

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Where now
after
Labour
conference?

See centre pages

Pay the ambulance workers!

If someone penetrates the security at Tory Party conference and tries to blow up Thatcher, who will rush her to hospital?

And if there aren't enough ambulance workers, because too many have given up trying to survive on their awful wages, Thatcher will be a bit upset, won't she?

The low pay of ambulance workers is just one of the Tories' NHS scandals. But the government's arrogance towards the NHS and its staff are turning more and

more people against it.

Very few people believe anything the government says about the NHS anymore — let alone that it's 'safe in their hands'.

Everyone knows that ambulance workers, like all health workers, deserve decent pay. The whole labour and trade union movement must support them. The Labour Party conference expressed its support last week — we must make Labour's leaders stick to their word, and ensure that local Labour Parties give support not just in words but also in action.



Photo: John Harris

Defeat the Tories!

2 IRELAND

Labour's record on Ireland

NORTH AND SOUTH

By Patrick Murphy

In the year which makes 20 years of troops in Northern Ireland, the Labour Party remains largely indifferent to the variety of issues raised by the Irish question.

At last week's Conference there were five motions and one amendment on the agenda dealing with Northern Ireland. That would not usually be enough to get a debate, but there was one.

At the end of Thursday afternoon, a familiar low-level debate highlighted the problems of 20 years. The Labour spokesperson on Northern Ireland spent his allotted time attacking the Republican Movement and all who would speak to them in Britain. The left, the only speakers to show any solidarity or passion for the oppressed, recited their demand for a commitment to 'Troops Out' and were easily beaten, not just in the vote but often in the argument.

This is a serious state of affairs. Labour is heading for a repeat of its disgraceful record on Northern Ireland in the 1970s.

Until 1980 the subject had not been discussed at Conference despite the fact that a Labour government sent troops in. The party had a policy known as bipartisanship. Northern Ireland was an issue on which they openly agreed with

the Tories. The problem was one of security and in the face of the 'terrorist enemy' it was essential that the major parties were united. In fact Labour were, if anything more hardline than the Conservatives.

Conservative Secretary of State Willie Whitelaw introduced political status for prisoners incarcerated for offences related to the Troubles. He also negotiated with the IRA.

Labour Secretary of State Merlyn Rees abolished political status in 1976 and was thereby responsible for a long and painful republican campaign for its return. Dozens of men and women refused to wear normal prison clothes or clean their cells in a heroic struggle against the Labour government's 'criminalisation' policy.

In the end 10 prisoners died in a hunger strike in 1981 as Thatcher carried on with the policy pioneered by Labour.

When the leading hunger striker Bobby Sands was on his death bed the Labour spokesperson of the day, Don Concannon engaged in one of the most sickening and cynical pieces of opportunism in Labour's history. Because the attention of the world's media was on the gates of Lond Kesh, Concannon decided to grab his share of the action. He visited Bobby Sands just to tell him and more importantly the British electorate that on no account did he have the support of the Labour Party. As if there could ever have been any doubt.

After Merlyn Rees, Labour appointed the worst Secretary of State to serve any government in the whole of the Troubles. Roy Mason was responsible for a reign of terror, including torture, inhuman and



Aftermath of Deal

degrading treatment of suspects and a strengthening of the UDR and RUC, who we now know to be responsible for a good deal of the 'terrorist' violence against innocent Catholics. Mason displayed crass ignorance of the politics of Northern Ireland and his reign politically strengthened Provisional Sinn Fein.

It is impossible to exaggerate the picture. Labour's record is a sorry, horrible mess. It has no link whatever with socialism, democracy or even liberalism. Almost every other Labour policy has some faint connection with or represents some sap to, its radical pretensions. In the case of Northern Ireland there was nothing but brutality and ignorance.

Since 1980 there have undoubtedly been some improvements — the aim of a united Ireland as a long-term solution, a break with bipartisanship and commitments to ban plastic bullets, end strip-searching and repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (which Labour introduced). An attempt was made to choose spokespeople who knew something about Northern Ireland (Stuart Bell being an obvious exception). But recently these gains have looked extremely superficial.

The Policy Review didn't mention Northern Ireland; an earlier National Executive Committee on

the subject was wound up without a report. The Labour Party's drive to ditch both principles and policy detail in search of easy votes will be particularly disastrous in Northern Ireland.

With no coherent policy they will be buffeted around by generals, civil servants, the press, public opinion and their own baser prejudices. All the signs are that the experience of Rees and Mason would

be repeated. Labour leaders can continue with this sham largely because more people doubt the main alternative 'Troops Out' than doubt the policy of 'holding the ring'.

In that context it is truly tragic that the Labour left can find no alternative more credible than that of the Daily Mirror — pull out and all will be well. But that is another story.

Irish workers scapegoated

Evelyn Evans, a canteen worker for the RAF, has been sacked, just for being Irish.

According to the *Sun* (not known for its pro-Irish sympathies), Evelyn lost her job as a result of an IRA alert at the airtraffic control base at West Drayton, Middlesex. The contractors who employed her sacked

all Irish workers except those who had worked long enough to have security clearance.

Evelyn had worked there for a month. She said: "Just because I'm Irish doesn't mean I'm a bloody terrorist. Does this mean every Irish person living in Britain is a bomber?"

She is to take the case to an industrial tribunal.

Sun distorts facts to boost racism

RACE AND CLASS

By Chris Reynolds

"Send us back, say Britain's blacks" screamed the headline in the *Sun* on 9 October.

Racism is all right was the message of the article under the headline. It is all right because racists' demands are welcomed by black people ('send us back', for example) and anyway "whites are not solely to blame for intolerance".

"Asians, not whites, are most opposed to their children marrying someone of another race", claims the *Sun*. "And whites feel they are just as much victims of race hate from non-whites as blacks are from whites".

The article is based on an opinion

poll. But its conclusions are not justified by the poll figures, let alone by the much harder and more solid facts of everyday discrimination — which the *Sun* never mentions.

Black people suffer job discrimination. Two surveys done in 1985 monitored applications from similarly-qualified blacks and whites. One survey in Leicester, found that 42 per cent of the whites got jobs, but only 11 per cent of equally-qualified blacks. The other, in London, Birmingham and Manchester, found that 45 per cent of employers were biased.

The *Sun* reports only three questions fully from its poll. The results from two of them run counter to the *Sun*'s conclusions.

29 per cent of whites said that they would be 'not very happy' or 'not at all happy' if 'people from another race' moved into their neighbourhood. Only 6% of Afro-Caribbeans, and 8% of Asians, gave similar answers. 57 per cent of Afro-Caribbeans, and 48% of Afro-Caribbeans, positively welcomed 'people from another race' moving



Racist 'Sun' implies black people make Britain 'overcrowded'.

into their neighbourhood, but only 30% of whites.

Asked whether 'people of different races only learn to get on well

when they live in the same neighbourhood', 74% of Asians and 69% of Afro-Caribbeans said yes, by only 57% of whites.

The poll asked: "If people want to, should they be given financial aid to help return to their country of origin?" 69% of Afro-Caribbeans and 54% of Asians said yes, and that's where the *Sun* gets its headline, "Send us back!"

Yet the question says 'people' not 'black people'! The 'country of origin' for many black people is Britain. The *Sun* quotes one Jamaican worker saying that he would like to go back to Jamaica — but he says that he holds back from going because his children were born in Britain and have their home here.

All the poll result proves is that racism makes life in Britain miserable for many black workers.

The *Sun* claims that "a third of blacks would support a total immigration ban". Further down the article it reports that two-thirds of whites have the same attitude.

It does not report that immigration from the West Indies and the

IRA.

Partly, the big RUC operation, involving 300 police, was to placate the Southern Irish government, anxious at lack of progress around the Anglo-Irish Deal. Dublin wants 'the future' of the UDR discussed — ie. it wants the issue of its disbandment raised. Ian Paisley has already launched a campaign to 'defend the UDR'.

The UDR is effectively a Loyalist armed gang, successor to the 'B Specials' that played so notorious a role against Catholic communities in the late 1960s. Its links with Loyalist paramilitary or terrorist groups, are well-known.

Indian subcontinent has been banned for many years, apart from family reunions, while thousands of people, mostly black are summarily deported each year. It does not report that millions of white people from the EEC can come to Britain quite freely, while people from Bangladesh coming to join their families in Britain are held back by a deliberately-engineered two-year queue for documents at British immigration offices in Dhaka.

According to the *Sun* "all races oppose left-wing 'positive discrimination' schemes which penalise whites to give blacks a better chance of finding jobs".

It doesn't tell you the wording of the question they asked. If the issue was put like that, no wonder they got the answer they wanted.

The picture might be different if the poll asked about the direct anti-black discrimination which is a thousand times more widespread than any sort of 'positive discrimination' and whether people supported any special measures to redress that anti-black discrimination.

Neither Honecker nor Pozsgay, but workers' power!

EDITORIAL

What all the East German refugees will think of West Germany in a few years time is not hard to guess.

They will quickly be disillusioned with the West, except a minority who manage to get rich. But no one could look at the expressions of delirious bliss on the refugees' faces, as they leave the trains shouting 'freedom' and be in much doubt that East Germany must be a terrible place to live.

Low living standards, unbelievable drabness and constant police surveillance are the realities of life in East Germany and elsewhere in the Eastern bloc. Honecker is proving to be one of the last geriatric die-hards, a sort of European Deng Xiaoping, no doubt dying for the chance to etch his name into history as dramatically, that is, bloodily, as Deng did this year.

But the reformers in Eastern Europe know that massacring their people will not stave off the future. Reforms are a burning necessity. And, protected by Gorbachev's example, they have started reforming — in Poland and in Hungary, in a big way.

Economically, Hungary has been carrying out Gorbachev-style 'perestroika' for a long time; but, apart from some scope for intellectuals, its political regime bore the stamp of bloody suppression of the 1956 revolution. Now, the political thaw is going much further than many observers expected.

Presidential and general elections are to be held. Top reformer Imre Pozsgay is expected to win President; most pundits predict a coalition government.

The ruling so-called Socialist Workers' Party — the 'Communist' Party — has officially decided to dissolve itself and set up a Western-type social democratic party instead. This could mean splits. Although for the moment, the change means little more than a new name, its implications could be far-reaching.

Poland is now ruled by a non-Communist government, at least in its majority, set to preside over very radical market-oriented reforms.

The Eastern European societies simply cannot continue in the old way. But change only makes their oppressed peoples, and most alarming for the regimes, their working classes, hungry for more of it. If the



East Germans take refuge in Church

mass movement gets too strong, what does the bureaucracy do then? Not all of them are necessarily going to have the means to follow the example of their Chinese cousins, even if they have the will.

So very significant events are taking place in Eastern Europe. Socialists in the West must be able to deal with them. We must be firmly behind all the protesters in Eastern

Europe, like the thousands being bashed about the head by Honecker's police.

