CONFERENCE DELEGATES' BRIEFING

WEDNESDAY BRIGHTON 1989

UNCHAIN OUR UNIONS!

EACH time workers have fought to defend jobs, conditions, and living standards Tory anti-union laws have been used against them: outlawing picket lines, seizing assets, blocking solidarity action.

The Policy Review specifically retains 2 Tory restrictions: obligatory secret ballots for strikes and election of union officials, and statutory limits on secondary action. It suggests setting up a special court to decide whether particular industrial action is acceptable and gives the court power to fine recalcitrant unions.

Restoring so-called unoin "immunities" has nothing to do with giving unions "special privileges". It's simply about enabling us to fight the employers on something like an equal footing. After all, no group in society enjoys more "immunities" than the bosses. They're free to sack workers, close factories, and exploit labour. We are asking for the legal freedom to fight with the only weapon we have - collective working class action.

The Policy Review is part of a drive by Labour leaders to detach our Party from its base in the organised working class. The plan is to turn Labour into a party like the US Democrats: without members, links to unions, policies or principles.

Can you imagine the Tories imposing restrictions on the flow of capital? Or severing *their* historic links with big business? If Conference fails to repudiate this part of the Policy Review, Thatcher will sleep well, knowing her work will remain intact long after she has gone.

Maybe that's the point. Kinnock was keen yesterday to dampen down workers' expectations of a new Labour government. Tory anti-union laws could be very handy for a right-wing Labour government under pressure from its own supporters for long overdue improvements in wages and conditions.

REJECT "PEOPLE AT WORK"!

SUPPORT COMPOSITE 16!

GREENING LABOUR - A LONG WAY TO GO

By MARK STRONG, SERA EXECUTIVE

THE nuclear power debate showed the contradiction between Labour's green image and reality. The NEC say 15 years is too quick to phase out nuclear power, which even the CEGB admits could be done in 10.

These confusions will be repeated in today's environment debate. The composites (whittled down from over 100 motions) help establish good principles, but are in no way fully green, let alone Red-Green! But the time allocated to the issue improves on the usual Friday morning slot.

COMPOSITE 38 means well but fails to convey the gravity of the ecological crisis. It wants [energy policies] "ecologically sensitive". How does that square with nuclear power?

COMPOSITE 39 is better, apart from a fatal flaw: its call for investment in nuclear fusion. Fusion is merely another way

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LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Today's Debates

Continued from front page

of sinking billions into the nuclear industry with little result. The money would be better used on renewable sources or conservation. The rest of the motion is good: calls for the Ministry of Environmental Protection to have Cabinet status & for an Environment Unit in all Ministries.

COMPOSITE 40, on water, deserves full support. Clean water should be a *right*, not a privilege.

SUPPORT COMPOSITES 41 & 42. Without winning back the countryside we'll never have a socialist government. The present approach simply ignores rural issues.

On transport, Labour's contradictions are again highlighted. The Policy Review document is an improvement on anything we had before. It calls for all transport modes to be assessed on an environmental basis and recognises that cars are not the answer to transport problems. **Why then is the Party raffling a Mini Metro, which doesn't even have a catalytic converter?** We need a more radical red-green transport approach, which would be highly popular.

There's a long way to go on greening the Labour Party. But as public concern grows, even the leadership must realise that to be Green is to be popular - and to be Green you have to be *socialist*.

POLICY REVIEW:
A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE
(or "Let 1,000 quangos bloom...")

The Policy Review section on "Consumers and the Community" lumps together Local Authorities, education, and health care. Lip-service is paid to **"empowering workers"**, which in practice means the creation of a plethora of quangos, or the ludicrous idea of making a proportion (unspecified) of bank directors "accountable" to account-holders!

On **Local Authorities**, attacks on privatisation are not matched by concrete commitments: such as withdrawal of Competitive Tendering, taking privatised services back into public control, restoring cuts in resources, or learning any lessons from the GLC experience.

On **education**, in investment plans are vague. Teachers' pay and student grants are not really dealt with. Re-establishing ILEA doesn't get a mention. Private schools will stay; new religious schools endorsed.

On the **NHS** there's no reference to the need for a massive programme of hospital building. Tory charges for eye and dental tests will be "reviewed as soon as resources permit"! The Policy Review approach is summarised at the beginning of the document: "Markets are the most appropriate means of efficiently distributing many goods and services."

