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LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

An alternative way forward for the Labour Party

By Steve Reicher

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(Exeter Labour Briefing)

1987

(This pamphlet is an up-dated version of the document passed by the *Briefing* Conference of May 1986)

BRITISH POLITICS is currently dominated by the prospects of a general election. Within the Labour Party there is general agreement that the need for electoral victory is paramount, that nothing should be put in the way of it. We know that a third Tory term will not only mean more of the same, but a deepening of the capitalist offensive. Emboldened by its success a Conservative cabinet would embark on schemes previously only hinted at. Such things as private health insurance in place of the NHS, education vouchers in place of mandatory state support, and compulsory labour to qualify for the dole - a literal return to Victorian values in the shape of the workhouse. Nor are we under any illusion that such attacks would lead to massive resistance, that from adversity would come an upsurge of socialist consciousness. Just as Tory victory would increase their confidence, so it would lead to major demoralisation in the Labour movement. Waking up the day after the polls to find Thatcher still at No. 10 would imply a prospect of more job losses, more cuts, more attacks on every level and no immediate prospect of their reversal. At best one could hope for protracted, painful defensive struggle.

But if we were to wake up to a Labour majority the converse would be true. It would lead to the expectation that change could and should happen. Not only should the redundancies and the decay of welfare cease, things should actually get better. In other words Labour victory would cause a major shift in class forces. Those who suffered from capitalist crisis would expect and be prepared to demand advances.

But could Labour deliver those advances? After all, people want a Labour Government not in order to see different personalities in office, but in order to secure a reversal of the ravages inflicted by the Tories. They want action - not just new faces. It is at this point that it becomes apparent that there exist two sharply opposed models of the way forward for Labour. The first model is that associated with the leadership of the Labour Party and the leadership of the TUC. It is that 'New Realism' which, translated, is the defeatist conclusion that we cannot confront the bourgeoisie, we can only cajole them into concessions. The second model is based on the converse premise that anti-capitalist advances can only be achieved by organising anti-capitalist struggles. This model may seem to have less support, but it remains a potent force in our Party. It has been represented in the recent period by the Printworkers, the militants of the NUM, those of us who stood out against rate-capping and those involved in the constant struggle against racial, sexual and national forms of oppression. **Labour Briefing** has been a consistent expression of this second position.

This pamphlet will provide an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of these contrasting models. We hope to give an honest appraisal of each in the light of the tasks facing our movement. How - in other words - are we to reverse the ravages of two terms of Tory rule and resolve the present crisis in the interests of the working class and its allies among the people as a whole?

1. Kinnock's strategy: the fantasy of 'new realism'

The best way of understanding the strategy of the

present leadership is to consider the stance they have taken at the last two party conferences. Of course, on the surface, the 1985 and 1986 conferences appeared to be very different. The former involved major battles over policy and was marked by Kinnock's sharp attacks on the left. The latter was more like a rally than a conference, with Kinnock's tone almost that of a moral crusade. However at an underlying level there was a fundamental continuity of approach.

In 1985 Kinnock took his stand on two issues: (1) Liverpool; (2) the proposal that the next Labour Government should retrospectively reimburse the NUM. It was a logical choice. The two issues were, and are, linked in a crucial manner. Each touches centrally on the relationship between the Labour Party and the capitalist state. What should we do when the ruling class mounts a legalised attack on local democracy, jobs and welfare services? How should we respond when they hijack a union in dispute and use financial means to limit its effectiveness in pursuing that dispute? On both issues, Neil Kinnock made his position clear. A Labour Party under his leadership will not confront the state power of the ruling class. The struggles waged by Liverpool Council, the NUM, and more recently, the printworkers, represent a kind of politics which lies beyond the framework defined by Kinnock. Class struggle is now simply off the agenda.

In 1985, then, Kinnock sought to defeat those who represented anti-capitalist struggle within our Party. In so doing he was sending a very clear signal to the state, and to those whose interests it represents. 'A future Labour government', our enemies were told, 'will play by your rules. You have nothing to fear from the Labour Party.' However, while Kinnock is able to play on the

demoralisation engendered by seven years of Thatcher in order to suggest that one cannot confront the power of Capital, his position still depends on promising a reversal of Thatcherite decline. In order to do this he must square the circle of seeking to reverse a capitalist offensive without anti-capitalist struggle. The only way of so doing is to promote illusions about the ease of achieving Labour's aims; to downplay the resistance we will face from our class opponents. The leadership performance at the 1986 conference was an attempt to perform this trick. Two incidents, one from Kinnock, one from Hattersley, will serve as illustration.

