As miners and party activists advance:

STOP KINNOCK'S RETREAT!

Jeremy Corbyn MP
Islington North

Just over a year ago, Labour lost the General Election in the most chaotic and confusing display of the inconsistencies of its own programme.

Since then the Thatcher government has intensified its policies of creating the huge mass of unemployed to bring real wage levels down, using the local authorities as a means of passing on cuts in spending and establishing a national police force with which to destroy any group of workers who are determined to defend their jobs and industry.

Internationally they have lined up with Reagan to hit at any third world country that tries to achieve its salvation by separating itself from the western economic system.

The media have tried very hard to present the SDP as the viable alternative to the Tories; the reality is that the SDP do not differ fundamentally from the Tory government. The increasingly bellicose and authoritarian voice of David Owen is part of the onward march to the right as the current economic system cannot provide or deliver the living standards needed and expected by working people. Their rightward shift is most clearly demonstrated by the support their conference gave to the "working miners"; the elevating of scabs to the pedestal of their conference ephemera would have done credit to Saatchi and Saatchi. Exactly what a collection for strike breakers is meant to finance is unclear.

In the circumstances the Labour Party

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!
KINNOCK AND LIVERPOOL

The fight to defend jobs and services in Liverpool could have been a golden opportunity for Neil Kinnock to prove himself as a real leader of the Labour movement. Unfortunately, his performance did nothing to dispel the impression that Mr Kinnock is yet another would-be leader more interested in parliamentary manoeuvres than defending working class communities.

Firstly, there was a repeated refusal to actually come to Liverpool either for public events or private talks. Given the media's vilification of the mayor and council, it was obvious that Mr Kinnock's main concern was to make sure that the media could never show him sharing a platform with Liverpool councillors, either physically or politically.

When Neil Kinnock eventually met representatives from Liverpool, or when he despatched his sidekicks Cunningham or Straw, the message was always the same. It was very plain that the elected leader was that the fight for jobs and services could not be allowed to break the Tory laws. This position led his supporters to argue for massive rate rises of over 50% as a way out of the crisis.

Such a disastrous policy was the conclusion of the type of politics which sees fights such as Liverpool's as an irritating distraction, rather than as potential starting points for a genuine struggle to bring down the Tories.

Kevin Feintuck

GILLINGHAM AGAIN!

A full year since the first attempt to ban sales of Militant from party premises, the witch-hunt has returned in a more vicious form than before.

A motion to ban sales was passed, at the July GC a young supporter decided to defy the ban, and had his newspapers torn up by another delegate. Now one Militant seller is facing disciplinary action whilst another is threatened by a motion to expel him.

Clearly the left in Gillingham is facing a very serious situation. Unfortunately, a united left response has not yet been possible, as a discussion over whether to specifically fight the witch-hunt, or whether to head off the witch-hunt indirectly, by seizing the political initiative somehow, has taken place.

However, it does look possible that the left will be able to unite around a left-wing recruitment campaign. Gillingham is a small town, and only a thick trickle of left activists join the party. These generally become disinterested with a party which is exclusively concerned with electoral and apolitical fundraising activities (neither of which it does very well). They leave before their numbers build up to any significance.

The losses caused to the left by last year's witch-hunt were very considerable, and this year we will not be helped by the New Unitarian witch-hunt created by the Kinnock/Hattersley election.

Perhaps, like Ken Livingstone's 'Target Labour Government' we in Gillingham need a 'Target '85', a determined and detailed plan to recruit a whole section of the LP's left periphery, in time to vote down the expulsions, and end this harassment of the left as quickly and cleanly as possible.

Les Hartop

THE MINERS STRIKE: SIMILARITIES WITH IRELAND

Briefing supporters from Brighton have been talking to a Kent Miner about the police tactics and the similarities with the army's tactics in Ireland.

'Having been on strike for the last 26 weeks, I feel that there is a definite similarity between the police tactics used in our struggle and the army tactics used in Ireland. The thought of this happening on the mainland never crossed my mind until this strike.

The police seem to have everything planned in advance: stopping you moving about the country, setting up road blocks and deploying thousands of officers overnight.

The similarity does not stop there, what with the searching of houses, the interrogation we get when we are arrested, similar questions. Who do you vote for at the last elections and why?'

One incident sticks in my mind. It was the day we were sent to Orgreave. The police were trying to stop us as usual, but we got through. Later in the day we were faced with a massive police presence including horses and dogs. Our comrades were beaten by police batons, chased by horses and dogs. All perfectly organised by the inspectors.

Anybody who watches the news on the TV has only got to turn the sound off, and they could not tell the difference between the coverage on Ireland and the miners' picket lines.

The question that keeps coming to mind is when will the plastic bullets and tear gas appear on the streets of Britain. We have stood up for 6 months, Ireland has stood up for 15 years. So remember comrades, if you don't run they can't chase you. So stand up and fight for your principles.'

Dave Newell
Kent NUM (Betteshanger)

STOP KINNOCK'S RETREAT (cont.)

ought to be able to mount a huge mobilisation of opposition; the authoritarian right represented by the SDP and the Tories should be easy to isolate.

In the last year the threshold of authoritarian oppression has steadily advanced, and the point of opposition of Labour has retreated. The fight over the non-unionisation of the Stockport Messenger Group of Newspapers was not met by united TUC opposition, but by specifically orchestrated TUC retreat. In the miners' dispute, the principles at work have been the carefully prepared Tory attempt to break the power of the miners by creating the notion of 'economic' nuclear power and 'uneconomic' coal and of the use of a national police force through the Chief Constables to destroy the effectiveness of picketing.

In the dispute the interference of the media is to be expected, but what is new in the climate is the self-imposed impotence of the TUC and Labour Party leadership to fight the Tory authoritarians.

It is as though the offices of the TUC and the Party have been afflicted with a heavy dose of opinion polls and daily advice from the media. If the benchmark of political leadership is established by the degree of "public acceptability" engineered by right wing journalists there will never be the climate for change.

History shows that support for the policies of others does not reap rewards for the opposition. Just as the 1983 General Election was lost when Michael Foot "spoke for England" (in the words of a Tory) at the start of the Falklands war there will be no prizes for the Labour leadership for their abdication of battle and standing by, thus forcing the miners to fight alone.

The comparison of the timidity of our parliamentary leadership and the poor growth in support for the Party has to be compared to the boldness of the Party members in the battle over local government, and in defence of the local welfare state.

In London the campaign to save the GLC and oppose the rate capping measures has completely altered the political climate. Eighteen months ago the GLC was supposed to be very unpopular due to its support for minorities, international work and confrontation policies. A refusal to bow down to the media has generated a new respect and support. What other group in the Party would deliberately call four by-elections as a test of public support?

The next General Election is at most three years away and to win it, and win back the support of those lost to the SDP last time, the Party has to lead and show itself determined to defend the worst off and those in trouble. Retreat before the media hysterics and shelving of the policies designed to help the position of women in society, of anti-racism and of the growth of local services will not do that. The more that socialist policies are abandoned to the media, the more voracious their appetites will become.
Neil — Never on the picket line — says Dai Davies

Dai Davies is a member of the South Wales area executive of the National Union of Mineworkers. He told Valerie Coultais what he expects to come out of the discussions at the Labour Party conference on the miners’ dispute.

We will be looking for total support from the Labour Party for our dispute. We want no ambiguity about it. I think Dennis Skinner has shown us what can be done.

He has spoken on 88 platforms in support of the National Union of Mineworkers. He’s also been on picket lines, unlike the leader of the party who condemns the violence of the miners without once going on a picket line himself.

The view Neil Kinnock puts over is that of the Tory press and the police. It’s unsurprising that you accept their view if you only learn about it second-hand through the press.

Riot
I was at Orgreave on that Monday in June. We arrived at 6am in our jeans, shirts and trainers and we were straight away confronted with lines of police in riot gear. By the time lorries went out at mid-day in the second convoy it was like a greenhouse with the sun beating down on the glass visors of the police. They had come prepared to have a battle. Thatcher was determined to have a battle. The bias in the reporting that day was incredible.

Throughout the strike 700 police have been reported injured but the NUM has had 3,000 lads injured. Two lads died last Saturday coming off the picket lines in a car accident. Two have already been murdered by the police. But the press portray violence as if it’s just one side. At Kellingley pit today they wouldn’t let lads speak to those going into work. Loads of pickets had head injuries at the end of the day. The riot police are wild. When they know a miner has been injured they bang their shields together.

What I would like to emphasise about this is that it’s not completely new for us. In 1910 in Tonypandy village they brought troops and police into the valleys. In 1921 South Wales was the huge producer of coal. The Yorkshire lads now are the big producers. That’s why a lot of police violence is concentrated there. They hold the key to the dispute. The TUC leaders cannot be trusted to implement Congress decisions. We’ve got to ensure our negotiations are not taken over by them. Arthur Scargill’s speaking to delegates and rank and file members of the unions to get these decisions carried.

Barristers
The South Wales executive will be going to the Labour Party conference to get our MPs active in this dispute. In South Wales we’ve got too many barristers, solicitors and the like as MPs to do something positive.

We’ve got to really hurt them to win. We made a big mistake in 1981 when we returned to work after four days. In three years she has been able to stockpile the coal and now she’s ready for us.

The ordinary Labour Party members have been great in this strike. I’ve been to

Bristol and Birmingham. Some ward parties are paying well in excess of the levy. All the meetings I’ve been to have been outstanding. I don’t think they’ll stay this dispute until after the Conservative conference. I think after that Thatcher will agree to a settlement. If we win she’ll have problems whenever she settles. Some elements in the Tory Party are already moaning. McMillan has said that you should never embark on a battle with two things, either the armed forces or the National Union of Mineworkers.

Nottinghamshire striking miners visit Belfast

We were first asked to go to Northern Ireland by the Secretary of our Trades Council who is a member of the Troops Out Movement. We decided that with the tactics that the Police were using on our picket lines that it would be beneficial for us to witness things at first hand and draw our own conclusions as to any similarities with what is happening in our villages.

We were shown around areas of West Belfast (the Twinbrook and Polglaize Estates) by supporters of Sinn Fein. We also attended workshops at the Conway Street Mill just off the Falls Road. We visited all the forts that the British Army had built to justify their presence. We also saw the sophisticated monitoring systems which aid the repression of the Nationalist population in the surrounding areas of West Belfast.

Despite the obvious deprivation and the continual presence of the British Army, the local people gave us striking miners (there were 14 of us from all coalfields) a marvellously enthusiastic reception.

On the Sunday, the striking miners and the Troops Out delegation were asked to lead the march commemorating the twelfth year of internment. As we moved off the tension in the air was obvious. The British Army, RUC and UDR lined the procession’s route with guns at the ready.

