

Socialist Organiser

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**LABOUR
PARTY**

THIS EVIL GOVERNMENT



Cops riot

"I WITNESSED women and children being hit with truncheons, glass from broken vehicle windows showering down on those inside, and a mother dragged out [through] a shattered window with her child and thrown weeping to the ground".

This was 'Observer' reporter Nick Davies' account of the savage police attack on coaches and vans carrying 400 'hippies' to a peace festival near Stonehenge in Wiltshire.

A High Court injunction had been granted forbidding them to hold the festival. They tried to defy the court order and were met by a thousand police who assaulted them.

Miners

TV news reports on Saturday evening carried scenes of violence unseen in Britain since the miners' strike.

The extreme violence during the strike was blamed on the miners. Now the police were using unrestrained violence against the unresisting but defiant 'hippies'.

Nick Davies again:

"It was a scene of the utmost violence and when it was over — as a column of police led a queue of bedraggled prisoners to waiting vans — the 'peace' convoy was no more: its vehicles destroyed beyond repair".



Tamil women threatened with deportation. Photo: Andrew Moore.

Refusing refuge to Tamils fleeing slaughter

By Jeremy Corbyn MP

On May 20 Home Secretary Leon Brittan announced in the House of Commons that he considered the communal violence in Sri Lanka to be subsiding, and that it was now safe for Tamils who had sought refuge in Britain or other European countries to return to the southern part of Sri Lanka.

There is no evidence whatsoever to support this contention. Indeed, all evidence from journalists and from visitors to Sri Lanka and eye-

witness accounts indicates that the situation in Sri Lanka has been steadily deteriorating as the communal violence gets worse. The army has been singling out young Tamil boys.

Later that week, Home Secretary Leon Brittan changed the rules under which Members of Parliament can make representations to pre-

vent people being removed from Britain.

Normally an MP is allowed to make representations in a reasonable course of time and discuss them with the Home Secretary. On the Friday evening of the Bank Holiday weekend I discovered that only 24 hours was allowed to make representations; there was no apparent likelihood that Leon Brittan was going to cancel his weekend

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Robbing the poor

By Jim Denham

Secretary of State Norman Fowler describes his Green Paper on the future of the Welfare State as a plan to "simplify" and "improve" the benefits system.

Like Margaret Thatcher's promise that "The NHS is safe with us", this claim is a sick joke.

Fowler's proposals are a thinly disguised attack on the poorest and most vulnerable members of society: the unemployed, pensioners, the low paid and working class youth.

Amongst the proposals contained in the Green Paper are:

*The abolition of the state earnings-related pension scheme (which every worker has paid for through national insurance) and its replacement by individual private schemes.

*Housing benefits to be withdrawn from a wide range of claimants (no-one under eighteen to be allowed to claim it at all, and the first 20% of rates payments to be paid, even by those who still qualify).

*Payments for special needs (e.g. maternity grants, heating additions, and the death grant) to be abolished and replaced by means-tested schemes which most claimants will not qualify for.

*Family income supplement to be replaced by "family credit" — a new means-tested poverty-wage supplement to be paid to the male partner.

*Child benefit to be allowed to fall behind the rate of inflation.

*One in six people are living below the government poverty line. 7.7 million people in the UK are living on supplementary benefit levels. A further three-quarters of a million are worse off but don't claim supplementary benefits. (Government statistics).

*The average unemployed person was getting only 59% of the income he/she could expect if in work. Only 3% of unemployed people got as much money on the dole as they would have collected in wages (Institute of Fiscal Studies).

*According to government estimates, benefit unclaimed (SB, FIS, one-parent benefit, free milk, etc) in 1981/2 was £886 million. Known benefit fraud in 1983 was between £4.7 million and £135 million. Inland Revenue estimate of income tax evasion was £4.5 billion.

*Since 1979 the tax system has helped the rich at the expense of the poor. Between 1979 and 1983 those families with incomes below £100 per week paid 4p more in income tax each week, while those on incomes above £575 per week paid £74 less tax after inflation.

Over the same period the government has cut back on £8.2 billion of benefits, while giving £13 billion to the richest 5% of the population.

*Claimants under 25 to be "docked" between £3 and £5 a week from their basic rate. (This comes on top of Fowler's other major attack on youth, announced before the Green Paper — limiting

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Paul Whetton's diary Watch out for strong-arm laws

The deaths of 38 football fans last week was certainly a tragedy. When it comes to deciding what caused such a disaster I don't think you can say it was this or that which caused it.

I certainly think the National Front were involved. Other factors clearly contributed to it. We've got to remember that football isn't just a sport, it's basically a business, and profits have got to be made out of it.

So I think the organisers just wanted to sell tickets and cram people in so they could make money out of it.

We are now reaping the whirlwind of rampant nationalism which has dominated sport in all its forms for many years now.

Thatcher has been promoting Victorian values and now she has got them. Many people are trying to relive the past and many youngsters who need to back a winner, have no other winner to back than following teams like Liverpool and England and so on. The rights and wrongs of what happened in Brussels can be discussed, but my big fear is that legislation will be pushed through on the pretext of dealing with football hooliganism, but which will be used against trade unionists, ethnic minorities and so on.

Some of the comments on TV during and after the rioting were shameful. Maxwell was particularly abysmal when he laid the blame for what happened in Brussels on the work of the Militant tendency in Liverpool.

The chairman of Norwich who will be the first team to be affected by a ban on British teams in Europe, also said some disgusting things, the implication being that what is needed is the emergence of a strongman to take hold of the nation and put it on the right path.

It's all part of the climate being created by Thatcher which could open the way at a later stage to fascism. One of the worst aspects of the media coverage was the "trial by television". The incidents were happening hundreds of miles away and yet the commentators were dealing out immediate blame and immediate justice.

What the Liverpool fans may have done pales into insignificance against what the authorities may see to be the answer.

There have been comparisons made with the miners. The chairman of Norwich Football Club, arguing for a ban on people leaving Britain to go and watch football matches abroad, backed his argument by saying that the miners had been stopped from moving about the country to picket, so why shouldn't those suspected of being football hooligans?

Comparisons between what happened on the terraces in Brussels and the clashes between the police and miners during the miners' strike are totally false and people in the mining communities are really sickened by that.

Back in our own industry, I've been talking to rank and file NACODS members about their dispute with the Coal Board. They are really fed up with what their leaders are

doing. They want to take action. I don't put much faith in that, not because I doubt the rank and file NACODS members but because the leaders are bending over backwards to accommodate the Coal Board.

We are going to find the Coal Board strategy of voluntary redundancies very difficult to counteract. It is very difficult to fight the closure of a pit if large numbers of mineworkers at that pit have taken voluntary redundancy.

