

A **Socialist** ACTION



Photo: DAVE DRONFIELD

IF ANYONE was in doubt about what would be the most important issue at this year's Labour Party annual conference, Neil Kinnock has cleared their minds wonderfully well. Responding to the unexpected and unwanted, news that TUC congress had supported the demands of the NUM, he put the issue faced at Labour Party conference in a nutshell: he didn't support the miners, and if conference did then the Labour leadership would damn well ignore its decisions.

Kinnock has risked the wrath of every party member with such a statement because the question of what attitude to the miners is vital to the party's whole future. Kinnock's statement, as far as accountability is concerned, begins to take the party openly back to the worst days of Wilson and Callaghan.

The choice posed by the NUM resolution to this year's conference is not just about the miners — vital as that is. It is a choice about what type of party Labour will be. For step by step Neil Kinnock is taking the party down a path of going over to the fundamentals of Tory and Alliance policy. Already on a whole string of issues Kinnock has shown how far he is prepared to take the party: on Handsworth, on local government, and on incomes policy, to name but a few — but most of all on the miners.

It was the miners' strike which posed the alternatives for Labour most clearly: by the determination of the NUM national leadership to fight and win, and in the alliances with the oppressed sections of this society they built to strengthen the strike. The miners did more damage to Thatcher in twelve months than four previous years of Labour parliamentary opposition.

There is only one way that Labour can win a clear electoral victory, and that is if it fights for the support of the whole working class and its allies, by showing itself determined and capable of offering a real alternative to the austerity policies of Thatcher and her friends. And *that* means supporting all those in struggle against such policies *now* — not mouthing hollow promises about a different future under Labour whilst attacking those who are prepared to take on the Tories today.

The single most important way of showing that determination is support for the demands of the mineworkers' union: action for all those victimised because of the strike and the return of union money confiscated because of the strike.

Every Labour Party member, and every trade union militant must show where they stand by overwhelmingly supporting the resolution of the National Union of Mineworkers to this year's conference.

- See p2, 'Two Alliances for Labour'.
- See p5, 'Why Labour must support the miners'.



Photo: GM COOKSON

Labour must back the miners!

Socialist Action

The English Mitterand...

NO ONE on the left can be in any doubt about the road that Neil Kinnock has chosen to travel.

There were some who thought that his decision to abstain in the Benn-Healey battle for deputy leader in 1981 was a tactical difference with other left-wingers. And that Kinnock was still really with the left of the party.

There were others who pointed to his strong defence of unilateral nuclear disarmament and his record as an anti-apartheid campaigner and thought that he should be given a chance. Many gave him the benefit of the doubt.

And then came the miner's strike.

Neil made his views clear by April of the strike — joining those in the labour movement who attacked the NUM for not holding a ballot when 80 per cent of its members were on strike. He then boycotted the five rallies called by the NUM and denounced 'violence from both sides' — making no distinction between the state machine perpetrating violence and individual trade unionists who were responding out of self-defence for a just cause.

Scuffing at accountability Kinnock has stated that whatever conference decides he will not commit the next Labour government to release and reinstate the jailed and sacked miners and return the NUM's funds.

Having already pushed Labour Party EEC and disarmament policy to the right, Roy and Neil hope to steer economic policy well to the right. Denouncing the Handsworth riots as having origins in tribalism he stands four square against the demands of blacks and women in his own party.

To cap it all Neil has now spoken in favour of state funding of trade union ballots as if the AUEW right-wing needed any more help!

The record of the last two years is that Neil Kinnock has moved from left of centre towards the right so fast it's devastating.

No-one need have any doubt about what kind of government Kinnock will preside over — with David Owen or without. You need just look across the channel at the Mitterand government.

...and the French Kinnock

JUST in case we needed reminding what nasty things Socialist government's can get up to we need only look at the Greenpeace affair in France. After trying to deny and cover up the Mitterand government has now admitted that French military frogmen had been ordered to sink the Greenpeace flagship, Rainbow Warrior, while it was moored in New Zealand.

David Lange, the New Zealand Prime Minister who defends his government's non-nuclear policy, has charged the French government with 'affronting New Zealand's sovereignty' by carrying out what he considers an act of war and has demanded compensation. Laurent Fabius, French Socialist Prime Minister, admitted that the affair had been concealed from an official government report authored by Gaullist Bernard Tricot.

In establishing a new parliamentary commission and sacking Defence minister Charles Herhu, the French government is admitting that some people very high up are involved — perhaps even President Mitterand himself.

Having unleashed the largest right-wing racist movement in Europe today because of its austerity policies it has also refused to break with French nationalism and France's commitment to an independent nuclear foreign policy. Hence the terrorist attack on Greenpeace.

If anyone needed reminding what right-wing social democracy is all about they just have to look across the sea to France...then watch Kinnock next week in Bournemouth.

Two alliances for Labour

TWO ALLIANCES will confront each other in next week's Labour Party conference.

The first alliance, very much the stronger of the two, is symbolised inside the party by Kinnock and Willis — and their bloc with Hattersley and the TUC right-wing.

But in reality that bloc extends outside the Labour Party to far wider forces. In particular it is a bloc that extends to Steel, Owen and Thatcher.

The fundamental basis of that bloc is to accept, and institutionalise, the decisive changes brought about in British politics, society and economy by the Thatcher government.

Every day that goes by makes the basis of that bloc clearer. The first step was Kinnock's declaration, immediately after the 1983 election — and even before his election as party leader — that withdrawal from the EEC should be abandoned as Labour Party policy. Hattersley has since produced economic policies which abandoned even the pledge to renationalise the industries privatised by Thatcher. The next step was Hattersley's 'discovery' that recreating the exchange controls abandoned by Thatcher was 'unrealistic'.

Labour is now pledged to economic policies that in all essential structural features accepted the transformations brought about by the Thatcher government.

On the trade union field exactly the same shift is being carried through by Kinnock, Hattersley and Willis. The 1980, 1982 and 1984 Trade Union and Employment Acts were consciously modelled by Prior, Tebbit, King and Thatcher on the policies pursued by the right wing of the EETPU and AUEW.

The laws were not designed to smash the trade unions but to tighten the grip of the right wing bureaucracy over them, which is not inconsistent with weakening the unions overall and trying to really smash trade unionism in certain parts of the private and public sector.

The aim of the anti-union laws was to offer the trade union bureaucracy a definite, lower grade, position within the Thatcherite universe. The condition was that the practices of the EETPU and AUEW right wing were generalised throughout the trade union movement.

This is exactly the process we saw developing at this year's TUC congress. Willis and the TUC general council did not 'compromise' with the AUEW over acceptance of state funding for ballots. They capitulated to the AUEW leadership.

Kinnock took the logical next step in his major interview with the relaunched *Tribune* newspaper last week. Kinnock declared 'I don't think there is anything wrong, provided that there are real safeguards against loss of independence, with state finance.'

As the 'real safeguards against loss of independence' is completely pious what Kinnock really states is that he supports the AUEW right wing in its fight with the general council. Coupled with the abandonment of the pledge to repeal all the Tories trade union laws this means that Kinnock/Willis are now moving openly to accept that not only will the essential economic structure of Thatcher's Britain be maintained but so also will its new framework of trade union law.

In a third key area the policy is also clear. The consequences of Thatcher's economic and social policies inevitably mean constantly increasing attacks on democratic rights, and increasing repression, in Britain itself as well as in Ireland.

The unemployed, blacks, the inner cities, young people and many others have nothing on offer from Thatcher. The inevitability is of revolts of the type we saw in the 1981 explosion in the inner cities, in the fight of the miners for their jobs, in Handsworth, and in a thousand less publicised examples.

Far from explaining that rebellion and 'disorder' is an inevitable consequence of Thatcher's policies, and supporting those who revolt against them, Kinnock's leadership has thrown itself four-square behind repression — although naturally trying to cover themselves with mealy mouthed 'get out' clauses. Kinnock condemned the so-called violence of the miners. Hattersley categorised the black youth in Handsworth as 'criminals' and Kinnock engaged in disgusting racist outbursts on 'tribalism'.

Kinnock has demanded that councillors in Lambeth and Liverpool allow social services in their areas to be savaged.



While Kinnock undoubtedly does not aim at the same type of repressive policies as Thatcher, he in fact supports her policies on every crunch issue.

On repression, as on economy and trade union law, Kinnock is accepting the framework established by Thatcher — a framework which extends also to Steel and Owen.

The acceptance of the fundamental framework established by Thatcher does not of course prevent there being real differences on particular questions. Kinnock undoubtedly still supports a higher level of welfare spending, and more reflation of the economy, than Thatcher. Owen and Steel are also based in different, subordinate, sections of British capital than Thatcher. But all these are differences negotiable for the ruling class solely within the fundamental framework created by the Thatcher government.

It is this core of agreement which opens up the final perspective of Kinnock's policy. Given that Kinnock and Willis no

longer propose to reverse any of the fundamental structural steps of Thatcherism — but now simply demand changes on secondary questions — the way is opened up for agreement between Labour and the SDP-Liberal Alliance. The Alliance also demand to maintain in place the fundamental steps of Thatcherism but want definite changes on secondary questions.

The logical outcome of Kinnock and Willis' line is a coalition between Labour and the Alliance. The fact that this is today rejected by Kinnock, and that it is at present only the extreme right wing — the EETPU, AUEW, figures like Alistair Graham — who are prepared to openly consider collaboration between the labour movement and the Alliance does not alter the trend of development of Kinnock and Willis' course.

The logic of the present majority alliance of British politics is simple. It stretches from Kinnock and Willis, through Hammond and Laird, to Owen, Steel, and Thatcher. Its basis is to express real differences

on secondary questions but to accept and implement the fundamentals of what Thatcher has created.

The second, minority, alliance will also be seen at the Labour Party conference. Its cutting edge, its most advanced point, is the national leadership of the NUM. But it will also be seen in the black section of the Labour Party, and in those on the left of the party who strongly supported the miners throughout the strike — Skinner, Benn, and the Campaign group of MPs. It can be seen in Women Against Pit Closures and in the demands of the Women's Action Committee. It also exists as a minority in other unions, and in the CLPs.

It is to help promote that second alliance that Socialist Action is organising an 'Alliance for Socialism' weekend in November. To help create a forum in which different sections of the left can debate out a way forward for the labour movement. We hope all our readers will support it.

The battle for black sections

Why Black sections?

THE ISSUE of black sections will be, after the debate on amnesty for the miners, the most explosive question facing conference. Over thirty-five black sections have now been set up, the latest in Hattersley's own constituency. Here we print extracts from the black section newsletter's hard-hitting defence of black self-organisation.

Why do you want Black Sections in the Labour Party?

Black people have been loyal supporters of the Labour Party for years. In the 1983 General Election a Commission for Racial Equality survey suggested that more than 80% of Black voters who went to the polls voted Labour. Yet the Labour Party does not reflect this loyalty in its structure or in its policies.

At the level of representation, there are no Black MPs, no Black people on the NEC, far fewer Black Councillors than the proportion of Black people in the electorate, few Black people on regional or district executives, or on CLP General Committees. Few wards involve Black people in their activities.

At the level of policies, Labour governments and councils have generally done little to counter racism (the GLC is a notable exception). Past Labour governments have pursued policies which have not only allowed racist practices to continue, but have made matters worse — for example, the tightening of immigration laws and the Nationality Green Paper which laid the basis for the current Nationality Act. Remember, the police riot in Southall in 1979 which left Blair Peach dead occurred under a Labour Government.

The Labour Party Black Section believes all this must change and that it will only change if Black people in the Party organise to demand their right to representation and changes in policy. We believe Black Sections can help draw Black people into Labour Party activity, allowing them to organise to play a bigger role in their wards, unions, general committees and so on. Indeed this is what has tended to happen where Black Sections have been set up.