On arrival at our destination we witnessed an RUC attack on the march which was to result in the murder of Sean Downes and injuries to scores of women and children. This was something that I will never forget. It was a nightmare.

The ex-Commissioner of the RUC is now the co-ordinator of the policing of the miners’ strike and to date 15 Police Forces have been trained in the use of plastic bullets, there being a massive stockpile of 20,000 of these lethal weapons. We believe there is an increasing likelihood that the appalling reality of Northern Ireland will soon be a fact of life for working people in mainland Britain. Is it plastic bullets for us next?

MARTYN BOWER (COTGRAVE NUM)
Notts women strike back ... and much much more!

AT Labour Party Women’s Conference this year amid overwhelming support for the miners’ dispute, with particular emphasis on the Women Against Pit Closures group as there was one view expressed which had less consensus. A miner’s wife from South Wales said that the Welsh women “were not like the petticoat wives in Notts who didn’t support the strike” — there was immediate objection from the back of the hall where the delegation from Notts were sitting. For a miner’s wife supporting the strike in Notts the struggle is especially difficult. As well as working in the soup kitchens and making up food parcels, these women are regularly on the picket lines, addressing rallies and fundraising meetings and suffering police harassment and occupation of their communities. Some support groups have had to “sit in” for several days in order to secure premises for their use.

However, our Welsh sister is forgiven, those were relatively early days when the media would have us believe that every Notts miner was a scab and the women were jubilant about it. We know better now.

Effectively organised

It is probably a result of these added pressures that the Notts miners’ wives have become so effectively organised and have embraced issues other than the strike. There are now 25 Women’s Support Groups at pit communities throughout the Notts coalfield which were set up by the women with mutual support and cooperation. These groups come together to make the Notts Women’s Support Group which is the representative, coordinating body for the whole of the area. Delegates from each group attend regular weekly meetings which exchange information, discuss policy and activities and decide on how food and money raised should be distributed. Through this meeting groups cooperate democratically, in raising funds, organising speaking tours, printing badges, ‘T’ shirts, leaflets and writing and publishing a regular bulletin. This group has been crucial in maintaining mutual support and fundraising efficiently; it is vital to the winning of the dispute in Notts.

This level of commitment and activity has also challenged the role of women in the home and sexism in the mining community generally. Men are having to stay at home, baby sit and get meals while women are out raising funds and demonstrating. Women in Notts are saying that when the men return to work, when the battle is won, they won’t be going back to business as usual at the kitchen sink.

Influx into the Labour Party

Recently one of the women took 100 application forms for the Labour Party for distribution at her pit! The picture across the coalfield is similar with a massive influx into the Labour Party, with the majority of the new members being women. They are joining despite the lack of meaningful support from the Labour leadership, despite Labour councillors who continue to cross picket lines and make it as difficult as possible for them to get premises for soup kitchens.

The women have seen the support Labour Party ward activists are giving and those, all too few, Labour MPs such as Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner and Ann Clwyd, who haven’t been afraid to champion their cause. The polarisation of the Labour Party around the dispute is nowhere more apparent than in Notts.

Making the links

Not only are the women joining the Labour Party but they are making all the links between other issues and campaigns and will be taking these into the Party and the women’s sections they plan to set up. Women have visited hospitals under threat of closure and are joining the campaign against NHS cutbacks locally. Recently Women for Peace in conjunction with support groups organised a Women for Mines not Missiles March, drawing together the issues of pit closures, nuclear power and nuclear weapons. Greenham women have consistently given their support to the dispute while mining women have visited Greenham and some plan to go back and stay. For these women the fight will continue, in the Labour Party and outside on a whole number of issues which they have taken to heart and are relevant to combatting the policies of the Tory government and replacing it with a Labour government which truly represents their interests and the interests of their communities. Their presence will invigorate the Labour Party locally as well as posing the omnipresent question of women’s representation.

In Notts and nationally the Labour Party will have to sit up and take notice. “Here we go” has become the victory chant of the strike and is also the title of the Notts Women’s Support Group bulletin — for the women of Notts it could just as appropriately be “Here we come”.

Tina Yemm
Notts Women’s Support Group
East Nottingham CLP

*Donations to the group are much needed and very gratefully accepted. Please send cheques made payable to “Notts Women’s Support Group” to the group at NUPE, Sherwood Rise, Nottingham. Tel. 0602-603522 ext. 29. We are always keen to send speakers to meetings etc, so please contact us.

HERE WE GO!

BULLETIN OF THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE WOMEN’S SUPPORT GROUPS.
LABOUR WOMEN AND FEMINISM
— BUILDING THE LINKS

Labour Briefing are organising a conference for Labour women on 'Labour Women and feminism'

In the last few years there has been an upsurge of political activity amongst women. Large numbers of women have been involved in campaigns and activities, for example the peace movement, reproductive rights campaigns, anti-imperialist struggles and industrial struggles — the Bankside strike and the miners' strike being two recent examples. Yet in 1983 General Election only 26% of women supported the Labour Party. Quite clearly the Labour Party has failed to express that activity on its own political agenda, and has failed to use its political power to give effect to those campaigns.

By organising the Labour Women and Feminism Conference we hope to stimulate a discussion, aimed at building and strengthening the links between the Women's movement and the Labour movement, and between women engaged in various aspects of political activity. In particular we have suggested two themes for discussion. Firstly, how should the Labour Party fight for women's liberation? In other words what kinds of issues should we be demanding that the Labour Party raises and uses its political power to support. Secondly, how could the Labour Party be made more accessible to women? For example, what structural and constitutional changes need to be made to encourage all women to identify the Labour Party as their political power base.

Jane Stockton (on behalf of Briefing women's group)

The Conference will take place on 17th and 18th November at County Hall, London SE1.

AGENDA

Session 1

How should the Labour Party fight for women's liberation?

Workshops on fertility, peace, sexual harassment, racism, women and anti-imperialism, violence against women and pornography, heterosexism and sexism, women and mental health, women and the cuts.

Session 2

Making the Labour movement accessible to women.

Introduction plus workshops on women in trade unions, black women and the Labour Party, women with disabilities women with children, women and class, older women.

Session 3

Forum on 'What strategy for Labour women'.

Speakers from Briefing women and L.C.C. women.

For registration details and other information contact: Jane Stockton, 31 Connaught Road, London N16.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK are holding a DAYSCHOOL FOR WOMEN IN THE LABOUR/MOViEMENT

On SATURDAY 20th OCTOBER 1984 At UMIST, SACKVILLE ST, MANCHESTER.

There will be a number of Workshops to choose from both in the morning and afternoon as well as a special workshop session on WOMEN AND PIT CLOSURES and also a final session on WHAT NEXT FOR WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT?

Repeal the Racist Immigration Laws - No 'Special Cases'

Social worker and NALGO member, Muhammad Idrish will be addressing a Labour Party conference Fringe Meeting on Wednesday 3rd October. The subject is the racist immigration laws and how the labour movement must organise to fight for their repeal. It is organised by the Mohammad Idrish Defence Campaign and the Immigration Widows Campaign, with sponsorship from Ladywood CLP, Birmingham.

Many readers will know already of Mohammad's fight against deportation. The Home Office are trying to deport him on the grounds that he and his wife are separated. There is no claim that his marriage is not 'genuine' and they are not divorced.

Not a special case

The defence campaign is now nearly two years old, and fights for Mohammad not as a 'special case' (for example advising him to train as an athlete or sell double glazing) but demanding his right to stay as part of the struggle against the racist immigration laws.

It differs from other anti-deportation campaigns in its emphasis on seeking support and taking the struggle into the labour movement, as well as the black communities. Initiated by trade union and Labour Party activists, the campaign continues to draw on support from trade union and Labour Party branches across the country.

His case has the national backing of NALGO, and was debated at both the 1983 and 1984 annual conferences of the union. This therefore marks a significant breakthrough in the anti-racist struggle within the labour movement. Two large demonstrations have been organised in Birmingham and London together with various pickets of the Home Office and High Court. Regular joint meetings are held with NALGO officials and NEC members. However, the campaign committee retains most influence at the branch level through its affiliates.

This was demonstrated recently when the NALGO bureaucracy attempted to go against conference policy and refuse to pay for Mohammad's application for appeal to the House of Lords. Through its contacts, the campaign was able to mobilise pressure from branches and get the decision reversed.

National day of action

NALGO is committed to a national day of action in the event of a deportation order being served, and the campaign will be mobilising for strike action on that day. Activists within NALGO have a crucial role to play in making sure this and other conference decisions on Mohammad are implemented in full.

The Other Bookshop

328 Upper Street London N1
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Only the Rivers Run Free
Northern Ireland: The Women's War
Eileen Fairweather, Roisin McDonough and Melanie McCrory
McGibbon & Kee, Pluto Press $5.95

Garrison Guatemala
George Black
Zed Press $5.95

The Making of Neil Kinnoch
Robert Harris
Faber & Faber $4.95

What is to be Done About Illness and Health
Jeanette Mitchell
Penguin/Socialist Society $2.95

Who's Afraid of Margaret Thatcher?
Ken Livingstone and Tarig Ali
Verso $2.95

Bookstall services provided for labour movement bodies, CND groups etc. Phone or drop in for more details.

To order any of the above titles, please send cheque/P.O. along with 50p P&P to above address.

Barry Lovejoy, Secretary, Mohammad Idrish Defence Campaign
Vice-Chair, Ladywood CLP

Public Fringe Meeting, 12.30 p.m. Wednesday October 3rd, Gresham Hotel, Blackpool. (Gerald Kaufman and Clare Short invited).

For more details contact 30 Antrobus Rd., Handsworth, Birmingham 21. 021-523 8923.
INTERVIEW WITH A. SIVANANDAN:
RACE & CLASS

A. Sivanandan, Director of the Institute of Race Relations, has been active in the black movement since the 1960s. He was interviewed for Briefing by Tony Greenstein and Lili Roswear from Brighton Briefing.

Briefing: What do you think the left of the Labour Party should be fighting for, in particular with respect to the next manifesto, on racism?

A. Sivanandan: That is a non-question for black people. It’s totally meaningless. The Labour Party is not and has never been serious about fighting racism. Even when it has made some overtures to such a fight for example in 1976 it never came to anything.