A central passage of Kinnock's leadership speech was devoted to defence policy. He devoted his efforts to suggesting that Britain could go unilateral without breaking with imperialism. That, on the one hand we can reject the basic premise of Western imperialist strategy while remaining part of a Western imperialist alliance, and on the other we can do so without provoking retaliation from the major imperialist power, the U.S.A. It will be all so easy, suggested Kinnock, we will simply disarm, send home American nuclear bases and everybody will be happy. Those like Caspar Weinburger who utter threatening noises are entirely unrepresentative.

Within half an hour of this the American Ambassador came on television to contradict him. Weinburger, said the ambassador, is not isolated, the American government shares his posture, America would react. Within a few days, several of Britain's senior generals said that they too would react, that they 'could not assure the defence of the country' under a Labour government. In other words, we should not count our chickens on unilateralism. As soon as a Labour government

tried to implement such a policy it would meet sabotage from abroad and sabotage at home, which could only be resisted by mass mobilisations behind the policy. To discourage mobilisation by an unrealistic suggestion of ease casts severe doubt on the possibility of us ever going non-nuclear.

The Hattersley example is even more blatant. It arose in the debate on economic policy and concerns the central question that an incoming Labour administration would have to face: the question of rebuilding our economic base. If Labour is to reverse mass unemployment it must acheive a huge program of reinvestment - how then is that to be acheived? The Hattersley suggestion is well known: persuade capitalists to invest by a combination of tax incentives on the repatriation of capital and a British Investment Bank which gives as high a rate of interest as anyone else.

In debate Ian Mikardo pointed out the ineffectiveness of this policy - so weak that City tax consultants could run rings around it. Why should capitalists choose voluntarily to re-invest in Britain at a lower rate of profit than they can obtain elsewhere? What are needed are policies that compel re-investment. Mikardo suggested the very mildest: exchange controls. In his own words 'you can't make a socialist omelette without breaking a few capitalist eggs'. Hattersley's response spoke volumes. He had nothing to say to the charge of ineffectiveness. He simply said that to propose exchange controls would lead to a flight of capital in advance of an election. In a sentence the entire strategy is summarised. If we act against the interests of Capital it will destroy us. If that means we have to eschew all effective measures so be it. But let us try and promote the fantasy that we can rebuild the

economy in the interests of working people with the cooperation of those whose fundamental interest is their exploitation.

All the supposed sophistication, all the intricate proposals of the self-styled 'new realists' are attempts to cover this basic contradiction.

2. Kinnock's strategy: the advantages

If the leadership strategy is so flawed, how has it gained so much support? Firstly we must recognise that its basic premise, a defeatism in the face of capitalist power, reflects the real experience of defeat in our movement. Years of closures and redundancies have made successful resistance, let alone gains, seem a distant prospect. Kinnock was immeasurably strengthened in his strategy by the defeat of the miners - after all, it was reasoned, if even the NUM was defeated what chance is there for the rest of us? Yet the 'new realism' does not only reflect a widespread pessimism; it also claims to offer important benefits.

Probably the most obvious relates to media popularity. After Kinnock's attack on the Liverpool council in his 1985 conference speech he was hailed throughout the media as an inspired leader. 'The greatest leader since Gaitskell' we were told as the Daily Mail, Daily Express, Sun and Telegraph vied with each other in praise. Along with this went a rise in the opinion polls. Thus Kinnock's message apparently gained the support of the Tory press. Better still, it may be reasoned, by following his route the state and the entire establishment will (up to a point) tolerate and even support what we are doing.

The value of the media cannot be underestimated. It was not Kinnock's speech in itself that had the

magical temporary effect on the opinion polls. Only a miniscule proportion of the population actually heard his words. What people were responding to was what they learnt as filtered through the media. Any intrinsic qualities of Kinnock's speech were therefore neither here nor there: what mattered was the signal which the establishment received. Once the media bosses had been assured of Kinnock's commitment to their system, he became their momentary darling, and his speech a work of inspiration. To any Labour leader there is obviously much value in this.