In particular we support working class struggles, for example against unemployment and all the Soviet social ills the market reforms bring. We want more reforms — in workers' interests. And we put no faith in enlightened Gorbachevite despots to deliver them.

Workers' liberty East and West should be our slogan. And if the Iron Curtain really is to melt, that must be our opportunity to build working class links across the whole of Europe.

The days of Honecker and his pseudo-liberal counterparts are numbered. We must make sure it is socialist democracy that replaces them.

Kinnock fury at amazing Labour fiasco

PRESS GANG

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR DAILY STAR

Paranoia about the media used to be the prerogative of the left. Times have obviously changed. According to Saturday's *Independent*, "Some (Thatcher) aides privately are complaining for the first time in many years, about Labour bias in the press"

Maybe I'm not as vigilant on the reds-under-beds front as I should be, but I honestly fail to see what these 'aides' are complaining about.

On the evidence of last week's coverage of events in Brighton, I thought the gentlemen of the press put up a pretty impressive show, given the unpromising material they had to work with. Take the coverage of the defence debate for instance: okay, unilateralism was dumped and that couldn't be entirely ignored; but the passage of a resolution calling for defence spending to be reduced to the European average, produced a classic *Sun* front page headline, 'Labour leads us arm-less'. The *Mail* described Neil Kinnock as 'furious and humiliated', while the *Express* claimed "Neil Kinnock's attempt to give Labour a moderate new image was shattered..." All three papers, together with *Today* quoted "Top Defence Ministry sources" saying things like "This would reduce our defence forces to a Dad's Army".

Then there was the eagerly awaited debate on union legislation. While the 'serious' press did at least note that the successful Kinnock/Meacher proposals stopped well short of repealing all Tory legislation the tabloids had obviously prepared well in advance: "Kinnock and unions link up for return of secondary strikes" (*Mail*); "Meacher turns the clock back to the strike hit '70s" (*Express*); and "flying pickets will be back vows Meacher" (*Sun*).

All good stuff, of course. But it was obviously hard work keeping up the Shock Horror/Kinnock Humiliated/Meacher vows revolution tomorrow angle. In fact these sort of stories were often accompanied by other pieces complaining about how bland and unexciting the whole affair was. The *Daily Mail* even complained that Labour's media supremo Peter Mandelson and his highly trained team of 'spindoctors' were deliberately playing up the strength of the hard left in order to boost the coverage of conference with stories of left-right rows.

The *Mail's* man, David Norris was not taken in: "in fact the spindoctors were well aware that the union barons had already agreed to give the new policies a clear run" he complained.

That sounds to me like a perfect admission that no one could really be expected to take all that Dad's Army/flying picket guff very seriously. Still, the tabloids did their best and Mrs Thatcher's aides should really be more grateful.

P.S. eagle eyed readers will have noted the absence from the above, of the words 'Mirror', 'Maxwell', 'Haines', 'Pergamon', 'sackings' and 'hypocrisy'. Maybe next week...

Who makes Labour policy?

Would it be lawful for workers to refuse to handle imports from South Africa? Answer no.

"Would meat porters be allowed to take action in support of nurses?" Answer, no."

Labour front-bencher Michael Meacher makes these promises to

the bosses in an article in the *Independent* on 9 October. He also promises that "we would retain the current Code of Practice on peaceful picketing which limits the number of pickets".

None of this was voted on by Labour Party conference, not even as part of the job-lot in the Policy Review. Both the Policy Review

and the resolution passed at this year's Labour Party conference confine themselves to vague promises of 'fairer' labour law under a Labour government.

A resolution passed overwhelmingly at the 1988 conference still stands, promising the repeal of all Tory anti-union laws.

Meacher was following the example of other labour front-benchers in flouting conference decisions. After conference voted to cut arms spending, Gerald Kaufman declared on TV: "The resolution is not Labour Party policy. Labour Party policy is in the Policy Review".

Roy Hattersley said: "The Policy Review takes precedence over any resolutions passed at conference. The Policy Review is primary, and resolutions are secondary and subservient".

Labour's leaders want to replace conference as the decision-making body by unelected Policy Review

groups, or just by themselves.

On the first day of conference, constituency activists proposed that resolutions contradicting the Policy Review should be 'treated as amendments' to it. General Secretary Larry Whitty replied that the tradition had been for conference not to amend National Executive statements, and conflicts would be sorted out afterwards.

His line was nearer what John Prescott said on TV late in the week: that the National Executive would have a duty to amend the Policy Review in line with the resolutions passed which contradicted it.

Constituency Labour Parties and trade unions should bombard the National Executive with resolutions demanding that it recognises the supremacy of Labour Party conference over unelected Policy Review groups and off-the-cuff TV policy-making by individual party leaders.

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'The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race'

Karl Marx

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7965.

Latest date for reports: first post

4 LETTERS

What, no ballot?

GRAFFITI

What no ballot? On Monday 10 October journalists at the *Daily Torygraph* staged a lighting strike in protest at planned staff cuts.

None of the reports on the strike mentioned a ballot being held. Maybe Tory journalists can see better than Neil Kinnock what's wrong with Tory laws imposing pre-strike ballots.

According to a poll in last week's *Economist* 96% of Britain's top bosses support Margaret Thatcher. But of those 96%, 88 per cent think that she should quit before or just after the next election.

Those top bosses are better off than ever before. Basic salaries rank them slightly behind bosses in other EEC countries, but according to the *Sunday Correspondent* "Executive packages in Britain are among the most attractive in Europe although they lag behind in the basic pay content."

"Profit sharing bonuses, share options, company car and help with private medical care are par for the executive course". And a report in the *Daily Telegraph* confirms this: a survey by merchant bankers concluded that share options add 50 per cent to salary for top managers.

The ultra-free market Adam Smith Institute has been booked up to do a seminar on privatisation in Hungary in December. The arrangement was made by the National Bank of Hungary and the main opposition group, the Hungarian Democratic Forum.

The Adam Smith Institute already has a seminar planned in Poland. There, the booking was made by leaders of the Polish United Workers (Stalinist) Party.

As the Tories squirm and wriggle, trying to redesign the 'safety net' to ease in the poll tax, one group of people are happily bouncing in a safety net.

MPs will be guaranteed against any losses due to poll tax on second homes they maintain in London when their constituencies are outside the capital. They will be paid a special allowance to compensate.

According to a report in the *Solidarnosc* daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*, mentioned in the *Guardian*, the Romanian government tried to organise a

Warsaw Pact invasion of Poland last month.

On hearing that a *Solidarnosc* prime minister had been appointed in Poland, Romania sent out a call to other Warsaw Pact states for them to "act uniformly to prevent the handing over of workers' and peasants' power into reactionary hands".

It seems to have got no takers.

The latest issue of the Polish Solidarity Campaign newsletter reports that all big political parties in Britain invited *Solidarnosc* representatives to their conferences this year — with one exception.

The exception is... the Conservative Party, always keen to use conflict in the Eastern Bloc as 'proof' of the iniquities of 'socialist', but less keen, it seems, to give real support to Eastern Bloc workers.

The Tory Party office told the Polish Solidarity Campaign that they had 'forgotten' and it was not 'too late', since the list of invitations had been closed 'months ago'. They gave exactly the same excuse last year.



Fact don't confuse him

Dogmatism is a virtue, so Ted Grant of *Militant* tells us. In a special feature for the 25th anniversary issue of the paper, he writes:

"*Militant's* activities are based not on episodic events or an empirical analysis of events as they happen, but on the theory of Marxism... It is this theoretical advantage of examining things in the process of change and development and not being influenced by temporary events that gives *Militant* an advantage over all other tendencies..."

What he means is to assert that *Militant* does not allow short-term trends to divert it from long-term perspectives. What he actually writes, however — that no mere fact can ever disturb *Militant* from its preconceived conclusions — is nearer the truth.

How to rebuild Labour's left

LETTERS

The momentum built up by the Policy Review at this year's Labour Party Conference will make life even harder for the serious left between now and the general election.

Already the secretary of the Campaign Group is talking of the need to combine with Tribune in a body whose leadership he does not see coming from the Campaign Group.

One valid point he did make, however, was for the left to concentrate more on developing policies and less on capturing positions.

The implication is nothing less than a socialist manifesto taking up all the issues contained in the Policy Review.

The CLPs Conference is a natural focus to develop these ideas and represents the most important initiative on the left in the Labour Party for some time.

Socialist Organiser should devote a section every week to a report from the CLPs Conference steering committee, starting straight away.

One of the main reasons why Kinnock has such a stranglehold on the Labour Party is that he is one of the best organisers the party has had. Lol Duffy is therefore quite right when he says we can put all the



Kinnock has organised well

draft resolutions we like, but if we're not organised in the constituencies we are going to lose every time.

But if we merely tighten up what we have been doing already we will still lose, one of the main reasons being the drift towards one member one vote.

It is not surprising that members of the Labour Party who are part of

the 'ideological vanguard' in the constituencies can find themselves out of synch with the mass of the membership, who are not at the meetings to be swayed by their arguments.

Ken Livingstone hit the nail on the head when he said at Brighton that the likely introduction of mandatory balloting would require the Left to find a way of communicating directly with the mass of party membership and not just the activists.

I remember at one of the workshops at the first CLPs Conference a party member bemoaning the fact that many members back home just did not know of the radical initiatives that the hard core of activists were undertaking.

So if we are to organise in the constituencies around a true socialist programme of action, just how are we to do it?

Here are just a few ideas based on my experience as a Labour party member for the past fourteen years. They can be adapted depending on the number of members and/or level of activity in the constituency.

1. Aggregate meetings for all party members in the constituency. Hold special aggregate meetings once a year for new members/members transferred in.

2. Direct debit membership in Walworth Rd should be resisted: it breaks local links between party and member and discourages local donations.

3. At the least the membership secretary should be sympathetic to the left. Membership lists can be used to post bulletins to each party members. Why not a local version of 'Labour Party News' with a serious left message?

4. Socialist Organiser should act more consistently as a practical aid for constituency activists, getting draft resolutions for national and regional conferences (while we've still got them) published in good time.

How about a full list of various deadlines printed as soon as they become known?

So there it is. The codification of socialist principles into an alternative manifesto hammered out among all the groups on the serious left, using the CLPs Conference as the anvil. Equal weight given to how to organise around those ideals. To borrow Neil Kinnock's phrase, "the triumph of ideas needs organising".

I have to say that I think the CLPs Conference Newsletter would be far more useful if it concentrated on the above, rather than list yet more undemocratic practices by the party leadership.

Ian Hollingworth
Salisbury

Links between sexism and racism

On reading Ruth Cockcroft's article 'The Feminist Case Against Censoring Pornography' I found it very interesting.

What I did find worrying was Ruth failing to see the connection between racial and sexual oppres-

sion and that the roles are the same in both cases. As a black woman I have spent many years trying to decide which is the worst of the two. Now I see them as the same. It would be interesting to see how other black women who read *Socialist Organiser* view this.