But the Labour Party is not a monolith. There’s Hattersley and the Centre Right. These people are ostensibly egalitarian but they do not relate race to class – egalitarian but not revolutionary. Secondly there is the traditional left represented let’s say by Heffer – the so-called revolutionaries who subsume race to class. When people thought Scarman was suggesting positive discrimination, Heffer roared bovinely against such measures because it would privilege one section of the class. Then there is the new left of people like Ken Livingstone. They are egalitarian and ostensibly revolutionary, but they have never accepted black working-class struggle (largely extra-parliamentary and extra-union) as an intrinsic, indeed revolutionary, part of working-class struggle as a whole; they have never acknowledged its contribution to this country. The ‘new left’ never incorporated the struggles of black working-class people – at Imperial, Morden, Perivale, Warrington, Heywood, and finally Grunwick where for a brief moment of time Labour Party and Trade Unions flattered and failed. In the end Grunwick was an attempt to incorporate the black workers in the Trade Union structure and the Social Contract and not an attempt to take up the cause of black people and therefore of the class. To put it differently, the resistance of black people has been both in the workplace and in the community, as a people and a class, as a people and a class. And the left’s inability to incorporate such struggle as part of the struggles of the working class in this country is an aspect of racism. When you people talk about incorporating, you talk about incorporating cultures – that if you learn to like rice and curry, Indian dancing or play a tin drum then you’ve incorporated black culture into your culture. Bullshit. Our culture is the culture of resistance to racial oppression and class exploitation. The presence of black people in this country has been like an anti-body in the body politic – that’s in the very nature of this tradition and history which had to take on both colonialism and racism.

But in Britain we don’t have a settler working class. How would you characterise the impact of racism on working people?

Of course you cannot have colonialism and slavery without racism and racist culture. Racism is as English as Shakespeare and as old as slavery. It is in the milk you suck at your mother’s breast. 500 years of slavery and colonialism have bred a culture which is so racist that inevitably the working class have begun to look at black people as enemies. Also, colonialism benefitted the working class in the metropolitan countries. In the post-war period after independence, white workers have suffered from the breakdown of the welfare system, bad housing, schooling, employment. It is working class people who are bearing the brunt of the recession now. They see the people next to them competing for those same houses, jobs etc, as blacks and enemies; therefore there is division.

But is unity possible?

I must think that it is possible. Maybe it is an article of faith and not justified by the empirical data around me. But it is the black community and the black working class that have held out the possibility of such alliances. It is a failure of white working class leadership that it has not made use of those opportunities. The richness of our history is not only in the struggles here but also in the struggles against colonialism. There is a continuum between the anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles; some of the traditions we developed in the fight against colonialism were brought to our struggles against racism here. That is why the question of community and class, from pre-colonial societies and colonial-capitalist societies, has something to teach white capitalist societies where the working class struggle has become purely economic. The struggles of black people in this country have a political dimension. They are struggles against power not solely for a wage. We are returning to the British working class (whose struggles taught us a lot in the colonies) lessons from our own struggles against imperialism and racism – but you don’t want to know. You insist that we learn from you and that is an aspect of racism.

You’ve said on another occasion that the left had been left with ‘the ethnic baby’ but you didn’t know what to do with it. What did you mean?

Because the race/class struggles of black people in this country had not become a part of working class struggle as a whole, the Labour right was able to isolate race from class and treat the former as a problem of culture rather than a symptom of exploitation. Anti-racism took on a pluralist, culturalist, ‘ethnic’ aspect rather than a class aspect. And Roy Jenkins, Labour’s Home Secretary at the time, was the prophet of that pluralism. Multiculturalism became the substitute for anti-racist struggle. The challenge of black workers in this country, the challenge of resistance to the system and the state, as a people and a class – all those struggles of resistance against the system – became translated from the horizontal to the vertical, from class to ‘ethnicity’. The divisions of society that we are talking about are class, horizontal divisions. What the system tries to do is to divide the working class into vertical divisions of race, religion, sex and so on. The task of radicals, militants, is to turn the vertical into the horizontal. You begin that is to resolve the problems of racism, and the problems of class inherent in racism, in cultural, ethnic terms. The solution you felt was to create a black or cultural bourgeoisie; the answer was cultural...
ism and not classism. Hence multi-racial education and multi-cultural activities. Your struggles were not enriched by our struggles but your culture was by our culture or, rather by the superficial cultural artefacts – food, clothing, dance, drama, arts that sort of thing. And having thus separated us from our white fellow workers you divided us into cultural, ethnic groups. Black people united by the common experiences of colonialism and racism became compartmentalised into West Indians, Asians, Africans – and among the West Indians into islanders and among the Asians into Bangladeshi and Pakistani, Muslim and Hindu. And the system having divided us all can now begin to beat the shit out of the working class – white and black.

What do you think of the GLC anti-racist year? What the GLC has done is to chart a path through territories that the left, and the Labour Party in particular, have never traversed. And that is a tremendous achievement when you realise that they had no anti-racist tradition – on the left, in the Labour Party or in the unions – to draw on. They are pioneers and they have made the mistakes that pioneers make such as confusing (personal) racialism with (institutionalised) racism – which in turn has led to the belief that ‘racism awareness training’ is a step in the anti-racist direction. But that is nothing compared to all the good they have done. They have given us black people our heads, and that is a considerable beginning for a country which for 40 years has been intrepidly racist.

Why are you critical of racism awareness training? As I said before, ‘racism awareness’ confuses personal prejudice or racism with institutionalised racism – and therefore believes that if you get rid of your racial prejudices you then get rid of a racist system i.e. you get rid of the structures of racism by changing your attitude of mind. That’s a bit too metaphysical for me; the world is not in my head, it’s out there. Racism awareness training is like potty training for whites – it promises to get rid of white racist shit neatly, clinically. And it makes whites feel guilty. I want white people to feel ashamed. Guilt is to transgress other people’s rules and conditions – the Prime Minister’s, the Headteacher’s, God’s. Shame is about failing your own standards. I am not against awareness, but awareness has to be an awareness of everything around you – of poverty and injustice and the nose next door – and that is the business of living and perceiving – the ability to live on the tip-toes of your sensibilities, to become whole again and not fragmented the way that capitalism wants us to be.

Do you see the Uprisings in 1981 as a seminal event, not least in terms of black/white unity? Yes, absolutely. It was that moment of time when the injustices, disabilities, inhumanities visited on the people of the inner cities were so huge that the youth irrespective of race had to shake out the system. It was not a question of black youth and white youth but of youth in the inner cities and their rebellion marked a hunger for a different sort of life. It was significant in that it was a moment of time when black and white youth came together to protest against Thatcherite monetarist policies, against the decay of inner cities, against the impossibility of living in these urban jungles. It was a protest against the type of living that the Tories had held out – the dog eat dog, competitive living, impersonal, exchange value living. But the moment was lost – because there was no left leadership that could effectively bargain with the state – to see that the life of people in the inner cities improved dramatically. Hence, the political battle was lost to people like Scarman. (The British have always done this in the colonies: whenever there was trouble, they brought in a commission.) The next thing they did was to generate a black petty bourgeoisie, and create all these culturalist avenues for black people to go into: arts and crafts, TV Black on Black, Eastern Eye – that sort of thing. Now it would be a different matter if black people were allowed to go on Panorama or Weekend World to talk about Britain, Israel, America in the mainstream programmes. Why have we become ghettoised into channels where we are allowed to have our little bits of culture? It is an aspect of that same syndrome I spoke of earlier: it is because our working class struggles have not become a part of your working class movement here that we now have culturalist programmes reproducing a black petty bourgeoisie to manage racism, weakening thereby not only black working class struggle but working class struggle as a whole.
WHY WE OPPOSE NOT FIXING A RATE

There are two tactics for defending our local communities against Tory rate-capping. One is the refusal to fix a rate (supported by Ted Knight, and Clael Lloyd-Jones in the last Briefing and the other is to introduce an illegal or deficit budget on the basis of no cuts, no rent rises and no rate rises above the level of inflation. We would like here to recommend a deficit budget!

Not fixing a rate is motivated on the basis of achieving a simultaneous unity of Councils whose money would run out at different times with deficit budgeting. But ‘when the money runs out’ is secondary for deficit budgeting which is a proclamation of illegal intent as soon as it is adopted, unlike the refusal to fix a rate which is really illegal only when the money runs out. Such illegality with no rate is thus not consciously prepared for but arrives more by default than by design.

There may also be differences in the ‘period of financial solvency’ which Ted Knight has mentioned for Councils refusing to fix a rate. Their income would be from rents and charges which may vary with each Council. And as Clael Lloyd-Jones asks of not fixing a rate; “Do we really want tenants subsidising other rate-payers?” There are other differences — precepting authorities have to fix a rate in March by law unlike the boroughs and districts, and for provincial councils, the “London option” may not be so appropriate.

Councils proclaiming and adopting “illegal” deficit budgets in April/March on the basis of the “Three Noes” would all be in the same position — a state of open illegality and principled opposition to the Tory attack. Their position would be clear, rather than left ambiguous.

The refusal to fix a rate is a weak tactic that concentrates our defence on the weakest element in the potential opposition to the Tories — the formal agreement between councils not to fix in rapidly changing circumstances. It places the burden of struggle in the council chamber rather than extending it to the community as a whole, tenants and workers. It would create a chain of uncertainty with poorer councils dependent on richer ones not to go for an individual deal. Any such move would cause a chain reaction the other way in forfeiting the position of those who had remained solid and impossibly compromising further opposition. It would make ‘personal liability’ determined by declaration rather than by ‘proof’ of “Wilful Misconduct” being obtained and narrow our appeal against this determination!

It is a “passive” tactic which does not project itself beyond the refusal to fix a rate and awaits the response of the Government. But the Government could call our bluff and fictio infinita as it’s done with the miners’ strike. Jenkin has said he’ll not send in commissioners and hand Labour a target for struggle on a plate. We must not just plump for a tactic which we think will cause a quick early crisis or is merely dramatic, or is made more easily compromised on by its being ultimatumistic but adopt a tactic that works.

Apart from leaving the running with the Tories, the refusal to fix a rate also leaves the political initiative with them. It allows the question to be posed in terms favourable to the Tories and their media — “carte-blanche high-rate seeking councils” or worse “irresponsible Labour councils”. By focusing attention on the rate, it diverts from the real questions.

NO RATE RISES

An omission in all the motivations for not fixing a rate is the specific commitment to no rent rises and no rate rise at least about the level of inflation. Indeed it is precisely left open by the refusal to fix a rate. In the past rate rises could be seen as a progressive local taxation, but with present rate-levels in inner-city areas (especially London) any increases are wholly regressive on sections of the working class who are made to pay for Tory policies.