What is true of the media is also true of other sections of the establishment: the owners of capital, the financiers, the Whitehall mandarins, the armed services and the police chiefs and all others who occupy the controlling centres of the state. It would be very consoling to feel that all these were on our side. And indeed the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership has gone a long way towards bringing such an illusion into being. For instance, to take Hattersley's economic policies - they may be ineffective but they have been welcomed by the Confederation of British Industries!

But here one should sound a note of warning. In opposition it may be possible to maintain a few fantasies; to pretend that one can restructure the economy while gaining the applause of the CBI, to go non-nuclear and retain the support of the generals. But in office the illusions are quickly dispelled and choices must be made. Stay with the capitalists and do their bidding, or fulfill one's pledges and break with them. It is because of this that, whatever the momentary honeymooning, the attempts by Labour to woo the establishment are bound to fail. A Kinnockite Labour may - to the establishment - seem better than Left Labour, but

Labour remains inherently untrustworthy. Owen or Thatcher are far firmer friends. As we shall argue, the ultimate futility of trying to woo the establishment is made far more acute by the present crisis.

3. Kinnock's strategy: the economic background.
The Labour leadership base their entire strategy on the hope that it is possible, in return for laying aside threats of expropriation, to persuade capitalists into making concesions in the interests of the exploited and oppressed. But is this a possibility?

It is essential to consider this question in the light of the depth of capitalist crisis which this country currently faces. **The Economist** has estimated that capitalists will not judge profitability to be high enough for Britain to be worth investing in unless or until the average wage can be cut by some 30% in real terms. Meanwhile they invest overseas. Thus, since 1979, we have seen the chronic equivalent of a flight of capital combined with an investment strike. The amount of capital invested abroad has tripled while investment at home has fallen. Capitalists are actually scrapping the machinery of industry. All this is reflected in lost jobs and output. Industrial jobs are disappearing at the rate of 13,000 every month. Since 1983, for the first time since the industrial revolution, Britain has been a net importer of manafactured goods. In August 1986 alone the deficit amounted to one and a half billion pounds.

The reality is that the British economy is shot to pieces, kept temporarily afloat on North Sea oil. As the oil runs out, the true situation will begin to emerge, and recent levels of unemployment and attacks on living standards will look mild in

comparison with what the system will then demand.

Hattersley's economic policies - virtually indistinguishable from those of the social democrats - are a throwback to an age that has passed. During the period of Empire, and then during the post war boom, capitalism in Britain was able to afford concessions to organised labour in exchange for our movement's acceptance of the fundamental priorities of the state. Indeed the Labour Party was founded on such a bargain. It was formed as a pact and a bridge between the trade union leadership and the liberal bourgeoisie. Working people were to be offered limited reforms, paid for out of the profits of empire. In return, imperialism, as such, would never be questioned. This has been reflected by a chauvinism and racism in our movement whose most tangible expression has been the way in which successive Labour governments have always come down on the side of imerialist interests: in Greece, in Vietnam, in Iran, even in South Africa.

Pre-Thatcherite versions of Toryism were also a product of that period when there was some fat in the the system. Both Conservative and Labour subscribed to that 'Butskellite' consensus which was based on a belief in bargaining and a measure of compromise as the essence of politics. They were logical capitalist adaptations to the world as it then was. The achievement of Thatcher and her supporters was to have realised in time that such a world had vanished for good. The bourgeoisie no longer has the leeway to **buy** working class passivity: if organised labour is to be kept down it must be through unemployment and frontal attack as living standards are forced down. The tragedy is that the corresponding awakening of the Labour Party - an awakening to the fact that if the power of labour in the new

situation is to be safeguarded, that of capitalism must be broken - scarcely got under way before it was thrown into reverse. The narrow defeat of Tony Benn in the Deputy Leadership campaign led quickly to the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership with which we are encumbred now. Under the banner of a ludicrously misnamed 'new realism' they sought to revive an oudated politics of class collaboration and entreat the bourgeoisie to play ball.

Meanwhile, the capitalist offensive has taken four forms

1. Direct attempts to increase the rate of exploitation, reducing wages or increasing work without extra pay (one instrument of this being Thatcher's privatisation plans which, in particular, threatens womens' jobs).