Men who've got thirty years in the industry behind them and the prospect of a big pot of money will be hard to dissuade. Our argument, and it has been our argument throughout the strike, is that they are not taking money, they are taking jobs. And in small communities you are accepting not just money, but the fact that your pit is no longer going to work.

These men didn't buy those jobs, so they are not theirs to sell. These men are custodians of those jobs and they should be handing them on to the next generation.

That's the message we've got to get across.

Judging by the work put in by the Women's Action Group in Horden, it would seem that many of the women have got this message much more clearly than many of the men working in the pits.

Here in Notts, the morale of the former strikers has been greatly boosted by the court decision that we have always been full members of the union and that the fine imposed on us in the form of a dues levy has now got to be paid back.

So we are trying to make the most of this boost in morale to mobilise the ex-striking miners, to get them to branch meetings, to get them backing the representatives that we want in Notts.

With motions for Labour Party conference shortly to be discussed up and down the country, I hope that some will consider motions supporting an amnesty for jailed miners and an end to the victimisations.

Personally, I would also like to see motions attacking the role of the state, the police, state control and so on. This is because I fear that many of the 'law and order' measures being introduced by the Tory government would be taken on board by a future Labour government.

We must say to the next Labour government, "Look, this is not on. We're not having anything to do with it. Tory legislation is not to be used against the working class. We want the whole lot repealed."

Obviously it is important to oppose Tory measures, but we must be ready to oppose any soft-peddalling by a future Labour government on a whole range of measures introduced by the Tories.

I think the major question is unemployment, and many of the actions taken by the rank and file to secure jobs for their community will be fought against a Labour government and we don't want them armed with all this Tory legislation to use against us.

Islington - 'caring' but not fighting?

"Islington — we'll keep on caring" say the forlorn little posters tied to the lamp-posts on every main road. It begs the postscript "but don't expect us to keep on fighting".

On May 31, the deadline set by the District Auditor for making a rate, Islington Council quietly slipped out of the fight against the Rates Act.

A secret juggling act with the finances had allowed the Council to cobble together enough money to meet their planned budget by "mortgaging" any future plans. And alongside this, the Council's leadership were busy 'talking down' the fight, spreading defeatist rumours that every other council was about to

collapse and set a rate.

Thanks to these actions, the Council leadership managed to win majority support not just among councillors, but in the Labour Party and the council workers' Joint Trades Union Committee, for backing down.

Though the Council leadership have now secured themselves an uneasy peace with the government, the district auditor, the Party and the unions, there will be a price to pay.

By their 'creative accountancy' the council leaders have tied Labour in Islington to a programme for the next council of only being able to 'stand still', at best, because they have bled dry all the funds. The political price will be that the thous-

ands of trade unionists, tenants and members of community groups who have been 'marched up the hill and down again' won't be willing to back them again — you can cry wolf too often!

Despite the defeat a significant minority of councillors, trade unionists and Labour Party members were determined to fight. If that opposition to 'muddling through' and in favour of fighting back can be organised to build closer links between rank and file council workers and Labour Party members, we won't get used again as a 'stage army' — we can lead the campaign to get more resources for inner city areas like Islington.



Lambeth, Liverpool and Camden are still defying the government, refusing to set a rate. Above: Lambeth council leader Ted Knight.

Labour womens conference

Following the clean sweep for its demands for women in the Labour Party at last year's Labour Women's Conference, the Labour Women's Action Committee is moving on to build on its gains at this year's conference (Labour Women's Conference, Bournemouth, 16-18 June).

Now that the WAC demands are the national policy of Labour women, WAC is concentrating, in its model resolutions to conference, on the age-old problem of getting Party men to take the women's wing of the movement seriously.

One of the WAC resolutions carried at last year's conference called on the Women's Conference to elect the five women on Labour's National Executive Committee. Since we can expect total myopia from Party men to this demand, a WAC model resolution to this year's conference, adopted by many women's organisations, calls on the National Labour Women's Committee to organise shadow elections for these five NEC places. WAC believes that this would show the yawning disparity between the women men elect to these places at the annual conference, and the women that women would elect for themselves, given the chance.

WAC itself, shadow elections or no, will be promoting the same slate of five women for the women's section of the NEC as last year. These are Margaret Beckett MP, Frances Morrell, Leader of ILEA, Diane Abbot, Westminster City Councillor, Joan Maynard MP and Clare Short MP. These are all women with a proven track record on women's issues and perhaps as significantly, as socialist reformers too. But year after year, the

elections for the women's section are used as trading fodder between trade union men, or rewards for good behaviour.

As the next general election comes into sight, the need to fully and truly represent the needs of working class women in Labour's policy making will become more and more urgent. Women are the gastarbeiter [guest-workers] of the British labour system, making up 40% of the workforce but earning on average 75% of men's wages. There are two million low paid women (using the TUC norms for low pay) and one million one-parent families. Women's unemployment has increased five times faster than men's and women are being elbowed

out of even their most traditional work areas — catering, telephonists, etc. Where they manage to stay in work, women stay firmly at the bottom of the tree. Outside the workplace, social security and community provision has never adequately acknowledged women's needs as the primary carer in the family.

Recitation of this roll-call of oppression provokes many a groan from Party men, particularly trade union men, or else simply knee-jerk hostility or blank disbelief. If women are not to see the Party as totally irrelevant to their needs, it needs women to make relevant policy for women urgently.

The Women's Action Committee

will be presenting this demand, and the others it is supporting, through a series of events at this year's Women's Conference. On Saturday from 9.30 at the Pavilion Ballroom, Bournemouth, Glenys Kinnock will star in the WAC Revue. On Sunday at 5.15 at the Wessex Hotel, Westcliffe Road, the WAC Rally will include as speakers Jo Richardson, a representative from Women Against Pit Cloures and Diane Abbott. To start things off the WAC tea party will be providing its usual supportive environment for delegates on Saturday at 5.00 p.m. (venue to be decided).

JOSIE EDWARDS

Shi'ites out to destroy PLO

Palestinians are still holed up in Beirut's Bourj al-Barajneh refugee camp fighting for their lives against the combined forces of Shi'ite Muslim Amal Militia and Shi'ite sections of the Lebanese Army.

The Shi'ites insist that the conflict will not stop until all Palestinian military presence in Lebanon has gone — i.e. when the armed PLO is destroyed.

There are horrifying reports of brutality towards the Palestinians, hundreds of whom have been killed. The full details are not yet known and the Palestinian dead are as yet uncounted.

Attempts to organise a ceasefire — nevermind a general solution — have flopped. President Amin Gemayel's attempts to work out a solution together with influential Syria have so

far failed.

The Syrian government says that it wants a solution, and promises not to increase its military involvement in Lebanon without Lebanese agreement. But Syria authorised the Amal attacks and it has a clear interest both in destroying the PLO once and for all and, more generally, in 'stabilising' Lebanon by giving power to pro-Syrian forces.

