structures of government. The proposals for forms draw heavily on the women's Claim of Right. With the exception of a small group of Labour councillors there is general agreement on the need to increase the number of women councillors and Assembly representatives.

There is general appreciation that the workings of a Scottish Parliament must not mirror Westminster. Linked to this is the question of proportional representation which the Greens have put forward as a way of increasing the representation of women.

Under the additional member system we would legally require lists to alternate female and male so that 50% of members elected from this list would be women.

***LB*: It seems early hopes of a referendum and early elections to an Assembly are receding. Why is this?**

PO'B: We have argued for a referendum next March and Convention-organised elections to an Assembly within twelve months of a general election. The trend is against these proposals being accepted.

Labour is proposing that local government results be construed as a referendum, without an actual referendum.

In general, Labour is being pushed one step at a time, but they are slow steps. Its tactic is to drag things out until the general election.

***LB*: Has the Poll Tax had an impact on the Convention?**

PO'B: It was clearly a factor in helping establish the Convention. There is the potential for a larger rebellion around the Poll Tax and the Convention, but there is no leadership able to fuse it. The danger is that this potential will dissipate.

Despite attempts to paly it down, I believe the number of non-payers who have not paid for political reasons is very high. The Greens originally participated in the STUC campaign and argued for multitacic opposition to the Tax. We now favour non-payment.

***LB*: How do the Greens see an independent Scotland functioning?**

PO'B: We have no detailed analysis as yet and are a long way behind the SNP. We have some basic principles, e.g. a basic income scheme which would remove the poverty trap and cut bureaucracy.

***LB*: Is the need to develop such policies related to your separation from the Greens (UK)?**

PO'B: It is part of our philosophy that we should decentralise control. The dynamic of politics in Scotland makes it imperitive we go independent. Working our our relationship with Greens in England will take six or seven months.

***LB*: The SNP favour an independent Scotland within the EC. What trading links should Scotland have?**

PO'B: The EC is bureaucratic, undemocratic, centralist and under the control of the multinationals at a European level. It wants to move to superpower states with appropriate military forces, etc.

We are for a European confederalist alliance of nations — a Europe of autonomous regions East and West, cooperating to tackle environmental, ecological, and social problems.

We oppose a common European currency; we are not free traders. Trade should be on terms of reciprocal need. If goods can be produced locally they should be. A lot of international trade is unnecessary and would not exist if the hidden costs of transport were taken into account.

Planning must be decentralised and democratic. Small is beautiful applies to government as well as multinationals.

***LB*: Given Scotland's nuclear bases, could it become nuclear free?**

PO'B: Only in an independent Scotland. However, the consensus within the Convention is that defence is a UK matter. The lesson for CND from Labour Conference is that they have relied too heavily on Labour. If CND had pushed for a Green vote this would have put a lot more pressure on Labour.

South London Trade Union Conference Against the Poll Tax

Saturday 9th December

Lambeth Town Hall

10.00am-4.00pm

A Conference of Action!

Anti-Poll Tax campaigners across London have called this conference to discuss what action trade unionists can take to stop the tax. The conference is open to delegates from trades councils and union branches/shops, as well as individual trade unionists keen to take up the fight.

For more details contact LAPT c/o M. Loebner, 6 Morrison House, St. Martins Estate, London SW2.

Labour Party Black Section

THE NEW AGENDA:

A Conference for Black Trade Unionists

Saturday February 10th, 1990

The Asian Centre, 8 Caxton Road, Wood Green, London N22

Registration Fee: £3 waged, £1.50 unwaged/low-paid (payable on the day).

For further details contact Roger Mckenzie, 5 Beatrice Road, London N4 4PD, tel.: 01-802 3111 ext. 125 (daytime).

GUILDFORD 4 ARE FREE!

Celebration Social

Friday 24th November, 8pm

Haringey Irish Centre, Pretoria Road (off White Hart Lane), London N17

Admission: £3.50, £2 (concessions)

Disabled access & facilities

Organised by Haringey Irish Working Group

Labour Party

Social Democracy

The view from the rose-garden

With the Policy Review now adopted by Labour Party Conference and the future of the block vote in doubt, the left needs a clear understanding of what is happening in and to the Labour Party.

Some confusion and sloppiness has crept into some of *Briefing's* recent analysis.

In the otherwise excellent editorial in *Briefing* no. 90, we read that:

"the aim of the leadership is to turn Labour into something like the US Democratic Party; a vehicle for professional politicians, with no formal links to the organised working class..."

In *Briefing* 83, Bryn Griffiths wrote approvingly of the *Independent's* description of the Policy Review "as Labour's Bad Godesberg".

He added that this was "where the German Social Democrats abandoned their socialist heritage". He also talked of Kinnock's "attempt to further Social-Democratise the Party".

There are two points being made here. The first is that the Policy Review represents such a fundamental shift in Labour's programme that it represents a qualitative change (the Bad Godesberg reference).

The second is that the abolition of the block vote would represent a fundamental change, turning the Labour Party into the British equivalent of the European social-democratic parties (which are regarded as different) or even worse the US Democrats.

Because the adoption of the Policy Review and the bringing into question of the block vote are happening at the same time it is not always possible to disentangle these two views, and anyway they overlap in many respects.

While other European social democratic parties went through a period of debate before going over to the side of counter-revolution in 1914, the British Labour Party never experienced such a qualitative turning point.

It never abandoned socialism *because it was never a socialist party in the first place.*

Labour couldn't drop references to Marxism in its programme because its never had any. The Labour Party was founded by the trade union bureaucracy, who wanted their class collaborationist politics voiced in Parliament.

By Pete Firmin
Brent East CLP

This was the same trade union bureaucracy which supported Liberal MPs before the Labour Party was formed, and its formation implied no fundamental change in political outlook.

Throughout its history Labour has been a loyal servant of British capitalism and imperialism. In this it has been no different from the rest of social-democracy since 1914.

The description of Bad Godesberg as when the German SDP abandoned its socialist heritage is bewildering.

The German SDP, along with many other European social democratic parties, abandoned socialism in 1914 when it supported its ruling class in the inter-imperialist slaughter of the First World War.

It followed this up in 1918-19 by opposing the seizure of power by the German working class and helping to organise the volunteer *Freikorps* white army, used to crush the revolution and butcher revolutionaries.

The programme adopted at the special party conference at Bad Godesberg in 1959 at most codified the Party's practice over the preceding 45 years.

While it dropped specific references to Marxism, it still contained many more references to socialism than Kinnock's Policy Review.

While the Policy Review is outrageously right-wing and needs to be fought tooth and nail, it is no different from Labour's practice throughout its history.

If the reference to the US Democratic Party was solely meant to refer to style and presentation (Kinnock videos, campaign songs, laser shows) then there is no argument.

But talk of "no formal links with the organised working class" is more fundamental.

It implies that Labour could become simply another bourgeois party and that Labour and Tories, like Democrats and Republicans, would be the tweedledum and tweedledee of the ruling class, offering no choice to the working class and oppressed.

The precise form of the Party-union link is secondary.

The social democratic parties of Europe, which were at one time socialist, never had the type of organic link with the unions at every level which the Labour Party has.

But that doesn't mean that they have *no* link with the organised working class. Unlike in Britain, many of these parties actually *founded* the trade unions and have maintained close links with them.

Kinnock has no more intention of breaking all links with the unions than these other parties.

The usefulness of the union link to these parties (and the ruling class) is that it enables them to draw the unions into class collaboration so that the economic problems of capitalism can be tackled at the cost of the working class (as with the Social Contract in the 70's).

The ruling class prefers to see its own party (in Britain, the Tories) in power.

But at times of Tory unpopularity and increased class struggle it is prepared to accept (and sometimes even prefers) Labour in government — provided it can rely on it to discipline the working class for capitalism.

When the Labour Party looks like an unreliable instrument for this (as in the early 80's), then the ruling class does everything possible to prevent it coming to power: hence the promotion of the centre parties and the hate campaign against the Party and individuals within it.

Kinnock's intention is not to abolish the link with the unions. On the contrary, his usefulness to the ruling class rests precisely on his ability to make deals with the unions and undermine any opposition to capital's interests.

What Kinnock wants to prevent is a repeat of the late 70s when working class opposition to Labour policies found expression not only in strike action, but through the Labour Party Conference's rejection of government policies and those who carried them out.

It is this potential channel for the working class to call the Labour leadership to account which Kinnock wants to get rid of.

In this he has the support of a trade union bureaucracy, which is wedded to capitalism and determined to preserve its own interests above those of its members.

Support by the unions for the right in the Party has been the norm.

The last part of the last Labour government and its aftermath (up until 1981) was an exception, the result of the massive opposition in the unions to Labour's policies, primarily its pay policies.

This opposition extended right into the upper tiers of the unions. But it was the exception not the rule.

Kinnock does not want to abolish the block vote because he wants to break all links with the unions (far from it) or because the link with the unions is "unpopular".

He knows that if he wins a General Election his policies will become as unpopular with the working class as Wilson's and Callaghan's (if not more so).

His intention is to exclude the possibility of opposition developing in the Party in the future through the local Party-union links. The irony here this is that he has to use the union bureaucracy to abolish the block vote.

As Larry Whitty made clear at the end of Party Conference, the Party cannot move *too* quickly to a purely individual membership base because the leadership is not yet sure that this would be sufficient to keep out the left.

Abolition of the block vote would not be a fundamental change, but it would be an important one.

To ensure that this channel for the reality of the class struggle to intrude into the Labour Party is maintained the left has to oppose moves to abolish the block vote while arguing for its democratisation.

Debating Party democracy

Democratising the block vote

In the last issue of *Labour Briefing*, Pete Willsman of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy warned readers through the letters page that *Briefing* supported the "disaggregation" of the trade union block vote at Party Conference.
In fact, in response to the Edmonds' proposals *Labour Briefing* has launched a debate on the party's democratic structures and part of that debate focuses on the trade union link and the block vote.
In this article BRYN GRIFFITHS of Tottenham CLP puts the case for "disaggregation". If you disagree or wish to add to the debate in any way, please write in.

When the Labour Representation Committee was formed by the trade unions and the block vote first established, the Party was made up of a large number of unions of roughly the same, relatively small size.

Today, following a long history of amalgamations, the block votes are concentrated in ever fewer hands in an increasingly monolithic system.

The block vote has been criticised from both left and right.

Supporters of Benn and Heffer have pointed to the fact that their support was dramatically under-reflected in last year's recent leadership challenge, as union after union with significant minorities for Benn and Heffer cast all their votes for Kinnock and Hattersley.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee have siezed upon the unpopularity of the block vote to launch an assault on the trade union link itself.

They hope that individual membership plebiscites organised and controlled by Walworth Road will weaken the influence of CLP activists and make it "safe" for the trade unions to reduce and eventually relinquish their block votes.

The contradiction for the LCC is that whilst they are hostile to the trade union link they realise that historically the block vote has been a conservative influence on the Party.

Pete Willsman and his comrades in CLPD have reacted vigorously to this threat to the Party's trade union link. In this I agree with them.

The trade union link and its expression through the block vote means that the Labour Party is not only different to the US Democratic Party but also different in a qualitative way to the social democratic parties on the continent.

However bureaucratised the present system, it contains within it the potential for the organised working class to express its anger at a future Labour government implementing austerity measures.

The process was clealy illustrated in the early 80s, in the struggles for Party democracy and Benn's campaign for Deputy Leader. As far a *Labour Briefing* is concerned Labour's organic link with the trade unions is not up for debate.

What *is* up for debate is *how* we defend that link and *how* we struggle to renew and democratise it. Here we disagree with CLPD, who simply champion the status quo.

It is impossible to justify the existing block vote system to a CLP delegate who has just seen one radical policy after another defeated and the Policy Review imposed by trade union leaders who act without reference to their members.

It was this type of disatisfaction with Labour's undemocratic structures that helped CLPD's demands achieve such resonance in the early 80s. It would be a sad twist of fate if their conservatism today allowed them to be outflanked by Kinnock's LCC hit-squad.

One key step in democratising the block vote would be to "disaggregate" it. Why shouldn't minorities within unions have their views expressed when their unions cast their votes at Party Conference?

The argument often used against this proposal is that it would undermine the principle of collective decision-making needed to ensure trade union solidarity.

But elections and policy-making *within* the labour movement cannot be compared to the need for unity against the bosses. In practise, this conception leads to extremely bureaucratic methods and the crushing of political minorities.

In the short term such a proposal might mean losses for the left. Large "left" unions such as the TGWU and MSF would cast a proportion of their votes with the right on questions such as unilateralism.

In the long term, however, this method would encourage political debate within the unions.