We have learnt from the histories of anti-colonial struggles, from black struggles in Britain and the rest of the world, from the struggles of women and gays and lesbians and from the struggles of the British labour movement, that the only way to fight against an oppression is for those who are the victims of that oppression to organise themselves to fight it.

Aren't Black Sections a form of apartheid in reverse?

What an insult to compare what we are doing to a violent and oppressive South African system which, as we can see on TV and in the papers, murders Black people every day. This argument is doubly insulting as many Black Section activists are in the forefront of the solidarity movement with the Azanian freedom struggle.

'Apartheid' means separate development. Black Sections aim to breakdown the separation which now exists whereby the overwhelming majority of Black voters vote Labour but the National Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Labour Party are all-white preserves.

Black Sections aim to involve more Black people in the Party at all levels, to encourage them to go to their wards and union meetings and to be elected to GCs, councillors and as PPCs/MPs. We propose a divisions for Black people on the NEC, the same as for women, youth, unions etc so that whatever the outcome of elections to other NEC places, there will always be Black involvement and representation, and not separation, at this high level of the Party.

How not to create unity has recently been illustrated in Liverpool. By ignoring the advice of

Black community workers and appointing Sam Bond as Race Relations Advisor, the Council succeeded in antagonising the Black community at a time when maximum unity against the Tory cuts was required. The Liverpool Black Caucus also opposes these cuts, particularly as they will hit Black people hardest, but it cannot unite with the Council on the basis of subservience.

Won't Black Sections split the Party?

The Party is split already with Black people excluded from positions of power. The real question is how do we build unity between black and white people and on what basis? The white leadership of the Party believes we can build unity if Black people keep quiet and if we ignore racism, particularly white working class racism. They fear antagonising racist Labour voters if they allow Black Sections to exist. Such a fear is a self-fulfilling prophecy. The cancer of racism threatens the unity of workers and is a barrier to the achievement of socialism. Racism won't go away if we pretend it doesn't exist.

The Labour Party must stop making excuses and tackle racism head-on including that which exists in its own ranks. Unity can only be built by fighting racism and it can only be built on the basis of equality between black and white people. This equality is not achieved by just saying it exists. It can only be achieved by recognising that Black



people are currently in an unequal position and that special measures need to be taken to redress the balance. These special measures include the right of Black people to organise to place demands on the Party and the creation of places on GCs, ECs, all the way to the NEC for Black Section representatives.

In addition, much discrimination takes place unconsciously. Saying one is treating people equally does not mean that one is in fact doing so. It is very easy to discriminate unconsciously by using procedures which indirectly discriminate on the basis of colour. Policies and practices need to be constantly reviewed and monitored to avoid such unconscious discrimination. Within the Labour Party, the Black Sections are an excellent instrument for monitoring and examining the policies and practices of the Party in and out of power.

Isn't it impossible to define who is black and therefore impossible to say who can and who can't join the Black Section?

The Home Office has no problem with definitions when it deports hundreds of our brothers and sisters or when it divides families. Police officers have no problems with definition when they harass Black youth. So why should we have problems? If you are oppressed by racism and identify yourself as Black, then you are welcome in the Labour Party Black Section.

For us Black is a political colour. We are not Black because we eat different food, speak different languages or enjoy different kinds of music. We are Black because we suffer from a common oppression — racism — and we will fight against all attempts to divide us into different ethnic groups.

Won't Black Sections just help Black careerists and do little in the fight against racism?

When we hear this point from white people we treat it with scorn. We would give the argument more weight if Black people in the Labour Party were allowed to develop their careers, but unfortunately

the racism within the party hinders this. Why is it we rarely hear described as such the hundreds of white careerists in Parliament, but whenever black politicians put themselves forward they are immediately denounced as careerists?

We treat this argument with more respect when it comes from Black activists who are worried about Black careerists selling out their struggles just as Labour Party activists have worried about MPs reneging on Party policy. We would simply answer that all movements contain careerists. The question is how do we control our representatives and make sure they are accountable? We believe that there is more chance of controlling Black 'leaders' with Black Sections than with the present system where so-called representatives of the Black community rely on white patronage for their token positions of power.

Isn't it policy that really matters? The Labour Party will only involve more Black people if it adopts policies which are attractive, not by internal constitutional change.

Bill Morris wins — thanks to Black sections

BILL MORRIS, the TGWU's first ever black deputy general secretary, is also set to be the Labour Party NEC's first black member. Three months ago he was not even on the TGWU shortlist. His rapid promotion is a backhand tribute to the relentless pressure of the black sections on the party leadership, which has chosen to upgrade a public opponent of black self-organisation. It highlights the seriousness of Kinnoch's counterattack. MIKE WONGSAM replies to Morris's claim that he won by 'using the system'.

AT THIS YEAR'S conference the Labour Party black section will face the most frontal assault from the party leadership it has yet seen.

Hitherto, black sections have engaged in

ideological debates, constituencies supporting them have faced threat and bluster, and leadership personalities have tried to placate them by proposing black rights campaigns, liaison officials and other such devices to outflank and incorporate them.

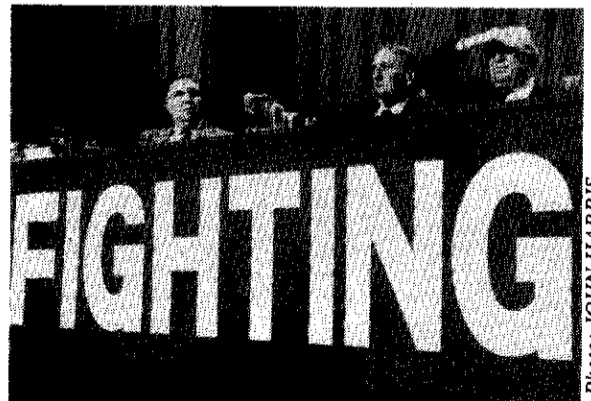
By Mike Wongsam, Labour Party black section national committee

These efforts have not worked. The black sections enter conference sporting some notable successes — black prospective parliamentary candidates who support black sections in winnable seats, formal backing from NUPE and the NUM, and black sections established in 35 CLPs.

Ironically, their greatest success is being used by the Kinnoch camp as

the spearhead of its assault on them. Bill Morris, deputy general secretary of the TGWU, was not even on the shortlist three months ago. Having secured the position, he now stands poised to become the Labour Party's first black NEC member — a tremendous victory for black people and a direct result of the pressure exerted on the Labour leadership by the combination of black revolt and black self-organisation. Yet Morris himself opposes black sections, and his appointment will be celebrated at conference as evidence that black people can win high position in the labour movement 'using the system'.

Bill Morris speaks in favour of 'black rights campaigns', 'real programmes' to combat racism', and so on. But delegates should look behind the rhetoric to the



...but not for black people. All-white platform at the 1980 TUC conference

real content of such proposals. The biggest test of our 'anti-racist' leadership was its attitude to black youth in Handsworth, who justly revolted against a rapid intensification of police operations in the area. Hattersley and Kinnochite Jeff Rooker led the pack in calling for

heavy policing and depouncing 'criminals and hoqligans'.

It is not enough to make general pronouncements against racism. The Labour Party must recognise the true condition of black people and support them when they struggle against it. A

Of course it is policies that matter and whether and how these policies are implemented. The Labour Party has to shed its history of complicity with racism and imperialism and become a party which champions the fight against racism and unequivocally supports liberation movements the world over. Black Sections exist and are being set up in growing numbers of constituencies precisely to ensure that the Party does this.

It is trite to counterpose the need to change Labour's policies to the need for Black people to organise in the Party. Unless Black people are represented at all levels in the Party there is not much hope that it will adopt policies that reflect the needs of Black people. Even with better Black representation, unless Black people organise to make their voice heard, the Party's policies will not change. The improvements in Labour's position on the Immigration and Nationality Acts have come about as a result of Black people organising in campaigns against deportations and against these Acts.

One can go further. Improved policies are no guarantee that a Labour Government will repeal racist legislation. Past Labour Governments have reneged on policies. We believe that Black people in the Party have to organise to stop this from happening and to make sure that the Party campaigns against racism now.

One thing is clear. If the Labour Party does vote to allow Black Sections it will be a big step forward politically as it will mean that the Party has recognised the depth of racism in British society and in the Party, and the importance of Black people organising themselves in the fight against racism.

leadership that cannot defend Handsworth's youth, that prostrates itself before the law and order lobby, cannot defend black youth in Newham, Brixton, Toxteth and Southall. And if they can't stand up to the 'law and order' lobby, what use are they in the battle against racism? Only black people themselves can advance the measures needed for their own defence.

Despite the manoeuvres, we are confident our momentum will continue. NUPE is the third largest union in the country. The next general election will probably see black MPs who back black sections. The weight of the NUM vote in the labour movement far exceeds its membership. We ask all black members of the TGWU: does Bill Morris represent your position on black sections. If not, then join the struggle for the TGWU black caucus now!

Hattersley faces black section

EIGHTY PEOPLE came to the launch meeting of the Birmingham Sparkbrook black section on 22 September despite fierce opposition from Roy Hattersley, MP for Sparkbrook.

Among the speakers were Keith Vaz, PPC for Leicester East, black councillors from Birmingham and Nottingham, and officers of the black sections national committee.

Godfathers

Since the decision to form a black section was taken, Hattersley and his 'ghetto godfathers' have done everything they could to prevent the launch going ahead.

Hattersley's opposition has become even more rabid since he got wind of a Channel Four documentary alleging malpractices in his constituency. Due for screening on Thursday 26 September in the 'Bandung File' series, the programme deals with the mass recruitment of Asians to the party, political patronage and the marshalling of votes through the ghetto godfathers.

Hattersley, unsettled by these issues, has described the allegations as 'beneath contempt'. What are really

beneath contempt are the measures Hattersley and his supporters have gone to to retain their grip on the constituency's black vote.

One week before the launch of the black section the constituency officers issued a letter to all Executive and General Committee members. The letter drew their attention to an article in the *Sunday Times* of 15 September on the row, and to the article's reference to the launch.

'It is clear', the letter said, 'that no member should take part in the organising of such a meeting, or make comments about it to the media.'

Discipline

An executive committee meeting has been called for 23 September and is expected to try and discipline anyone involved.

In his speech at the meeting Marc Wadsworth, speaking on behalf of the black section steering committee, spoke of the opposition to black sections

in the Labour Party. In particular he attacked the hundred or so MPs like Hattersley who represented constituencies in which black people held the balance of power, but who bitterly opposed black people having an independent voice in the party.

'You know the old story', he said 'they say that one black person is a token, two is a threat and three is a riot'.

Demands

But Wadsworth also attacked the ghetto godfathers, 'who are prepared to shake hands with bankrupt MPs and are prepared to have their heads tapped on the back' in exchange for hundreds, if not thousands, of votes.

Black sections, Wadsworth argued, like the one in Sparkbrook, represented a change in direction: 'we are moving away from patronage. We are moving away from deference. We are now making demands.

'We are here to stay, black and brown. We are going nowhere. We are in Britain and we want our slice of the cake, both economic and political.'

Perhaps it's that that really unsettles Hattersley.



Birmingham councillor Amir Khan is spearheading the move to a Sparkbrook black section

Manchester on collision course

A SERIES of disputes between labour councils and black people have recently highlighted labour movement racism. Manchester city council looks set for another such conflict, provoked by its rejection of black demands for a race committee. **TREVOR WONGSAM** reports.

Tension between Manchester's black organisations and the city council came to a head on Friday 13 September at a packed meeting called by the Ethnic Minority Rights Council. This umbrella body, including West Indian, Bangladeshi, African, Chinese, Sikh and Moslem organisations, was formed after Manchester city council decided in January, by a single vote majority, to reject demands from black community representatives for a separate race unit.

