

A Socialist ACTION

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Kinnock or Scargill

The choice for Labour



Photo: GM COOKSON



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

THE LABOUR Party conference could not meet at a better time. Because this week can be the crucial one in the miners' strike. And a decisive one for Labour.

The choice the Thatcher government now faces is brutal and simple. If the government is going to win the miners' strike it must win *quickly*. Because the crucial question in the strike, the situation at the power stations, is now crystal clear.

Even Gavin Laird, right wing general secretary of the AUEW, explained the situation brutally on breakfast TV on Tuesday. If the power unions push on it they will stop scab coal being brought into the power stations and being used.

Laird's estimate from the AUEW reports, which are now identical to those made by the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, the *Guardian*, the *Sunday Times*, and almost every other independent forecaster, are that power cuts would start in six to eight weeks. The Thatcher government must act rapidly or it has lost the strike.

This is why all the signs are building up of a new escalation of Tory threats and attacks. Thatcher's aim is to call the bluff of the TUC right wing on its votes to support the miners.

The momentum was built up on Monday night by Norman Tebbit urging the miners and TUC right to stand up and fight 'the Scargill wing of the NUM'. The same policy was being carried through during the week by a high court action to declare the NUM

strike illegal unless the union calls a ballot.

The government's aim is obvious. It is trying to create a situation where, for the first time, it *can* use the courts against the NUM as a whole.

Whether the government dares to embark on that course depends completely on whether it believes the TUC can break up any moves to solidarity with the NUM. Because the government is offering Labour and the TUC the threat of a choice. *Either* force the NUM to accept defeat by agreeing to the proposals put by MacGregor *or* face a legal and industrial confrontation that will literally rival 1926.

For in reality we are back to the question posed right at the beginning of the strike. Is the labour movement with the eighty per cent of miners who have fought for their jobs and their industry? Or is it with the campaign of press hysteria and police violence to try to force the finest union in the labour movement into the ground — no matter that this attack is made around rhetoric about a ballot?

Put in terms of this weeks' Labour Party conference the question is: is Labour with Neil Kinnock or is it with Arthur Scargill? With 'talking left and moving right', as Austen Mitchell rightly called the 'dream ticket', or with the hundreds of thousands of workers who have been involved in the miners' strike, the solidarity with it, and in sustaining that strike in the labour movement?

That choice is particularly blunt over the NUM. But its reality arises every day. It came up over Liverpool, over the GLC, over rate capping.

The choice for the Labour Party is to fight for its supporters, the labour movement in this country, or to

sabotage that movement.

Neil Kinnock or Arthur Scargill and the NUM — and what the two of them symbolise today to the mass of the working class in this country. That is the choice for Labour.

This week and every week.

THE
LABOUR
PARTY

Socialist ACTION

The left and the conference



THE LEFT goes into the 1984 Conference of the Labour Party with the impetus of the miners strike behind it. With the victory in Liverpool, in Chesterfield, and in the GLC under its belt. With the 'new realist' strategy of the trade union right adopting a low profile at this year's TUC. The contrast with 1983 could hardly be greater.

Unfortunately, the gains at Conference will not reflect this situation. On policy the victories will fall to Kinnock, who is in the process of shifting party policy openly to the right. On defence and on economic policy it is the right who have made the gains, and who will press home their advantage at Conference. The defence document ties Labour policy firmly to the coat-tails of the USA and NATO. The economic policy document abandons any pledge even to renationalise hived off industries. Kinnock will, probably, also get through his proposals on reselection.

The last 12 months have shown two things; that the working class is not down and out as many people argued after the General Election, and that the 'dream ticket' is about reversing the policy and democratic gains of the last five years. But how could a right which has been under constant pressure on mass struggles for an entire year succeed in making steps forward at this year's conference?

The problem for the left is that it does not have the policies to answer the right and is not organised to pursue that fight effectively. In the ranks of the party activists have been fully involved in supporting the miners, defending Liverpool, opposing privatisation and in the struggle against the missiles. The development of black sections is a reinforcement of the party.

But the fight for Party policy to reflect these struggles is vital. The left must develop its answers to the right on the policy issues, or it will always lose the argument. The left also needs to organise its forces on a national level to deal with the right's ceaseless attacks.

The left must learn the lesson of the last year, and take steps to overcome these weaknesses in the months ahead. A major step in the right direction can be taken now - by getting Conference to call a national Labour Party demonstration in support of the miners. And by fighting to reject the economic policy and defence documents.

Turning the gains in the mass struggles into steps forward in policy, organising the left. These must be the watchwords in the party in the next year. Then the superb work done in building solidarity with the miners will be translated into a solid victory against Kinnock in the party.

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New realism lives!

THE RHETORIC at this year's Labour Party conference will be dominated by the miners' strike. On the face of it the contrast between the situation last year and this year's conference could hardly be greater.

Last year the movement was in the wake of the general election defeat. The TUC congress had seen the 'new realist' right sweep to leadership. At the party conference the dream ticket rode in under the banner of unity — linking Kinnock firmly to those who had sabotaged Labour's election chances.

This year, after seven months of the miners' strike, the situation in the class struggle has been transformed. Endless declarations will be made of support for the miners, the need to defend local democracy and other issues. But under the surface Kinnock, backed by the 'new realists' of last year, is taking the Labour leadership firmly to the right.

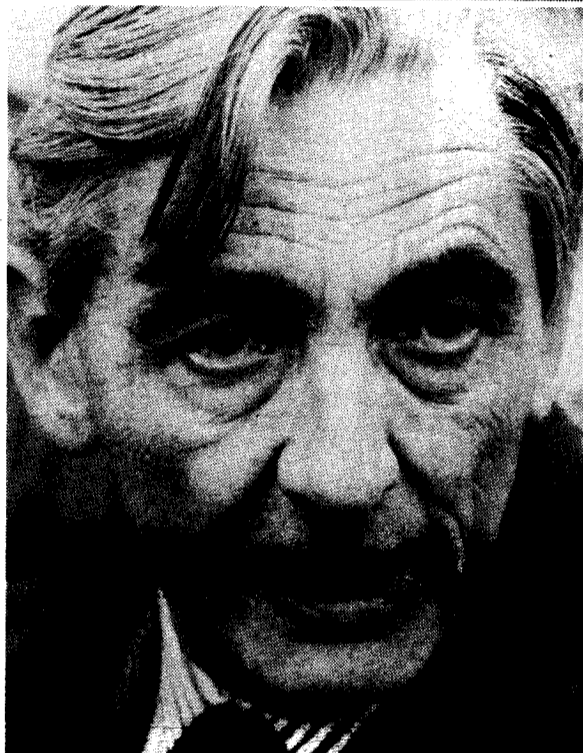
The role of the dream ticket in the miners' strike — one part support and nine parts demanding a ballot and denouncing 'violent picketing' — has been a disgrace to the party. The left seized the victory in Liverpool against open opposition by Kinnock. Ken Livingstone, fresh from GLC campaign triumphs, is not the type of image Kinnock is eager to project.

By Pat Hickey

But despite these successes for the left, and the fact that Kinnock may face considerable opposition on reselection, there is going to be no major challenge from the left on policy at this conference.

At party conference on the key votes, and despite the activity of the constituencies, it will be the shadow of the TUC that dominates. The right wing trade union leaders, despite the miners' strike, have no intention of dropping the policies which are the backbone of 'new realism', and of the Healey/Hattersley wing of the party. These policies continue to be a mortal threat to the strength and unity of the labour movement.

The 'new realist' strategy, launched at the TUC in 1983, was kicked into touch in its initial form by Thatcher when she insulted the TUC openly over GCHQ. The miners' strike then destroyed the argument that the working class was,



NUJ pickets at Warrington

pragmatic adaptation to whatever anti-union laws the government of the day might adopt. They also seek a Labour Party with policies which would make it fit to govern in the eyes of the ruling class. Or at least, fit to make a coalition with the Alliance.

These policies are being made to work their way right through the movement. We saw it in action over the NGA dispute, and over GCHQ — with the offer of a no-strike agreement. Indeed, no-strike agreements are now common-place.

claims for improved terms and conditions.'

Eric Hammond puts this approach in a nutshell: 'We do what is pragmatic, practical and what'll work. I've always considered strikes a failure. The skill should always be in finding an agreement'.

This kind of unionism is 'business unionism' — that is, trade unionism which aims at maximising income and minimising expenditure at the expense of union democracy, membership rights, and workers' interests. But in the long run it is a trade unionism which has no need for a centrally organised exclusive link with the Labour Party.

The right wing are working out, in the Labour Party, a set of policies which complement the policies of the trade union right — on defence, economic policy and so on. These moves take the labour movement in a direction which will in the longer run threaten the unity of the movement.

The SDP is waiting in the wings for the opportunity to link up with the trade union right on policy and aims. Chapple has already made his moves to make such a link.

The labour right will be only too happy to meet up with their old friends in the SDP. The left is in a fight, both in the unions and the Labour Party, to defend the strength and finally the unity of the labour movement.

Have no illusions, the policy of 'new realism' has not gone away either in the Party or the TUC.

defeated and had shifted decisively to the right. But these setbacks only caused the 'new realists' to alter their tactics, not their aims. Contrary to press claims, 'new realism' has not gone away at all.

At the TUC the 'strategy' document which embodies the new realist line was passed without opposition. The document starts from the argument that the election of the Tories in '83 'signifies that a major section of the British people was, at the very least, willing to tolerate a philosophy that ran counter to the post-war consensus on the welfare state and full employment'.

There was of course, no mention of the role that the right played in Labour's election defeat, and still less is there any consideration of the need to fight to alter such a situation. The document goes on to argue that in-

dustrial action should not be used for political purposes — 'Governments, however distasteful their policies, are to be changed through the ballot box'. These points continue to underpin the policies of the right both in the trade unions and Labour Party.

This line, most clearly expressed by Frank Chapple in his address to Congress last year, stated the need of the trade unions to talk to all parties capable of forming a government, and to establish a dialogue with the Tory government.

The right went on to make clear that, in their view, a Labour Party with left policies could not win a general election in Britain. Len Murray pressed home the point by stating that the trade union movement would not remain interested forever in a party that had no hope of forming a government.

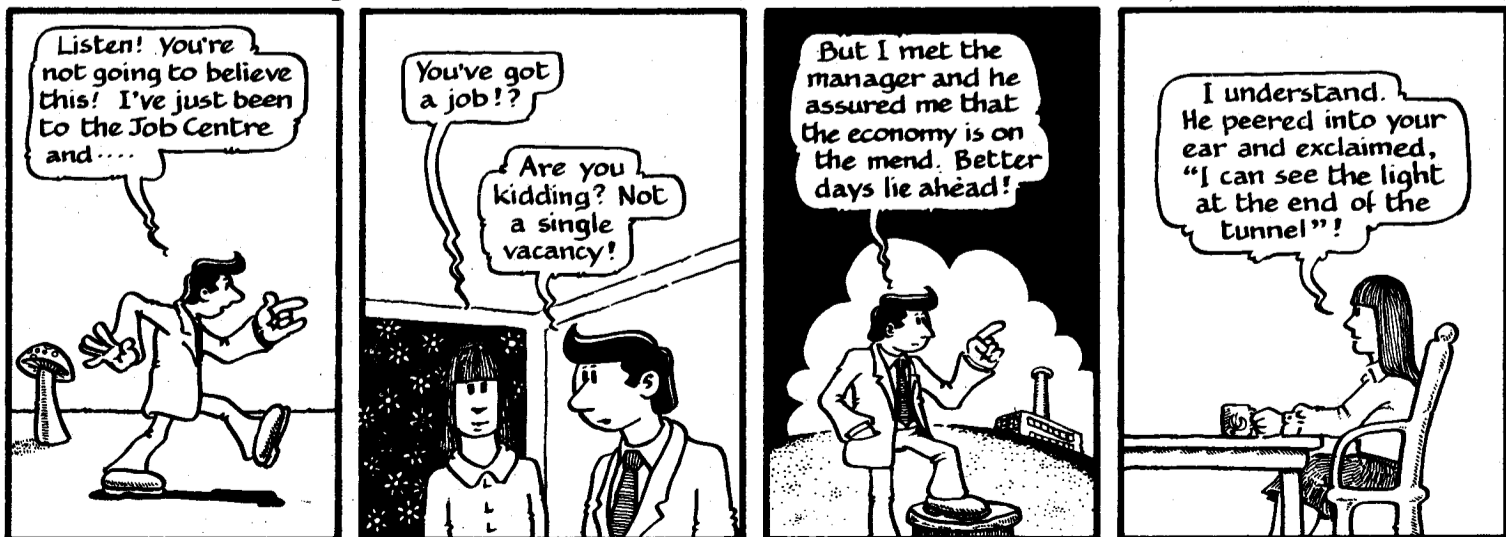
The aim was a trade union movement with weakened links to the Labour Party, and a

'Good sense'

The EETPU and the AUEW have been competing for such agreements with major employers. The electricians have even organised a trip to Japan, armed with a glossy brochure containing recommendations from major employers on the union's 'good sense', and even one from Employment Minister Tom King.