2. Attempts to decrease the social wage (cuts in health, education, pensions etc., with the brunt, again, falling particularly upon women).

3. An assault upon the organisations through which people defend their interests (anti-union laws, increasing police powers, the new 'public order' legislation, abolition of the metropolitan tier of local government - all working to produce a climate in which Trades Unions are no longe seen to be legitimate organisations at all).

4. An ideological offensive to justify these attacks (the propagation of a new theology of the market, ideology of the family and of sexism, racism and jingoism - these all serving to deflect our anger and create scapegoats and internal divisions between us).

These four elements combine to form a coherent strategy. They are not manifestations of

'Thatcherite insanity'. They are the logical expression of the needs of an increasingly desperate ruling class. Cosmetic variations and changes of emphasis aside, they would have to be the components of any administration which attempted to solve the present economic crisis within the framework of the capitalist state.

4. Kinnock's strategy: the disadvantages

We have noted the main apparent advantage of Kinnock's strategy - that of limiting the frenzy with which the press and 'the establishment' mobilise against us. Now let us examine the disadvantages in the light of the objective situation which has been touched upon.

We may imagine Neil Kinnock, newly arrived at No. 10, having got there through assurances that he is no threat to the power of the establishment. What can he do to rebuild the economy, to tackle unemployment, to restore the welfare state? We have already heard the proposed answer from Roy Hattersley: a partnership with the employers whereby, in return for certain tax concessions, they invest their money in the British Investment Bank, they conclude voluntary planning agreements and they produce for social welfare.

But why should they? What could suddenly induce a capitalist to invest in Britain at a 3% rate of profit rathe than (say) Chile at a 15% rate? What makes Roy Hattersley believe that capitalism will spontaneously deny its fundamental nature for the sake of his credibility? The only way they will voluntarily invest is if they get that 15% in Britain too, and the only way they will get that is by continuing their offensive. There are already rumours that not only has the City of London rejected the National Investment Bank but that it is already preparing to sabotage it.

The universal experience of trying to persuade capitalists to impose voluntary restraints is that it doesn't work; they either refuse to invest, take their money elsewhere, or else take no notice at all. An element of compulsion is required, and that means (as Thatcher, from her own standpoint, well understood during the miners' strike) a struggle for ascendancy and power. The leadership alternative is a pipe dream. It is not realism, it is a denial of reality. It cannot possibly work. Yet it is not simply that his plans for economic reconstruction would fall by the wayside. A Kinnock who had won an election by tying himself to the apron-strings of the bourgeoisie would have no means of resisting any of the attacks which our opponents would inevitably demand. Just as Denis Healey was forced into bowing to the dictats of the I.M.F. in 1976, so Neil Kinnock would be defenceless against the demands of international and domestic capitalism in the late 1980s. The differnce is that the crisis of capitalism is now that much deeper. Consequently Kinnock would be forced into far more drastic attacks upon our movement - unless, that is, he decides at long last to take on the ruling class.

But then let us suppose that, at this point, Kinnock **did** recoil from the necessary consequences of his course. Imagine that, faced with the threat of massive economic sabotage by the bourgeoisie unless wages were slashed, unions muzzled and welfare dismantled, he decided to break with these capitalists, to resist their attacks and seek a socialist solution to the crisis? What would happen? He would find himself completely isolated from the forces which could resist a capitalist offensive. Having come to power by rejecting class struggle and by demobilising the actual struggles of our movement,

he would find the bourgeoisie facing no barriers in the path of his offensive. Neil Kinnock would be like the German of Pastor Niederhoffer's famous poem. Having seen them going for the mines, go for Liverpool Council, go for the print workers, go for black people, go for women at work and women in the home - he would find himself all alone when they went for him.

5. Kinnock's strategy: its effect on current struggles.

It is important to realise that not only does the leadership strategy store up disaster for the future, it also causes severe problems in the present. Quite apart from being incapable of advancing the interests of working people, it is not even a recipe for electoral success. Indeed, Kinnock's reluctance to confront Tory philosophy head-on plays straight into our opponents' hands. For the Tories, success lies not in the fact that people are attracted by industrial decline, decaying public services and unemployment. It lies in the apparent absence of any alternative.