No rate rises must be one of the first “ground rules” of any tactic we employ. By refusing to specify it, councils would fly in the face of every principle of trade-union negotiating practice. They would begin by signalling to the government that their position is open to compromise, rather than resolutely maintaining the optimum demand. Recent statements by Cde. Knight reported in The Guardian and the statement of the A.I.A. calling for such things as the continuance of government aid to urban projects beyond its current 3 year limit would seem to confirm this, and move in the direction of a “shopping list” of “items”, rather than intrinsically maintaining our full demands! Not fixing a rate is also supported by those who see the opportunity for increasing rates which they consider a solution to their dilemma. They ask: “If you don’t raise rates, how are you going to pay your workers’ outstanding wages” as if this were not also a problem for councils refusing to fix a rate as they run out of money. They thereby betray their labour-management, rate-raising, business-as-usual” mentality. Since the Tories have put us all in the same boat, deficit budgeting, based on the three no’s, provides a basis of unity for our fight. We say that we must get out of this situation and roundabouts sectionalism by honestly explaining to our tenants, rate-payers and workers that guarantees for the future depend on the outcome of the fight. If we surrender or just increase rates, there are no guarantees that the Tories will respect in relation to the council workforce’s contracts, conditions, wages or even redundancy payments!

UNCERTAINTY

There would be much less uncertainty for our communities with a deficit budget than the refusal to fix a rate. A deficit budget removes the rate-payers’ worry about legal obligation to continue paying rates, extant if a new one is not fixed. Also, payment of a new fixed rate would mitigate the severity of any future demands for arrears.

Some cdes. have suggested that there is no contradiction between fixing a budget which specifies a rate but not levying it. But in fact these are logically exclusive. If you can publish a rate then why not levy it? The only answer can be that you want the freedom to levy a different rate from the published one, sometime in the future, depending on your dealing with the government. And this would still be unacceptable.

What occurred in Liverpool was a deficit budget. This was the point about it being referred to as an “illegal budget”? The threat of its adoption and its mass support was what forced Jenkin to make concessions. It was not the absence of the fixing of a rate, (9%), which was only caused by the action of the six renegades. We therefore regard the tactic of illegal, deficit budgeting, which should be based on the strategic orientation of the “Three Noes”, as the best strategy for victory.

Phillipa Jones, Joe Murphy, (Hackney South CLP)
Pat Jordan, (Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP)
VERSOS PROUDLY PRESENTS

Who's Afraid of Margaret Thatcher?

STARRING

KEN LIVINGSTONE, TARIQ ALI & THE BRITISH ELECTORATE

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BLACK SECTIONS ARE HERE TO STAY!
VAUXHALL CLP

DEFEND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
NO CUTS, NO RENT RISES!
Fen Falconer (Coventry District Council)
Peter Lees (Coventry District Council)
George Lindfield (Coventry District Council)
Terry Donovan (West Midlands County Council)
Dave Spencer (West Midlands County Council)
Richard Chessen (Warwick District Council)
Roger Grenville (Warwick District Council)
Barbara Long (Warwickshire District Council)
Don Worseley (Chair, Coventry South West C.L.P.)
Mota Singh (President, Leamington Indian Workers Association, c/c-chair Leamington CLP)
Tony Wheeler (President, Leamington Trades Council)
Chris Long (Secretary, Leamington Trades Council)

Abolish the Monarchy and the House of Lords!
Andy Harris GLC/ILEA member Putney
Bryn Davies GLC/ILEA member Vauxhall
Steve Bundell GLC/ILEA member Islington North
Lesley Hammond GLC/ILEA member Dulwich
Paul Moore GLC/ILEA member Lambeth Central
George Nicholson GLC/ILEA member Bermondsey
John Carr GLC/ILEA member Hackney Central
Charlise Ross GLC/ILEA member Holborn & St Pancras South
John McDonnell GLC member Hayes & Harlington
Jenni Fletcher GLC member Tottenham
Tony Hart GLC member Hornsey

GREETINGS TO CONFERENCE FROM THE HOUNSLOW 6 — EXPELLED FROM THE LABOUR GROUP FOR DEFENDING PUBLIC SERVICES.
VICTORY TO THE MINERS!
John Connelly Bill Raymond
Enda Donnelly Niall Murphy
Heather Wetzel Chris Hickey

The Legal Workers branch of the T.G.W.U. demands an end to privatisation. Renationalisation without compensation!

Manor branch (Brent South CLP) sends greetings to Conference.
Kinnock and Hattersley, get off the fence! Full support to the miners!

BARKING AND DAGENHAM HEALTH EMERGENCY SENDS GREETINGS TO LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE
SUPPORT THE BARKING HOSPITAL WORKERS!
Brent East CLP sends greetings to conference
TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND!
SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE!

Greetings to Labour Party Conference delegates and Briefing supporters from officers of the University of Sussex Student Union
Fight education cuts! Victory to the miners!
Fiona Morton (President)
Vice-presidents: Jane Speare (Social Services),
Alick Bridger (Finance),
Martin Huseyin (Education),
Janice Turner (Communications)

EALING LABOUR BRIEFING
Sends greetings to Labour Party Conference delegates and to all Briefing supporters
Ealing Briefing meets every month at the West London Trade Union Club, Action High Street, London W.3.
For further details, contact:
Andy Kelleher (Ealing North CLP) at 841 4640
Ruth Clarke (Acton CLP) at 840 2099
Peter Purton (Southall CLP) at 574 2420
GREETINGS

LEWSHAM EAST CLP SENDS GREETINGS TO CONFERENCE SUPPORT BLACK SECTIONS!

Black Sections National Steering Committee
Greetings to all Labour Party delegates and Briefing supporters. Black Sections are here to stay! Support Diane Abbott and Keith Vaz, candidates for the NEC.

Fraternal greetings to Labour Party Conference delegates from
Cllr Colin Penfold (Wirral Borough Council)
VICTORY TO THE MINERS!

Fraternal greetings to Labour Party Conference delegates from
Cllr John McCabe (Merseyside County Council)

BRIEFING CONFERENCE MEETING “TARGET LABOUR GOVERNMENT”
Sunday 30th September at 7.30pm
Claremont Hotel, North Promenade, Blackpool

Speakers:
Tony Benn M.P., Ken Livingstone
Diane Abbott (Women’s Action Committee)
Kirstine McDowall (Labour Movement Lesbians)
Betty Heathfield (Women Against Pit Closures)
Sharon Atkins (Black Sections National Steering Committee)
Speaker from the L.P.Y.S.

NEC SLATE
Constituency Section
Benn
Blankett
Heffer
Meacher
Richardson
Skinner
Wise
Women’s Section
Abbott
Beckett
Maynard
Morrell
C. Short
Trade Union Section
Clarke E.
Fullick
Haigh
Hoyle
Kelly
Kitson
O’Neill
Sawyer
Switzer
Conference
Arrangements
Committee
Balfe
Briscoe
Canavan
Jones
Shaw
Constituency
Place
Willsman

Fighting Ratecapping WHICH OPTION?
Speakers:
Hilda Kean and Ted Knight
Claremont Hotel, North Promenade, Blackpool

Organised by LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING,
HACKNEY LABOUR LEFT
LEWSHAM LABOUR LEFT

Hanover branch (Brighton Kempton CLP) sends greetings to Labour Party Conference delegates

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VIEWING STARTS AT 1PM
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PENNY WITHERAM 01 965 2864
DENISE FEARS 01 961 0061
GREETINGS TO LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

Socialist greetings to all Conference delegates. Support the WAC resolutions.
Mary Honeyball
(Joint Chair, London Labour Party Women’s Committee)

John Chapman (Bermondsey Labour Party) sends socialist greetings to all Conference delegates and Briefing supporters.
No to one person, one vote for re-selection!

Next issue out: 18 October. Deadline for articles: Monday 8 October. To be sent to 54 Bow Road, London E3.

Next Editorial Board: Sunday October 21 at Digbeth Civic Centre, Birmingham at 12 noon.
Why we should oppose
the Defence Statement

THE Defence Statement “Defence and Security for Britain” will be presented to Annual Conference without discussion in the constituency parties. Delegates will receive this long statement (57 pages) just before conference and they will be informed that they will be required to vote on it without amendment. Very little time, if any, will be given to debate on it, as it will be taken with the disarmament resolutions. They will take second place to this statement, once it has the endorsement of conference. This would not be a worrying matter if the statement contained the disarmament policies which conference has adopted to date. But apart from a holding position in which nuclear disarmament by Britain is accepted, many of the policies of the past have been ditched.

Of particular concern is the abandonment of the commitment to reduce Britain’s military expenditure to that of the average of our major European allies. By this we have always assumed a major cut from the present level of 5.6% to about 3.9%. It has been a basic demand that escalating military expenditure must be reduced in order to lower international tension, re-direct investment to create alternative work for the defence industries and to ensure that money is spent on welfare, hospitals, schools and jobs. The statement says that defence reductions could not be achieved in the life-time of a single parliament. In a section on alternative work for defence workers, the statement admits that reduction in defence spending results in a higher rate of economic growth. Yet in the face of its own research, the Labour Party wants to take a very different line. This is to advocate increased spending on conventional weapons. This is the key commitment in this document.

Totally opposed

It is totally opposed to our past policies. Last year, we voted almost unanimously for a resolution which contained the statement that “the UK expenditure on nuclear and conventional defence produces a massive distortion in the use of Britain’s industrial and research resources”. Ron Todd, in moving the resolution said that he would not take back a single word of that resolution. Why have the Labour leaders moved so far from conference policies? There are two probable reasons. Firstly they believe that if they play Thatcher’s game of appealing to nationalism and to echoes of former glory when Britain ruled the waves, they will win the next election. Secondly they are buying the silence of the right wing who refused to accept unilateral nuclear disarmament without major concessions. This is a very dangerous game to play for now the spirit of Labour’s defence policy has taken on right wing tendencies and even the commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament may be threatened in future deals.

Roy Hattersley has hinted that there are certain ambiguities in the document. He is probably already thinking of a new formula which will allow US nuclear bases to remain here in order to retain our contribution to the NATO alliance. It is on the question of NATO that this statement gives most cause for alarm. In the past we have never been so unquestionably committed by our leaders to continued membership of NATO. In the draft Manifesto, last year, there was a section on the desirability of the mutual dissolution of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The support for withdrawal from NATO by the constituency parties and the left is well-known. Labour CND and Labour Action for Peace have constantly argued for withdrawal from this aggressive nuclear alliance which perpetuates the division of Europe and forces each and every new phase in the nuclear arms race.

We will stay in NATO

The document doesn’t tell us why we must belong to NATO. It insists that we will stay. There are long passages on NATO’s new weapons and advantages in high technology, surveillance, precision guided missiles and electronic warfare capability. The enemy is assumed to be the USSR, which is another very worrying departure in this document. Tony Benn’s addition to the preface, modified by the drafting committee, is an obvious attempt to alter the strident attitude to the Soviet Union. The preface notes that the USA and the USSR were both our war-time allies and are re-engaged in a relentless arms race. But less than a page into the document, words such as the “Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies have a large military capability which could pose a potential military threat to Western Europe” and “British and NATO policy must be designed to deter the Soviet Union from military attack” start to appear.