Paulette Powell
London E15

Black Monday, 9 Oct

9 October 1989 will be seen as a black day for the millions currently on DSS benefits in the UK.

They will be expected to keep diaries of jobs applied for, replies from employers and copies of letters written to employers. (Everybody has a photocopier in the back room?).

They will be expected to accept 'employment on trial'. This means taking low paid work that they have no experience or qualifications for and the chance of turning the job down between 6 to 12 weeks.

The catch is that they 'have to show just cause for doing so'. The current legislation suspends benefits for 26 weeks if people leave employment 'without just cause, so the excuse 'it wasn't suitable' is not good enough.

The most damning clause is 'the permitted period' or 'widening the type of job they will take'. This means enforced low paid work where claimants cannot turn a job down if they have been unemployed for a 'period of one week to thirteen weeks'. So adjudication officers at the DSS will decide to suspend benefits during that period. After this period any job refused (low paid or otherwise) benefit will be suspended for a period of 26 weeks.

What can the unemployed do to fight back? Organise street meetings outside your local DSS office to get the unemployed to gain the confidence to fight back. For help and ideas contact: Terry Egan, National Unemployed Centres Combine, 24 Hardman Street, Liverpool, Merseyside.

Steve Harnden
Wallasey Unemployed Centre

An unexpected pleasure

I came across No 11 of *Workers' Liberty* magazine at Bookmarks bookshop last week and was glad to see the Shachtman article took me back to my time in WIL and RCP (1943-44) — then I went to sea and lost touch, so I am a bit behind! The article on Deutscher is very welcome. But two pictures of Arafat is surely excessive!

I found Belinda Weaver's article an unexpected pleasure.

Melvin Durden
London NW4

Which way forward for the left in the unions?

A national conference organised by the Socialist Conference

Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 November
Sheffield Polytechnic Students Union
Pond St (opposite rail station)

Saturday: registration 10.30am, conference 11.00am-5.00pm; Sunday 10.00am-4.00pm

Credentials: £6 waged, £4 unwaged from The Socialist Conference, 9 Poland St, London W1V 3DG



Siberian miners: can Gorbachev stop them striking?

New socialist party formed in USSR

The Soviet parliament last week (3 October) voted to ban strikes in all 'essential services'.

The immediate focus is a rail blockade by Azerbaijan which has been seriously affecting Armenia.

But coal mines where strikes took place last summer, would also be defined as 'essential'.

The use of troops in such cases was also accepted by the parliament.

The motion, advocated wholeheartedly by Gorbachev himself, applied explicitly to

transport, fuel and energy, metallurgical and chemical sectors. Only 'unequivocal, draconian measures' could avert chaos, Gorbachev said.

This is the limit to glasnost — no real freedom for workers. This ban on strikes makes Thatcher's anti-union laws look mild. It shows where Gorbachev stands on even basic issues of genuine democracy.

The working class is Gorbachev's greatest fear. He does not want a repeat of last summer's strike wave. Since the economy is quite unable to deliver the goods to keep workers happy, repression is all that remains.

If Soviet workers disobey Gorbachev's ban, what will the govern-

ment do? That will be the real test.

A socialist opposition is needed to Gorbachev, which looks to rank and file workers and fights for socialist democracy. And a radical Socialist Party is now being formed.

In various towns a Committee for a new Socialist Party has been formed, including among its number the well-known intellectual, Boris Kagarlitsky — member of the Moscow Popular Front and author of 'The Thinking Reed'.

Grouping together over 2,000 people, the Socialist Party represents a hope for the future. All British socialists must support it.

Contact: New Socialist Committee, c/o PO Box 82, London E3.

Menem pardons the torturers

More than 200 Argentinian torturers, including former military dictator Leopoldo Galtieri, are to be pardoned by President Carlos Menem.

A few of those responsible for the 'dirty war' including Galtieri's predecessor Videla, are to stay in prison. But Menem is releasing the rest.

Three dictators, from 1976 to 1983, presided over the 'dirty war' — a war against their own people brutal and bloody even by the standards of South American repression. Thousands 'disappeared', never to return.

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo still demonstrate in Buenos Aires, demanding to know what happened to their children, who disappeared in some cases 13 years ago.

To pardon the torturers is an outrageous insult to these women

and all who suffered the repression. Almost no Argentinian family escaped unscarred. Galtieri himself, was, of course, responsible also for the absurd Falklands adventure that left many more Argentinians dead.

In contrast, the leader of the radical Montoneros guerillas is to stay in jail. Ironically, the Montoneros were only the radical wing of Menem's own party, the Peronists.

Menem believes it is vital to have the army's confidence because of Argentina's terrible economic problems. His solution to these problems is to make workers pay, and sidle up to the 'golpistas', who will only repay him, as they have repaid every politician like him in Latin America, with further coups and repression from which he will not escape.

There could be good reason to fear another coup in Argentina. There has been talk of it for months. Menem is only paving the way for it.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Wednesday 11 October
Leeds SO: 'Stalin's heirs face the workers'. Speaker: Mark Osborn
Thursday 12 October
Manchester SO: 'Stalin's heirs face the workers'. Speaker: Mark Osborn
Thursday 12 October
Leicester Trades Council demonstration to support Ross Galbraith and Gary Sherriff, sacked for refusing to work on an order for South Africa. 8am, Catherine St/Barkby Rd.
Thursday 12 October
North London Women for Socialism: 'The future of socialist feminism'. Speakers: Martha Osamor, Nadine Finch and others. Red Rose, Seven Sisters Rd, N7, 7.30
Saturday 14 October
Socialist Movement supporters in the Labour Party meeting. Key Books, 136 Digbeth, Birmingham,

11.30. Contact Davy Jones 01-607 9579

Sunday 15 October
N. London SO meeting: 'Can Labour beat Thatcher?' Speaker: Clive Bradley. 7pm Angel and Crown, Upper St, London N1.

Monday 16 October
Newcastle SO: 'Stalin's heirs face the workers'. Speaker: Martin Thomas. 7.30pm Moorside School

Monday 16 October
'Why we want an independent public inquiry into the W. Midlands Serious Crime Squad'. Public meeting 7pm Library Exhibition Hall, Chamberlin Square, Birmingham.

Tuesday 17 October
Glasgow SO: 'Stalin's heirs face the workers'. Speaker: Martin Thomas. 5pm Glasgow University.

Wednesday 18 October
Cardiff SO: 'After Labour Party Conference'. 7pm The Comet, Moira Street, near Cardiff Royal Infirmary.

Saturday 21 October
NALGO Broad Left conference. 11

NUS calls for November loans demo

By Paul Mc Garry (NUS National Executive, in personal capacity)

An emergency National Executive meeting of the National Union of Students called a national demonstration in late November against the introduction of a student loans system.

It is a complete volte face for the Labour Students (NOLS) group on the Executive. They have consistently argued and voted against first-term national demonstrations. This can be seen as a victory for the left.

This change of position has been justified by the Tories' temporary dropping of legislation to restrict student unions. Also, said Labour Student's leaders, student activists up and down the country are lobbying for national action, and NUS needs to provide a central focus after the Queen's speech (in which loans are expected to be announced).

The left had been saying many of these things for several months!

The turn by Labour students to a national demo left an alliance of the 'Communist' Party with Cosmo Hawkes and his ragbag of 'independents' voting against.

Manchester Area NUS demonstration

Fight for the Right to Study! Grants for all students!

Wednesday 18 October

Assemble: 1.30 All Saints, Oxford Rd, Manchester

More details: 061-736 3636

Kent Area NUS Activist Conference

How to fight loans 4 November at Poly of Central London (Marylebone Rod site)

For more details contact: Kent Area NUS, c/o Students Union UKC, Canterbury

am Mechanics' Centre, 103 Princess Street, Manchester.

Saturday 21 October
Hands off Our NHS! Demonstrate against the White Paper. 4pm Belvedere Road, London SE1.

Wednesday 25 October
Forum on Ireland with Patrick Murphy (SO), Redmond O'Neill (LCI) and a speaker from the CPGB. 7pm Merseyside TU Resources Centre, Hardman St, Liverpool.

Saturday 28 October
Birmingham Trades Council demonstration against the poll tax. 12 am assemble Chamberlin Square.

Friday 3 November
History Workshop Conference 1989. Salford University. Contact Helen Bowyer, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4UX (061-736 3601)

Monday 6 November
SO/Socialist Outlook debate: 'The nature of the Soviet Union'. 7pm University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1



The road to Brighton Pier

By John O'Mahony

Orders reigns in the Labour Party! For now. This year's conference established one thing most clearly of all: that the big majority of the party wants to give Neil Kinnock and his team a clear ride against Thatcher for the 1991 or 1992 General Election.

Kinnock had most things his way. Not everything: against the will and voice of the seemingly all-powerful leadership, Conference passed Bruce Kent's motion to cut arms spending. The left, and left-wing moods, impulses and aspirations, are not dead. But this conference showed them more dormant than at any time in the last ten years.

That is not surprising. There is a traditional and very powerful strand in British labour movement politics which scorns 'pie-in-the-sky' ideas and prizes the approach which sets practical, limited, immediately realisable goals and goes for them.

It is the old narrow reformist approach, with its mixture of foreshortened vision, blinkered thinking, and its own version of 'pie-in-the-sky' ideas — 'socialism' to come sometime in the future, when the immediate short-term business is not so pressing.

This traditional thinking combined with the effects of ten years of defeats for the labour movement to provide the conditions for Kinnock's triumph.

Right now the aching need is to bring down Thatcher. Everybody (except perhaps the foolish people who run the SWP) knows that only the Labour Party can do that, and that the normal way to do it is to use the next election.

The limited revival of industrial militancy this year shows us what the future will bring, but it has still

not reversed the broad eight-year trend of industrial peace — the peace of Thatcher's industrial graveyard. The electoral struggle is the only weapon now available to the labour movement for a comprehensive response to the Tories — and people know it.

The pressure is enormous not to rock the boat, not to be too concerned for the future beyond the defeat of Thatcher, not to worry about what a Labour government would do. First get the Tories out!

Kinnockism in the Labour Party is a direct — and, in the minds of Labour's leaders, a conscious — byproduct of ten years of rampant Tory rule.

Many people who are now Kinnockites enthusiastically joined in the left's fight ten years ago, when it seemed that the Labour Party could be reconstructed and politically regenerated into a socialist movement accountable to the working class. They now settle for a lot less, in the spirit of settling for the best 'realistic' option available. And so Kinnock and his friends could "write their own ticket" at this year's Labour Conference.

A shameful sight it was, to see a Labour Party which did not even dare commit itself to unshackling the unions from Thatcher's police-state trade-union legislation, the most vicious this side of Europe, for fear of a vote-losing campaign in the Tory tabloids.

Even poor old timid, tepid Michael Meacher is — so the *Observer* says — due to be sacked from his Shadow Cabinet job by Kinnock because he appears too 'pro-union' to blend comfortably into the image Kinnock and his friends think best for the Labour Party now.