NUCLEAR *FUSION*: ANOTHER VIEW

Our opposition to the nuclear industry and nuclear **fission** should not cloud our view of nuclear **fusion**.

The latter is a non-polluting, non-irradiating power source which works on the same principle as the sun itself. The problem is that no one has made it work yet - and the Tories have cut the only research programme. Fusion technology is quite different from fission and investment in fusion would have to go outside the nuclear industry.

Potentially, fusion is a safe, limitless power source - which at least makes it worth researching. ***Peter Chowney***

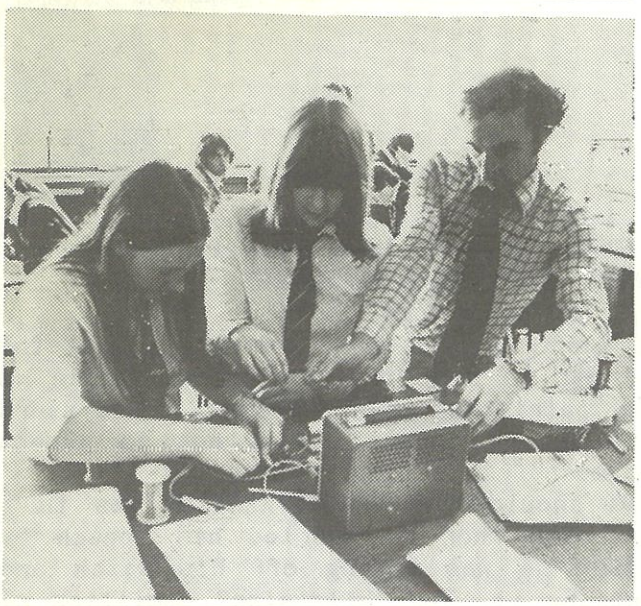
LABOUR AND THE SOCIAL CHARTER

GREAT hopes for the EC Social Charter are understandable but misguided. The Charter's full of fine promises with no means of enforcing them. Thatcher's hostility shouldn't mislead us; after all W. Germany's Kohl shares Kinnock's enthusiasm. The EC will not deliver workers' rights from above. We have to struggle for them, along with our comrades in Europe. OPPOSE COMPOSITE 15's call for worker-employer "joint action teams" to do battle for Britain in Europe.

POLICY REVIEW: PEOPLE AT WORK (How many?)

NO commitments to full employment, shorter working week, longer holidays, or abolition of YTS & ET, despite grandiose waffle about training. Plans to keep key aspects of Tory union laws (see front page) there's no mention of the closed shop and enough ambiguity to keep the Law Lords in permanent sessions. All the positive promises in the "Charter for Employees" (minimum wage, maternity rights, no victimisation) will mean little if unions aren't free to fight for them in workplaces.

Today's Debates



EDUCATION

UNFORTUNATELY the delegate from Derby South (which had a strong resolution inspired by the Socialist Teachers Alliance) missed compositing so education Comps 23 & 24 are weak. Nevertheless, they represent an improvement on the abysmal Policy Review treatment of the subject. Baker's claim that Labour accepts 70% of the Education Reform Act is right.

Local Management of Schools is a device to break the power of unions and Local Authorities and gain parents' consent for Tory anti-working class, anti-women, anti-lesbian & gay, neo-imperialist education. Labour should back *democratic* management of schools, involving parents, students, and *all* education workers.

COMPOSITE 23 wants resources to be allocated to schools according to need; safeguards for conditions of service and measures to avoid redeployment and job loss.

COMPOSITE 24 also has good points: abolishing "opting out"; guaranteeing pre-school education; opposing student loans; supporting pay increases for education workers; restored negotiating rights for teachers. But why does it call for a **core curriculum** for primary schools which excludes humanities and arts? Also, the SEA call for a moratorium on new voluntary/-religious schools was lost in compositing.

SUPPORT 23 & 24, but remember our reservations. Let's come back next year with better resolutions!

***Debbie Epstein*, Selly Oak delegate, Socialist Teachers Alliance**

VOTING GUIDE

MORNING

POLICY REVIEW: PHYSICAL & SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT: OPPOSE. See front page.

COMPOSITE 38: SUPPORT. Good as far as it goes.

COMPOSITE 39: SUPPORT (but see two views on nuclear fusion, p2)

COMPOSITE 40 SUPPORT. Public ownership of water.