In fact the TUC strategy document, despite claims to the contrary, endorses sweetheart agreements. Clause 79 states: 'The most practicable way to increase union membership might be to develop relationships with employers, particularly those opening new plants, and to conclude on the best possible terms. Even though these terms might not be entirely satisfactory they would, nevertheless, lead to unionisation among employees and provide the basis for future

A PIECE of The ACTION



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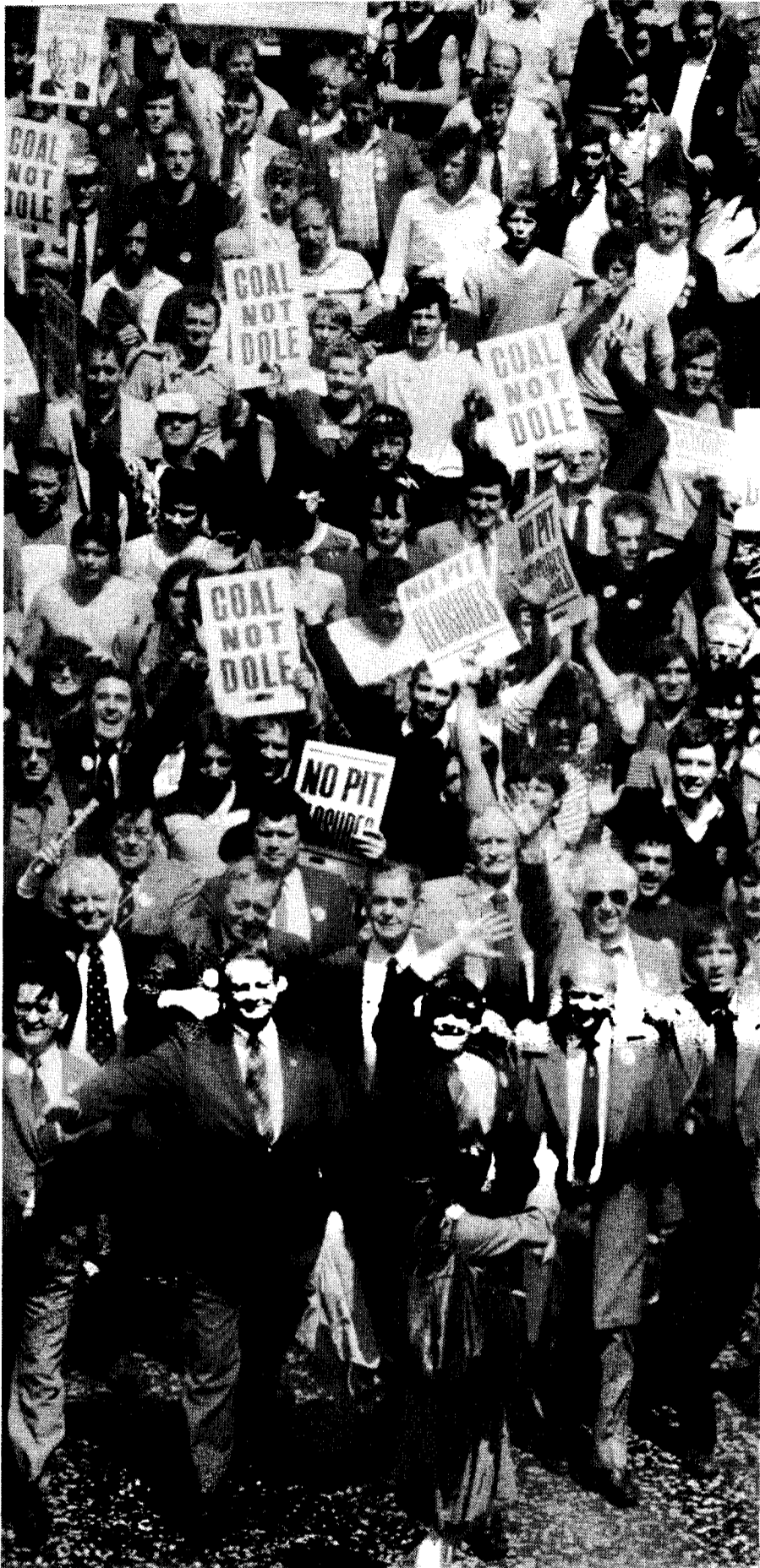


Photo: GM COOKSON

For a national LP/TUC march

What miners want from Labour

THE MINERS' strike will dominate the Labour Party conference this week. There are many emergency resolutions calling on the party to support the miners' struggle, in particular through calling a national Labour Party/TUC demonstration. These resolutions must be supported.

We asked NIGEL BEVAN, from Penrhinweiber NUM, what he wanted to see coming out of conference.

NEIL KINNOCK would be ill-advised to give the same speech on the miners' strike at the Labour Party conference as he gave to the TUC. According to the *Sunday Times*, he's likely to be howled down by delegates who will be wanting total support for the NUM's battle to stop pit closures.

Labour

The miners' strike has been going on for 29 weeks now. The Tory government's plan for our industry is clear. They want to close all the pits in the so-called peripheral areas and invest in the 'profitable' pits so they can eventually sell these super-pits off to private industry. Their aim is to privatise the coal industry in the long run.

We want an expanding energy policy that does not substitute nuclear power or oil for coal. We want our industry to expand not run down in order to smash the National Union of Mineworkers. That is what we are striking for and we expect the Labour Party leaders to explain our case and defend our struggle. But what is their record on this issue?

The first time Neil Kinnock spoke up publicly in support of the miners was

18 weeks into the strike at the Durham miners gala. Before that Denis Healey and Neil Kinnock had concentrated a lot of energy on attacking, not the Tories, but our union for its decision not to call a ballot.

We've had to listen time and time again to the leader of the party denouncing the violence of miners on the picket. When you're in the front line and the police start kicking your legs and other parts of your body — deliberately trying to provoke you — what do you do? Turn the other cheek? When has the working class ever won

anything without having to go out and fight the ruling class to get it?

What is needed from this Labour Party conference is an end to equivocation. The NUM can't stand around waiting for a Labour government to come to power as Kinnock advised us at the TUC Congress.

The party is supposed to represent working people and when we take action to defend our jobs — in line with trade union and Labour Party policy — we need active backing from the party. The Tories have spend billions of taxpayers money on generating electricity at enormously inflated costs, policing picket lines, losing taxes, losing production — all for the sake of smashing the NUM.

With the Yorkshire NUM threatened with court action, now is the time for the labour movement to give the same kind of attention to the miners'

cause. The only way for working people to win against Thatcher is to be defiant. If that means a strike on this scale, with all the hardship it entails, then that's how it will have to be.

* For a national Labour Party-TUC demonstration in support of the miners!

* All unions to implement TUC congress decisions on the miners' strike now!

* Organise local labour movement conferences to discuss implementing TUC Congress decisions and extending solidarity with the miners!

* No TUC talks with the government or the NCB on the miners' strike!

* Full TUC financial backing for the miners!

* For a 24 hour general strike in support of the NUM!



Tighten the knot!

MOVES TO TIGHTEN the knot on the Tory government gathered momentum this week with decisions in crucial power stations to back the miners. In South Wales, the North East and Yorkshire key power stations have given their backing.

Workers at Blyth, Fiddlers Ferry, Aberthaw, Drax, Eggborough and Ferrybridge 'C' alone account for more than a third of the CEB's coal-fired capacity. Their decision to refuse fresh supplies of coal brings the day when the lights start going out a giant step nearer.

The Trent Valley power stations are, as expected, the most difficult to get support from. But other moves by the unions will reduce the significance of that.

The GMBATU is putting a four-point proposal to the power unions. This involves stopping all imports of coal for the NUM's strike, stopping all deliveries of coal from Nottinghamshire, and restricting oil burn to last year's levels.

The coal-handling gangs, members of the TGWU and GMBATU are able to keep a complete check on coal coming in. The policy needed is simple. As the convenor at Fiddler's Ferry, Bob Godwin put it: 'We are not letting any more in'.

By Pat Hickey

These moves will massively increase the pressure on Thatcher. She must now move to bring matters to a head.

The growing support from the power unions is a double-edged sword. It means the government is no longer sit back and pretend that it is just a matter of sitting out the strike, until the miners are starved

back. Now they have got to act.

As the *Economist* noted: 'It is now unlikely that the vehicle of this defeat will be either Mrs Thatcher or Mr MacGregor... Nor will defeat come at the hands of the government's inert anti-trade union laws or from some judge-enforced ballot which Mr Scargill will ignore. Instead defeat will come from within the trade union movement itself.'

The implication of the *Economist* article is clear. TUC support is a double-edged weapon. The TUC can deliver enough support to ensure complete victory for the miners. The TUC must now try to blow up the developing solidarity by escalating the political stakes facing

the TUC. After ASLEF, the health workers and the NGA, there is no room for complacency about the TUC's potential for snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

The TUC talks with MacGregor — aimed at getting ACAS involved — are not a side-show. They are part of the price that the TUC is demanding for its involvement.

There are plenty of people in the labour leadership — Kinnock is one — who are more keen to see the strike settled than to see the miners win.

The next few weeks will be crucial. If Thatcher can up the stakes sufficiently, she can try to crack the TUC and use it as a wedge against the miners.

The labour movement will now have to decide if it must ensure this doesn't happen by re-examining its efforts to deliver the 'total support demanded by congress policy.

Deputies must strike

IAN MacGregor's hard line tactics as chair of the NCB look likely to explode in his face as the pit supervisors union, the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers, ballot on strike action.

It seems likely that the members will give the required 66 per cent majority for action.

If the NACODS were to strike it would mean a dramatic blow against the NCB. It would almost certainly mean that the working pits would have to stop.

NACODS is not noted for its militancy. It worked through the last miners' strikes, and has made no attempt to support the present dispute.

NACODS' main complaint is that its members are being stopped pay when they refuse to cross picket lines. Some 3000 of their 17,000 members are at present not being paid.

By Paul Dwyer

The reason for the NCB's hard line with the normally docile pit supervisors is MacGregor's desperate attempt to shore up the almost non-existent 'back to work' movement.

If the pit supervisors refuse to cross the picket lines with the handful of scabs in the striking areas, the back to work movement will be seen to have totally collapsed.

The NCB will have to concede the issue to the union. If this were to happen, a strike is

unlikely. This would be a mistake on NACODS part.

Their grievances with the Board are very similar to the NUMs. They are the closure programme, the tough management regime under MacGregor, and the NCB's attempts to ride roughshod over the union.

By coming out with the miners they would hasten the defeat of the NCB, and rid the industry of its present boss. If the NCB were defeated in this strike, NACODS will be very unlikely to support MacGregor's firing line.

A compromise made with the NCB will be seen to have been made with the miners. NACODS could pay a heavy price for such a compromise later.

Reselection — is the tide turning?

By Vladimir Derer, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

PERHAPS the most important decision this year's Labour Party conference will have to make is on the future of reselection. What is decided will show whether the party's drift away from socialism and democracy has been arrested or whether it will continue.

Superficially the choice will be between approval or rejection of the NEC's constitutional amendment which gives CLPs the option to abandon the present reselection procedure.

The NEC's proposal is that the selection conference may be dispensed with. Instead the vote on the re-adoption of the sitting MP is to be taken either at several branch meetings at which none of the competing candidates is present, or by postal ballot of all members.

There would be no obligation either to call a meeting at which members would have the opportunity to question the various candidates, or to circulate the candidates' statements.

The suggested new procedure, introduced behind the smokescreen of a phoney extension of franchise, would not just favour the re-adoption chances of the 'sitting' MP, but would ensure that the MP would cease to be accountable to the party. For the only rank and file body which is in a position to monitor the MPs parliamentary work — the General Committee of the CLP — would lose the power to decide whether the MP is to be reselected.

The present real participation of party members in the decision making processes of the Parliamentary Labour

Party, which it has through the influence a General Committee can exercise on its MP, would be replaced by the illusion of participation that is so common in bourgeois democracies.

The timing of the NEC's proposals is not accidental. The conservative elements within the party, always intent on removing the cancer of accountability, have been given their chance.

Neil Kinnock, whose victory owed so much to the support of the 'soft' left, has thrown in his lot with the right wing, leaving the former 'left' supporters bewildered. Their pathetic hope that they will be able to influence him has come to nothing.

What are the chances of success of this new centre-right coalition within the party. Superficially they are good. The democratic reforms of 1979-81 were achieved in the wake of the Labour government's defeat.

Trade unionists, including their leaders, were still highly critical of Labour's record in office. The NEC was still enraged at the way it was then treated by the then party leaders over the manifesto.

CLPD's arguments in favour of democratic reforms were still widely accepted. Under these conditions it was relatively

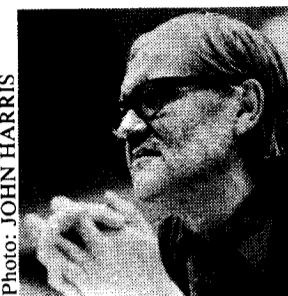


Photo: JOHN HARRIS

easy to win the vote on reselection in 1979 and 1980. It was also relatively easy for CLPD and the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory to bring together ten left-wing organisations under the umbrella of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee and to get them to accept the CLPD strategy.

The result of this unprecedented cooperation was the setting up of the Electoral College by the Wembley Conference in 1981. No such favourable conditions exist today. Thatcher's anti-working class and anti-social policies mean that most trade union leaders are prepared to stomach almost anything the parliamentary leadership dreams up. The fragile alliance of the left has disintegrated.

The Bennite left and the ultra-left groups failed to appreciate that during a period of reaction a different strategy is appropriate if previously achieved gains are to be safeguarded and the ground for further advance prepared.

CLPD's compliance with the conference deci-

sion on the register, imperative if political class struggle was to be carried on under more difficult conditions, was represented as an act of betrayal. (What respect do these 'revolutionaries' show for bourgeois formalities!)

Much of the 'soft' left which originally, like CLPD, prioritised democratic demands drifted towards the centre. Some of their leading lights even engineered — in the name of democracy needless to say — 'acceptable' formulae for the demolition of institutions designed to secure accountability.

Yet the picture is not altogether grim. Even if most of the trade union leaders have already forgotten the argument that they were parroting only yesterday, about the damaging effect of internal party conflicts over constitutional issues, the rank and file trade unionists have not.

Whatever 'deals' Neil Kinnock may have made with top leaders, indications at present are that these leaders' recommendations may be ignored by the many trade union delegations at Blackpool. The executive committees of several trade unions have already rejected the NEC's proposal. If conference follows their example, what needs to be thrown out is not only the present NEC's proposal, but also any resolutions which would give the NEC the chance to bring in a 'better' proposal next year.