On one level the thinking in the labour movement that allowed Kinnock and his friends to do what they did at conference makes sense. Of course it is of the greatest importance that Labour wins the next

election. It is true that short of a tremendous surge of industrial militancy of such scope and power that it could bring down the Tory government — and right now that is nowhere in sight, and anyway would be unpredictable — the next election is the best chance we have to kick out Thatcher.

A Labour government would at least loosen the legal disabilities which now cripple unions, and the recent experience of the dockworkers, for example, shows how lethal a barrage of weapons the Tories now have in their legal arsenal. It may even be that a Labour government will be necessary — both to loosen the Tory shackles and to break the atmosphere of primitive-Tory reaction which now reigns — before there can be a large-scale revival of industrial militancy.

In any case no-one but a sectarian fool can deny the sense and logic of those of the early-'80s left who now say that beating the Tories is the first goal.

We part company with those comrades not on that, but on the miserable Kinnockite way of trying to dislodge the Tories, and on Kinnock's alternative to Thatcher. We refuse even to pretend — as many erstwhile leftists do pretend, in the first place to themselves — to believe that Kinnock's policy represents a real alternative.

Kinnock and his friends hope — and that is all it is, passive hope — that if they can appear as champions of normalcy then the Tories will defeat themselves. So they make themselves into 'wet Thatcherites', as bland as bland can be, supporters of market economics, and even of Thatcher's anti-union legislation — and hope that the winds and tides of opinion favour them in 1991 or '92.

They hope that Thatcher's and Lawson's ability to manipulate the economy into a pre-election boom will vanish this time round (and it may do so); they hope, if all else

fails, that the electorate will at least want a change next time round and opt for Kinnock's 'Thatcherism with a human face'.

The Labour leaders' new 'line' is that they represent *mainstream* capitalist policy, as against the maverick Tories. "Mrs Thatcher is out of step", they say — out of step with the policy of the West German Christian Democrats or the rulers of Japan or George Bush in the US. And Labour is *in step* — with those capitalist governments.

Peter Mandelson, Labour's Director of Communications and *eminence grise* of the new regime, puts it strikingly in an interview in the current *Marxism Today*:

"Europe is bound to have become important for the Labour Party because it's a way of getting socialism in through the back door. The Tories were absolutely right in warning the British people during the European elections that Labour saw the European Community as a way of bringing more socialism into Britain".

Ten years ago almost the whole Labour Left, and much of the Labour Right too, saw the capitalist EEC as an obstacle to their hopes of bringing Britain to 'socialism in one country' ahead of the rest of Europe. Now the same EEC appears as a means of getting 'socialism' (mainstream welfare capitalism) through the back door of Tory Britain — and Labour proclaims its goal as bringing Britain into line with other countries.

This approach has been accepted, or at least condoned, by the labour movement, not just because of the pressure for unity, and not just because of the demoralisation caused by ten years of defeats. The ideological weakness of the left is also a major factor.

When the left was stronger, the economic programme of the broad left was never developed beyond a vague scheme for a siege economy with import controls, price controls

and nationalisations.

That 'siege economy' programme has lost credibility. Kinnock's team has pushed through the ideological breach with a forthright acceptance of market economics, national and international. Most of the left has no answer. The two left resolutions on the economy got tiny votes in Brighton. Yet everyone knows that the acceptance of market economics is the keystone of the Policy Reviews. The left could challenge the Policy Review seriously only on less central issues.

Yet Kinnock's is a cowardly, passive, and ultimately an irresponsible approach. Because it has led Labour's leaders to divest themselves of any real alternative to Thatcherism, it is an approach that will finally explode in their face, when they have to try to clean up Thatcher's mess. Those in the labour movement who now support Kinnock will come face to face with Kinnock's 'Thatcherism with a human face' in power, and find it neither human nor friendly. It will still be capitalism, and most of the Thatcherite mask, too, will still be in place.

The alternative to Kinnock's approach is a drive to *fight* the Tories, on the sort of policies *Socialist Organiser* has advocated for the last ten years. Instead of speculating on electoral moods and hoping for the best, Labour should go out and agitate and organise against the Tories.

But Kinnock and his friends have not even dared to do that over the Poll Tax, a vastly unpopular measure on which a campaign could have mobilised millions of people around Labour. A campaign like that would not have made Kinnock a socialist, but it would have been serious anti-Toryism.

It is Kinnock's very failure to fight on this and other issues that pushes people who would be enthusiastic activists and militants in a fighting anti-Tory campaign behind Kinnock now. The lack of a lead from Labour's top ranks blocks off an avenue of action and leaves them little alternative:

It was an important conference; it registers serious changes, and gives the green light for more.

Back at the start of this whole cycle in Labour politics, I wrote: "If the proposals [for Labour Party democracy] get through, it will be the beginning of a major left/right struggle..."

"Either the left will go on... to consolidate the Labour Party as a genuinely socialist party seeking to overthrow capitalism on the basis of the class struggle of the working

Trade union rights voted down



Hypocrisy as the platform sings 'The Red Flag'

Trade union rights were a central issue at the Brighton Conference.

Liz Williams from Wallasey Constituency Labour Party moved a composite committing Labour to repeal all anti-union laws and to introduce "a legally recognised right to strike, to picket effectively and in whatever number is chosen, and to take other forms of industrial action".

The composite also claimed "the right for unions to determine their own constitutions and rule books in accordance with their own democratic procedure free from any interference by the state".

Moving it, Liz said: "This composite is about restoring basic rights to trade unionists, not giving privileges. Privileges do exist in this society. They are the privileges of the rich, the privileges of Thatcher and her friends".

Seconding, Tim Peacock from Broxtowe CLP said: "The Policy Review offers us 'A Charter for Employees' — sounds like it was written by someone from Personnel! We need a *Workers' Charter* giving workers the legal rights we need to defend ourselves collectively against the bosses".

And Arthur Scargill spoke in support. "It's all very well for the platform to praise Solidarity in Poland. What they should

remember is that Solidarity has often called strikes without a ballot".

The composite won two and a quarter million votes. The TGWU voted for it, and so did a number of other unions. The issue caused a public row within the UCATT delegation on the floor of conference.

The composite adopted by conference on trade union rights was moved by John Edmonds of the GMB. It did not spell out the Labour front bench's intention to keep Tory laws requiring ballots, banning 'secondary' action, and limiting pickets to six, but only talked of "the repeal of anti-union legislation and its replacement by a fair and positive framework of industrial relations legislation".

Edmonds even spoke of the need to repeal *all* the Tory anti-union laws. Other speakers on his side of the debate, however, were more forthright.

Bill Jordan of the AEU declared: "The mass pickets have been demobilised, and the Labour Government must not call them back". Eric Hammond of the EETPU congratulated himself on the fact that his industrial policy is rapidly becoming Labour Party policy.

The two and a quarter million votes for full trade union rights are, however, a good base on which to build a campaign against the approach of Hammond, Jordan and Edmonds.

class, and build up a mass membership around such policies. Or the left will be purged and the Labour Party transformed from its present ramshackle self into a tight and intolerant party modelled on the West German, Swedish and other Social Democracies".

We are now living through the worse of those alternatives. The left has not been completely purged, but the regime has been greatly tightened up.

The National Executive's report to conference listed 71 cases heard by the National Constitutional Committee, the vast majority leading to expulsions. Numerous

"Instead of speculating on electoral moods and hoping for the best, Labour should go out and agitate and organise against the Tories".

constituency Labour Parties have been suspended.

The Labour leadership is not swayed by the need for unity. It is consciously, aggressively trying to remodel the Labour Party as a safe party of capitalist government — and trying to construct guarantees to keep it safe.

When the conference voted for arms spending cuts, the Labour leadership did not do what they might traditionally have done — vaguely promise to "take on board" the decision, and then whittle down the policy over time. They put down a marker by slapping the conference in the face, immediately declaring that they would ignore its decision.

The last major vote of the conference was to review the whole structure of Party decision-making. The leadership's plans are to eliminate conference altogether, except perhaps as a media event like an American party convention, and to replace it by unelected policy commissions on the model of the Policy Review groups.

The left has not been thoroughly purged, nor is Kinnock likely to be able to purge it thoroughly before the next election. But the right wing clearly has the upper hand, for

now. The decisive turning point which gave it the upper hand came long ago, and Brighton was only drawing out the implications.

That turning point was in the early '80s. It resulted not from the strengths of Kinnock and his friends, or of the hard Labour Right, but from a turn made by Labour's *Left*.

When Thatcher came to power, the labour movement had two options: fight back then and there, mobilising on every issue that arose, trying to drive the Tories from office; or ride the punches and wait for better days.

A fight back was possible. Thatcher was very unpopular for the first two or three years after 1979. Industrial combativity was still relatively high. The anti-union shackles were only being riveted on; they were not reliably in place. The miners had not been defeated.

And in 1980-1 sections of the Left had positions from which they could lead a fight back, in local government. It was a god-sent opportunity. Tory cuts could have been resisted. Local government positions could have been used to mobilise against the government, linking up local communities with industrial and other struggle.

But the dominant section of the local government left — people like Ken Livingstone, Ted Knight, and David Blunkett — decided differently. They decided to avoid confrontation, to duck out of the struggle, to haver and try to find a way out.

So they ran local government, raising rates to compensate for Tory cuts. At best they failed to do anything to mobilise their local working-class communities against the Tories, at worst they alienated and disgusted them.

Militant on Liverpool City Council got further down the road towards a fight with the government, but backed off in the end — so it was the same result, with a few added grotesqueries.

Instead of local government under the left being a school of class struggle, or of anti-Tory struggle at least, the Livingstones made it a school of class collaboration, an academy for 'lesser evil' politics, a crash course in what Ken Livingstone himself called 'the politics of the cynical soft sell'.

The left didn't get another chance. And everything else since has flowed from those decisions to do local government business as usual with left trappings.

Because we failed to fight — and nobody in their right minds would have relied on the Labour leader-

ship to lead a serious fight — the Tories went from strength to strength, and the labour movement from retreat and defeat to defeat and retreat.

The right and soft left were both strengthened in the Labour Party and trade unions, and made to seem the best thing going as alternative to the Tories. Today, those like Ken Livingstone who bear most responsibility for what happened to the labour movement in the early '80s still parade as verbal leftists, free with the 'cynical soft sell' and left verbiage, but the reality of the defeats shapes events more than the left verbiage.

What should the left do? Tenacity, tenacity, always tenacity, must be our motto.

There were sizeable left minorities at Brighton on many issues. New recruits can be brought into the Labour Party from poll tax campaigns and industrial struggles and won to the left.

The "Constituency Labour Parties Conference" set up last year held a lively fringe meeting at Brighton, and will be campaigning:

- for a charter of CLPs' rights;
- to defend Conference sovereignty;
- for Clause Four, unilateralism, and trade union rights.

Its newsletter, and its conferences (the next one of which is due next spring), will provide a solidly-based framework for active CLPs to coordinate campaigns and exchange ideas.