This could only benefit the left — unless, of course, we are simply arguing for Broad Lefts to act as electoral machines with the aim of seizing control of the union machinery without in any way actually changing it.

The mechanics of dividing up the block vote are extremely complicated. It is unlikely that a single blue-print could be suitable for all unions.

Balloting

Clearly, individual membership balloting is not a desirable option. Taking "one member, one vote" into the unions would undermine any possibility of democratic collectivity and accountability.

Personally, I would prefer the casting of a union's votes at Party Conference in such a way as to reflect the division of opinion at the union's own annual conference.

For leadership elections this would be relatively simple but for complex composites drawn up on the eve of Party Conference the task would be more difficult.

Unions could establish positions on major issues such as unilateralism and mandate delegations to feed the balance of opinion within the union into the Party Conference.

Each union has its own structures and traditions. Some have developed trade structures; other have strong regional structures; others are highly concentrated.

Any proposals for disaggregating the block vote on the basis of these structures would have to emerge from the unions themselves.

The debate on the block vote is a difficult one. The creation of participatory structures with adequate rights for political minorities can never be easy.

It is crucial nonetheless for the left to be at the forefront of any debate on democratising the unions.

For socialists, trade union democracy is an absolute principle — and must be prioritised if we are to gain the trust and respect of the whole working class.

London: All power to the centre!

If you can keep your bureaucrats while all around are losing theirs...

A new drive to wipe out the left in London local government is being co-ordinated from Walworth Road.

The new rule change — that local manifestos must "reflect national Party policy" is being used to hasten the advent of a monolithic, Stalinist-style Party entirely in the hands of the leadership.

Frank Dobson MP warned a meeting of London CLP Agents that he was fed up with defending London Labour to his parliamentary colleagues and that London would never be forgiven if it "lost" Labour the next General Election.

This sentiment is being taken up more widely by the organised forces of the LCC and other Kinnock-backers, who are now moving to make sure that any "London effect" is silenced *now*.

But this is not just a difference over how to win elections: there is a *hidden* agenda.

The last thing the leadership wants is for an increasingly militant working class to push Thatcher out and install a Labour government *expecting it to fulfill our needs.*

Labour has no economic programme with which to meet these needs. The movement must therefore be diffused, and taught to have low expectations of what a Labour government would offer (as Kinnock warned in his keynote speech in Brighton).

'Beware'

Comrades outside London read on — and beware!

•Lambeth LGC has been closed down and the NEC (i.e. Joyce Gould) has taken over producing the manifesto, compiling the panel, and supervising the selection process in the wards.

The blatantly spurious excuse for this was that the LGC had invited sitting Councillors to attend a meeting and answer questions from Party members.

Now members of the Regional Executive are to reinterview everyone previously placed on the panel by the suspended LGC.

So far, 20 Party members have gone through this "double jeopardy" process. One has been excluded. She is Chair of her Ward, President of Southwark NUT, and the chief challenger to the sitting Councillor in her Ward, an LCC stalwart.

She has been struck off the panel because she is alleged not to have given a clear enough answer on following Group standing orders and to have suggested that she might feel bound by a mandate from her Ward.

This naked authoritarianism has elicited protest from all sections of the local Party, particularly in Vauxhall, where the NEC has already imposed an MP in the by-election.

In response to protests from Labour Party branches and Council Leader Joan Twelves, GLLP Secretary Terry Ashton warned the local Party against "affecting the ability of the Labour Party to gain national power" and told Joan Twelves to concentrate on running

By Jenny Fisher Bow & Poplar CLP and Mike Marqusee Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

the Council and refrain from "impugning Party officers".

•In Camden, four sitting left Councillors — Sandra Plummer, Caroline Holding, Graham Shurety, and Dave Moran — are threatened with expulsion from the Party for "a sustained course of conduct prejudicial to the Party".

The Executive of Holborn & St Pancras CLP had conducted an enquiry into the four and recommended that the matter be referred to the Group. The GC voted instead to send the report directly to the NCC, which will hear the case on December 7th.

Dossier

The 114 page dossier produced in evidence against them includes press clippings and minutes of meetings dating back to early 1987.

The gist of the charges is that they publicly criticised Camden's cuts policy and had the temerity to defend manifesto commitments.

Meanwhile, Camden LGC has excluded Steve Taylor and Terry Flannagan from the panel — but admit John Mills.

Steve Taylor is a *Briefing* supporter and currently Chair of Hampstead & Highgate CLP.

Mills, a former bigshot with the hated London Docklands Development Corporation, was instrumental in setting up the current negotiations between Camden Council and Kings Cross developers.

•In Hackney, three left Councillors — Lynne Faulkes, Ian Row, James Whiting — have been expelled from the Labour Group for voting against Council plans to spend £368,000 doing up Stoke Newington Town Hall as the Borough Poll Tax offices.

The three will be ineligible to stand as Labour Councillors in May if the Whip is not restored.

•In Haringey, four left comrades — Richard Heffernan, Mandy Mudd, Scott Reeve, Peter Thomlinson — have had their appeal against being excluded from the Council panel rejected by the Regional Executive Committee.

Two other comrades, Jane Connor and Ian Lund, await their appeal.

McCarthyite

The whole affair stinks of a stitch up. In the course of this McCarthyite exercise, the left comrades were subjected to prolonged, intense, often abusive questioning by no less than three separate bodies.

They were excluded despite having give the same answers as others who were included.

The REC was represented by Wheatley and Spalding, who virtually refused even to consider a 55-page dossier documenting a welter of inconsistencies, irregularities, and injustices.

They were adroitly "advised" by Assistant Regional Organiser Margaret McDonagh, who was shown at the abortive NCC hearing in the Mandy Mudd case to have submitted false and distorted evidence to the NEC.

Absolute Oath

It now appears that nothing short of an oath of absolute, perpetual, and unconditional loyalty to the Labour Group (not the Labour Party) is sufficient to secure admission to a panel in London.

Meanwhile, the calculated smear campaign mounted by the right wing Council leadership against Martha Osamor continues.

Ludicrous allegations made by discredited Broadwater Farm dictator Dolly Kiffin formed the sole basis of a year-long "investigation" by the Council's Head of Internal Audit.

None of the other individuals or bodies concerned in the allegations have been asked to submit evidence.



In Tower Hamlets, Margaret Hodge remained unimpressed by the 1,000 people who turned out to a Haringey Against the Poll Tax meeting, supporting the slogan "Don't Pay!" We wait for Margaret to organise a similarly large rally around the slogan "Let's all pay the Poll Tax". Meanwhile, she presides over yet another strike of Islington Council workers, this time childcare workers...

•The GLLP Regional Executive has set up a "London 1990" committee to co-ordinate Labour's local election effort in the capital.

Seconded to the committee from national HQ at Walworth Road is full-time Party Press Officer Jo Moore, leading LCC deadhead in Haringey and a pivotal figure in the Haringey-Walworth Road witch-hunting axis.

Moore has been the elected Organiser for Hornsey & Wood Green CLP for the last two years. Under her aegis, Party membership has fallen by over 20% and three Council by-elections have been lost (and none won).

Moore and her colleagues refused to allow the local GC even to discuss support for the 1,000-strong rally at Hornsey Town Hall.

In the absence of any other apparent qualifications (energy, imagination, campaigning skills, or socialist commitment) it must be assumed her recent elevation is on the basis of her role as Witchfinder General in Haringey.

•Islington Council Leader Margaret Hodge read the riot act to a meeting organised by the PEO for Party members in Bow & Poplar CLP. Her remarks were mysteriously released to the press *before* she delivered them.

The draft manifesto currently under discussion in Tower Hamlets includes a commitment not to implement the Poll Tax.

'Enver'

Margaret "Enver" Hodge is having none of it. She gave what the anonymous author of the press release called "a dressing down to Party activists", including such gems as:

"Fools who talk of breaking the law or refusing the collect the government's imposed Poll Tax are fundamentally threatening the chance of us taking power next year"

and

"Ordinary Labour Party members in Tower Hamlets must not let the misguided and mischievous betray the people of Tower Hamlets and undermine Labour's victory in 1990."

Hodge counterposed "those of us who want Labour to win" to those who "indulge in gesture politics" and accused the left of scaring "ordinary people" away from Party meetings.

Poll Tax

On the Poll Tax she insisted that all Labour Councils can do is mount take-up campaigns for rebates and that Labour had won support in Scotland by *opposing* non-payment.

Her talk of "own goals" struck some observers as pretty rich, given the timing and nature of her press release.

The evening before the Hodge meeting, the Tower Hamlets Labour Group had requisitioned a full Council meeting to present a resolution to stop registration and preparations for collection *pending the determination of the final Poll Tax level for the Borough.*

The Council's ruling "Liberal Focus Team" refused to take a vote on the resolution which was supported by a vociferous lobby.

Pressure is now mounting on the Party in Tower Hamlets to drop its Poll Tax proposals. Joyce Gould has written to the LGC Secretary claiming the local policy is out of line with national Party policy.



Celebrating in the old days, when Labour had something to offer in the way of a gutsy fight...

Similar noises were made at a recent ALA meeting. Party members in Tower Hamlets now fear they will not be permitted even to discuss the draft manifesto.

When pressed by the Bow & Poplar Chair on the source of her divisive and damaging press release, Hodge would only say it came "from the local Party".

When further pressed as to whether she meant *her* local Party, in Islington, or someone in Bow & Poplar, she said nothing.

If it's the former, why are people in Islington interfering in Tower Hamlets? If the latter, how did Party members in Tower Hamlets know about her speech beforehand?

What secret links are being used across London to organise against the left — and the last threads of Party democracy?

•London by-election results, including in the Kinnockite kingdom of Wandsworth, have lagged well behind Labour's showing in the polls. The Party's profile in the capital has collapsed, along with its membership.

Behind all this are fears at the highest level that Labour's lead in the polls is more fragile than the leadership likes to let on.

•The witch-hunt in London is therefore not just about London. It is a national initiative designed to identify *in advance* a scapegoat for any failure in the next General Election.

Strangled

It is also an attempt to stifle critical discussion and strangle the Party at the roots — thereby forestalling any rebellion from below when a Kinnock government launches its inevitable attack on its own supporters.

What we are witnessing in London is a classic Stalinist distortion of democratic centralism in which all power is concentrated in the centre — and the rank and file exists only to implement the centre's commands.

Terrified bureaucrats in the GDR will soon be emigrating to London, where they should feel right at home working with their counterparts in Herbert Morrison House.

Guildford 4

Commons motion on the Guildford 4

A total of 28 Labour MPs signed Jeremy Corbyn's motion concerning Sir Peter Imbert's role in the Guildford Four enquiry.

"That this House welcomes the release of the Guildford Four;

demands that all police officers involved in the original investigation and conviction be suspended pending full investigation into this tragic miscarriage of justice;

further notes that Sir Peter Imbert received the Balcombe Street gang's admission to the Guildford bombing and that he subsequently became Deputy Chief Constable of Surrey and was therefore in a position of authority to see and reveal the documents which eventually proved the innocence of the Guildford Four;

and therefore asks Sir Peter Imbert seriously to consider whether he can continue in his current position and maintain credibility and public confidence in the Metropolitcan Police."

East and West: Spotlight on Germany

New openings for left

The Wall and the West

The stunning events of the last few weeks in Eastern and Middle Europe have generated more than world historical change.

They have also given rise to a vast amount of bullshit.

The Nine O'Clock News alone has provided us with unprecedented reams of facile "analysis".

But it's not just in the mass media that one can hear the self-interested bleatings of capitalism; the right wing journals of American academia are full of the intellectual of the month, Fukuyama.

Popular

This suddenly popular theorist has proudly declared that with Communism's death history has come to an end and the utopia of liberal democracy (i.e. capitalism) will reign for all time.

In the last *New Left Review* Norberto Bobbio eloquently expressed what anyone with a dose of common sense knows about Fukuyama's theory:

"The poor and forsaken are still condemned to live in a world of terrible injustices, crushed by unreachable and apparently unchangeable economic magnates on which the political authorities nearly always depend.

"In such a world the idea that the hope of revolution is spent, that it is finished just because the communist utopia has failed is to close one's eyes so as not to see."

But it is necessary to dig still deeper and discover why the media and the right intellectual analyses of changes in the East are so poor.

The majority of public figures in the West have been happy to swallow whole the shallowness of Cold War ideology.

This ideology has assumed an actual and morally necessary political, economic, and social separation of East from West, and thus bad from good.

As a result, any shift in the Eastern Bloc towards liberal capitalist democracy is seen purely in terms of the "decent ordinary people" of the East finally bringing their evil leaders into line with the West.

Profound

The only profound consequence of the West, in this view, will be a spontaneous overflow of love and harmony on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

Of course the whole thing is nonsense. The Cold War with its simplistic ideological polarisations, its maintenance of the post-war settlement, and its military stalemate has served Western states only too well.