Winning support from the 'middle classes' - an oft-stated aim of Kinnock - is important. But to do this, the task is to shift the terrain on which Thatcher has chosen to fight, transforming the terms of the debate between capitalism and socialism on which Thatcher's appeal to the middle class rests. The task is to convince the 'middle classes' that organised labour, as politicised through the Labour Party, offers to them and to the whole of society a solution to the economic crisis. The clearer and more consistent that solution, the more appeal it will gain. Thatcher's success has been in proposing just such solution and, in so doing, shifting the political consensus of the country. In contrast, Labour has failed to produce a consistent strategy - torn

between accepting capitalism and wanting to deny the unpleasant consequences.

In failing to produce the basis of a new consensus, the leadership has been left to chase an existing consensus - with disastrous consequences. Every time Labour shifts to the right under Thatcherite ideology, it only succeeds in strengthening that ideology and hence in strengthening Thatcher. When Kinnock brands demands for youth unemployment and a living wage as 'impossibilism' he only validates the Tory claim that unemployment is inevitable. As Labour lends credence to NATO, so it contributes to the myth of a soviet threat that underpins the 'deterrence' argument. And when Labour turned against the miners on the picket line, it only reinforced the 'law and order' hysteria which was then used to further limit the right to picket. The truth is that weakening or disowning the working class and its organisations is a disastrous way of trying to win middle class support, because it leaves the middle classes with no credible social force other then big-business to turn to. It leaves no other solution to the crisis than promoting the interests of business leaders, even at the cost of greater exploitation. And the Tories and Alliance parties will always be so much better than us at presenting and representing such a solution.

In the run up to the election, Kinnock's tragic errors are being compounded. Increasingly we are called upon to keep our heads under the parapets, to abandon class struggle for fear of provoking the media and thus alarming the 'electorate'. This was symbolised at the 1986 Party conference when British Telecom were allowed inside the hall while the National Justice for Miners Campaign were initially excluded and had to fight for a stall!

How can one expect to generate enthusiasm for and confidence in a Labour Party which snuggles up to industry while disowning all that smacks of socialism? The bankruptcy of this path is reflected in opinion polls which put Labour neck and neck with a Tory party beset by crisis, failure and scandal. In 1983 Tebbitt said that if unemployment is above 3 million in five years time the Conservatives don't deserve to be re-elected. Unemployment in 1988 will be nearer 5 million than 3 and that the Tories are even in with a chance is a testimony to the failure of Labour strategy.

Far from being an electoral liability, a bold programme of action to escape from the economic impasse is a precondition of Labour's mass popularity. If our party can be seen to speak with our own authentic voice and promote a coherent solution to the crisis, we can become a real pole of attraction. Thatcher's purist recipe of relying on pure market forces has been tried and found wanting. Unemployment is still rising, the pound is falling, trade figures are deteriorating and British capital increasingly eclipsed by international rivals. Even many Tories now have doubts about the Thatcher strategy. The time is now ripe for the opposite solution - the conscious control and planning by people of their own economic and social lives - to be presented in thorough and uncompromising terms. The millions of voters who out of cynicism or apathy have drifted away from a Labour Party ashamed and afraid of its own inspration will have some reason to support a party that defends their interests - working class and middle class - as staunchly as Margaret Thatcher has been defending those of the rich.

We can anticipate Kinnock's retort. Apart from rejecting the possibility of challenging the bourgeoisie, it would be to tell us that such

ideas are all very well, but we cannot get too far ahead of 'the people'. We cannot go too quickly and too far in challenging the values which people hold. Yet if the years of Thatcherism have shown one thing it is that positions and values can change dramatically, that it is possible to win people to a new consensus. Things that were unthinkable a few years ago are now common sense. It is only because he has accepted this 'common sense' that Kinnock brands our ideas as impossibilism. In terms of the traditions of Labour, our class politics are less strange than the spectacle of a Labour leader promoting patriachy in 'womens' magazines, extolling the virtues of Japanese capitalism, defending Tory anti-trade union laws and publicly attacking the miners in struggle.

It should be remembered that there could have been no more successful riposte to Thatcher's 'there is no alternative' than a succesful miners' strike. It would have given the lie to the government's fatalistic presentation of unemployment as outside their control. It would have checked our opponents' ability to push through further attacks on jobs and services. The experience of the miners' strike cut across the divisions which typically weaken our movement and class. It was through their experience of police brutality that the miners came to understand the brutality suffered daily by black communities, and the nature of British racism. It was through the powerful involvement of women that traditional sexist prejudices among miners began to be undermined. As whole communities were aroused it was the reality of the struggle itself that convinced those involved of the bankruptcy of Toryism across the board.

