LABOUR
40p FORTNIGHTLY
BRIEFING
No. 94 December 6th 1989-January 9th 1990

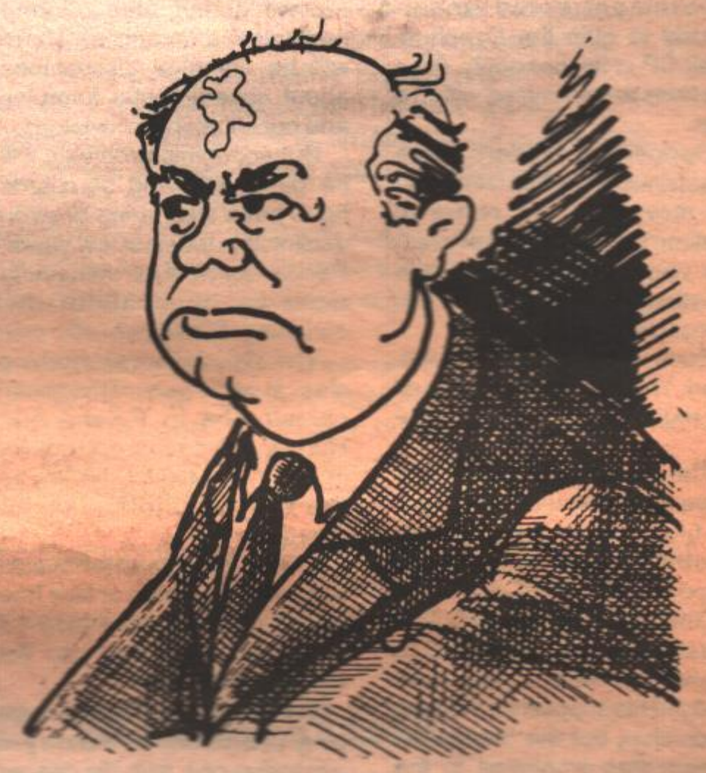
INSIDE:

☆ Class struggle in the USA
☆ Ambulances face the crunch
☆ East Germany: eye witnesses
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☆ El Salvador: FMLN

40p

EASTERN EUROPE

CZECH STALINISTS REAP THE WHIRLWIND



For 21 years Czechoslovakia has lived under a militantly reactionary regime.

After the removal of Alexander Dubcek, the Communist Party was purged of all those who refused to accept the invasion and the country was "normalised".

On the economic front, the regime was able to increase the supply of foodstuffs and consumer durables, but at a terrible cost in terms of a neglect of long-term investment and ecological damage.

On the political and cultural fronts stagnation was institutionalised. The population were forced to bow before the symbols of the occupation regime or face ostracism and persecution.

The apparent success in getting the majority to accept this humiliation gave the regime its special character: that of smug, brutal cynicism and lack of self-respect or respect for its own people.

But the spirit of resistance never died. In 1977 hundreds of people signed Charter 77, calling for the regime to open a dialogue with the society, and since then various forms of open opposition were sustained despite persistent state repression.

In recent years, and particularly since the era of glasnost, the opposition expanded and became bolder.

Demonstrations on significant anniversaries, such as the 1968 invasion, drew crowds of tens of thousands.

At the same time the first cracks appeared in the tightly controlled system of mass organisations through which the regime had ruled.

In January this year leading media personalities protested against police brutality while signs of independence were seen in the Socialist Youth Union (CP youth organisation) and the Czech Socialist Party and its newspaper *Svobodné Slovo* (Free Word).

A crucial turning point was the East German events. It became clear the Soviet regime would not intervene and that the Brezhnev Doctrine, "to preserve socialism", has been officially buried.

By Colin Meade

But what sparked off the mass upsurge was the brutal police attack on the entirely peaceful demonstration on November 17th, supported by the communist youth organisation and joined by thousands demanding democratic change, to commemorate students killed and persecuted by the Nazis.

The floodgates opened. Day after day hundreds of thousands demonstrated in the centre of Prague demanding the removal of the Jakes government, the bringing to justice of those responsible for police violence and the release of all political prisoners.

The movement spread throughout the country with big demonstrations in Bratislava, where historically the opposition has been weakest.

In the week after November 20th the students and organised opposition prepared for a two hour general strike on November 27th. The rulers started to make concessions hand over fist.

A stormy meeting of the CP's Central Committee on November 24th replaced hated figures such as Jakes with less discredited nonentities headed by Karel Urbanek and offered dialogue with the movement and a speed up in reforms.

At the same time a successful struggle took place to reach and win over the working class for the strike, resulting in hundreds of factories, including some of the largest, shutting down and meetings being held.

Continued inside, p.2

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Letters

Czech Stalinists reap the whirlwind

By IAN BELL

cont. from front

The opposition leaders of the Civic Forum entered into negotiations with the Prime Minister, Ladislav Adamec, driving a wedge into the ruling elite.

Adamec conceded an end to the one-party system, abolition of censorship, education reform, facilities for Civic Forum to organise, and a coalition government to come to power on December 3rd.

On November 29th the government voted unanimously to strip the Czechoslovak CP of its monopoly. Free elections are promised within a year.

Opposition leaders have constantly emphasised that the movement can revive at anytime if necessary to prevent the regime from getting a breathing space in which to reorganise.

Such vigilance is wholly justified. The hardliners that head the regime did not want to give in.

They know that once out of power they will face the anger of the Czech and Slovak peoples who hold them responsible for 21 lost years.

General Vaclavik, who had threatened to use his forces to "prevent chaos", has now pledged his support for the new leadership, but the thousands of parasites employed in the "security" services form a solid base for reaction.

On the other hand, the reformists in the Party have established a "Democratic Forum". It is clear that a massive struggle is now underway in the run up to the Party Congress at the end of January.

Alexander Dubcek has reappeared from his long exile to a rapturous reception in Wenceslas Square. The Dubcek legend, and the idea of a reformed socialism, seems to retain strong appeal for the working class.

There is no question that if there is an open crisis in the ruling party Dubeck will be seen as a possible head of a national unity government. Indeed one of the demands of the movement, as yet not met, is for the resignation of the current President, Gustav Husak.

But the majority of the organised opposition is not Dubeckite. The political spectrum stretches from revolutionary Marxists to monarchists.

But the overwhelming majority of the opposition support some kind of market economic reform and a turn towards the West. However, the need for unity in action around democratic demands, and a complete break with the authoritarian system, has put the activity of the opposition at odds with some of the ideologies propounded by its activists.

The opposition has also sought out contacts with democratic movements in neighbouring countries, breaking with centuries of national antagonisms.

The debate will now open about the way out of the social, economic, and ecological crises in Czechoslovakia. More far- reaching democratic and national demands are sure to be raised.

The extent of the crisis will surface, with mobilisations around a multitude of long neglected grievances. There will be complex discussions about governmental formulas and constitutional provisions.

But economic problems will be decisive; living standards have been stagnating or even declining in the past few years. People know that something must be done about the economy: but what?

The Czechoslovak working class is well aware of the social catastrophe in Poland and Hungary as a result of a belief in the international market as the magic solution to all economic ills.

Until now, Czechoslovakia has remained more or less free of the debt trap and may be able to avoid falling into the clutches of the IMF.

But the problem of re-equipping Czechoslovak industry is a massive one, with the danger that the workers will be made to pay for the crisis.

The establishment of free trade unions and political formations with a working class programme is of decisive importance now. One encouraging sign is the formation of Left Alternative, a movement for democratic and self-managed socialism, whose most well known figure is revolutionary Marxist Petr Uhl.

Czechoslovakia lies at the heart of Europe and its problems inevitably involve general European questions.

Oppression

All the issues of women's rights, the rights of lesbians and gay men, the many forms of racism and cultural oppression will now begin to be articulated in Eastern Europe, as will those concerning the rights of small nations.

The West European left must strive for common discussion with activists in the East to listen and absorb the experiences of decades of struggle against Stalinist dictatorship.

The disintegration of the Stalinist system in Eastern Europe is also beginning to shake the edifice of the capitalist pseudo- united Europe in the West.

It is time for socialists to begin to put some flesh on the bones of that old slogan: for a United Socialist States of Europe!

Neither sloppy nor confused

Dear *Briefing*,

I must reply to Pete Firmin's accusation that I have contributed to a certain "sloppiness and confusion" creeping into *Briefing's* analysis of the Labour Party.

Pete noted a reference I made to the *Independent's* description of Labour's 1989 Conference as "Labour's Bad Godesburg and from that inferred that I thought that Labour was abandoning a socialist heritage that it never had.

I did not state or simply that Labour was abandoning its socialist heritage because, as Pete knows, I hold the view that Labour has *never* been a socialist party. What I did do was merely cite the *Independent's* editorial to illustrate the major retreats that the Policy Review represented.

I must, however, take up Pete on his statement that the abolition of the block vote would not be a fundamental change, merely an important one.

The Labour Party, whilst social democratic from its inception, was always qualitatively different from its continental partners.

Its organic link with the trade unions makes it *possible* for working class militancy to feed directly into the Party itself. This process happens in spite of, rather than because of, the programmatic positions of the leadership.

A failure to be clear on the above points could lead to serious political errors.

First, comrades who only examine the *programme* of the Party will have a tendency to drift out of the Party as initiatives such as the Policy Review shift it further and further to the right.

Second, a failure fully to understand the importance of the Party's trade union link could lead to vacillation on the question of the block vote when comrades examine its current undemocratic use by trade union leaderships.

The removal of the block vote would be a fundamental change. It would transform the Labour party, leaving us with a party not dissimilar to the German SPD a party with its few remaining democratic channels completely walled off.

Such a development would be a major defeat for the working class and would put British politics on the road towards the tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum choices of the American system.

The defence of the block vote and the defeat of the Edmonds proposals should be at the forefront of every left activist's mind for the coming year.

Bryn Griffiths,
Tottenham CLP

WRITEBACK!

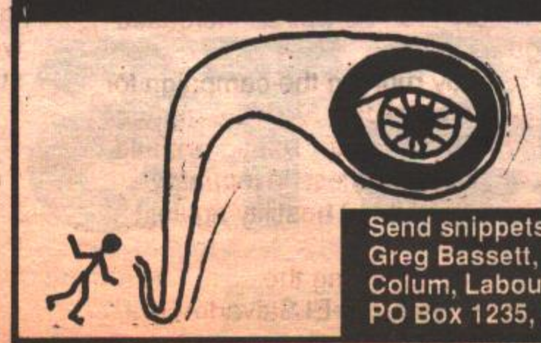
We welcome your letters!
Disagree with something? — write in.
Agree with something? — write in.
Want to raise a new idea? — Write in.
Let's hear your views!

Write to: Writeback, Labour Briefing, PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY.

Please send letters for the next issue to arrive by Wednesday, Jan. 3rd if possible.

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

PERISCOPE



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

Six of one?

The council candidate selection process is going well in Hackney. So far only around 30 people have put their names forward — for a total of 60 council seats.

Local Tories are having a field day since they got hold of a letter sent to all GC delegates by the LGC secretary predicting a Tory victory in 1990 if no one else stood.

So is there really a chance of a Tory Hackney Council by default? More to the point, would anyone in Hackney notice the difference.

80% of the other

More fun and games in Hackney... With the close of Poll Tax registration less than 80% of those elegible to pay have been registered. And that's after using all manner of personal records to put the register together, including housing benefit and DSS data.

This, of course, is just the sort of abuse of civil liberties which interests the NCCL. So Hackney Against the Poll Tax are putting a case together. This should prove to be ideal for Andrew Puddephat, new general secretary of the NCCL, to cut his teeth on. Until he started the job, comrade Puddephat was leader of Hackney Council.

Should prove to be an interesting case.

"I had a dream...?"

Don't read *Briefing* last thing at night, otherwise you could end up having a dream like *Briefing's* American proof-reader Hal Ussinate did after reading the last issue.

Poor Hal dreamt about **Margaret Hodge's** visit to Tower Hamlets to address a meeting of Bow & Poplar Labour Party members.

As described in the last *Briefing*, the meeting was held the day after the Labour Group had put a motion to Council that the Poll Tax registration process be suspended until the full amount of Poll Tax was known.

Margaret "Enver" Hodge then abused her platform to "read the riot act" to local Party members about their Poll Tax policy. The whole matter was subsequently released to the press.

Hal dreamt that none other than **Peter Mandelson** had ordered the press release upon hearing of Margaret Hodge's impending visit.

Mandelson had assigned the task of writing the release to none other than LCC supremo **Jo Moore** who, like Margaret, comes from one of the leading London Boroughs in showing Labour's opposition to the Poll Tax by handing out fines for non-registration.

Jo had used her experience in presiding over Haringey's recent string of by-election defeats to divine Margaret's line on the Poll Tax.

Not least because Margaret is now presiding over a very damaging childcare workers strike against cuts in the service, only time stands in the way of her emulating Jo's recent performance.

Hal further dreamed that, once written by Jo, the press release was widely distributed by a shadowy, unidentifiable figure who had lost his seat in the Council reselection process.

This had been backed up by another shadowy figure, who had invited at least one local journalist to attend the Party members-only meeting incognito...

Phew! Was Hal glad to wake up after this nightmare about how the LCC were secretly operating to portray the Party as divided!

Of course, dreams have a funny habit of coming true.

Or maybe it's just a case of needing to have them interpreted. Hal wonders if Margaret Hodge can provide any interesting interpretions of dreams...

Shore-ing up our defences

We are indebted to Tower Hamlets CND for sharing with us this response by Peter Shore to a concerned constituent:

"I am certainly not satisfied with the idea of a future in which only the Soviet Union and the United States possess nuclear weapons.

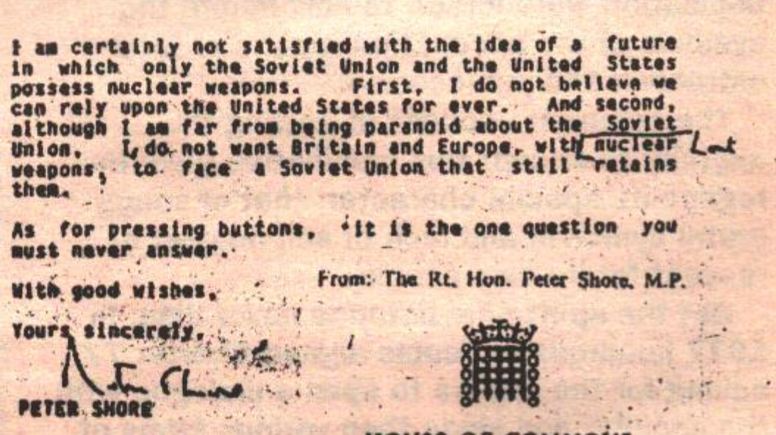
"First, I do not believe we can rely upon the United States for ever.

"And second, although I am far from being paranoid about the Soviet Union, I do not want Britain and Europe, with nuclear weapons, to face a Soviet Union that still retains them."

As you may be able to detect from the enclosed graphic, Peter was to change his mind after the letter had been typed, and changed the "with" in that last sentence to "without".

Still, at least that is less enigmatic than the final sentence of the letter:

"As for pressing the button, it is the one question you must never answer."



Contact Briefing

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Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

For joint action against the Tories!

As we go to press the 11-week old ambulance dispute is reaching crunch point. In Glasgow ambulance crews, frustrated and angered by lack of progress in the dispute, have withdrawn emergency cover and gone on unofficial strike. In London ambulance controllers walked out in solidarity with ambulance crews, arguing that they were no longer prepared to be part of Clarke's action against the ambulance crews.

The response of the union leaderships to the escalation of the dispute has been to call emergency crews back to work in case they upset public opinion.

Public support is important, but in itself it doesn't win disputes. Industrial militancy and muscle does. Poole and the NUPE leadership must not be allowed to sacrifice the militancy of the workforce to satisfy the opinion polls.

Calling workers back from action they are taking poses the danger of fragmentation of militancy and of further action.

Co-ordinated national action is now needed to win the dispute. Other NHS workers should follow the example of those at Homerton Hospital and at Barts who walked out in support of ambulance crews. NUPE should be forced to back politically this kind of solidarity action.

Other sectors should follow the direct action lead of Local Authority workers in Camden and Hackney who backed the December 6th Day of Action. The health service belongs to all of us. We should all defend it.

But above all the situation demands that workers who have pay claims pending — such as the engineers and the car workers — take action now on their own demands.

The Tories' climbdown over NALGO and rail during the summer of discontent shows their inability to fight on several fronts at once.

Taking action together can bring us victory over the Tories.