Mining women fight on!

THE MOVEMENT of women in support of the miners has mushroomed in every pit area. It has tremendous significance for the NUM and the labour movement, showing how vital it is to reach out and organise all sections of the oppressed and exploited.

MAUREEN DOUGLASS from Hatfield Women's Support Group spoke to **VALERIE COULTAS** about the movement and its relationship to women's organisations in the Labour Party.

What have you learnt from the movement of women in support of the miners?

have had to go and speak to other workers. Going into a factory canteen to talk can be just as horrifying as a public meetings.

It has released women from their isolated role in the home into organising, something they have not done before. It's bringing them into contact with new aspects of politics.

Even if they have voted Labour before, they've never been in direct contact with the Labour Party. When they go on demonstrations and pickets they meet people with left-wing views, making them aware of many more issues.

Women have begun to realise what the police really are and what they are used for by the government.

Women's confidence has grown. Even the women who tend to concentrate on food provision and working in the canteen



PHOTO: B YOUNG

It is certainly one of the main places they should be. It would be very interesting for someone to come to our group and put the case for women becoming active in the Labour Party.

What problems have you confronted in organising as women?

Very early on in the strike we encountered a certain amount of sexism from the men. They sang songs and shouted slogans that were insulting to women.

'Get your tits out for the lads' was just one of them. The depressing thing has been that a lot of women I've come across don't recognise these

slogans as oppressive to women.

Some do, but others sing along with the men. I find it quite disturbing. Our group decided to ban these slogans.

I spoke out about it at the Barnsley rally. That was my naivete at the time — I couldn't believe at first that such things didn't upset women.

Insular ideas do exist though, even when people are fighting such a political battle as the miners. Anti-black, anti-gay, anti-woman prejudice doesn't disappear overnight.

There are so many questions to tackle all the time, sometimes it's difficult to know where to concentrate next.



Police vs. women at Greenham

By Ilona Aranovsky, London Region CND (personal capacity)

THOUSANDS OF WOMEN from all over Britain, Europe and New Zealand are arriving at Greenham during the 10 days protest against NATO war games.

On Saturday and Sunday thousands sat down at 'indigo' and main gates to blockade the base. Thatcher's policy of direct repression using the courts, eviction, prison and police intimidation has failed to break up the camp and the power of Greenham to mobilise masses of women.

Well known women from the camp had been arrested prior to the action in the hope of keeping the 'ring leaders' out of the way, but they paid their fines, contrary to normal policy.

On Sunday they were picked out of the crowds by police and charged with obstruction. Police horses

were used for the first time at Greenham on Sunday, with the deliberate intention of intimidating and frightening us.

They walked through the blockade and were pivoted round to bodily push and shove women aside, while foot police

hauled at us from behind, at the risk of seriously injuring women.

The blockade stopped many cars, if not US army vehicles.

Sunday was Labour Party London Day, with Jo Richardson and the bright yellow Labour Party campaign bus.

This weekend will be the culmination of the action with thousands more women expected — be there!

For transport details ring London Region CND, 01-388 1628 or London LP women's committee, 01-701 4760.

Labour women will win!

THE LABOUR Women's Action Committee will continue to have a massive impact on conference this year, as it has over the last two years.

This year the WAC resolutions for constitutional reform go to conference floor with added force. They have all been adopted by Labour women's conference, and have the endorsement of the Labour women's committee. Eventually the NEC will be forced to make some move to meet women's demands.

While the trade union block vote can still be wheeled out to vote them down, the moral force of the argument goes from strength to strength. And the iniquity of using the block vote in this way against the clear views of the overwhelming majority of women in the party is applying greater and greater pressure.

The debate will probably take place on Wednesday.

In addition to continuing this struggle WAC will be fighting for the slate that it supports for the women's section of the NEC.

Women at conference will be organised around this campaign through daily meetings, while the light relief will be provided through WAC's Wednesday night review. The review was one of the highlights of Labour women's conference this year, with women showing that left-wing, feminist politics are fun. Male attitudes in the labour movement are pretty thoroughly taken apart!

At a rally on Monday night Dora Russell will speak. She explained to WAC that she was delighted to be invited and support the struggle, despite age and illness making travel very difficult. For women it is a long, long struggle.

Women's events at conference

Monday
7pm WAC, Lobster Pot, 'Women Will Win!' Dora Russell, Jo Richardson, Greenham, Women Against Pit Closures, Frances Morrell, Diane Abbott.

Wednesday
5.30pm NAC/LARC, New Clifton Hotel.

WAC Satirical review: 'The Heroes: An Everyday Tale of Labour Men...' (jointly with New Socialist)

Thursday
Labour Women for Ireland, 'In Sisterhood and Solidarity' Guest House Association Rooms, 87a Coronation Street with Diane Abbott, Mandy Moore, Ex-Armagh prisoner.

In addition WAC will be arranging a daily rendezvous point for women delegates, probably at lunch-time.

Britain out of Ireland!

TO COINCIDE WITH the 18 August demonstration, marking the 15th anniversary of British troops being sent into Ireland, TONY BENN has published a draft private member's bill on British withdrawal from Northern Ireland. CAROL TURNER asked him about his bill.

Tell me why you're introducing a parliamentary bill on British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, and what it's about.

I drafted the bill some time ago, based on the 1948 Palestine Act which provided the legal cover for what was called a termination of jurisdiction. It was the only parallel I could think of.

The bill establishes a clear intent to withdraw with a date — at the moment, not written in.

We've reached a new situation in attitudes to Ireland. The argument is not completely won, but opinion has shifted very substantially.

The bill is intended to focus people's minds on life after British withdrawal.

It would appear to me that the government is preparing a move. I think the nature of the deal the prime minister has in mind would be that we would withdraw from the North if the Republic can be persuaded to join NATO.

Do you think that would be adequate then?

No, don't misunderstand me. From the point of view of the Irish, they would simply be substituting American control of the whole of Ireland for British control of part.

Not that I'm another British politician with a policy on Ireland, but I think that a reunited neutral Ireland would give the Irish people as a whole the one real chance of tackling their own problems on the basis of class politics, not sectarian or British imperial politics.

The success of the nationalist campaign in the North has shifted British public opinion. And the

miners' strike has had a big effect too.

A lot of people, particularly in the mining areas, have seen on their TV screens the police in riot gear going in against these 'criminals'. Now they're seeing the same thing happen to them.

Many people, including me, have argued for years that what's happening in Ireland was a preparation for similar police tactics in Britain. We are now beginning to see that very clearly. The criminalisation of the mining community has begun in the media and through government statements.

Will your bill be debated in parliament?

I want to make it absolutely clear that this type of legislation is designed to focus public attention on the practicalities of policies — not with a view to winning a parliamentary majority under the Tories. That you would never do.

What will be the effect of this in the party? Will it put the pressure on?

I think it would. Take the Prevention of Terrorism Act. In the last couple of years Labour's front bench has spoken against it. We have also had discussions on the national executive about the need for a new look at Ireland because the contradiction about maintaining the veto and working for unification is too glaring to make our policy credible.

A couple of years back you were calling for withdrawal followed by a United Nations peace-keeping force. Is that still your view?

That was to try and deal with the argument that



we'd like to get out but there'd be a blood-bath. My own candid opinion is that if it became absolutely clear that we were going this would release a whole range of arguments and discussions within the whole of the Irish labour movement.

I'm not wedded to the idea of a UN peace-keeping force. But you've

got to find ways of dealing with the arguments that are put by those who are in favour of us remaining in Ireland.

The purpose of my bill is to get away from a fixation on the problems of violent sectarian confrontation, the problem of feeling that if you keep up the violence you succeed in retaining the British

troops. I think that things would begin to change once it became clear that an SAS or paramilitary intervention couldn't be triggered off simply by driving the Catholic community in the North into desperation and violence — that you couldn't just defy that community and, when they resisted, bring in more troops.

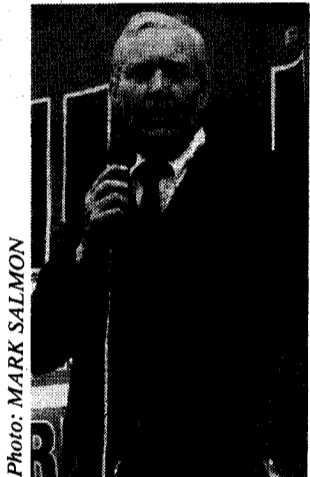


Photo: MARK SALMON

Socialist Action asked Tony Benn if Northern Irish people should be allowed to join the British Labour Party:

I don't think the campaign for Labour representation in Ireland is a soundly based movement. We have had a Northern Ireland Labour Party for a long time, which was linked to the British party and a member of the Socialist International. It was an ineffective, loyalist rump. It had absolutely no place in Irish politics and is an integrationist movement.

I don't personally believe there is a majority for it, and if there were it would be going absolutely the opposite way that we have to go. It would involve us more deeply in the affairs of Northern Ireland and it would alienate us more completely from the nationalists and the socialists in the north. It would widen the gulf between the labour movement in the north and in the south.

The primary reason the labour movement hasn't been able to shift is those trade unions who have membership in Northern Ireland. They don't want the border issue raised, because it divides their members, and so you get the unions cemented into an integrationist position, whereas the political people in the CLPs see quite clearly that the situation has got to end.

It is an aberration. I know there are people in left groups who are in favour, but it is an illusion. It is pretending that the national question doesn't exist, like pretending the women's question doesn't exist or pretending the black question doesn't exist. You can't pretend that people's experience doesn't exist for political purposes just because those assumptions don't entirely fit in with your own views.

Miners visit Belfast

AMONG THE British delegation visiting Belfast on the weekend of Sean Downes' death were more than a dozen striking miners. JON LOVIBON collected reactions during their visit.

Paul (Lancashire): What hit me first was the dereliction, and the police and army presence. It was unbelievable — like a created ghetto, like Warsaw in 1940... Any trade unionist worried about the future of our country should go to Northern Ireland — should be compelled to go. With what is happening in the miners' strike, with growing unemployment, that is the future of our country, the mainland, there in Northern Ireland.

Wayne (South Yorks): Every day they face the enemy on the streets. Doors being kicked in by soldiers and police. They throw bricks at the army because they are terrorised by them and because they want to free Ireland. It's their way of fighting

back... I'm ashamed to be British after what I've seen. The British army and the RUC are the aggressors.

Guy (South Yorks): When you watch telly at home it's always the Catholics who're the aggressors, the violent ones. When you see bombs flying through the air, and missiles, you don't see why. You don't see what's gone before or what happens after. If people at home saw what we've seen here there'd be a reaction like when people saw on TV that unarmed picket being battered by riot police at Orgreave.

Arthur (South Yorks): The very fact that the entrances to the advice centres and clubs are electronically controlled

security doors gives some impression of how these people have got to live. And we were told 'Don't go out on your own or you'll get your cards'. There's something wrong isn't there? ... My deepest realisation is that, like everybody else, we know about the atrocities being committed in Ireland, but we tend to say it's miles away, it isn't our trouble. It's very important to realise that the atrocities are being committed in our name. Whether it be with our permission or not, the very fact that we haven't brought forward our wholesale objection has given our assent to these actions.

Ken (Lancashire): As many trade unionists should come across as possible. Also people from Sinn Fein should come to Britain to tell people what they told us. We saw things at first hand, so now we know it's true. You need only go over for a day.



SEVEN OUT of sixteen resolutions to Labour Party conference call for it to disassociate itself publicly from strip searches and the sexual harassment of women prisoners.

Pressure for a hard op-

position line follows an appeal from the Labour Committee on Ireland. Labour's national women's conference has already opposed strip searches.

The LCI will be seeking separate composites on this issue, on Diplock no-

jury courts (five resolutions) and on troop withdrawal (six resolutions). It will fight the three Militant sponsored resolutions calling for a Northern Ireland Labour Party, which are close to the positions of a number of prominent right wing unions including the AUEW, GMBATU and

APEX who back the Labour Representation Committee's call for the British Labour Party to organise in the North of Ireland.

● See p10 for the LCI's two fringe meetings at conference.

Vote gains Kinno

defen docu



THE PARTY LEADERSHIP evidently wants the NEC's defence statement to conference to achieve one thing: end the open season on defence and NATO within the party and put these great issues back where they are supposed to belong — in the hands of the 'experts' in the parliamentary leadership. They want to take defence 'out of politics' again inside the labour movement, the way Wilson managed to do after 1963.

To achieve this purpose, right-wing leaders like Denis Healey and Roy Hattersley have been persuaded to accept pretty firm commitments by the NEC on unilateralism (minus what looks like a clever lawyer's escape clause on Polaris). They have also been persuaded to accept all sorts of noble sentiments about non-provocative conventional defence. But at the same time, they have been offered a green light for increased spending on conventional weapons, and an unconditional commitment to NATO.

Finally, they have no doubt been given a nod and a wink intended to convey roughly the following: 'look, old boy, this is only an NEC statement. If the rank and file think they've really won, then we'll have a quiet life for four years on defence, people's guard will go down and, who knows? The brew might be diluted in the manifesto and then it could turn out to have gone off with age, and we could flush it into the Thames from the Cabinet Office toilets if we manage to get into them after the elections.'