With the Arafat wing of the PLO now openly seeking a US-sponsored Middle East settlement involving Jordan, Syria feels threatened. It is likely that the US will move closer to recognition of the PLO. Plans for negotiations with Palestinian, Jordanian and Israeli representatives could then go ahead, if Israel can be cajoled into accept-

ing it. Syria — which established itself as vital to any peace negotiations in 1982/3 would then be squeezed out.

But the Amal attacks on refugee camps have pushed pro-Syrian rebels in Yassir Arafat's Fateh, and other Palestinian groups (neutral in the intra-Fateh feuding in 1983) into lining up together. Syrian President Assad's allies — from factions in the PLO through to Iran and his Soviet backers — are deserting him.

There needs to be an international outcry against the Amal attacks on the refugee camps and at the role played by Syria since civil war started in 1975.

Syria should get out. Israel should get out too — without leaving behind mounds of dead as it is doing, and without a Quisling 'security zone'. And there needs to be a democratic solution to the whole Middle East conflict — Israel/Palestine as well as Lebanon — to begin to clear away the suffocating debris of national and communal hostility.

Anti apartheid demo June 16

Called by Anti-Apartheid Movement. Assemble 12 noon, County Hall, London. Nearest Tube: Waterloo.

PASOK wins in Greece

The governing Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) won last Sunday's general election in Greece.

Andreas Papandreu will be prime minister for another five years. He beat his rival, Constantine Mitsotakis of the New Democracy party, thanks, it seems, to votes from supporters of one of Greece's two Communist Parties anxious to avoid a right wing government.

PASOK promises radical social change. But it has promised this before. In fact Papan-

dreu's government proved to be like most other social democratic parties in power — it attacked the workers to prop up the bosses.

PASOK's election campaign combined none-too-scrupulous attacks on its opponents, with Greek nationalism. His victory, Papandreu has said, proves the strength of popular sovereignty: the Greek people voted for a programme for significant independence from the big powers and for disbanding US

bases in Greece.

PASOK's vote was down on the last election in 1981, but still big: it won 161 seats in the 300-seat Parliament, getting 46% of the vote to New Democracy's 41%.

New Democracy would have been a step backwards. Their policies included Thatcher-style monetarist economic policies.

Now working class expectations will be high: and they will certainly have to confront the PASOK government if they are to fight for their own interests.

Sri Lankan Marxists say: Self-determination for the Tamils!



The three million Tamils of Sri Lanka — one-sixth of the population — have long suffered oppression from the Sinhalese majority.

In July 1983 full-scale pogroms erupted, encouraged by the right-wing Jayawardene government. Violence has continued since then, and now tens of thousands of Tamils are fleeing to India and to Europe.

The following account of the background is excerpted from a pamphlet by the Revolutionary Workers' Party of Sri Lanka. As well as outlining the basic issues, it discusses the failures of the left in Sri Lanka.

The main party of Sinhalese chauvinism since Sri Lanka's independence in 1948 has been the Sri Lanka Freedom Party of Solomon and Sirimavo Bandaranaike — a party which claims to be anti-imperialist and even socialist, and which carried out major nationalisations in the 1960s.

Sri Lanka — almost uniquely — had an avowedly Trotskyist party with a mass working class base, the LSSP. At first the LSSP opposed the SLFP's chauvinism. But there were always weaknesses in its position, and in 1964 it finally abandoned all real pretence of Trotskyism by joining a coalition with the SLFP.

The left wing of the LSSP — under the leadership of Edmund Samarakkody — denounced the coalition and split. Today they are continuing the fight for Trotskyist politics through the RWP.

THE Tamil people (today over 3 million) have for over half a century claimed equal rights with the Sinhalese. But the Sinhalese bourgeoisie, from prior to Independence (1948) sought and achieve privileges over the Tamils.

Continuing their anti-Tamil policies after political power came into their hands all Sinhala bourgeois governments have carried out systematic discrimination against Tamils in the fields of:

- government land colonisation;
- employment in government service and in public corporations;
- Tamil language rights, higher education, etc.

With regard to the up-country Tamils, nearly a million plantation workers were disenfranchised by the D.S. Senanayake UNP government in 1948 through the notorious Citizenship Acts.

Equal

Attempts by the Tamil people to win equal rights with the Sinhalese through agitation and peaceful methods have been used by the Sinhala bourgeoisie to develop anti-Tamil sentiment among the Sinhalese over the years. Whenever limited mobilisation of the Tamil masses in furtherance of winning equal rights, took place the Sinhala bourgeois governments have answered with repression.

The Tamils found that repeated attempts of the Tamil leaders in the Tamil Congress (TC), Federal Party (FP) to co-exist and co-operate with Sinhala bourgeois parties, UNP and SLFP and their governments were of no avail.

It is then that in 1972 the Tamils reorganised themselves in the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and adopted the demand for a separate Tamil State — Eelam. It is the fact that the election manifesto of the Jayawardene led UNP government admitted that it was the failure of previous governments to grant the rights of the Tamils that led them to demand a separate State.

What happened in and after 1977 when the present UNP

regime commenced is too well known. Systematic police harassment and violence against Tamil youth in the North led to the Tamil youth taking up arms to defend themselves. Continued police and army violence against Tamil youth led to a more determined resistance and armed defensive actions by the youth.

The government's response was the use of South Africa-type repressive legislation, and the sending of an army of occupation to the North.

It was clear from the outset that the July anti-Tamil pogrom was part of the plan of the UNP government in its further repression and suppression of the Tamil people.

Arson

And the destruction by violence and arson of the residences, business houses and factories run by Tamils is proof that the break-up of the economic base of the Tamils was the aim of the planners of the pogrom. It was abundantly plain that the beneficiaries of the destruction of the economic base of the Tamils were not mere looters and vagabonds. The beneficiaries were the Sinhala bourgeoisie.

The further proof that the Jayawardene bourgeois government was behind the anti-Tamil movement and the pogrom is what they did, through Parliament, even while this pogrom was still continuing. Through the black anti-Eelam law it rushed through Parliament, the 16 TULF MPs were sacked from the Assembly.

Even as the hill-country Tamils, the plantation workers, were disenfranchised in 1948 by the first government of the Sinhala bourgeoisie, even so in 1983 the rest of the Tamils have been disenfranchised under this law.

It is the reality today that social, political and economic relations between the Tamils and the Sinhalese have been ruptured to such a degree that any kind of common or joint economic activity has become impossible. This means that three million Tamils have broken with the government



which they see as their destroyer. This further means that the government will resort to more and more repression.

And inevitably, this means that the armed defensive actions of the Tamil youth in furtherance of Eelam will continue.

Thus the National Question is and will remain one of the most explosive questions in Sri Lanka for years to come.