Hands off Central America!

The media has focused much attention on the Malta summit between the two superpower leaders and the prospects for arms cuts.

One item high on the agenda but less publicised was the situation in Central America.

When the USA and USSR discuss "regional issues", new depths are plumbed in the search for a counter-revolutionary stabilisation of those areas of the globe where people have dared to fight back against their exploitation.

Soviet policy in Central America has long been treacherous. Last year the USSR made full oil supplies to Nicaragua conditional on the FSLN forming a coalition government — against the express wishes of the Nicaraguan people!

Now the situation is critical in the region. Bush will have sought Soviet indifference to any US attempts at covert intervention in El Salvador, as well as increased interference in Nicaragua.

The US Embassy is already running the campaign for the opposition in next year's elections. Now the rupture in Nicaraguan-El Salvadoran diplomatic relations could put the Central American peace process in jeopardy and will certainly lead to renewed US hostility against the FSLN.

All credit to the Sandinistas for aiding the revolutionary struggle of the FMLN in El Salvador! But this courageous stand will be used as an excuse by their fair-weather friends to desert them: all the more reason for us to redouble our solidarity!

Summit diplomacy which aims to "carve up" the world's trouble-spots must be rejected in favour of the right of peoples to self-determination. The USA must not be allowed a free hand to intervene in Central America — by Gorbachev or anyone else.

The most effective means of preventing this is to step up the campaign in the labour and student movement for material solidarity with Nicaragua and the liberation forces in El Salvador.

Put socialist policies on the national agenda!

The challenge to Margaret Thatcher's leadership of the Conservative Party by lowly back-bencher Sir Anthony Meyer marks the end of an era.

Meyer will be defeated but the contest shatters the myth of Thatcher's divine right to rule unchallenged, a myth peddled enthusiastically not just by Tory loyalists but by the likes of *Marxism Today*.

Thatcher's crisis as leader is also revealed in the opinion polls, where Labour has reached 50%. The Tories are facing a rout in next year's local elections.

While Labour support has massively increased, its lack of a clear policy alternative is the Party's weakness. Personal attacks on Thatcher are no substitute for a clear policy alternative or for supporting those workers actually taking action against her government's policies.

The left in the Party must not accept the ideological paucity of the leadership. Instead we must never fail, when campaigning for a Labour victory, to put forward a socialist alternative.

We must make sure that when we look back at the end of 1989 it is not just remembered as the year when Thatcher's rule began to crumble but also the point at which socialist politics began to return to the national political agenda with a vengeance.

Behind the headlines

East Germany: the road to democratic socialism

"Talking 'bout a revolution"

The East Germans are on the move.

A process of change has begun involving the vast majority of the population and which only a Soviet invasion can halt — which Gorbachev has ruled out.

The desperate manoeuvring of the bureaucracy has fooled no one. Week after week hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets.

The largest demonstrations are in Leipzig, where upwards of 200,000 (almost half the population of the city) gather every Monday, but rallies are growing in Dresden, Halle, Karl-Marx Stadt and East Berlin.

Demands

The demands are clear:

- end the authoritarian state;
- the immediate release and rehabilitaion of all political prisoners;
- free elections and referenda;
- official recognition and support for the opposition groups;
- freedom of, and equal access to, the press;
- freedom of assembly and association.

But what is behind these slogans, and where are mass mobilisations heading?

Is it really, as the western press would have us believe, that the East German population is motivated entirely by a desire for bananas and radio cassettes and a deep longing for consumer goods and capitalist values?

It is clear that the opposition's leadership — New Forum, Democracy Now, Democratic Departure, and all the other groups spawned by the uprising — want a "renewal of socialism".

They want a move towards a democratic socialism that holds onto what is good about the current system but empowers the people.

They are clearly opposed to German re-unification, seeing it as annexation, and are very suspicious of the reaction of the West.

By REBECCA FLEMMING (just returned from East Germany)

But, though everyone you speak to has a vision of a "new, shining socialism" in the GDR, a clear plan of how it can be achieved is much more elusive.

The task facing the opposition is immense. The economy, though the strongest in Eastern Europe, is in crisis. The ecological destruction in the highly industrialised south is appalling, some say the worst in Europe.

The SED provides not only the political leadership but also the civil service and the officers of the security forces.

The whole structures of the state must be dismantled and built anew, or the reforms and changes will be superficial and short-lived.

Currently the major debate in New Forum is about whether or not to form themselves into a Party to stand in the free elections promised next spring.

It is indicative both of the uncertainty in the movement and of the fact that these groups are involved in a process of rapid political development.

Opposition

The opposition groupings are growing daily, with memberships well into the thousands.

They are developing democratic structures with regular meetings and a series of working groups on a wide range of subjects from education to psychology; women to ecology.

However, the wider population is not as clear in their aims. A nationalist section of the movement is developing, calling for re-unification under the slogan "Deutschland einig Vaterland" (Germany, the united fatherland).



PHOTO: Rebecca Flemming

Recent scenes in East Germany

But, even for the most fervent re-unifiers are not pro-capitalist. It is as if the fact of West Germany's capitalism is hidden behind a cloud of nationalist feelings for the "brothers and sisters across the border".

For all its uncertainties, the situation in East Germany is exciting, particularly when taken in connection with the upheavals across central Europe.

The opposition groups are well aware of the necessity of links with similar groups in neighbouring countries.

The demos in Leipzig have sent and received messages of support from the masses in Prague, and the founding conference of the East Germany Greens was attended by representatives from the recently formed Hungarian Green Party and a green activist from Latvia!

A number of different, interlinked processes are currently in motion in the GDR and the rest of Eastern Europe.

The precise outcome cannot be predicted. Great possibilities are opened up but they necessarily carry with them great risks.

Socialist Movement

Oxford Socialist Conference

Debate, determination — and debt

To say this was a case of bad timing is an understatement.

The Oxford Socialist Conference clashed with the Manchester Poll Tax Conference, the Socialist Movement Steering Committee, NAC's campaign launch, and the Pergamon 23 March Against Maxwell — which on its own kept a coachload away.

By Carl Statton and Conrad Astill North Oxfordshire Campaign Group

Enough whingeing. About 50 comrades assembled to hear a sacked Pergamon worker appeal to us not to forget them and so let Captain Bob off the hook. (Resolutions to the NEC, please).

Nadine Finch read to us from that well-worn platform for former revolutionary socialists, *Tribune*, and pointed out *Socialist Action's* view that to have any hard and fast views on Ireland is "ultra-left".

Martha Osmamor reassured us that there is "life after death" in the Labour Party. Jeremy Corbyn was in confident mood with a list of recent victories — the Nalgo pay claim, and the Guildford 4, not to mention the imminent victory of the ambulance workers.

He also made no bones about the tasks ahead — Birmingham 6, Tottenham 3, etc. Jeremy didn't too worried that his "image consultant" had written him off.

Small workshops followed on the usual subjects, with the notable absence of anything on lesbian and gay rights.

During the lunch break a tape and slide show was presented by some comrades from Oxford Women and Ireland on the subject of strip-searching. The show is excellent and performances can be arranged can be arranged via the Women's Centre, 35 Cowley Road, Oxford.

We attended the Labour Party Socialists workshop in the afternoon and after much doom, gloom, and dejection we decided that further contact between socialists in the Labour Party was a good idea.

A brief discussion on proposals to withdraw from local government concluded that the situation hardly arises in much of Oxfordshire (in our constituency the most pressing problem is not *whether* the left should stand but who on earth it can get to stand!).

Next was a video on the Pergamon dispute featuring vintage footage of the Bastille Day picket complete with Tony Benn in tasteful sans-culottes headgear. The video is available to buy or hire from Pergamon Strike HQ (0865 819162 or 723450).

The closing plenary was lifted by a speech from a striking ambulance worker and an account of the latest union leadership sell-out at Cowley.

After reports from workshops the proposal for a recall conference was supported and a steering committee set up.

We left feeling optimistic about the future of the Socialist Movement in Oxfordshire. No sectarianism. No SWP wrecking crew (we only saw three all day). And four *Labour Briefing* sellers!

The worst aspect of the day was the huge financial shortfall — somewhere in the region of £400! If you can spare a couple of quid please contact the Oxford Socialist Movement on 0865 724452.

Diary of activities and events

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.

Poll Tax: We are hoping to set up a Poll Tax working group to continue and develop the initiatives of the Socialist Movement on this issue. Ring Terry Conway, 01-263 8289.

Anti-Deportation Update

Deportations

Micheal and Sharon Decardi Nelson must stay!

Micheal Descardi Nelson has lived in Manchester for the last six years. He has been married to Sharon, a British citizen, for the last two years.

His father is also British and has lived here for the last 28 years. Micheal originally came from Ghana but has no family there now.

In January this year Micheal was visited by the police and then held at Risley Remand Centre. He is now on bail and has to report to the police every week.

In October a deportation order against Micheal was signed by the Home Office. This means he can be removed from the country at any time.

All this happened despite the Home Office accepting that:

- **Micheal and Sharon's marriage is genuine.**
- **Micheal has no-one in Ghana to return to.**

Nonetheless the Home Office insist that Micheal should start a new life in Ghana even though he knows no-one there.

The Home Office says it will pay the fare for Sharon to accompany Micheal even though she is a British citizen and has never been to Ghana before. In effect, the Home Office is trying to deport her as well.

Sharon's father has recently died so that her mother, Joan, is her only living parent. Joan was born here and cannot travel. She expects never to see her daughter again if Micheal is deported. Micheal's father is ill and will also not be able to visit them if his son is deported.

Micheal's deportation would therefore tragically effect both families.

Micheal and Sharon must stay!

Micheal and Sharon's Defence Campaign meetings are on Friday's, 7.45pm at the Church of the Ascension, Hulme, Manchester. The Micheal and Sharon Decardi Nelson Defence Campaign can be contacted c/o 10 Knowles Place, Hulme, Manchester M15 5DA.

Poll Tax Extra

Southwark Anti-Poll Tax Conference

Militant manoeuvres

The Southwark anti-Poll Tax conference on November 18th was very instructive for activists trying to work with *Militant* supporters in their local groups.

In our experience *Militant* is no longer the immovable monolith of old. Diversity of views and lack of a clear line on some issues have enabled us to win the occasional argument.

At the 18th November conference, a leading *Militant* supporter denounced a *Militant*-backed resolution on work in the trade unions on the grounds that it gave too much to the unions and the Labour Party.

Transpired

He transpired to be in a minority of one, clearly causing considerable embarrassment and a hasty, ill-concealed caucus in the middle of the debate!

As someone observed: "We'd been wondering why they hadn't been wheeling out their big guns. Now we know why!"

Comparison with the national conference a week later is interesting. In both, *Militant* supporters were in a clear majority, and were intent on winning all elections for officers. Also, in the run-up to both conferences non-*Militant* forces had considerable influence on the proposed aims and constitution.

By Gary Ostrolenk SCRAP

At the Southwark conference when we had the debate on how to move the campaign forward in the trade unions we consciously avoided polarising the issue and *Militant* ended up championing a Trade Unions Against the Poll Tax conference initiated by *Briefing* supporters.

In contrast, at the national conference *Workers Power* and others postured with abstract propaganda for a general strike, falsely polarising the debate, triggering the worst in *Militant* bullish sectarianism, and undermining the constructive work of *3D*.



Broad forces assembled on Leeds demo — how do we keep the momentum going?

Yes, we all know that *Militant* supporters can be nasty. The question is, given their overwhelming predominance in the campaign, how can we take the movement forward?

We can do that only by building the mass campaign itself and by drawing out the contradictions that undoubtedly exist in *Militant's* politics. Not by shouting "lefter than thou!" and screaming "Fixed!" every time *Militant* supporters win a vote.



Polish Socialist Party (DR) Support Group

Fundraising Social

Saturday 9th December
West London Trade Union Club, 29 Acton High Street, W3
(BR Acton Central, Tube Acton Town)

Organised to raise money for printing equipment

All comrades welcome

Public Meeting

John Stockwell
former CIA case officer
on

Changing East-West Relations

- **The role of the CIA and intelligence services.**
- **The global security system and military alliances.**
- **The implications for the Third World.**

Monday 11th December
Room 14, House of Commons

Sponsored by the Campaign for Non-Alignment and the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign

Lessons of the Guildford Four campaign

Who freed the four?

From all the hype and self-congratulation it might almost be possible to believe that it was the media themselves who had doggedly campaigned for the release of the Guildford Four — and should reap the credit.

TV news would have us believe — somewhat more plausibly — that certain of the great and good had benignly spent their valuable time freeing the four — and we should be suitably grateful.

The coverage suggested that the campaign was exclusively composed of retired law lords and assorted members of church heirarchies who, driven by a passion for justice, corrected this slight error on the part of the British state.

This is all myth. It is an attempt to limit the damage to the image of British "justice", to try to salvage something from the wreckage of judicial attitudes to Ireland and the Irish.



Scenes from Belfast



PHOTOS: Frankie Quinn

By Ian McLarty

As *An Phoblacht* noted, "While Charles Haughey jumped belatedly on the publicity bandwagon when he met Hill and Conlon... it was not those in high places who had ultimately secured their release but the many ordinary people on the ground who campaigned over 15 years for justice".

The campaign itself was led by relatives of the four prisoners; it was they who put time into committee meetings, fringe meetings, speaking at rallies, and raising the question wherever possible against tremendous odds.

The campaign was able to have an organiser and a well-produced exhibition as a result of a grant from Camden Council (at a time when grants were in and cuts were out and being Irish meant you received help from Camden instead of repatriation).

The campaign spoke on joint platforms with the Birmingham 6, participated in marches which included demands for the release of those imprisoned after the Broadwater Farm distutbances and were present at the Time To Go meetings concerning British justice in relation to Ireland.

The campaign frequently organised collection at Irish pubs in London. It made sure the issue was continually raised within the Irish community in Britain. Irish people in Britain gave the money which kept the campaign going and were always prepared to listen and give support to those collecting.

The campaign also tried to place the issues before an international audience. Obviously a lot of work — lobbying politicians, organising tours, etc. — was carried out in Ireland.

However, depsite late-in-the-day cries from Haughey and the like it should be remembered that the campaign was going to have to rely on a Dutch MEP to raise the matter in the European Court.

The campaign also sent packs and appeals to Senators and Congressmen in the US — and got better responses than they did from many Labour MPs here!

One member of the campaign even travelled to Korea to raise the question of the Guildford 4 at a human rights conference there.

In short, the relatives pursued what could be described as a "twin track approach" — by raising the issue among ordinary people they built up such a sympathetic atmosphere that those in the public eye could not ignore the case and were forced to take a stance.

The main question now is what happens with campaigns like the Birmingham 6, Tottenham 3, and Winchester 3?

Obviously there has been no better time for pushing for the release of these prisoners. Major advances amongst the general public can be made at this time.

Socialists urgently need to get labour movement support behind these campaigns. Such support always remained disappointingly low in the case of the Guildford 4 — to the detriment of both the Guildford 4 and the labour movement.

Errol Smalley, Paul Hill's uncle, explains: "At the end of the day, people in high places assisted in securing the release of the Guildford 4. But I have no doubt it was the ordinary people who gave us the strength to carry on".

CND Annual Conference

Still unilateralist, *still* fighting

The highlight of CND's annual conference was an address by East Berlin Protestant Pastor Kratschell.

Discussing recent events, he said that there was a real danger in East Germany that in the euphoria following liberation too many people would be fascinated by capitalist glitter and insufficiently aware of the unemployment, homelessness and poverty it engenders.

But many East Germans, himself included, wanted to promote humane socialist values and structures in a liberated society.

The conference saw CND's unilateral stance as more relevant than ever in the new political situation. This mood was shown when a Southfield CND ammendment to abandon CND's unilateralist position was withdrawn to avoid a resounding defeat.

Conference strengthend Bruce Kent's draft statement of CND's basic aims to include:

"British 'independent' nuclear weapons and American bases should be unilterally and unconditionally rejected and removed... Britain should not be a member of any nuclear alliance... "

Three emergency resolutions were passed with only a few votes against. One, co-sponsored by Labour CND, deplored the Labour Party's decision to drop unilateralism at a time when international developments provide ideal opportunities to win support for it.

But it welcomed support for a reduction in defence spending and it called on all its supporters in the labour movement to campaign for unilateralism and transfer of resources to social welfare.

Another emergency resolution called on CND itself to campaign for a reduction of arms expenditure and a redirection of resources to real social needs.