More than that, we need to organise a serious Marxist left, not only in the Labour Party but in the trade unions too. That is what *Socialist Organiser* is trying to do.

It must be a left which dares to face the lessons of the past so that we do not have a future as similar to the past as Neil Kinnock's future in office is likely to be similar to Labour's last period in office.

The Labour left will revive, and so will the left in the unions. Despite himself, if Kinnock wins the election it will give a great boost to the left and the working class in general.

The *Sunday Correspondent's* Donald MacIntyre recorded a conversation in a bar at Brighton which puts it nicely. Ex-MP John Golding, the long-time right-wing roughneck, was astonished at the peace and calm. He said to a friend: "When's the Labour Party conference then? Because this certainly isn't it".

His friend replied: "I'll tell you exactly when it is — October 1992". When Labour has won the election — or lost it again.

Socialist Organiser in Brighton

Socialist Organiser supporters produced a daily briefing for conference delegates in Brighton.

We also organised for several fringe meetings, including especially the Chinese Solidarity Campaign and the Constituency

Labour Parties Conference meetings.

Eric Heffer, Tony Benn, Joan Maynard and Peter Heathfield all signed the Chinese Solidarity Campaign petition to free political prisoners in China. Gerald Kaufman, Arthur Scargill, and Maeve Sherlock refused.



8 LABOUR PARTY

The week at Brighton

LABOUR PARTY

Sunday

Conference rejected the proposal that resolutions carried in contradiction to the Policy Review should be 'treated as amendments' to it, by 3.704 million votes to 2.245 million.

The constitutional amendment that CLP votes for Leader and Deputy must be decided by one-member-one-vote was carried by 5.207 million to 0.508 million.

Monday

The left resolutions on the Economy were defeated by 0.459 million to 5.597 million and 0.239 million to 5.852 million.

The mineworkers' motion to phase out nuclear power within 15 years was defeated by 3.243 million to 2.859 million.

On armaments, a motion welcoming the Policy Review was carried by 3.597 million to 2.415 million; the unilateralist motion was defeated by 3.635 million to 2.431 million; and the motion calling for

a cut in arms spending was carried by 4.201 million to 1.922 million.

A motion calling for recognition of the PLO and an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel was carried by 4.645 million to 1.394 million, against the National Executive's recommendation.

Tuesday

The National Executive working party 'compromise' proposal for a Black Socialist Society was lost by 2.715 million to 3.363 million. The National Executive's policy — for a Black Socialist Society with white members — was defeated by 2.893 million to 1.428 million.

A proposal for quotas of women among Labour candidates, the Shadow Cabinet and the National Executive was carried on a show of hands. A resolution laying down timescales for these quotas was remitted.

Constitutional amendments to the Labour women's organisation, merging the National Labour Women's Committee with the NEC Women's Committee, were carried by a large majority.

Wednesday

A resolution calling for the right to take effective strike action and

for unions to regulate their own democracy free from state interference was lost by 2.239 million to 3.823 million.

Thursday

A resolution calling for non-payment and non-cooperation with the poll tax was lost on a show of hands.

A resolution calling for Labour to consider electoral reform was lost by 4.592 million to 1.443 million. One calling for a Bill of Rights was lost by 4.481 million to 1.297 million. The platform was defeated on full equality for gays and lesbians by 3.702 million to 2.317 million. A call for troops out of Ireland was defeated by 5.308 million to 0.600 million.

Friday

The GMB's motion, which calls for a review of decision-making and could lead to the permanent domination of Policy-Review type structures, was carried on a show of hands.

depends where you are in the labour movement. If you are high up, then you have done pretty well and it might get you into government — but for what purpose. It's not been good for the left".

Dennis Skinner MP

In 1931 they must have been disillusioned. I know my dad was. But it didn't stop him fighting. He didn't throw the towel in.

It took 14 years and a war, but things changed. They change all the time.

I think we have to understand that we socialists are optimistic. It's a contradiction to be a

pessimist.

I can see a dozen issues upon which we have got to fight. One of the things we have to do is make sure we put sectarianism onto the back boiler.

Dave Hatt (NUR delegate)

I think the Conference was very flat. It was stage-managed even before we got here. There seem to be cartels in the unions. The one thing that has not come through from this conference is any debate or consultation. If they think this is going to convince the electorate then they are in cloud-cuckoo land.

Votes for the National Executive

Constituency Section

	1989	1988	Gain/loss	
Dennis Skinner	358,000	400,000	-42,000	Re-elected
Tony Benn	387,000	416,000	-29,000	Re-elected
Alice Mahon	104,000			
Diane Abbot	196,000	258,000	-62,000	
Audrey Wise	206,000	247,000	-41,000	
Ken Livingstone	284,000	406,000	-122,000	Voted off
Jo Richardson	319,000	377,000	-58,000	Re-elected
David Blunkett	483,000	485,000	-2,000	Re-elected
Robin Cook	404,000	341,000	+63,000	Re-elected
Tam Dalyell	72,000	155,000	-83,000	
Bryan Gould	329,000	293,000	+36,000	Re-elected
Michael Meacher	222,000	248,000	-26,000	
John Prescott	390,000			Voted on
Gerald Kaufman	215,000	194,000	+21,000	

WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under

workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide, including the struggle of

workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class-based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.

Clare Short MP spoke to Socialist Organiser about electoral reform

I have moved from the traditional position that we have an adequate electoral system. We have to examine proportional representation.

The straight majority system is not good for the left. We do not want to steamroll over people in our move to socialism. We have to engage them in debate.

I'm not interested in pacts; but we have to examine all the forms of PR and discuss all the angles.

Deepening democracy is not a quick fix. We're looking for democratic system not just a walk into power.

Pete Proctor (Sheffield Hallam CLP delegate)

"Was it a good conference? It

Thatcher mucks it up



LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

Last issue's science column on the disposal of nuclear waste was based partly* on the reports of the proceedings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science's annual meeting. This week we look at some more of the topics discussed.

Two days before announcing a six months delay in electricity privatisation, new Energy Minister John Wakeham had denied that any delay was on the cards. But people attending the BAAS meeting two weeks before had heard energy experts predicting such a delay due to problems in agreeing contracts for electricity supply between generating companies and distribution boards.

Indeed, according to Dr John Cheshire, an energy consultant and adviser to the House of Commons Select Committee on Energy, and Professor Ian Fells of Newcastle University, the fragmented structure of privatised electricity supply industry which has caused this delay would have other more serious effects.

Emphasis on short-term profitability would lead electricity companies to build gas turbine power stations. These are more efficient, are quicker to build, require less expensive equipment to control acid emissions and hence cost less. However, if the 15 Gigawatts of new electricity generating capacity required by the turn of the century (according to the CEBG) were to be gas-fired, this would deplete our proven gas reserves under the North Sea by 40% in 20 years, said Professor Fells.

He also pointed out that Sweden, committed to phasing out nuclear power by 2010, and Holland, Denmark and West Germany were all increasing their use of natural gas. Instead of the surplus we now have of gas in Europe, we could easily be in deficit in 10 or 20 years. Gas would also lose its present cheapness because of its attractiveness as an environmentally 'cleaner' fuel. It contains less sulphur and hence contributes less to acid rain. However, it is still quite bad for promoting the greenhouse effect (though not as bad as coal).

Professor Fells, head of Newcastle's Department of Energy Conversion, stated that market forces were "less than useless" in dealing with long-term problems with expensive solutions, such as acid rain, ozone depletion and global ('greenhouse') warming. Market forces could not ensure that Britain had the correct mixture of coal, oil, gas, nuclear and renewable sources of energy. Privatisation was coming at precisely the wrong time if these problems were to be tackled.

Bickering over commercial contracts could lead to the use of oil-fired power stations to ensure continuity of electricity supplies as other power stations became obsolete. These oil-fired stations were ordered just before oil prices went through the roof in the early 1970s. They are at present too expensive to use except in emergencies. Professor Fells favoured planning for a diversity of methods of power supply.

Mr Sam Goddard, corporate director of planning and construction for National Power ('Nat Pee') said that protecting the environment would require energy conservation and more nuclear power. Renewable sources of energy would play only a small part in the next 10 or so years. Mr Andres Crane, also of Nat P, said that cutting Britain's carbon dioxide emissions from power stations to the level achieved by France would require a seven-fold increase in the nuclear programme.

Dr Cheshire, a senior energy consultant to a City institution, reported that pressure was growing in the City for Britain's second generation of nuclear reactors, the Advance Gas-cooled Reactors, to be removed from the privatisation programme, just as the first generation, Magnox, reactors had been. "The City regards AGRs as liabilities rather than assets," he said.

* but mostly on the detailed notes taken at geologist Dr Neil Chapman's talk at the Open University's Summer School by OU student Michele Raithby.

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What is the 'Social Charter'?

This is the text of the European Community's 'Social Charter'.

Margaret Thatcher has condemned it as 'socialism by the back door'; the Labour Party conference last week in Brighton agreed to overwhelmingly support it.

The Charter lives up neither to the Tories' fears nor Labour's hopes. All its clauses are hedged about with ifs and buts. It is hard to see what changes in policy it would impose on the Tories other than perhaps restoring union rights at GCHQ (clause 15) and restoring restrictions on young workers' hours (clause 26)

The labour movement needs more than support for the Euro-capitalists' vague liberal promises. We should be discussing a European workers' charter, with such clauses as:

- A 35 hour week across Europe
- Levelling up of welfare provision — West German pensions, French family allowances, Italian nursery provision, and Danish unemployment benefit, across Europe.
- The right to strike, the right to picket, and the right of unions to control their own democracy free from state interference.
- Democratic control by the elected EC parliament over EC policy.
- Cross-Europe public ownership and workers' control of the great multinationals.
- Full rights for migrant workers from outside the EC.

Right to Freedom of Movement

1. Every citizen of the European Community shall have the right to freedom of movement throughout the territory of the Community subject to restrictions justified on grounds of public order, public safety or public health.

2. The right to freedom of movement enables any citizen to engage in any occupation or profession in the Community on the same terms as those applied to nationals of the host country, subject to the provisions of Community law.

3. The right to freedom of movement shall imply entitlement to equal treatment with nationals of the host country in all fields, including social advantages and taxation.

4. This right of freedom of movement shall imply that:

- Harmonisation of conditions of residence in all Member States, particularly those concerning family reunification, shall be continued.
- Obstacles arising from the non-recognition of certain categories of diplomas or occupational qualifications must be eliminated.
- Special attention must be devoted to improving the living and working conditions of European Community citizens residing in frontier regions and, in particular, of frontier workers.

5. The wage conditions as well as social protection are guaranteed to all Community workers engaged in non-temporary gainful employment in a Member State other than their country of origin in particular when awarding public work contracts on terms identical to those enjoyed by workers of the host country.