NATIONAL UNITY AND GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

The present situation arising out of the refusal of the Sinhala bourgeoisie and their governments to grant the demands of the Tamils for equal rights with the Sinhalese has created a crisis of considerable magnitude.

For a long time now, the use of draconian repressive legislation and the presence of an army of occupation in the North, has led to the breakdown to a large extent of the government administration.

While the Sinhalese bourgeoisie and their governments were directly responsible for promoting the anti-Tamil chauvinism leading to violence and pogroms against the Tamils, the left movement through opportunism leading to wrong policies over the years contributed in no small measure to the growth of Sinhala chauvinism and even genocidal sentiments in regard to the Tamils.

Anti-imperialist

The failure of the left parties to take up the struggle for the uncompleted democratic tasks opened the door for the so-called progressive bourgeoisie to brandish slogans of fake anti-imperialism and democracy. Thus, did Bandaranaike enter the political stage raising the slogan of "Sinhala Only" in the name of fighting remnants of colonialism in the administration.

When Bandaranaike adopted the stand of "Sinhala Only" the issue of the official language to replace English and this movement grew overnight into a mighty Sinhala chauvinist current, it was clear that this was no mere question of the official language. It was from

the outset the slogan for a pro-Sinhala and anti-Tamil movement.

And in this context, when the Phillip Gunawardena led VLSSP lined up with Bandaranaike on "Sinhala Only" and when the Communist Party (CP) changed its position on Sinhala and Tamil as official languages to Sinhalese only, it was the beginning of the capitulation of the left movement to Sinhala chauvinism.

Language

Although the LSSP stood firm on its stand on Sinhala and Tamil as official languages with parity of status between 1955 and the formation of the Bandaranaike government in May 1956, yet quite early changes were in the offing.

The policy of responsive co-operation to the SLFP government was the beginning of the

movement towards the SLFP, and away from the position of struggles for the language and other rights of the Tamils.

It was with the presence of the two left parties in the Second Coalition Government led by the SLFP that discrimination and harassment of Tamils became worse than ever before. This discrimination related to employment, colonisation, promotions of Tamil public servants, in the field of education, so-called standardisations in regard to University admissions.

There was also systematic harassment by police of Tamil youth, arbitrary arrests and detention without trial, etc.

Thus the traditional left parties not only step by step took chauvinistic positions in regard to the Tamils, but went so far as sanctioning through a bourgeois government the direct police harassment of the Tamils.

There is simply no solution for

the oppression of the Tamils in Sri Lanka within the framework of capitalism. That is clear enough from all that has happened and from the present policies of the two main Sinhala bourgeois parties, the UNP and SLFP.

Only through the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism is it possible to lay the foundations for equal rights for Tamils in relation to the majority Sinhala people.

But there is no question of waiting for this solution to fall from the skies. The struggle for the rights of the Tamils must continue, but with different methods. It is basic to the success of this struggle that all sections of the Tamil masses must be mobilised on the basis of their separate demands for struggle against the capitalist government of Jayawardene.

Unity?

Such mobilisation of the Tamil masses need not and cannot be separated from the mobilisation of the Sinhala masses who are suffering under the oppressive Jayawardene government in numerous ways. Such joint mobilisation will not be a dream if the left parties break sharply from opportunism and Sinhala chauvinism and adopt an anti-capitalist perspective.

It is inescapable that such mobilisation and such struggle calls for revolutionary leadership that has to be built from revolutionaries among the Tamil and Sinhalese and all sections of the workers and toilers irrespective of nationality, religion or caste.

And in regard to the problems of the Tamil people, such a leadership must take its stand by unequivocally supporting the right of the Tamils for self-determination, that is the right to a separate State.

Refusing refuge

Continued from page 1

holiday to consider representations.

After massive protests from some of us, he agreed reluctantly that the time might be extended in certain exceptional cases. So far there have been very few exceptional cases.

The following week the situation became worse. Leon Brittan announced visa restrictions on Tamils leaving Sri Lanka to come to Britain; this effectively creates a queue of terror outside the British High Commission in Colombo or for anyone trying to leave Sri Lanka to travel to Europe to avoid the violence.

The government's decisions have been in response to a very carefully orchestrated campaign by the gutter press particularly the Mail and the Express and the Sun to stir up racial hatred against Tamil people seeking refuge in this

country, and Tory MPs who have called for the removal of all Tamil people from this country.

The Tamil people who come here have all been through the most appalling violence and fear, and are looking for some security in this country and indeed in other European countries. The Dutch and British governments seem to be vying to be the worst towards Tamil refugees.

The British government has also continued to supply arms to the government of Sri Lanka and maintained arrangements for Sri Lankan army officers to be trained at British military establishments, showing quite clearly that they support the monetarist government of president Jayawardene against the people of the country, and are not prepared to seriously support something dialogue which could produce any solution.