NATO, the EC, the limited ideological spectrum of political parties in the West — all have been made possible by a post-war settlement which has also provided the basis for defence contract-based economies, US military dominance, and the creation of an ever more comprehensive EC built upon the maintenance of a relatively weak and divided Germany.

The hypocrites of Western leadership are now faced with a nightmare: their most insincere but highly popular piece of rhetoric (tearing down the Iron Curtain) is coming true before their very eyes.

This is why James Baker and Margaret Thatcher are urging caution and trying to dampen down "premature excitement".

By ADAM LENT

Even Lech Walesa, the newest and most popular member of the Capitalist Club, was warning that East German reform had progressed too quickly, a *week before* the Berlin Wall came down.

In this context is is clear that recent political change will *not* end its phenomenal spread at the GDR/FRG border.

But, of course, what we all want to know is how this will affect Western socialism.

Ralph Milliband has argued recently that the Eastern changes condemn the labour movement in the West to another sterile period of working within the confines of Social Democracy, largely because the ideology of revolutionary socialism is taking such a battering.

But this fails to recognise the gaps that will now open up in the military and economic structures and strategies of the West.

New problems for these structures are far more likely to determine the future political direction of labour in the capitalist world than some nebulous dialectic of Eastern ideological collapse and Western perception of that collapse.

The nature of these problems and gaps and the new possibilities for the left are just beginning to be glimpsed.

Calls for the dismantling of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the forging of effective links with workers and socialist sin the East, moves to incorporate Eastern Europe into "pan- European" economic agreements (thus revealing the EC to be little more than a glorified capitalist trade exclusion zone), and calls to democratise and socialise any supra-national European institutions are now all realistic projects.

And, who knows, the conjunction of the weakening legitimacy of Cold War political structures with the worsening economic crisis could see the regrowth of mass working class action.

The opportunities are there to be seized. But the present British Labour leadership is either too blinkered to see them or too timid to act upon them.

Weapons

In fact it is beginning to look as though Kinnock may have chosen a particularly had time to commit himself to nuclear weapons, NATO, and the capitalist vision of the EC.

The ideology and structures of post-war Western Europe have stifled radicalism for over 40 years, but the holes in this fabric are growing day by day.

The East European people have given the Western left its cue: throw off the depression and introspection of the last miserable decade — and act.

East Ge

Post-wa crumble

Despite the changes in the GDR, the Party leadership is still in place.

Krenz's reformist credentials are non-existent. Groomed for the leadership by Honecker he became well-known for his open support for the Tienanmen massacre.

His new Politburo still contains a majority of its old members and one of the four new members is Wolfgang Herger, a Honecker man responsible for security and for the police violence against demonstrators on October 7th.

Krenz has called a party conference for December, but refused to call a party congress. According to SED rules, only a congress can elect a new Central Committee and a new leader. In any democratic process, Krenz would lose.

The split between t bureaucratic leadership and t base of the party is clear.

The party youth organizati (*FDJ*, Free German Youth) completely on the side of the m movement and its paper, *Jun Welt* (Young World) is one of t most lively and radical papers.

By Gus Fagan Editorial Board, Labour Focus on Eastern Europe

The *FDJ* leader Eberha Aurich told the Central Comm tee plenum that the "you generation" of East Germany h been "betrayed" by the party a that he rejected the subordinati of the youth movement to t party.

The *FDJ* delegation in the GD parliament has called for co pletely free elections.

This is evident at every level the party. When the Central Co mittee on November 8th elect Hans-Joachim Böhme, Party ch in Halle, to the Politburo, the lo party in Halle *voted him out* local leader.

When 60,000 demonstrated the streets in Halle, Böhme to refuge in the local headquarters the *Stasi* (the state securi police). The Central Committ was forced to "accept his resign tion".

Werner Walde, party chi from Cottbus, elected as candida member of the Politburo, al resigned immediately in simi circumstances, as did Johann Chemnitzer, party chief fro Neubrandenburg.

New leaders have been elect in Halle, Erfurt and Karl-Ma Stadt. District party leaders in Pe



Mass demonstration in Lei awakes.

Looking back at the Cold War

Why they divided Germany

Sometimes when you stand back from a problem and look at it from another point of view, you can find that the solution is actually simple, or even that there is no problem at all.

The GDR decided that the solution to the problem of mass emigrations which threatened to de-populate it was to make leaving, and coming back, routine and normal.

In doing so they have made the fortified frontier meaningless.

The Berlin wall, the symbol of the division of Germany and Europe, has been brought down metaphorically, and in places, literally, and the possibility of German reunification is suddenly a topic for discussion.

This possibility has overturned all the certainties of the post-war order in Europe and is causing confusion for the politicians for whom the division of Germany is, in fact, a necessity.

The end of the Second World War saw the US and the USSR facing each other, not only as rival superpowers, but also as two rival and incompatable social systems.

The partition of Germany wasn't an accident resulting from this rivalry. It was a recognition that Germany was the strongest economic power in Europe: Germany under the influence of one the superpowers would have decisively altered the balance between the two.

All the other countries of the continent had experience of one, two, or three wars with Germany, but this "German Question" couldn't be raised as politics were defined by the two blocks.

By BRIAN ELKINGTON

It was in every state's interest that Germany should be divided, but the division was always blamed on the other bloc, a weapon in the Cold War.

The Cold War wasn't a reluctance to fight a real war, neither did it have much to do with deterrence.

Although there were some US generals and politicians who wanted to wage a war against the Soviet Union after the defeat of Germany, it didn't really fit in with the propaganda line that the war had been fought against fascism and aggression and for democracy, freedom and self-determination.

The US had still had to come to terms with being the strongest imperialist power.

The Soviet Union, in contrast, was exhausted with 20 million dead and much of its western part devastated. The states of eastern Europe would be a friendly buffer, as they had been an unfriendly buffer before the war.

Although the imperialist powers had agreed to this at Yalta in 1944 and in Potsdam immediately after the war and, although at first the USSR was prepared to be flexible about the social and political systems, this was forgotten and the "Soviet bloc" was another Cold War weapon.

In fact the Cold War was very useful to the capitalist system. It meant that inter-capitalist rivalries could not get too far out of hand. There might be trade wars but not real wars as long as the "Communist Threat" was still there.

The threat was also used as a pretext to witch-hunt the left and in many countries, influential and powerful movements were broken by this repression.

On the other hand Stalinist repression and economic underdevelopment were held up to the working class as examples of what socialism really was about.

No mention was made that the region was grossly underdeveloped even before it was systematically devastated in the war and that only Czechoslovakia was not a dictatorship by 1938.

German reunification was another useful Cold War slogan. Both sides could call for it on terms that would be unacceptable to the other, such as demanding free elections in the GDR, or the dismantling of the Berlin Wall.

After portraying eastern Europe as grey and repressive for so long, capitalist politicians are finding that, on the face of it, their conditions are being met, with some eastern bloc states apparently adopting Thatcherism or Reaganomics.

They see the prospect of a capitalist restoration in eastern Europe — with West German investment going into East Germany — leaving the other markets for everyone else.

But what then of NATO? What is the "Evil Empire"? Why a divided Germany? What place for the EC, originally formed to limit West German heavy industry by the Schuman Plan?

The idea that a united Germany would consent to be occupied, so that if the US and USSR ever decided to have a war they would have somewhere to fight it, is absurd.

Equally a neutral Germany is a contradiction in terms: a united Germany would be a major power in its own right.

All the certainties of the Cold War are gone. Capitalism would be faced by the prospect of explosive rivalries without the policeman of the Cold War.

What then for the working class? The workers of the GDR have forced changes, not only by emigrating, but by demonstrating in their millions. The working class has shown once again that it is in its power to change the system.

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leberg, Köthen and Bautzen committed suicide.

According to ADN, the official East German news agency, local party groups throughout the whole country have been meeting to demand free elections.

Outside the building where the new Politburo was elected, several thousand party members demonstrated, chanting "We are the party."

In speech after speech the new Politburo was condemned and calls were made for the prosecution of the old leaders.

In response the Central Committee established a commission to investigate offences by veteran leaders Günther Mittag and Joachim Hermann and at the same time expelled them from the Committee.

Reformers

Only one of the new ten member Politburo (reduced from 21) is regarded as having some reformist credentials. This is Hans Modrow, the new 61-year old Prime Minister openly supported by the Gorbachev leadership in Moscow.

By drawing him into the Politburo and making him Prime Minister, Krenz is probably trying to secure his own position.

Modrow seems to want a clean sweep of the old guard and has spoken in favour of a coalition government with the old front parties in the *Volkskammer* (the Liberals, Christian Democrats, and Peasant Party).

His government will probably move in the direction of Gorbachev-style reform: separation of party and state, economic decentralisation and limited privatisation, and a more liberal *Rechtsstaat* (state based on the rule of law).

In the cultural arena, the repressive rule of Kurt Hager has finally come to an end.

In his place is Klaus Höpcke, who won credit among GDR intellectuals last March when he supported a resolution of the *Pen-Zentrum* condemning the persecution of Vaclav Havel by the Czech authorities.

The prominent GDR writer, Christa Wolf, has issued an appeal to the numerous writers and other cultural figures forced to leave in the past decade to return to East Germany.

Independent Groups

A number of independent groups have formed since the summer. The first of these, set up in August, was the "Initiative for a Social Democratic Organisation" which later became the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

The SDP claims to be independent of the West German SPD and has applied to the Socialist International for recognition.

In September a number of groups met (300-500 people) in Böhlen (near Leipzig) to formulate a left-wing platform (the Böhlen Appeal).

This called for "the predominance of social ownership of the means of production", "self-determination of the producers" and "political democracy".

By far the biggest group is *Neues Forum* (New Forum). This mass organisation still has no clear political programme but does see itself as fighting for a democratic socialism.

Two other similar organizations are *Demokratischer Aufbruch* (Democratic Breakthrough) and *Demokratie Jetzt* (Democracy Now).

As the conservative West German paper *Die Welt* wrote in October, "what all of these groups want is socialism with a human face."

Unlike in Poland or Hungary, a general socialist orientation appears to be common to all the movements and groups organised so far. There is no evidence of right-wing organisations.

An independent trade union initiative, *Reform*, has been established but remains small. Up to now protest has been concentrated in mass political action outside the factories.

Some attempts are being made to breathe life into the old political parties in the SED-dominated front (the CDU, Liberals) but the eventual line-up of political parties and currents is still very unclear.

West Germany

All the major political currents in West Germany are disoriented.

The conservatives (CDU), trying to win back supporters from the radical right, talk about reunification of the *Vaterland* but seem to have no clear strategy.

Any real re-unification would only benefit the SPD, who, after years of dealing only with the CPs in Eastern Europe, have been trying hard to distance themselves from the SED.

The Greens, perturbed by the thousands of refugees who were enthusiastically embracing West Germany ("kissing the ground like the pope" as one of their MPs said), have called for the Federal Republic to recognize officially the East German state and treat its citizens like those of any other state.

Behind all the rhetoric, however, the West German establishment wants to prevent what CDU Foreign Minister Genscher calls "a de-Europeanization of the German question".

By this he means that gradual steps towards some form of German unity should be part of the overall process of European unification in what Gorbachev calls the "common European home."



zig — the spectre of real communism is haunting Europe as the sleeping giant of the East German working class

Eye-witness report

Practical solidarity needed!

The events of the past few weeks have come as a shock to many of us, but not as much as to the those dissidents in East Germany who have been repeatedly arrested over the years for such trivial things as handing out leaflets.

What comes as just as much of a shock is returning to Britain to find the complete distortion of those events by the British media.

The general drift here is that all the East Germans want is unification with the consumer paradise of West Germany.

The so-called *Independent* even referred to "green- tinged romanticists in the opposition who oppose reunification" as if these people can be ignored.



East Berliners scale the wall on November 9th

By Mark Thompson Leader of ASLEF delegations to East Germany, July and November 1989.

Luckily, Western propaganda about a consumer paradise does not fool the East Germans, just as they have never been fooled by their own government's propaganda that everyone in the West faces unemployment and homelessness.

Denied for 28 years the right to see for themselves, they finally won this right, after massive demonstrations, on November 8th (although still with some bureaucratic formalities).

With £34 each on offer from the West German government, two million East Berliners promptly went to West Berlin, the City they had seen only across the Wall, for what turned into a massive party.

All but 10,000 returned home the next day, together with several thousand who had previously escaped.

Talking to East Germans, both supporters and opponents of the Communist Party, one thing is clear. The last thing they want is unification with West Germany.

Hard as it is for our journalists to understand, East Germans *like* having subsidised housing, food, and creches, virtually free public transport, and the right to work written into law.