6. Recourse to sub-contracting in the context of the freedom to provide services, when it leads a worker of one Member State to perform non-temporary work in

another Member State cannot be an obstacle to the principle of equal treatment with workers of the host country, especially in so far as the wage conditions and the other social benefits related to this wage are concerned.

Employment and Remuneration

7. Every individual shall be free to choose and engage in an occupation according to the regulations governing each occupation.

8. All employment shall be fairly remunerated.

To this effect, either by law or by collective agreement at national, regional, interoccupational, sectoral or company level or in accordance with national practices:

- a decent wage shall be established, particularly at the level of the basic wage;
- rules shall be laid down on the basis of which workers subject to terms of employment other than an open-ended full time contract can be assured of an equitable reference wage;
- wages may be withheld, seized or transferred only in accordance with national law; such provisions should entail measures enabling the worker concerned to continue to enjoy the necessary means of subsistence for himself and his family.

9. Every individual shall have access to public placement services free of charge.

Improvement of living and working conditions

10. The development of a European labour market must lead to an improvement in the living and working conditions of workers in the European Community, this process resulting from an approximation of these conditions while the improvement is being maintained. This process will concern:

- the organisation and flexibility of working time, particularly by establishing a maximum duration of working time;
- all forms of employment other than open-ended contracts and in particular to fixed-term contracts, seasonal work, part-time working and temporary work.
- other forms of working such as weekend working, night work and shift work as well as to systematic overtime.

The improvement shall also cover, where necessary, the development of certain aspects of employment regulations such as procedures for collective redundancies or those regarding bankruptcies.

11. Every worker residing in the European Community shall have a right to annual paid leave and to a weekly rest period, or to a rest period of a regular rhythm to be agreed jointly by the two sides of industry.

12. Every worker residing in the European Community shall have a right to have his conditions of employment stipulated in a contract of employment save where such conditions are governed by law or collective agreement.

Right to social protection

13. According to the arrangements applying to each country:

- every citizen of the European Community shall have a right to adequate social protection;
- all workers, whatever their status and whatever the size of the undertaking in which they are employed, shall enjoy adequate levels of social security benefits



Nurses' strike in France

proportional, where appropriate, to length of service and pay and to their financial contribution to the appropriate social protection system;

- persons who have been unable either to enter or re-enter the labour market and who are no longer eligible for unemployment benefit, shall be able to receive a minimum income and appropriate social assistance;
- persons, especially the elderly, who do not have adequate means of subsistence shall be able to receive a minimum income modulated or complemented by appropriate social assistance.

Right to freedom of association and collective bargaining

14. Every employer and every worker in the European Community shall have the right to join freely any professional, or any association of his choice legally constituted.

Everyone has the freedom to exercise this right or to renounce it without any personal or occupational damage being thereby suffered by the individual concerned.

15. This right shall entail recognition of the right to belong to a union, the freedom to negotiate and conclude collective agreements, which should be promoted.

This right shall imply that relations based on agreement may be established between the two sides of industry at European level if they consider it desirable. The texts of the agreements thus concluded may cover employment and working conditions as well as related social entitlements.

To this end, the dialogue between the two sides of industry at European level must be developed, in particular at interoccupational and sectoral level.

16. The right to resort to collective action in the event of a conflict of interests, includes the right to strike, save in exceptions specified in existing legislation.

In order to facilitate the settlement of industrial disputes it is desirable to make possible the establishment and utilization of procedures of conciliation, mediation and arbitration.

Right to vocational training

17. Every European Community worker shall have the opportunity to continue his vocational training during his working life. The public authorities, enterprises or, where appropriate, the two sides of industry, each within their own sphere of competence, shall set up continuing and permanent training systems enabling every citizen to undergo retraining, more especially through leave for training purposes,

improve his skills or acquire new skills, particularly in the light of technical developments.

18. Every European Community citizen shall have the right to enrol for occupational training courses, including those at university level, on the same terms as those enjoyed by nationals of the Member State in the territory of which the course takes place.

Right of men and women to equal treatment

19. Equal treatment for men and women shall be assured. Equal opportunities for men and women shall be developed.

To this end, action shall be intensified to ensure the implementation of the principle of equality between men and women in matters of remuneration, access to employment, social protection, education and vocational training and career development.

Such action shall imply the development of amenities enabling those concerned to reconcile their occupational and family obligations more easily.

Right of workers to information, consultation and participation

20. Information, consultation and participation for workers must be developed along appropriate lines and in such a way as to take account of the laws, collective agreements and practices in force in the Member States. This shall apply especially in companies or groups of companies having establishments or companies in several Member States of the European Community.

21. In particular, these provisions shall be implemented in due time in the following cases:

- when technological changes which, from the point of view of working conditions and work organisation, have major implications for the workforce are introduced into the firm;
- in connection with restructuring operations in firms or in cases of mergers having an impact on the employment of workers;
- in case of procedures of collective redundancies or those regarding bankruptcies;
- when transfrontier workers are affected by employment policies pursued by the firm where they are employed.

Right to health protection and safety at the workplace

22. Every worker must enjoy satisfactory health and safety conditions, more especially in his

working environment. Appropriate measures must be taken to this effect with a view to achieving further harmonisation of conditions in this area while maintaining the improvements made.

Such protection may not be jeopardised by provisions concerning the implementation of the single market, especially as regards the awarding of public works contracts.

Protection of children and adolescents

23. Without prejudice to such rules as may be more favourable to young people, in particular those ensuring their preparation for work through vocational training, the minimum employment age shall be fixed at 16 years.

24. Young people aged over 16 who are in gainful employment shall receive equitable remuneration.

25. Appropriate measures shall be taken to adjust labour regulations applicable to young workers so that their specific development and vocation training needs are met.

Futhermore, for a period of at least two years, following the end of compulsory education, young people shall receive two years of initial vocational training in order to adapt to the requirements of their working life: for young workers, such training shall take place during working hours.

26. Except where so permitted by legal provisions or the provisions of collective agreements, no young worker aged under 18 shall work more than 40 hours per week and shall not be required to perform night work.

Elderly persons

27. Every person in retirement or early retirement shall be able to enjoy resources affording him or her a decent standard of living.

28. Any person who has reached retirement age but who is not entitled to a pension, for whatever reason or who does not have other adequate means of subsistence, shall be entitled to a minimum income, modulated or complemented by social protection and medical and social assistance specifically suited to their needs and as wide an access as possible to such assistance.

Disabled persons

29. All disabled persons, whatever be the origin and nature of their disablement shall be entitled to additional concrete measures aiming at improving their social and professional integration.

These measures shall concern, in particular, according to the capacities of the beneficiaries, vocational training, ergonomics, accessibility, mobility, means of transport and housing.

A different film of rebel youth

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver
reviews "Dead Poets Society"

The lesson that we physically exist separately and alone is hard, but it's one we learn to accept within the first year of life.

A much harder separation comes later, emotional separation, the process of striking out on our own path in life.

In growing up, in battles with our parents and teachers, we push against the walls of what is wanted of us, and if we're lucky, we break free. We discover our own voices.

If we're not lucky, we never break free, and end up either living out our parents' choices for us, or rebelling against their authority. Either way, we haven't left home. The life we live feels wrong somehow, like an ill fitting shoe. Something has been lost — ourselves.

"Dead Poets Society" is concerned for that fledgling self hidden within each of us. Set in an exclusive American boys prep school, it concerns a group of identikit schoolboys who blossom into thinking, feeling, and sometimes incompatible people under the tutelage of Mr Keating, an inspirational poetry teacher, played with brio by Robin Williams.

Till now, the boys have been ground down by the combined power of parents and school. Set unthinkingly on the path of worldly success, destined for careers as bankers and bosses, the boys are encrusted with a mixture of conformity and cynicism that is blasted away by their first contact with Keating.

Using a mixture of goading, inspiration and calls to rebellion, Keating tries to help each boy uncover who he is as an individual. Keating understands the pressure to conform, but he wants the boys to fight against it, to test the rules to the limit, and if necessary, to break them. Only thus will they learn to think for themselves.

Finding our own core, our own voice, is never easy. Most people have conflicting needs — the need for individual achievement, and the need to be liked and approved by others. Resolving that conflict, fin-

ding the balance that suits us, requires the separation of our self from others.

To find that self, we have to feel pity, love and concern for the child we once were, with all our hopes and dreams. If our parents failed us, and bullied us to do only what they wanted, it's harder. In the film, both Tod and Neil, the boys from unhappy homes, find it harder to break away from unloving, controlling parents. Having missed out on love and acceptance, their sense of their own worth is shakier. It takes confidence and courage to choose your own life.

In the film, Keating represents the ideal parent, the person who encourages you to excel, who recognises you as unique, while accepting you as you are. It is an over sentimental picture, though. Keating is presented as unflawed, as warm, generous and empathetic, with none of the controlling, life-denying features of the other teachers or the parents. It's as if Peter Weir, the film's director, was unable to get into the mind of the teacher and see him as whole, but sees Keating the way the boys do, as omnipotent, as perfect.

Keating is flawed. True, he inspires the boys, but he is also blind to the seriousness of Neil's torment, and pushes the boy further than he can safely go. Yet much of what he does is helpful, and if he is implicated in Neil's downfall, he is also instrumental in the liberation of several others.

Keating's motto is Thoreau's, to "live deliberately...so that when I came to die, I should not discover that I had not lived."

In the closing scene, some of the boys show they have understood that, and their courage and pride is heartening to see.

Unlike "If..", that other schoolboy fable of rebellion, "Dead Poets Society" is genuinely subversive. In "If.." the boys finally take to the roof with guns and shoot it out with the society they detest. Their rebellion is nihilistic though, a dead end, a mere reaction to the status quo. It poses no real threat.

"Dead Poets Society" is different. In teaching the boys to think for themselves, Keating is arming them with different weapons — the ability to say no to conformity, to stand up for principles, the courage to be different, and to speak out against wrong.

So why did Hollywood make this film? It's hardly the usual message.

Over the years, Hollywood has



Breaking away from careers as bankers?

financed many films about misunderstood youth. Foreseeing box office gains, the studios have bent over backwards to identify with teenage rebels and have flattered such audiences by showing the spoilsport grown-ups as wrong and hypocritical.

I imagine they thought they had the same sort of thing in "Dead Poets Society". But they're wrong. The comfort for the boys in "Dead Poets Society" is not the comfort Hollywood has usually given — i.e. that one day they'll be grown up themselves and able to inflict

similar misery on their own kids — but rather the comfort that courage and principle and self-knowledge are good in themselves and bring rewards from within.

The film has more in common with rarities like "Norma Rae", the film in which textile worker Sally Field learns to fight the bosses. The final scene of "Dead Poets Society" echoes the scene in "Norma Rae" where worker after worker stops work.

There are flaws. Weir's tone wobbles when he has to draw female characters. The women are

either goddesses like Chris, Knox's lady love, beautiful, golden and unattainable, or commoner clay, like the two girls who attend a society meeting and fail to recognise the words of Byron.