There is a link between the commitment to conventional spending and the enthusiasm for NATO. This is the biggest sell-out of them all. NATO is demanding greater spending on conventional weapons by European allies, in the Rogers Plan. This will mean a strong front-line in Central Europe and the adoption of Deep Strike battle strategies. Conventional weapons will not however replace nuclear weapons in the new strategies. Conventional weapons will not however replace nuclear weapons in the new strategies, they will be integrated with nuclear strategies by NATO. So when the Labour leaders call for more conventional defence spending, they are well aware that NATO’s nuclear strategy, with or without Britain’s nuclear weapons, will remain intact. So much for the past conference resolutions to commit the Labour Party to reversing the nuclear arms race.

The document contains many further inconsistent and contradictory passages. It has very little to do with disarmament. Its commitment to removing Cruise and US bases is apologetic and out of character to the rest of the document. This statement is a major step backwards. It should be thrown out by conference and delegates should insist that conference policies alone should form party policy.
Councillor Dave Spencer was a delegate from West Midlands County Council to the Convention.

Since the 2nd END Convention in West Berlin last year, Cruise and Pershing II missiles have been deployed in Western Europe. When you consider that a Pershing II missile fired from West German soil can destroy Sofia within four minutes or Moscow within eight minutes, you begin to realise the horrifying possibilities. Already new missiles are being positioned in Eastern Europe to answer the threat. It is estimated that at least 3.5 billion dollars went to the multinational firm converting Pershing I to Pershing II. It is almost certain that the order to deploy Pershing II has already gone in. The decision to deploy 464 Cruise missiles is only the thin end of the wedge - the US Air Force has a programme for 3,780 air launched Cruise, whilst the US navy has plans for 3,994 sea-launched Cruise missiles. Then there is the US government's decision to produce 200 MX missiles with ten warheads each which can be directed to ten separate targets with laser and radar systems - to be deployed from 1986 - with the Soviets now SS-17, SS-18, SS-19. And so on, and so on.

Many socialists stuck into the nitty gritty of CLP trench warfare seem oblivious to the missile madness going on all around us. When a group of people were watching the Carl Sagan video on "The Nuclear Winter" last month, it is the first time I have seen genuine shock and emotion amongst some hard-bitten Lefties. I include myself. "Oh my god, this is awful" one critic said. We know the international capitalism is bad, but just how obscene, wasteful and destructive can perhaps be seen in the expenditure on these awful weapons.

What do to about it?
What to do about it? Peace activists in Peruiga were certainly in a very serious mood. The mass protests, the mass petitions, the peace campaigns have roused large numbers of people to face the unacceptable - but the missiles are still here. Stories from West Germany tell of the increasingly vicious police methods used by the state against protesters, the rubber bullets, the bone breaker water cannon - the same from Italy and the USA. Other political methods must be found as well as the familiar mass demonstrations. Here, of course, is where the discussions started. There are various buzz words coming from some key figures in END - for example, "non-alignment" and "dialogue". This view saw the European Peace Movement as an honest broker or intermediary encouraging 'dialogue' between the two super powers, together with various "non-aligned" and non-nuclear powers, like the six signatories of the "four continents peace initiative" of 22 May 1984. But as one East German exiled put it quoting Stalin, "The Pope! How many army divisions does the Pope have?" Our divisions are the people we can mobilise on the streets, East and West, to threaten the super powers - we cannot have a dialogue with them on the basis of rational discussion.

Empty seats
This question raised a key problem at the Convention known as "the question of the empty seats". Some Peace Movements had been refused visas by their respective countries. This included all the Peace Movement from Eastern Europe and the peace representatives from Turkey and Israel. At the same time the official peace movements from Eastern Europe were very much in evidence, arguing,

Dear Labour Briefing,

Congratulations to Labour Briefing for establishing itself once more as the conscience of the Labour Movement. The need to ensure that the PLP contains more black people, women and manual workers is vital. We only have to look at the new intake of London Labour MPs in June 1983 to see this: Banks, Sedgemore, Corbyn, Smith and Cohen. All white, all men, all middle class. Strange, isn't it, that none of them appeared on your hit list?

Sadly, your August editorial marks the continuing, and probable final, decline of Labour Briefing from a journal concerned with political issues to a fan magazine for the self-seeking professional careerists who litter your recent issues with their slobbering.

Your editorial no doubt signals the beginning of a period of 'Tammany Hall' politics by Left and Right solely concerned with increasing their proportion of CC delegates. It was exactly the same kind of tactics that finished off Bermondsey Labour Party as a political force and ensured our defeat even before the capitalist press put the knife into Peter Tatchell.

If you want to see what Labour Party members in London who aren't interested in furthering their own careers are doing, then take time off and come to Bishops Ward in North Lambeth. In a little over a year we have tripled our membership to over 200 and smashed the Alliance as a political force in our area. Our membership is overwhelmingly working class, and women constitute over half the members. The proportion of black people in our party is over 20%, which is significantly higher than in the population of the ward. All this has been achieved by campaigning in defence of working class interests rather than indulging in sterile internal conflict.

you must always ask the question: Which one is the KGB agent? We must never become deaf to the screams from the bowels of the Lubyanka".

A real tonic
The great joy of these Conventions is the exchange of new ideas, news and addresses among the delegates. Workshops of all sorts spring up all over the place. This Peruiga Convention must be the most chaotic and disorganised ever, but the final event I have ever attended - yet the energy, the enthusiasm, the seriousness, the goodwill of the delegates was a real tonic. In Brussels 1982, the Greenham women burst through the conference arrangements committee and seized the imagination of the delegates. In West Berlin 1983 the shear numbers involved were an inspiration. In Peruiga 1984 I will recall the large contingent of steel workers from Sheffield whose final evening's vigil through the narrow streets of nearby Assisi, past the basilica of St. Francis, shouting, "The people united will never be defeated". They gathered at the end to listen quietly in translation about the British miners' strike and then threw their equivalent of £5 and £10 notes to the miners' fund and the money just kept coming. The class solidarity is there, the serious purpose of the peace activists is there - the political leadership is missing. The CP change the "workers" to "the people" and raise the blind alleys of "non-alignment" and "dialogue" with the peace activists - we have plenty to learn as well as perhaps drawing them into political struggle.

For the first time in a long time people are beginning to think that the next General Election will see the return of a Labour Government. Those, from whatever shade of left or right, who damage the chances of a committed socialist Labour Government in pursuit of their own sectarian interests will be judged the real traitors to the Labour Movement.

Paul Wheeler

Dear Briefing

I was saddened to read in your normally excellent magazine an article in the National Supplement No. 10, August 1984, enclosed within the London Labour Briefing No. 145.

The article I refer to was headed up 'Defend Ahsan' and contained a story about the West Midlands Low Pay Unit and one of its employees, Raqib Ahsan. Knowing something about the case, I read with incredulity the farrago of lies and innuendo which made up the story you published. I can only say that if anybody had taken the slightest trouble to contact the Low Pay Unit to determine the facts then the story would have been quite different.

I won't go into the details of the case, in all fairness I think you should contact the Low Pay Unit to find out the facts for yourself. However, I will say in passing that the Low Pay Unit has a proud record of very useful collaboration of trade unions and other organisations on the left and that it is a shame that Briefing should attack such organisation and not be ready and with such little regard for the facts.

Yours sincerely

(personal capacity)

Tom Wilson

Research Department

General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union

Member Brent East CLP
YOUTH BRIEFING

YOUTH PAGE HERETO STAY!

From young miners to young women, from youth in CND, to those on the streets of Ireland, young people have nothing to lose and everything to gain by fighting for socialism.

Yet, the Labour Party is unable to offer a way forward — the lowest ever youth vote at the last general election is an indication of this. Every time the Labour Party sells out a struggle, every time it refused to listen to the demands of women and blacks, it only cuts itself off further from the thousands of youth who are taking their future into their own hands. Attacking the autonomy and budget of its own youth section hardly helps the situation.

Under its present leadership the LPSYS itself is small and isolated from the mass struggles of youth. Yet potentially the LPSYS could be one of the biggest sections of the Labour Party and a valuable ally of the left. The fight for a mass campaigning LPSYS is something left in the party cannot afford to ignore.

This page is going to be a regular feature of Briefing. If you have any questions or would like to see anything in the next page contact, Tracy Doyle, c/o 54 Bow Road, London E3.

* The next meeting of youth involved in Briefing is October 27, Digbeth Civic Hall, Digbeth, Birmingham, at 2pm. All welcome!

Build LPSYS! Build YCND!

Briefing talked with Tarsam Singh, 17 year old school student from Birmingham, who recently went on the Bases Tour '84 organised by YCND.

Why did you get involved in the peace movement?

Having looked at the government's of the world constantly building more and more nuclear weapons designed only for death and destruction, it was clear to me that unless somebody did something — and quick, this political madness would be the end for all of us. CND seemed to be the only people really trying to do something about it. They appeared to be fighting for a world in which we could all live together — world peace! So I decided to join and add my little contribution.

In Birmingham, YCND has organised days of action, occupied Job Centres calling for Jobs Not Bombs, had demos — you name it and we've organised it to try and stop the bomb.

West Midlands YCND is organising an anti-Trident demo, why did you decide to demonstrate against Trident in particular?

YCND has been in the forefront of the campaign for nuclear disarmament and we decided that we'd organise our own demo on October 13 to advertise our resentment towards the proposed Trident missiles that will be based in this country. We wanted to build a march that would be a demo with a difference! At the moment it looks really good, we want to make this the biggest YCND demo since the 30,000 strong carnival in May 1983. But to do this we have to and we want to get everybody involved.

The Labour Party Young Socialists had been traditionally very hostile to YCND, but they have now agreed in the West Midlands, at least, to help build this demo. We in YCND saw this demo as a good way to get rid of this frustrating hostility. After all we are fighting the same enemy — the Tory government. During the miners strike, YCND has understood that, I just wish the YS nationally would. We regularly organise our YCND groups to collect money and food for the miners and we will have a YS and a young miner speaking at our rally on 13 October to illustrate our support.

CND alone cannot bring down the Tories — so what do you think of the Labour Party and its present leadership?

Put it this way, if there was a general election tomorrow I would vote Labour, despite the fact I think they are wishy-washy. To me Kinnock and Hattersley epitomise the watering down of Labour Party demands, like their opposition to the black sections and their failure to give any support to the struggles of young people. But I don't believe we'll get anywhere by letting them off the hook, we should be trying to steer the Labour Party away from irrelevant diplomacy and towards supporting the miners, the fight against Cruise and Trident, what I really mean are the struggles of people like you and me.