The council opted instead for a race sub-committee of its equal opportunities unit, established last year with a quarter million pound budget to fulfil the council's pledge to 'positive policies' to combat all direct and indirect forms of discrimination in the city.

The black community's representatives, in numerous meetings with councillors, has since fought for a separate race unit because of the scale and nature of the problems of racism.

Wedge

Black people are angry that the council has not stood by its own pledge to consult and to take the views of oppressed groups into consideration. The dispute threatens to drive a wedge between the black community and the Manchester Labour Party.

'There are two kinds of racists in our society', says the EMRC in a letter to council leader Graham Stringer, 'those who hate

the blacks, and those who know what is good for the blacks.' The council, it says, is in danger of falling into the latter category.

Refuting the charge from some town hall quarters that EMRC spokespeople are in league with the old right wing to pursue personal advance, the EMRC points to the unanimous votes in support of its demands at large meetings held in black and Asian areas throughout the city.

The latest turn of events follows a meeting between the EMRC and Manchester MPs Bob Litherland and Tony Lloyd in July, after which the MPs, who stressed they were acting only as mediators, proposed an interim compromise to the council leader involving a sub-committee of the council's policy committee 'as a gesture of good will.'

Fury

The council now seems set to reject even this compromise. Such was the fury greeting the council's spokesperson on 13 September that the meeting agreed almost unanimously to break off all relations with the council if there were no immediate results.

The violent split in Liverpool between the black caucus and the city council should be a warning. If Labour ignores the just demands of black people it will shoulder the blame for dividing the movement. These lessons must be learned, and learned well, by all labour activists and supporters.

Handsworth campaign gets going

THE Handsworth legal defence campaign, involving Afro-Caribbean and Asian organisations, is planning its first public meeting next Friday 27 September.

The meeting, which will be held at Holte school in the Lozells Road area, will be the first forum in which the issues raised in the 'riot' can be discussed

By Mick Archer

out. One key objective will be to dispel any suggestions that the trouble was caused by 'racial' tension between Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities. A demonstration may also be called by the defence campaign in the near future.

The idea of a demonstration was first publicly floated by Birmingham Trades Council. In a meeting convened by them on 16 September they proposed a march on the issue of 'jobs for youth'. The defence campaign rejected this proposal on the grounds that any initiative had to come from the black organisa-

tions themselves and would have to confront broader issues affecting their communities, in particular the issue of racism. In the light of this stance the proposed march was dropped and the labour movement organisations present pledged their support for any initiative taken by the defence campaign.

To organise these events, the legal defence of the black youth arrested will require extensive resources. An immediate task is to get speakers from the defence campaign around to as many labour movement bodies as possible, where they can raise both political and financial support.

• The defence campaign can be contacted by writing to: HLDC, 104 Heathfield Road, Handsworth, Birmingham.

• At the time of going to press details of the defence committee public meeting have not been confirmed. Readers should therefore phone the defence committee on 021-554 0026/2747 to confirm this.

Interview with Clare Short

LAST WEEK Clare Short, Labour MP for Birmingham Ladywood, attended a press conference at the Asian Resources Centre near Handsworth's Lozells Road. Chaired by Avtar Joughl of the Indian Workers' Association it involved representatives of several Asian and Afro-Caribbean organisations and the recently established Handsworth Legal Defence Campaign.

Why was the press conference held and why did you participate in it?

Because it was very important. It was a coming together of Asian and

Afro-Caribbean progressive organisations to say that this malicious line that was being developed through the media — that the real cause of all the trouble was conflict between the Afro-Caribbean

and Asian communities — was completely false. It seemed to me that the Labour Party should be seen to be behind that stance.

At the time of the press conference it was announced that 257 people had been arrested. Now it's more than 300. You yourself said at the press conference that you had phoned the police at 2am on Tuesday and there were only two arrests at that time. What do you feel about the number of arrests so far?

I think the police are trying to arrest lots of people in order to suggest that they are in control of the situation. But in fact they have gone for a number of strategies.

It's the view of many people, and I think I share it, that the police basically abandoned Handsworth in the early part of the riot and that's why the looting took hold so badly. I don't think anyone should romanticise that: lots of the shops that were looted had families living upstairs who were absolutely petrified.

These are families that work enormously long hours to make a living. They are not rich capitalists or anything like that.

But at 2am on Tuesday, which was when the major thing was over, only 10 people had been arrested. There are now over 300. The police have been hauling young people off the streets ever since in order to try and suggest

that they were controlling the situation. And I think the odds on lots of people being innocent are very high indeed.

Do you think there is a real danger of racist elements exploiting the media line about the divisions between Afro-Caribbean and Asians? For instance the speech by Enoch Powell calling for repatriation and reports that the British National Party have thrown leaflets from moving cars saying that it is the politicians who have supported 'the black invasion' of this country who are to blame for what occurred?

I think there's a real contradiction here. Some right-wing elements and certainly the media have tried to run the line that the whole cause is conflict between the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities, and indeed tried to inflame such a conflict that didn't exist. But then the extreme, crude racists come in — Enoch Powell and the British National Party — and of course attack both communities without exception.

They are hostile to both the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities. There's a weird irony there that the force of their pressure could be to make the two communities understand that they have to stand together.

Do you think the events in Handsworth and the issues involved will come up at Labour Party conference, and if so what sort of line do you think the Labour

**LABOUR PARTY
BLACK SECTION**

FRINGE MEETING

THURSDAY, 3rd OCTOBER

AT THE

WESSEX HOTEL,

WEST CLIFF ROAD

Photo: ANNETTE SANDY HELEN CARR (TURCO)

Photo: LEROY

THE reason that the NUM resolution to this year's Labour Party conference should be supported is because that resolution comes from the organisation that is most closely involved with the problems. Consequently, Labour Party delegates should recognise that we know best how to formulate a policy that will suit our requirements.

It is a resolution that has already attracted the support of the TUC, and we would hope that the votes cast in the TUC congress will be repeated or indeed increased at the Labour Party conference.

We recognise other resolutions as an attempt to be supportive of us, but in some ways they could prove counterproductive. If they are defeated, they could — and would — be used by the media to undermine the benefits obtained at the TUC. I would hope that constituency parties would consider withdrawal of these resolutions.

The question of amnesty is dealt with in the first two requests listed in our resolution: a complete review of all cases of miners jailed as a result of the dispute and by the guarantee of reinstatement of all miners sacked for activities arising out of the dispute.

The NUM resolutions should give the Labour Party conference an opportunity to unite behind what is the positive and acceptable policy of the NUM. I hope for even greater support from those trade unions who abstained or chose to vote against our resolution at the TUC, and on this occasion we hope that the constituency parties will demonstrate their support as indeed they did during the dispute.

I disagree with the arguments of those who say that supporting our resolutions will damaged the chances of Labour at the next election. There are many examples where positive action and positive leadership has seen an increase in support from rank and file workers and the electorate.

One example is the activities and leadership of Arthur Scargill himself. Another is the activities in my own Chesterfield Labour Party where, since Tony Benn became our

Why Labour must support

AS LABOUR Party conference prepares to debate the NUM resolution calling for action on all miners victimised and the reimbursement of all union money confiscated as a result of the strike, Neil Kinnock is making his lack of support for the miners clearer than ever. His statement after the success of a parallel resolution during the recent TUC congress — 'I'm going to be the next prime minister and I decide what goes into the manifesto' — sums up exactly what's at stake with this, the single most important resolution at conference.

The methods of struggle of the NUM leadership are totally at odds with the sort of Labour Party that Kinnock wants to lead. That is why the NUM resolution is of such crucial importance — because it represents a battle for the future of the party as a whole.

At the same time that Kinnock is making his position clear, a report from the National Coal Board states theirs: up to 30 per cent of current capacity is likely to go over the next two or three years. This encapsulates the choice for Labour Party activists: support the struggle of the miners and any other section of the working class prepared to confront the Tory attacks, or capitulate to the Tories' project of forcing the cost of the crisis onto the shoulders of the workers.

JOHNNY BURROWS, an NUM delegate to party conference and chair of Chesterfield Labour Party told CAROL TURNER why support for the NUM resolution is vital, while NUM leader JACK COLLINS explained exactly how the Coal Board plans to proceed in Kent — by closing all the pits despite their viability.



the miners

'Coal Board double-talk'

MINERS are at a loss to understand the reasons for the present Coal Board policy. It is yet another example of the Board's double-talk.

The Board has said that irrespective of the efforts of the labour force at Tilmanstone, they will close the mine. Referring to an area at Tilmanstone called The Fives, where coal is presently mined, the Coal Board bosses said a couple of years ago that: 'the development of Fives would give access to an area with 10-15 years seams and in about five years' time we could be looking into the lower seams'. That is seam no 7.

After a great deal of persuasion by this union the Board agreed to drive two tunnels into a lower seam at Snowdown. During that period Board area

director, Rawlinsong, said that as far as no 7 and no 8 seams are concerned 'they could be forgotten'.

Now they have reached no 7 seam, a 7 inch thick seam of coal. According to area manager McAlpine last Thursday, the seam consisted of high quality coking coal with the added advantage of being low in ash content, and what's probably more important, low in sulphur. Those clean-burning qualities would appeal to all those concerned with the problem of acid rain.

Seam no 7, in common with the rest of the coalfield covers a triangle between Canterbury, Pegwell and Hythe, and extends beyond into the channel. They should be going into the seams at Tilmanstone which is three miles away, as they have at

Snowdown.

Instead of talk about closing the coalfield, they should be expanding it. The Board could turn both these pits into brand new pits at a cost of about £3 million. All the structures are already there. Sacking men at Tilmanstone, by comparison, will cost £7 million.

It's possible that these seams are being held back till the Board's big business friends come along; and it's also possible that the Board wants the Kent miners out of the way. The Coal Board say there are tremendous losses but they are sitting on top of millions of tons of valuable coal and not working it. We're talking about 100 square miles of coal, and there aren't many seams of that thickness.

Deep division in South Wales

DEEP DIFFERENCES between south Wales NUM leaders and the national union emerged at the first meeting of the Wales congress in support of the mining communities.

Research officer Kim Howells, speaking on behalf of the south Wales executive, launched a bitter attack on socialists who, he said, were endangering the chances of getting jobs back by their campaign for amnesty. The best way to win reinstatement was to elect a Labour government.

South Wales, he said, had opposed the NUM's resolution to Labour Party conference because it would jeopardise Neil Kinnock's chances. He claimed south Wales had the best record of any area in winning jobs back, with only seven miners still sacked, and waxed bitter

over new area director Cliff Davies' denial of the 'secret deal' struck with his predecessor, Phil Weekes, when south Wales returned to work.

Sharp differences arose over miners Shankland and Hancock, serving life sentences for the murder of taxi driver David Wilkie. Delegates from the south west were keen to campaign against their conviction. But Kim Howells and executive member Dave Hartwell claimed the families were against such a campaign and accepted that they should be in prison.

Howells and Hartwell launched a bitter attack on the left who, they said, were exploiting the situation. Monmouthshire area of the NUM were also attacked for their proposals on the campaign.

Ron Thomas from Bristol TGWU had to remind congress that one of its central aims was to campaign around victimis-

ed miners.

It was left to representatives of victimised Phurnacite workers, and Penrhwiweiber NUM, who are fighting closure, to put forward action proposals to congress. Both asked it

to campaign for support. Speaking tours were set up in Bristol and the West Country.

These initiatives contrasted sharply with the South Wales NUM policy, which whilst supporting an

individual lodge against closure, has done little to campaign or build for support. Whilst south Wales NUM leaders continue on their present course, clashes with the national union appear certain.