Unfortunately if the country is to get the investment in new technology that the Federal Republic got in 1945, it will be on condition that it abolishes these social benefits.

Bush and Kohl also seem to think they can unilaterally impose reunification (Thatcher is opposed, but not out of concern for East Germans' democratic rights).

Quite whether this involves advancing the forward positions of NATO and the EEC to the Polish (or even Soviet) border remains unclear.

New Forum, the broad opposition movement that brought a million people onto the streets, continues to demonstrate. Its demands are:

- Freedom of travel, without *any* bureaucratic restrictions;
- Free elections and abolition of the leading role of the SED (Communist Party);
- Freedom of assembly and speech;
- A free (i.e. uncensored) press;
- Free trade unions.

The last demand is the most important, because a strong working class underwrites all the other freedoms.

The first independent unions are only now being set up, mostly in the Stalinists' showpiece factories.

If the East Germans are to maintain their social benefits in the face of the demands of Western capitalism, it will only be through strong union organisation. For this reason this last demand is the least popular with our capitalist press.

Krenz, the hardline Communist leader trying his best to appear a radical reformist, remains ambiguous as to how much reform he is prepared to concede. If he hesitates, he may fall victim to the newfound radicalism of the rank and file of his own party.

In the build-up to the party conference on December 13th-17th, they have been holding their own demonstrations, with the slogan "We want to win free elections."

If these "radicals" (Gorbachev supporters, though more interested in democratic glasnost than economic perestroika) come out on top, and they can hold free elections before the opposition parties have a chance to find their feet, they may well win.

The Communists' traditional stooges, the Liberal Democrats, the Christian Democrats, the New Democrats, and the Peasants Party, are desperately trying to assert their own identity.

Unofficially, they are building links with their West Gertman counterparts, as is the still illegal and very small Social Democratic Party.

The space for a radical Marxist party exists, as was proved at a recent debate between East German Marxists and Belgian Trotskyist leader Ernest Mandel before an audience of 500 people.

Speakers who equivocated on the leading role of the SED were heckled, but Mandel was rapturously received.

What they need, if they are to reach the same audience as the other parties, and if New Forum is to turn into a genuine mass movement with a democratic structure, is access to hard currency — essential for computer discs, typewriter parts and printing ink.

There is a crucial role here for British socialists. Such aid now will be the key to the future development of socialism.

Please send cheques and secondhand (or new) computer equipment to the Briefing office, with cheques made payable to *Labour Briefing* and marked on the back "East Germany".

The Women's Page

Ten years of Thatcher:

You're on your own, sister!

In 1979 not many socialist feminists celebrated the election of Britain's first woman Prime Minister.

Even fewer would have predicted her ten year long reign.

By Barbara Green
Women for Socialism



Whilst the bosses face skill shortages, local authorities shut nurseries.

The policies developed during the years of what has become known as "Thatcherism" have done little to improve the lives of the mass of women.

These two combined facts — that Thatcher is a woman and that her government has shat all over women — has intrigued the media and the left.

We have all read the articles and books (a surprising number written by Bea Campbell), watched the TV documentaries (Bea Campbell seems to have a hand in a few of these as well) about Margaret Thatcher, "the Woman *and* the Prime Minister.

We have seen how her image has changed in the last ten years, her hair, her clothes, her make-up, her voice. Unfortunately the one thing she has not changed is her husband!

Without wishing to defend Thatcher's cynical use of the media, hands up all those who have *not* changed in the last ten years?

I know many men on the left are still wearing the same baggy jeans, etc., but this is hardly anything to be proud of.

It is difficult not to be frivolous when discussing the obsession that the media and sections of the left have on this issue.

The result of concentrating on Thatcher as a woman and not as a representative of the most reactionary government for many years is to neglect the results of the policies followed by that government.

In particular, the Tories have bolstered the notion of "individual responsibility" in the fields of education, health, accommodation, and work.

Women, or at least some women, are now encouraged to have babies and return to work.

Assuming you don't work for one of the private companies that are now going to provide creches at exorbitant costs to individual women, you will have to find your own solution to childcare problems because the state certainly does not consider that care for the under-fives is its responsibility.

Even if you live in a Labour Borough the chances of a nursery place are remote. You name it — you are individually responsible for finding and paying for it.

There is also a newly emerging group called the Conservative Family Campaign which is clearly linked with the Moral Majority mob in America.

The CFC (I thought that was something that made holes in the ozone layer) are sponsoring motions in parliament to outlaw lesbians for using artificial insemination by donor (AID).

After all, if women don't need men to have children, well, where will it all stop?

In the years since the 67 Abortion Bill, numerous attempts have been made to change and weaken it. Socialist feminists have fought off these attacks, but now once again they are going for a reduction in time limits.

This whole debate indicates how far the Tory ideological campaign has advanced.

Many Labour MPs are now prepared to back a 24-week limit on the basis that this will stop any further reduction. That argument simply does not hold up. Many of those Labour MPs are merely capitulating.

They have taken on board the Tory line that abortion is about the foetus and not women's choice and control over our own bodies. Many now believe that it is the foetus not the woman's rights which have to be defended.

The onslaught organised in America by anti-abortionists does not simply reflect a powerful group of religious maniacs but a political system that cannot tolerate women having control over their bodies. Exactly the same thing is happening here.

Much has been made recently about the numbers of women entering the workforce and how by 1992 we will make up over half the working population. This suggests a certain amount of financial independence and potential political power.

But the leaderships of the labour and trade union movement have not encouraged women to organise.

They have not given women any power because they too fear the potentially progressive role that the self-organisation of women would have. In fact, that Labour Party has gone so far as to dismantle the Women's Organisation because it is too left wing.

For the vast majority of women the power of Tory ideology and practical policies remains enormous. The leaderships of the labour movement bear a lot of responsibility for this.

Everybody on the left is now heard to say that the Labour Party will not win the next election — the Tories will lose it! Women won't forget this.

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

Our bodies: abortion choices

RU ready?

Between one third and one half of all abortions in France are now carried out using the abortion pill RU486.

The pill allows women the option, in the early stages of pregnancy, of an abortion without the need for surgery or general anaesthetic.

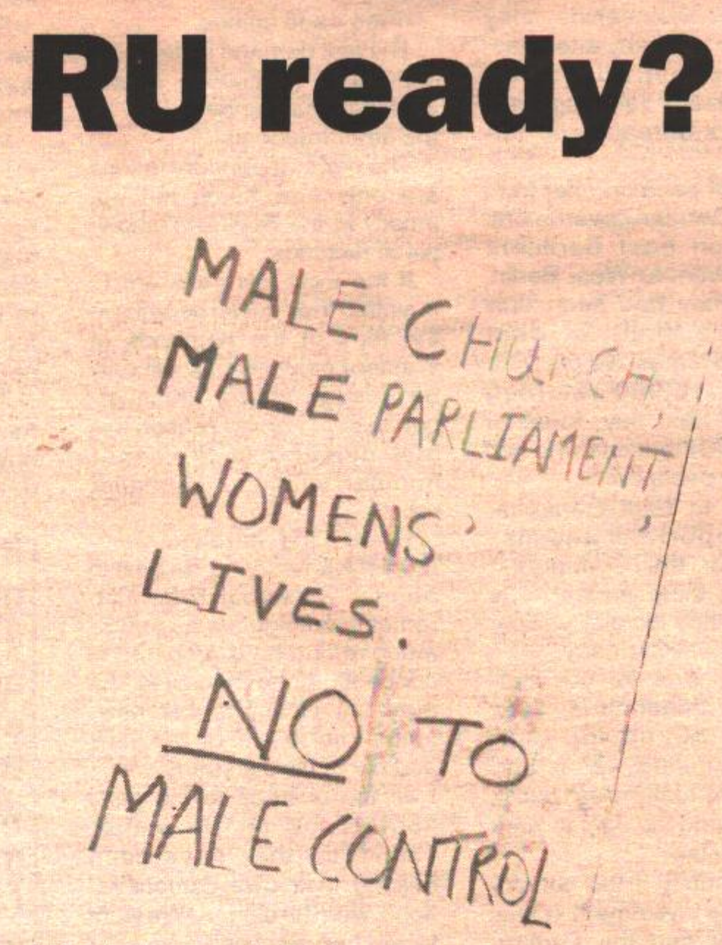
By GILL LEE

Treatment consists of taking three tablets followed by a prostoglandin injection or pessary, and is 95% effective.

The apparently safe and convenient form of abortion may never be available to women in Britain due to the threats of the anti-abortionists and the profit hunger of the pills' manufacturers, Roussel.

Publicity

Roussel is scared of the bad publicity and consumer boycott threatened by anti-choice activists should they dare to manufacture in Britian.



It is also rumoured that the chair of the German parent company is an anti-abortionist. This shows the need for medical research and development to be controlled by women, not dictated by the whims of private drug companies.

Following death threats against researchers, and in response to the call for a world wide boycott of their products, its French manufacturers tried to suspend the pill from distribution there.

Unprecedented

Only the unprecedented action of the French Government, which argued the drug was "the moral property of women", ensured it has continued to be available across the Channel.

Unfortunately it is hard to imagine the Thatcher Government taking a similar pro-choice stance and, as the manufacturers have asked, inviting the distribution of RU486 in Britain.

RU486 has been under trial for about seven years and has been approved for use.

Women here should call for its immediate production and distribution on demand. The availability of control over our bodies should not be denied us by the anti-abortionists or private drug companies.

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

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

I am particularly interested in:.....

.....

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

Hornsey & Wood Green Labour Party Women's Section
Presents
A Central and South American evening for women
Friday 8th December at 7.30pm
Station House Community Centre
Stapleton Hall Road, N4
Bar, food, music, singers, video, stalls and goods from Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua
£6 waged/£3 unwaged; ticket price includes food.
For tickets phone
Jane on 01-881 8471 or Maggie on 01-341 4376

BOOK REVIEW

'You wouldn't want them in your defence...'

Out of his skin — the John Barnes phenomenon, by Dave Hill, *Faber & Faber*, £4.99 (paperback).

English football is racist.

This racism is expressed at every level of the game, from the Football League Management Committee down to the crowds who spend their Saturday afternoons hurling insults and bananas at black players.

This book tells the story of one footballer, John Barnes, and his progress through the English game — marked at every stage by the contradictions which this racism throws up.

To his credit, Dave Hill has not fallen into either of the traps frequented by his journalist colleagues.

He rejects the racist assumptions, widespread throughout football, that black players, by virtue of their genetic make-up, are:

"fast, naturally gifted, skilful and intuitive..." but, on the other hand, "lack determination/character/'bottle'... well you wouldn't want too many of 'them' in your defence, would you?"

Equally, Hill refuses to accept the vulgar and impressionist notion that racism in football is entirely the province of "mindless hooligans" who, according to TV pundits and the popular press alike, are single-handedly destroying "our national game".

By Glenn Sutherland
Bow & Poplar CLP

Instead, Hill attempts to analyse the relationship of black players to the racist attitudes and practices in the English game — and to do so in terms of historical and material reality.

We should not be surprised by the fact that he does not completely succeed in this herculean task. But we should applaud him for making some rare progress in this direction.

John Barnes, coincidentally, *is* "fast, intuitive and skillful" on the football field.

The book is liberally sprinkled with poetic descriptions of his play, for example, his beautiful goal against Brazil in the Maracana Stadium in 1984.

Barnes has often been accused of being lazy and lacking the will to win or even to take much part in some games. This is particularly true of some of his performances for Watford and England.

Hill puts this down to a combination of the footballing style (or lack of it) which both Graham Taylor and Bobby Robson favour and Barnes's upbringing in the bosom of the Jamaican ruling class.

John's father is a colonel in the Jamaican army and both at home and at school Victorian values such as "fair play", "honour", and "dignity" were rammed home at the expense of "winning at all costs".

As Hill says (with reference to the rows with Taylor over Barnes' "laid back attitude") "The fear of failure did not show in his eyes."

"Character"

The emphasis placed on work-rate, "character", the will to win, and team spirit in English football since the war is one of the main obstacles to black players progressing in the game.

This is not because black players necessarily show any lack of these questionable qualities, but rather that football managers, directors, and fans regard them as "white, anglo-saxon" attitudes.

The central event in the book is John Barnes' first season after signing for Kenny Dalglish's Liverpool in June 1987.

Hill chronicles the horrific racism of both Liverpool and Everton fans and Barnes' methods of coping with and overcoming it by "good public relations".

He also traces this racism back to its origins in the slave trade economy from which modern Liverpool sprang.

Hill also contrasts the thriving black amateur football scene in Liverpool with its overwhelmingly white professional counterpart.

This book is essential reading for anyone who is interested in football, racism, the imperial history of British culture... in short, for all socialists.