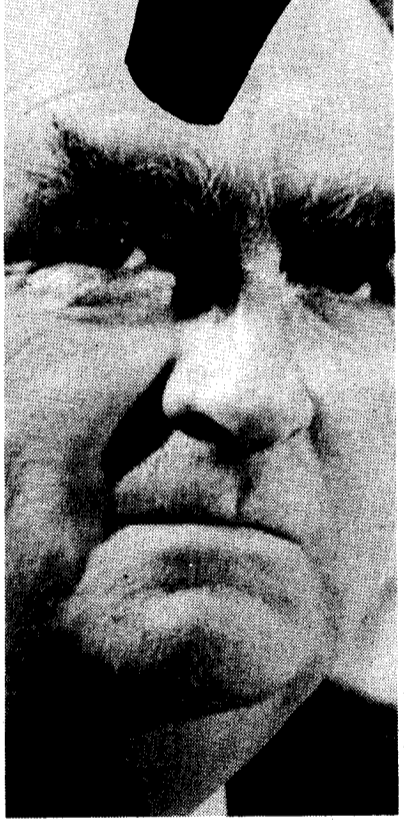
Polaris

Let us first itemise the commitments on nuclear weapons. Page 10 says: 'we are committed to remove cruise missiles and all other nuclear weapons from Britain.' Page 42 emphasises that Labour 'will remove any cruise missiles on British territory or in British waters'. The statement re-enforces this on page 21 by saying Labour is 'committed to the unconditional removal of all US nuclear weapons and nuclear bases from British soil and British waters....These include the cruise missile bases, F1-11 bases and the nuclear missile submarine base.' It declares unambiguously, 'Labour will, on assuming office, immediately cancel the Trident programme.' It calls for the scrapping of all NATO battlefield nuclear weapons and the reconversion of British weapons platforms to exclusively non-nuclear munitions, adding that the scrapping of battlefield nukes 'must not be made conditional on "improving" NATO's conventional forces' (page 12).

All this is very positive and it is reinforced by a commitment that Labour 'will regularise the presence of the other US forces in Britain to ensure a physical British veto over the use of such facilities in the interests of collective security and in accordance with the NATO Treaty' (page 22).

Then we come to the formula on Polaris. On the face of it, the commitment here seems firmer than the phrase in the manifesto which said Polaris would be thrown into the East-West negotiations on arms control and added that, within the life-time of a parliament Labour would go over to a non-nuclear defence policy.

The statement declares: 'Labour believes that Polaris should be phased out in successful international arms negotiations in the next few years. If this is not done, Labour will, on assuming office, decommission Polaris from service.' The only nagging problem here is this lapse into technical jargon at the end with 'decommission from service'. Could this possibly mean, stop patrolling with Polaris, but keep it in port, 'in reserve', under top secret conditions of course so that nobody (except the Russians) would know where the hell Polaris was? This needs to be



cleared up with a solid, Anglo-Saxon word like 'scrap'.

But once this small, though vital, ambiguity over Polaris is cleared up, then the left and the unilateralist wing of the party can claim a real victory over the right on the question of nuclear weapons. Healey's bombastic threat after last year's conference that the right would mobilise to overturn the unilateralist majority this time round has not materialised. And if the NEC statement had confined itself to the issue of nuclear weapons, the left could have voted for it with both hands.

But of course, it doesn't and one of the main reasons why the parliamentary leadership is not trying to mobilise anti-Labour opinion against the membership on nuclear weapons this time round is because of the rest of the NEC statement. In the first place, it unequivocally and unconditionally commits Labour to NATO and this to the political leadership of NATO — Washington. And secondly, it pushes the door wide open for the next Labour government to spend as much as it likes on beefing up Britain's conventional military strength in order to please Washington and keep the military brass here happy.

On the issue of money, the document still pays lip service to the party's previous commitment to reducing defence spending to the same propor-

tion of GDP as those of 'our major European allies'. But it also — and this is the new point — makes clear that it is paying nothing more than lip service to this idea, by saying the following: 'This could not be achieved in the life-time of a single parliament without major cuts in our conventional forces which we do not recommend. Our priority must be a non-nuclear defence policy...' By tacking on this last sentence, the authors can mean only one thing: 'We will spend as much as we like to beef up conventional forces provided we do what we promise on nuclear weapons.'

Transparent

So the parliamentary leadership's hopes are transparent: they want to detach those in the party whose sole concern is to remove nuclear weapons from Britain from the political left, which sees nuclear issues as part of a more basic struggle against the threat to the world posed by US militarism under four more years of Reagan. At the same time as, they hope, isolating the anti-NATO left, they want to reassure Washington that Britain under Labour will continue to be a loyal client-imperialist state while getting rid of its own nuclear weapons (which the US was never particularly fond of anyway).

Now some people, including some of the authors of the document itself, will say this is grossly unfair, and it is quite true that a number of those who worked on the document — such as Eric Hoffer, Jo Richardson, Mary Kaldor and Mike Gapes — cannot be described as in any sense supporters of Reaganism, or even NATO itself.

And such people will point out, correctly that the statement makes a number of important statements against current US strategic plans and against some of the aggressive schemes being cooked up by the right here at the moment.

It points out the powerful trend in American ruling circles that believes the US can fight and win a nuclear war (the stated view of Weinberger). It points out the aggressive character of both the Allied Command Europe's concept of 'Follow-On-Forces' deep strikes into the Soviet rear and of the US army's current European war-fighting doctrine of AirLand Battle.

It points out that all these things will be seen by the USSR as 'a political and military offensive strategy' on NATO's part, and presumably they are to be seen as such by us to, or are our American

leaders in NATO just a bunch of idiots blundering around in the dark?

The authors also put forward all sorts of positive proposals for a nuclear free zone here or there, for a nuclear free Europe, for non-provocative forms of conventional weapons and for evidently defensive battle plans and deployments along the central front.

There is only one problem with all this, but a crippling one. The Left members of the NEC working group have put their signature to a document that ties us unconditionally to the American alliance, that involves us in full collaboration with the American war machine, that does not propose we withdraw from a single aspect of the activities of NATO, that insists NATO is the only legitimate framework for efforts to change the course of US policy. There is not a single line in the document suggesting that there are some circumstances in which Labour would pull out of the American alliance. There is not one word in the text about moving Britain towards non-alignment.

The statement tries to cloud all this behind vague talk about the need to end

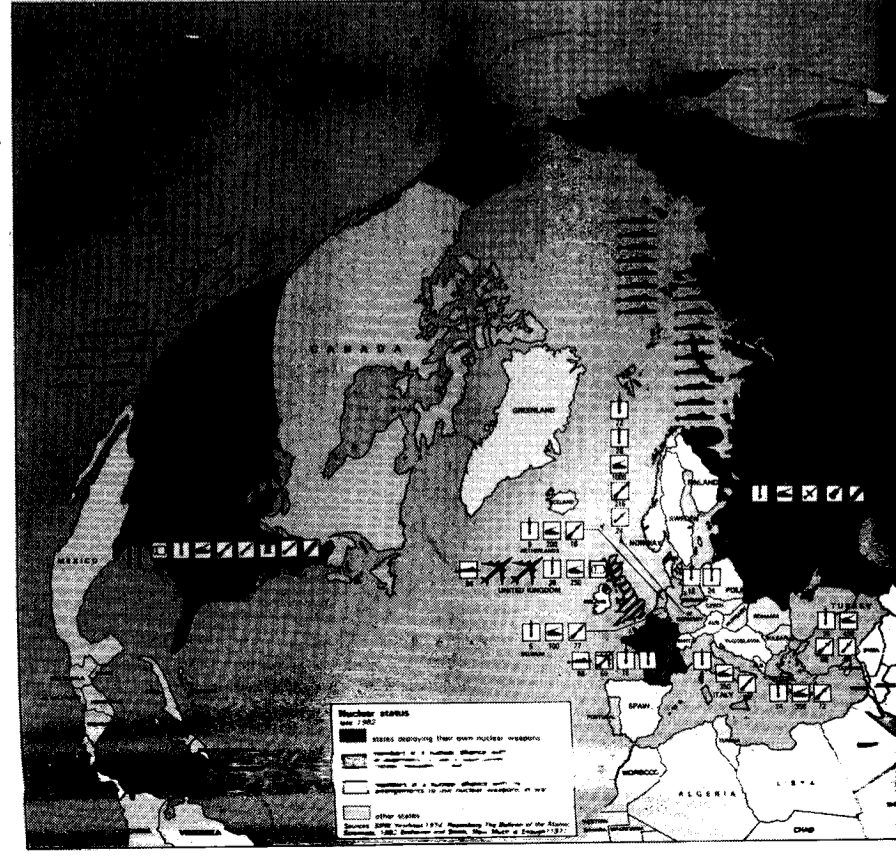
the bloc system in Europe by persuading both NATO and the Warsaw Pact to simultaneously dissolve themselves. Let us be clear what such phrases mean: persuading the Americans that it is in their best interests to surrender their hegemony in Western Europe for the sake of giving the peoples of Eastern Europe more freedom.

Why on earth should it be in the best interests of American capitalism to give up Western Europe? It is ridiculous to suggest, as the authors do, that somehow the US leadership will be brought round to such views by reasoned argument in the confidential atmosphere of the NATO Council.

Challenging

Any serious reduction of US power in Europe would require a great struggle by the labour movements and peace movements of Western Europe, openly challenging US policy all along the line, and presenting the US administration with a choice between regaining the initiative through negotiating sweeping force reductions with Moscow, and seeking to subvert democratic liberties in its sphere to regain control, as was done in Greece in the 1960s.

If the document was serious about overcoming the bloc system in Europe, it would make the following demands: the removal of all US nuclear weapons not just from Britain but from the whole of Western Europe; and the removal of equal numbers of US and Soviet troops from the Central Front (as the Soviet Union has urged in the MBFR talks in Vienna for many years). But instead of this, the document declares 'there is some strength in



ock's nce ment

the argument that NATO could improve its defensive conventional capability on the Central Front' (page 2). In other words, the NEC is offering to beef up the conventional pressure in exchange for removing nukes from the UK.

Somewhat, somebody managed to smuggle the following sentence into the NEC statement: 'The significance of...reductions in nuclear arsenals and of a defensive deterrence policy depends on whether they can initiate a political process of reducing tensions between the blocs.' This is absolutely right. The removal of nuclear weapons from Britain or the successful resistance to this or that new dangerous conventional military system does not in itself have any lasting significance in pulling the world back from a holocaust. Such positive steps must be part of a political struggle to defeat the politics behind the arms build-up.

Awful truth

And it is this political drive, deeply rooted in the social system of Britain and the US, that the NEC does not want to confront. It is frightened to tell the awful truth about this: that the threat to our security comes from a Washington in the hands of Reagan and from a British establishment committed to appeasing Washington all along the line; that these people are involved in an aggressive drive to impose terrible suffering on the Third World, to push the USSR towards a blow-out and to combat 'the enemy within' — ie, the British labour movement; and that the labour movement's struggle against

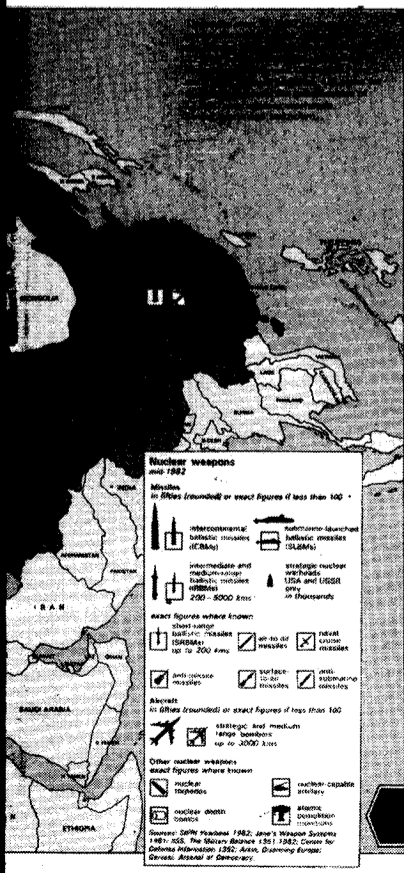
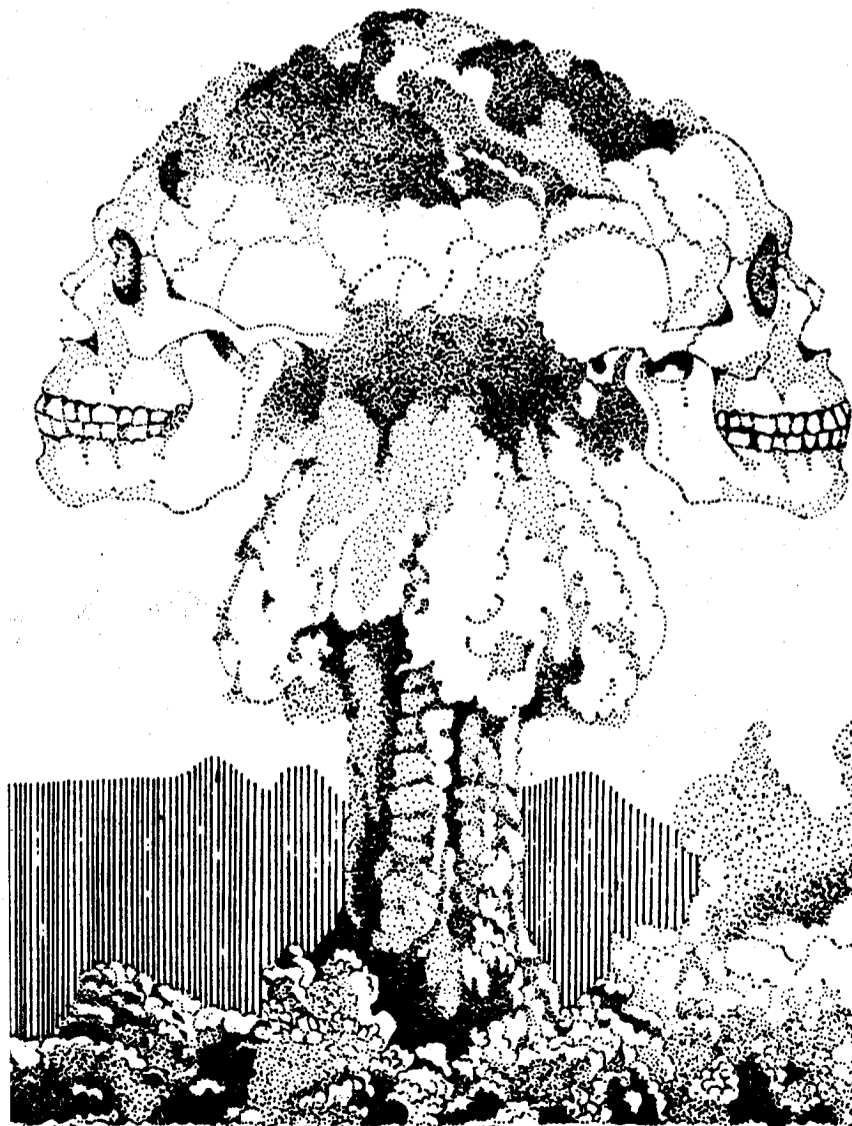


nuclear weapons must form part of an overall political struggle against the entire policy of NATO's leadership.