Coventry strike reinstatement

THE THOUSAND miners at Coventry colliery in Warwickshire were virtually solid when they went out on 24-hour strike last Wednesday in support of five of their work mates.

The five went to an industrial tribunal after being victimised for supporting the NUM's year-long strike. They won their case with the tribunal, but the Coal Board refused to reinstate them. It is obvious that the Coal Board

does not want to take back miners who defended their communities and fought for their jobs.

By Hanna Khamis

One of the victimised miners, Dennis Evans said: 'none of us thought that we would get so much support for what we were doing. This was the first strike over reinstatement in the country. I think it shows that we were wanted back by the lads.' The strike was supported by men who worked throughout the year-long

strike shows that in Coventry pit — the only Warwickshire pit which backed the NUM — militancy is still strong.

The industrial tribunal compensated the men, but the Coal Board is under no obligation to give them their jobs back.

Colin Wall and Nev Bell, two other sacked miners from the pit, said, 'compensation was no use. We want our jobs back. The issue is reinstatement. If we are rehired we will lose our pensions. It would be like we just started on the job.'

Kent — branch officials thrown off NCB property

TERRY HARRISON is the branch secretary of Betteshanger lodge. In June 1984 striking miners occupied this pit and management asked Terry to go down and persuade his members to end the occupation. This he agreed to do.

On 26 June Terry received a notice of dismissal from the NCB for alleged 'gross misconduct' arising from his role in the occupation. Eight of the eleven members of the branch committee at Betteshanger have lost their jobs as a result of the strike, including the chair, the treasurer and the vice chair.

The NCB has obtained injunctions to prevent anyone sacked trespassing on NCB property. This means union officials have been prevented from using the union office at the pit head.

This information in this box was compiled from the June/July pilot issue of Pitwatch, 9 Poland St, London W1

Scotland — large scale sackings

TWO HUNDRED and two miners have been dismissed in Scotland. Albert Wheeler, until recently the Scottish Area director, has refused to reinstate any miners.

The branch secretary at Bilston Glen is one of those still sacked. Charged with a breach of the peace he was found not guilty at Edinburgh's Sheriff Court.

Of those dismissed in Scotland 83 per cent have only been charged with breaches of the peace, not 'damage to property' as claimed by the media and the NCB. Forty three per cent of those sacked held official union positions and a further 28 per cent are known to have played an active role in the strike.

Notts — unfair dismissal

TWENTY FOUR miners have been sacked by the NCB in Nottinghamshire. Ken Petney from Blidworth remains sacked by the NCB despite the case against him being dismissed the day before the miners strike ended.

Police charged Ken with 'malicious wounding and grievous bodily harm' after a fight took place between working and striking miners. Ken waited a year before his trial came up in Nottingham Crown Court during which time he was fired. The evidence of the working miners testifying against Ken was so ludicrously inaccurate that the jury burst into laughter several times.

The NCB has not budged, knowing that Ken was very committed to the strike. His case is awaiting the outcome of an industrial tribunal.



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

WHAT DO you think will be the key issues facing this year's conference?

I think you've got to start with two sides of the picture. One is what's actually happening. The government is losing support very widely in the country because of the policies they are pursuing.

Therefore there is a genuine desire, and belief, in the possibility of a Labour government. I think the movement's feeling is that we have moral responsibility to do everything we can to win. That's the first thing.

I think the second thing is that there are issues we've got to be clear about. We must stick by the miners. We must stick by Liverpool and Lambeth council. We must stick by our own people.

My guess would be — I can't forecast exactly but my guess would be — that there would be very widespread support at the conference for a resolution of the type put to the TUC on the miners — whatever the NUM come forward with. There will be a strong commitment to Liverpool and Lambeth.

I think if you look a bit further ahead, as the prospects of the election get nearer, we've got to ask ourselves very clearly what we're going to say to the new appeal which the establishment are promoting, that we want a hung parliament.

I think we've got to say to people quite openly what a hung parliament would mean. It would mean a paralysed parliament. I would mean endless compromises and shifts. It would mean that power would rest where it does rest anyway — with the civil service, the media, the companies, the banks and so on.

We've got to warn people against a hung parliament. The reason that this is important is that the hung parliament is the end product of the 'anti-Thatcherite' campaign.

If you say we must concentrate on Thatcher, and say we've all got to have an alliance against Thatcher, you're playing for a hung parliament. And a hung parliament would not give us the power to do what needed to be done.

A couple of other aspects stand out — if I review the whole area. We've got to think very very carefully about what would happen when a Labour government is elected. What pressures would be put upon it, how it would deal with unemployment, what its relations would be with the banks, the city, the multinationals, how we'd cope with the treaty of Rome, what would happen vis a vis the Americans and so on. That is something I would call 'preparing for victory.'

The last point, which is on the agenda, and which is of great importance, is about the nature of the party itself. Because with all the problems we've had in the past, and all the disappointments there have been, the Labour Party is the *only* vehicle for social transformation. It potentially contains within itself everybody who would be needed to make that transformation. But it is too narrowly based.

Therefore the question of black sections, the question of women's rights, the question of further affiliations, the question of undemocratic expulsions — which is an attempt to narrow down our base still further — all these are on the agenda. I think the conference, if it is to be successful, will need to give a lead and come to clear decisions on all

these matters.

I don't think anyone wants a personal attack on others. I don't think the personality side is of any relevance whatever in internal party politics, any more than it has any relevance in external party politics. Therefore whatever we say has got to be a principled presentation of a point of view.

That means there are no circumstances in which you'd accept an agreement between the Labour Party and the Alliance?

No circumstances whatever.

We talk about the Alliance but the only true alliance is the Owen-Thatcher alliance.

We've got to be clear on what we are about. We're there to protect our people. And you cannot protect your people if you dilute your policy in an agreement. That was what paralysed us during the Lib-Lab pact and contributed very substantially to our defeat in 1979.

I think that if we'd said we are going to put forward our policies, and if anyone brings us down they face an election on the issue on which they brought us down, then we'd have done much better in the subsequent election than by going along with a diluted policy, and disillusioning our own people.

There seems to be two contradictory processes in British politics. On the one hand there is no doubt that there are strong right wing pressures — not merely from the Tories and the SDP but within the labour movement. The EETPU and AUEW are consolidated right wing forces. But on the other hand you have consolidated left wing radical forces — which are now a minority, but at the same time are much more combative than anything we've seen for a long time.

How do you see the situation?

I think there's something in that. But when you look back at the post-war Labour government it wasn't a minority of right wing trade union leaders, it was a *majority* of right wing trade union leaders.

During the Gaitskell years, which I remember very well, the parliamentary leadership was a very right wing leadership. And it was protected at conference after conference by the



Photo: DAVE DRONFIELD

praetorian guard of right wing trade union leaders. So I think you have to have a reasonable historical sense.

You say that the radicalisation of the labour movement may be a minority strain. But I don't think it is. I think that it's a majority strain. But I don't think that the majority of people in the Labour Party would go along with what's tended to be a very personalised form of left critique.

I myself have been turned off, indeed repelled, by the idea that the left's function is to find the next person who's betrayed us and identify them and build it all up on that basis.

Because the will to win, plus the distrust of all personalities in politics, have combined to make people say 'look, if you're telling us to back the miners we're with you', 'if you're telling us to back Liverpool we're with you', 'if you want really full employment, that's millions of new jobs, we're with you'.

But if you want us to join up in pointing the finger of scorn at whoever the last person is to have shifted to the right, then we're not with you. And if you're asking us to engage in an internal struggle against individuals then we're not with you.

How do you assess the significance of what happened in Handsworth?

I think Handsworth is an example of the end product of Tory policies. It's a very interesting coincidence that the day the riots broke out in Handsworth the government decided to surcharge, bankrupt, and disqualify the Lambeth and Liverpool councillors.

The other point is the way in which the media covers things. They absolutely ignore pressing problems. I think only thirty out of two hundred and eighty West Indian youth in Handsworth had been able to get jobs in the last twelve months. There's no coverage of that whatever in the right wing press.

It's only when you have a riot that Panorama, Insight, World in Action, and articles in the papers examine it.

What Handsworth shows is what we know. That if a democratic, socialist, labour movement political alternative is not opened up — if the GLC is abolished, if the Metropolitan councils are abolished, if rate capping's introduced, councillors are hounded and driven out of political life, and if attempts are made to destroy the miners — if you try to remove the democratic option then you will get, put crudely, rioting.

People don't plan a riot. A riot is the product of a straw that breaks the camel's back.

I think there is no doubt that policing played a large part in it.

Community policing, which is no solution to the problem but which is clever policing, was abandoned in favour of the riot type policing. And if you send in an occupying force whenever anything happens — practiced in northern Ireland, in the miners' strike, at Greenham Common, and now used in Handsworth — then all these factors come together.

What it indicates to me is why the Tory Party and the establishment are terrified of Mrs Thatcher. Because at a certain stage if this got out of control then they think there might be, as there would be, an overwhelming landslide to Labour. So that's why they're building up Steel, building up Owen, building up the wets, building up the anti-Thatcher alliance.

Because the purpose of the hung parliament, the coalition, proportional representation, the SDP and so on, is to fend off a Labour victory. But they know something has got to change because riots of this kind really are very, very frightening to a government.

Just to take some aspects of the international situation. What do you think needs to be done by the labour movement about South Africa?

I think you have to step up the pressure for a break in diplomatic relations and for sanctions.

I think you also have to relate it to what's happening at home. Britain is a big investor in South Africa — because

they've made a big profit out of it.

One of the most hypocritical things is to present apartheid as if it were something that the 'Afrikaners' were doing to the blacks. It's actually something *we're* doing to the blacks with the help of the Afrikaners — I'm using crude language.

It's a British problem as well. If you were to tackle it properly you would have to tackle the way in which capital in Britain has made a profit here and sent it to areas where Botha's police were keeping the trade unions down and where bigger profits could be made.

I've got the figures. £1100 in capital has been exported from Britain for every man, woman and child in Britain since Mrs Thatcher came to power. It means you tighten your belt in accordance with what the Treasury say, and make a profit for your employer, and he sends it to South Africa. He then brings it back as dividends which he gets and you don't.

I think a lot of our arguments now have to interlock issues. Starvation in Ethiopia while the Common Market burns £207 million worth of food. They spend £500 million on the Falklands. They decided to highlight their hostility to the Russians with the 'Brave Defender' exercise — and expel Soviet people from the London embassy.

I think our job is to connect. Because when you connect otherwise disconnected issues they come together in a way that gives people a new perception about what is happening.

I think apartheid should be put in its proper connection, and linked to the fact that Namibia provides the uranium to go into the nuclear power stations that the government wants to build, out of which comes the plutonium that goes to America that comes back as a warhead that goes to Greenham Common.

The power stations undermine the miners, the nuclear weapons build up the cold war and so on. If you can connect these up — and it's not a difficult thing to do — then I think you've got an envelope in which your argument is contained which registers with people.

It's the very opposite to saying 'all we've got to do is get rid of Mrs Thatcher and all our problems are solved.' That has tended to be the way in which some of these arguments are presented.



That is a great danger because it ends up as a hung parliament and no public support for what you want to do — therefore no backing when you are criticised and pressurised from the boardrooms.

One very sharp issue at this year's conference will be over the question of black sections. How do you see that?

I'm one hundred per cent in favour of black sections. When you look back at 1918 — when the Labour Party was founded in its modern form — the trade unions and the Independent Labour Party were affiliated. Paul Robeson affiliated later, as did the Fabian Society. You can see that what happened in 1918 was that the progressive forces of one type or another, together with the unions, came together to form a socialist party.

If you had a founding, or reforming conference now, which I think we should have, then obviously the black sections would be a part of it. You might find the Indian Workers' Association would want to affiliate, women would demand greater rights and other progressive groups might want to affiliate.