New Liverpool signings Beardsley and Barnes pose below NF graffitti at the Kop end.

Join the FSA

Write to: FSA, 59 Oakwood Road, Halewood, Liverpool L26 1XD

Book Review

Their Thatcherism and ours

The Thatcher Effect, eds. D Kavanagh and A Seldon, *Clarendon Press*, 1989.

What is Thatcherism?

Many big books have been written about this.

Academic theorists have characterised it as a unique form of "authoritarian populism". Media pundits, like Hugo Young, see Thatcherism as more of a style than a policy.

Last month Thatcher herself told Brian Walden that Thatcherism was a lot older than she was.

So is it a coherent free market philosophy? Not a bit of it! Cut through the ideological dressing, say her shrewder supporters, and you find that government policy has been guided by old-fashioned Tory pragmatism.

Take privatisation, that uniquely "Thatcherite" policy. The rhetoric about increasing share ownership and competition is torpedoed by the facts.

Two years after Amersham International's cut-price privatisation (there were *24 times* as many applications as shares), the number of shareholders had fallen by 88%.

As for competition, what's so "competitive" about privatised monopolies like BT, the 75% rejection rate of private tenders for hospital laundry services, or the fact that company directors' pay increased *on average 85%* in the first two years of their privatisation.

The plain fact is that privatisation is more about raising revenue to finance the public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR) and giving cheap capital to the government's City paymasters than practising a radically new philosophy.

By Mike Phipps
Woolwich CLP

Privatisation has taken at least a dozen forms since 1979. All they have in common is unloading manageable spoonfuls of capital into the private sector and oiling the Stock Market.

In its first term, the government paid the City £50 million in fees, expenses and commissions linked to privatisation. £15 million profit was made on the first day of trading in Cable and Wireless.

The same pragmatic — rather than philosophical — goals have guided the government's entire economic strategy, as even a devoted fan like Samuel Brittan is forced to concede.

Turning to social and industrial policy, the position is even clearer.

At every step in the last ten years, the government has had to take into account the concrete balance of forces before acting. The difference with Heath is that the Thatcher regime has prepared its ground in advance.

This occasioned, for example, the drawing up of the Ridley Plan to defeat a coal strike even before the Tories took office.

It led to the gradual piling up on the statute book of anti-union legislation, often used only to finish off a strike once it had been wrecked by leadership treachery.

This was also the reason why the government's most intensive barrage of (anti-) social legislation could only be put through in its third term — in conditions where the miners had been defeated and the working class thrown back.

Only then was it safe to enact Poll Tax, axe student grants and undertake a deeply unpopular reorganisation of the NHS.

Nor can anything uniquely and radically Thatcherite be found in foreign policy.

It took her ten years to get "one of us" running the Foreign Office. But the Lawson crisis meant the biddable Major going to the Treasury and his FCO job being taken by the more mainstream Hurd.

The Lawson crisis has made every big book about ten years of Thatcher instantly out of date. *The Thatcher Effect* is no exception. Samuel Brittan's contribution would have been completely rewritten, to go by his recent rantings on TV.

The Thatcher Effect has the advantage of having lots of solid facts about the results of government policy.

GNP spending on health in Britain is 2% less than the average OECD country. Over £1 billion has been "saved" in Rayner's civil service cuts.

Housing is the area where the greatest amount of spending cuts have occurred, with the government budget cut from *£7.3 billion to £1.9 billion.*

£17.5 billion has been raised in Council house sales in the last ten years, compared to the £23.5 billion raised by *all other privatisations.*

While each policy area is examined in turn, the real effects of government policy in the last ten years on *people* are not. The book is silent on these effects on women, black people, youth, the unemployed and the homeless.

Equally there is no analysis of the major political turning points — especially the miners' strike — which set the tempo for policy attacks.

How can one understand the abolition of the GLC, for example, without considering the victory of the London Labour left at the start of the 1980s?

More insidiously, the book intersperses basically lowgrade academic factual textbook articles with pure Thatcherite propaganda from the likes of Samuel Brittan and Enoch Powell.

How's this for a guilt-by-association smear from Vernon Bogdanov, writing on the 1970s:

Emblems

"The most memorable emblems of that decade were the Saltley pickets, the masked gunmen of Northern Ireland, and the cancer patients turned away from hospitals." Highly objective!

A real overview of the Thatcher decade needs to look at both sides of the political equation. Neil Kinnock is already, after Gaitskell, the longest-serving leader of the Opposition this century.

Labour's three election defeats were *not*, as the authors would suggest, due to conjunctoral weaknesses in the short election campaigns in 1979, 1983 and 1987.

They were connected to the Party's refusal to mobilise its natural base and champion the demands of workers who have fought the bitterest and most drawn-out struggles since the 1926 General Strike.

All talk about changes in the class and social structure, in the vein of *Marxism Today*, which fails to put at its centre the criminal inability of the labour movement leaders to organise the real opposition to the government, becomes merely an apology for ten years of capitulation.

What is Thatcherism? Not a style, nor an ideology, but a militant, practical policy of capitalist government against the working class

Its a policy which has endured only because the class capable of defeating it has been repeatedly misled and sold short each time it has tried.

In the last analysis, the "Thatcher effect" was caused by the timid inaction of the labour movement leadership.

Trade Union Briefing

Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference

Trade union left moves ahead

550 trade unionists — the overwhelming majority of them non-aligned militants — attended the conference organised by the Socialist Movement in Sheffield on November 11th and 12th.

This highly successful event represented an important development for the left in the unions and the fight-back against New Realism, and could not have come at a better time given the current rise in struggle and the beginnings of a regeneration of the unions at rank and file level.

By Alan Thornett Trade Union Briefing

The conference was sponsored by over 40 labour movement organisations; and 160 trade union branches and nine trades councils sent 250 official delegates to it. There were 57 members of NALGO, 16 CPSA, 23 MSF, 22 NUJ, 18 NUM, 16 NUPE, 18 NUR, 33 NUT and 22 TGWU, plus members of most other TUC affiliated unions.

The opening plenary was chaired by Jeremy Corbyn MP and featured Tony Benn, Micky Fenn (victimised Tilbury Docks Steward), Anne Speed (Irish TGWU), Anne Henderson (NUR Broad Left), Debbie Epstein (LGLGR and STA), Kim Moody (Labor Notes US), Rauion Corriz (General Motors Barcelona) and an ambulance crew.

The Sunday plenary included representative from four other current disputes — Pergamon, Essex Chronicle, Sheffield CPSA, and Islington NALGO childcarers.

It was the biggest unofficial, rank and file gathering of its kind in Britain for over ten years — showing that despite damage done by Thatcherism there is still a keen response to this kind of organisation.

Many of those attending came from a new generation of trade union militants brought forward by the new mood of rank and file militancy expressed in the industrial actions of the last year and a half, represented most clearly at the moment by the ambulance crews.

But it was not just its size and scope which made the conference important. It was the democratic basis on which it was organised which represented a sharp break from previous initiatives (organised by the LCDTU, the IS/SWP, and BLOC in the 1960s, 70s and early 80s) which were rigidly controlled and discussed only short, unamendable, statements made available on the day.

This conference was organised by a committee elected at the June Socialist Movement conference and discussed a comprehensive policy document circulated in advance and open to amendment via discussion in the 36 workshops held over the weekend.

The political scope of the conference was an important innovation as well. The policy document set out to address not only the more traditional "trade union issues" (the employers' offensive, the anti-union laws, health and safety, new technology, the changing nature of the workforce, privatisation, the defense of the NHS, the fight for higher wages and the defence of working conditions) but also to make the issues of women, blacks, and lesbian and gay workers in the unions a central part of the agenda.

For the first time at such a conference there was an out lesbian women speaker in the opening plenary. It also had sections on ecology and the unions, the Poll Tax, and international issues.

The central themes of the conference were: build a fight-back against new realism; defy the anti-union laws; support those in struggle; and democratise the unions. These were the key lines of divide which the conference sought, with some success, to draw in the trade union movement.

There were a number of important discussions in the workshops. John Palmer introduced the workshop on the Single European Market and 1992 (which developed into a debate between those supporting the policy document which saw 1992 as the reorganisation of capital on a European scale which would have a devastating effect on the working class as big corporations rationalised to meet new conditions) and an attempted amendment (which saw "... the concentration and socialisation of capital symbolised by the market represents a move forward in the organisation of production, creating new structures and links across national boundaries which can only be to the ultimate benefit of workers sharing a common class interest").

This key sentence in the amendment was defeated, but the discussion made an important contribution to an important debate which is as yet under-developed in the British trade union movement.

A debate which did go to the floor of conference was on an amendment on broad lefts and how they should be organised. The workshop on broad lefts adopted an amendment which outlined a series of principles on which all broad lefts should be based.

No one disagreed with the principles as such but the extent to which they should be preconditions for supporting broad left formations, as opposed to objectives which socialists should fight for inside the broad lefts themselves, was controversial.

It would have been too restrictive and required broad lefts to be near-perfect political formations before they could be supported by the Socialist Movement. This was not cleared up in the debate since the mover stressed that these were not preconditions, while the seconder stressed that they were.

It was pointed out in the debate that most of the BLs which had sponsored the conference do not meet all the criteria concerned. The amendment was carried against the platform and a strict interpretation of it would represent a potential problem in the relationship between the Socialist Movement and the broad lefts which took part, formally or informally in the conference.

The conference took several important practical initiatives designed to strengthen the work of the Socialist Movement in the unions. A new Socialist Movement Trade Union Steering Committee was elected at the conference from regional meetings of delegates and from caucuses of members of the individual unions.

This committee was charged with carrying out the decisions of the conference, organising the trade union work of the Socialist Movement, and building solidarity with those in struggle.

The Socialist Movement plans to publish the agreed policy statement almost immediately as a pamphlet for sale in the trade unions. Various other practical decisions of the conference will be implemented as well - including caucuses of members of several of the unions present, a conference on the Poll Tax and the possibilty of a conference of the European left.

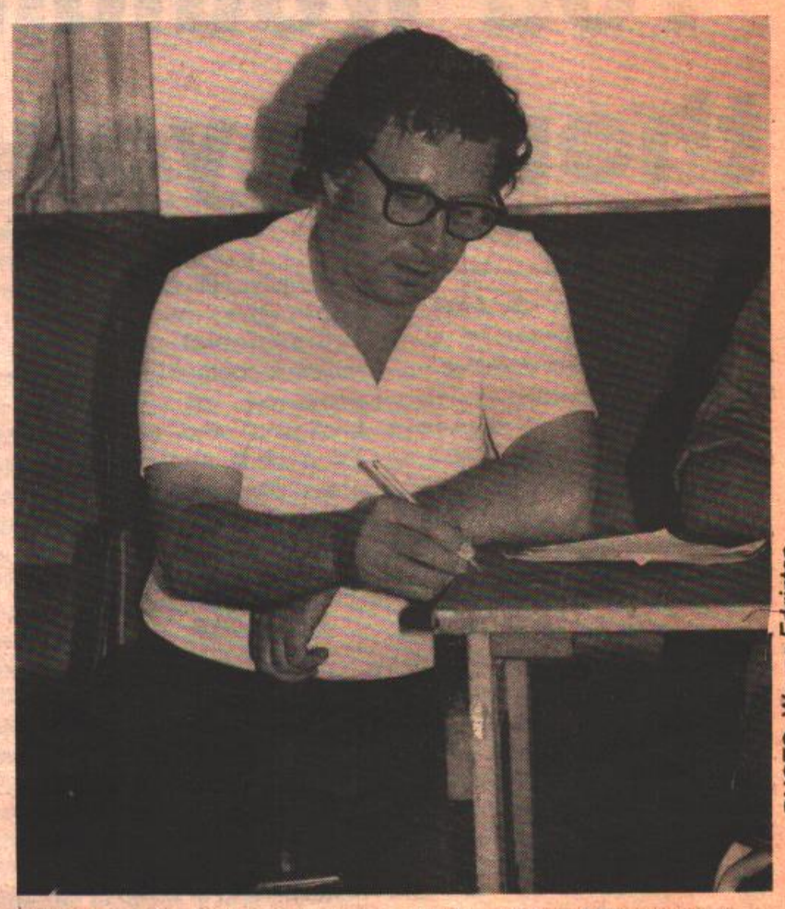


PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

Alan Thornett poised to sign copies of his book "From Militancy to Marxism"

Ford's

Ford workers demand a share of the profits

The present dispute in Ford's has to be looked at in the context of the steady rise in productivity by the workforce.

In the last five year's productivity has increased by 50% as reflected in Ford's profits and its lead in the markets.

By Steve Riley Branch sec. Ford Dagenham TGWU central branch.