The presentation of Keating as opaque and mysteriously (because we don't know why he does what he does) perfect, and the rather romantic, melodramatic and overwrought scripting detract from the film, without destroying its appeal.

The film's message is "Know thyself". It makes a nice change from "American the Beautiful".

A Welcome Change

TV

Vicki Morris watched 'Business As Usual' on TV last week.

Indeed a busy film. The issues it covered included sexual harassment in the workplace, police racism, strip-searching, urban decay and gender role reversal.

The story is set in the mid-80s in Liverpool. Babs, a dress-shop manageress, is unfairly dismissed for complaining to her boss about his sexual harassment of "one of her girls".

The film charts the dawn of Bab's labour consciousness, from when she first unsuccessfully ap-

peals to management for her job back, to when she realises that the best way to get a fair deal from bosses is to fight them. She learns the value of the "basic" working class solidarity which exists in her own community, and of the strength of the organised labour movement.

Solidarity comes from ordinary Liverpool shoppers who boycott the boutique, and support her picket. They are people who, for the most part, know what it is like to fight to keep a job because there will be no other job to go to.

The labour movement is mostly militant paper-sellers, with plenty of time and enthusiasm for picketing, organised in an unemployed branch of the TGWU.

This film provided a welcome contrast to the usual media portrayal of left wing paper-sellers. In fact they were the heroes and heroines of the hour.

It was they who persuaded Babs to fight her bosses. Interestingly her

initial reaction to the suggestion of industrial action was coloured by her husband's experiences of years as a full-time union official negotiating with management and government to keep his workplace open.

When laid-off he was reluctant to admit his failure and remained suspicious of class conflict. It wasn't until Babs had left him at home and gone out to work that she started to see for herself how society really works.

As one of the major themes of the film this should have been brought out more explicitly as the events unfolded. It wasn't until Babs appeared as a guest-speaker at the TGWU branch meeting that we found out what had been going on in her head.

But this was a fault of the film rather than of Glenda Jackson who managed to appear like a normal nervous person throughout the whole film, even on this big occasion when she was more worried

about finding her handbag after her speech than acknowledging her standing ovation.

The film's treatment of the issue of sexual harassment was sympathetic and intelligent. The victim, Josie, was not a goodie-goodie, and had been out with the offending boss a few times. But the filmmaker understood that there is a world of difference between choosing to do that and conceding to be groped by him whenever he wanted.

The film also gave a good sense of how women who want to hold onto their jobs find it hard to speak out about sexual harassment. Throughout the dispute Josie didn't join the picket for fear of losing her job, which she needed to keep herself and her unemployed boyfriend.

The film suggested, albeit implicitly, that as this trend of women workers becoming bread winners continues, unions need to take up the issues which affect them. It showed that women workers need

strong, collective union organisation to help them take up the issues like sexual harassment.

Again, however, this central issue which, after all, was the trigger for the whole film, got a bit lost. The picket was supposedly part of a union campaign against sexual harassment but the placards seemed a bit tokenistic; it seemed more of an excuse to make a lot of noise and hammer bosses in general.

This was probably a result of the film trying to tackle so many issues. It sometimes seemed as though the filmmaker was too anxious to provide something — including romantic interest — for everyone. As the opportunity to make and market a film like this can't come along very often, again perhaps it was understandable.

Well, it moved along apace and was never dull, but colourful and uplifting. And it was, after all, a rare sight, a film about the working class fighting bosses and winning. There should be more of them.

'Caring' council cuts child care

Jo Thwaites reports on the battle by parents and workers in Islington against cuts in the council's children's day centres

Parents of children in Islington have been ignored, then, when 180 of us, with kids, made a noise at one of their committees, were patronised and insulted by the officials and councillors of Islington: the 'caring council'.

We got letters from the Director of Social Services when negotiations with the unions were breaking down telling us that 31 staff had been cut, but that 100 more children were to be taken in and that the unions weren't agreeing to it.

Parents are worried about safety as we see every day how short-staffed the nurseries are. There is no doubt in our minds that the quality of care is suffering.

Outings are rare, there's a lot more tv watching and babies don't get the individual attention they need — nor do the over 2s for that matter. The pre-school room in one nursery has been closed for 6 months due to lack of staff.

Islington council has suspended managers of its Children's Day Centres indefinitely without pay and locked out the rest of the staff from 13 centres in the borough.

As a result, some 150 NALGO members began an indefinite strike from Monday 9 October.

The section has shown consistently, at mass meetings and in an official ballot, that it is opposed to the cuts the council is making. Over the last two years, the centres have had over one quarter of their staff cut as posts have been left vacant. Despite this, the Council wants the staff to care for the same number of children.

More and more agency staff have been used, unsettling the children as they don't know them.

When we raise questions of safety we're told we don't know what we're talking about but the professionals in social services do — their 'professional' opinion informs their decision to cut staff and take in yet more children. Parents are not 'professionals'.

The Director of Social Services laughed at us, feigned sleep and boredom in meetings, refused to talk to us when we had a sit down in

Workers argue that they must maintain a staff to children ratio of 1:4 in order to provide good and safe childcare. The new ratios would make that, and especially preventative work with children at risk, impossible.

Managers from Neighbourhood Offices are also out on strike, and the priority will be to ensure their work is not covered, and support is built throughout the Islington NALGO branch.

Parents continue to be very supportive and are quite clearly demanding that the council continue service on the present staff to children ratio.

Messages of support, donations and speakers from Islington NALGO CDC workers c/o 2, Orlestone Rd, London N7 8LH. 01-354 7470.

the Social Services HQ and sent an admin lackey to get rid of us. Previously he had told us that if anything did happen to any children he would, along with the Chair of Social Services, take full personal responsibility. Two mums told him if anything happened to their kids, they would personally kill him.

Margaret Hodge — council leader and champion nursery-worker and ungrateful-parent basher — declared at Labour Group that we were being selfish. We already had places for our

children. We shouldn't be stopping the council letting other parents have the 'privileges' we have.

The Audit Commission — a remarkable child-oriented body — had investigated the nurseries two years ago and said they weren't good value for money (not that they ever investigate Personnel Departments). Since then, despite having cut staff, Islington Council is still falling over itself to oblige the government-backed Audit Commission by cramming yet more under-5s into the under-staffed nurseries.

The parents are fully behind the nursery workers and strike. We can see through the Council's transparent juggling of statistics and inaccurate and deliberately misleading staff/child ratios. They can't wait to cut for the Tories yet dishonestly claim they're creating more nursery places.

We along with the workers know what the reality of caring for under-5s is and no amount of inaccurate figures will change the fact that ratios of any more than 1:4 can be downright dangerous.

The local paper denounced our lobby as the 'ugly face of protest' with 'worrying use of children as a weapon'. The parents say the ugly face of Islington Council has shown itself yet again — but this time they won't get away with doing the Tories dirty work.

Stick to principles and don't despair

WHETTON'S WEEK
A miner's diary

At Labour Party Conference our worst fears were realised. Kinnock stamped his authority on the party, which means that whatever the outcome of the next election we can't win.

If the Tories get in, we are going to get hammered; and if Labour gets in we'll be hammered by Thatcherite policies pursued by Kinnock.

The anti-union legislation the Tories have slapped on the statute books will still be used against us. There's no doubt Kinnock will face real problems — economic and industrial. The last thing he's going to want is Bolshie trade unions pursuing higher wage claims. So it looks as though we're in for a rough ride whatever the outcome.

In the event of a hung parliament it's going to be much worse. Kinnock said there'll be no deals, but I'll believe that when I see it.

Even if he's true to his word, in a hung parliament the Tories certainly won't stop at doing a deal. We would face the prospect of Dr Death or Ashdown holding the whip hand, and we'd be in the same boat as if the Tories had full rein. It's pretty dismal.

But we have to look at history. The organised working class is stepping up its demands and its actions. It seems to me that whatever the outcome of the next election, that action has got to continue.

The only answer we've got is not to desert, but to stay in the Labour Party and take it back off the hijackers. We have to organise: the rank and file within the trade unions and the Labour Party have to get more organised, get their act together, so we'll know exactly how to deal with whatever problems face us after the general election.

We mustn't be despondent. The Labour Party belongs to us — the working class. We have to take it back.

Labour Party conference was a non-event as far as the pit goes. 'Red Ken' being defeated was noticed. But Kinnock is appealing to the non-activists. And I'd like to issue a word of warning.

Kinnock is building on a bed of sand, appealing to disillusioned Tories, middle-of-the-road liberals and the party non-activists. When it comes to the crunch, they will desert him as quickly as they flocked to him.

He's taking the activist and the committed vote for granted. I understand that you have to do that on some occasions, but it doesn't mean you have to turn you back on them entirely, or desert your principles. And I'm afraid he's putting his faith in people who will desert him.

We'll accept Party policy, but retain the right to get that policy changed, to get the party back on what we consider socialist principles.

We should be as firmly committed to our principles and policies as Thatcher. If that means we have to remain in the wilderness, so be it.

I would rather remain in the wilderness and fight, knowing that when we do get back in — which is inevitable — the principles, aims and objectives will still be there.

If we made a stand on principles, the support would be there — rock solid support, which would remain. Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire.

A rose by any other name

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

Suddenly it begins to look though Labour might win the next general election.

In this context, an article by the *Observer's* Economic Editor, William Keegan, in this month's AEU Journal takes on a particular significance.

"The most difficult nettle a future Labour government would have to grasp is the one marked 'wage inflation'", writes Keegan. "The Thatcher/Howe/Lawson approach has been to fight inflation either with recession or with a high exchange rate, which makes industry less competitive, or with both". Then comes the crunch: "Mrs Thatcher and Mr Lawson will never

concede the need for some kind of incomes policy, yet that is what is required. It will fall to Labour to have to admit this, however unpopular the concept is with trade unions."

Now, the AEU Journal is an admirably non-partisan publication noted for its wide variety of contributors (including, recently, Mary Whitehouse) and its expert gardening tips. A piece by the Economic Editor of the *Observer* advocating incomes policy is surely not particularly noteworthy, you may object.

The Somnolent One begs to differ.

Traditionally, Labour governments have tried to achieve two things: running capitalism more efficiently than the Tories and, at the same time, appeasing their working class electoral base with a few concessions.

Incomes policy is the so far unspoken, but inevitable, logic of Kinnock's Grand Plan for rescuing British capitalism from the mismanagement of Thatcher and Lawson. From now until the next general election, the likes of Jordan and Edmonds will be softening

up their members for a deal on wage restraint. The deal, may or may not be statutory (voluntary arrangements coupled with penalties against employers who break the norm would be an easier pill to swallow, at least initially) and it probably won't actually be called an 'incomes policy'... but a rose by any other name...

The 'left' unions like the TGWU and MSF are formally committed to opposing incomes policy, but it is worth remembering that it was the left wing 'terrible twins' Jones and Scanlon who were the main architects of the Wilson government's Social Contract. Left unions with a large proportion of low paid members like NUPE and NALGO (soon to merge) could be bought round with vague promises of a deal on a minimum wage.