Many so called 'registered' groups, which were only invented in order to justify expulsions, would be recognised as legitimate strands of opinion, and would be affiliated.

And I think at some stage the Labour Party will have to bring itself into line with the nature of the support which it wants by changes in its own constitution. Of that I'm pretty sure.

You stressed very much the necessity to link issues at present. There have been quite a lot of attempts by people to create different types of organisations on the left of the Labour Party at the present time. How do you see those? And how do you see the role of the Campaign groups of MPs in relation to those?

It's a good question because during the deputy leadership campaign in 1983 there was the Rank and File Mobilising Committee set up, which was a loose grouping of people around a particular question: to follow up the electoral college with a candidate who was committed to party policy. That ended with the hairsbreadth defeat the 1981 conference.

There are a whole range of organisations in existence trying to do this.

My own view is that the best way to unite people on the left is around issues. I think that if you are campaigning for something — even the deputy leadership was a discrete issue in the sense that it was a campaign that ended with a particular vote and that explained

alist alliance

ed why people hung together in that period even although there were a lot of differences. But if you look at what needs to be done now it is so clear that you have got to defend people who are fighting for their rights. And around that you can find great unity. And not just unity on the left, unity within the party.

Over the period since the election you've been associated with a number of policy and campaign initiatives — for example the question of amnesty, and beginning a discussion in the party on the question of NATO. What are the issues which you think need to be opened up at the present time?

One of the effects of breaking the consensus, which is what Mrs Thatcher's deliberately done — I didn't believe in the consensus either but I wouldn't have broken it her way — is to open up things that have been hitherto undiscussable.

Look at the legislation that has been drafted through the Campaign Group. Such as the democratic amnesty bill in the 1982, to provide an amnesty for local councillors, or the bill making it illegal to have nuclear bases in Britain. These were before the 1983 election.

Since then there's been the Land Bill, the bill to terminate jurisdiction in the North of Ireland, the Reform Bill, which is a very radical measure showing how major reforms could be undertaken with a piece of legislation, and the amnesty bill to which you referred.

What we are doing is putting items back on the agenda for the movement. That is a function that I think has to be performed to allow natural campaigns to grow around them. Then when the campaign reaches the point where it can be converted into a hard policy commitment you punch it into place, as the movement says, 'We want that done.'

What is so interesting for me is that if you take the miners amnesty bill, for example, it was introduced at the end of June. It was criticised as something that couldn't be meant seriously. And in a modified form it became the policy of the TUC.

So the speed with which an item, if it is put on the agenda, can win a majority is something which we sometimes underestimate.

I think that the NATO question for



Photo: DAVE DRONFIELD



example — which is something that I myself had not argued until about a year back, but thinking it through it is something that had to be raised — I notice that at the last international committee of the executive there were five resolutions from local parties on that question.

I wouldn't expect a change on NATO at this year's conference, or a decision about land at this year's conference, or even a decision on Ireland at this year's conference. But I think these seeds are growing in the ground. And out of that will come some very significant change of policy.

What do you think about the argument that various people who are engaging in struggles are losing Labour votes? The idea, for example, that Scargill lost the Radnor by-election?

I think it's totally false. I think indeed that the poll gain that Labour seems to have had in the last six months is attributable to the miners — and the miners support groups, Women Against Pit Closures, women's action groups, and so on.

Although there is a school of thought, which I do not share, which says that the only thing that held back a recovery of the Labour vote earlier was the miners' strike. I take quite the contrary view.

People may not all agree with what Arthur was saying and doing — because if you live in an area where there are no pits the complexity and significance of what is said may be lost on you. But people were prepared to make sacrifices to see the miners were not hammered into the ground.

Mrs Thatcher's fall in popularity corresponded to the year of struggle

The public are not stupid. They don't take the view that a conflict on a picket line is the same as an act of terrorism or that what happened is criminal in any sense. They differentiate between a principled stand and criminal action.

The intention of the government is to criminalise all dissent. But people know the difference. Our position would have been infinitely stronger if from the outset there had been a clear principled and unquestioning support given at every level of the party and the trade unions — and continuing through to the local government battles. That would have helped.

The amazing thing is that without that unqualified support there still is so much public sympathy and support for what's been done.

I've never seen any conflict in politics between the principled position, and winning, because all my experience shows that if you try and slip through without any difficulties people see through you and say 'We want a clear stand.'

— particularly now when things are so desperately difficult and when people are really frightened.

They want to be sure that if there is a Labour government something will be done.

And that means giving the same support to Liverpool, or Lambeth, or black people in Handsworth as was given to the miners?

Absolutely without question.

How would you compare the state of the left today with the situation say in the 1940s or 1950s?

Much much stronger for a whole range of reasons.

The miners' strike was the most historic struggle against injustice, and for trade unionism, we've seen this century. I don't know where you'd have to go back to find a parallel. That has raised consciousness, raised hope, recreated an organisation, reminded people of the need for trade union solidarity.

So in that sense, despite the tragedy of what is happening, I think the left is very much better placed.

I also think the left is more international now. Again I think the miners' strike has played a part.

All these solidarity committees that have grown up have a big influence.

You can't have a meeting now without the Nicaraguans, the South Africans, the Iranians, the Turks, the Cypriots, the Chileans. Indeed in Chesterfield we've set up an international committee.

So in terms of depth of understanding, internationalism and confidence I think the left is very strong — much stronger than it was when I was first elected in 1950. Much stronger than it was in 1935 when I was ten and campaigning for the Labour Party.

I looked at the old literature. It was quite radical language but it hadn't got anything like the backing behind it that exists today.

But I think it's necessary to have an even longer historical perspective than that. I believe that by what Thatcher has done — that is go for naked capitalism and use the state to suppress the working class, which is what her policy is — she has actually reopened every major question that has ever been agitating in British history. These questions have been put back on the agenda.

It's a very important time for us to be rereading our history. Because if you do think it's the first time it's ever happened, you don't believe you can win. Actually we've had much worse situations in the past and we've come back much stronger.

The difference between then and now is that with the socialist pioneers they were doing it for the first time. They never knew that it was possible to

win. We're not pioneers. We're simply re-establishing a strength for Labour. But re-establishing it now against a perspective which is much clearer in the light of experience — namely that you've got to change the structure of the state, and the structure of economic power in Britain.

Otherwise Labour governments could become a sort of ambulance, an intensive care unit for capitalism, until it recovers and then you hand it back to the old gang.

I'm basing it first on an attempt to understand my lifetime's political experience. And then to set it alongside a longer perspective which I think should always be in the back of our minds — because that gives us strength and confidence in what otherwise look like very dark days.

So the core of your thinking remains the indissoluble unity of democracy and socialism, and you're confident that's going to defeat Thatcher?

Yes — socialism is about morality and democracy. Morality in the sense that it's about the values of society. The root of socialism after all is some moral obligation — both international and national.

But the democratic sword is one you must sharpen. Because the democratic sword is the thing they're really frightened of.

I'm drafting another Bill based on the Trade Union Act of 1984. The Trade Union Act says workers have got to have a ballot to elect their union executive, they've got to have a ballot before there is industrial action, and they've got to have a ballot before political funds are authorised.

Take out the word 'trade union', and put in the word 'company', and provide for a ballot for the election of directors, a ballot before industrial action — which means the export of capital, closing plant — a ballot of the workers before a company can pay any money to the Tory party.

You can actually use the democratic weapon Thatcher has fashioned for her own purposes to try and turn the unions against each other. But you take that sword which she has roughly prepared and say now we're going to use it to change capitalism.

The answer to privatisation is democratisation — it's not the recreation of the Morrisonian corporate state. We are going to democratise industry and in the process, of course, acquire it, with the nationalisation of the banks, but it's got to be quite a different pattern from the post-war pattern.

I think that sword is the strongest weapon in our armoury. And in a fun-

ny way, for cynical reasons, Mrs Thatcher has at least acquainted people with some of the arguments which, turned against capitalism, could transform it very, very rapidly indeed.

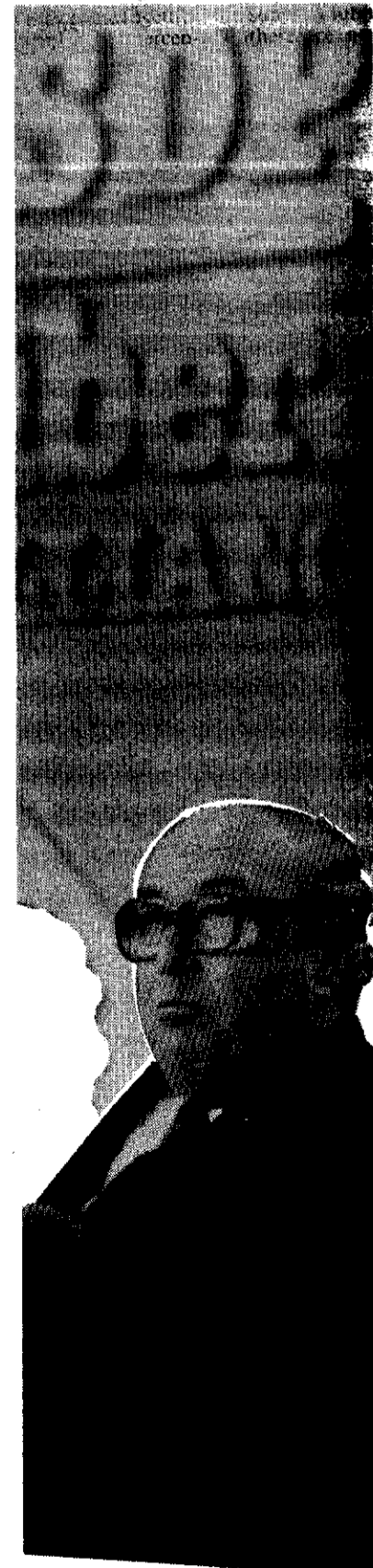


Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Photo: GM COOKSON

IRELAND UNFREE

Dunnes workers to address Labour Party conference

A KEYNOTE speaker at the Labour Committee on Ireland's fringe meeting will be Mary Manning, one of the eleven strikers in Dublin who have made South Africa's cause their own.

By the time Mary arrives she will have been on strike for one year and eleven weeks. The strike began when shopworkers at Dunnes' Dublin store refused to handle Outspan oranges after hearing of the decision by their union, IDATU, to boycott South African produce as part of an active anti-Apartheid policy.

Management suspended Mary indefinitely and, with full union backing, the shopworkers set up a picket which has been outside in Henry Street ever since.

The picket line has achieved world fame and has been visited by, among others, Arthur Scargill, Bishop Desmond Tutu and Gerry Adams.

Last week the strikers won an important victory when Dunne's management said it would open discussions with other chain stores to 'phase out' South African goods from all Irish shelves. But management refuses to concede the issue on which the strike began, namely the right of shopworkers themselves to refuse to handle South African produce, in line with union policy.

The strikers have many lessons to offer the British labour movement — not least their refusal to accept the May Labour Court ruling that they should return to work and continue to protest in some other way.

The Labour Committee on Ireland fringe meeting will also launch *Ireland After Britain*, a collection of articles on Ireland's future by prominent authors and edited by Martin Collins. It is followed by a social.

In addition Labour Women for Ireland are holding a meeting on Tuesday, featuring Sinn Féin councillor Dodie McGuinness and other women speakers. Dodie is also speaking at the Target Labour Government meeting on Sunday night.

Labour Committee on Ireland
Fringe Meeting
5.30pm Wednesday 24 September
Chine Hotel, Boscombe Spa Road
Bournemouth

'THIS CONFERENCE calls on the next Labour government to break off diplomatic relations with South Africa and impose economic sanctions until all vestiges of the apartheid system have been removed.'