Faced with rising inflation, and with the average Ford worker trailing behind the average Jaguar worker by £34, people are seeing that this is outrageous and saying enough is enough.

They want a decent share of the profits in terms of productivity gains that we have already given the company. Ford have come back, as they usually do, with a two year deal which involves a proposed 8% offer for the first year and 7% for the second.

Our demand was for a one year offer. In the light of inflation and how Ford is going to raise prices over a two year period this two year offer is not acceptable to us.

Moreover, they have made no attempt to deal with the other two main points of the claim. These are firstly, for a shorter working week — for 35 hours in line with the Confed's position — and, secondly, for an extra week's holiday.

Offer

Ford are due to meet on 6th November and will probably come back with an offer of another one per cent or slightly more. They will without a doubt want added strings for that — more efficiencies and so on.

Leaked

Although they are denying it about two months ago we know that Ford leaked to the press the suggestion that they might be prepared to settle around 10%. That was obviously to set a figure in people's heads, so we think they are aiming for a final figure just under 10%, but with strings attached.

In the longer term we are of course worried about the future of Dagenham. Ford are simply not putting the investment into the plant which they are putting into their European plants, and which their competitors are making.

One glaring example of this is the Try-axe press, which most of the European companies are installing. These can treble the output of the present presses. Although Ford said they planned to put one in our press shop before the summer shut down, they have now withdrawn that.

This is necessary capital investment to make us competitive. We are very suspicious that the situation we experienced with the foundry is going to be repeated. There, over a period of years investment was not made, the workforce cooperated in ensuring efficiency, but at the end of the day they said it was uncompetitive.

Despite our approaches management have made it clear that they are not prepared to discuss investment with us.

Worries

These worries that Ford may be moving in the direction of closing down Dagenham are reinforced by the move to continuous, three shift working in Europe. Adopting this will increase capacity by about a third.

The size of the market over the next four to five years could in this context be met with the plants that Ford have got in Europe without Dagenham.

Concern

So our concern is that when the next Fiesta is due — in about five year's time — Ford will announce that Dagenham in uncompetitive. Particularly in the context of the dropping of trade barriers after 1992 it will be much easier for Ford to move production elsewhere.

Reprinted courtesy of *Socialist Campaign Group News*

NUJ Left

Jim for deputy

Left NEC member Jim Boumelha is standing against Chris Frost for the NUJ's vice-presidency at Annual Delegate Meeting 1990.

And this year's president, Paul McGill is after right-winger Alan Pike's job as general treasurer.

From *NUJ Left Bulletin*

Boumelha, NEC member for Magazines and Books outside London, is FoC of the 23-strong Pergamon Press chapel which is fighting an epic David-and-Goliath battle with the Robert Maxwell empire.

Striking chapel members have been sacked, and have toured Britain and Europe to publicise their strike further than Maxwell thought they would dare.

Under a long-standing NUJ tradition the person elected as vice-president is unchallenged for the presidency the following year.

An NUJ Left meeting last month considered, but rejected, a request for support from Frost, who was narrowly beaten by David Sinclair in this year's vice-presidential battle.

Frost couldn't line up wholeheartedly behind the Statement of Principles adopted by the NUJ Left inaugural conference earlier this year. Boumelha is a committed socialist and campaigner for black rights in the unions.

He has been part of a sometimes small left minority on the NEC. Where others have faltered he has resolutely opposed the leadership's climbdown over a strike against broadcasting censorship, and the re-admission of Wapping scabs.

McGill, who previously held the Northern Ireland seat on the NEC, now works in England. The chance of replacing Pike, whose dismal record speaks for itself, with one of the union's most senior and effective figures, is too good to miss.

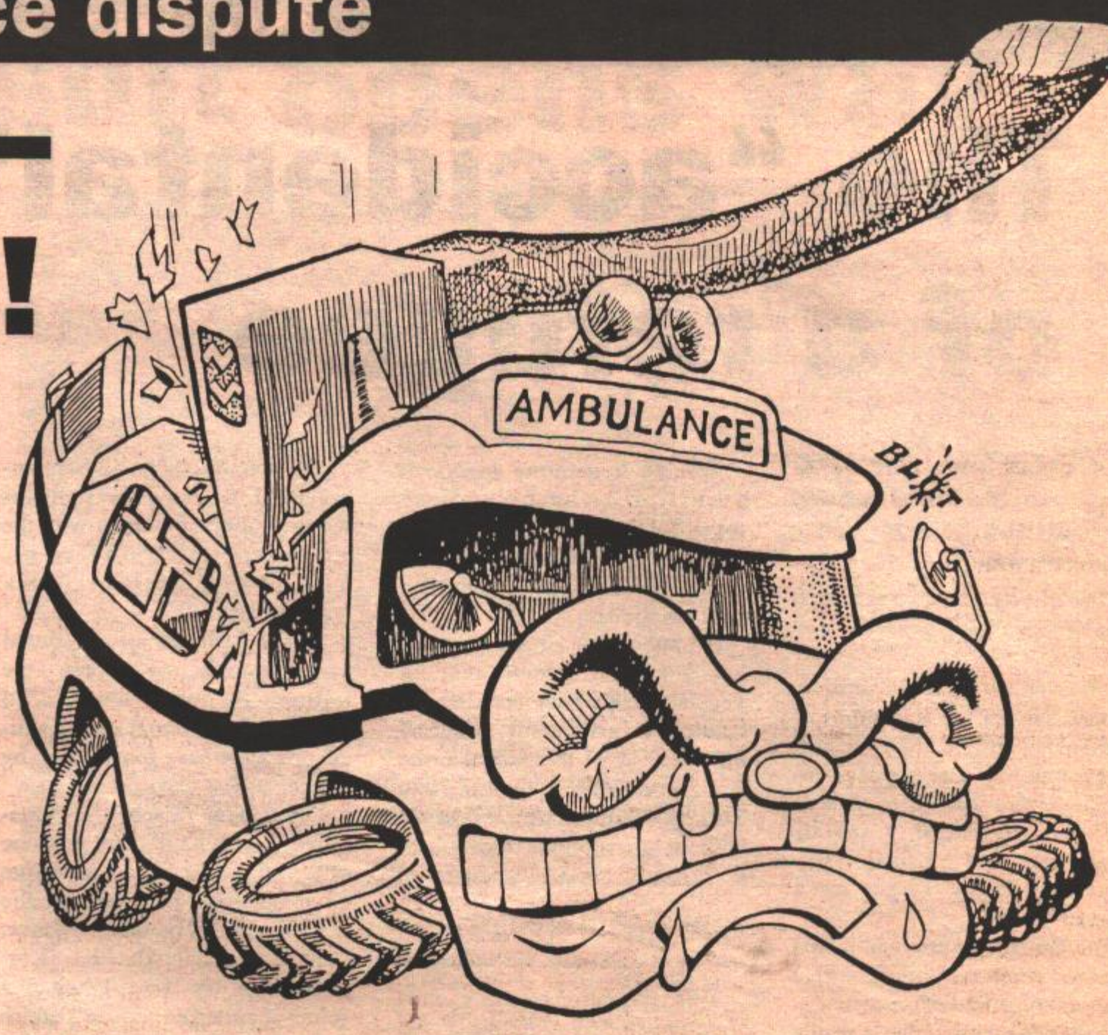
A bizarre feature of NUJ elections at this level is the practice of candidates gathering in as many branch nominations as they possibly can. It seems that a long list of branches in the conference agenda really does help build credibility and pull in extra votes, however illogical that seems.

Therefore every member of the NUJ Left should make an effort to get Jim Boumelha and Paul McGill nominated by his or her branch.

Last month's Left meeting also resolved to put up candidates for the TUC, Women's TUC and NEC seats, in line with an earlier decision to contest every position we can.

Ambulance dispute

No concessions — spread the action!



Ambulance crews are receiving massive popular support in their current dispute with the government. Money has flooded in. Even hospital consultants and managers have signed petitions supporting our 11% pay demand.

The thousands who marched on Saturday November 18th showed that ambulance workers are absolutely solid and determined to resist the Tories' threats and expose their lies.

By an ambulance worker

In London, ambulance controllers are now considering refusing to put 999 calls through to the police and army. Rising media star Roger Poole and the NUPE leadership should be using the opportunity to call for the spread of such action.

Poole has called for an accident and emergency service only from Tuesday, November 21st. This is welcome and needs to be built upon. But over the last week Poole has actually withdrawn some important parts of the claim, including the long service claim, which is a vital demand.

No other increment is available to people once they've qualified. At the moment overtime is paid at standard rate. Poole has dropped the demand for it to be paid at a proper overtime rate. We had also demanded a reduction in our work time and Poole seems to have dropped that too.

Over pay Poole also seems to have made concessions, calling for an increase on the government's 6.5% offer rather than the full 11% claim. Just as the action is spreading and the government panicking, the union is giving away concessions. Yet in the end the government offered nothing new in the recent abortive negotiations.

The proposal coming from NHS manager Nichols that there should be some increase for those with paramedical training is divisive and diversionary. There's been a commitment for years that *all* ambulance workers should receive training to high, paramedic standards.

But such training takes up to three months and requires time in hospitals. It has taken authorities which started from scratch up to *seven years* to set up facilities.

So in many areas paramedic training isn't an option available to ambulance workers, no matter how much they may want it. Basing the pay award on paramedic training would therefore be an insult to day workers and non-emergency crews.

Managements' response to the action seems to vary from region to region. In Hertfordshire no one is being paid unless they are working normally and the army has been brought in for 999 calls.

Cover

In other areas where there is accident and emergency cover only, non-emergency staff are still being normally paid on the basis that they are doing the exempted work agreed by the union.

In other areas day workers and non-emergency staff are not being paid at all.

In London, Health Minister Clarke warned that it would be illegal for workers in dispute to use ambulances to answer 999 calls which should have gone to the policed and army. After a defiant response from the workers he now seems to have backtracked on this.

A lot of areas are already doing only accident and emergency work. This action must be spread. Ambulance workers are learning fast and their confidence is growing. But we'll have to be on our guard against sell-outs from our union leaders.

Union merger

GMB officials to spy

The following leaked memorandum from GMB Scotland Regional Industrial Officers on possible merger with UCATT speaks for itself:

1 September 1989
To: All Officers

Dear Colleague
UCATT

We have to advise you that the General Secretary, Bro J Edmonds, and Bro F Cottam recently met three members of the UCATT Executive to have a tentative discussion about the possibility of an amalgamation. Obviously at this stage no conclusions have been reached by either side about going any further along this path.

However, it would now be useful to have all the intelligence we can get about the situation within UCATT, as an aid to possible decision-making later.

Any information any Official who is in contact with UCATT Officials or activists can glean would be helpful such as

State of morale in the Union.

Degree of real control exercised by the Executive and/or fulltime Officials.

Influence of lay activists.

Political infighting?

Views of FTO's, activists, members, about possible amalgamation in general or with any particular Union.

Any other useful information.

Any relevant information on above should be given to Bro R Scott.

Yours sincerely

R Scott A Fairley R Thomson
Regional Industrial Officers

NUT

Action on pay now!

The NUT Executive has offered activists attempting to rebuild confidence amongst teachers in the wake of Baker's attacks nothing in the way of much needed assistance, no less leadership.

The government has put a 7% limit on teacher pay for next year, although no figure has yet come out of the "independent" Advisory Committee set up by Baker to determine pay levels.

By Martin Allen Socialist Teachers Alliance

The NUT, lead by right-wing New Realist Doug McAvoy, has submitted a 40% claim over two years and is spending £million plus of members dues on a publicity campaign.

One worrying aspect of the campaign is the emphasis put on uniting the six teacher unions, amomg which only the NUT and the NAS/UWT are affiliated to the TUC. Two others represent head teachers and one has called for separate scales and widening of differentials.

This exercise in "unity" extends to the Professional Association of Teachers, a right-wing anti-trade union, anti-industrial action organisation which in the past the NUT has refused to even sit round the table with. The first priority should be unity with the NAS/UWT — along the lines of current national policy.

The NAS/UWT leaders to their credit have called for industrial action, even if it is seen as a "last resort".

While activists should support and campaign around the claim, the 40% figure will mean little to many members unless a programme of action is planned to win at least a reasonable amount and prevent teachers standards of living falling yet further.

Rights

Teachers, who still have no negotiating rights, have had pay rises below the rate of inflation imposed on them for the last two years. During the industrial struggles of last summer, the NUT leadership backed out of an "interim" pay claim despite support for it from many branches.

The left in the union, organised around the Socialist Teachers Alliance and the Campaign for a Fighting Union, have called for a Special Salary Conference to discuss the way forward.

Support for strike action on pay would come from a membership that has sen workloads increase dramatically over recent weeks as a result of the new national curriculum.