A third emergency resolution welcomed the sweeping changes in Eastern Europe. It called for local and national campaigns to challenge the defence policies of the government and opposition parties; to oppose British and NATO nuclear weapons; pledged itself to work for a peaceful, undivided, and nuclear- free Europe; and for the dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

A Greater Manchester CND and Greater Manchester Youth CND resolution was carried that called for a "major Peace and Environmental Festival in summer 1990 to take place in a large British city to launch the Green Decade".

One of the best attended of a large number of workshops was a "Red/Green dialogue on unilateral nuclear disararmament" sponsored by Labour CND and addressed by Ken Livingstone and Penny Kemp of the Green Party.

By Walter Wolfgang CND National Council (in a personal capacity)

El Salvador Solidarity Campaign

Activist and organising meeting including up to date report from the FMLN.

Saturday 9th December
11.00am - 4.00pm
Praxis, Pott Street, London E2
(Tube Bethnal Green)

All welcome
Contact ELSOC, 20 Compton Terrace, N1 or phone 01-704 9849 for further details.

Watching Brief

Comrades and Friends, a film charting the Benn-Heffer leadership challenge produced by a student of the National Film school will be shown on Channel 4 on Monday 11th December at 11.00pm in the *News From Home* spot.

Labour Party

LCC on "democracy"

One member, no vote!



Labour's Conference: soon to be changed out of all recognition if the LCC have their way.

Anyone who wants to know the hidden agenda behind Labour's current "consultative" exercise on Party Conference should read "Leaders and Members" a report from the LCC's Commission on Party Democracy.

It is wrapped as usual in meaningless double-talk about "involvement" and "mass membership" and "decision-making".

Underneath, the document's specific proposals reveal in alarming detail the authoritarian and cynical elitism characteristic of the increasigly narrow clique of careerists which is today's LCC.

On "Fair Representation for Women" the LCCers stake everything on quotas which would:

"remove the need for separate women's organisations to be resolutionary and electoral. Instead they could concentrate on organisation, discussion, training and confidence building."

God (or Peter Mandelson?) forbid they should occasionally debate a political issue and come to a collective decision via a majority vote!

God (or the LCC?) forbid they should elect delegates to Party bodies and expect those delegates to adhere to those democratically decided policies!

To the LCC these are just old-fashioned encumbrances, infinitely inferior to new fangled (but unspecified) "informal structures" which "would cease to be arenas for factional battles."

The document examines ways in which quotas for women could be enforced at various levels of the Party and some of these proposals deserve consideration.

Party

The problem is that at no point does the document even mention the necessity for these quota-ensconced women to be accountable to women in the Party they are supposed to represent.

Indeed, their proposals for a restructured NEC would ensure that there were more women members on the NEC (through imposition of quotas) and at the same time that these women would continue to be chosen by and accountable to a predominantly male electorate.

The "tyranny of structurelessness" is fully revealed in the section on "The Party and its Members".

"Most Party decisions should be subject to proper debate at all levels of the Party and decisions on policy reached through meetings, not ballots." What the hell does that mean?

A sentence later, they get down to brass tacks:

"Intermediate units of party organisation — currently the constituency party — should be managed by an executive committee which is responsible to meetings of all members. General Committees should be scrapped."

This recipe for top-down and unaccountable management of local parties by a self-perpetuating clique shows the reality behind the LCC's familiar diatribes against "activists" who allegedly dominate "endless round of meetings".

We are urged to emulate the customs of local Conservative Associations: "luncheon clubs, women's organisations, garden parties, jumble sales, barbecues — there is no shortage of activities other than meetings."

And there is no shortage of ways of patronising rank and file members and keeping them as far as possible form the real levers of power in the Party, already in the LCC's white knuckled grip...

By MARK SEATON

"Delegate bodies", the LCC argue, are "simply unnecessary" at the constituency level. Quarterly general meetings "to receive reports from the EC and the MP" would be sufficient.

Yes, we wouldn't want ordinary members bothering their heads with questions of policy and tactics which should be left to their betters.

Trade union affiliation at constituency level would go out the window.

Once again, "formal delegate links" are cast aside in favour of the chimaera of "less formal structures" (easily dominated, of course by those who already have information and power, and of little use to those seeking either).

The document makes no mention of the witch-hunt and offers Party members no guarantees of their right to dissent and to organise to express that dissent.

It says that Party members should have the right to form certain kinds of groups (like the LCC) and that these groups should be registered, but that:

"Labour should not permit parties within the Party. Groups like Militant and some of the other Leninist organisations should continue to be refused registration."

The document notes that the LCC has "consistently" supported the Black Sections demands, but goes on to warn that, as with women, quotas would make separate organisation and representation unnecessary.

NEC

In their revised NEC there is no room for a Black Socialist Society delegate or anyone else specifically representing black members.

Most crucially, the document recommends that the Party should break its links with the unions (largely because they are, allegedly, "unpopular") and "declare a long term aim to move towards an individual member party."

However, "at the moment the unions act as a safety valve. It does not matter if the CLP delegates at conference are sometimes to the left of the unions because they exercise so little power over decisions."

The LCC proposes a series of "interim steps" including:

- reducing the block vote to 60% of Conference;
- issuing a "code of conduct" to affiliated unions to guide them on how to conduct "affairs affecting the Party";
- provision for the block vote to be split in elections to reflect minorities in the unions;
- and the scrapping of the local electoral college and any trade union influence on parliamentary selection.

Some of these suggestions will be welomed by many *Briefing* readers and we have already launched a debate in these pages on democratising the block vote, but a huge gulf separates us from the LCC perspective.

Their aim is not to strengthen but to eliminate rank and file trade union influence on the Party.

By breaking up the federal and affiliated nature of the Party they are not empowering individual members but stripping them of any real chance to influence policy and leadership through collective democratic decision making.

On policy making, the document is at its wooliest.

Conference

"Party Conference should consider policy documents which are amendable rather than motions" and should "focus on just two subjects a year."

Responsibility for these policy documents would lie with "policy commissions" which would be made up of "spokespersons, MPs, union representatives, experts."

"Polling of both voter and Party members attitudes", they say, should be commissioned. (It's so much more convenient — and malleable — than actually letting them vote.)

And the coup de grace: "Conference debates should be preceded by a speech from the platform by the relevant front bench spokesperson." Arghh!!

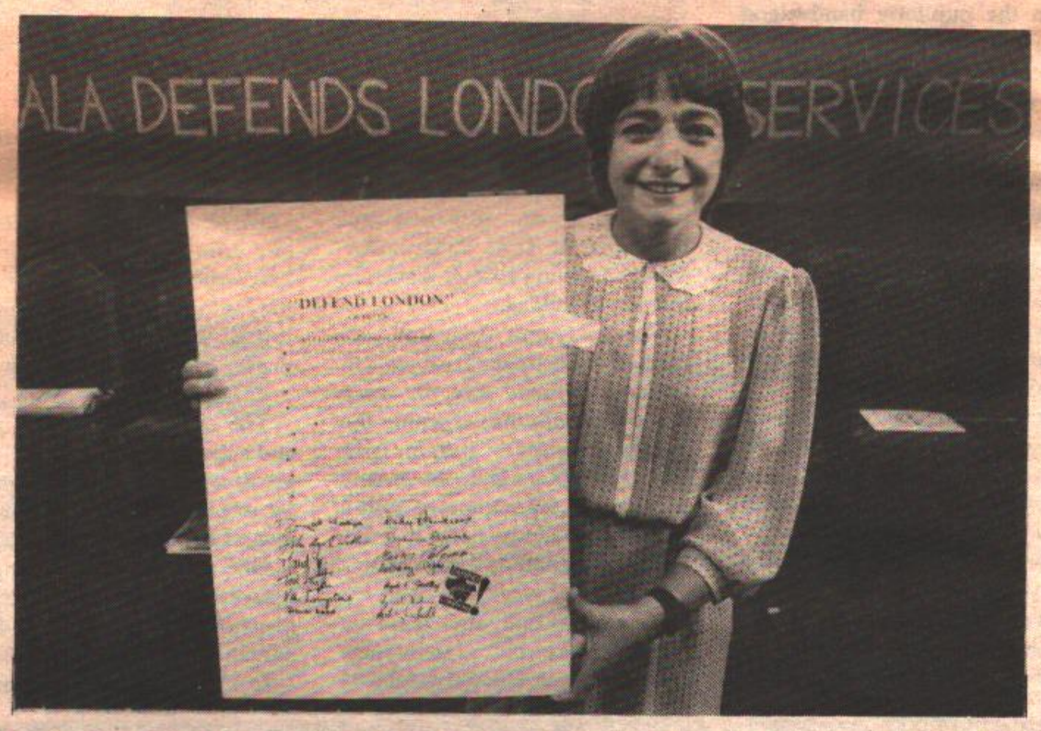
Finally, the document proposes a smaller NEC, with MPs represented in a two-member PLP section and barred from standing in the constituency, trade union, or socialist society section.

There would be no Women's Section. Instead, once again, quotas would reign.

Getting rid of PLP dominance would be welcome, of course, but what the document coyly terms "the development of a tier of lay activists who are able to be elected to the highest bodies in the Party" is surely only a euphemism.

This would be a recipe for perpetual dominance by apparatchiks working full-time for the Party, the unions, various quangoes and senior local government positions — in other words, for the current (quite tiny) membership of the LCC.

Contact LCC at 9 Poland Street, London W1 for your copy of "Leaders and Members".



Defending London — Margaret Hodge style

Birmingham Six

Corbyn presses Waddington

Late night TV watchers may have glimpsed Jeremy Corbyn's excellent House of Commons intervention on the Birmingham Six. For the benefit of the early-to-bed crew (and those without tellies) we reprint the exchange from *Hansard*:

MR CORBYN: Is the Home Secretary aware that, over a period of 15 years, a campaign was waged for the release of the Guildford Four, which was eventually successful?

Will he now recognise that there is potentially a large number of serious miscarriages of injustice involving people in British prisons, such as the Birmingham Six?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman announce that he is prepared to establish a new form of appeal system, so that those who have been convicted on the basis of confessional evidence obtained under prevention of terrorism legislation can be brought once again before the Court of Appeal and their cases re-opened and re-examined?

In that way, people such as the Birmingham Six who have been wrongly imprisoned for 15 years will at last be allowed to go free.

MR WADDINGTON: I realise the importance of that point, but I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's assertions.

He knows perfectly well that the Home Secretary can refer a case to the Court of Appeal if there is new evidence or if there are new considerations which were not previously before the court.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall take my responsibilities in that direction seriously, but at the present time I do not see such new evidence and therefore, I do not see the grounds for again referring the case.

The terms of reference of the inquiry by Lord Justice May are very wide, and he may well touch on some of the matters that the hon. Gentleman has raised including the consequences of the committal and trial and what happened after the trial of the Guildford Four.

Battle lines drawn in Sparkbrook



Racist Roy challenged at last

Roy Hattersley will face Martha Osamor in a one-on-one selection contest in the Sparkbrook constituency in Birmingham.

Martha fought her way on to the shortlist in Hattersley's home base wth the support of Birmingham Trades Council and local TGWU and MSF branches.

By LESTOR YOUNG

Local Black Sections activists and others on the left will be campaigning hard for Martha in one of the old Labour right's strongholds.

Though they have no illusions about winnng the seat this time around, they have put Hattersley on notice — paternalist godfathers will not be tolerated.

"By standing against Hattersley in Sparkbrook I am making a political statement," Martha told *Briefing*.

"No parliamentary seat is untouchable and no politician is too big to be challenged.

"Women and black people, ordinary working people, should learn from this that they can stand anywhere and challenge anyone. It is a valuable means of raising issues and opening debate."

Hattersley made insulting remarks about Martha during the Vauxhall by-election controversy. She promised then to fight Hattersley in his own backyard and has now kept her word.

"In the Sparkbrook selection two of the key issues will be Black Sections' demands for black rights within the Party and a woman's right to choose on abortion.

Choice

"On these isues there is a clear choice between me and Roy Hattersley," Martha declared.

The ballot in Sparkbrook will be conducted in mid-December.

Meanwhile, Black Sections activists are mounting serious challenges in a number of other seats, including Ealing Southall, Birmingham Small Heath, Birmingham Perry Barr, and Newham North East.

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).

Labour Party Socialists

Preparing for the future

The last meeting of Labour Party Socialists — the Labour Party wing of the Socialist Movement — took some important steps in building the launch conference planned for the new year.

The meeting agreed a draft appeal which will be used to gain sponsorship and support for the conference.

By BRYN GRIFFITHS

The appeal, which will be printed in full in the next issue of *Briefing*, states that there is an urgent need for "a democratic and non-sectarian forum geared to meeting the needs of socialists active at the base of the Labour Party."

The strength of the statement is that it combines clear and unequivocal support for a Labour victory at the next General Election with a commitment to fight for socialist policies and strategies.

Silent

In the run up to the next General Election there will be immense pressure on socialists to remain silent. It is vital that the promotion of socialist politics is not left to the small groups outside the Party.

The authors of the statement have also placed our struggle in the Labour Party in the political context of the broad struggles around the Poll Tax and industrial disputes.

This approach marks out the Labour Party Socialists from other sections of the left, who argue we should confine our activities to the Labour Party itself.

Forward

The involvement of the North West Campaign Group in the meeting was a step forward.

John Nicholson, representing the Group, stressed the importance of establishing regional organisation for the Labour left. This argument was welcomed by all present.

If the Labour Party Socialists is to be successful it must avoid the trap of confining itself to a small number of London-based national organisations and consciously emphasise the need for local grass-roots organisation.

The lesson of last year's NEC slate "campaign" was without organisation at the base we will suffer serious and unecessary defeats. A precondition for such involvement is greater democracy in the selection the left's candidates.

The meeting had an initial discussion on the NEC slate that stressed the need for democratisation rather than a political personality contest.

It was generally agreed that the launch conference itself should discuss what procedures to adopt for slate selection. Some of us went further, suggesting the conference should discuss names and seek an input into the Campaign Group's selection process.

Labour Party Socialists will be commissioning four papers to focus discussion at the Conference:



PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

Labour MP Dennis Skinner supports the P&O workers. Labour Party Socialists must work to ensure these links continue

•**Party democracy.** What kind of Party should we building in the constituencies and how should we oppose the Edmond's proposals?

There was discussion about whether we should draw up an alternative constitution to show what kind of Labour Party we are fighting for.

•**Policy for the next decade.** The events in China, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have made the results of the Policy Review redundant.

It is important that we respond with positive political ideas to fill the vacuum left by the Labour leadership.

Year

•**Campaign activities.** The conference will need to establish campaign priorities for the new year.

Model resolutions will be important but we must go beyond that to discuss how campaigns (such as the anti-Poll Tax movement) can be taken into the Labour Party.

•**Left organisation.** It is essential that the conference establishes permanent regional structures to carry forward the decisions of conference. In many ways this will be one of our most important discussions.

"We must combine clear and unequivocal support for a Labour victory at the next general Election with a commitment to fight for socialist policies and strategies."

The last *Labour Briefing* Steering Committee discussed the Labour Party Socialists initiative in detail. The draft statement's stress upon the importance of the coming general election was endorsed.

From now on, politics will be dominated by the electoral chances of the Labour Party.

The Socialist Movement's theme of "Socialism in the Nineties" needs to be related directly to the need for a socialist campaign for a Labour victory.

It is essential that we begin to prepare now to organise around a slogan along the lines of "Vote Labour and fight for socialist policies".

Work

Our role will be to work for a Labour victory and urge people to join the Party to struggle for socialist policies. Such an approach will need independent propaganda and a national structure if it is to achieve any visibility during a general election campaign.

The election of a Labour government would radically alter the political situation.

The defeat of Thatcher and the Tories would raise working class expectations. Labour's inadequate economic policies would quickly place it on a collision course with its own supporters.

The groundwork we do now and during the election itself will determine our ability to capitalise on the political opportunities that the election of a Labour government would present.

Election

Between now and the General Election political debate within the Party will be frozen, but it is up to us to use this period of entrenchement to prepare for the political opportunities that lie ahead.