Instead of this, the NEC takes us, out of fear, into an Alice in Wonderland world where Washington is the guarantee of our peace and security, where NATO can become our great instrument for peace and progress, where Washington can come to see the wisdom of giving up its most important international power base — its hegemony in Western Europe.

Just as CND long ago recognised that unilateralism must involve withdrawal from NATO, the Labour Party must buttress its unilateralist commitment with an international policy that breaks with the NATO commitment. This will be a long battle, and it may begin with very small, largely negative victories such as the SOGAT idea 'we go along with NATO except where it conflicts with Labour Party policy'.

What we cannot accept is a sordid, self-defeating deal whereby we offer full support for NATO and for a conventional arms build-up in exchange for the removal of nukes from Britain. The NEC statement's logic is to turn Britain from being Reagan's nuclear battleship into his supply and communications base. This is not a socialist policy that the left can support. The battle over defence inside the party must go on.



Non-nuclear Nato a deception

THE DEFENCE document, *Defence and Security for Britain*, will be presented to this week's Labour Party conference. Delegates to conference will be confronted with a crisis. A vote against the document by conference would be presented as a rejection of the commitment to get rid of nuclear weapons, which is contained in it. This would be a victory for the right.

A vote for the document means that the Labour Party will be committed to a defence policy to increase military spending on conventional weapons and to a position of uncritical enthusiasm for NATO, which is, again, a victory for the right.

My argument is that there is nothing to lose in opposing the document. There is everything to lose if we keep silent. Too often the left has been told to keep quiet so that 'we can at least hold onto the gains we have made'. (In this case the bargaining chip is that we have won the party to unilateral nuclear disarmament).

We are told that this is too important to jeopardise at this stage: 'We should accept what we can get and then after conference, open up the debate again'. This argument is being put by comrades who have the very best of intentions, but their understanding is at fault.

By Joy Hurcombe, Labour CND, personal capacity

If the defence document goes through without opposition, the very cause we support, namely unilateral nuclear disarmament will be the next in line for 're-definition'. In fact close examination of the document shows that the sections on getting rid of nuclear weapons and bases are lukewarm and at times inconsistent.

Firstly there was a scramble to get the wording right on the commitment to get rid of Polaris. In the drafting committee, the phrase 'Labour will include Polaris in the nuclear arms reduction negotiations' very nearly got into the document instead of the words 'to decommission Polaris from service immediately on assuming office'.

The commitment to get rid of nuclear bases is nowhere spelt out in clear terms. There are indications that the commitment is seen to include only those US bases where nuclear weapons are presently sited. This will include only those with Poseidon and Trident missiles and F1-11 airfields. We demanded that all US bases must go and all US soldiers should leave.

Yet the document assumes that the US occupying army is here to stay and declares that the presence of other US forces in Britain will be regularised.

A British veto over the use of US facilities would be meaningless. The commitment to refuse Cruise and Trident is in the statement, but nowhere is it argued for with conviction. Similarly, the section on removing battlefield nuclear weapons is weak and contradictory. First we are told that we should work for a European

nuclear weapon-free zone then we are told that we will wait for NATO to withdraw all its nuclear battlefield weapons from Europe.

There is no time scale for this to take place but 'in the event of NATO failing to do this the British government will remove all battlefield nuclear weapons from the British army and the RAF units in Germany'. We have to oppose the weakness of the commitment to getting rid of nuclear weapons and bases and the support for continued membership of NATO.

But we must also oppose the way in which Labour's longstanding commitment to reduce military spending has also been thrown out.

In the document, there are long passages devoted to explaining how the front line in Germany will be strengthened with new conventional weapons and how this will be understood by the USSR to be a 'friendly and peaceful gesture'. Throughout the document the USSR is assumed to be the enemy (despite an attempt at balance in the foreword, written in by Tony Benn).

The draft composite resolution, put forward by all of the disarmament groups in the Labour Party, insists that the commitment to reduce defence spending is still Labour Party policy and that this must be a priority within the lifetime of the next Labour government. Without this, there will not be alternative jobs created for defence and other workers and no further money available for social needs.

Delegates are therefore urged to support this composite and to oppose the defence document.

The policy we should support involves Britain taking independent initiatives for nuclear disarmament. And why can't it? And while we are about it why not remove British forces from Europe and really begin a new order in European affairs?

This is the real failure of the statement. It seeks to retain all of the existing trappings of the British military machine. Nuclear weapons are replaced by conventional weapons which are just as lethal as some battlefield nuclear weapons. The document's commitment to NATO and to nationalism surpasses the Tories. The Tories are criticised for introducing cuts in the NATO defensive conventional forces in order to pay for Trident.

To appear radical, the document states that the Labour Party will press for NATO to become non-nuclear but there is again no timescale and therefore this demand is meaningless. For NATO, a nuclear alliance dominated by a nuclear power and committed to fighting with nuclear strategies, to make such a change is well nigh impossible and therefore the Labour Party, in raising this as a demand, is being deceptive and dishonest to its supporters.

- Reject the document and demand a socialist foreign policy
- For the removal of all nuclear weapons
- For withdrawal from NATO
- For reductions in defence spending
- For peaceful strategies towards the USSR and for the withdrawal of all foreign troops and bases from this country and from Europe.

Local government debate Full support for 'illegal' councils

THIRTY-ONE RESOLUTIONS to Labour Party conference tackle the attacks on local government. Many support the stand of Liverpool council and slam Neil Kinnock's failure to do the same.

The basic line of divide on local government is still whether or not to break the law. Amongst those councils prepared to break the law to defend local jobs and services, a discussion on tactics still goes on. TED KNIGHT, leader of Lambeth council champions the option of not fixing a rate.

He explained to CAROL TURNER that this strategy, based on a unity between Labour councils never seen before, allows councils to argue for a return of central government funds to the hard-hit inner city councils.

FOR THE first time, a decision has been taken by Labour-controlled councils throughout the country that they can no longer accommodate or comply with Tory legislation which means massive cuts.

There is general agreement that Labour councils won't make cuts in jobs or services in the coming year. That's a major step forward.

In the past the Tories have always passed back to Labour councils the decisions whether we make cuts, put up the rates, or come to some other compromise. Now everybody is saying: no, the responsibility lies with the Tory government.

We have three months to develop a strategy which will place that responsibility squarely on the government. How do we do it?

First, the 16 rate-capped Labour-controlled authorities have already said they won't appeal against the limit. If they did, the government has the right to step in and cut their budgets.

And those same authorities won't negotiate

with the government individually either. We don't accept the cake is big enough — we want a bigger one, not a reorganisation of the same cake.

The tactic that was necessary for Liverpool this year — talking directly to the government — is no longer valid next year.

Refusal

The government want to make their legislation credible by Labour councils coming forward to negotiate. Our refusal is important.

There is also a general conclusion by Labour authorities that, even if they had the opportunity of raising rates (and, of course the rate-capped authorities haven't) they have now reached the limit of rate increases. This applies particularly to places such as Manchester and Liverpool who have that option.

Compensating for Tory cuts would mean increases of 50 per cent plus. That is not politically, socially or practically acceptable.

The people we would be hitting are working class communities, hit in

every other direction by Tory cuts.

We are arguing for a return of rate support grant to local authorities. If we could get back the £3½ billion that's been taken away from London, not only could we maintain existing services, but we could extend them and reduce the rate burden on the communities we represent.

Labour councils are presently preparing their budgets for the coming year.

In Lambeth, we are discussing this with user groups and trade unions. Our budget will be set over the next three months as a result of such consultations. It will be supported and defended by trade unionists and the community as well as Labour councillors.

From January onwards we are mounting a campaign to demand government resources for that budget. We're saying it's impossible to raise money locally to meet our needs. We'll take our campaign right to the point where the government will legally insist on the council setting a rate.

Resources

Our argument is that if we set the rate, we can only set it within the government's terms. That means we cannot provide the services we require: the government's got to provide resources directly.

At all points in this campaign we are saying frankly that we don't wish the right to raise the rates. We've raised them as high as they can go. They already accommodate massive Tory cuts.

Not setting a rate is

demonstrating publicly that this council is not prepared to comply with the Tory legislation, it shows the government and local people that we cannot continue under the present legislation.



Ted Knight

We've chosen next March as the date of confrontation because other councils throughout the country will be taking the same steps then. Our intention is not to comply with the law.

The results of the GLC by-elections are very good for Labour. The percentage support show a major vote of confidence in the campaign against abolition. We've seen an indication that local government, local services, local jobs and local democratic rights are of key importance to working class people in this country.

I'm confident of our campaign against Tory attacks, first because in many, many years of local government activity I've never seen such unity among Labour authorities. Second, we haven't seen such unity with local government trade unions,

locally or nationally.

The TUC recently took an important decision to back the local government fight. We must see that consolidated at Labour Party conference.

The party and its leadership must be committed to full support for whatever tactical decisions Labour-controlled councils and their trade unions have to take.

That means we want to see the parliamentary leadership openly supporting those councils who fight.

Confirm

That means the parliamentary leadership have to support us if we step outside the law to maintain jobs and services. We're still waiting for such support from them.

We want conference to confirm that the return of a Labour government will see the restoration of central government financial support to local authorities — and the decision that any penalties imposed on a Labour councillor immediately withdrawn and compensated for by a Labour government when it comes to office.

In other words, we need to know that we aren't going to face the same situation Clay Cross councillors faced, and that the Labour Party is prepared to withdraw retrospectively any penalties imposed by this Tory government.

● Next week Hilda Kean, leader of Hackney council, explains why she favours setting a rate but making an illegal budget.

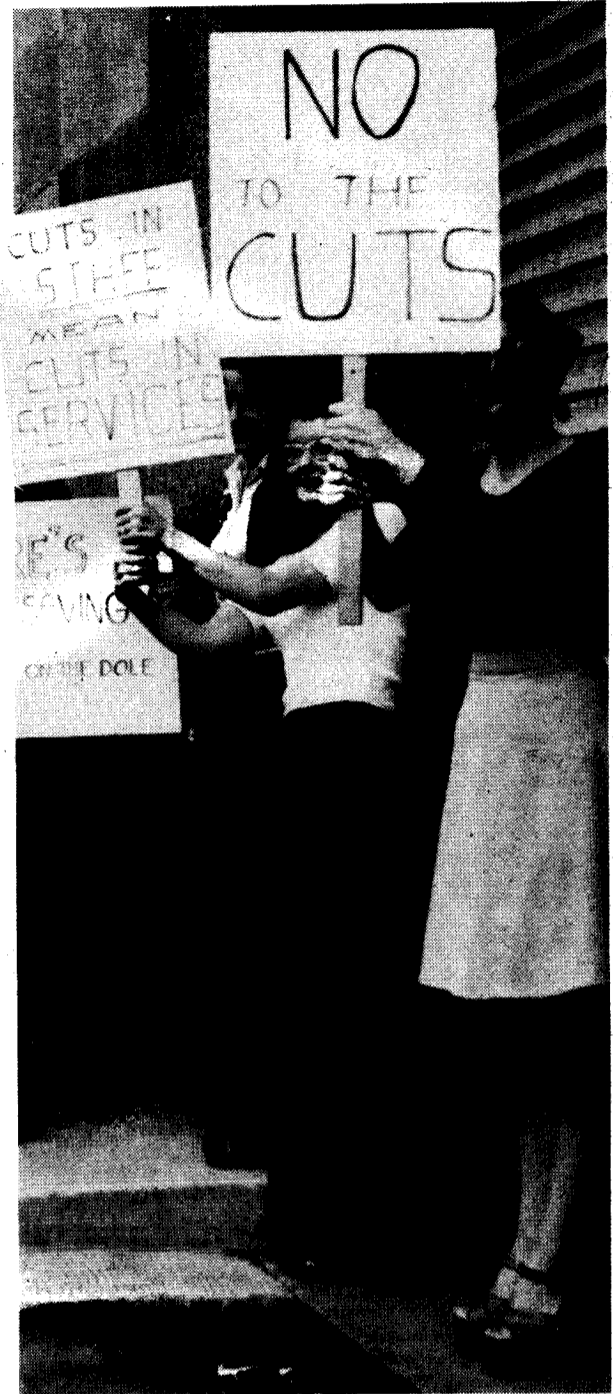


Photo: TED STOMER

Dancing to the same old tune

IT IS A tragedy that borders on farce that successive 'lefts' within the labour movement have utterly failed to understand the potential huge support for Labour among youth.

This, and the fact that they will support radical socialist policies, seems to be a mystery unfathomable by the Labour left.

GRANT KEIR, Islington YS, argues that the current Labour left has to discuss how it is going to build support for its policies among young people.

NOT SINCE the days just prior to the Second World War have the conditions been more propitious — or the need more urgent — to build a mass, campaigning youth section for Labour.