In London, the situation is becoming impossible for many teachers. High mortgage rates have driven teachers out of the area and LEAs are desperately trying to plug the gaps and provide emergency cover for teachers who have left and cannot be replaced.

Nationally the number of vacancies is also rising. East London and Hackney teachers are refusing to teach oversized classes and children are being sent home.

Activists within the NUT should be arguing for the following demands:

- A one-day strike.
- A campaign of escalating strike action.
- Support for other workers in struggle against the government, including the Ambulance workers.
- A Special Salaries Conference — immediately.
- For flat-rate pay rises.

The Headquarters of NALGO is only a few yards away from the NUT Head Office at Hamilton House. The NUT leaders should follow the example of NALGO. Ballot its members, campaign for a "Yes" vote for industrial action, and lead from the front instead of falling back on excuses about "apathy" amongst teachers.

Fight back against apartheid!

In support of TGWU members Ross Galbraith and Gary Sherriff, sacked for refusing to work on a South African order at Granby Plastics, Leicester.

March and Rally

Saturday 9th December 1989

Assemble: Cossington Park, Belgrave, Leicester, 12 noon

Bring your banners!

We won't take blood money!

For further details contact Leicester and District Trades Council, 138 Charles Street, Leicester. Telephone Leicester 530005.

MARCH AGAINST MAXWELL!

November 25th
Assemble: 12 noon at NUJ HQ, 314 Grays Inn Road (Kings Cross tube)
Rally at Holborn outside the Mirror building
Speakers from: national and international unions and Labour Party
BRING YOUR BANNERS!

International Briefing

Kurdish refugees

The "accidental" death of a refugee



Turkish workers face police brutality on May Day demonstrations in Ankara.

On October 28th, over 3,000 people marched from Hackney to Southbank for Siho Iyigüven's funeral.

Siho's body was then taken to Heathrow airport to be *deported*.

Siho was a 26 year old Kurdish refugee. He set himself alight in Harmondsworth Detention Centre after being told that his application for asylum had been refused.

Three thousand Kurdish refugees are now in Britain. They have been fleeing Turkey since May 1989.

The British government's first response was to introduce a visa restriction for Turkish citizens.

It then locked hundreds of the refugees into prisons and detention centres where they were harassed, intimidated, and even beaten up by racist police and immigration officers.

Behind this barbaric treatment and the determination to deport these people is the government's belief that Kurdish refugees are not "political" but "economic" refugees.

By denying the political basis of the Kurdish refugees' asylum applications, the government ignores the persecution of Kurds in Turkey, and this in turn only encourages the Turkish regime.

Oppression of the Kurds is an important part of the overall policy of the "last Turkish state".

North Kurdistan — in south eastern Turkey, the least developed part of the present Turkish state — is the homeland of eight million Kurds.

Twenty million Kurds live in Kurdistan as a whole, divided between Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Kurdistan has always been an area of disputes, uprisings, repression and massacres.

Turkish hegemony in North Kurdistan, where landless peasants form the vast majority of the Kurdish population, is based on the government's deal with local landlords.

No attempt at agrarian reform has yet taken place. Instead Turkish troops have acted as the landlords' bodyguards, ensuring the survival of the feudal order and its gradual integration into Turkey's capitalist market — without interruptions from below.

By Sahin Cengiz

This integration requires an *assimilation* policy, since a national market needs *one* nation, particularly if it is being imposed on an underdeveloped country: hence the Turkish state's denial of the existence of a Kurdish minority.

In Turkey it is a criminal offence even to speak Kurdish, not to mention the right to enjoy a separate cultural identity or self-determination.

Kurdish children are forced to learn Turkish in schools. Their parents are forced to say Muslim prayers by religious officers sent by the state.

Some Kurdish people are Alevis who have their own belief which is often contradictory to official Islam.

From the beginning of this century, popular uprisings have taken place in North Kurdistan and have been put down with genocidal brutality.

But the idea of national identity and the struggle for self-determination really begins with the rise of the socialist movement in Turkey in the late 1960s, in which many Kurdish activists took part.

The coup d'etat on 12 September 1980 disrupted the fight for Kurdish liberation along with the whole socialist movement. Violent repression was widespread.

Kurds suffered an additional suppression. In prison some were tortured to death; some faced firing squads without trial. Political prisoners have fought back by hunger strikes and prison riots.

Diyarbodur prison, the "capital" of North Kurdistan, was one of the infamous centres of torture en masse and has been in the frontline of this heroic resistance.

In August 1984, the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) began a series of armed attacks on Turkish troops in North Kurdistan.

Since then, the security forces have been engaged in counter-insurgency operations and persecution of civilians. All the Kurdish village inhabitants in the area have suffered from raids and house searches.

The troops usually beat up everyone, including women and children, and sometimes male inhabitants are taken to the nearest police station and tortured. They are accused of being *potential* supporters of the guerillas — since they are Kurds.

The government tried to arm members of particular tribes and villages as "village protectors".

But this tactic failed due to the resistance of the Kurdish people which cost the lives of at least 100 peasants who refused to fight against their own people.

The recent news from the North Kurdistan is even worse.

In addition to torture and killings, civilians are now under serious threat from the government's new policy of *inhumanising* certain areas where Kurdish guerillas are thought to be based.

Thousands of Kurds are forced to leave their home-villages. This summer, the troops forced the whole population of one village to eat human excrement to "convince" them to move.

A Turkish daily, *Milliyet* estimates that over 9,500 Kurdish people were detained between August 1984 and July 1987 in the southeastern provinces. This number has at least doubled since then.

This summer, mass graves were uncovered but details could not be published due to the media ban. The government admits that last year a young woman's vagina was searched by police to find out if she was the fiancee of a PKK activist.

In August 1989, the army declared its intention to use chemical weapons if necessary in pursuit of *inhumanization*.

In their Home Office interviews, many Kurdish refugees explained that this persecution by the security forces was why they had left their homeland for Britain.

Their lives and properties were under serious threat and they hoped to be safe in Britain, where they believed that human rights are respected by law.

The deportation policy of the Home Office (51 Kurds deported so far) and the barbaric treatment by police and immigration officers areof course a big disappointment for these people.

But they *will* struggle for their right to stay which is guaranteed under international law.

After Siho's death, representatives of Kurdish and Turkish political organisations and community centres in London founded the "Siho Remembrance Committee" to carry on the struggle for the following demands:

- ***Freedom for all refugees in detention!***
- ***All refugees to be granted full asylum!***
- ***No more deportations, no return to torture!***
- ***Unite divided families!***

The Committee organised the massive march for Siho's funeral, despite the Turkish Community Centre (Halkevi) bureaucracy which refused to take part in either the Committee or in the march for purely sectarian reasons (Siho was not a Turkish CP suppporter).

British labour movement support for the Kurdish regugees is of central importance.

We cannot expect the British government to condemn Turkey for its fascist brutality against the Kurds, but we can expect it to uphold agreed international conventions on refugees.

The government's attacks on these political refugees is a vivid demonstration of its support for the repressive Turkish regime — not least because of business opportunities in Turkey.

For British imperialism, along with the US and others in NATO, Turkey remains a useful watchdog in the Middle East.

Support for Kurdish refugees' right to stay means more than preventing further deaths.

Thousands of "Siho's" have been tortured and killed in the villages, police centres, prisons, and in the mountains of Kurdistan only because they are part of a nation rising up for its right to self-determination.

Siho's outcry "only my dead body will return to Turkey" was cynically ignored by the Home Office and by the British media (who are more interested in East German refugees "seeking freedom").

We cannot afford to wait until they realise the meaning of human life.

For more information contact:
Siho Remembrance Committee,
c/o Liberty Hall,
489 Kingsland Road,
London E8.
Telephone 01-249 6630.



Police arrest demonstrator — Turkey or Britain?

Free Michel Warshawsky!

Michel Warshawsky, an Israeli journalist and peace activist, has been sentenced to thirty months in prison, with ten months suspended and a non-parole mandatory term of 20 months.

Michel is the director of the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem, which has been at the forefront of the struggle within Israel against the occupation of Palestine.

Michel's "crime" is having been involved in producing an AIC booklet which gives guidelines to Palestinian activists on how to resist torture and interrogation by the Israeli secret service.

The Centre was raised by the police in February 1987, following which it was closed for six months by administrative order and Michel imprisoned for one month.

International support as well as support within Israel led to his release and the reopening of the centre.

The severity of his current sentence is an indication that Israel is determined to stamp out any opposition to the occupation and any co-operation between Israelis and Palestinians.

The AIC is urgently trying to raise around £12,000 which is what an appeal will cost, as well as the £3,500 that they have been fined.

Your support is urgently needed.

Send donations to: AIC, First International Bank, 015 Shlomzion Branch, NR 105183598, Jerusalem, Israel.

For further information contact the Committee for Freedom of Expression of Palestinians and Israelis, BM 9585, London WC1N 3XX, tel. 01-226 7050.

Sri Lanka

Bosses seize their chance

Two men disappeared on Friday 27th October.

They are M. Lionel, an advice worker at the Legal Advice Centre, Katunayeke, Sri Lanka and M.M. Ranjith, an employee of Floral Green Ltd (a company operating in the Free Trade Zone, Katunayeke).

They are among the many thousands of people who disappear almost daily in Sri Lanka today.

Lionel has worked as an advice worker at the Legal Advice Centre since 1985. This centre provides legal advice to FTZ workers because the government does not allow trade unions in the FTZ.

On this ill-fated Friday Ranjith was asked by his employers to attend an internal disciplinary inquiry at the company premises at 4 pm.

Lionel accompanied Ranjith as an observer at this inquiry as lawyers are not allowed to attend such inquiries. Subsequent enquiries made by Mrs Lionel revealed that the two men had left the Floral Green premises at or about 7.30pm.

According to information given by persons who do not want their identity disclosed, it appears that Lionel and Ranjith had been taken into custody by police on their way home.

Two days before this incident the full-time lawyer at the Legal Advice Centre, C. Kotelawala, had been taken into custody.

On hearing of this arrest other lawyers had intervened and secured his release, although he was badly beaten and tortured whilst in custody.

Kotelawala tried to send word to Lionel about this incident but his message arrived at the Legal Advice Centre only after the disappearance of Lionel and Ranjith.

Clearly, employers are taking advantage of the prevailing situation to eliminate worker activists with the assistance of the police. Neither Lionel nor Ranjith were directly or indirectly involved with the JVP or other armed groups.

The Legal Advice Centre handled a total of 86 complaints from workers last year. Since April 1989 the Centre has received 570 complaints. This explains why the employers have ganged up to prevent the Legal Advice Centre from functioning.

Write to the President of Sri Lanka, President's House, Colombo, Sri Lanka, calling upon the government to immediately release Lionel and Ranjith.

Namibia

SWAPO's poor result opens way for imperialists

SWAPO gained an indecisive victory in the UN supervised elections to the constituent assembly.

The stage is now set for some undignified horse-trading with puppet politicians known for their collaboration with South Africa's occupation regime.

Constitutional agreement will be dogged by minority demands for "group" rights and Namibia's precarious security and economic situation could lead to further anti-SWAPO violence.

As we go to press, South African police have arrested dozens of SWAPO leaders in the north after DTA vigilantes attacked SWAPO supporters and one of the vigilantes was killed. The fighting could spread.

SWAPO polled 57.32% of the 670,830 votes, most of them from Namibia's largest Ovambo cultural formation.

Although gaining 41 of the 72 seats in the assembly, Namibia's UN independence plan stipulates that the constitution must be adopted by a two thirds majority.

Thus SWAPO must win over at least seven opposition members for the final vote. Yet only one of the other 31 seats is held by a politician untainted by political service in the colonial administration.

Twenty-one seats were obtained by the DTA, a lavishly funded federation of ex-National Party whites and ten black tribal organisations.

The DTA's campaign was based on widespread intimidation by its ex-soldier vigilantes, which the UN could not control, plus employer paternalism and an inexhaustable supply of free handouts of food and drink.

There will be much speculation about the reasons for SWAPO's poor showing.

By Ben Campbell

The election was run by Pretoria's local white dominated administration. It was weighted against the nationalist movement through gerrymandering and intimidation.

Thousands of white South African residents and pro-Unita Angolans were registered to vote, anti-SWAPO vigilantes ran amok, the state radio broadcast a constant diet of anti-SWAPO propaganda, employers exerted quiet coercion, and some actual ballot rigging was spotted.

So much for the UN trumpet call of "free and fair" elections as a model for the world's "troublespots"!

But can these factors alone explain why SWAPO faired so badly in much of the centre and south of Namibia, and why it was so dependent on the huge Ovambo vote?

Part of the answer is given by the 37,874 votes for the United Democratic Front (no relation to its namesake in South Africa).