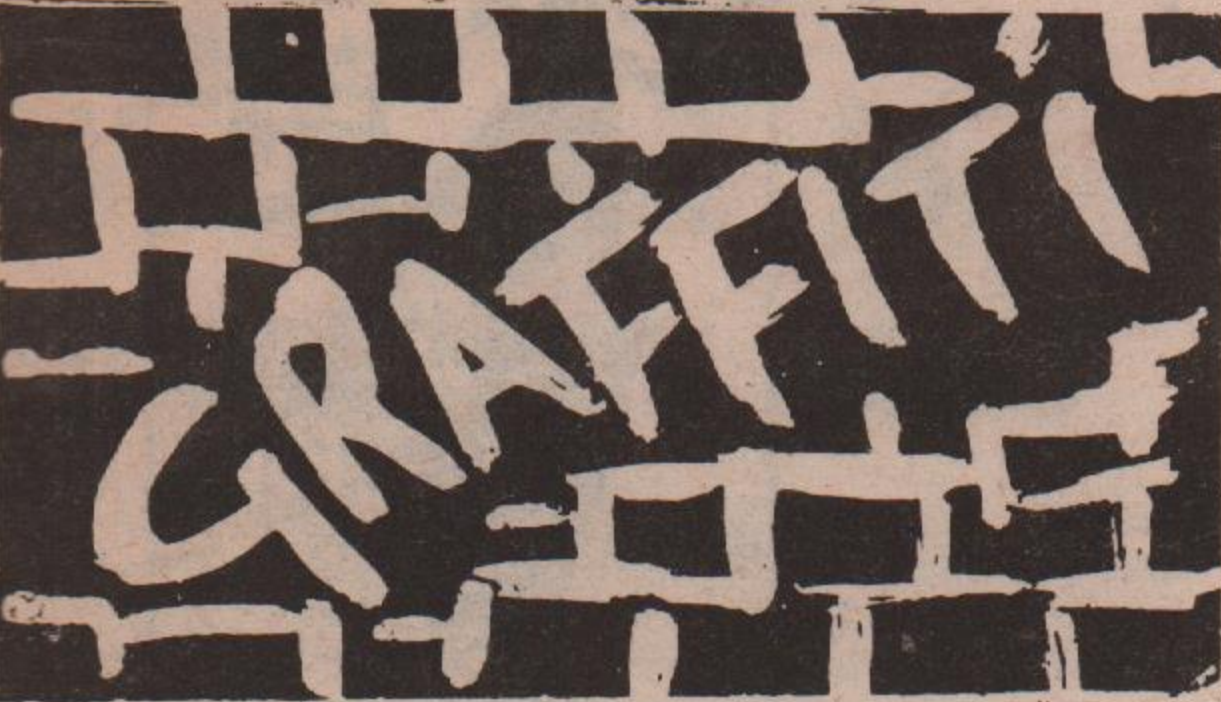
The political history of the

last 20 years has been one of continued manipulation of racial groups on this question by the government, and over the past ten years a series of constitutional changes to exclude Tamils and their political parties and organisations from representation in the national parliament or indeed any other sphere of national life.

The present violence in most parts of Sri Lanka, and the appalling atrocities the army commits on the Jaffna peninsula in the north, are the product of the long-term policy of the current Sri Lankan government.

I believe it is essential that the labour movement stands up for the rights of refugees in this country and Europe, and demands the British government immediately lifts the restrictions and allow people to enter this country as refugees. The government must also cease supplying arms and equipment to the government of Sri Lanka.

JACK CADE'S



The travels of Ken

LAST week's issue of the London magazine 'Time Out' carried a long interview with Ken Livingstone, illustrated by the picture we reproduce on this page.

In this feature 'Time Out' says that Ken Livingstone 'founded' Socialist Organiser. Now of course, once people are canonised, the hagiographers attribute many deeds to them, great and not so great, that they never performed.

SO was started in October 1978 by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV), a broad grouping which came into existence at a conference of 200 activists held in July 1978. The SCLV's aim was to organise socialist, anti-Tory and anti-Callaghan-government, propaganda in the run-up to and during the general election. It was initiated by Workers' Action with the collaboration of the Chartist group.

Livingstone was an invited speaker at the July 1978 conference and was a member of the SCLV steering committee elected there. But he played no part in initiating the SCLV, and never attended a single steering committee, though he was, of course, a valuable associate.

Carvel

Livingstone gives an account of his differences with SO in John Carvel's book, 'Red Ken', but it is no less inaccurate than the Time Out story.

The forces around SO began to split just after the Tories won the 1979 election, at a SO conference on local government.

The 1978 SCLV manifesto had rejected rent and rate rises, but now Ken Livingstone and many others said that rate rises were a good way to 'gain time' in face of the Tories — or were even a socialist measure, a new Law of the Maximum. Our side of the argument said that rate rises to offset Tory cuts were still cuts — a cop-out, an alternative to mobilising the local working class to confront the Tories.

A very big majority of those who sold, wrote for and financed SO shared our views; the big majority of the broad Labour Left shared Livingstone's outlook. At the SCLV AGM in November 1979, a steering committee was elected reflecting the

majority on this question — though with a big minority representation, and an assurance that SO would continue to be a broad paper. It would give space to the rate-raisers, but the editorial line would be against rate rises: this was a clear issue of accountability.

Within a few weeks the Chartist group, which had led the argument for rate rises, seceded from SO. Soon the Chartist minority launched London Labour Briefing.

We continued to give space to Livingstone.

In Carvel's book Livingstone says he broke with SO when the majority elected its own SCLV steering committee. In fact he appeared frequently in SO for 18 months after that, while also contributing to Briefing.

Herald

Then, in circumstances and for immediate reasons that we have never understood, Livingstone, with Ted Knight, separated from Briefing and launched Labour Herald.

In Carvel's book Livingstone claims he broke away from SO because of a 'takeover' — i.e. the majority insisting that the paper's editorial line was accountable to the majority.

But Labour Herald was founded without a conference, without supporters, with three self-appointed political editors and a managing editor (Steven Miller) lent to them by the Workers' Revolutionary Party, which also prints their paper on terms that allow it to survive despite its lack of a visible network of sellers.

Livingstone's role in all this was never clear. He spoke at both WRP rallies and Morning Star jamborees.

And the precise point of his sharp break with SO is not entirely clear, even to us. We criticised the GLC when it came into conflict with the NUR in late 1981. An SO supporter, Gerry Byrne, challenged Ken Livingstone for the left's nomination for MP in Brent East, in a situation where she had no hope. We continued to support Livingstone where, when and as long as he could be supported — though not uncritically or sycophantically, and there, maybe, lies the rub.

Private schools

PRIVATISATION is on the rise in education.

The number of pupils in private schools rose last year from 417,020 to 419,350, even though Britain's overall school population is declining.

Under this scheme, 20,023 children (as against 14,434 the previous year) were paid for by

the government to attend private schools.

The scheme subsidises the private schools (already helped by tax concessions) and siphons off star students from the state schools. Labour is pledged to abolish it when it returns to power.

An army of liberty?

ACCORDING to the report in the Morning Star, Tony Benn told their '40th Anniversary of the Victory over Fascism' rally "... that the liberties that we now enjoy in Britain were bought in large part with Russian blood".

Or, as the Star headline put it: "Russian blood pays for liberties we enjoy, says Benn"

Another speaker at the rally was Evgeny Grigoryev, deputy editor-in-chief of the Russian paper Pravda ('Truth'). As the Star reported it, he "paid tribute to the courage and steadfastness of the British people in the war" and recalled the days when the Soviet Union and Britain were 'allies for freedom, peace and justice'."

Poor, generous, quixotic Russian people — dying in their millions (20 million in all) to secure for us liberties they do not have themselves and, apart from an all too brief period in 1917 and after, never have had.

The truth in what Benn said is of course that the Russian army — and the Russian winter — broke the Wehrmacht's back. But wouldn't it be better to find a way of saying this that avoids being offensive to those in the USSR who fight now for the elementary liberties won in Britain centuries ago, who fight for free trade unions, or who fight, like the Ukrainians and the other non-Russian nationalities who form the majority of the USSR's people, against shameless national oppression?

Of the 20 million Russians who died in Hitler's war, a lot died because of the Stalin regime. Stalin slaughtered the top army officers in 1937, beheading the USSR's army. He entered into a pact with Hitler which gave Hitler the green light for war in the west. Stalin refused to prepare for the Nazi invasion even when warned it was imminent, trusting in his friend Hitler. The Stalinist terror led millions of Ukrainians and Russians to welcome the Nazis as liberators — until they realised that they were all designated as sub-human slaves in Hitler's zoological system, and resisted.

A sizeable proportion of those 20 million people died because of the totalitarian political system erected to protect the rule of a privileged bureaucratic elite, a system which is today essentially what it was under Stalin.