Then the threat of war and fascism, mass unemployment, and the struggle to organise

masses of youth against the policies of the government were the backdrop for a massive growth in Labour's youth organisation, then called the Labour League of Youth.

Its membership grew to 150,000, and sales of its monthly paper reached 25,000. The 1938 membership has never been equalled.

The right in the Labour Party have always had a consistent attitude towards youth. The 1924 Labour Party annual conference report set the tone which has not changed through the years.

It said the youth sections should 'be mainly recreational and not too much attention paid to politics'.

Of course, when the youth have voiced opposition to this attitude, the right have always removed the velvet glove to use the iron fist. Expulsions and witch-hunting are as old as youth sections themselves.

But the attitude of the right is no surprise to anyone. The left has to



Dennis Skinner shows the way on a YS march against YTS.

campaign against witch-hunts, from whatever quarter they come. That means demanding money and political support for the campaigns and activities of the LPYS.

Yet the left at best offers passive support. Why is this?

The Bevanites in the 1950s never had a coherent strategy for building support for themselves amongst young people. But when the right attacked, both the Bevanites and the

youth section were victimised.

John Lawrence, writing in 1952, describes the effect this had on the youth section:

'In this kind of atmosphere it is not surprising that a somewhat exotic brand of pure socialism has developed in which the construction of "socialist" programmes tends to take the place of a mass campaign against Toryism.'

Today the policies of the Labour left, as sum-

med up by figures such as Benn, Livingstone and Scargill, are enormously popular amongst youth.

Their opposition to wars in the Malvinas and Ireland, their support for workers' struggles, their championing of unilateralism, opposition to NATO, and the popular way in which these issues are presented, attract young people to socialism. Yet to anyone familiar with the LPYS of the 1980s, John Lawrence's words of

some 30 years ago must have a familiar ring.

The left does not have a strategy to build itself amongst youth. The Kinnockite 'unity' conference will not last. The left and youth in the Labour Party will inevitably be attacked again.

If the left continues to condemn, correctly, the witch-hunts of the right and centre, but lets the current LPYS leader-

ship 'get on with it', it will utterly fail to build a key prop of support for its policies.

It is not a sectarian attack upon the current leadership of the LPYS to propose different ways in which it can be built into a truly mass campaigning youth wing of Labour. It is incumbent upon the left of the Labour Party to get down to this task in a serious and sober fashion.

Photo: JOHN HARRIS

LAST WEEKEND, Roy Hattersley made a speech on economic policy to the Socialist Economic Review conference. It made the front page lead of *The Times* and the front page of the *Financial Times*. The newspaper headlines 'Hattersley moves to shift Labour on nationalisation' and 'Hattersley urges Labour rethink on nationalisation' told the story.

Roy Hattersley announced: 'I want to argue for an increase in social ownership. But I do not propose an extension of nationalisation.' And that: 'A society in which a higher percentage of productive capacity is owned by the state is unlikely to be highly efficient or truly free.'

A week before the speech Hattersley launched the new NEC economic policy document *A future that works* which spelt out the 'no major nationalisations' line. JOHN ROSS looks at the issues involved in Hattersley's arguments.

The particular ideas and policies being raised by Roy Hattersley and the Labour right to justify their new economic policies show just how important somewhat obscure economic and theoretical polemics can be in influencing the forms of Labour Party policy.

The inspiration for the type of arguments Hattersley advances today can be directly traced to one crucially important book on economic theory — Alec Nove's *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*. Nove's book in turn basically elaborates arguments which took place among Russian economists during the 1920s. The various other popularisations of the same ideas, for example Geoff Hodgson's *The Democratic Economy*, add nothing substantially new to the debate.

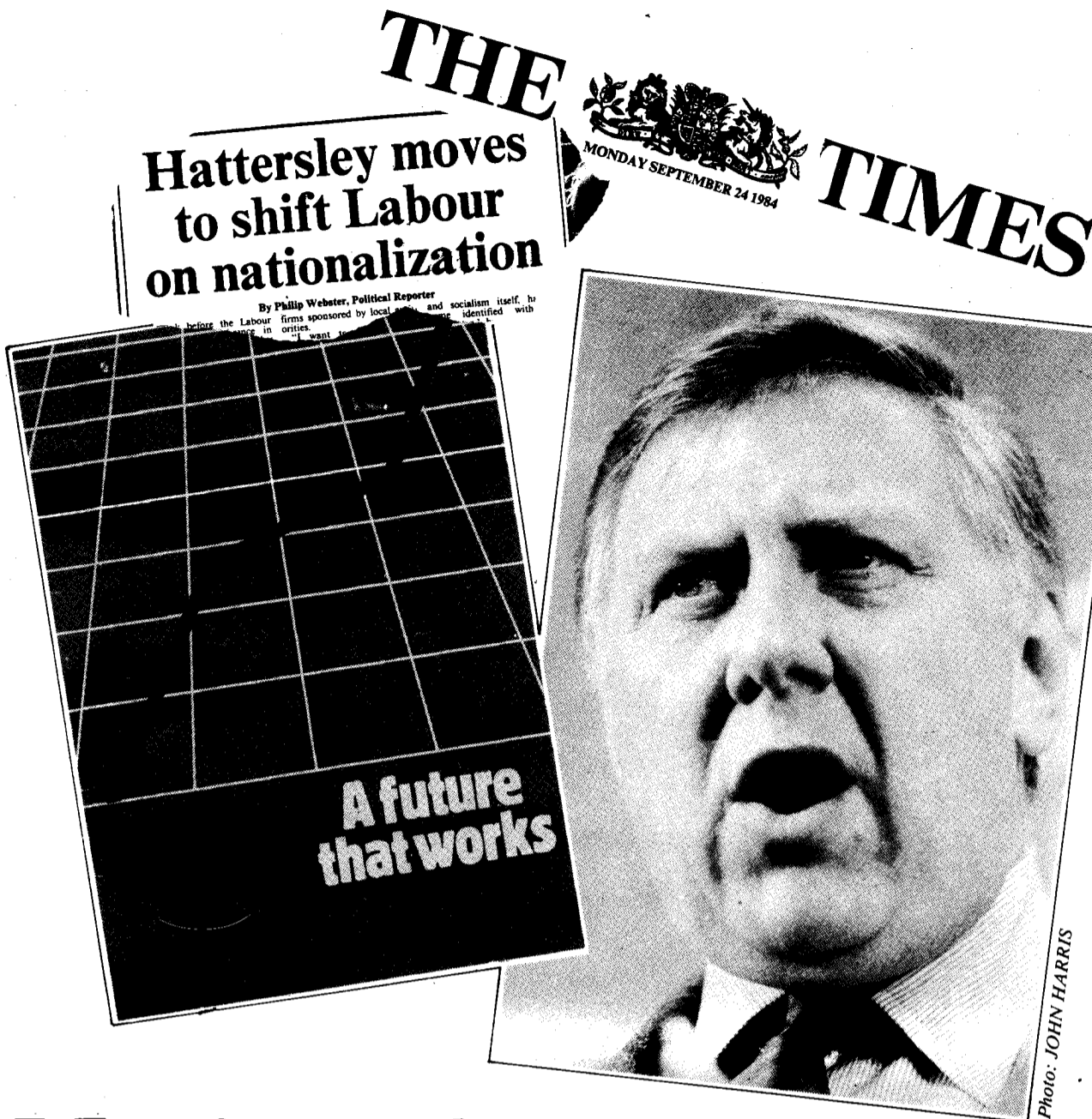
'New thinking'

The theorists of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, whose phrases Roy Hattersley picks up, might think they are engaging in some 'new thinking'. In fact, as Keynes once remarked, every 'practical' politician usually turns out to be the prisoner of the ideas of a long dead economist. What Hattersley had to say on the question of nationalisation simply repeats basic errors much less vulgarly expressed by others before. Let us look at Hattersley's arguments starting from the basic features of a capitalist economy itself.

The contradictions of a capitalist economy can, in their fundamental features, be explained very simply. The demand for goods (or services) in any economy may be divided into two fundamental types. Firstly goods which are consumed, or intended for consumption, in any form at all — whether it be food, cars, or guns intended for war. At this level whether these goods are consumed by individuals or provided by the state is not crucial. The second category are goods intended for producing other goods — the 'means of production' in the terms used in Clause 4 of the Labour Party constitution.

In a capitalist society, however, the *mechanisms* which determine the demand for the type of goods are completely different — which is where the problems start. If foreign trade is excluded for the moment then it is relatively easy to regulate the demand for consumption goods — and to ensure that consumption goods are sold on the market.

The human social needs for food, clothes, hospitals, schools, entertainment and so on are for practical purposes unlimited. The sole limit on what is actually bought of such goods and services is having the money to buy them. Any method which increases the money available to buy such goods — whether it be cutting taxes, raising wages, increasing pensions, launching hospital building programmes — will sharply increase the demand for consumption goods.



Nationalisation and socialism

Such means of increasing demand for goods in the economy are often referred to as 'Keynesian demand management'. In reality, however, they greatly predate John Maynard Keynes and have been used by every revolutionary and reformist government in history — including the Bolsheviks in Russia, Castro in Cuba, Allende in Chile, Mitterrand in the first part of his government in France, and the FSLN in Nicaragua today.

Techniques

These economic techniques are well known, well established, and proven effective over short periods of time. If tomorrow the British government increased old age pensions, introduced a national minimum wage, cut income tax on working class wages, raised local government spending and embarked on a huge school and hospital building programme there is no doubt that the economy would start to grow again.

There is no reason whatever why socialists cannot use such techniques for their own purposes — indeed every socialist regime in the world has. In fact such methods are particularly well suited, over short periods of time, to pursuing socialist objectives.

Elementary economic theory, both Marxist and Keynesian, say that demand for consumption goods will increase most effectively if you give the most money to those who will spend the greatest part of it. In other words the most effective means of 'reflation' of the economy is to concentrate on measures such as aiding the low paid, pensioners, raising

working class wages, increasing social spending etc.

The types of immediate policy pursued by the Bolsheviks after October 1917, or by Castro, or the first year of Allende's government, or the FSLN today do not merely aid the worst off sections of society, but are the most economically rational policies to pursue. All measures of this type, of increasing wages, or pensions, or useful social spending should be supported 100 per cent.

But the problem for any policy of 'Keynesian', or other reformist type, is that, under capitalism, demand for the means of production is not regulated by social need at all — nor is it regulated by individual consumption. It is regulated by profit. Capitalists invest, or fail to invest, not because society's needs have or have not been met, but depending on whether they make a profit or not.

Contradictions

This is where the contradictions of Keynesian economic policy immediately become evident in practice. Increasing demand for consumer goods, increasing public spending and so on will (where there are unused resources in the economy) produce a short term increase in output. But any sustained increase in output requires new investment — and the need for that new investment increases the nearer the economy approaches full employment and the limits of its existing productive capacity.

If investment does not take place then the result is raging inflation — as more and more money is pumped into the economy but the number of goods and services being produced does not

increase (because investment and productive capacity is not increasing).

This situation of rising, or even uncontrollable, inflation is in practice the outcome of every reformist Keynesian experiment — as Allende found out in Chile and Mitterrand found out in France. Any traditional Keynesian policy is totally dependent on the willingness of capitalists to invest. Capitalists, not socialist governments, have the decisive weight, and the whip hand, in that situation.

Reflation

There is of course a way out of this situation. If the capitalists refuse to invest in the way that is needed then the decision is simply taken out of their hands. If this is done then the 'reflation' of the economy can be carried through on an ongoing long term basis.

Put in its simplest terms, and reduced to pure economics, that is exactly what the Bolsheviks in Russia did, Castro in Cuba did, and the FSLN is doing in Nicaragua. All simply refused blackmail from capital. They passed simple laws. Firms or capitalists which complied with the needs of the economy in increasing investment, output, particular needs of production and so on were left owning their companies. Those that did not had the decision taken out of their hands — through being nationalised.

Workers' control and inspection of production was introduced in the meantime to determine which capitalists were and which were not complying with these social needs. Workers' management was introduced into the firms that were taken

over — and many that weren't. The pattern was simple and universal. It broke the resistance and sabotage of the capitalist class.

For nationalisation is not an end in itself. Nationalisation is a means to an end — that end, in narrow economic terms, being the ability of society to control its entire economy on a democratic basis. Without nationalisation then the fundamental decisions on investment and production continue to be taken on an anarchic basis controlled by profit and not social need.

Every programme of 'reflation' — and even the Bolsheviks did not start by nationalising everything on day one of the Russian revolution — always faces at a certain point a crucial choice. When capital will not invest it either objectively or subjectively (or both) sabotages the economy. Inflation mounts and economic disorder increases. There are then two paths — and only two paths.

Blackmail

The first is that the 'socialist' government backs down before the blackmail of capital. This was the course, on different scales, of the disastrous Wilson and Callaghan governments in Britain, of Allende in Chile, of Mitterrand in France. The result is, at best, demoralisation of the working class and the rise of the radical and/or fascist right — as in Britain and France. If the development has gone further, as in Chile, the revenge of the capitalists will be far worse. In any case the surrender to capital inevitably ends in disaster.

The second choice is that when the resistance of the capitalists starts it is broken. The decisions are simply taken out of their hands (an event known as a socialist revolution for anyone who wants to consider it from a purely technical economic point of view!) And a capitalist who does not control investment, who does not control production, where decisions are taken not for his or her interests but for the needs of society, does not 'own' capital in any meaningful sense of the word at all. 'Nationalisation' is not a fetish, it is simply the sole means whereby society can control its own economy.