The UDF won four seats on a ticket almost exclusively focused on the SWAPO detainee issue. These votes were largely based on fear and ethnic distrust, rather than a programmatic or ideological critique.

SWAPO was the only party to put forward a comprehensive programme of radical reform, but its leadership seems not to be trusted by certain minority black ethnic groups.

Some observers think SWAPO will now have to ally with the UDF, although this alone will not produce a two thirds majority.

The UDF is a residual alliance consisting of the Damara Council, the "coloured" Labour Party, ex-SWAPO detainees and the miniscule Workers Revolutionary Party (an offshoot of Cliff Slaughter's British remnant).

The UDF's Damara and coloured leaders have served on South Africa's "second tier" of ethnic government.

Right-wing

Its top officials are also co-directors with other puppet leaders of the reactionary Namibia Foundation, a funding body backed by South African business and other right-wing interests to aid Namibian political parties that support capitalism and "group rights".

The remaining six seats were shared out amongst four other parties:

- the all-white Action Christian National (Afrikaaner National Party) (3);
- the Rehoboth-based Federal Convention (1);
- the reactionary Herero-based Namibian Patriotic Front (1);
- and the left sounding Herero-mixed race Namibian National Front (1).

The NNF's elected member is the only non-SWAPO representative to have not served in one of Pretoria's puppet administrations.

Combativity

But, with no track record of real combativity with the regime, a vague programme and only 5,344 votes, the NNF is hardly a force to be reckoned with.

The inconclusive election result compounds the dire problems facing Namibia's people.

South Africa remains in charge of running the local administration until independence. SWAPO cannot afford the transfer of governmental power to become logjammed by constitutional wrangling.

Waiting in the wings is South Africa's 20,000 strong "demobilised local army whose demob pay is about to end. An exodus of white settlers and some capital flight has started.

To add to SWAPO's dilemma, Pretoria has cut its budgetary transfer to the local administration, threatening some essential services.

It would be surprising in these circumstances if the SWAPO leadership does not try to make overtures to some white settler politicians and eventually give way to imperialist plans to manage the economy and restructure the departments of state, including the army.

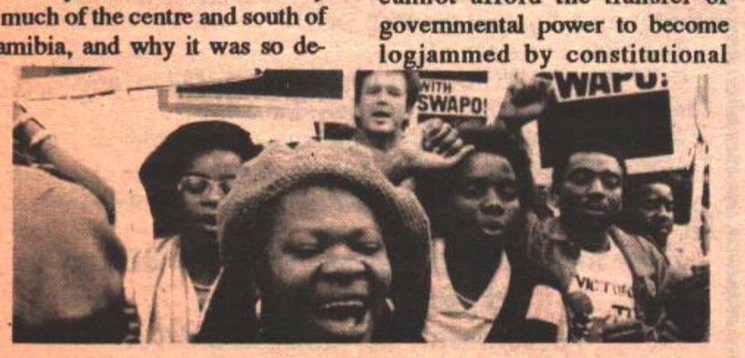
Thatcher has already proposed sending in a British military training contingent.

A politicised working class organised democratically and acting in concert with its huge ally in South Africa is Namibia's only hope of progress. And it is the only force capable of overcoming the acute ethnic divisions in Namibia which the election revealed.



PHOTO: NCCT/John Liebenberg

SWAPO rally in Windhoek, July 1989



El Salvador

Victory to the FMLN!

As we go to press the whole of El Salvador is in the grip of a huge military offensive by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front.

The FMLN controls half the country and has set up popular governments in eight out of the 14 provinces.

The stakes are very high. If the FMLN are defeated in San Salvador, the capital, mass executions, in particular of trade unionists will follow.

If on the other hand the FMLN win, it will represent a major defeat for US imperialism that has staked its reputation on stopping the spread of "communism" in its "back yard" of Central America.

This is not just a guerilla war, this is a mass insurrection.

It has similarities with the Nicaraguan insurrection. The army, in desperation, has resorted to using planes (with US pilots) and helicopters to bomb and machine gun densely populated urban areas.

Significant sections of the civilian population have joined in the fighting, turning a major guerilla offensive into a mass insurrection. The Guatemalan army has entered the conflict. It could become a large scale regional war.

This is an insurrection called for by trade union organisations and we must make sure that the workers movement over here does not let them

By Gareth Mostyn
Member of ELSOC EC
(personal capacity)

down.

The US government has spent ten years putting all its efforts into preventing the growing Salvadorean insurrection but has so far failed miserably. The FMLN have grown into a sophisticated and capable military force over ten years of civil war.

They have promoted mass democratic organisations like trade unions, peasant co-operatives and student bodies.

The FMLN made a major shift in policy at the beginning of this year and said they would be willing to take part in elections and respect the results. The government refused.

Flexible

Eventually the government agreed to a framework for dialogue. The FMLN put forward extremely flexible proposals that would have involved ending all military actions if the government would simply respect human rights and bring to justice those who would not.

The government's counter proposal was little more than suggesting that the FMLN surrender. The FMLN continued to push for peace while keeping intact the plan for insurrection that had been planned but postponed earlier this year.

ARENA, the political party of the death squads, came to power in June. Within the military a grouping know as *tandona* who supported a policy of total war had eased into leading positions.

General Rafael Humberto Larios of the High Command, and the *tandona*, appeared on television and said that "justice" would be brought against the "front groups" of the FMLN in retaliation for a successful military operation against the High Command.

The following day two large bombs went off, one in the offices of a human rights organisation, *Comadres* and the other in the offices of the left wing trade union federation *Fenastras*, where eight died, including General Secretary Febe Elizabeth Valesquez, the most prominent women trade unionist in the country.

UNTS, the trade union coalition issued a press statement declaring war on the government and calling on the population to participate in its defeat.

The FMLN announced they were withdrawing from the dialogue which was being used to cover the government's participation in the massacre.

Eleven days after the bombing the FMLN launched its offensive called "Febe Elizabeth Valesquez lives!". This has turned into an insurrection.

The fighting will bring the most bloodthirsty tendencies in the government to the fore. The army has openly shot six Jesuit priests, including the rector of the Central American University.

The government will carry out mass killings in an attempt to crush the revolution. The FMLN will not be wiped out but huge numbers of people may die.

Vigour

We must respond with as much vigour as the Salvadorean workers.

- There should be collections in workplaces.
- The opportunity should be taken to explain international links, the role of the trade union movement and the legitimacy of taking up arms in the face of such repression.
- Unions should make public statements in support of the people being bombed by US supplied planes.
- The labour movement must put Thatcher on the spot for her support of the Salvadorean regime and her failure to call for a ceasefire or condemn the bombing of civilians.

Everyone should affiliate to the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign. We should be ready for US intervention and argue for the US to leave El Salvador.

LABOUR BRIEFING

NALGO

We need national co-ordination

Most of the national trade union activity over the Poll Tax has been about producing publicity about what a bad thing it is.

The TUC demonstration in July has not been followed up or built on. At a recent meeting of the South East Region of the TUC discussion on the Poll Tax was confined to publicity and the state of local campaigns.

Any suggestion of regional co-ordination or union led initiatives was dismissed.

This is based on a strategy aimed not at defeating the Poll Tax but at making it thoroughly unpopular and boosting the chances of electing a Labour government — and doing nothing to rock the boat.

Despite talking about supporting "mass campaigns of non-payment", that's what NALGO policy is being directed at too. But that isn't what was decided at NALGO Conference.

At this year's conference a motion calling for a nationally led campaign and ballot on non-compliance received the votes of between a quarter and a third of the delegates.

The strength of support for this position and the logic of its arguments pushed the whole debate to the overwhelming adoption of a policy that supports mass campaigns, non-payment (where "viable") and encourages branches to seek the support of members directly involved to take industrial action "if appropriate".

This is a classic left-sounding NALGO leadership formula for doing nothing, as tried and tested over previous rounds of cuts in local government.

Weakness

Despite this weakness the conference policy does give branches a lot of room for action provided the confidence can be built within the membership.

We should be building non-payment campaigns to show real community resistance to those implementing the tax and effective support for workers refusing to co-operate.

We should be taking up service conditions issues. For instance in many Boroughs it is estimated that Poll Tax collection could lead to a 200% increase in workload for cashiers who work in "decentralised" offices.

We should not just concentrate on trying to win support from Poll Tax workers (who have the most to lose), but also take up the role of benefit workers, legal departments, and any other sections asked to give information on civil liberties issues and methods of debt recovery.

Even small victories in these section will build the campaigns.

A lot will depend on breaking down the isolation of branches and building co-ordination between branches wanting to build a national campaign.

Earlier this year Lambeth NALGO called a conference of branches and activists wanting to campaign against the Poll Tax.



The anti-registration campaign may have helped prepare for a mass non-payment campaign: but this still needs to be brought into the workforce.

By Brian Gardner
Islington Nalgo

Despite attempts to wreck this initiative by those who opposed supporting mass non-payment campaigns (and who have since changed their minds!) it was able to make links and organise the debate at conference.

Birmingham NALGO have called a follow up conference for NALGO branches on 20th January in Birmingham and we should get every branch we can to to send delegates.

It is important that co-ordination is not limited to NALGO, links need to be made with other unions particularly in the civil service. One way of doing this would be to call local, regional and eventually national conferences of the labour movement.

Calling a national trade union conference on the Poll Tax is one initiative the NALGO Birmingham conference could support.

The purpose of broadening out the discussion to all unions should not only be to fight for action by those directly involved but to argue for solidarity action and to put pressure on the trade union leadership and Labour Party to give some national leadership to the campaigns.

This article was reprinted from *NALGO Action* published by Islington NALGO, 2 Orleston Road, London N7.



Burning registration forms

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November 25th Conference

For a broad-based, democratic movement

By Jane Connor Tottenham APT

This Saturday, November 25th, sees what promises to be the largest meeting of anti-Poll Tax groups to date.

It may be big, but will it be beautiful? In the run up to this conference — and in the building of the movement generally — there has been growing concern over the tactics employed by supporters of the *Militant*.

Saturday's conference will be perhaps the *only* opportunity before the Poll Tax is implemented in England and Wales to elect a representative and authoritative leadership for the movement.

Unfortunately the Organising Committee — all *Militant* supporter has structured the agenda in such a way as to make November 25th more of a rally than a genuinely participative conference. There will be no workshops, no hustings for the national elections, and no lunch break — which means no fringe meetings.

Those activists who are in favour of creating a democratic union of all anti-Poll Tax groups, built on a federal structure met on September 3rd and elected a steering committee committed to fighting for unity within the movement.

That steering committee has produced *3 D* and collectively agreed on a slate for the three national officers to be directly elected at the conference. Because the September 3rd steering committee believed that the leadership of the movement should represent the diversity of our movement, and because we were striving for unity, we proposed a slate which *included* leading *Militant* supporter Tommy Sheridan.

Needless to say, *Militant* have not responded likewise. Their slate of Tommy Sheridan, Maureen Reynolds and Steve Nally are all *Militant* supporters!

A second, and perhaps more serious problem, has been the ambiguity of the Organising Committee on the question of Labour Party delegations. *Briefing* supporters have consistently argued for the right of those Labour Parties committed to fighting the Poll Tax to be involved in all the structures of the movement.

This is a necessary part of developing a *labour movement orientation* for the campaign and recognises the relative weight of the Labour Party within the labour movement as a whole. Whilst there are differences amongst *3 D* supporters on this question we feel that these should be debated out.

There is still time to get delegated to the conference and trade union activists in particular should come to Manchester to ensure that the question on non-collection and non-implementation is not lost in the general euphoria over levels of non-payment in Scotland.

There will be a meeting for supporters of *3 D* at 10.00am on Saturday 25th November in Manchester, just prior to the conference. Ring the *Briefing* office on Friday for details.

Come to Manchester and fight for broad-based, democratic, activist-led movement.

3D hits the streets!

A new anti-Poll Tax newsletter has been launched in support of the slogans "Don't Pay, Don't Collect, Don't Implement". Appropriately named "3 D", the newsletter is the offspring of the Steering Committee elected by the September 3rd national meeting, and aims to spread information about the non-payment campaign as well as debating tactics for the way forward.

3D is also standing a slate for the three national officers to be elected by the November 25th National Conference Against the Poll Tax.

The slate consists of:

- **TOMMY SHERIDAN, a supporter of *Militant* and Chair of the Scottish Federation, for Chair;**
- **JANE CONNOR, a *Briefing* supporter active in Tottenham against the Poll Tax, for treasurer;**
- **DANNY BURNS, Secretary of the Avon Federation, for Secretary.**

Stay in touch: get your copies of 3D from:
11, Springfield Road,
Tottenham, London N15 4AY.