In many ways I respect the Labour Party Young Socialists a lot more than the Labour Party because I think their demands are a lot more sincere, but I wouldn't respect the YS nationally a lot more if they were involved in all the actions that youth are fighting for. I think the LPSYS and YCND nationally should be fighting for jobs not Bombs together. Our demo in Birmingham is one example but we've got to do further. The miners need our support and believe me we need yours — so come on our demo on October 13 and bring your YS/LP banner.
FOR A MASS CAMPAIGNING LABOUR PARTY YOUNG SOCIALISTS'

One only has to look at the massively successful Gay Games '83, 'Jobs for the Change' and the Carnival against Racism to see the potential to interest young people in the ideas and activities of socialism. At the moment we are in the middle of the biggest battle against the Toreis since the height of the miners' strike. A national L.P.Y.S 'Youth for the miners' demo and festival with Youth CND would not only boost support for the strike but would win many youth to the Labour Party and the L.P.Y.S.

Washing thinking is not enough however. Activists in the Labour Party must organise now with Young Socialists to make good ideas a reality and build the L.P.Y.S. Drastic measures are not going to be enough.

There is an urgent need for a discussion on the left about youth. The Labour Party Young Socialists is presently very weak. The real membership of the YS remains at the feeble end of about 3,000. If Labour is going to have any chance in hell of defeating the Tories and the Alliance, support among youth will have to be built up.

The pathetically low vote for Labour at the last election must be reversed. Part and parcel of this must be a strong, campaigning and democratic young section with its own lively and interesting youth paper.

But the response of the Labour Party leadership is at best total lack of interest and at worst pure neglect. Our budget and trying to dictate what can and cannot be sold or distributed at YS events. This must stop. Socialists in the Labour Party must discuss and take part in actions that can and will build the L.P.Y.S, we must defend the right of the YS to make its own decisions, to be democratic and independent. Two sets of attitudes in the Party must be overcome. Firstly, the idea that youth are useful doorknockers but of course, if the L.P.Y.S gets too left wing or too political its budget will be sliced to stop it from doing or saying anything. Secondly the attitude of many on the left of the Party has been to ignore the YS and leave the present leadership of the YS to get on with it.

Why are these attitudes a problem? The main thing is that no form of witchhunt, whether it be a cut in the YS budget, dictates on policy and particularly expulsions can be tolerated. It is vital that in a youth organisation that we have the right to make our policy decisions and map out the way forward for youth. On the other hand, ignoring the L.P.Y.S solves nothing.

The conditions exist for the creation of an L.P.Y.S that numbers in the tens of thousands and it is to this task that the left must address itself. Such a YS will not and cannot, be built on the basis of a narrow, sectarian programme. It will be built only by involving itself in, and giving support and direction to the struggle that young people are involved in. Campaigns such as CND, women's liberation, campaigns against racism, gay liberation and industrial struggles such as the miners strike. Such a campaigning YS would strengthen no end the position of the left in the labour movement as a whole and would be capable of beginning to overcome the apathy and hostility among a large section of young people to politics. It will only be built, however, if the left as a whole plays an active part in building the YS and taking it out of the hands of the present leadership — by political rather than bureaucratic or organisational means.

There is a growing minority in the YS which is committed to just such a campaigning approach. Its ranks are drawn from the mass campaigns such as CND, and groups such as Lesbian and Gay Young Socialists. These are alongside support for the Labour Committee on Ireland, the campaign against Reagen's wardrive in Central America and other international issues which have received increasing support from youth in the L.P.Y.S. This current is beginning to organise through regional 'minority' bulletin and courtroom at national YS events such as the defence of political view, support for the demands of the Women and YS Committee. A discussion has begun about launching a national journal to organise these activists and deepen our links with the rest of the left. The aim of this open letter has been to open the debate about the way forward for Labour's youth organisation and to begin to build up the links that will be necessary if Labour is to have the kind of campaigning youth wing it needs.

The left wing of the party has been throwing itself into activities such as solidarity with the miners, defending the cities, defending the political levy, winning the demands of the Women's Action Committee and building black sections. But the important task of building up Labour's youth organisation has all too often been ignored. Instead the narrow and sectarian politics have been pursued by the L.P.Y.S leadership cutting it off from tapping the huge potential which exists among young people. The left must break with this and win the L.P.Y.S over to its own campaigning politics.

We appeal to the left at all levels of the Party to join us in building a mass campaigning L.P.Y.S.

Bernie Wilde (West Midlands Regional Committee member)
Dave Shepherd (Southern Regional Committee member)
(Both signatures in a personal capacity.)

For a workers' alternative

Dear Editor,

The Briefing conference at County Hall in July agreed to publish an open letter from two L.P.Y.S comrades in the next National Supplement. We are writing in response to that decision, since, in our view, the open letter does not fully represent Briefing policy towards the L.P.Y.S, nor do we believe it poses any serious challenge to the Militant's leadership of the L.P.Y.S. We would like therefore for our letter to be published alongside the open letter, as a first response.

The letter calls for a "broad-based" campaign — in alliance with CND and similar groups — aimed at "taking the L.P.Y.S out of the hands of the present leadership." In our view, given the political and class composition of CND and the other umbrella-groups mentioned, this would endanger the substantial gains made in the L.P.Y.S since 1970 in winning it to socialist and working class policies and building amongst primarily working class youth. Any campaign to broaden its appeal amongst organised gays, ethnic minorities, feminists, CND activists, etc., must respect these gains and build on them, not counterfeit itself to them. Under the current conditions of witch-hunt, particularly we must be careful not to allow ourselves to be associated with Neil Kinnock's and the right's characterisation of the L.P.Y.S's politics as "narrow" and "sectarian.

The letter's aim is to give an ounce of support to the current L.P.Y.S leadership's programme. Given the hostility of the Right towards this programme, this could all too easily be misconstrued as Briefing's hostility, or at least neutrality, on the issues raised. But the nationalisation of the major monopolies under workers' control — the establishment of social ownership of the means of production, the end of social divisions, and any attack on its centrality must be resisted. Our argument is that in order to implement this programme, all sections of the oppressed will have to mobilised behind it and enabled to understand its relevance to the struggles of their own lives.

Briefing's aim in this respect — with the support which we feel we do have within CND, among gays, women's organisations, ethnic minority groups, etc., is to provide additional strength, diversity and a broader range of involvement to the L.P.Y.S and its fighting leadership, not attacks which could be interpreted as divisive. Briefing has consistently attempted to represent a "coalition of the dispossessed". The Russian Revolution itself was victorious because of the strength of the alliances its working class leadership was able to form. But our fight for this must not be at the expense of the absolute centrality in this coalition of the working class and its own programmatic goals — which intrinsically must be anti-sexist, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist (to a degree which the Militant comrades have so far failed to understand). We would welcome further contributions to this debate.

Chris Knight
Graham Bash
Jane Stockton
Stuart Marshall-Clarke
Kevin Flack
Mick McKeever
Jon Pickering
Dave Lewney
Lesbians and Gays
the struggle reaches Blackpool

Any conference delegate could easily be forgiven for not noticing that history is being made at the back of the resolution booklet. Turn to page 153 and you find two resolutions and seven amendments on 'Homosexuality'. Not a great number, but compared to what we've been used to it is quite an astonishing amount. Particularly when it is considered that at least five CLP secretaries failed to get their amendments supporting lesbian and gay rights in on time.

This sudden leap in support for lesbian and gay rights is not the result of an overnight-seeing-of-the-light by some in the labour movement. It is the culmination of months and years of hard, and sometimes painful, work by the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights.

Lesbians and gay men have been joining the Labour Party in increasing numbers recently. And they have joined as 'out and proud' people not prepared to sit back in silence while their identities and rights are ignored by the white, male, heterosexual dominated labour move-

ment. In some places where a single lesbian or gay man has been very isolated it's been a hard slog raising the issue and has incurred predictable abuse. But in others there have been wonderful successes such as in Nottingham where an out gay male councillor was elected. And 1984 has seen the launch of a group no one would ever have dreamed of - Labour Movement Lesbians!

Not all fun and games

Out in the wider world it hasn't all been fun and games either. Gay's the Word bookshop in London was raided by Customs and Excise looking for porn. They only found Mills and Boon but have decided to prosecute anyway. Street harassment of gay men in Earls Court has increased - in subsequent cases the police have frequently been found guilty of lying. And there have been numerous raids on pubs and clubs. Lesbian mothers are still faced with the horrific choice between being out and happy with their sexuality and losing their children, or keeping quiet, living in secrecy and fear and keeping their children. Or there is the current case of a lesbian fighting to keep her home, a council flat, now that her lover has died.

But amidst all this bigotry and state repression has come the beginnings of a response from the labour movement. Back in February the London Labour Party passed a strongly worded lesbian and gay rights resolution. Southern Region Labour Party subsequently followed suit. In June NALGO almost unanimously passed a similar resolution. NUPE and ACTT have affiliated to the LCGR. There is already a lesbian and gay group in NALGO. Now NUPE, lesbians and gay men are attempting to get a group off the ground. The GLC ball has kept right on rolling with the best monument to their policies - the £1 million lesbian and gay centre due to open soon. Other Labour authorities have been adopting similar policies. Lesbian and Gay Young Socialists, with tiny resources and having only been in existence for a year, have managed to force the LPYS to adopt a limited policy. And recent weeks have seen another novel initiative - Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners group. They received an ovation on the recent Women Against Pit Closures March. LGSM also hope to be visiting South Wales at the invitation of the NUM.

LCGR has grown in numbers and influence. Its campaigning work has given lesbians and gay men a long overdue public political profile. This party conference will see our biggest openly lesbian and gay presence, our largest fringe meeting and it could - should - see our first debate.

Heterosexual interests

The Women's Liberation Movement has long since pointed out that the labour movement is run in male interests. It is also run in heterosexual interests - just look at the publicity in some election or other. If it's a man running - and it's mostly men that run - and frequently when it's a woman - there'll be endless rugby-playing-statesman Himsel with Wife and 2.4 kids just in case we missed the message - this guy is absolutely NORMAL! And like racism benefits white people, heterosexism benefits heterosexuals. As long as the labour movement ignores this it will thereby be weakened.

The establishment, Defenders of the Status Quo, Tories - they all know where they can divide and rule. Time is long overdue for the labour movement - Norman of the hitching trouses, Arthur of the hairspray, Uncle Neil and Eric and Aunt Gwyneth and all - to really listen to what we've been saying. Verify it is that united we will never be defeated but while heterosexism rules okay we ain't united. No way, no how.

Ask not for whom the Bell tolls - it tolls for thee. And we're tolling all the way to Blackpool!