Farewell king

For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground,
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:—
How some have been depos'd; some slain in war;
Some haunted by the ghosts they have depos'd;
Some pois'n'd by their wives; some sleeping kill'd;
All murder'd:—for within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court; and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state, and grinning at his pomp;
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be fear'd, and kill with looks;
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,—
As if this flesh, which walls about our life,
Were brass impregnable; and humour'd thus,
Comes at the last, and with a little pin
Bores through his castle-wall, and—farewell, king!

Shakespeare: 'Richard II'

The power

ONE OF the most striking things in Time Out's feature on Ken Livingstone is this quote from GLC councillor Valerie Wise:

"Yes, the class of '81 was amazing, and what happened here has still to be fully appreciated. That is one thing no one can take away from Ken Livingstone: he gave us the power and let this happen. And we trusted each other. We trusted each other implicitly".

Yes, the GLC Labour group have the local government 'power' as defined by the capitalist state. They have used it to do some good things. And they have used it to obey the Rates Act rather than face the wrath of the Tories who might have disqualified them from ever again 'taking the power' within the legal structures of the British state as now constituted.

But wasn't that one of those things to which we said 'never again' after the experience of the Wilson/Callaghan government? Benn's image of the Parliamentary leaders using the labour movement to climb to office and then contemptuously kicking the ladder away —

doesn't it fit the local government Left too?

In fact, of course, neither Ken Livingstone nor anyone else 'gave' the GLC councillors 'the power'. Their power was limited and subordinated to the purposes of the Tory government.

The idea that they were 'taking' a little bit of 'the power' was one of the most gross delusions of the local government Left. They took power on the terms of the establishment, and exercised it only within those limits.

All very much like previous generations of Labour councillors, who decade after decade have taken themselves and the Labour Party through the school of local government reformism.

The mystical transformation of this humdrum activity into 'taking the power' was provided by writers in the pages of London Labour Briefing. But meanwhile those who 'took the power' have got on with cuts, rent and rate rises, wage conflicts with the local government unions, and compliance with the Rates Act.

George Brown

GEORGE Brown is dead. He was Gaitskell's lieutenant in the right wing's war in the early '60s to change the Labour Party into what the SDP now is.

He was the wretch who proposed Nye Bevan's expulsion at the 1939 Labour Party conference.

Brown was Harold Wilson's opponent in the election for Labour leader early in 1963, after Hugh Gaitskell died suddenly. When Brown lost, it seemed a victory for the Left.

Brown went on to serve four years as a minister in Wilson's government, until he resigned in 1968. He left the Labour Party in 1976, a premature SDPer, waiting so to speak for the party in whose ranks he died to be born.

When you consider what Wilson and the 'left' did — such ex-Bevanites as Barbara Castle, who introduced Labour's attempted anti-union legislation in 1969 under the title 'In Place of Strife' (derived from Bevan's autobiography 'In Place of Fear') — then Brown seems in retrospect to have differed from Wilson mainly in being more candid and straightforward.



Scrap school?

I WAS appalled to read Stan Crooke's letter in SO 230 which appeared to embrace the "de-schooling" concept long espoused by one strand of "radical" educationist thought. I can think of few less useful contributions to be published in the same week as that in which a member of the Tory cabinet, Lord Young, announced that he favoured lowering the school leaving age to 14.

The labour movement has long campaigned for a state-funded system of comprehensive education. Whatever faults that system may have, and they are many, it seems to me to be the height of folly not to build upon past achievements but to cast them aside in this nihilistic fashion.

Stan's argument that working class people in the 19th century showed a healthy mistrust of schools is highly misleading. Certainly many working class parents opposed the schools established after the Education Act of 1870.

That, however, was mainly because they feared that they would no longer be able to send their children out to work to supplement their miserable incomes.

Whilst that was a perfectly understandable reaction, it is hardly an act that should be commended by socialists as being somehow progressive.

Of course there should be a debate amongst socialists as to current trends in education and how they can be reversed. The Tory offensive cannot simply be measured in terms of favouring private education and cutting resources to the state sector; a central feature of that strategy is also the total restructuring of the curriculum at secondary and further education levels.

Whether this is to be done directly through the Manpower Services Commission (e.g. YTS and TVEI) or, as in Scotland, indirectly through the Action Plan, the intention is the same. It is to provide a curriculum for working class youth which is narrowly vocational, and which both inhibits the imagination and suppresses the critical faculties. Its central aim is the production of a docile and malleable workforce (when work is made available).

Labourism, based as it is upon the same ideological premises as are espoused by the architects of these schemes, can provide no coherent critique nor alternative curriculum.

Such an analysis would have to break not only from the methodology of the New Right but also from the elitism and other negative features which have permeated the state sector.

To undertake such an analysis, propagandise and campaign for its implementation is a major task involving a great deal of collective effort. Compared to that endeavour, the simplistic slogans of "de-schooling" are a cop-out.

IAN McCALMAN

Socialist FORUM
50p Number 2 March/April 1985

Ireland 69-85

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Editorial: Dialogue yes, tripartism no!
Militant's record in Ireland and ours
James Connolly
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Football violence

Behind the Brussels disaster



Thatcher's hypocrisy

Thatcher's solution is no solution. She likes the image of trouble-shooting, the Iron Lady, the Falklands Spirit.

Coming down hard on football violence has become a symbol for the whole of Tory policy. Hooligans, like the rest of us, need a short sharp shock to make the country great again.

Like Jimmy Hill, raving on TV as we watched the horrific events in Belgium, she no doubt thinks that hanging and flogging (and a spell in the army) would do the trick. It's only a matter of time before she says so publicly.

Thatcher sees the issue politically. Football hooliganism, she says, is on a par with picket-line violence, and Northern Ireland, as symptoms of the problems of Britain. Tough treatment of soccer hooliganism is an ideological prop, a justification, for smashing up picket lines, beating down the Northern Irish Catholic revolt. By putting an equals sign over Belgium and Orgreave, Thatcher hopes to win a big political and ideological victory over the working class movement.

It is rubbish, of course. Self defence — by miners on picket lines, or by Irish Catholics against British troops or Protestant bigots — is nothing to do with violence at football matches. It is not senseless, pointless violence for its own sake: it is necessary, political violence by a class or a community against a ruthless political enemy.

Thatcher wants to win other victories too. The flip-side of chauvinism and gang warfare is the notion that we are all, collectively, as a nation, guilty for what happened in Belgium. "It has brought shame," Thatcher said, "on Britain and on football" — adding that the miners' strike paved the way.

The suggestion that we are all responsible for the deaths in Belgium — or that all the British people who were there are responsible — is idiotic.

If we are all 'guilty', we should also all 'pull together' to do something about it. We should all accept the short sharp shock — not only that, we should want it, plead for it, as a national penance.