Class struggle in the USA

Interview: Kim Moody

"Let's put the *movemen* into the labor moveme

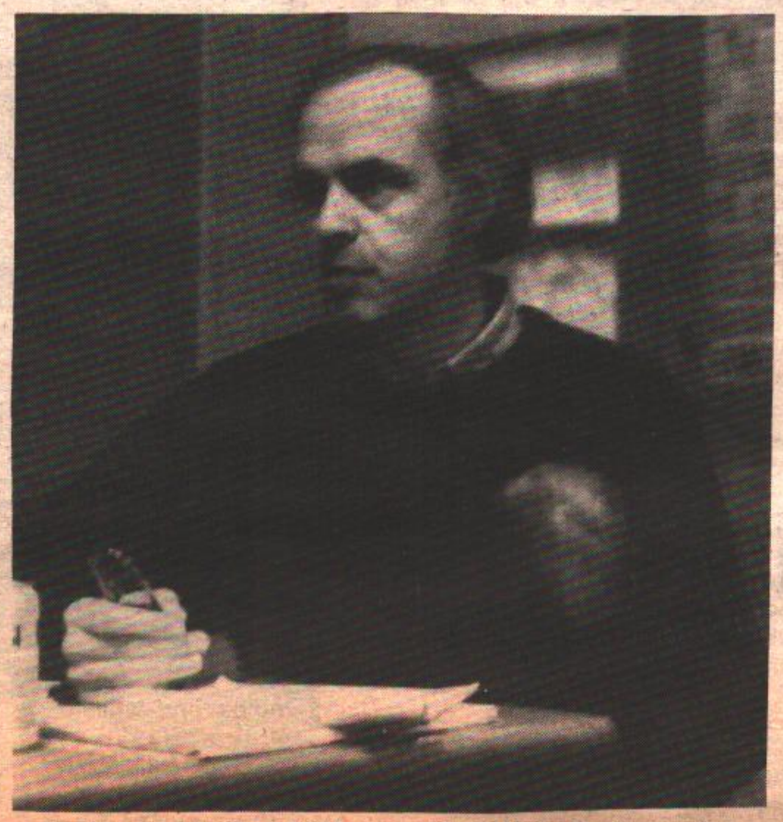
Yes, there is a class struggle in the USA — and anyone who writes off the US working class is a fool. Highly skilled and educated, culturally and socially diverse, with its own traditions of political and economic struggle, the potential power of the US working class remains second to none.

Of course, that potential has been stifled during the US labour movement's long nightmare of "business unionism" — with its traditions of class collaboration, anti-communism and imperialist chauvinism in politics, and promotion of racism and sexism.

But over the last decade or so various insurgent movements have sprung up in one union after another. These movements have been faithfullly chronicled in *Labor Notes*, a uniquely non-sectarian bulletin written by and for militants in US unions.

***Labor Notes* (whose slogan is "Let's put the *movement* back into the labor movement") has offered not only a forum for sharing information but also an organisational focus. Its two day national conference this May attracted over 2000 participants from scores of unions and all over the country.**

Kim Moody, one of the founders of *Labor Notes* and currently on its full-time staff, visited Britain recently in order to take part in the Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference. Kim, who is the author of the excellent *An Injury to All* (Verso, £10.95), found time to talk exclusively with *Labour Briefing*.



Kim Moody at the Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference in Sheffield

***LB*: Tell us why *Labor Notes* was set up and what it does.**

KM: Three of us started *Labor Notes* in 1979 because we felt there was a need for a non-sectarian publication that could reach what we saw as a potential layer of new militants in the unions. At that time it seemed a turning point. There was a big miners strike which was one of the first signs of the intensified employers' offensive, with the bosses going after one of the traditionally strongest and most militant unions.

The other factor was the level of active support and solidarity for the miners, for instance groups of auto workers took collections at their plant gates. Active solidarity work is not much of a tradition in the US labour movement — not even in the 60s, and much less in the 70s.

At this time the Democratic presidential administration had taken a clear turn to the right around fiscal and welfare policy, and labour law reform had been defeated in Congress. Because of the recession business was organising against the workers ever more aggressively.

Our experience had shown us that US workers couldn't be reached with a socialist newspaper so we started *Labor Notes*. Although most of us had come out of the IS (*sister organisation of the British IS/SWP — editor*) we didn't start it as an IS newspaper, but as an independent journal.

Surprisingly quickly we were able to build up a network of trade union activists that went way beyond the traditional left — we didn't want this just to be a left journal even though it would be written from a left perspective. We wanted it to reach out to militants like the coal miners and their supporters who didn't necessarily have a political background but could see that something new was happening in the workplace and that the unions needed to respond to it.

Marginalisation

At the time we had no idea of the scale of the approaching employers' offensive. With the election of Reagan we saw the marginalisation of traditional labour liberalism as well as the defeat of the social movements of blacks and women. These movements didn't disappear but many of the legislative gains associated with them were rolled back or not enforced.

***LB*: But *Labor Notes* not only survived this period but prospered. It seems to have plugged into a resurgence of rank and file organisation, for example the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). How has that resurgence occured and how deep is it?**

KM: It was always our perspective that for the labour movement to get out of its crisis would require a rank and file approach within the unions and especially in the new sectors of industry. There had been considerable rank and file activity in the late 60s and early 70s, but this was mostly wiped out by the recession after 1973.

In the miners — with their heritage of rank and file rebellion and their traditions of respecting picket lines — we saw a potential for revival. Also in the late 70s there was a rank and file movement amongst steel workers — a rank and file slate was run in the largest district of the union.

In the early 70s "Steelworkers' Fightback" ran a candidate for president of the union. He came very close to winning, but "Steelworkers' Fightback" was then disbanded. Subsequently the reform movement in steel was severely defeated not only by the union leadership but by the general catastrophe in the industry itself.

We learnt the lesson that whatever the fate of the industry — something beyond our control — rank and file organisation was the key to transforming union politics.

The 80s were a very difficult period for this kind of organising because of the intensified internationalisation of many US industries. It took workers many years to understand the need for rank and file organisation to defend themselves against this process.

The TDU have been around since the mid-70s, but they have made a number of breakthroughs in the last few years. TDU has grown and partly under their impact politics in the Teamsters' Union began to open up. There are now elections for top officials and convention delegates — something which seemed impossible to achieve only a few years ago.

The Teamsters' membership also won the right to reject contracts by a simple majority. In the last three years major Teamster groupings with national contracts (such as freight workers) have all rejected contracts by a majority vote. But under old Teamster rules you had to have a *two thirds majority.*

The Teamster bureaucracy, riddled with links to the Mafia and thoroughly corrupt, came under greater and greater pressure. Even before government intervened they were on the run.

Corruption

When the government did move in to prosecute Teamster leaders for links with organised crime and corruption they all went running to the government begging for pardons and squealing on each other! In the meantime TDU intervened. They said in effect, that they didn't want government control — they wanted the right to vote to elect their own officers. The momentum behind them was such that they won a pretty good version of the right to vote and there will be elections for national officers in 1991.

There is already a declared opposition candidate for President, Ron Carey, a militant with a base in the United Parcel Service workforce. UPS is one of the nastiest employers in the country — the UPS slogan is "We run the tightest ship in the shipping business". It's hell for the employees, and there's always been a lot of rebellion at workplace level.

Carey led strikes in the 60s and 70s and led the opposition to the most recent UPS contract, along with the TDU, which suceeded in defeating that contract. Though he's traditionally been a parochial militant, rather than a political, he's making some effort to break out of that, going down to *Camp Solidarity* run by the Pittston coal strikers in Virginia.

He's also begun to develop a broader notion of changing the labour movement as a whole. He's been quoted as saying that if you can change the Teamsters, you can change the entire labour movement.

Impetus

***LB*: What kind of politics has emerged in the various rank and file movements?**

KM: People are moving rapidly. Much of the impetus has come from struggles over the new labour relations — quality of life, team concept — what people over here would call Japanese-style labour relations. This has swept the auto industry and many other industries too. New Directions — the insurgent movement in the United Auto Workers (UAW) — comes out of a struggle against the new labour relations techniques. It has become a struggle to re-establish some sort of union power in the workplace and to develop new tactics to fight management offensives.

New Directions and others got into the question of union democracy as they tried to carry out some of these ideas and make their way through union structures. They came up against the machinery of the union, which has moved steadily to the right, and there has been a head on clash.

The UAW has been famous in the past for co-opting opposition but is now attempting to smash or discipline the New Directions militants. The central idea behind New Directions is to make the union *a representative of the workers against the employers.* They see this division almost in a class sense, which is not always the case even among militants in other unions.

This movement has by and large had to deal with issues like race and sex pragmatically, as the questions come up. Most of the people coming into New Directions are new to union politics, and to politics in general. This is less true of the leadership of New Directions, but the distinction between leadership and rank-and-file is more blurred here than it usually is in opposition movements.

Blacks, particularly in Missouri, have played a leading role from the beginning. There has also been an attempt to project women into the leadership. It began, not because of any feminist consciousness on the part of the male leaders, but because women were getting involved and the issue simply presented itself and had to be addressed.

Three weeks ago New Directions held its founding Convention as a national organisation. Of the three Co-Chairs, two were black.

Negotiate

***LB*: Why is Pittston so important?**

KM: Traditionally the strength of the unions in the US has been their ability to negotiate and enforce a national contract. This has enabled them to discipline the employers, make them pay minimum wages, etc., and prevent them from playing one group of workers off against another in the same industry.

But in the last ten years every major group of employers has attempted to break these national contracts. In many industries, like steel and auto, they've done this with the complicity of the union leadership. But in the case of the miners they've done it against union resistance.

Appalachia

Pittston is particularly significant because of the issues on which the employers want to break out. The major one is that they no longer want to fund the health fund for retirees. The significance of that is that the miners' health fund has been the main source of finance for a whole system of health care delivery in Appalachia, a very poor part of the country. It's not a public system; its a private system that wouldn't exist without the payments from the miners' health and welfare fund. It serves the whole community in a part of the nation where no private or public health care would otherwise exist.

If Pittston breaks out of the national agreement the other major coal operators will too. And that would mean a complete free for all.

When the employers talk about "flexibility" what they really mean is introducing or increasing competition among workers. Standardised national contracts prevent that competiton. The employers want to break these contracts beacuse of the whole notion they have of "flexibility" as a means of dealing with global production and competition.

Coal is a competitive industry globally. Pittston is an export company. They export to Europe and other places — in competition with South Africa and Poland. The union knew it had to draw a line here or else it would be kicked to pieces. That's why the union leadership has taken such a hard position. They see it as a survival issue.

a survival issue. In coal mining, because of its base in a traditionally poor region of the country, the memory of absolute poverty is still strong. This union also has a tradition of resistance which is much stronger than in other

nt back nt"

nions. When the Pittston workers irst went out, within a few weeks he entire Eastern coalfield came ut in a wild cat strike that lasted or two weeks.

Virginia has spent over $1 million a day on extra policing in this ne small part of the state. They ave gone all out to stop the iners. The number of arrests is ver 3,000 — in a dispute where nly 1900 miners are on strike. oth the leadership and the rank-nd-file view this as a political truggle — a struggle against the overnment of the United States nd the government of Virginia.

Disobedience

There isn't a New Directions ype movement in the union. The nineworkers' leader is extremely opular and has kept in close ouch with the rank-and-file. He is ot as distant as past miners' eaders, nor is he your average abour movement bureaucrat. olitically he's more to the left han most. He seems commited to eeing this thing through.

***LB:* Do you think they will win?**

KM: I think they *can* win. If they continue being willing to use illegal tactics, in particular mass civil disobedience. There have also been illegal strikes by other miners from coal companies that have been supplying Pittston. Pittston as a corporation is losing money overall.

The encouraging thing is the impact this is having amongst other workers and the support the Pittston strikers are getting from all over the country.

***LB:* Do you think opinion on foreign policy and US labour's long-standing anti-communism is shifting?**

KM: There has been a fight at the highest level of the labour bureaucracy on the question of US policy in Central America. I would say as yet, its an inconclusive fight. The dominant wing of the bureaucracy has not changed its position one jot — it continues to support reactionary policies. But it has been challenged and there is a sense among more and more workers that the era in which they benefited from American world hegemony is over.

There is no real support for the Contras anymore outside of the fundamentalist Right. Anti-communism is more complicated. American workers, trade unionists and even the oppositionists are "anti-communists" in one sense or another. But things have changed for a number of reasons.

First, every time movements like TDU or New Directions gets started they get "red baited" — heavily red baited — by the union leadership. Even by union leaders who in other contexts would call themselves socialists. But the old trick hasn't worked. There are leftists in the New Directions leadership and they have been attacked but the rest of the New Directions leadership has stood behind them. This doesn't mean they're socialists but that they recognise that movements of trade unionists have always included socialists and they're not afraid of this.

Second, what is going on in Eastern Europe and China is changing everything. On the one hand, Gorbachev may be the most popular politician in America today — and that has an impact on "knee jerk" anti-communism. But more important the rise of opposition movements in Eastern Europe and China, with a strong labour base, has had a big impact on people's consciousness. Particularly when some of these movements say that while they are against the authoritarian regimes they consider themselves socialist. Democracy is no longer seen as synonymous with capitalism.

***LB:* Is there any prospect of building a labour party in America?**

KM: There is increasing interest in the debate over that question. The Jackson phenomenon has awakened in many people's minds the potential to go beyond standard Democratic Party politics, though Jackson himself was not inclined to do so. But he did help articulate some social dynamics in the Black community and the labour movement — he's related to a lot of strike movements, appeared on many picket lines, and raised some expectations. He set off a lot of thinking in the direction of independent political action.

In the labour movement itself there are long-time supporters of a labour party, including some of the smaller unions that have maintained a left leadership, and individuals, progressives, and socialists like Tony Mazocchi of the Atomic, Oil, and Chemical Workers who are also arguing for a labour party.

All these people are waging what you might call a low-intensity campaign for a labour party, talking to rank-and-file meetings, etc. There is now a more positive response to this idea than in the past, particularly given the Democrats' record in state and city government as willing administrators of Reaganomics.

Most of us now think that if we get a labour party in the US it will not come from a single national initiative as it did in Britain — by the labour leadership forming a Labour Party — but through local and regional developments. Already there is a noticeable increase in independent election campaigns.

Whatever happens, the creation of a labour party remains a minimum condition for any real change in the balance of class forces in favour of the working class.

Mass action in Virginia

Pittston miners occupy plant

This is an edited version of an article in the November issue of *Labor Notes*.

On September 17th, United Mineworkers of America (UMWA) members occupied Pittston's Moss #3 preparation plant.

At about 4.00pm two large U-haul trucks wound their way up the dusty mountain road leading to the plant near Carbo, Virginia.

At the entrance to the plant, the trucks stopped, their rear doors opened, and out stepped 98 camouflage-clad miners and one minister.

Loaded down with sleeping bags, gas masks, and rations — but with their hands raised over their heads to show that they were unarmed — the 99 quickly marched passed the gate and into Moss #3.

Two blue-uniformed Vance Security guards at the front gate fled. A few other guards, maintenance workers, and management personnel, badly outnumbered, retreated into an inner office, until they were escorted out by the occupiers.

Within minutes of the occupation 200 miners and their supporters appeared out of the Virginia countryside. They massed at the entrance of the plant to prevent the state police, now notified of the occupation, from following the miners inside.

Solidarity

Word of what happened spread quickly. Within an hour, cars of supporters lined the roads leading to Moss #3.

Signs proclaiming solidarity from a number of unions were hung outside the plant. One sign — "From NYNEX to Pittston: The CWA Supports the UMWA" — became the miners' favourite; it was taken inside the plant grounds and hung.

[Ed. note — The Communication Workers of America (CWA) waged a long and bitter dispute against the US's private telephone companies, including the New York and New England monopoly, NYNEX.]

The occupiers painted "UMWA Forever" and the numbers of the local unions involved in the sit-in on the outside of the preparation plant. They hung an American flag — right next to their camouflage flag.

By nightfall, miners from neighbouring states and a caravan of supporters from New York arrived, swelling the number outside the plant to 2,000.

"They'll have to arrest each and every one of us out here before they get those inside," UMWA Vice President Cecil Roberts told the crowd. Chants of "Union" filled the countryside.

All of the Pittston coal mined in southwest Virginia is shipped through Moss #3 to be sorted and cleaned. The 77-hour occupation shut down Pittston's operations and cost the company as much as $1 million per day.

Throughout the occupation miners were stationed along the road between the preparation plant and Camp Solidarity — a distance of about a mile.

By Phill Kwik
Labor Notes

Using radios and walkie-talkies, miners stayed in constant contact with each other — planning strategy, organising their supporters outside the plant, and monitoring state police movements.

Each morning brought rumours that the state police had come to evict the occupiers. In response, miners and supporters would flood the bridge at the entrance to Moss #3. The police never arrived.

"The main purpose of the people outside Moss #3 was to show support, but also to defend the occupiers inside," Brad Burton, the mineworkers' midwest regional director, told *Labor Notes*.