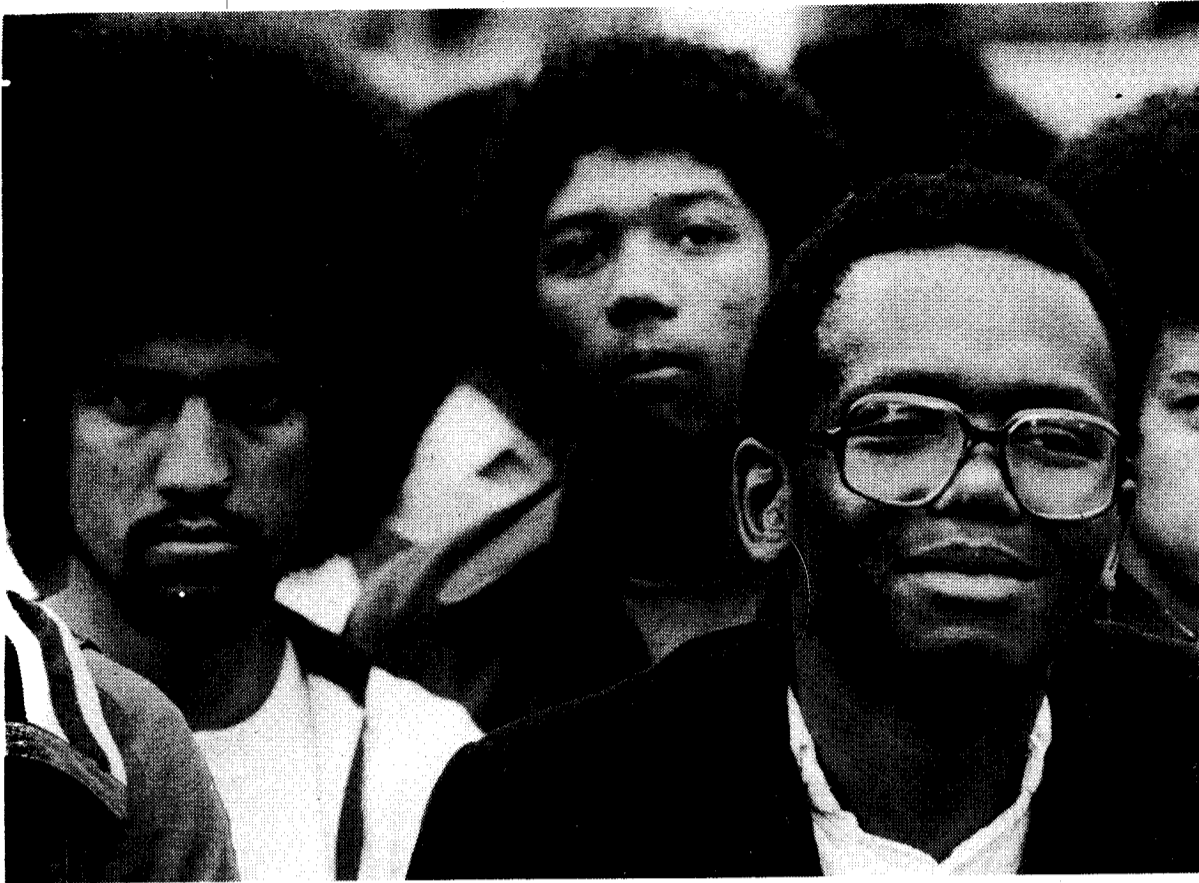
Centralised

There is of course a considerable, and totally legitimate, economic argument about how a nationalised economy is to be run. The totally centralised economy of the type introduced into Stalinist Russia by the first Five Year Plan of 1929 is grotesque both economically and politically — and the first person to violently condemn it, incidentally, was not the Labour right wing but Leon Trotsky. There is absolutely no reason why, either in theory or practice, there should not be a place within a socialist or transitional economy for co-operatives, small personal firms, and even small scale capitalist production — indeed all are necessary and useful.

But you cannot run the railways, or the electricity plants, or the car industry, or steel production as a workers' co-op, or a 'small scale' capitalist enterprise. 'The common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange', remains the sole means whereby the basic large scale industry of society can be brought under its control. That is not dogma. It is just the truth.

And without it society remains subject to the most fundamental dictatorship of all — the dictatorship of capital. The dictatorship that every decision affecting unemployment, wages, living conditions, health and work is decided not by criteria of human need but by, or under the pressure of, criteria of profit. By criteria of the continuous 'extra-parliamentary' dictates of capital and its constant violence towards the bodies, lives, health and minds of those who live on it. But Roy Hattersley is no socialist on that.

Which is why, finally, he's not even a democrat either.



LESBIAN AND GAY oppression is the only oppression still respectable in the labour movement. That is why every socialist must support the fight led by the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights (LCGR) to get the issue debated at conference for the first time this year.

Ending the oppression of lesbians and gay men is a basic question of human and democratic rights. As such, a party which claims — as a socialist organisation — to represent all the oppressed has a fundamental duty to take up this struggle.

But lesbian and gay liberation is more than that: it is also a socialist issue in itself, and has to become an integrated part of the movement towards a society of freedom, justice and equality for all.

By Peter Purton, Ealing/Southall CLP

At every level of society, in every state institution, and at every moment of their lives, homosexual women and men face discrimination, prejudice and bigotry. For countless millions, the fear is too great and we — your workmates, neighbours, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers — choose instead to lead a life of self-oppressed misery behind the invisibility of homosexuality.

To enable these millions to come out and live openly requires both the support of open movements of lesbians and gay men, and also the public and practical backing of the labour movement.

For those of us who dare to be open about our sexuality, there is the risk of falling foul of the vast apparatus of laws used by the police and courts to try to keep us off the streets.

The brutal lawlessness of the cops in the coalfields comes as no surprise to gay men like Jimi Christmas, viciously beaten up by the police in Soho — for kissing his boyfriend — or for the clients of Earls Court pubs deliberately entrapped by the Met's 'pretty police', or drinkers at *The Bell* in Kings Cross invaded by van loads of the boys in blue.

The cold reactionary hostility of the state to civil

liberties is already familiar to us, through the Customs' bust on the *Gays the Word* community bookshop in April, and the continuing interception and confiscation of lesbian and gay literature on its way to Edinburgh's *Lavender Menace* bookshop.

It would require a book in itself to list the infringements of the human rights of lesbians and gay men that have taken place already in 1984 alone. Yet what have we heard from our leaders on these outrages? It seems that even when a Labour MP like Roger Thomas himself is tripped up by the law, the great labour movement cannot shake itself up sufficiently to publicly denounce this indefensible persecution.

Every thinking socialist will know that these attacks are not without purpose. They are designed to drive us back into the closet so that we cannot be seen to challenge a whole system of social order which sees everything outside the traditional heterosexual family as perverted or unnatural.

It is in the interests of the state and of capitalism that women's place is understood to be in the home, that man's place is as head of family and breadwinner — and that lesbians and gays should not exist at all, because they don't fit this cosy picture.

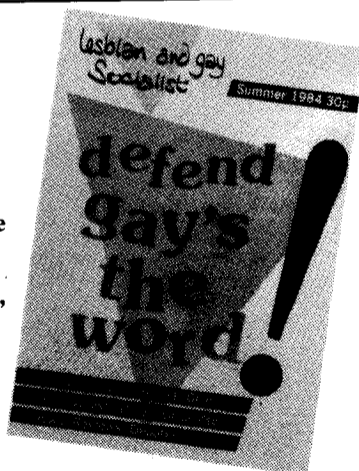
It is in the interests of the working class movement and all the oppressed to challenge and break up this oppressive social system.

It is in the interests of the working class movement and all the oppressed to challenge and break up this oppressive social system.

Lesbians and gay men have already demonstrated their support for the miners with magnificent collections in London pubs and clubs. Let the labour movement now begin to recognise its own responsibilities: starting by taking the debate at Labour Party conference.

Gay rights - the missing debate

Lesbian and Gay Socialist — new issue out now. Details from LGYS, 39 Cheppenhall Rd., London W9.



Labour campaign for gay rights

Winter Gardens
Tuesday 2nd at 7:30
KEN LIVINGSTONE
CLARE SHORT MP
GERALD KAUFMAN MP
SARAH ROELOFS

At conference

Vote for black sections!

By Mike Wongsam, Black Section Steering Committee, personal capacity.

SURE to be one of the noisiest and most impassioned debates at Labour Party conference this week is that on black sections. This is already clear from the ferocity of the preconference struggle inside the party.

The party leadership and front bench spokespersons in the PLP have found it irresistible to make pronouncements before the publication of the NEC working-party report. The *Militant* launched a campaign of vilification against the Black Section steering committee, labelling them 'self-seekers', 'careerists' and characterising the movement as a 'petit bourgeois' deviation. These facts taken together with the extensive media and press coverage over the past nine months, guarantees that this debate will be one of the highlights of the coming week.

Yet the extent to which the question of black sections is less a matter of debate and more a matter of fact is quite apparent. Inside London most of the black sections have been formally recognised and have delegates onto their GMCs. The movement is now in the process of breaking out of London and turning into a national phenomenon.

More people in the constituencies are being convinced of the case for black sections — this year eighteen CLPs and two trade union resolutions have been submitted in support of black sections with only one CLP resolution against. This compares to just three CLP resolutions last year.

Why then is it impor-

tant that Labour formally adopts a change in its constitution to allow for delegates from black sections onto GMCs, regional Labour Parties and the NEC?

There are two points here. The black community in Britain is one of Labour's natural constituencies in elections. This point is proved repeatedly and was again emphasised during the last general election.

In the face of mass desertions of votes from Labour the black community held firm with 80 per cent of the black vote going to Labour. Yet despite this proven loyalty it was the Tories that made special efforts to court the black vote with a poster campaign.

This cynical manoeuvre was made for the purpose of allaying fears of infiltration of the Tory Party by hordes of known extreme racists. Nevertheless it shows how much importance is attached to winning black votes by the Tories as compared with Labour.

Moreover one will see the Alliance parties presenting a few token blacks as election candidates so as to give the impression that they are colour blind. But the public has at least the impression that black people can get selected for posts both inside the parties and as candidates.

The Labour Party

however is notorious for its 'blacks lose votes' attitude. Now that these questions are beginning to be challenged by the formation of black sections, the eyes of the black communities will be on Blackpool. A vote against a rule change will be seen as a snub for black people.

There is another reason why a rule change has to be supported. Unless black sections elect their own delegates *as of right* onto all policy formulating bodies of the party from top to bottom, including the NEC, then the establishment of black sections just becomes the Labour Party's own form of tokenism.

It would give black members the right to organise independently, but no means of influencing party decisions or policy.

Therefore the black sections will themselves become a little more than useless as regards the mass of black people. The essence of black sections is that they are a mechanism whereby the concerns of the black community can be brought to bear on the party.

This is why Kinnock has very astutely taken the position of supporting black sections 'in principle' but being opposed to a rule change. This gives the appearance of giving way to the demands while preserving the status quo in reality. It is a ruse to win over the left in the party.

The left should beware this kind of astuteness on Kinnock's part — it is not only directed against black people.

Conference fringe meetings

Saturday

7pm Campaign Group 'Birthday Rally', Pavillion Theatre. Chair: Ken Cameron, Arthur Scargill, Joan Maynard, Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Jo Richardson, Eric Clarke, Audrey Wise, Ken Livingstone, Diane Abbott, with Grindthorpe Colliery band.

Sunday

2pm CPLD, Baronial Hall, Winter Gardens, 'Labour's recovery under threat - defend reselection'. Margeret Beckett, Eric Clarke (NUM), Diane Abbott, Pat O'ly.

6pm LPYS, Pavillion Theatre, 'Young Miners' Rally' Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner.

7.30pm Briefing, Claremont Hotel, North Promenade. 'Target Labour Government'. Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, Betty Heathfield, Diane Abbott(WAC), Sharon Atkins(Black section),

Kirsten McDowell(Labour movement lesbians).

Monday

12.30pm 'The Belgrano'. Lounge of New Clifton Hotel, North Promenade. With Tam Dalyell, Jim Slater, Martin Flannery.

5.30pm Labour Against Witchhunts, The Lobster Pot, Market St. With Ann Pettifor, Pat Tuff, Ken Livingstone.

7.30pm Labour Herald, Spanish Hall, Winter Gardens. Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill, Ken Livingstone, Joan Maynard, Ted Knight, Paul Boateng, Lil Stevens, Matthew Warburton.

8.30pm Black sections, Prince William room, New Clifton Hotel. Russell Profitt, Jo Richardson, Diane Abbott, Keith Vaz, Mike Cummins (BTUSM).

Tuesday

6.30pm Campaign Against the Police Bill, Pembroke Hotel, North Promenade. 'Policing the

miners' strike'. Tony Benn, Chris Khamis, Louise Christian, Dave Douglass, Greenham Common speaker.

7.30pm Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, Winter Gardens. Ken Livingstone, Clare Short, Gerald Kaufman, Sarah Roelofs.

Wednesday
12.30pm London Labour Briefing, Hackney and Lewisham left, Claremont Hotel. 'Fight rate-capping — which option?' Ted Knight, Hilda Kean.

5.30pm Labour Committee on Ireland, Lobster Pot. Sean Rodmond(IMETU), Tony Benn, Peter Archer, Armagh speaker.

Also Muhammed Idrish — details to be finalised.

Thursday
5.30pm Labour CND. 'The Euro-bomb and the West European bloc'. Joan Maynard, Tony Benn, Ron Todd, Denzil Davies, Gunter Brinerup.

How 'left' is Robin Cook?

A NEW factor enters the choice of Labour's national executive this year as constituency parties decide whether to back Robin Cook, Neil Kinnock's former campaign manager, and MP for Livingston.

Cook's manifesto follows an article he wrote in July for *Tribune*. It's core is a call to make Walworth Road more efficient. This is all very well, but doesn't tell CLPs much about his policies — all the more confusing since he is standing as a 'left' candidate. Much as Kinnock stood for leader. It is very easy to cash in on rank and file hostility to the bureaucracy — and a convenient way to obscure the political issue. But his campaign is clarified by an odd statement of support from the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, from whose London office he ran Kinnock's leadership campaign.