To assuage our guilt we must put up with undemocratic laws, heavier policing, the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. It is sick.

Thatcher's proposals to



'solve' the problem — banning alcohol, most obviously, would mean more power to the police. Of course, as evidence in Scotland suggests, restricting alcohol does have some effect on reducing football violence. But it needs strong policing, and draconian restrictions on people who do only want a nice time, to enforce it.

If working class people themselves establish forms of control — from restricting alcohol to collective disciplining of thugs — that is one thing. But Thatcher wants to punish us in order to strengthen the hand of the police in strikes, on demonstrations. That is why she is so eager to equate football rioting with the miners' strike.

In any case, it is rank hypocrisy. Drink is only part of the problem — an extra factor, not a root cause. The average Tory drinks far more than the average working class youth — because the average Tory has got more money.

And the Tory Party is funded by big breweries. They make profits out of the stuff.

Dog-eat-dog society

An English philosopher once commented that "the life of man is solitary, mean, nasty, brutish and short." With scenes like those in Belgium last week, it is difficult to doubt it. Something compels people to the most mindless, pointless acts of brutality.

By nature, so the argument goes, we are all selfish, heartless, greedy. Some people, for particular reasons, are worse than others. But the nasty, vicious streak is there in all of us. That's what drives us to beat the hell out of each other. That's what drives us, in the final analysis, to war.

Human nature?

Hooliganism, then, is the price we pay for being, in essence, anti-social, only compelled to live together by states, governments, and 'law and order'.

It is a depressing view. But it is false. Alongside the violence and brutality, there are tremen-

The deaths of over forty people in Brussels, at the European Cup final between Liverpool and Juventus, provoked horror and outrage throughout Europe.

The stadium was inadequate, it was badly organised, the police were inept and heavy-handed, and fascists helped to stir it up: still, the fact remains that a number of fans acted brutally and mindlessly. The Tories seize on such events to boost their drive for more police powers. Tom Rigby and Clive Bradley argue an alternative socialist view.

dous, heroic moments of solidarity: acts of working class solidarity, heralding a different kind of society.

Brussels

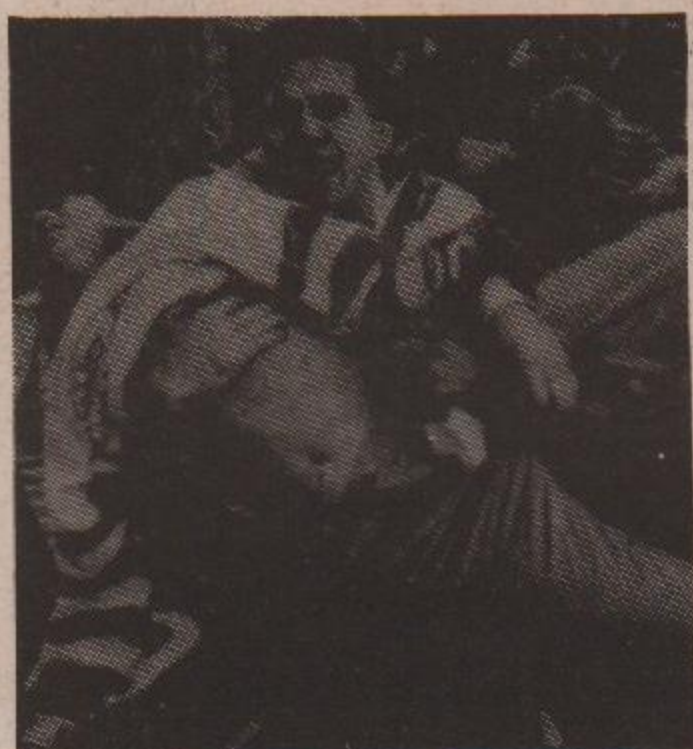
Thousands of workers in countless working class struggles have proved to be ready to die so that their com-

rades, and future generations, might have a better world to live in.

This society — class society — breeds national hatred, chauvinism, racism; it is a society created and founded upon horrific, monstrous, institutionalised violence, held together by violence. The law of profit, the domination of our lives by money and governments who

worship it, brutalises us. In a dog-eat-dog society, dogs will eat dogs.

And for the most part, those who enjoy mindless violence are from the most brutalised, the



Top and above: victims of the Heysel stadium tragedy are carried away

most dehumanised sections of our society.

Most football violence is small scale, individual acts of thuggery. More recently there has developed a cult of gangs — gang warfare, in miniature, being a model of the whole organisation of society. It is mindless — though even then there is an element of incoherent revolt, particularly in confrontations with the police — but it is rooted, not in human nature, but in class society.

Rotting

Society is rotting: the Tories are right about that. But it is their society, their rotten, miserable, stinking system. It can be ameliorated. We can fight for policies to help lift people from the gutter. But the solution is to change society; and transforming the dehumanised violence of dispossessed working class youth into coherent, political struggle against capitalism would be a tremendous force towards creating a new society, based not on hatred and misery, but on human solidarity.

The fascists move in

There is some evidence that fascist groups played a part in the violence in Belgium. Certainly, both in Britain and in Europe, fascists try to recruit from football fans. And they do provoke a lot of violence — against the 'enemy' team; and, of course, against blacks. Fascist groups were also active on the Italian side at the European Cup.

But fascist involvement at Liverpool is not great — unlike at Millwall or Chelsea, for example.

And to blame it all on fascists is too easy an explanation. Most

football hooligans are not members of fascist gangs. And if they are receptive to fascist propaganda, the question that also needs to be asked is why this is so.

The answer lies with the labour movement. Reactionary, anti-social revolt, and the growth of fascism are nurtured by the weakness of the mass organisations of the working class.

The sub-class of unemployed white youth, and the middle class, are attracted to fascism because the labour movement does not act as a self-confident

force, offering real solutions, a real alternative. If the labour movement makes itself strong, fights militantly and politically for its interests and the interests of the oppressed, fascist groups will remain isolated and weak.

That means also that the labour movement must show that it is stronger than the fascists — it must physically oppose them and drive them off the streets. If the labour movement acts, as the decisive and most powerful force in society, it can weld the masses of working class youth tempted by fascism into a movement for socialist change.

In trim for the system?

Many people on the left argue that competitive sports — by their very nature — encourage rat-race behaviour and violent attitudes. In some left-controlled councils, this has led to the suggestion of banning them in schools.

The idea of competition, of wanting to beat people, is the product of — and reinforces — a society based on exploitation, walking all over people to get to the top, and in the case of capitalism, financial competition.

Competition, rather than social cooperation, is the basis and norm of class society. It breeds chauvinism at all levels — irrational opposition to the other (team, nation); irrational desires to 'win'. And these irrational ideas are necessarily

macho — or something that imitate machismo in women. At a low level it is stupid and petty; at a higher level it leads to violence like that in Belgium.