"Everyday, when we were in front of Moss #3 we would discuss how best to defend the plant," said Mike Ruscigno, a member of Teamsters for a Democratic Union who travelled with the caravan from New York.

"We would break into groups: those who agreed to be arrested and those who would want to provide support.

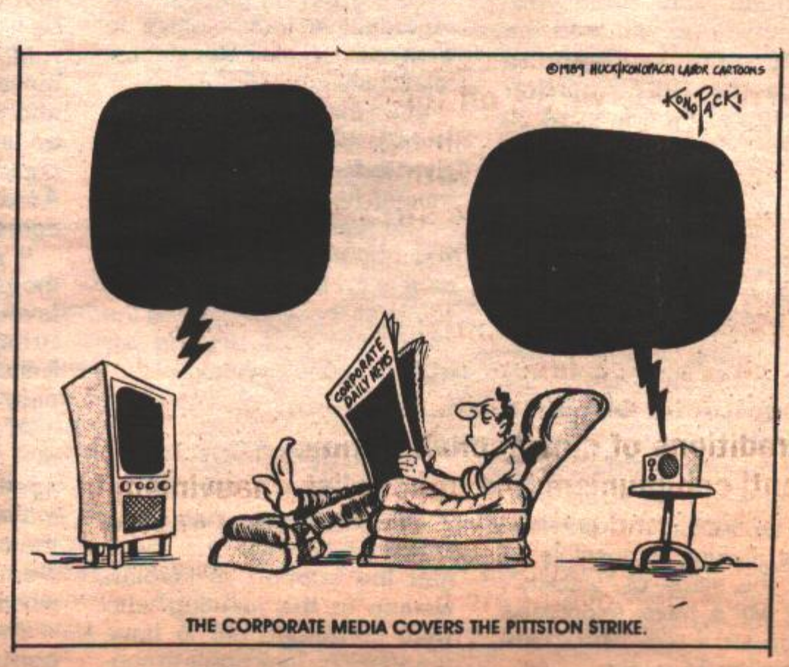
"And each evening we would walk back to the Camp and see the police buses, lined up, ready to haul people off..."

On Monday morning, the state police attempted to close the road from Camp Solidarity to the plant to control the numbers of supporters. But "the miners simply took us through the woods, around the police barricades, and up to the plant," Ruscigno said.

The days outside Moss #3 were filled with singing and with discussions on the significance of the occupation. Many compared it to the autoworkers' 1937 sit-down strike in Flint, Michigan.

'Terrorists'

Pittston Coal Group President Micheal Odom called the miners "violent" and claimed he would never "negotiate with terrorists."



THE CORPORATE MEDIA COVERS THE PITTSTON STRIKE.

In response, the occupiers, each of whom owned one share of stock in Pittston, told the press:

"As stockholders we have the right to inspect our investment. What we are finding is that the scabs and management have left this place a mess and we'll have to be here for a few days to assess the damage."

The occupiers allowed daily inspections of the plant by two management representatives and two state police officers.

On September 18th, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) asked a court to declare the sit-in illegal. A court official said the NLRB was seeking heavy fines, jail terms and an end to the $200 weekly strike benefits paid to the occupiers.

Violations

The following day, Circuit Judge Donald McGlothlin imposed fines of £13.5 million against the UMWA for a variety of violations of court injunctions in July and August. The judge also ordered the UMWA leaders to order the occupiers out of Moss #3 or face arrest.

On September 20th, Virginia's Democratic Governor said that he would no longer allow the strikers to violate state and federal court orders.

He ordered more state police into the area, joining the 300 state police and 200 federal marshals already there.

At 3.00pm a US District Judge ordered the miners to vacate the plant by 7.00pm, or face more fines and possible eviction.

The miners ignored the deadline. Instead, they changed the location of their regular Wednesday night rally from a nearby town to the gate of Moss #3.

By 7.00pm 5,000 supporters were outside the plant. Although the state police temporarily withdrew to a new location down the road, the air


Jesse Jackson has raised expectations

was tense as the crowd braced for a showdown.

For two hours, the crowd heard speaker after speaker denounce the company and the police state tactics of the Governor.

They cheered the news that Senator Edward Kennedy, chair of the Senate Labor Committee, would launch an investigation into the strike, complete with public hearings.

At about 9.30pm UMWA Vice President Roberts arrived to speak. He was not alone. He led the 99 occupiers out of the plant, who then melted into the crowd to avoid arrests.

"We stood the state on its head. We defied all the forces trying to get us out — the courts, the state police, and Pittston," Roberts shouted at the crowd.

"We only leave when the UMWA says that it is time to leave."

As the rally broke up, Judge Williams retrospectively extended his deadline for vacating the plant to 11.00pm, and did not fine the miners for the action.

The union's decision to abandon the occupation surprised many ministers and supporters. While not all were initially happy with the decision, most seemed ready to support their leaders.

The Women's Page

Embryo Experimentation Bill

Fight for Choice!

Stop the Amendment Campaign-Fight for Choice is the new campaign launched on November 25th to defend abortion rights in the next Parliamentary session.

The campaign discussed the threat from Anne Widdecombe, who will lead the twenty-second attempt to reduce the 1967 Abortion Act's upper time limit of 28 weeks.

By VALERIE COULTAS

She is using the Embryo Experimentation Bill to re-introduce the debate on time limits.

The threat to existing abortion rights is a very real one. With technological developments making it possible to lower the stage of "viability", many MP's have expressed support for a reduction in the time limit to 24 weeks.

Of course no "time limit" will satisfy the anti-abortionists who want the 67 Act completely overturned, and they will come back for more if they win this time.

The new Campaign was also aware of other attacks present in the Bill:

•the possible restriction of access to AID (Artificial Insemination by Donor) and the new reproductive technologies to women in "stable heterosexual relationships";

•and the 14 day limit on embryo research which would give the foetus recognition as a "human being".

The name of the Campaign was agreed after a prolonged debate on the relationship between all these issues and the importance of uniting all women in one campaign.

Important

The debate on the name was important because the result had the support of lesbian women in the meeting who were concerned not to have the attack on their rights to control their fertility and have children downplayed.

The meeting adopted a number of campaigning slogans, including "Control, Access, Time!" which tried to bring the different aspects of the fightback together.

The Campaign plans to produce leaflets and posters and will be mobilising for a lobby of Parliament and a demonstration in the new year.

Many women pointed to the mass campaign in defence of abortion rights in America as an example British women could gain inspiration from and American women present agreed to speak on platforms.

It was also suggested that the political climate was more favourable to a fightback in Britain although the "time limits" issue would not be an easy debate.

All *Briefing* supporters must now place resolutions on the agenda of their next labour movement meeting backing the campaign in defence of a woman's right to choose whether or not to have a child.

The campaign can be contacted via NAC, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC2B 5AU.



PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

Benyon, White, Corrie, Alton, and now Warnock and Widdecombe

Women in East Germany

Behind the steroids

The images of East German women in the west are predominantly of burly shot putters and butch swimmers.

They have, so the stories go, been force fed on steroids since birth (the only way they could beat the good, wholesome girls from the "free world" must be by cheating).

By REBECCA FLEMMING

We occasionally get to hear about their high standards of prenatal care, and the fact that everyone can have a year's maternity or paternity leave with full pay and their own job to go back to.

Even more rarely is it revealed that free child care is available to all women and that colleges like the Humboldt University in East Berlin have a 50% quota for women.

So it is hardly surprising that the western media have paid little attention to the role of women in the current upheavals.

If they had taken a little time out from their almost completely unsuccessful search for anybody with anything approaching pro-capitalist views to find out what is really going on, the results would have been very rewarding.

For amongst the multitudinous groupings of the opposition is developing a strong socialist feminist current.

The women's group in the New Forum in Leipzig is setting out to form its own theory of the oppression of women and its own strategy for liberation.

It has broken away from the kind of feminism institutionalised by the SED with its Women's Representatives, its "Frauenbund" and its rhetoric of equality.

The document published by the New Forum Women's Group and proudly displayed on the wall of the Information Bureau in Leipzig, explores the ranges and depths of women's oppression in the GDR.

It rejects the state feminism of the SED which has actually contributed to, not challenged, women's subordination with its overpowering pro-family policies and massive material incentives for women to have children.

Group

The Group also rejects the idea that capitalism has anything to offer women and makes demands on the state and society as a whole.

It also makes a series of demands on both the structures and leadership of New Forum to improve the situation from the present encouraging number of women involved at all levels of the organisation, including as spokespersons.

Talking to lesbians from the East as they queued up outside Women's Clubs in West Berlin (East Berlin has mixed clubs but no women-only venues), I found their feelings were clear.

Small

Already the few, small feminist groups that existed before the "November Revolution" and some of the lesbian and gay groups from East Berlin have added their voices to the calls for reform with their particular demands.

There are things to be defended in the current system for women, but deep and far reaching changes are also necessary. Women's active participation in the processes now unfolding is essential.

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.

Berlin

"I was there"

In 1958 I left East Berlin covertly.

I left covertly because the act of "preparing to leave or leaving the GDR" had been made a criminal offence in an attempt to stem the exodus of millions of East Germans to the Federal Republic and elsewhere.

By Helga Gladbaum
Brent Councillor

This statute, as it turned out, was not sufficient to deter people. As a final desperate measure the Berlin Wall was built in 1961.

Recent developments in the GDR have left everyone amazed at the sheer pace of change.

Little did I anticipate that a weekend family reunion in West Berlin would be totally overshadowed by the momentous opening of the frontiers between East and West Germany.

Wall

On the Friday the Wall was breached, the weekly newspaper *Die Ziet* talked of the "real threat" of the hundreds of thousands demonstrating on the Alexanderplatz in East Berlin marching through the Brandenburg Gate into West Berlin.

Typically, this speculation had already been overtaken by events. From midnight thousands of East Germans began pouring across the border points.

Soon the whole of West Berlin was thronged with visitors from East Berlin and the GDR. Some were going to stay for good, but most were just there for a family outing.

The atmosphere was electrifying and euphoric.

At the border crossings every East German car was received with cheers by West Berliners, presents were distributed, free taxi rides provided, invitations for breakfast at a nearby cafe given out, even overnight accommodation was offered.

By Saturday, the numbers had dramatically increased. Long queues formed at post offices and banks where the 100DM welcoming money was being claimed. Shops which normally closed at lunchtime on Saturday stayed open all day.

By the afternoon, public transport was choked with people. Police broadcast warnings that platforms were dangerously overcrowded and the centre of Berlin came to a momentary standstill.

In the streets it is easy to strike up a conversation. Many made use of this opportunity to visit family and friends or just to have a look at Berlin "because you never know what is going to happen tomorrow".

Others said: "This wouldn't have have been possible without Gorbachev". Some also ventured to say: "Why did we wait so long? Why didn't we have the courage to demonstrate before?"

But nobody seemed to have an answer to the question: "What is going to happen next?"

Every meeting was tinged with doubt and uncertainty about the future, but also with a joyfulness that this revolution had occurred without bloodshed.

Television not only provided an overview of what was happening elsewhere but also the faces and emotions.

Seated

The disbelief as people strolled across borders that had been hermetically sealed for 28 years, past the once feared and stern looking border guards will always stay in my memory.

I shall also always remember the sight of both East and West Berliners climbing the Berlin Wall while border guards looked on impotently.

West German television offered instant analysis and "solutions" of a kind we are familiar with from the British media: re-unification of Germany, collapse of communism, etc...

Programme

The programme from the GDR, however, grappled with the heart of the matter: how to change often fossilised attitudes and institutions; how to change the economic and social structure without selling out socialism?

Above all, it acknowledged that the people of the GDR had brought about a fundamental revolution and that these people could never again be ignored.

Although it was no more than coincidence that I was in Berlin that weekend, I am happy to say "I was there".

BOOK REVIEW

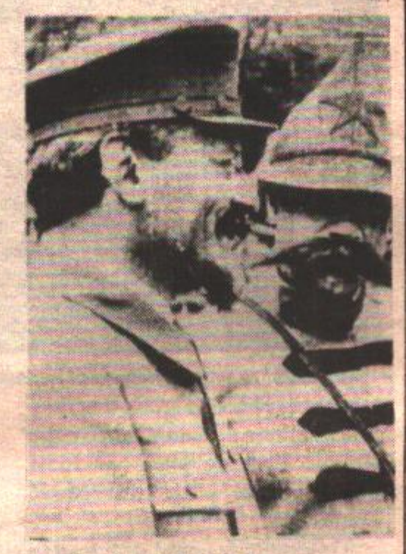
Diary of a civil war

The Bolshevik Myth, by Alexander Berkman, *Pluto Press*, £8.95.

During his recent visit to London, Soviet oppositionist (and Marxist) Boris Kagarlitsky touched on the vexed question of the relationship between Leninism and Stalinism.

He argued that whilst Stalinism could in no way been seen as the natural outgrowth of Leninism, it was nonetheless inseparable from the developments in post-revolutionary Russia which preceded it.

He also indicates that there was a revival of interest in the USSR today in the ideas of the Workers Opposition, a faction in the Bolshevik Party which fought against bureaucratism and for a greater role for workers' management in industry in 1920-21.



Trotsky at the front

Watershed

These two years were a watershed in Soviet politics. In 1920 the Civil War was in full swing. Famine and disease were killing off tens of thousands. The economy was in ruins. The rouble was worth 1% of its October 1917 value.

Compulsory grain requisitioning was viewed with hostility by growing sections of the peasantry.

In November 1920 the Party leadership was divided over Trotsky's proposals for the opening of a "labour front" — the imposition of military discipline on the industrial workforce.

In March 1921, against the backdrop of the Red Army's suppression of the Kronstadt sailors' rebellion, the tenth Congress of the Communist Party decisively defeated the Workers Opposition and voted to ban factions.

Deported

Alexander Berkman kept a diary of these years. A lifelong anarcho-communist, Berkman was deported from the USA with other Russian radicals in 1919 and arrived in the Soviet Union on January 20th 1920, "the most sublime day of my life."

For Berkman, the next year and a half were an experience in disillusionment as he tried to serve the Revolution in the face of mounting suspicion and bureaucracy.

Berkman's analysis of the Revolution is neither Marxist nor profound.

He disapproves of both "war communism" and the New Economic Policy which gave a limited lease of life to capitalism.

And as he regards the Communists' expectation of revolutions elsewhere in Europe as hopelessly utopian, he argues that Russia must rely on its own efforts to reconstruct.

But his observations are interesting.

From his anarchist standpoint, Berkman is alert to many nascent problems only later identified by opposition Communists:

- the ubiquitous commissars, allocated to all non-communist personnel in positions of authority;
- their bureaucratic mentality, preferring to "wait for instructions" rather than be guilty of showing independent initiative, whatever the situation;
- and the rise of the Cheka (Soviet secret police), already perverted by corrupt and ex-Tsarist elements.

By Mike Phipps
Woolwich CLP

Berkman's book, first published in 1925, was, says Nicolas Walter in his introduction, an embroidered, rewritten version of his 1920-21 diary. It was conceived as an anti-Bolshevik polemic, designed to unmask what he saw as a terrorist state worse than Tsarism.

Ironically, the most powerful passages in *The Bolshevik Myth* concern the effects of the Civil War waged by the Whites. He describes his own arrival on the empty streets of Petrograd, a city reduced from three million people in 1917 to just half a million in early 1920.

Then there are the accounts of the White anti-Jewish pogroms in Fastor in the Ukraine. One lasted *eight days*, conducted by the white General Denikin.

Slaughtered

Ten thousand people were slaughtered, three thousand died of exposure and wounds, and hundreds of women and girls as young as eight were abducted by the army for prostitution.

One witness told Berkman: "There is not a woman or girl above the age of ten in our city who has not been outraged. Some of them four, five, as high as 14 times... Tell America about it — will it still remain silent?"

Berkman told his story to a world that chose to ignore the White Terror and vilify the Reds.

Today, Pluto's reprint of Berkman's avowedly partisan book allows us to draw some lessons from one of the bleakest periods of Soviet history.

BOOK REVIEW

"Let history judge"

Let History Judge, by Roy Medvedev, *Oxford University Press*, £25.00.

In many ways this is one of the great books of the last thirty years.

It is, therefore, to be welcomed that Oxford University Press have published a new, revised and expanded edition.

The new edition develops the essential themes of the original published in the West back in 1971.

That volume was written under conditions of Brezhnevite repression which saw Medvedev stripped of his Party membership and subjected to virtual isolation.