By Alan Freeman

Derby South's resolution to Labour Party conference bluntly sums up the only acceptable policy: complete severance of economic, diplomatic and all other relations with the racist regime, not to 'reform' it but to bring it down.

● Britain is apartheid's major international prop. It created it. It ran it for over a century. It lends South Africa half its money and owns half its investments with 1,200 British companies operating there. And — surprise, surprise — it is the only Western power opposing sanctions.

● Britain makes superprofits from African sweat and blood. In 1983 an African in manufacturing

THE ANC (African National Congress) is the largest, and most important, political organisation engaged in the struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Prior to the widely publicised meeting between the ANC and South African business leaders in Zambia last week OLIVER TAMBO, president of the ANC, gave an interview to *Newsweek* magazine outlining the organisation's goals.

How important is the current crisis in South Africa to the ANC?

It represents a heightened level of resistance to the apartheid system such as we have never had before. It is a great leap forward toward our goal of ending apartheid and replacing it with a new South Africa.

Have you been surprised by the intensity of the demonstrations?

Yes and no. I have been surprised that they have endured so long, in spite of everything the regime has done to stamp out the protest. On the other hand I'm not surprised, because what is happening now follows naturally from what went before. The jailings, the tortures, the Sharpeville and Soweto killings have given people no choice but to escalate the struggle even further.

Many of the present demonstrators are very young, even schoolchildren. Can you control what they do?

At this distance we cannot control events on an hour-to-hour or day-to-day basis. But we have called on the people in general to make the country ungovernable and apartheid unworkable, and what is happening is a response to that call... We can't tell our children that what they are doing is very dangerous. They are sustained by a hatred of the system.

Will the Botha government give in to economic



Break all links with apartheid

got 360 rands compared with 1,429 for a white worker. In mining it is worse. The four million whites enjoy one of the highest living standards in

the world. For the 19m African people poverty, starvation, homelessness, unemployment, disease and social deprivation of every kind are the norm.

● Britain defends, and even equips, the most barbaric repression and denial of the most basic human rights. 700 Africans have been killed and over 2,000



Oliver Tambo

ANC leader speaks

and political pressure, or will it fight to the end in a last bloody showdown?

I have never thought a blood bath was not inevitable. I fear that is not only coming but already here. We will fight, and we will expect a blood bath. We will make sacrifices, but then again the West knew it had to make many sacrifices when it fought to break the Nazi regime. This regime will be broken, as was Hitler's.

Even South Africa's white businessmen are demanding changes in apartheid. Yet your Freedom Charter (ANC constitution) states that 'the mineral wealth... the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people.' What will be left for these businessmen?

South Africa is basically very wealthy, but that wealth is owned by very few people — three major companies, Barlow Rand, Anglo American and Sanlam, control perhaps three-quarters of the wealth. The blacks have virtually nothing, but most whites are excluded as well. The distribution of wealth is quite inequitable, and these monopolies will go. But below that level, there will be plenty of room for private enterprise.

In your conference in Zambia in June there were decisions to extend the armed struggle into white areas, and last month you said that in the battles to come, 'many white people will lose their lives.' Does this mean you will be aiming at white-civilian as opposed to police or military targets?

We're not going to kill schoolchildren; that's their morality; they shoot children who throw stones. In the past, when planning attacks on police and military installations, we have taken into consideration whether civilians would die. From now on, whether civilians are likely to die will not be a consideration. We have held off in the past, but it has done nothing to save our people's lives.

You have a military wing which has carried out successful sabotage attacks, but is the struggle a military one or largely a political and economic one?

Both sides are indispensable. The armed struggle is an extension of the political one. Our military aim is to damage the economy and to make people feel insecure. The South African army may seem invincible, yet everyone has seen that it

has been almost helpless over the last year. It has failed to end the struggle.

Where do you get your weapons?

We get them from the socialist countries, principally the Soviet Union, from the Organisation of African States and from individual African countries. The West does not give us any but we would take them if they did. We would like to get Western weapons as a gesture of support from the West.

Your Western critics would say that you are getting into debt with the Russians to such an extent that they will lay claim to your minerals and bases if you finally win.

You can't be ungrateful to those who help you against your enemies. We are grateful to the Soviet Union, as we are to countries like Sweden and Holland, but gratitude will not define whom we will trade with in the future. Our minerals will be ours alone, and we will sell to the best buyers. But we will not forget those who helped us at the hour of our greatest need. As for those who are against us now, you could hardly expect us to give them preferential treatment.

Do you think the South African government will

jailed last year. Torture is widespread and prison conditions horrific.

● The policy of 'constructive disengagement' — trying to persuade white racists to reform themselves — will not work. Two days after Pretoria's vanuted 'reforms' were announced Botha went on public record to explain that they wouldn't make any practical difference. Not one 'reformer' accepts the one step needed to bring justice to African people — or one person, one vote.

● Labour governments bear a heavy share of the blame for past involvement in Apartheid. In 1975 Wilson tried to sack Heffer from the cabinet for even daring to speak out against naval exercises around Britain's South African base in Simonstown. Black people rightly have no confidence that Labour, when in office again, will take the necessary steps to end complicity with this barbaric regime. Conference has to ensure it takes the first step now.

release Nelson Mandela? I believe they will have to, but I don't know when. We have to put enough pressure on the regime for them to see that it is in their interest to release him. I think Britain and America could be very important in achieving his release, but they won't use their leverage, perhaps because they think it is not in their interest.

Is there still time to negotiate a gradual transition to majority rule?

I think we would be less than natural to demand anything less than to be free now. Nobody wants to endure pain for a moment longer than they have to. There is no question of a gradual transition to majority rule; to make it gradual would be to make the crime continue. The only negotiations we would see would be about the mechanisms for an immediate change to majority rule.

When will that come? In months, years, decades?

This will be just a guess. It certainly won't be decades, and I'm not even sure it will be one decade. We will aim for less than a decade.

Do you think the American government believes that change is at hand?

I think the administration finds it very difficult to accept that constructive engagement has failed. We believe the American people are far ahead of their government in understanding what is going on, and we hope the administration will take heed of the democratic will of the American people and break their alliance with this racist regime.

Do you support sanctions against South Africa? Your critics say blacks will be the first to be hurt.

If our people are prepared to die and go to jail to end apartheid, do you really think they will worry that sanctions, which they know hurt the regime, will cause them a little more hunger and lose some of them the miserable jobs they are now allowed to have?



Put abortion on the agenda

By Valerie Coultas

THE FORTY FOUR Labour MPs who voted for Enoch Powell's so-called Unborn Child (Protection) private members bill, restricting embryo research, are given a hard time in the six resolutions presented under the title 'reproductive rights' in the conference agenda. Each CLP is outraged at their decision to vote for this bill against a woman's right to choose.

Such strong stuff is to be welcomed. Labour must develop 'a positive policy based in the Warnock Committee's recommendations,' argues Harrow East CLP, 'from a socialist woman's angle and not from the traditional family structure'. Labour must also repeal the Gillick ruling and ensure free contraceptive advice is available to the under-16's when it comes to power argues Taubton CLP.

Watford and Taunton CLP's along with others denounce the free vote — the central problem that pro-choice campaigners in the Party have faced — urging Labour MP's to vote for a woman's right to choose 'and leave the matter of conscience to the individual woman concerned'.

Such sharp points are summed up nicely by Ruislip CLP's insistence that all these issues should be formulated by Labour leaders in 'consultation with women members and women's organisations within the Party'.

This highlights the argument that the women's organisation have the automatic right to present five resolutions to party conference. In return it would be an excellent gesture if members of WAC made a priority of helping pro-choice campaigners to get this debate onto the agenda of this year's conference.

A challenge to the left

Leonora Lloyd

THE NATIONAL Abortion campaign has had an eventful year, what with the Gillick ruling and the Powell bill, not to mention attacks on the time limits. As we come up to our tenth annual conference, we are faced with the certainty that there are many more attacks to come.

Till now, Tory ministers concerned with health (Sir George Young and Kenneth Clarke) have at least been reasonably sympathetic and supportive on the question of abortion.

Now, following the government shuffle, Catholic Barney Hayhoe is in charge of health matters. His junior minister John Major was previously a government whip and during the Powell Bill gave advice on procedure to Powell's supporters. Both have a record of voting consistently 'pro-life'.

Before the Government changes, it was expected that Kenneth Clarke would introduce a Government Bill along the lines of the Warnock Report, allowing experimentation on the embryo until 14 days, in order to pre-empt another Powell-type bill.

With the new health team, it is unclear what will happen. Mrs Thatcher is known to be in favour of such a bill, but even if one were introduced, it is unlikely to be steered through the House with much enthusiasm by the two ministers, even though they are in theory not going to vote against a Government Bill.

The appointment of Hayhoe is also likely to affect Government attitudes to the question of under-16 contraception. If Victoria Gillick wins the DHSS appeal in the House of Lords, then there is likely to be no action on the matter from the Department of Health, unless it is to re-inforce the decision by directives to doctors.

If she loses, then it is likely that a Private member's Bill to outlaw advice and treatment without parental consent will get active or tacit Government support.

The provision of family planning services to women generally, research into better forms of contraception, improvements in the availability of abortion on the NHS — all these are likely to be adversely affected.

These are the issues that the National Abortion Campaign will have to tackle at its conference on 26/27 October. It will be one of the most important we have held. Over the next period we will have to build the campaign, winning significant new numbers of affiliates and increasing our output of information and propaganda, if we are to begin to counter the attacks that are now taking place.

(The NAC Newsletter, price 75p including postage, will be available in two weeks time. Details of that, and the conference, can be obtained from NAC, Wesley House, 70 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5AX)

Labour must support women's demands

THE DEMANDS of the Women's Action Committee, so controversial a few years back, are still on this year's conference agenda. They haven't gone away — and the main reason for that is that they simply haven't begun to be met. They have been eclipsed though, in media terms, by the demands of black people for self-organisation within the party.

DIANE ABBOTT, Westminster councillor and WAC activists, explained to CAROL TURNER why Labour women are still fighting and why the issue of black sections is part of the same fight.

WOMEN'S Action Committee supporters have put forward a number of resolutions to this year's Labour Party conference. We are making three basic demands: the right of the national women's conference to put forward five resolutions to annual conference; the right of national women's conference to elect five women directly to the national executive; and that at least one woman be on every parliamentary shortlist.

The fundamental aim of WAC is to empower women in the Labour Party. Although there is an annual conference of Labour women, it has no power whatsoever. It doesn't even report to annual conference. We want to start by making the women's conference a real force.

At the moment women on the Labour national executive are elected by annual conference — that means by the trade union bloc vote. Year after year women like Betty Boothroyd come top of the poll for women's NEC places, but they simply don't have the support of women. They aren't feminist, and they aren't directly accountable to women in the party. If women were directly elected, then they would fight for women's interests.

The same goes for women parliamentary candidates and MPs. In over 300 selections that have already taken place, at one point there were only 12 women selected. Constituency after constituency had all-male shortlists.

No one's saying local parties have to select a woman. Our demand that at least one be on the shortlist is, in fact, very modest. We're saying 'give women a chance'. At present it looks as if there aren't going to be any more women in parliament after the next general election than there are in this.

These are the reasons why women's demands are a big issue at this year's conference. Because it's only lip-service paid to women's rights — and that includes all sections of the party: the left, the right, and the centre. This is most clearly shown in the scandal of how few women parliamentary candidates have been chosen so far. And that even goes for black candidates, who are all men.

The main argument against positive action for women is that people say they've got to go for 'socialists' — as if there were a conflict! As if men were 'more socialist' than women! They bring up examples such as Shirley

Williams to argue that women are somehow less reliable than men. Nobody brings up David Owen, or the multitude of other 'unreliable' men. There is an endless list of white men who've sold out the Labour Party.