COMPOSITE 41, 42: SUPPORT. More time needed on rural issues.

COMPOSITE 43: OPPOSE. Embraces Tory "right to buy" and lauds "private provision" in large scale housing estates; the Labour Housing Group is an LCC stalking-horse.

COMPOSITE 44: SUPPORT. Not good enough, but better than nothing.

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION 4: SUPPORT. Action on food safety.

AFTERNOON

POLICY REVIEW: PEOPLE AT WORK: OPPOSE. See front page.

COMPOSITE 14: SUPPORT. Weasel words from Edmonds and Todd (and bizarre first sentence) but carries a useful coded message for Kinnock.

COMPOSITE 15: OPPOSE. Illusions in Social Charter will hamper union response to 1992, as will "joint action teams" with bosses.

COMPOSITE 16: SUPPORT. Comprehensive statement on union rights far outstrips Policy Review on both union law & health & safety.

RESOLUTION 122: SUPPORT. Resist Tory attack on FBU.

POLICY REVIEW: CONSUMERS & THE COMMUNITY: OPPOSE. See article.

COMPOSITES 23, 24: SUPPORT. Minor improvements on Policy Review's woeful education section.

LESBIAN & GAY RIGHTS: ALMOST THERE!

AS trade union delegations get off the fence, it looks more and more likely that lesbian & gay equality will be restored as Party policy. We now have pledges from the TGWU, NUPE, SOGAT, NUM, COHSE and others. A few more will guarantee victory on Thursday afternoon. **There remains a risk of C.32 being removed from the agenda.** LCLGR asks delegates to **lobby the Standing Orders Committee at 2pm TODAY, Wednesday.**

***Peter Purton*, LCLGR**

Yesterday's Debates

MORNING SESSION

DEBATE started with **Jack Rogers** calling Black Sections "apartheid" and recommending mixed black and white sections: because the NEC was "sincere" in proposing them. He also thanked **Gwyneth Dunwoody** (now we know who to blame). Speakers from the floor all condemned the NEC. **Bernie Grant, Kingsley Abrams,** and other Black Sections supporters hit back hard, with help from the National Labour Women's Committee. **Jatin Harna,** moving Black Sections' composite, pointed out the NEC's use of Orwellian newspeak: substituting the word "a barrier" for the word "essential" in last year's Black Sections motion, thus reversing the substance of the motion. In the end both composites and the NEC proposals were defeated: the latter by nearly 1.5 million votes. C.6 (the original Black Socialist Society proposals) lost by only 648,000 and Black Sections' own formulation got more votes than last year.

John Smith opened the **Economic Equality** section. No great rows here, but at least agreement on minimum wage, progressive taxation (though not progressive enough), women's equality, opposition to Poll Tax. 2 motions passed strengthened this part of the Review.

AFTERNOON SESSION

FINE stuff from MPs & union officials on the sexism & inaccessibility of Party structures to women: hence *quotas* as a remedy. Various delegates spoke for the emergency resolution to refer back the NEC proposal on merging the National Labour and NEC Women's Committees. Block votes saved the NEC's bacon - again.

Strong, sincere speeches in support of quotas, notably by **Maria Fyfe** and **Mildred Gordon**: less admirable were women push-ed quotas *at the expense* of women's self-organisation. Quotas are all very well, but without a *strong women's organisation* they will give us token women manipulated by men. Ironically, for all the lip service to women's representation, Conference voted in the morning *not* to include women's reproductive rights on the agenda.

***Liz Davies*, Islington N delegate**

WORLD REACTION TO KINNOCK'S SPEECH!

"Very impressive. We see his approach to disarmament as the best route. You don't give away something for nothing. He's talking language we can understand..."

US Ambassador to Britain (really)



LEADER'S SPEECH

MOSES, BUSH, SUPREME SOVIET - BUT NOT THE WORKING CLASS

THE usual ingredients: the story about the old man in his constituency who spoke to him, patriotism, puns, Sweden... and stern warnings to Labour voters not to expect too much from a Labour government.

We should have known Kinnock was in a time-warp when he started his speech by saying he was taking off his watch and ignoring it. The "Wilsonian" qualities of the speech made "dinosaurs" look modern.