Sarah Roelofs,
Labour Movement Lesbians
Paul Canning,
Lesbian and Gay Young Socialists

Labour campaign for gay rights

Winter Gardens
Tuesday 2nd October at 7.30 p.m.
Ken Livingstone
Gerald Kaufman MP
Sarah Roelofs

At conference
THE BELGRANO WAR CRIME

Tam Dalyell

When there are so many issues of nuclear and chemical weapons, East-West relations, the Middle East, and the Third World demanding Conference's attention, readers of Briefing could be excused for wondering whether priority in prime Conference time on Foreign Affairs ought to be accorded to the Falklands in general, and the Belgrano in particular – albeit with three resolutions and eight amendments.

£3 million a day is the Sunday Times figure for the cost of Fortress Falklands – given the soaring costs and technical difficulties of the Margaret Thatcher International Airport at Mount Pleasant, and frigate replacement costs at £150,000,000 a time, I believe the costs are in excess of £6,000,000,000 before 1987, estimated by Dr Paul Rogers of Bradford.

Nor should those attending be under any misunderstanding that there could be a Second Falklands War. It is wishful thinking to suppose that the Argentine military have simply gone away. Nothing of the kind. They have been humiliated, and humiliated machos are dangerous. They are far better armed than they were in April 1982 – partly by British industry, but mostly by most sophisticated weaponry from France (Israeli adapted Nesher Mirage Vs for example), from Germany (Meko 360 frigates, with Rolls Royce engines), from Italy (guidance systems for the Condor missile, which could reach Port Stanley at 4,000mph) and the USA (spare parts and side-winder missiles for the Skyhawks).

LIES

Another set of reasons why Conference should give time stems from the unchallengeable fact that Mrs Margaret Hilda Thatcher has been caught out by a number of identifiable lies. The truthfulness of a British Prime Minister, as long as she or he remains in Downing Street, is a matter of urgent public concern.

If Heads of Government are allowed to get away with lying, then the Health of a Democracy is injured. As Socialists, Truth is a very central part of our political beliefs, and Conference should demand that the Truth be winkled out of the Government.

Mrs Thatcher claimed in Parliament, and on many occasions that the Falklands War came ‘out of the blue’ on Wednesday 31st March 1982.

Not so.

In her own handwriting, in the first week of March 1982, ‘she was minuting on the Despatches of Ambassador Antony Williams from Buenos Aires, ‘we must have contingency plans’.

Those who ask for contingency plans in the first week of March, can hardly claim total surprise in the last week of March.

And, indeed, Defence Secretary Nott admitted in the House that we were ‘not unprepared’. Preparations for the Task Force had been going on for weeks.

In Dennis Skinner’s words, ‘Mrs Thatcher lured the Argentines on to the punch.’

Mrs Thatcher told Mrs Diana Gould, the housewife from Cirencester who questioned her on TV on May 24th 1983, when most of us were out canvassing, that Belgrano was converging on the Task Force, and presented an immediate threat.

NO IMMEDIATE THREAT

Over the last two years, it has become clear that whatever the purpose of Mrs Thatcher in ordering the sinking of the Belgrano, it was not because the 44-year old survivor of Pearl Harbour was approaching the Task Force, or presented an immediate threat.

If Conference thinks that too much is being said about Belgrano, let comrades recollect that the Head of Government who behaved in this way in sinking that ship, is the same Head of Government who has her finger on nuclear weapons.

Mrs Thatcher claims that no indications of the Peruvian Peace Proposals reached London until three hours after the Belgrano was sunk.

A mass of evidence proved that this is not true.

For Domestic Political Reasons she wanted Her War.

Mrs Thatcher is wicked and evil.

Is the Labour Movement going to allow her to get away with it?
REAGANISM FIRMLY IN THE SADDLE — by Mike Davis

At a time when the Labour Party leadership is insisting more strongly than ever that Britain must remain a loyal subordinate to the US in NATO, and even justifying this course as the best means to ensure peace and security in Europe, we asked Mike Davis of New Left Review, author of numerous studies of contemporary US politics, to describe what sort of American 'leadership' we can look forward to as a result of the November elections.

Reagan is set for a massive victory in November, probably on the scale of Lyndon Johnson's victory over that earlier harbinger of Reaganism in 1964, Barry Goldwater. Those who hope that this victory may be balanced by Democratic victories in the simultaneous Congressional elections are likely to be disappointed. While the Democrats may pick up extra seats in both the House and the Senate they are unlikely to seize control of the Senate from the Republicans, who are superior in both finance and technology and will be able to tip the balance through injecting millions of extra dollars into the TV networks. And those who are encouraged by the stronger anti-Reagan stand of the Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill, overlook the fact that his second in command, Wright of Texas, the House majority leader, is collaborating more and more openly with the administration, ensuring, for example, the passage of Reagan's appropriations for El Salvador.

In short, those who want to grasp the dominant trend in US politics in the next months and years have to look inside the Republican Party. And the Convention in Dallas showed that the Party is dominated not just by Reagan but by Reaganism, the Republican far right. That wing didn't just write the platform, which is far less binding than manifestos here, but they dominated the delegations from every corner of the Union. The so-called liberal, Rockefeller wing of the Party, dominant for so many decades since 1940, faces virtual extinction. It had to take refuge in its own little meeting at the convention, totally trivialised by the bulk of the delegates. The most symbolic moment in the whole event occurred when Goldwater rose and made more of less exactly the same speech he made in 1964 — 'Extremism in defence of liberty is a virtue'. The self-confidence of the Reaganites is illustrated by the fact that they are openly working to get Percy, the liberal Republican senator from Illinois, defeated by a liberal Democrat so that arch-conservative Jesse Helms of North Carolina will become chairperson of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Percy's place.

If Reagan wins by a 10% margin (and the polls now show him 27% ahead) the Congressional opposition will keep its head down, at least until the expected collapse of the economy towards the end of 1985 and Reaganite Foreign Policy will have a pretty clear run. For the first time ever, the main lines of this policy are being laid down not in the State Department or the National Security apparatus but in the Pentagon, by Weinberger and his group.

The largest group in the foreign policy establishment supports the military build up as a means towards an eventual new set of deals with the Kremlin, on terms more favourable to the US. But this group has been unable to spell out the terms for such a new deal. The Weinberger group, on the other hand, aims to use the military build up not for a deal but for permanent destabilisation and mounting pressure on the USSR and the non-capitalist world as a whole, seeking 'windows of opportunity' on the path to some sort of Soviet 'blowout'. This Weinberger group is smaller than the first group, but it is more powerful, with tentacles into burgeoning New Right think-tanks like the Hoover Institute and Georgetown University.

In Europe, lots of people pin their hopes on a third group who are now warning, often in apocalyptic terms, about the dangers of Weinbergerism and who want to end the new Cold War. This group includes many of the distinguished architects of the first cold war as Harriman and MacNamara, as well as Ball and Vance. They are much touted over here by people like Denis Healey, but they have little clout in Washington these days and those who pin their hopes on them are living in a dream world of lost Atlanticism.

The Reaganites' first target after the election will be Central America. In recent months the White House has strengthened its commitment to victory in El Salvador and to the overthrow of the Sandinistas. It has also learnt that plans on these lines meet no serious congressional resistance provided the administration makes gestures towards negotiations.

The other side of the coin of Reagan's victory over the Rockefeller Republicans is the collapse of the New Deal coalition in the Democratic Party — what held the old Republican East Coast Establishment together was precisely its acceptance of the New Deal. The most dynamic element in the Democratic Primary Campaign was Jesse Jackson's drive to build new coalition of the working poor — the Blacks, Hispanics and women. The old party machine and AFL-CIO Executive Council Mondale's apparatus — faces Reagan preserving his inroads into the white, ethnic blue collar vote in the North East and Midwest, while it had been totally incapable of building an alliance between organised labour and the working poor. Jesse Jackson's campaign has produced a new force in American politics out of the ruins of the New Deal Democratic Party. It is the one hopeful development in American politics.

Jackson's team understood that they had to go to the electorate not only with the symbols of black nationalism but with social democratic politics. They demand that the working poor be brought into the high wage economy and point out that this can be done only by an absolute cut back in the military budget. At the same time, they link this with a foreign policy which involves support for basic social change and revolution against US-backed dictatorships in the third world.

This policy has been developed by Jackson aides like Berkeley Congressman Ron Dellums, the first self-declared socialist in Congress since Vito Marcantonioni in 1948, and Mayor Hatcher of Gary as one of Jackson's campaign chairman. These people have their roots in the struggles of the black industrial workers and the black community. In Foreign policy, Jackson has turned for advice to the Institute of Policy Studies, which is a radical anti-militarist group in Washington.

The large votes that Jackson gained in the primaries showed the great potential of what he called the 'Rainbow Coalition' based on these policies to mobilise the working poor. The campaign also surprisingly transformed the debate in the Democratic Party into a battle between Mondale and the Left. Jackson also successfully polarised the black population against the black establishment in the Democratic Party, the crisis managers of the inner cities like Andrew Young, Coretta Scott King and Mayor Bradley of Los Angeles. When Young tried to oppose affirmative action (i.e. positive discrimination) at the convention in the name of party unity with the Mondale camp, he was booed down by the majority of Jackson delegates.

For forty years groups like the Democratic Socialists of America have been looking for some sort of social-democratic constituency inside the Democratic Party. Yet when Jackson produced just such a force, the DSA went over backwards to keep their distance from him, backing Mondale — this was another useless clarification.

It would be wrong to call Jackson's campaign a complete, radical alternative, but it is a new social democratic pole in the political system that won't disappear. It is the only force in American politics with a coherent and thoroughgoing alternative to Reaganism and the Cold War. It is to these forces and not the smear establishments that MacNamara that the British left should turn in its search for American allies against American militarism.

PALESTINE MEETING BANNED

On the advice of International Department Secretary, Jenny Littte, an advert for the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine fringe meeting at the Labour Party Conference has been banned from the Conference Diary. The reason being that we are advertising a speaker from Matzpen — an anti-Zionist Israeli socialist group — that is opposed to a sister party of the Labour Party, ie the Israeli Labour Party which is a member of the Socialist International.

This means that anti-Zionist groups cannot speak on Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine platforms, nor can speakers opposed to some of the rag bag of parties in the Israeli Labour Party, in particular of course the racist and apartheid Socialist International. The reason given for the ban took exception to the PLO speaker. Ms Little wasn't in the least concerned with Conference resolutions supporting the PLO. It was the NEC to which she was accountable. She refused to confirm the suggestion that the Foreign Office had more influence in the International Department than party conference. Both Tony Benn and Joan Maynard have agreed to raise the banning of the LMC/P meeting on the NEC. Last year we were banned because we were not registered.
SOUTH AFRICA—STATE OF REVOLT
South Africa is in a state of revolt. August and September, intended by the racist prime minister PW Botha to be a period of triumph with a new constitution designed to perpetuate white rule into the next century, have turned into a nightmare.