In one sense the fight of women in the party is the same as the fight of black members. At the end of the day, those who oppose the demands of women are the same people who oppose the demand for black sections. At the heart of it, they are about protecting their own individual power.

Bureaucracy

There's no way that we can empower women and black people without taking power away from white men. Capitalism and the Labour Party bureaucracy can always afford to have a few token blacks or women. Look at America, there's been black congressmen since the '40s.

If it was just a question of individual women or blacks wanting personal advancement we wouldn't need to raise autonomous organisation. None of the leading WAC supporters have been selected. Sharon Atkins and myself are hated by white men. There are easier ways of getting a career than by upsetting the establishment.

I was already a councillor before I became involved in black sections. I didn't organise my local black section to become a councillor, I did so because I was a councillor and wanted a political base. I wasn't satisfied with being token, I wanted to involve black people in the political process.

It is these issues, and for these reasons, that WAC will be organising again at this year's party conference. We're organising not just through resolutions but also with a fringe meeting on the Monday of conference, and our review on Thursday.

We want to draw more and more party women into what we're doing and what we're fighting for.



Women at the 1980 party conference: little has changed

Photo: LAURIE SPARHAM (IFL)

Labour's NATO debate

By Carol Turner, Secretary Labour CND (personal capacity)

WHEN Labour published its defence statement last year, Labour CND took a position of neither supporting nor endorsing it. We did that because it conflicted with CND policy of withdrawing from the NATO alliance, and because of the ambiguities created by a statement that simultaneously promised unilateral nuclear disarmament and 'full support' for the nuclear club.

But one thing the statement has done is raise among the constituency activists the whole issue of NATO membership in a way that hasn't been seen for years. There are enough resolutions and amendments on this year's annual conference agenda to ensure that this issue is debated out.

Not that anyone is expecting to win the vote, however. There is little likelihood that a resolution calling for withdrawal will find favour among the trade union bloc votes. But there is every indication that it is an issue finding more and more time on the agenda of local parties.

Whilst winning the vote is excluded this year, raising the debate certainly isn't. That's why every party activist and every trade union militant should fight to ensure that debate is given the prominence it deserves in



Labour CND's march before last year's party conference

Photo: GRANT KEIR

order to start a real discussion within the party and within the labour movement as a whole.

That's with a view to decisively winning the vote in the future. That's also why Labour CND is organising a fringe meeting on the subject of NATO withdrawal on the Tuesday evening of conference.

Fighting to maintain a clear commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament is still on the order of the day. Raising the question of NATO is part and parcel of this fight. In a recent interview for the END Journal Labour spokesperson on defence and disarmament, Denzil Davies, said that in 'time of crisis' he thought Labour would accept cruise and other NATO nuclear weapons back into the country. Recognising the pitfalls of taking such a clear position, Neil Kin-

nock denied this interpretation.

Nevertheless, Labour CND's point was rather effectively made: the defence statement was and still remains ambiguous. The doubts have to be cleared up before we go into the next election — and they have to be cleared up on the side of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

● 'Why Labour Should Withdraw From NATO', LCND/Dumbarton CLP joint fringe meeting, 8pm, Angus Hotel, Bath Road, Tuesday 1 October, speakers include Tony Benn and Eric Heffer.

● 'Labour: Campaigning For Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament', LCND fringe meeting, video and many guest speakers, including Peter Heathfield of the NUM, 6.30-11pm, Angus Hotel, Bath Road, Thursday 3 October.

NAC Fringe Meeting Whitehall Hotel

Exeter Park Road
(next to International
Conference Centre)

Lunchtime Tuesday 1 October

Speakers invited include Socialist Health Association, NOLS women's officer, NAC.

EVE OF CONFERENCE RALLY organised by Labour CND

'Labour: Fighting for Unilateral
Nuclear Disarmament'

among the many speakers are:
Tony Benn, Denzil Davies, Jeremy Corbyn, Turkish
Peace Movement, Greenham Common, NUM and
Women Against Pit Closures
Sunday 29 September
3pm till 4.45pm
Merryk Park
(approx ¼ mile from the conference centre)

Who decides: MPs or the Party?

THE IMMEDIATE and widely publicised response of the party leadership to the TUC votes in support of the miners at Blackpool once again points to the urgent need for accountability of Labour's elected representatives.

According to *The Times* of 4 September, Neil Kinnock made clear that he did not envisage the TUC demand in its present form being included in Labour's election manifesto even if it were to be carried at party conference.

The Times goes on to quote Neil Kinnock as saying: 'I am going to be the prime minister. It will be on the basis of my design, and the view I take of the manifesto, that we fight the next election.'

Kinnock's remarks are symptomatic of a growing sentiment among the party's establishment that the time is ripe to put the rank and file in their place. This is why they are encouraging further moves to change the rules governing the selection of parliamentary candidates.

The real aim, of course, is to eliminate the modest measure of accountability of Labour MPs which was achieved when the existing procedures for mandatory reselection were introduced.

Last year the NEC tried to change the rules but the 'Evans amendment' was defeated. This year four more resolutions appear on the conference agenda seeking to vary the current arrangements. Resolutions from the EETPU and the National Union of Labour Clubs (resolutions 26-32, agenda pp26-28) call for constitutional amendments which would enable all Labour Party members to participate in the selection of parliamentary candidates 'on the basis of one member one vote'.

These resolutions appear to ignore the fact that the existing rules already provide for this since all members can participate in the selection procedures when they attend branch meetings to make nomina-

tions and to select the delegates to the general committee, who make the final decision.

The other two resolutions, however, submitted

By Vladimir Derer, Secretary, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

by Bournemouth East CLP and Dudley West are more specific (more honest) about the sort of participation they have in mind. Resolution 26 (agenda p26) calls for all individual members to have the right to vote in the final selection, and Resolution 28 (agenda p26) from Bournemouth similarly calls for the final decision to be made by an individual ballot.

Though these resolutions appear at first sight to demand an extension of democratic rights, and the spurious use of the slogan 'one member one vote (OMOV)' is designed to convey this impression, in fact they would have the result, if passed, of reducing and not increasing democracy within the party.

They would do this by undermining the crucial role played by the general committee of the CLP, which is the rank and file body which monitors the MP's performance and record in parliament. Under the existing procedure an MP must take note of the GC's views since it is also the body which makes the final decision on reselection. These proposals for ballots of individual members seek to break the link between the final selection and the monitoring mechanism. They would, in effect, replace a systematic and continuous process of accountability with a single membership ballot every five years. Divorced from an effective

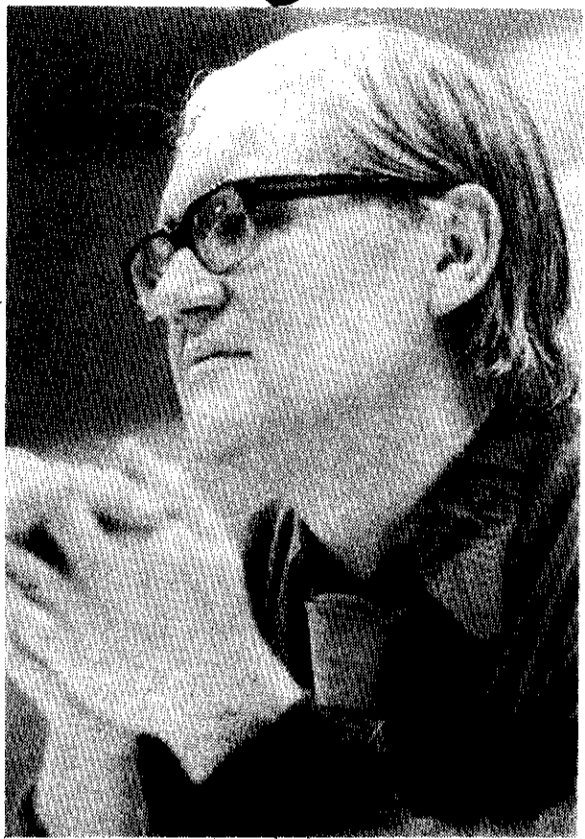


Photo: JOHN HARRIS

CLPD — Bennites fighting back

monitoring system, reselection would develop into an American-style circus in which the 'charisma' of the sitting MP would be the decisive factor.

Such ballots would also open up our procedures for selecting candidates to massive interference by the press and a hostile media. It is easy to see how such a system would undermine genuine accountability, leaving the parliamentary party once more free to disregard party policy on vital issues. Thus if carried by conference, these resolutions would not result in an extension of democratic power to the rank and file. On the contrary, they would restore the PLP's monopoly in deciding party policy.

These resolutions must be defeated. This, however, is not enough. Conference must also support the composite based

on the 13 resolutions and amendments asking that any further decisions on this subject be deferred until after the next general election.

Unless this is carried out the NEC will almost certainly bring a constitutional proposal embodying the same proposals to next year's conference. Consultations, under the auspices of the Labour Coordinating Committee, are already underway in search of a formula 'acceptable' to the trade unions. (All the schemes so far reduce or eliminate entirely the trade union influence in the selection process.) On present form the NEC will be only too pleased to use it.

Such moves by the party leadership would only provoke a massive reaction from the rank and file, who will not accept the loss of influence over party policy without a fight. Unless conference

decides to defer the issue as the 13 resolutions and amendments propose, the party's time and energy will be diverted from the principal task of fighting the Tories in the run-up to the next general election.

Rejection of the OMOV proposals or of any other similar schemes which the NEC is likely to produce, does not mean refusing to consider other ways of increasing the participation of the rank and file party members in the policy making process, including the selection of candidates for parliament.

In fact there is considerable scope for this now, even under the present procedures. More individuals could be included in the final selection, for example, by increasing the number of general committee delegates. Improvements are also possible in the ways in which many general committee discharge their function of monitoring parliamentary activities. The fact that those who today so noisily canvass OMOV schemes have not bothered to explore these possibilities, speaks volumes about the kind of change they want, and perhaps explains why so many of them opposed democratic reforms like mandatory reselection when it was first introduced.

The exploration of ways of further widening the involvement of party members should be done in a calm atmosphere, one which would not provoke internal conflicts. This is far from being the situation in which the present proposals are being introduced. They must be decisively rejected.

● *'Who decides — MPs or party? — CLPD Conference Briefing and discussion meeting: Sunday 20 September, 1.15, Pavilion. Speakers Margaret Beckett, Dennis Skinner (subject to other engagements); Diane Abbott, Pat Ollie, Gavin Strang, MP.*



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Wales witch-hunt moves into top gear

ALL MEETINGS and work of the Wales Labour Party executive and its sub-committees have been suspended following its decision to exclude two Militant supporters. They are Chris Peace, who topped the poll at the Wales party conference in the constituency sec-

tion, and Tony Wedlake, Young Socialist delegate to the 46-strong body.

This is by far the most serious in an escalating wave of regional and local witch-hunts. George Wright, secretary of the TGWU who is leading the witch-hunt with fellow right winger Ray Powell, MP for Ogmore, sees it as part of a national campaign to kick out the Militant. Speaking after the exclusions he explained that: 'The party nationally does not take a view on anything until they are pushed. This move is signalling a clear indication by the genui-

members of the party not to tolerate Militant infiltration any longer.' Wright is thought to blame left wingers for his failure to win the election for general secretary earlier this year.

The moves reflect how far the right in South Wales are prepared to go to keep their grip on the Labour Party. The row now goes to the national executive committee, and until it pronounces all the Wales executive's work is suspended. A decision could be reached in November, but it is now likely there will be no meetings until the New Year. The right wing are thus prepared to close down the party and kick out its most active members at the very time when 11 South Wales pits are threatened with closure and the area health authority has announced it intends to sack 300 workers.

'At this time,' said Tony Wedlake after the decision, 'the executive should be meeting monthly to coordinate the fight against the Tories and to save the threatened collieries like Penrhwi-ceiber.'