We've heard it all before: a vacuum called economic policy, talk of "priorities", and "Labour governments have been more patriotic than the Tories." ***Do we need an even bigger bomb then?***

It was rich to hear our leader deriding the Tories for having even less democracy than the Supreme Soviet. At least on the Supreme Soviet, delegates can amend the leadership's plans.

What Kinnock didn't mention of course (despite a bid for the mortgage vote) was Council house rents, or anything about local government, which provides most of the local services people use every day.

No mention either of nuclear power despite the usual "green" plea. Moses, George Bush, and the Supreme Soviet all got a look-in, but not black people on Broadwater Farm, lesbians and gay men, or sacked dockworkers.

He did condemn the Tories' water advertising campaign - which presumably irritated the paying exhibitors from "Water Businesses of England and Wales". And as for the jokes, if we're going to have a comedian as Leader let's at least go for Dennis Skinner - or Ben Elton.

For long periods delegates seemed bemused (asleep?) with little applause. Next year, why not save time, miss out the speech, and go straight to the standing ovation? In response to the ovation Kinnock said, "Come on, it's not the Tory Party" - not yet, comrades!

Yesterday's Fringe

VAZ WRECKS BLACK SECTIONS MEETING

AROUND 150 people, mostly black comrade, came to hear speakers on the next stage in Black Sections' struggle. **Martha Osamor** and **Narendra Makanji** gave excellent speeches on the need to widen the struggle and take it into the unions. Labour could not depend on the black vote forever. An **ANC** speaker followed, equating Black Sections' struggle with Southern Africa.

Then **KEITH VAZ** spoke. He congratulated speakers in the morning debate, then used the platform to launch an attack on **Salman Rushdie** whom he called a "black traitor"; he was appalled to see Black Sections linked with the *Voices for Rushdie* campaign, which he compared with Enoch Powell. When Vaz sat down only four people applauded.

Though Vaz wrecked the impetus of the meeting, the movement to create Labour Party Black Sections remains unstoppable because of the efforts of those who believe in democratic representation not narrow sectarianism, religious or political.

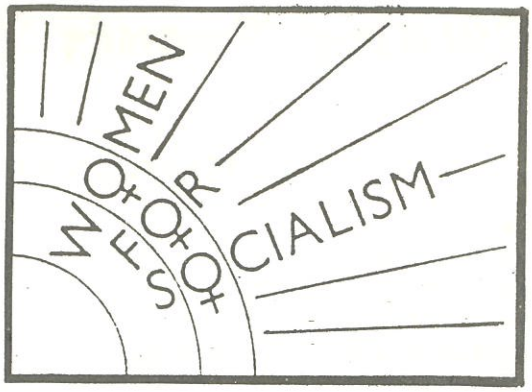
COMMENTS ON THE BLACK SECTIONS DEBATE

NARENDRA MAKANJI: "The NEC has been mightily embarrassed. Their case was demolished. Now we will target the block votes still holding out against us. We'll call on black members in GMB, COHSE, UCW, to force their leaders to change their tune."

MARTHA OSAMOR: "The NEC couldn't get a single black person, not even one of Hattersley's poodles, to argue for their proposals. We've defeated Kinnock's Black & White Minstrel Show. Now we'll step up our campaign to get Black people to vote for and join the Labour Party; and to force Labour to take up the issues that matter to the Black community."

"LABOUR LIFE" PICKET

OVER 60 comrades picketed "Labour Life" (an anti-abortion group). Only a handful of people went through the picket line - the vast majority being men! "Labour Life" has been allowed to "register" with the Labour Party and Conference was not allowed to debate the issue on Tuesday morning. The following crossed the picket line to attend the meeting: delegates from Mitcham & Morden, Ealing North, Sheffield Central, MSF Salaried Fraction, an NUR visitor, and a "Keep Sunday Special" exhibitor.



WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION: POWERLESS QUOTAS

YESTERDAY'S debate was notable for its length (the longest time ever given to a "women's" debate) and its blatant opportunism.

Quotas seem to be important more for their alleged women's-vote-winning effects than as positive action for women. The high degree of trade union support was impressive, but union opposition to a small attempt to democratise the new Women's Committee showed the hidden agenda.

Quotas are the feminist face of New Realism and are being counterposed to the longstanding campaign by Labour Women for effective power in the Party.

W4S supports quotas as a form of positive action, but these particular proposals are to do with increasing women's *images* not women's *power*.