Conviction

Nevertheless, unlike many of his contemporaries, he maintained a firm Marxist conviction and *Let History Judge* was a masterwork of investigation with little or no access to relevant Soviet sources and Western commentaries.

Undoubtedly, glasnost has been a major factor in allowing Medvedev to continue the extensive research which has gone into this book. However, it has still not been published in the Soviet Union.

Medvedev has written a book about the past and one that is rooted very much in the present. He is fully rehabilitated, a member of the Supreme Soviet and one of Gorbachev's foremost supporters.

As such one gets the impression when reading the section on the causes of Stalinism — the lack of glasnost in the Soviet press, Party and state leaders not being subjected to regular election — that one is reading supporting material for Gorbachev's political changes.

By RICK SIMON

Medvedev is critical of Trotsky and the main anti-Stalinist current Left Opposition. He notes that: "Despite the opposition's many accurate observations, however, the general thrust of its platform was mistaken."

The opposition erred in its belief that socialism could not be built in an isolated USSR, but would need the assistance of other victorious revolutions.

Vicious

Bukarin, however, while being too "soft" for the vicious political infighting, presented a programme which could have developed the Soviet economy without the terrible upheaval of the Stalinist years.

Stalin was able to take advantage of a number of features of the post-Civil War period, correctly identified by Medvedev: the ban on opposition parties and factions within the Bolshevik Party and the overwhelmingly petty-bourgeois character of Soviet society.



Soviet peasant women — benefitting from marketisation?

But what is never clear, and never can be clarified through Medvedev's framework, is *why* Stalin was able to exercise such dominance. For Medvedev it is ultimately a question of people's individual psychologies and a thirst for power.

Petty-bourgeois

"With his petty-bourgeois background and his training in church schools Stalin lacked the qualities of a genuine proletarian revolutionary."

In his analysis of bureaucratic degeneration, Medvedev, in keeping with current Soviet historiography on this period, cannot get beyond the framework of an isolated Soviet Union.

The international context of Soviet isolation and the forces operating on a world scale to assist that degeneration do not enter his equation. We have at best, therefore, a three-quarters analysis of Stalinism.

A few words cannot do justice to the wealth of detail in *Let History Judge*. One can only hope that a Russian edition is soon forthcoming.

Let History Judge can only be recommended wholeheartedly to all *Briefing* readers as a classic work of Soviet history.

BOOK REVIEW

The disputed role of the point of production

Critique of Economic Reason, by Andre Gorz, *Verso*.

In *The Critique of Economic Reason*, Gorz strikes back.

Heartily sick of being called a utopian socialist, he has decided to turn the tables and claim that the real utopian is none other than Karl Marx himself.

Fortunately the attempt is totally unpersuasive.

I have no doubt that if the old red were alive today, he would have no trouble seeing this old green off his territory.

Gorz's central claim is that Marx argues that the individual liberates him/herself, as a social being, by initially achieving liberty at the workplace.

For Gorz this is to base a theory upon the false, and essentially capitalistic, ideology of work.

Gorz argues instead that humans must liberate themselves *from* work if they are to achieve freedom and fulfilment.

The weak point in this argument is Gorz's failure to recognise the role that workplace control plays in Marx's very broad schema.

By ADAM LENT

At times Gorz seems to be moulding Marx in his own image.

He does not seem to grasp that workers' control of the means of production is a central feature, not of the immediate humanisation of work and leisure processes (the dominant preoccupation of Gorz), but of the political struggle for democratic control of the most basic materials that produce and reproduce a society and its members.

Leisure

A grand humanisation of work and leisure must come about, but for Marx this task is put off until after the revolution, and it is one that will generate its own logistical problems.

Gorz's Marx is really nothing more that a straw man.

Possibly recognising the paucity of his own analyses, the author dishes up the hackneyed and bankrupt critique of Marxism as a form of religion.

When a theorist turns to this reliable old stunt — always certain to convince those who know nothing about Marx's thought — one can't help feeling that desperation has set in.

Gorz's own prescriptions and social analyses come across as idealistic.

He essentially argues that the labour movement must drop its ideological commitment to the value of work and employment and build a movement around the struggle for longer and more fulfilling leisure time.

The ideal, although an apparently original and attractive one, fails to recognise the value of one of the oldest of socialist truths: in the struggle for the control of an economy, the ultimate cutting edge of the battle is the point of production.

Let's face it, it's there that one grabs the bourgeoisie by the genitalia.

Gorz's prescriptions are confused. He seems to be revolutionary in his call for a wholesale junking of capitalist work processes, yet naively reformist in his attack on the labour movement's commitment to re-employment.

Impractical

They are wholly impractical as a political programme.

I can't say I fancy telling an unemployed docker that he must bear up in the face of his poverty for the sake of a great service in the struggle against the work ethic.

At the end of this book, one can only feel sorry that a writer as eloquent and clear as Gorz has committed himself, for so long, to ideas as muddle-headed and incomplete as those current in his "post-Marxist" green milieu — a set of ideas that has claimed more than Gorz as a victim in the troubled 80s.

NACAB

CABx: whither anti-racism?

Unions representing a large majority of staff employed by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB) are disgusted at a decision by NACAB to accept some funding from private companies with interests in South Africa.

The unions say that this decision threatens the future of the CAB service:

• Accepting funding from companies having a direct relationship with a country which institutionalises racism undermines NACAB's anti-racist policy in the eyes of clients, advisers, and other agencies;

By a CABx worker

• Some local authorities have already indicated that they may now wish to reconsider grant aid to CABx;

• The decision was reached under pressure from the Department of Trade and Industry to accept private sector funding. Buckling under this pressure jeopardises the fragile independence of the service.

NACAB Council, the CAB service's "board of directors", voted by the smallest majority (14-13) to reject the recommendation of NACAB's Policy and Resources Committee not to accept funding from firms which employ staff and generate profits in South Africa, either through subsidiaries or associate companies.

It seems that NACAB will soon apply for funding to Allied Dunbar, a finance house wholly owned by BAT, which earns substantial profits from its South African subsidiaries. NACAB will bid for £950,000, spread over five years, to fund advice provision in CABx.

Staff represented by MSF along with many other workers including the CAB Black Workers Group have been shocked at the apparent ease with which NACAB has ditched its commitment to anti-racism for short-term financial gain.

Staff are prepared to fight. In a recent consultation exercise over 85% of respondents expressed their willingness to support the campaign to reverse the decision by taking industrial action.

"35" hour week

Extend the action!

The campaign for the 35 hour week has reached a crucial stage.

The campaign, run by the Confederation of Ship Building and Engineering Unions, should perhaps be retitled the "37 hour week" campaign.

There are small but important cracks in the ranks of the employers.

NEI Parsons, the Rolls Royce subsiduary in Newcastle, has offered a 37 hour week — and talks have now been arranged at their Derby and Glasgow plants.

BAe have talked of a phased introduction of a 37 hour week if the strike action in their plants is called off, although they are saying the deal would have to be "self financing" — in other words stringent productivity strings.

These small splits are important but the employers of the Engineering Employers Federation [EEF] are not about to crumble with such a small percentage of those involved in the claim on strike.

What the cracks do show, however, is what would be possible if a real all-out struggle for the 35 hour week was waged in the engineering industry: a major breakthrough could have been achieved by now.

With only just over 8,000 of the 2,000,000 workers covered by CSEU national negotiations on strike there is a danger that the action could drift into a stalemate.

The 8,000 strikers are employed at just five of the 4,500

By Alan Thornett Trade Union Briefing

establishments represented by the EEF: three BAe plants in Preston Chester and Kingston, a Rolls-Royce plant in Glasgow and a Smiths Industries plant at Cheltenham.

The strikers are receiving strike pay of £125 per week — partly from union funds and partly from collections and levies in the rest of the industry.

The response of the EEF has been to break off negotiations at national level and terminate all future national negotiations in the industry — reverting entirely to local bargaining.

This is a major attack on bargaining rights in an industry which has had national negotiations on hours, holidays and basic rates since the 1920s.

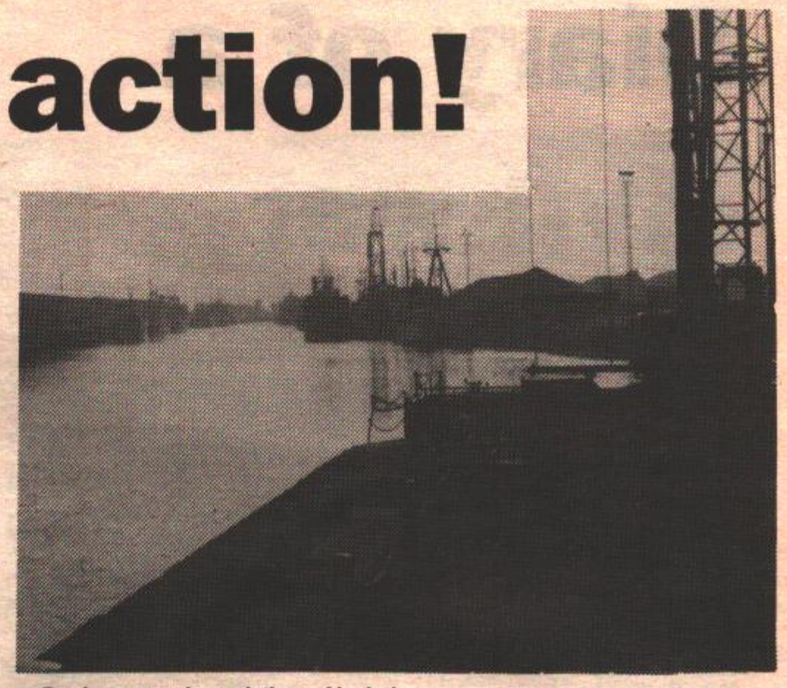
Response

There has been no response from the CSEU on this, although it abolishes at a stroke their main reason for existence. It is part of a trend by the employers as a whole.

In the 1970s they were trying to move away from local bargaining, but now with the unions weakened at local level they are taking this opportunity to get back to local negotiations.

They are trying to go down the same road as British Rail bosses and the local government employers.

The reaction of the CSEU leaders has been to stress that they will continue the campaign for the shorter working week via local negotiations with individual employers.



Dockers: previous victims of isolation

This strategy could well lead to the stronger plants forcing some concessions with the vast majority left out in the cold.

CSEU leaders are even delaying ballots for the planned second round of strikes — putting these back to well into the new year.

Interviewed in the *Morning Star*, Alex Ferry praised the response of engineering workers to the campaign, saying it had been the strongest response to any campaign in the industry since the defence of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971.

If that is the case then it is time that strength is allowed to reflect itself in a real extension to the action — not just to win the 35 hour week but to defend national bargaining rights as well.

Ferry draws no such conclusion however. Instead he stresses that there must be a reduction in hours "to at least 37 hours".

Nor is the CSEU opposed to productivity strings which have marred previous reductions in hours in Britain — with some workers doing more after the hours were reduced than they were previously.

The struggle for the 35 week goes beyond the CSEU and the EEF. A reduction in the working week is a part of the wage claims at both Ford and Vauxhall — neither of them members of the EEF.

A 35 hour week is an important element of the Ford wage claim. Ford unions have unanimously rejected the recent offer of 9.5% for this year with inflation plus 2% for next year and no reduction in the working week.

A ballot of the workforce for all-out action is now being arranged and polls conducted amongst the Ford workforce show that a reduction of hours is now a major priority for them.

NALGO Gen. Sec. Elections

Needed: a new left!

For the first time in its history, NALGO is having to ballot its members to elect the union's General Secretary.

The retiring incumbent, John Daly, is well known as an incompetent non-entity — selected by the NEC precisely because of that.

The current election, forced on NALGO by Tory union law, ought to be an opportunity for members to consider candidates who will put forward real strategies for a fightback against the Tory attacks on local government and other services and in defence of members' pay and conditions.

So far, only three candidates have been nominated:

•**Alan Jinkinson** (the present Deputy General Secretary);

•**Syd Platt** (District Organisation Officer for the East Midlands);

•**Roger Bannister** (Secretary of the Knowsley branch, *Militant* supporter, candidate of the Broad Left).

There is little to chose between the first two candidates. They are both part of the union's bureaucracy and have few political differences.

Jinkinson is supported unofficially by the *Morning Star* and is likely to be the eventual winner. He will probably receive considerable support from ordinary NALGO members based on the leadership's ability to deliver a victory in this year's industrial action.

On the other hand, the lack of any campaign by the union against the Poll Tax, against cuts, or on privatisation ought to be exposed by the Broad Left in order to gain support for a fighting alternative.

However, the Broad Left is still no more than a block of sections of the far left and has little influence. It produces no bulletins at conferences or magazines.

By Fred Leplat Islington NALGO

It has been totally absent from the major debates in the union on positive action and Ireland, and the opposition to the NALGO leadership's capitulation on cuts and privatisation has been led instead by branches such as Bury, Islington, and Newham, which are not directly associated with the Broad Left.

Nonetheless, in the absence of any other candidates, the left in NALGO should support Roger Bannister on the basis that his platform does offer at least the potential for a fighting alternative strategy (flat rate pay claim, national industrial action against cuts and privatisation, for a democratic merger with NUPE).

It's a shame, however, that Bannister still ducks the questions of positive action and Ireland.

Organising a democratic left in NALGO is going to be a long term task. Bannister's campaign could contribute to this, but the Broad Left's and *Militant's* undemocratic methods have turned away many good activists.

A positive contribution to the building of the left in the union is *NALGO Action*, a bulletin launched by Newham and Islington branches, which aims to provide information and debate.

The first three issues have been well received and it is now appearing every three months.

Socialists in NALGO should get their branch to sponsor the magazine and take out a bulk order (contact *NALGO Action* c/o Islington NALGO, 2 Orleston Road, London N7).

The Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee should also play a part in drawing NALGO militants together in the building of a democratic left in the union.

At the recent SM Conference in Sheffield, there were more "unaffiliated" NALGO members present than at the NALGO Broad Left Conference!

In the short run, union activists should organise in their branches now for the biggest possible vote for Roger Bannister and for action against the Poll Tax, privatisation, and cuts.

NUPE

Bickerstaffe moves against dissenter

The NUPE Executive Council has launched a witch-hunt against one of its own members.

The member is Ian Driver, of the ILEA branch, who was recently re-elected on to the NUPE EC, with an increased majority.

Ian now faces expulsion from the EC at a meeting to be held in January.

It is claimed that at a NALGO rally in Southwark during the national pay strike in July, Ian made a personal attack on Rodney Bickerstaffe, NUPE General Secretary, for mishandling the strike ballot of NUPE APT&C members.

This allegation is a flagrant fabrication. No evidence has been produced to support it.

Discipline

The NUPE EC has now set up a three person disciplinary committee which will hear the allegations collected by a full-time NUPE officer.

The real reason for the disciplinary action is that Ian Driver has consistently opposed the right wing policies of NUPE within the union and especially within its National Executive Committee.

By Fred Leplat Islington NALGO

He was the only EC member to operate out against the 1987 Local Government Manual Workers Job Evaluation Exercise, has called for the regular election of all NUPE full-time officials, and demanded that NUPE launch a serious campaign amongst its own white collar members to take industrial action with NALGO last July.

Socialists in NUPE should raise this issue in their branch or shop stewards committees. Pass resolutions to the NUPE EC in support of Ian Driver.

Democracy

The question of democracy in NUPE is vital: the New Realist EC led by Rodney Bickerstaffe has a record of ignoring democratic decisions and even union rules.

For example, the Labour Party Policy Review had only been discussed at NUPE's Development Sub-committee. A special Executive Committee was requested so that the union's attitude on this document could be determined by its highest standing body.

Support for the Policy Review was bulldozed through the NEC, whose members were given the 100,000 word Review four days before the meeting to discuss it.

Departure

This year, for the first time in ages, an EC policy was overturned by Conference and NUPE was committed to campaign for a "yes" vote for industrial action in support of the same pay claim as NALGO.

However, the NUPE leadership chose to ignore this decision by only producing one leaflet distributed with the ballot forms — in contrast to the 15 produced by NALGO.

Finally, the issue of democracy will be crucial in any merger of NUPE and NALGO. The left in both unions must insist on our members' rights to air political differences within the union.

It must also ensure that branches have some autonomy and that unelected full-time officials are not allowed to run the union without consulting the membership.

Ambulance dispute

Co-ordinated national action needed

A queue of solid Tory voters waiting to sign petitions in support of workers taking industrial action is a rare sight indeed.

An even rarer sight must be the same Tory voters digging in their pockets and parting with much loved cash to provide practical support for these workers.