Labour debates lesbian and gay rights

THIS YEAR'S TUC conference saw the first ever debate on lesbian and gay rights and the Labour Party Conference looks set to follow in its footsteps.

This success comes after the major impact made in the labour movement by Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners and by Lesbians Against Pit Closures, which began to develop political and personal links between lesbians and gay men and a key industrial trade union. In the public sector unions, successes had already been registered with the establishment of a number of trade union lesbian and gay groups, and

the positive responses of a number of unions on the question of AIDS.

But the response of the national Labour Party has

By TERRY CONWAY, Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights

been less than adequate. On AIDS, the leadership has not taken the opportunity to criticise the government for their failure to put money into research or to give adequate resources to already overstretched health authorities to meet this new demand. On the attack by Customs and Excise on 'Gays the World

Bookshop' they have not used the opportunity to point out that the Tories are attacking lesbians' and gay men's right to exchange information and ideas.

Many constituency labour parties, and a number of individual councils, and MPs, have taken these issues up. The fact that support exists among party members was also evident in the support for the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights resolution for this year's party conference. The next task for conference delegates is to make sure that the resolution is heard, and beyond to ensure that it is fully implemented by the leader-

ship. Lesbians and gay men are becoming increasingly organised within the labour movement. We are here to stay. The Labour Party and the unions must begin to represent all of their members and take up every attack on whatever section is under threat. This way we will strengthen our ability to go forward and begin to turn back the Tories' attempt to divide and rule.

● *LCLGR fringe meeting: Wednesday 2 October, 5.30pm Carlton Hotel, East Overcliff. With Terry Conway, Chris Smith MP, Janey Buchan MEP, and Sian James, Women Against Pit Closures.*



Lambeth stands firm

WHILE THE Tory assault on Liverpool is grabbing the media headlines their equally serious attack on Lambeth is still going on. Thirty two Labour councillors are threatened with surcharge.

Socialist Action spoke to TED KNIGHT, leader of the council, about the situation in Lambeth and the emergency resolution on defence of local government going to Labour Party conference.

Why did Lambeth refuse to set a rate?

If we had set a rate on the government's terms, it would have meant major cuts in jobs and services in Lambeth. 1,500 jobs would have gone. In an area of high unemployment and major inner city deprivation there was no Labour councillor in Lambeth that could compromise with such dictates from the Tory government.

Labour Herald says this week that the unions will continue to run the services under workers' control if elected councillors are removed undemocratically.

The joint trade union committee in Lambeth has said that if Labour councillors are disqualified they will refuse to operate services under a Tory council — which would take over as a minority council. They will run them under workers' control until a Labour council is re-elected.

But how will they get paid?

They would not get paid. It would be for six weeks only before a by-election returned the Labour council to power. The unions have no intention of allowing Labour councillors to be disqualified from office. They are going to use their maximum industrial strength. The government has realised they are not going to force their policies through the council chamber, so they are trying to use the district auditor to remove councillors from office. The unions are also planning other actions in support of the council, including demonstrations and strike action.

What are your contacts with Liverpool?

As councillors we are in contact with Liverpool and the trade unions are in contact with the unions. They're supporting each other. I'm speaking on a platform with Derek Hatton tomorrow.

What support have you received from the rest of the labour movement and



Ted Knight

the leadership of the party?

CLPs and trade unions have given us both financial and political support. They've been contributing to our £100,000 fighting fund to take our case through the courts.

The Labour Party NEC has supported the fighting fund. The Labour leader has taken a similar stand as on the miners' strike, where he was not heavily in support. He's

expressed opposition to our stand. He told us we should obey the law and implement the cuts in his famous 'better a dented shield than no shield at all' speech. Tory councillors quoted him against us in this battle.

What do you want party conference to do?

First, we ask them to support the fighting fund so we can go into the courts and defend ourselves. Second, we want them to

support the councillors in Lambeth and Liverpool, and others who have defied the Tory government. Third, we want the next Labour government committed to introduce retrospective legislation to remove the penalties imposed on Labour councillors and to compensate for any financial losses imposed on those councillors. We see ourselves alongside the miners as those who have been victims of Tory oppression.

A defeat for the NUR

GUARDS SACKED during the driver-only dispute return to work this Monday. The rail federation council and the British Rail Board have agreed to a bartering arrangement — sacked guards reinstated in return to driver-only operation.

The board also said no disciplinary action will be taken against other rail

By Rose Knight

workers who took industrial action, like the guards at Norwood and Kings Cross.

Guards at Glasgow Central, Immingham, Margam and Llanelli who have got their jobs back will find that in six months time they will have lost them again as driver only is introduced.

For a four month period some guards will be used to check tickets on trains and others used 'productively on other work'. They will then be offered voluntary redundancy or a transfer to a different job in another depot in their area.

Their grade and rate of pay will not be protected unless they agree to transfer. The agreement makes it clear that other

workers including drivers will also be displaced as a result of driver only operation.

Guards' jobs will eventually be eliminated as BR begin to use staff of a lower grade to get trains ready for use and to do commercial duties. Drivers will have twice the work to do on the trains in return for £7.32 a shift, about £5.00 after tax.

In his letter to NUR branches explaining the terms of the agreement, Jimmy Knapp, General Secretary says that the agreement had to be negotiated 'from a point of weakness'.

But he is partly responsible for the balance of forces which came down in BR's favour, even allowing for the situation arising from the miners' defeat.

He personally supported resolution 10 at this year's AGM which made ballots before national industrial action union policy, and he continues to insist that he was right. Knapp also argued at the special general meeting against calling for reinstatement of sacked guards before any negotiation over driver only could begin. Instead he and the NEC allowed the sacked guards jobs to be bartered in return for productivity.

An Alliance for Socialism

Socialist Action is co-sponsoring a weekend of discussion, debate, and agitation on the theme of 'Building an alliance for socialism' on the weekend of 16-17 November.

Speakers include:

Diane Abbott, Tony Benn, Jack Collins, Jeremy Corbyn, Vladimir Derer, Betty Heathfield, Peter Heathfield, Stuart Holland, Ann Pettifor, Russell Proffitt, John Ross, Marc Wadsworth, Jude Woodward, Doreen Weppler.

plus speakers from Black Sections National Committee, the FDR of El Salvador, and many many more.

Venue: Sir William Collins school, Charrington St, London NW1 (near Kings Cross Station)

£5 for weekend, £3 each day

Tickets from Socialist Action, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP



Photo: Andreas Nicola



Photo: GM Cookson



Photo: Laurie Spargham (FL)



Photo: GM Cookson

A Socialist ACTION

South Africa

Enter the liberals - exit democracy

South Africa's white liberal opposition, the Progressive Federal Party, has formed an alliance with chief Gatsha Buthelezi to fight for what it calls 'the dismantling of apartheid by non-violent means'.

The Convention Alliance, as the new body is called, was launched at a 150-strong conference in Johannesburg last weekend.

Buthelezi's chief contribution to non-violence is organising members of his Inkatha movement in armed vigilante squads to attack and break up anti-apartheid demonstrations and strikes. He is one of South Africa's most hated black collaborators with the apartheid regime.

Buthelezi was responsible for widely publicised attacks on Cape Indians last month. These were conducted at the behest of the South African security forces to try and drive a wedge between Indians and the black resistance to apartheid.

All the white Progressive Federal Party (PFP), with 27 MPs, now claims 20 per cent of the white vote in South

Africa. It is best known abroad for the work of Helen Susman, long celebrated as South Africa's lone white oppositionist MP. Rising support for the party is a product of growing realisation among whites that 'verkrampte', or hardline, apartheid's days are numbered. The PFP is therefore looking for new ways of protecting white privilege.

Helen Susman clarified her party's objectives in a frank interview with the *Daily Telegraph* published last week.

'Our policy is for multi-racial government and not simply for a transfer of power from a rotten white minority government to a rotten

black majority government', she said.

Set aside the outrageous racist assumption that black majority government will be 'rotten' and the PFP's objective is clear - to prevent black people securing their rights through the overthrow of apartheid. This is why the PFP, long publicised in the West as a beacon of progressive opposition to apartheid, has chosen this exact moment to forge links with apartheid's most detested collaborators.

Equal

The notion of 'multi-racial' government in a 'multi-racial', as opposed to 'non-racial', society is rightly overwhelmingly rejected by the black opponents of apartheid. It concedes the false principle on which apartheid is based, namely that South Africa, its parliament, its government, and its socie-

ty, should be organised on a racial basis. The black opposition increasingly and rightly asserts the view that South Africa is one nation. The only democratic solution in South Africa consists in a unitary state in which all citizens have equal rights.

Helen Susman's proposals make it clear just how important these principles are. She proposes 'constitutional devices to protect minority groups ... we have what is known as the minority veto whereby if something like 15 per cent of MPs consider a Bill is destructive of their interests they can exercise a veto against it.' This convenient device would mean that the white minority could vote down any measure not to their liking. A minority, and not the majority, would determine the policy of the country. It is a proposal which is the very opposite of one person, one vote.

Susman finally gave the game away, and show-

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Labour must stand by Liverpool

By Valerie Coultas

KENNETH BAKER, the Environment Secretary, has slammed the door in Liverpool council's face. He has made it clear that they cannot borrow the £25 million pounds necessary to keep the city's services running. Soon the council will be bankrupt and no money will be available to pay the workforce.

As we go to press 10,600 members of the 30,000 strong council workforce have backed Liverpool city council's call for strike action against the Tory cuts. The largest union - the GMBATU - have backed the call for strike action as has UCATT. But NUPE, the NUT, the NAS/UWT have voted not to even put the proposal to their members. The EEP-TU members have said no to the strike. VALERIE COULTAS reports.

The GMBATU regional office tried to stop their members voting for the strike because 'important questions about the state of the city council's finances remain unanswered.'

This was the theme of discussion that took place last Monday between seven senior full-time officials of the public service unions and Labour councillors.

Several top trade union officials in Liverpool are attempting to sabotage Wednesday's strike call.



council passed a rate rise of 9 per cent but budgeted for £80 million more than that would produce. A week ago council workers, aware that the money was running out, stopped the council issuing redundancy notices by locking the councillors out of the Town Hall and preventing the meeting taking place.

GMBATU members alone can bring the council services to a halt because they do the essential work of keeping the city and the schools clean and safe.

If there is a majority for this strike call the entire labour movement should come behind the striking council workers to demand that the Tories give Liverpool back the money they have stolen from it.

If this strike call is sabotaged David Steel's threat to take the court cases against the councillors through 'rapidly' will almost certainly be carried out. Any attempt to impose a Liberal/Tory administration on the beleaguered city must be opposed by strike action - as must the imposition of Tory commissioners. Whatever happens immediately this week the labour movement - and the Labour Party conference - must put its full weight behind Liverpool.

● Lambeth under attack
See page 11.

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Instead they appear to favour the Kinnock/Cunningham line - urging all Labour councillors to stay in office and make cuts if necessary. The *Militant* dominated council is being 'asked questions' to persuade it to increase the rates, raise council rents or use existing assets to save necessary the £25 million.

Liverpool city council is unlikely to back down and make working people

pay for Tory cuts. Derek Hatton, deputy leader, has dismissed the Kinnock line and said that all creative accounting options are ruled out in Liverpool.

But Liverpool has considerable obstacles in taking on the Tories this year. Every other major council - with the exception of Lambeth - has backed down and used 'creative accounting' to avoid a confrontation with the

Tories.

Ian Lowes, the chair of the council's joint shop stewards committee, hailed the GMBATU vote - 4,345 for a strike and 2,934 against - as a victory but looking to other results he made it clear that 'We will not go it alone. We will only strike if a majority of workers are voting in favour'.

In June Liverpool