It was therefore not only a betrayal but also a

tragic error when people argued during the strike that it had to be a vote-loser for Labour. The lukewarm support by the Labour and TUC leadership and the failure to involve and mobilise our entire movement were crucial factors in confusing people, alienating potential support and ensuring the eventual defeat of the strike. The near panic of the government when it looked as if the pit-deputies in NACODS would come out shows how successful real solidarity could have been. But the leadership of the Labour movement stood by, the strike was defeated and we now face a situation with an invigorated enemy a demobilised labour movement, and a Labour leadership terrified even of advancing the traditional demands for full employment.

6. The strategy of BRIEFING

The strategy of **Labour Briefing** is completely opposed to Kinnock's insistence upon accomodation and retreat. For us, any strategy for Labour to gain real power must depend upon increasing rather than demobilising the struggle against the bourgeois state and the employers. Our strategy involves co-ordinating the struggles of those in work and those out of work, those organised in Trades Unions and those dependant upon the welfare state, those who compromise the working class mass of the population and those suffering specific sexual racial and other forms of oppression. Far from being a narrow struggle , its logic is to encompass a grand coalition uniting a majority of British society.

Moreover, as the point approaches in which people will be asked to make an electoral choice between Labour and its enemies, we believe that we must escalate rather than abandon these struggles. By mobilising for jobs, for services and for disarmament in the present we achieve two things.

Firstly we lay the basis for success under a future Labour government, secondly we promote socialism by giving a glimpse of its realisation in the present.

Socialist consciousness, for us, is in fact an awareness of our own collective strength - as trades unionists, as the unemployed, as black people, as lesbians and gays, as the oppressed in general and therefore, ultimately, as the majority in society. An awareness of our joint interests, and of our strength in unity, does not come from abstract lessons; it is the fruit of experience. It comes out of concrete struggles where we gather together and use that strength to defeat the forces ranged against us. The experience of struggle is therefore the best way of destroying the ideology and reality of Tory rule.

It is this central understanding which informs the work of **Briefing**. It is not simply that we support the building of anti-capitalist stuggles, we consider a central task to be the bringing together of the disparate struggles that exist. **Briefing**, therefore, has defined its task as that of 'organising at the crossroads' - organising between the various levels of struggle involved. Through us, through the pages of our paper and our network of supporters, the vital links must be made: links between the industrial and political wings of our movement, between British workers and our International allies, between black and white, Irish and English, women and men, home and work, sex and class - and between politics as normally defined and everyday life itself.

Such a strategy involves the concept of 'taking the power' at every level, from the intricacies of our personal lives to confronting the might of

international capital. It means that we should not simply attack the oppressiveness of others but look to our own practices. Thus it means women taking the power against men at work, within the home, and within the framework of **Briefing** itself, black people taking the power within **Briefing** as within the Labour Party - and so on. This is very different from the idea of 'including' women's demands, those of black people, those of lesbians, gays or others. The question is whether those spearheading the fight against sexism, heterosexism, racism, capitalism or British imperialism across the globe will see the need to 'include' Labour Party activists such as ourselves. In other words we must drop the patronising notion that we are doing the oppressed a favour by taking up their demands. It is we who must earn the right to be taken seriously.

Success means changing the nature of our meetings, making them habitable for the oppressed, turning our traditions and structures inside out. And it means demanding and expecting a substantial ceding of power within our alliance by those least oppressed. In particular it means a ceding of power by those who are socially middle class, those who are white, those who are heterosexual, those who are British, those who are men. No-one need feel permanently excluded, but a sharing of power presupposes that the prevailing power imbalances amongst ourselves are corrected first.

Such changes in our own practice are the precondition for bringing together the forces that can take power on other levels. For if the process is to be succesful it must be carried to its conclusion - which means addressing the power of the capitalist state. And on this level it would be best to understand well in advance what is involved. A Labour Party committed to fundamental

change will never be praised by the leader writers of the Sun, Daily Telegraph or the Guardian; neither will its policies be endorsed by the C.B.I.