By Geoff Ryan NUPE Steward, Central Manchester Hospitals Branch

Yet this is exactly what has been happening in the ambulance workers dispute.

The level of public support for the ambulance workers is probably the highest ever recorded during an industrial dispute.

A *Manchester Evening News* poll showed 96% support for the ambulance staff and the national average is not much lower.

A two to one majority of Tory voters support ambulance staff's claim for a pay rise of more than 10%.

Kenneth Clarke's attempted smear campaign has backfired. His claim that ambulance staff in Becontree, Essex, refused to help a seriously ill baby in Upminster has been exposed as a lie.

The Becontree ambulance workers wanted the request for help referred to another ambulance station nearer to Upminster — which is normal practice. *Management* refused to do so, causing a delay in getting assistance.

When management finally did transfer the call to the appropriate station ambulance staff attended immediately — but were then prevented from helping the baby by police, who claimed they were investigating a possible murder.

Far from the baby dying as a result of any "refusal" by Becontree ambulance staff to attend, it was already dead *before* the call for assistance was ever made.

Clarke now faces possible legal action for his defamation of the Becontree staff.

Clarke has certainly not given up and is clearly prepared for a long dispute. He has decided to spend £200,000 of our money on newspaper adverts attacking the ambulance crews.

He is also considering making a separate deal with the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel (whose constitution outlaws industrial action, though some of its members have joined the current campaign).

Morale

In order to break the morale of ambulance staff, Clarke has decided to pay non-emergency staff for only one week in November, while emergency crews will receive only two weeks' pay.

Troops and police are now being used in London, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire, the West Midlands, and Derbyshire, while "voluntary" groups are providing a scab service in Surrey and Dorset.

In Lincolnshire crews have taken over their stations to prevent management removing emergency equipment.

In some areas members of the public have refused to go in army or police driven ambulances, demanding properly trained ambulance personnel.

Ambulance controllers in London have walked off the job in protest at delays by police and army in answering calls.

Split

Clarke has tried to split ambulance workers by offering different pay rates to "emergency" and "non-emergency" crews. This is a purely artificial distinction.

For example, in my unit there is a day hospital for elderly, confused people. Most of the work is what Clarke refers to as a "taxi" service.

Yet staff involved in this "taxi" service have to be able to persuade these elderly, confused people to leave their house and get in the ambulance.

They may have to assist them down several flights of stairs. They also have to look for signs of neglect, physical illness,etc.

Moreover, because of their confusion, some of the patients can become violent and staff have to know how to respond.

All of this requires skills far in excess of those needed to provide a "taxi" service.

They may not be on the same dramatic level as those required to help at a major accident but they are, nonetheless, skills requiring appropriate training and experience.

We should be extremely grateful to the BBC for *Casualty*, which not only demonstrates the tremendous range of knowledge, skills, and abilities required by ambulance personnel but also shows ambulance staff as a vital part of a larger team all involved in caring for the patient.

Despite the massive public support the dispute remains at an impasse. The main problem is the refusal of the NUPE leadership to translate this support into action.

For example, at a demonstration in Manchester on November 18th, the strong turnout of ambulance workers was an impressive display of high morale and staunch unity. But there was virtually no effort to mobilise anyone other than ambulance personnel — not even other NUPE members in the NHS.

Shop stewards were sent only one petition each.

Even allowing for the tenacity with which some NUPE officials guard their "patch" and for general incompetence, it is clear that it is a deliberate decision on the part of the NUPE leadership to damp down the sort of solidarity action that can actually win the dispute.

Reasonable

Roger Poole has been at pains to appear "reasonable" on TV. He has been prepared to drop parts of the claim (without a ballot of staff) and is constantly offering to accept arbitration.

There is no doubt that Poole's strategy has had some success. Many Health Service managers concede that he has done a good job presenting the unions' case and has scored heavily over Clarke in their televised disputes.

But his reasonableness and his good TV image still hasn't forced the government to back down.

Some workers, however, are beginning to take the sort of direct action necessary to win the dispute.

Organising

Throughout the country hospital workers are organising collections and setting up support groups, often without waiting for official sanction.



In London nurses have been contacting ambulance staff directly — bypassing the police and army — to transport terminally ill and radiotherapy patients, as well as those from Accident and Emergency departments and Intensive Treatment Units.

According to Barbara Maclean, branch chair of COHSE in Ealing, where management has stopped nurses making direct contact with ambulance crews, the ambulance staff have been waiting near casualty departments to find out where they might be needed.

Even the Royal College of Nursing has agreed that the Professional Code of Conduct allows nurses to make direct contact with ambulance staff in preference to complying with management directives.

At Homerton Hospital in Hackney and at Barts hospital staff staged 2-hour walkouts in support of the ambulance workers.

All of these actions are useful and should be imitated and followed up wherever possible. But they need to be organised and co-ordinated nationally.

That can only be done by the unions involved, particularly NUPE and COHSE. There needs to be a fight inside these unions to get the leadership to call for and organise further actions.

A nationally organised stoppage of NHS workers — even for a few hours — would be a tremendous boost to ambulance staff morale and would further isolate the government.

All unions should organise collections and — if possible — levies of their members.

With Christmas approaching, financial support has to be stepped up. There should be clear union directives to NHS staff to make calls only to ambulance workers. This would not only help to expose Clarke's lies, but also ensure the best possible care for patients.

A nationally organised campaign would also make victimisation much more difficult.

But the biggest boost to the ambulance workers would be if other groups of workers were prepared to take action now in pursuit of their own pay claims.

Past experience shows that the Tories do not like to have to fight on several fronts at once. When workers have taken action together they have been able to win.

Ford Victimisation

Stitch-up exposed

Mick Gosling's legal battle for reinstatement at Ford Dagenham has begun.

Mick alleges unfair dismissal because of trade union activities.

By a *Briefing* legal correspondent

Evidence before his Industrial Tribunal, which began on November 24th, points to a conspiracy extending to highest management. Ford's subscription to the Economic League has also been confirmed.

Ford clearly wished to scapegoat Mick and intimidate a workforce provoked into unofficial stoppages by poor working conditions and arrogant management.

Mick's TGWU branch, the "notoriusly militant" 1107, of which he was Chair, organised a lunchtime meeting on Ireland with Bernadette McAliskey. Ford saw their chance.

Giving evidence, Plant Manager Jeff Body admitted they "may have" infiltrated the meeting. But Ford, having planted stories in the tabloids, were totally unable to substantiate their informants allegations that Mick chaired the meeting when he should have been at work.

They then raked up months old incidents in which Mick had participated and accused him of inciting unconstitutional action (though at the beginning of one he was actually in the sick bay).

These stoppages, involving up to 90 workers, were on Health and Safety and invasion of privacy issues.

Management further resurrected the well known fact that Mick failed to disclose his degree when he'd joined Ford ten years before.

Disciplinary

Despite having no disciplinary record, Body, with the active collusion of Operations Manager Ubaghs, summarily dismissed Mick. The only way Mick could retain his job was by signing a document relinquishing all rights to take further action.

This would have meant Mick was working on totally different terms to his workmates, and the union advised him not to sign. Ubaghs then appointed poodle Neil Spence to rubber stamp Body's decision at the appeal hearing.

Fortunately the stitch-up was so blatant it seems unlikely to succeed. Counsel Richard Bloomfield emphasised the uniqueness of Mick's position:

- the only Dagenham worker in 25 years to be dismissed for unconstitutional action.
- the only person to be dismissed for unconstitutional action without progressive discipline.
- the only person to be disciplined for any of the incidents Ford cited, beyond a universal warning letter.

On all these stoppages, Mick was following overwhelming majority votes, and continues to enjoy the support of his branch.

The case continues in February.

Brighton

Organising solidarity

By JOHN GREEN

£9,000 was raised in the first week of collections for the ambulance workers in Brighton.

People queued up in the town centre to give money.

East Sussex ambulance workers are operating an open channel emergency service, while refusing to fill out reports and transfer patients between hospitals. This creates the maximum, workload for management while ensuring serious calls are answered.

Management has used this as an excuse to stop all their pay in December.

Ambulance workers responded by pulling their ambulances to the side of the road to collect money.

A support group has been set up with the aim of organising workplace and street collections.

Initial labour movement support has been positive.

The Brighton and Hove bus workers donated a TV for a raffle and the postal workers have donated £200. Both are planning to make workplace collections.

Students at the polytechnic collected £100 in an afternoon.

A public meeting and concert are being organised to rally further support.

International Briefing

Palestine

Two years on: the Intifada's strength

December 9th 1987, the day when Palestinians in the Gaza Strip took to the streets to protest at the death of four people who were hit by an Israeli truck, is regarded as the beginning of the Intifada.

This incident was the spark that ignited tensions within the West Bank and Gaza Strip created by Israel's occupation in 1967. Within days the uprising in the Gaza strip had spread to the West Bank and has continued ever since.

Reporting of the Intifada, while exposing the brutality of Israel's repression, has remained superficial, concentrating on the killings, injuries, clashes between soldiers and young Palestinians (shababs), and house demolitions.

The question begging is how the Palestinians have sustained their uprising in the face of military repression.

This summer I was fortunate enough to take part in a workcamp in the West Bank and gained an insight into what has kept the Intifada going.

The real substance of the Intifada lies in the network of popular committees that exist in all towns, villages, and refugee camps.

These committees, that have existed for several years, by organising the everyday life of Palestinians, ensure self-reliance and independence from the Israeli state.

Israel has realised how crucial the popular committees are and in an attempt to break their strength has made them illegal and so forced them underground.

Support for the committees comes from all sections of Palestinian society.

The committees elect representatives to take care of their day to day running, and nationwide co-ordination is achieved through fortnightly leaflets from the unified national leadership.

The Israeli authorities have repeatedly closed and disrupted schools and universities, so education committees were formed to provide "popular schools" offering popular and relevant education.

Palestinians also point out that the Israelis have unwittingly opened "universities" in the prisons because the large number of prisoners are now educating each other, passing on their own particular knowledge and skills.

The Israeli run hospitals in the occupied territories are severely underfunded and inadequate.

The health committees have responded by opening and running permanent and mobile clinics financed by donations and run by voluntary help, improving the quality of health care through a preventative and curative health service and health education classes.

Casualties from the fighting are more safely treated in the clinics than the hospitals which are often raided by the soldiers searching for injured demonstrators.



PHOTO: Tim Nolan

Palestinian children are at the forefront of the Intifada

Women's committees have strengthened the position of women in Palestinian society and increased their role in the Intifada.

They hold wide ranging classes and organise nurseries to free women from the home so that they can study and meet other women to discuss common issues.

In the villages the agricultural committees strengthen the boycott of Israeli products by helping to make the Palestinians self sufficient in most foods.

The committees have formed some co-operatives and advise people on how to develop small scale farming.

Strikes are central to the Intifada and are planned by the unified national leadership in liason with the General Federation of Trade Unions.

Much of the strike organisation takes place at a grass roots level through committees of trade union activists because many union leaders have been imprisoned.

Publicity committees arrange visits for journalists and photographers, and workcamps like the one I attended, in order to expose to the outside world the conditions of the occupation.

Safeguard

To help safeguard against sudden invasions by the military, all communities have security committees whose task it is to patrol the town, village or refugee camp and to warn the inhabitants of military activity.

The popular committees explain why Israel has not been able to break the Intifada.

The Palestinians are optimistic, as is perhaps best summed up by the popular slogan: "Israel is not stronger than America and Palestine is not weaker than Vietnam."

It is difficult to see how the uprising can be stopped because it consists of activity by all Palestinian society which has found a unity of purpose and a common aim: the liberation of their land and the creation of an independent state.

When independence is achieved, the mass involvement in the Intifada will surely shape the nature of a Palestinian state. Through struggle, people are realising their potential to control their own lives.

It is unlikely that such people will simply hand over the power to a remote bureaucracy after elections, but will instead retain a passion for continuing to shape their own future.

Hong Kong

Democracy demonstrators face trial

Four members o group *April 5th Ac* were arrested a charged following a smal demonstration against a Chinese National Day banquet hosted by Chinese officials in Hong Kong.

***April 5th Action*, a militant, left-wing organisation established following the latest 1989 mobilisations of the Chinese democracy movement, has been unwilling to tone down its demands to comply with the British Government's PR exercise.**

Publicly, Charles and Di took China off their recent holiday itinerary. However, Britain is already back to "doing business" with the Chinese authorities and accommodating their demands.

Not surprising, as the Chinese democracy uprising and its violent suppression only served to expose the dirty deals between the two sides over the future of Hong Kong made years back.

These had little to do with democracy for the Hong Kong people and much to do with bolstering trade between the two countries.

There is also evidence that Britain is itself clamping down on any "excesses" by the Hong Kong people in support of mainland Chinese and for their own democratic reforms.

There are a growing number of reports of Chinese refugees managing to escape to Hong Kong only to be returned to China, and entry visas have been refused for Chinese pro-democracy dissidents for no obvious reason.

The recent arrests of the Hong Kong demonstrators signal Britain's increasing intolerance of political activity on its colony.

The four received substantial injuries whilst in police custody and during scuffles on the picket line. Charges of assault and illegal assembly have since been brought against the demonstrators.

You can affiliate to the Chinese Solidarity Campaign by contacting us at 68, Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC1, tel. 01-494 3273.

This has caused much public disquiet. Amongst those voicing their concerns are civil rights campaigners, District Councillors and lawyers as well as the Association of Press Reporters.

A defence committee has been set up with considerable grass roots support.

Few in Hong Kong can have any illusions left in Britain. Those who can afford to leave Hong Kong look to countries other than Britain.

Britain's interest is in protecting its existing investment in Hong Kong after 1997, and its privileged status for future forages into China's economy relies on appeasing the Chinese Government.

The introduction of more direct elections to Hong Kong's governing Council will be, for the most part, cosmetic, aimed at allaying the fears of Hong Kong workers and small businessmen.

The major local and international capitalists have already been reassured, providing there are no dramatic reversals from Deng's economic reforms.

The Hong Kong workers however, having shown in their thousands support for greater democracy in China, will have had a taste for organising in pursuit of their own demands for a genuine and workable democratic self-rule in Hong Kong.

In the face of the present carve-up of Hong Kong's resources between the imperialist super-powers and the deepening disparities of wealth, nothing else will do.

Anti-Apartheid AGM

"Advancing" to the negotiating table?

On November 25th and 26th City of London University hosted that paragon of bureaucratic manoeuvre, the A-AM AGM.

Where else do you have the compulsory compositing of motions without the agreement of the movers.

By Mike Phipps Chair, Greenwich & Bexley A-A

Where else do you have entire *composites* guillotined for lack of time (an excuse to keep the Friends of Moses Mayekiso campaign off the agenda for the third year running?).

And where else would the Chair say: "Speak against the motion if you have to, but you're going to lose anyway."

This year's AGM contained few surprises and the debate was if anything of poorer quality than usual. Motions calling for recognition and support for liberation movements other than the ANC and SWAPO were predictably voted down.

Supporters of the A-AM Executive explained that by giving exclusive backing to the ANC all liberation currents would benefit. Yet in a debate on detainees, they argued that running campaigns around key trials, such as the Upington 26, would mean that other political prisoners would lose out.

Behind this logic-chopping, however, lies a crisis of perspective.

The main Executive resolution talked of "unprecedented advances" in South Africa, with a logic that leads towards a negotiated settlement in which apartheid, viewed as a moral, "colonial" problem is cast aside.

The reality is that apartheid is inseparable form capitalist exploitation — a fact ignored in A-AM publicity.

The A-AM's internal organisation came in for considerable criticism by delegates. Despite 18 full-time staff, no national demo was organised last year, and membership has slumped since the surge after the Mandela concert in 1988.

On publicity the Executive suffered its only defeat of the AGM — itself highly unusual! Women, youth, and black delegates all complained that the A-AM leadership was unrepresentative.

An important principle was established when the Executive were obliged to concede the need to build links between the black community here and the liberation movement in South Africa.

Frustration

Despite the frustration, the A-AM left caucus set up last year had some constructive discussions and resolved to carry on the fight for workers' links, democracy in the A-AM, and support for all genuine liberation forces.

El Salvador

FMLN pushes ahead

As the struggle in El Salvador continues, the casualties are piling up.

The FMLN had made great efforts to negotiate a peaceful way forward, and it is important that people understand why they decided to launch an offensive at this time.

They fully understood the painful cost in human lives of trying to overthrow a government through armed insurrection — especially a government armed to the teeth by US imperialism.