Lorraine Monk, delegate from Kingston, expressed the disillusionment felt by many rank-and-file Labour women when she said women were "worried about the Women's Organisation being eliminated altogether."

Jill Page, National Women's Committee Chair, was the only speaker to point out the "disgrace" of the 5 NEC Women's Seats still not being elected by women themselves: "Women have waited long enough for that injustice to be corrected; it causes deep and bitter resentment."

W4S has model resolutions for Women's Conference reasserting the need to win *power* for women. ***Contact us via 7c Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY.***

WOMEN FOR SOCIALISM

SEXIST TELLY:

FOLLOWING our leader's comic turn (and during the debate on women's organisation) the cameras abandoned the Conference Hall to focus on one Labour bigwig after another paying tribute to Mandelson's mouthpiece.

Coming Events

THE POLITICS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Speakers:
Hector MacKenzie
(General Secretary, COHSE)
Dr David Hill
(Socialist Health Association)
Lisa Haywood
(London Alliance for Mental Health Action)

Chair:
Cllr VALERIE VAZ

Wedesday October 4th
7.00pm-8.30pm
Brighthelm Centre, North Road

ROBERT MAXWELL IS COMING!
6pm, TODAY, Wednesday; Grand Hotel
You've worn the badges; you've signed the petition: now tell Maxwell in person that the Party: will not tolerate the sacking of trade unionists for taking one-day official action; fully backs the 23 sacked NUJ members.

VAUXHALL PS

WHEN NEC members grilled **Martha Osamor** before crossing her off the Vauxhall by-election shortlist she was attacked for not following official Labour policy on Ireland (she wants the troops out). **Kate Hoey**, beneficiary of the NEC's racist largesse, spoke yesterday at a public meeting of the Campaign for Labour representation in Northern Ireland - a body whose sole policy has been repeatedly rejected by Labour. ***We look foward to appropriate action by our "colour blind" NEC.***

KEN Livingstone's televised praise for Kinnock's speech is a good example of shutting the stable door after the horse has kicked you in the face.

FOOTBALL: POWER TO THE FANS!
TWO excellent resolutions were submitted to Conference by the Liverpool CLPs of Walton and West Derby. They address the real problems facing the 1½ million fans who go to football matches every week, and which culminated in the working class tragedy at Hillsborough. The Party must oppose ID cards and capitalist control of clubs. The breath of reality which these resolutions would have brought to conference proceedings was too much for CAC. Neither has been timetabled.

RUSHDIE: CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE
FOR the British establishment the Rushdie Affair is an embarrassment. Defending free speech for a Black socialist isn't a priority, especially when it exposes Thatcher's hypocrisy on Sinn Fein and threatens profits from rebuilding Iranian oil platforms. No wonder Penguin vacillates on paperback publication.

Labour is no better. Because of its reliance on mobilising the black vote from the top-down through self-styled "community leaders" (and continuing rejection of Black self-organisation), and its long term acceptance of Christian voluntary schools, blasphemy louts, and the established church. Labour has been unable to offer a coherent, democratic, anti-racist response to the reactionary attack on Rushdie.

Thanks to CAC, calls for the abolition of the blasphemy laws will not be heard at Conference; nor will arguments abut state support for religious schools. Delegates who want to talk about these questions and who believe you can fight *both* racism and fundamentalism should attend the *Voices for Rushdie* fringe meeting.
VOICES FOR RUSHDIE fringe
TODAY, 1-2pm, Brighthelm Centre
With: Southall Black Sisters, Campaign Against Repression in Iran, and Narendra Makanji.

LABOUR PARTY SOCIALISTS
IT'S been a hard week for the left: defeat on unilateralism, Livingstone off the NEC, flatness in the Conference Hall. There have been limited gains (reducing "defence" spending and rejecting NEC "Grey Sections") and victory on lesbian and gay rights is possible. Whatever the outcome of the remaining Conference votes the fight to win the Party to socialist policies and socialist leadership will go on in the CLPs and unions.

The left needs better organisation: not just at Conference but throughout the year. The Socialist Movement's open meeting for left delegates on Thursday will provide a much-needed forum to assess the week and discuss the way forward. Contributions from the floor will have priority.

Another meeting on Oct. 14th in Birmingham will see the formal launch of a national network for Socialist Movement supporters in the Labour Party. ***The old ways are dead; the left needs a fresh start.***
Thursday 5th October, 6pm
Brighthelm Centre, North Road