Let us suppose that **Briefing's** model of political action became that of the Labour Party itself. The moment the sincerity of our commitment became understood the employers and their state would mobilise all their resources against us. We would be slandered, the gutter press would pour forth with lies and distortions, with sexist and racist poison. Money would seek to flee the country as the financiers sabotaged the economy, various sources would 'advise' the Crown or the Courts or the House of Lords as to the constitutional impropriety of our proposed measures. If we came to power and refused to buckle before this onslaught there might even soon emerge the threat of intervention by the armed services posing as the 'upholders of law and order' in the name of 'natural justice' or 'the Crown'. We experienced a minor foretaste of some of this with the attacks on the 'fares fair' policy of the G.L.C..

But if the strength of our commitment will earn us enemies it will be at least as significant (again, as the G.L.C. experience has shown) in winning us allies and friends.Our commitment to black peoples struggles against harrassment and oppression, to the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland, to the struggles of women, to the fight against pit-closures and for jobs - all these and other commitments will provide us with an immense reservoir of popular strength and support. Just as it would be wrong to underestimate the opposition of our enemies so it would be an error to underestimate our own potential strength. If the 3 million people of underdeveloped Nicaragua can

hold at bay the might of U.S. imperialism a mobilised British working class would represent an awesome force. As a radical Labour Government, our task would be to harness that force; to defend ourselves through popular mass action - striking out at the power centres of the establishment in order to gain real control.

Three points need to be emphasised. Firstly it would be disastrous to sit back and hope that any of the existing media would allow us free or fair access to the means of communication and speech. We would have to take measures in order to ensure that the ruling class was prevented from seizing or retaining monopoly control over either the press or the airwaves. Secondly, it cannot be overemphasised that we would need to take control in economic terms. We would have no alternative but to bring the basic industries and the centres of finance quickly into public ownership, using the strength of an aroused working class to establish workers' power and to ensure that popular planning and workers control could be quickly introduced. No-one would object to a massive programme of automation and labour saving technology provided it led to socially useful production and to a shorter working week with no loss of pay, instead of to deskilling and mass unemployment as it does under capitalism. Here as elsewhere the crucial question is one of class power. Thirdly, in the international arena we would quickly find the imperialist powers - particularly the United States - doing all in their power to undermine us. Our only effective defence would be a genuinely internationalist and anti-imperialist foreign policy, guaranteeing us the respect and support of the oppressed peoples of the world, including those of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and other non-capitalist regions.

It is - to conclude - fundamentally wrong for Neil Kinnock to accuse the left of being interested in 'principles not power'. But it is important to be clear about what is meant by power. Kinnock tends to limit the term to meaning electoral victory. That electoral victory, as we started by arguing, is vital and our commitment to it is unequivocal. The same cannot be said with confidence of the leadership. It can be argued that their strategy - whatever the public statements - dovetails with the project to form a coalition government. We know, for instance that David Steel has been conducting secret meetings with several of Neil Kinnock's closest advisers. But for us there is more to power than portfolios in a coalition or the parliamentary illusions and trappings of office which have satisfied Labour premiers in the past. In our terms, power also has to do with the means of putting policies into practice, even in the face of opposition. It is only when it represents a conscious and mobilised working class that Labour can hope to implement a programme against the resistance of the ruling class and its state. This is the real significance of our slogan **Labour - Take the Power!** By power we mean both electoral success and the real strength to repel assaults on the rights and living standards of our movement and class.

Like Kinnock we want a massive progamme of investment to create jobs, we also want to break with all nuclear weapons, but unlike Kinnock we are prepared to face up to the real implications of such policies. Unlike Kinnock we are prepared to face the fact that such advances will not fall into our lap, they will have to be fought for. And unlike Kinnock we are clear that we must mobilise now for that fight. Thus all the criticisms of the right rebound upon them. It is we, not they, who are the realists, for only we are prepared to

confront the practical prerequisites for fulfilling peoples' aspirations. It is we, not they, who are interested in real popular power. It is not enough to formulate good intentions, well-meaning policies or ideas. Idealistic dreams may be a vital ingredient in any movement for social and political change. But no less vital is an unbending determination to take the power necessary to put them into effect.

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A Briefing publication
Published by Labour Briefing, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5