By Gareth Mostyn
Member, El Salvador Solidarity Campaign EC

The key question for the FMLN was the balance of forces.

Their attempts to reach a negotiated political solution resulted in a significant shift of popular support in their favour. For the guerilla army this also meant an increase in military capacity.

Despite the government's eventual willingness to hold talks, the army's actions showed complete hostility to any negotiated settlement.

There was a steady increase in repression, culminating in the lethal bombing of the FENASTRAS trade union building.

The FMLN had gone as far as was possible on the diplomatic and political front.

Sections

Large sections of the population had built themselves democratic organisations. These organisations occupied a plurality of political positions, but were united in opposing state repression.

An electoral solution to the stalemate was improbable. It would be worthless unless the victor had both the means and the will to remove the fascist elements from the state structure: to disarm and imprison the death squads and the generals who run them.

The scene was set: the party of fascism, increasingly isolated but with full US backing, faced an anti-fascist front in which the FMLN had the leading position.

The bulk of the bourgeoisie was willing to follow the lead given by the most right wing fascist forces, while Christiani, their man with the moderate image, gestured at the front.

In this context the FMLN launched their fierce offensive, which is aimed at achieving a further shift in the balance of forces and changing the terms of the dialogue.

They have been emphasising that this is *not* the final or even a general offensive.

The FMLN have not thrown every last fighter in the breach in a desperate bid for power. They have kept forces in reserve. The sixty-year old dictatorship has been severely and visibly shaken.

Huge cracks are appearing — visible to both supporters and opponents. The FMLN are confident that the next dialogue will be conducted in a more favourable context for them.

Within 15 hours of the FMLN offensive strategic areas of the capital had been taken. The military preparations to prevent the FMLN fighting its way into the capital had been made instantly redundant.

The most important element of the offensive has been the incorporation of new people into the FMLN army and in support of its struggle.

The British media have chosen not to show the kind of images shown on Spanish TV of mothers and children building barricades in San Salvador.

This incorporation of sections of the populace into this action should not, however lead us to see it as a typical spontaneous and general uprising. Rather, these initiatives are locally organised and carefully planned.

If people had thrown themselves against the army without organisation it would have looked more like an insurrection for the cameras but would have led to a huge loss of life.

The army responded with desperate measures. They have not been able to send in infantry soldiers,so the vast majority of deaths have been caused by indiscriminate aerial bombing, including the use of white phospherous.

The FMLN have been able to hold down the entire army — supposedly 50,000 soldiers. The only reinforcements sent to the capital were from the South West around Sonsonate, the only area where the FMLN are not strong.

Everywhere else the armed forces were tied down. In some cases they were unable to go more than 400 metres from their fortifications.

The FMLN retreat from the Sacomil and Soyapango working class areas of San Salvador has been hailed as a victory by the army. In Sacomil the many large blocks of flats have been reduced to rubble.

Residential

However, the FMLN did not withdraw from the fight; instead it moved to the residential areas of the bourgeoisie, where the families of the of those supporting the government live.

This was an effective political move because it exposed the attitude of the armed forces, who would not bomb the area.

Shocked residents told reporters that the FMLN had behaved impeccably, apologised for going though their houses, and did not shoot them on sight as they had expected.

In the early 80s most leading trade union activists were killed by death squads. The trade union movement was effectively eliminated.

This allowed temporary stability and an "improvement" in human rights for the "democratic" Duarte facade that followed; meanwhile a new generation of trade unions were built.

Now the military have again launched massive hunt and kill operations in the parts of San Salvador not in FMLN hands. Among the tragic killings have been the Jesuit priests and one leading trade unionist.

Detained

The Red Cross have reported a hundred TU members detained.

However, the FMLN have been careful to preserve the lives of trade union leaders and activists. Some have joined the FMLN in clandestine activity as a further stage of struggle. Others have been hidden away.

The mass movement is intact, although there is at the moment no room for strikes, demonstrations, or open political activity.

The government has now passed the "anti-terrorist laws" which were blocked by massive protest a few months ago. The strategy of open war advocated by the "Tandona" officers in the army is now in full swing.

It has been publicly announced that people who fail to declare themselves *for* the government will be regarded as *against*. The strategy of total war is to eliminate those who are *against*.

The strategy of the FMLN is to isolate these fascists. They say that the "Tandona" and the neo-fascist sector of ARENA linked to the oligarchy are the obstacles to a negotiated settlement.

The aim of the FMLN is to remove that sector, but not all the army and the bourgeoisie. The FMLN is calling for a provisional government comprising all forces except the neo-fascists *and themselves*.

This government would then negotiate a settlement with the FMLN. There are some similar ideas in Washington with talk of a government of salvation.

There has been speculation about whether the leaders and the fighters of the FMLN have different aims. The FMLN explains that any war ends in negotiations when one side or the other tips the balance of forces in its favour.

On the battle field it is necessary, for the morale of the combatants, to fight for victory. The FMLN leaders are saying that a successful negotiation *is* victory.

The US sent 200 troops in when the FMLN took the Sheraton Hotel and these troops remain in El Salvador. The danger of more direct intervention remains.

The Independent, *The Financial Times* and *The Economist* have all declared in their editorials that the US made a bad investment in El Salvador and should get out.

The Salvador Solidarity Campaign has given us plenty to do. Their two campaigning priorities are:

•An end to US intervention in El Salvador!

•An end to British aid to the government of El Salvador!

Further demands include Stop the bombings! Break diplomatic relations! Lift the state of terrorism! Promoting the FMLN should continue when possible and as appropriate.

•The El Salvador Solidarity Campaign can be contacted at 20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN, tel. 01-704 9849.

•There is an emergency briefing meeting for activists, 9th December — ring ELSOC for details.

•A national demonstration is planned for January 20th 1990.

Brazilian Elections

PT break-through

In Brazil's first presidential elections for 29 years the Workers' Party (PT) has made a spectacular breakthrough.

In the first round on November 15th the PT candidate, Luis Inacio "Lula" da Silva, came second with some 12 million votes (17%), behind the right-wing candidate, Fernando Collor de Mello, who received 20 million votes.

Now the December 17th run-off will be a straight contest between right and left.

In spite of the enormous pressure on Lula to soft-peddle his radical programme, and Collor's attempts to pose as a modernising social democrat, it is clear that, as one of Lula's supporters put it:

"this will be an election between us and them, poor against rich".

Indeed, the contrast between the two candidates' campaigns could hardly be starker.

Collor has relied upon massive support from the major TV network, a campaign fleet of 11 private jets, 80 personal bodyguards and a budget of over $100 million.

The temporary result has been to plug some of the gap left by the crisis of the ruling class which has, with inflation at 40% a month, completely discredited the government coalition — only able to poll single figures.

Lula's campaign has spent less than that of any other serious candidate. For the first part of the campaign he was frozen out by the media and had to rely on scheduled flights to cover the thousands of miles between rallies. As a result he was often late.

By STUART PIPER

Erratic opinion polls were soon giving the PT candidate five or six per cent.

But with two months to go, the obligatory free TV spots began to show nightly and Collor began falling, Lula started climbing, and his closest rival, the left-leaning old-time populist Leonel Brizola stood still at around 15%.

At the same time one of Lula's supporters won the lottery and bought a small jet for the PT campaign.

The PT's 500,000 signed-up members, only a tenth of whom could in normal times be considered active, mobilised a series of rallies, 50 to 100 thousand strong.

Taking place in major cities right across Brazil, they extended the party's support beyond the industrial workers of the south-east to the urban poor, landless cane-cutters of the north-east and the forest dwellers of the Amazon.

On voting day the PT probably had five times as many watchers at the polling stations as any other party.

Opinion polls after the first round gave Collor, with 48%, a 16 point lead over Lula. Two weeks later, the gap had fallen to 9%.

Lula was immediately endorsed by the Communist and Green Parties, each with 1% of the vote, and now, grudgingly, by Brizola's Democratic Labour Party. There is therefore a real, if outside, chance that Lula may win on December 17th.



PT presidential candidate Lula attends a rally in support of striking teachers at Quércia

This is important because the PT is not, in spite of all the pressures from without, and some from within, an electoralist party.

There are no signs of concessions to its 14-point programme, which includes fundamental agrarian reform, suspension of the foreign debt, and thoroughgoing democratisation, including subordination of the military.

Its "Guidelines for Government Action" make explicit the unbreakable link between fighting for these democratic demands and the building of socialism.

The PT recognises that trying to implement its programme will bring it up against mighty social forces, and the constitution itself, and that such confrontation will only be resolved by mass mobilisation in support of a PT government.

The PT acknowledges that taking office is not the same thing as taking power and notes the need to learn from the Allende experience in Chile to avoid any similar defeat in the case of a PT administration.

The PT is strengthened by the involvement at all levels of the party, including its national leadership, of various marxist currents.

Even if Lula does not win, the PT will have asserted itself as *the* political alternative in Latin America's largest country and, alongside the FMLN, will have started to redraw the map of that continent's politics.

LABOUR BRIEFING

Poll Tax in Scotland

The resistance continues

Eighty per cent of the original non-payers in Scotland have still not paid a penny — despite receiving "final warnings" threatening legal action.

This level of non-payment shows that, in addition to the thousands who simply cannot afford to pay, there is a widespread commitment among those who can pay to stand firm and defy the Tax.

Surely the figures will silence those who have tried to play down the non-payment campaign and makes a mockery of Donald Dewar's assertion to Party Conference that non-payment was not significantly higher

By Allan Green
Maryhill CLP

than under the old rates system.

Glasgow — where non-payment is running around 30% — was the scene of the latest anti-Poll Tax demo.

Between 10,000 and 15,000 responded to the STUC's "Enough is Enough — Stop the Poll Tax — Stop Warrant Sales" march and rally.

As with previous demos in Scotland, the event was effectively turned into a non-payment event by its participants.

The largest contingents were made up of local anti-Poll Tax groups and the SNP. Perhaps reflecting the current confidence of the non-payment campaign, supporters of the Anti-Poll Tax Unions were, despite the dismal weather, exceptionally lively.

The Labour Party presence was weak, a disappointment but not a surprise following the line taken by the Party Conference on the Poll Tax.

Offensive

The SNP took the opportunity to go on the offensive.

Banners proclaiming "A Vote for Labour is a Vote for Warrant Sales" hit Labour Councils at one of their most vulnerable spots — their reluctance to discard the "ultimate weapon" in Poll Tax collection.

But these SNP slogans smacked of hypocrisy, given the shoddy record of their councillors in Grampian Region and elsewhere. Nonetheless, there is a big fight on now to make sure there are no warrant sales carried out in Labour areas.

The STUC is now calling on the TUC to organise a major demo against the Poll Tax on April 1st, to mark the introduction of the Tax in England and Wales and its first anniversary in Scotland. This demand deserves widespread support.

Poll Tax Notes

Labour Councils levy fines

One of the less publicised aspects of the Poll Tax legislation is the new legal powers given to local Councils to fine people who fail to register.

Local Authorities are political, not judicial bodies, and to give them powers to fine demonstrates not only the Tories' own curious lack of faith in the legal process but the government's recognition of the likely scale of resistance to the Tax.

When some of us have argued that Labour Councils should refuse to implement the Tax, we've been told that the job of a Labour Council is to mitigate the worst effects of the Tax.

Labour Councils, therefore, would be expected to protest against the provision for fines and do their utmost to avoid fining their own potential voters.

Nonetheless, some of the most dedicated finers in London are Labour Councils.

Under the law, local Poll Tax Registration Officers are obliged to complete the register and can ignore instructions from Councillors that would prevent or hinder the process of drawing it up.

However, this does not mean that Labour Councillors should just sit back and let the officers get on with it.

There are still areas of influence, even within the law, not only over the literature going out but also over the methods used in compiling the register.

In Haringey, the Labour Council has the advantage of covering an area with one of the largest and most active anti-Poll Tax campaigns in the country, a campaign working at grass roots level attacking a key weakness in government policy.

By Craig Brewin
Haringey Councillor

But how does Haringey Council respond? By levying fines on campaign activists and beginning the fining process several weeks *before* the deadline for publication of the register.

Then in full Council the Council Leader, after making only a mild attack on the Tax itself, denounces the leaders of the campaign and indeed the campaign itself.

There are currently two different versions of just what Haringey policy on fines actually is.

According to the Council Leader, the only people being fined are those who refuse to register when visited by a Poll Tax canvasser.

However, according to Haringey's Registration Office, the policy is to fine everyone from whom they have heard nothing since the registration process began.

If no one has answered your door after it has been visited three times, and a final warning has been hand delivered, then you will be fined.

The reality is different from both these versions of Labour Council policy. People in Haringey are being fined without being spoken to by Poll Tax canvassers and/or without a hand delivered final warning.

The "policy" is a farce. The fact that many of the people initially fined were active in the Anti-Poll Tax Union (and the Labour left) has given rise to suspicions that individuals are being targeted for punishment.

Local Authorities have the discretion to draw up far clearer guidelines for their registration staff than Haringey or other Labour Councils have chosen to do. There is certainly no need to fine everyone who has not registered by a specific date.

In Haringey, in any case, the date seems to vary according to who you are and where you live.

Several of the people fined are known to live alone, yet they have been fined after having already been put on the register and forced to fill in a form stating that no others live at their address.

More benevolent Authorities have shied away from hitting people with fines at this early stage, preferring to compile the register through effective canvassing rather than intimidation.

Haringey's readiness to use its fining powers suggests panic.

The Council has agreed a strategy of blaming the Tories for the Poll Tax at all times — but the fining letters merely state that the Council has "no option" but to levy the fine, a simple untruth.

These matters are of grave concern to at least some local Labour Councillors, who tried to raise them at a recent Labour Group meeting.

Unfortunately, such was the commitment of the Group leadership to not discussing the Poll Tax that they walked out making the meeting inquorate.

Perhaps at the back of their minds is the fact that 10,000 £50 fines would raise half a million pounds — enough to cut the Poll Tax in Haringey by £3.50 per head.

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November 25th Conference

A wasted opportunity

By Jane Connor Tottenham APT

The much awaited launch of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation held in Manchester on 25th November was a bitter disapointment for many of the 1500 delegates who had travelled overnight to attend.

What could have been perhaps the only opportunity before Poll Tax implementation in England and Wales to seriously discuss strategy and tactics for the non-payment movement degenerated into a triumphalist rally.

Although the *Militant* dominated Steering Committee made a number of organisational concessions — such as allowing hustings for the national officer elections — on the eve of the conference, it was a case of too little too late.

It would be wrong to say that the conference was undemocratic — late resolutions and ammendments to the constitution were discussed and there were a range of speakers chosen from the floor. But the conference represented a formal, rather than participatory democracy.

There simply was no time to share the actual experiences of activists in the community campaigns and the unions. Only one rushed speech was made about recent strike action in London DSS offices. In fact any meaningful discussion on workplace action was squeezed between *Workers Power* sloganising and *Militant's* ambiguity on the question.

Supporters of *Militant* accounted for around two thirds of the delegates, although amongst delegates from London they were in a minority. *Militant* supporters swept the board in the national officer elections.

The most contentious debate was on the issues of racism, sexism and homophobia. The Black Lesbian and Gay Workers Group proposed an ammendment to the Statement of Aims which would have given the Federation a clear commitment to challenge racism, sexism and homophobia within the anti-Poll Tax movement and exclude racists, sexists and homophobes from the campaign.

In support of the ammendment an activist from Manchester highlighted the National Front's position of setting-up anti-Poll Tax groups. She explained that if the Federation didn't have a clear position it was in effect excluding women, black people and lesbians and gay men.

Leading *Militant* supporters argued vigorously against the ammendment, using their tired old formulas and regailing us all with tales of dramatic conversions of fascist skinheads to the nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies.

The ammendment was lost by a majority of 800-550.

Supporters of *3D* were present in large numbers and the newsletter had clearly played a big role building the conference and has developed a clear profile within the movement.

The *3D* steering group will be meeting in early January to produce a second issue of the newsletter and to organise a recall meeting for activists committed to non-cooperation within communities *and* workplaces who want to discuss concretely how to build mass non-payment.

Briefing supporters will continue to work with the whole of the anti-Poll Tax movement around specific initiatives — but we won't give up the task of building a genuinely mass, democratic, and participatory movement with a solid labour movement focus.

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.

Any money from sales, donations, subscriptions should be forwarded to *3D* as soon as possible so that the second issue can be produced.

☆ Don't Pay ☆ Don't Collect ☆ Don't Implement

Stay in touch: get your copies of 3D from:
11, Springfield Road,
Tottenham, London N15 4AY.