By Alan Freeman

The LCC does not propose a slate for the CLP section. Instead it says: 'The seven sitting members in this section have received continued support on the left. Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner and Eric Heffer have secure places. We therefore urge LCC members to try and ensure their CLPs vote in particular for the other four sitting members.'

It then calls for support for sitting members Audrey Wise, Jo Richardson, Michael Meacher and David Blunkett.

But it goes on: 'The LCC also recommends support for Robin Cook, because his candidature is linked to the question of campaigns and organisational reform.'

'LCC members will recall Robin Cook's role in steering the party through the European elections and he intends to approach organisational reform in a similar determined fashion. Robin Cook has declared a strong commitment to the campaign for trade union political funds and continued affiliation to the party.'

'On policy issues Robin has taken a lead on introducing coherence to Green politics in the party, and to the alternative and non-nuclear defence policy.'

'He is also a member of the LCC and has spoken often on our platforms.'

There is a slight problem here. There are seven places on the CLP section, and the LCC is backing

eight candidates. Either it can't count, or it can't make its mind up, or something hasn't been said.

Whatever the reason, the effect is clear. Cook is not a fringe candidate. His campaign is a serious attempt to get onto the NEC. If he wins, who will go? Obviously, the left candidate who got least votes last year — Audrey Wise.

'What real policy shift would this represent? First, in practice a reduction of the number of women on the NEC. Second, on the organisation question itself, it would strengthen Kinnock's drive to decrease the powers of the NEC via self-styled 'campaign committees' with shadow cabinet representation, which in practice have become policy-making bodies.'

No better example of this exists than the NEC campaign committee which Cook headed up as Labour's shadow EEC spokesperson. This simply dropped, quietly and 'efficiently', party policy on the NEC, to bring Labour into line with Kinnock's undeclared aim of making it a party of European big capital.

And what of defence, on which Cook's past unilateralist record has been good? As a member of the party's defence campaign committee and as chair of the Labour Disarmament Liaison Committee, he has been instrumental in Kinnock's drive to reshape party policy, not towards strengthening its unilateralism, but towards critically undermining it.

Cook's version of 'non-nuclear defence', which — behind the scenes — he has worked hard to sell to CND — involves the first time Labour has been committed to increase conventional spending since the war. It also pledges to maintain overseas commitments like the British Army on the Rhine which make it a front line state in NATO's plans to fight a nuclear war in Europe by escalating a conventional into a nuclear conflict.

In short, Cook may come to the party with 'left' credentials. But his real role, just like that of Kinnock and the LCC, has been and will be to undermine everything the left has won or fought for.



Diane Abbott - why I am standing

DIANE ABBOTT is one of the Labour Women's Action Committee's candidates for the women's section of the NEC. Her campaign is also supported by the black section.

The extent of support for Diane at conference next week will show whether or not the party has really begun to understand the issue of self-organisation for women and blacks. Socialist Action asked her to explain how she sees the campaign.

I am standing for election because I think it is important that black people's voices are heard at every level of the party. My candidature is part of a wider campaign to achieve this.

Black people have given loyal support to the party for years, yet there are no black MPs, a relatively tiny number of black councillors, and no black members of the NEC.

Having black people on the NEC would serve two purposes. Firstly it would symbolise to the wider black electorate that the party really is taking them seriously. But secondly it would also help

the party to understand and uproot the structural racism that exists within the party itself.

Labour governments have repeatedly brought in racist immigration laws. Labour local authorities have been just as bad as the Tories when it comes to racism in housing allocation, social service provision and in their employment practices.

The party needs to face this kind of racism and deal with it as a matter of urgency and I think it will be better able to do so if black people are actually represented at decision-making levels of the party.

In addition I want to be

on the NEC to carry forward the campaign for black sections. I think black sections will be important in maximising black involvement in the party.

In a similar way I want to fight for the demands of the Women's Action Committee.

A Labour Party which ended discrimination against women and black people would be a stronger, enriched and more powerful movement.

But I want to say that the campaign around Keith Vaz is also important. Keith Vaz was nominated in the CLP section of the NEC by Richmond party, and has the full support of the black section steering committee.

It has been argued that his campaign endangers the position of vulnerable left candidates like Jo Richardson and Audrey Wise. In no way is this the case, but his campaign is



important for its symbolic value.

In future years there must be no such argument, because the left must take the initiative in involving black groups in drawing up the left slates in the first place. That way it could not even be argued that

there is a conflict between supporting the left slate and supporting black candidates.

I am fortunate that due to WAC's initiative there is no such conflict in my case. But this is not a reason for failing to support Keith Vaz.

Vote for Keith Vaz!

THE MOST striking fact about the NEC elections this year will be the emergence of black people as an organised force for the first time inside the Labour Party.

Not only because Diane Abbott is standing for the women's section of the NEC, but because the black section also has a candidate for the constituency section — Keith Vaz. The campaign of both these candidates must be supported.

Unfortunately despite its tremendous significance for the whole future of the Labour Party, it cannot be said that the argument for black people on the NEC has even begun to be won in the party.

While Diane Abbott has gained considerable support from the left of the party for her campaign, the same cannot be said of Keith Vaz.

Undoubtedly one of the main reasons why the left was forced to take up Diane Abbott's campaign is down to the role of the Labour Women's Action Committee. The long fight to win more power for women in the party raises many similar issues to those now raised by the black section.

In drawing up its slate WAC was concerned to demonstrate that the fight for women's rights is not

counterposed to but on the contrary reinforced by, the struggles of other oppressed groups.

On the basis of WAC's support for Diane much of the rest of the left was forced behind her campaign — although with some dragging of feet from CLPD, the LCC and even the Campaign Group.

But Keith Vaz has not even got this support, although there is an equally strong case for at least one black candidate in the constituency section of the NEC.

The main argument against support for Keith Vaz — aside from the excuse that it is 'too late' — is that his campaign will threaten Audrey Wise, in particular, by dividing the left vote. In the worst instance it might allow Robin Cook on in place of her.



● We apologise to Eric Heffer MP who was not included in the list for the CLP slate we published two weeks ago. We only printed six names, due to a technical error. There are seven places for this section of the NEC and it has always been our intention to support Eric Heffer's campaign for the NEC.

As Diane Abbott points out elsewhere in this paper the way to avoid such apparent contradictions is for the left to involve black groups in drawing up their slate next time.

But the truth is that Keith Vaz does not threaten Audrey Wise. It is unimaginable that there exist a whole number

of constituencies where the political complexion is such that they would drop Audrey Wise in favour of Keith Vaz.

Only a tiny number of CLPs will even consider voting for Keith Vaz, and one can confidently predict that these will be CLPs that have already grasped the issue of women's representation. Audrey Wise and Jo Richardson are most likely to be the last people that any CLP will drop in favour of Keith Vaz.

The vote for Keith Vaz is going to be very like the vote for Russell Profitt in the Battersea reselection. In that case the solitary three votes, for Profitt could not be explained by the marginally better politics of Alf Dubbs. Nor will the similar vote for Keith Vaz — maybe half a dozen CLPs if he is lucky — be explained by the left's fear of the threat to Audrey Wise.

It will quite simply reflect the continuing deep-rooted backwardness on the black issue inside the Labour Party.

This has to be fought, and reversed by next year. The first step in that is for

the left to explain why black people are entitled to a representative on the NEC, including this year — whatever the left has already decided.

That's why the only position that the left can really take demonstrating that its support for black sections is not mere tokenism, is to support Keith Vaz in place of Micheal Meacher. Now, not in a year or so's time.

The slates to support

Constituency section
Tony Benn MP
David Blunkett, leader
Sheffield City Council
Eric Heffer MP
Jo Richardson MP
Dennis Skinner MP
Keith Vaz, black section
Audrey Wise

Women's section
Diane Abbott,
Westminster Cllr
Margaret Becket MP
Joan Maynard MP
Frances Morrell, leader
ILEA
Clare Short MP

Socialist ACTION

Labour's London triumph

THERE CAN have been few more embarrassing sights for years than the Conservative Party's John Gummer on television after last Thursday's GLC by-elections. The Tory Party's official line was the elections were a 'stunt' and therefore Gummer would not appear on an 'election panel' with the Labour Party and the Alliance.

However the reality is that the Tories considered the elections so important that Gummer wanted to be on the television to talk about them. Therefore he agreed to be 'interviewed'.

Viewers were then treated to the sight of Gummer sitting at a table on one side of the studio while refusing to walk ten yards to sit with the Labour Party and SDP on the official panel.

The whole pathetic performance then collapsed with the first remark of Bill Rogers of the SDP (of all people!). He said that while the Tories claimed the elections were a stunt, the whole world knew that if the Tories had thought they could win they would have fought the elections like a shot.

Ken Livingstone hit the nail right on the head with his victory speech when he said: 'When we set out to win this by-election it was to demonstrate that the government did not have a mandate to abolish the GLC. We won that when the Conservative Party refused to stand.'

In fact the opinion poll taken by Thames Television showed the extent of Labour's gain. In a GLC election 61 per cent of the population of London said they would vote

Labour. In a general election 49 per cent. In other words, the 'extremist' Labour GLC administration of Ken Livingstone is considerably more popular than the national Labour Party.

This reality also dished the attempt of the Alliance to run as 'pro-GLC anti-Livingstone' candidates. Labour slaughtered the Alliance, and Livingstone gained an immense personal triumph in winning eighty per cent of the vote against his Alliance opponent in Paddington.

The turn out wasn't as high as Labour would have liked — but that was due to low key press coverage before polling. Both the national and London press tried to give credibility to the Tories' case that the elections were irrelevant.

The by-elections were a solid Labour success. And a step forward in the campaign to save the GLC. The next step is the campaign to build a labour movement conference in London to plan out the fight to save the GLC.



Living quarters for 20 miners, Rand lease mine compound

South Africa: Miners of the world unite!

THE FIRST LEGAL strike of black miners in South African history ended only 24 hours after it started, leaving 9 miners dead and 250 wounded. The National Union of Mineworkers accepted a last-minute pay offer from the Chamber of Mines.

The workers had demanded a 20 per cent wage increase; the bosses offered 12 per cent. Eventually a 14 per cent increase was agreed plus holiday pay.

In the past, migrant workers in the mines only received a 'travel bonus' when they took time off to go and visit their families in the distant 'homelands'.

Not all the striking miners, however, went back to work. In the western areas, the miners were fighting not only for increased pay but also for union recognition. The so-called 'fracas' which the press referred to, was the battle between strikers and scabs who returned to work.

The police were called in, resulting in 250 people injured and 9 killed, according to official figures.

By last Thursday, 8000 miners were still on strike at the Hartbeesfontein mine.

As is usual in South Africa the unrest in the mines was attributed by management to 'tribal animosity' and 'agitators'. This is a palpable lie.

The strikes were not tribal in origin but a response to the low wage increases which go no way to meet the steep increases in the cost of living.

This year has seen a steep increase in the prices of basic necessities; the general sales tax has been

hiked to 10 per cent.

What the authorities feared was a repetition of the 1982 strikes which involved nearly 100,000 miners. This was the largest scale labour action to hit the mining industry since 1946 and the most costly in miners' lives since the shootings at the Oppenheimer-owned Carletonville mine in 1973.

Wages

The strikes in 1982 started in a similar way to the current ones. July is customarily the month when the Chamber of Mines announces wage increases.

On the wage issue, the workers' demands are two-fold. They want increases to compensate for inflation — to keep their wages at the same real value; and they want a new higher level of earnings —

their present wages still being a pittance.

In 1982, as today, the mine owners offered an increase of about 12 per cent. This means, in effect, that the black miners were being asked to accept a drop in their real incomes. The inflation level was running at 16 per cent.

Black mineworkers in South Africa are not only concerned about wages. They are also fighting for improved conditions of work. While he is working in the mines, the black miner knows no freedom.

Unlike the factory workers who leave for home at 5pm, the miner is confined to living out the term of his contract in the compound.

These compounds are huge, single-sex complexes. While some of the newer hostels are more spacious and have 16 men

per room, it is not uncommon to find 20 men crowded into tiny rooms.

In order to keep the miners divided, rooms and sections of the compounds are divided 'ethnically'. The very structure of the compounds is built in expectation of unrest. Most have only one tightly-controlled entrance.

The newer ones are built so that sections can be sealed off if necessary. At the slightest provocation the police are called in to 'restore order'. The police form a substantial part of management's industrial relations arsenal.

Black miners in South Africa live in an environment whose oppressiveness is total. By organising in the National Union of Mineworkers, they have taken the first necessary step to arm themselves for the fights which still lie ahead.

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Fund drive: close to a deal!

WE ARE NOW very close to clinching the deal for the building of our choice. As soon as it's absolutely definite we'll need that quick injection of cash we talked about last week. So get ready to dig deep soon.

Our plan for funds up to Christmas has received a good response so far. For October our black sections pamphlet will be out for Labour Party conference, and our miners' school takes place on 20 October.

For November we're planning a rally with the Sandinistas during their

tour. For December we plan a big Irish flavoured Christmas party. All the money for these projects will be counted towards the £10,000 that we need to change offices.

The whole of the paper staff will be moving around the country in the next month to work out plans for reaching this

target. It's a big priority for us so we hope it will be for you too.

Huddersfield supporters sent us £65 and someone walked into the office this week with a £16 anonymous donation. A few more like that wouldn't go amiss. But it's the big donations that can really get us going.

With the welcome return of the paper to a weekly schedule, and all the opportunities we are having for new sales in the miners' dispute, we're go-

ing to start organising the fund drive regularly through this column, keeping you completely up to date with plans and developments.

The Financial Times recognised that Socialist Action were right behind the NUM, whereas other left papers were carping on the sidelines.

Give us the backing we need to keep us right behind the NUM and every mass struggle against this rotten government.