In all the horse trading that will certainly be going on around the question of incomes policy, one phrase that you will not hear from the Labour leadership or the trade union bureaucracy is 'Social Contract'.

But that in essence is exactly what is

now being cooked up. A detailed history of the 'Social Contract 1974-78' would make useful reading for the generation of activists too young to remember the dreadful days of Phases 1, 2 and 3.

Suffice for now, to note that real incomes fell by 5 to 6%, the self-sacrifice, belt-tightening and so forth was never matched by the government's fine promises of price controls and special consideration of the low paid. Finally, the Social Contract led to a mass defection from Labour amongst the skilled and semi-skilled working class of the industrial Midlands, paving the way for Thatcher and all that followed.

Remember that as Bill Jordan and John Edmonds start their campaign for an incomes policy under whatever name.

Tower Hamlets strike

This is pure and simple union victimisation — but we won't let them get away with it".

That's how one NALGO striker put it at last Friday's branch meeting which voted overwhelmingly to carry on with the all-out strike action.

Derek Relph, the NALGO branch secretary, was sacked for alleged intimidation of scabs — a charge he and other eye-witnesses refute. After the settlement of the national dispute Tower Hamlets decided to carry on with their selective action. They gained support from the national leadership of NALGO and local Labour Parties. However the notorious Liberal Council seem determined to get rid of Derek.

With a 75% yes vote in the ballot 2,500 Tower Hamlets NALGO workers started an all-out indefinite strike. The national union is providing 100% strike pay.

Last Wednesday at Derek's hearing it was recommended that he be given a final written warning. However at Friday's branch meeting, attended by over 1000 strikers, this was thrown out as Derek had done nothing wrong in the first place.

The Friday vote was tremendous. The course of the strike must continue to be determined by the NALGO strikers and other trade unionists affected by the strike.

Contact numbers: 729 6682 Strike HQ (Bethnal Green Labour Party); 519 7457 Branch; 375 0114 Derek Relph.

Workers win a round

Building workers in Haringey council have scored a victory against council plans to cut wages and jobs.

After the announcement of a trading loss in February, Haringey council brought in management consultants to run the building Direct Labour Organisation.

Within a few months they had cut the workforce by 500 through voluntary and compulsory redundancies. This had been 'sold' to the unions and workers as a necessary restructuring to make the DLO viable.

A couple of weeks after the last of the 500 had picked up their redundancy cheques, management came back for a second bite.

This time they were demanding that the workforce sign new contracts, with a 30 per cent (around £90 a week) wage cut, and a return to a hated bonus scheme. The conditions were simple: sign, or you will have dismissed yourself.

Such 'hard-line' management tactics are not new, but Haringey surely chalks up a first for a Labour council.

No doubt modelling themselves on the port employers, management first attempted to negotiate the wage cut with

the union locally, and were told that the union was not in the business of cutting its members' wages. They then turned directly to the workers, through meetings and letters.

Finally, they turned to the national union. Not only did the national officers of UCATT enter into negotiations over the wage cut, but last Thursday (5th) they called a mass meeting to sell it.

The union's national local government officer told the members that there was no alternative but to agree. Management were not bluffing, and he had legal advice that there was no alter-

Christopher Patten, the supposedly 'green' Secretary of State for the Environment, has announced the privatisation of the Property Services Agency. The announcement followed earlier decisions to 'commercialise' PSA.

The combination of commercialisation and privatisation will devastate jobs and conditions in PSA. Management are already projecting the loss of

native to accepting or dismissing yourself.

He then added that he was there to listen. Speaker after speaker took the floor and told him that there was going to be no agreement!

Less than 24 hours later, management backed down. The DLO workers had won a round.

It can, however, only be a temporary retreat on the part of the council, and sooner rather than later they will come back with more threats and intimidation to cut wages and sack workers.

Despite the intimidation, and despite the national union, the workers said no, and solidarity won.

2,500 administrative and support grade jobs. With so much of the civil service being cut and privatised, PSA management are refusing to rule out compulsory redundancies.

Other civil servants will inevitably suffer through the provision of poorer accommodation and maintenance standards.

It is essential that the industrial and non-industrial unions immediately establish joint rank and file action committees across the country.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Democrats sell off elderly people's homes

By Gail Cameron

Eager to show willing to their Tory friends, the Wirral Democrats have

pushed through what, up until now, even Tory councils have not had the gall to propose — sell the homes that elderly people live in.

In order to save £6.5 million, Wirral Democrats have pushed through the selling off of 22 council run homes for the elderly to Anchor Housing Trust.

Local pensioners, trade unions, and Labour Parties are campaigning against the sell-off, and won support last week from the whole Labour Party conference.

Any Labour faint-hearted tempted by the idea of Labour entering an anti-Tory pact should come to Wirral and experience what Democrats in power are like!

Although Labour is the largest single party, Wirral Council is 'hung', with a handful of Democrats holding the balance of power. Six months' use of this power should be a warning to anyone who thinks Democrats are anything other than Tories in disguise.

Whilst being 'opposed' to the poll tax, the Democrats have a position of implementing it but keeping it low. When it came to light that the poll tax in Wirral would be £405 per person the Democrats and Tories clubbed together to devise a budget to reduce it.

A rate rise of 23.3% was pushed through (the highest in the country). Was the money to be spent on extra services? Quite the opposite, it was simply put in the bank to keep the first year's poll tax artificially low.

Not satisfied with this, they set up an 'Efficiency Panel' to oversee the cutting of £15 million from council spending... All this and the sale of the elderly people's homes to reduce the poll tax by a paltry £45 to £360 per year. We are paying our poll tax in advance.

Private nursing homes have strict guidelines as to who they will accept — thus it is usually only council run homes that cater for elderly people with dressing difficulties, incontinence problems or need for a higher level of care. Once the council homes are sold off and profit becomes the main motive in provision for the elderly, what will happen to those in most need of care who currently get assistance from the Council Sector only?

Kenneth Baker, by congratulating the Wirral Tories and Democrats on their 'foresighted' policy, have given the green light for similar sell-offs to take place throughout the country.

If Labour councils try to implement the poll tax they will be forced to make massive cuts and adopt similar policies to the Wirral Democrats. You either fight the poll tax head on and refuse to implement it or you make major cuts to keep it down — you can't implement the poll tax fairly!

IRELAND: The Socialist Answer



With contributions from Stan Fain, Tony Barr, Geoff Bell, Stan Crooke, Patrick Murphy and John O'Hanrahan

£1 plus 32p post from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Engineers must start the strikes!

By an AEU steward

It's now over 2 months since the Confed launched the levy for the 35 hour week campaign.

That means that in the best organised plants workers have already donated more than a day's pay to a strike fund without any strikes.

Ballots will be taking place from 16 October for action in the 7 plants that have so far been named. But strike action will not necessarily follow immediately.

The Confed leadership have made it quite clear that they intend to use the ballot results as a bargaining counter in further negotiations before any action is called.

Such a course of action would put off any strikes until the middle of November and make it very difficult for stewards to keep up the momentum on the levy.

More delay will simply play into the hands of the EEF who are determined to break the levy and demoralise engineering workers.

Bill Jordan has made it crystal clear that the Confed leadership want to see local deals signed for the 35 hour week.

There are problems with this approach.

- It would break up the unity of engineering workers if wide variations in hours were allowed to open up.

- The EEF have already made it clear that they want an end to national bargaining to prepare the way for local flexibility deals. So Jordan would be playing straight into the EEF's hands.

- The prospect of local deals could make it more difficult to collect the levy. Stewards will have to face difficult questions like "Why should we pay the levy for a strike which isn't going to benefit us?"

If the engineers are to remain united, as they are at the moment, then Jordan and the other Confed leaders have to make it clear that there will be no local deals, no concessions on flexibility agreements and no backtracking on the claim of a 35 hour week.



Honecker's police state cracks

By Bruce Robinson

Thousands of East Germans have taken to the streets in East Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden in the biggest anti-government demonstrations since the workers' uprising of July 1953.

One demonstration of 70,000 completely blocked the centre of Leipzig. They have met with large-scale arrests and violence. East Berlin has been closed off to western visitors and western journalists have been forced to leave.

The demonstrations were sparked off not just by the regime's refusal to bend following the exodus of East Germans to the West, but also by Gorbachev's visit to East Berlin

for the 40th anniversary of the East German state.

It marks the emergence of a mass political opposition within East Germany, which sees its purpose in changing the political system, rather than leaving. Demonstrators chanted "we're staying here", "Gorby, Gorby" and some sang the Internationale.

There were also calls for the release of political prisoners and the legalisation of the new opposition umbrella group, the New Forum, which has been banned as such organisations are "not necessary under socialism".

A Social Democratic Party has also been set up in the GDR. This is significant for two reasons.

Firstly, the old Social Democratic Party was forcibly unified with the Communist Party in 1946, against the will of its members, to form the

ruling party, the Socialist Unity Party. More importantly, both in 1953 and in the early '70s the West German Social Democrats were a focus for people in East Germany who were opposed to Stalinism but saw themselves as being on the left.

There are also reports of several hundred workers at a Berlin engineering works putting out a statement calling for the government to undertake urgent changes.

The 40th anniversary celebrations were notable for two things: Honecker's complacent regurgitation of old-style Stalinist slogans while a few blocks away thousands of people demonstrated against him; and Gorbachev's much warmer reception and scarcely veiled advice to Honecker to follow his own course.

Gorbachev is walking a tightrope. He can neither afford to risk bad relations with West Germany for Honecker's sake nor can he afford to let the strategically and economically important GDR collapse. So while he showed open unease with Honecker, he also made it clear that German reunification was not on the agenda.

A student reported a secret policeman in Leipzig saying to him "remember what happened in Peking". Full-scale repression of the opposition remains the most likely choice for the Stalinist regime, though it will probably not be at the same level as in China.

Whatever happens the last week's events mark the start of a large-scale political opposition to the East German regime.

Reject Rolls Royce threat!

We've told our members to expect such management propaganda. We don't anticipate it having an effect.

That's how the convenor at Rolls Royce's Hillington Glasgow plant responded to threats from management that selective strike action in support of the 35 hour week would lead to massive lay-offs at the firm.

Rolls Royce have sent a personal letter to every worker warning them

that either a strike or the 35 hour week would be a disaster for the company.

The best way to answer such claims is to keep up the levy and to point to the massive profits made by companies like Rolls Royce and the pay awards top managers are giving themselves.

The Rolls Royce letter is just one small part of a concerted management offensive against the levy and the 35-hour week campaign.

A confidential Engineers

Employers' Federation report shows that the bosses are prepared to prosecute this dispute with the utmost vigor.

"All federated companies have a duty to see that the collection of the fund is made as difficult as possible for the CSEU".

Roger Lyons of the MSF was right to say that this letter "suggests that the employers have got a spy network in place, indicating they are in a state of war with their workers".