Spearheaded by the United Democratic Front, a massive campaign against the elections was organised by the coloured and Indian communities. The final polls recorded were respectively 18 and 16 percent—a abysmal failure for the South African regime. Their strategy of co-opting the coloured and Indian population groups as junior partners in the oppression of the 76 percent African population has failed in the face of growing unity amongst the oppressed.

PROTEST AT ELECTIONS
The elections held at the end of August were accompanied by countrywide demonstrations and protests. Half a million black schoolchildren abandoned their classrooms and took to the streets to mobilise support. Trade unions, women’s organisations, church and political organisations and churches campaigned for a boycott. Underground units of the African National Congress carried out widespread sabotage attacks on government installations and police stations. The apartheid authorities responded with a massive show of force, arresting thirty leading members of the United Democratic Front on the eve of the elections and brutally crushing demonstrations, leaving a number of people dead.

VIOLENCE ERUPTS
If Botha hoped that the repression unleashed during the elections would put a stop to demonstrations of opposition, he was badly mistaken. Sharpeville erupted into violence as a huge demonstration against the new constitution was met by police repression. Simultaneously ANC guerrillas struck at key targets in the centre of Johannesburg. Armed police sealed off the town, army units were placed on standby and a reign of terror was unleashed against the population. In the first two weeks of September the uprisings spread to a number of other urban areas and the death toll rose steadily as police and army units moved in. Black schools were closed down and an order was issued banning ‘any gathering held where any principle, or any actions of the government . . . is attacked, criticised or discussed, or which is in protest against or in support of or in memorial of anything’.

GROWING CONSCIOUSNESS
The uprisings sweeping South Africa today have many similarities to the nationwide student and worker struggles of 1976. Since then, an inter-related process of political education and organisation has taken place in the oppressed population. The African National Congress has reasserted its leadership of the struggle and its non-racial perspectives have taken root in many of the groups that in 1976 were advocating black consciousness views. Amongst community and student organisations there is now a much more developed awareness of the need to map out tactical and strategic objectives and to move from organisation around specific grievances to organised mass resistance aimed at the overthrow of the apartheid state. There is also a much greater organisational unity on a non-racial basis, symbolised by the United Democratic Front.

TRADE UNION ACTION
The black and non-racial trade union movement is now far more powerful than it was in 1976, with organised membership pushing towards the half million mark. Many of the unions have eschewed ‘economism’ and are committed to a political struggle against the apartheid regime.

GUERRILLA ACTION
Despite Pretoria’s ruthless efforts to stamp out any external support, the ANC’s guerrilla structure is much stronger than it was a decade ago. The Nkomati security pact with Mozambique has not affected the level of ANC military activity in South Africa, despite Pretoria’s belief that most guerrillas passed through Mozambique.

The regional balance of power has also shifted decisively against Pretoria over the past decade. Zimbabwe is now independent and the pressure on the South African occupation of Namibia is mounting.

NATIONAL SECURITY
To meet the growing threat to his regime, Botha has embarked on a ‘national security’ or ‘total strategy’ policy. This involves economic and political reforms to accommodate relatively privileged sectors of the oppressed population—the Indian and coloured people and the growing skilled urban African workforce. But the power of the state and its armed forces has been immeasurably strengthened by a centralisation of power, a comprehensive militarisation programme and a massive expansion of the Defence Force. But the reforms have been decisively rejected by precisely those groups they are meant to co-opt. Resistance to the elections was strongest in the urban areas, and the ‘potential middle class’ in the schools and universities are in a state of revolt.

OUR RESPONSE
Botha’s visit to Britain and other European capitals earlier this year was intended to put the seal of approval on his ‘reformed’ apartheid state. And when six UDF members asked the British Consulate in Durban for refuge, their first response was to show them the door. Similarly Britain abstained in a UN Security Council vote to condemn the new South African constitution. While the apartheid system will be destroyed largely by the actions of the oppressed South African people themselves, the need for international support has never been more urgent.

Israel Labour forms a Government of National Unity
The recent elections in Israel confirm the trends apparent since Likud first gained power in Israel in 1977. The Oriental Jews will not vote for the ‘Labour’ Zionist capitalists who control Histadrut and the Kibbutzim. Despite inflation of 400% and the invasion of Lebanon, Labour actually lost a seat as its own base continues to decline.

On the left the secular Zionists of the Civil Rights Movement and the new Progressive List for Peace, gained two seats each. Of the 38,000 people who voted for the Jewish Arab list, only 5,000 were Jewish (cf to the 26,000 who voted for Kach). The major beneficiaries however were the fascist right. Meir Kahane’s Kach, as predicted in the last months, gained representation in the Knesset and the 3rd largest party is Tehiya (5 seats) with its religious wing Morasha (2 seats).

When Kach openly call for expulsion of Arabs from Israel, it is only saying aloud what has always been the unwritten policy of all Zionism. What can we expect to hear a lot more from Kach as it and Tehiya continue to grow.

To those who see the Israeli Labour Party as a radical even socialist alternative to Likud, the Government of National Unity must seem a shock. People forget that from 1967-70 Labour and Likud were in coalition, and this included Mapam, the ‘marxist’ Zionists. Peres & Shamir, the two leaders will take turns as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Likud will retain the Treasury and Labour defence. Given that Labour’s economic policies are based on the western (Ashkenazi) labour aristocracy in an Israeli capitalism financed by the United States, they will have no difficulty living with Likud stewardship. If they are to the right of Likud, with Histadrut—the ‘Trade Union’ which is Israel’s second largest employer—calling for Arabs to be sacked first if there is unemployment. The differences between Labour and Likud over settlement policy in the West Bank and their attitude to the Reagan Plan have not proved insurmountable.

What is clear though is that a West Bank state is an illusion. It is an economic and political reality (which allows its Arab inhabitants to be denied civil and political rights). Israeli forces will continue to stay in Lebanon indefinitely. Indeed nothing at all has changed in Israel except that the explicitly racist Zionist parties have grown from three to eight seats. Zionism like Apartheid has a logic of its own, the results of which are catching up with the secular Zionists. Mapam, who are now staying out of the coalition for the moment, want a democratic liberal Zionism when the essence of Zionism, with its denial of Palestinian self determination and its racist nationalism is fundamentally undemocratic. Repression of the Palestinians is bound to affect democracy within the Jewish community just as it has within South Africa’s white community. When Meir Kahane states that Zionism is not democratic, he is only reiterating what happened before, when the Zionists opposed independence for British Palestine when they were a minority. A Government of national unity heralds far deeper changes within the Zionist establishment in Israel.

Tony Greenstein
November, it seems, is the preferred election month for United States interests, at home and abroad. Not only are the conservative moneyed class of the US putting their razmataz all behind Ronald Reagan's bid for a second term in the USA but also in the Caribbean and Central America.

In each November election – US – Nicaragua – Grenadian – this bid for power is thinly cloaked in democratic rhetoric. Each person is to be guaranteed the right and freedom to vote (excepting electoral districts). But the right to vote is no longer a meaningful principle; but the US increasingly put it forward as the one and only test of acceptable and democratic government. As long as El Salvador has elections the bodies can pile up and the US government will continue to vote for more 'aid'.

THREAT OF NICARAGUA
Governments such as the Sandinistas in Nicaragua who dare to extend the democratic boundaries beyond the US limits are a threat, however. Access to day-to-day decision-making, education and collective power is too much of a threat to the hegemony of US money; abroad and at home.

Reagan will spend millions to be re-elected. He will also spend millions to install a Nicaraguan government prepared to repudiate its allegiance to social and economic progress for all Nicaraguans. As it is he has built airports and military bases the length of the Honduran border. His navy is on permanent exercise in Caribbean waters and there is a standing army in Honduras with a more mobile army of US-financed and trained contras all over the region.

And yet news that Nicaragua is constructing its own defensive airport is taken as the ultimate provocation; serious enough to justify a US invasion. And as at many times since the Cuban missile crisis 20 years ago the spectacle of Soviet aggression is called up as further evidence of America's moral right to act as world policeman.

But this time the socialist supporters of the Sandinistas must not be put off by Stalinist red herring.
US-trained contras – soldiers who learnt to kill under the dictator Somoza – and US forces themselves are destroying co-ops, oil stores and social projects, killing literacy tutors, farmers and children. They are putting extreme economic pressure on the country and offering every large or small businessperson promises of riches if they turn against the Sandinistas.

WHEN THE TABLES ARE TURNED
No one ever questions the fact that the capitalist parties of the USA have an almost unassailable advantage in elections in terms of finance and media coverage. But when the tables are turned in Nicaragua the Americans are swift to support the capitalist opposition parties who claim that the Sandinistas have an unfair advantage in respect of visible achievements. In the USA, setting up polling facilities is seen as democracy enough, but yet in Nicaragua the US are full of angst in case one little party (such as contra interests) loses out. And so the US, through their surrogates, Nicaraguans returning home from New York, demand that the Sandinista government hold talks with the contras before they will contest the elections.
Do they therefore think that the Sandinistas alone should decide the future of the country before the people have their democratic chance to vote in the election?

THE MYTH OF US DEMOCRACY
The myth of US democracy is being exposed as clearly as it was in Vietnam. But the left and the Labour Party are being characteristically slow to react. Neil Kinnock has cancelled his trip to Nicaragua. Only 4 resolutions appear on the agenda for conference. It all seems so far away?

Like it or not, however, the front line is over there and events there will affect prospects for a whole range of socialist change here.

CONCERT FOR CHILE
The Chilean exile group Inti Illimani return to Britain in October for a ten date concert tour, including a concert in the Royal Festival Hall on Friday October 26th. They are probably the best known of the Chilean exile artists, very popular in Britain after a highly successful tour last autumn. As in previous years, all the concerts are benefit events for the different Latin American Human Rights Committees and Solidarity Campaigns.

At the Festival Hall concert there will be a speaker from the important trade union and Labour Party delegation which visited Chile at the beginning of September, the first such delegation since the coup 11 years ago. With the Chilean people once more on the streets in massive numbers demonstrating their defiance of the military and demanding an immediate and unconditional return to civilian rule, our support to the Chilean union and popular movement is especially important after the delegation's visit.

Andy Brown Chile Solidarity Campaign

CENTRAL AMERICA: WHAT NEXT?
Emergency Conference, 13 October
Key Topics:
• Air-War in El Salvador
• Elections in Nicaragua
• Consequences of US Elections
• Guatemalan Refugees

Speakers:
Jeremy Corbyn, MP
Maxine Molyneux
James Dunkerley
plus Eye-witness Reports from El Salvador and Nicaragua

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