There is another side to it, though. A kid from the Brazilian shanty towns can, through sheer skill and craft, become a Pele. Sports like football can provide escape from squalor, and an opportunity for oppressed youth to become heroes in a society that otherwise blocks their future. And in a society that restricts working class access to creative arts, sport is a major means of self-expression. Skill in sport is itself a creative endeavour.

What do you think? Letters to: The Editor, Socialist Organiser, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Of course the salient point about this new Popular Front is that the Alliance is *not* in the anti-Thatcher camp. It is not in the political sense a party of a wavering middle class. It simply represents an *alternative variant of Thatcherism*. The SDP is a capitalist party pure and simple. On the SDP "Campaign For Fair Votes" sit representatives of Trafalgar House, Beechams, Thorn, EMIC and Cadbury Schweppes and former Tory Cabinet Ministers, Lords Carr and Jellicoe. It is, as Owen has declared, a social market party.

On vital issues, such as the separation of the Labour Party from the unions, the SDP's position is harder than Thatcher's and at one with the Institute of Directors. From the viewpoint of the stability of capital the failure of the '74-'79 government and the emergence of the Bennite left represented a threat to the turn and turn about system of rule by two capitalist parties. If Bennism crystallised, moved left and was carried into the unions the possibility of a government which would act against the interests of capital was opened up. Conversely, if an alternative governing party institutionally separated from the unions was to emerge, a party purely of capital which could, nevertheless, mop up the working class vote and gain some kind of support from Chapple, Duffy, Grantham and so on, then this could interact with and mesh into ruling class plans for the labour movement — the plans which the Tories are now implementing with the goal to remould the unions, weaken their centre, the TUC, and cut them off from *direct politics* in the shape of their own party, and thus to create a US style political system in Britain.

In the present situation there is a decline in support for both Tory and Labour, but the SDP cannot make a decisive breakthrough both because of the impasse of class relations and because of the British voting system. Therefore, the best alternative for capital is, as the *Economist* pointed out, a situation where "Dr Owen could head a non-Marxist Social Democrat grouping (with much kicking and screaming on both sides) to realise Mr Tony Benn's worst fears, an SDP-moderate Labour coalition, radical but not union dominated, from which the Bennites are forced to split away. Such a coalition remains the best hope for a realignment of the left of British politics — a realignment which is itself British politics' most urgent priority".

The *Economist* is well aware of what the policies of such a coalition would mean for the working class, yet their realignment is *precisely identical with Hobsbawm's Popular Front*. Hobsbawm would be there arguing that the Labour Party must totally revise its programme and accept Alliance terms governing down the pace of social change to what is acceptable to the SDP and the *Economist*.

Bennites

And the *Economist* is correct about the Bennites. The political implications of a policy of alliances across classes means that the most determined and aware sections of the working class will not accept it. Neither will their political representatives. The hardest sections which will not accept subordination to capital must be broken to secure the interest of one's new capitalist partners, just like in Spain during the Civil War.

Except that Hobsbawm would probably recommend the left stay in and accept the vicious policies as in the late '70s. After all, unity comes before all else. That, of course, would be the best and cheapest means of discrediting and breaking Labour's socialist left. And that is the historic task of the Eurocommunists.

For Hobsbawm is attempting to carry on in the '80s the politics Berlinguer and Carillo developed in the '70s, the politics Thorez, Dimitrov and Stalin developed in the '30s and '40s. Hobsbawm himself recognises and celebrates the underlying continuity. It is one of his few services to history in this debate.

There are certainly differences. For the politics of the 1935 Popular Front turn of the Communist International meant direct collaboration between the Communist Parties and sections of national capital, primarily in the interests of Russian policy. But the Communist Parties have changed a lot since then. They have been moulded and shaped by class collaboration in World War Two, by the experience of the popular fronts

The socialist alternative



Sections of the labour movement have fought to radically change the Labour Party

This week John McIlroy concludes his critique of the ideas of Eric Hobsbawm. Hobsbawm, a leading intellectual of the Eurocommunist wing of the rapidly-disintegrating Communist Party, argues that Thatcherism is a new phenomenon — much worse than 'ordinary' Toryism — requiring a new strategy from Labour. He argues for a new version of the Popular Front — an alliance with the Liberals and SDP. In this article McIlroy spells out the alternative to Hobsbawm's pessimism.

of the post-war years, by the splits and traumas of international Stalinism since the denunciation of Stalin by his successor Khrushchev, the Sino-Soviet split, the Hungarian Revolution, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, etc. If in the '30s and '40s the Western CPs acted as direct agents of the Kremlin who served their own ruling classes only the better to serve the USSR, today the leaders of Communist Parties such as those in Spain and Italy are governed more and more by the simple necessities of collaboration with the ruling class on their own national terrain. From revolutionaries perverted by loyalty to the Kremlin they have become just parties of reform — or primarily parties of reform. The "left turns" of the late '40s have long ago ceased. The tendency to open splits with Moscow has increased. By disorientating and obstructing those socialists who would change society the Eurocommunists now protect the interests of their own ruling class and of those in the Kremlin fearful of socialist change in other countries — just as surely as Thorez and Togliatti ever did.

If in 1988 a Kinnock, Owen, Jenkins, Steel government sits in Downing Street — perhaps even containing some Tory wets as Hobsbawm's fellow party member, Bob Rowthorn, suggests — it will be a remarkable achievement for Eric Hobsbawm. For the working class the British Popular Front will be a tragic nightmare.

Crisis

So far we have agreed with Hobsbawm that there is a crisis in the labour movement. We have disagreed with his argument which, stripped of its obfuscating twists, is simply that "the profound changes in the social and economic structure since the 1950s" means that to achieve power Labour will have to abandon socialist positions. We have argued that his solutions involve in reality — and at best! — a Labour government just like all the others, or more likely, a coalition with the SDP, and

either would be disastrous for Labour. How then is Labour's crisis to be explained and in what direction should we take to solve it?

The crisis of the Labour Party, the serious loss of support since the early '50s, is explained by the decline of British capitalism and the response of British social democracy to it. It is explained not by a strong labour movement going soft from the '50s onwards. It is explained by the weaknesses of a labour movement which was always inadequate rising to the surface to be exploited by our enemies as the crisis of British capital progressively intensified. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky all pointed out that the British labour movement was strong organisationally and defensively, but that compared with other countries its labour movement exhibited tremendous political deficiencies. The Labour Party was never a gradualist socialist party like those in continental countries. The labour movement never produced a strong Communist Party. As we have said, this political weakness was related to the whole development of the British working class — developing within the first capitalist nation, the one-time strongest imperialism, a country with no major social upheavals for centuries and so on. What happens to a reformist party when the scope for concessions to its base drastically narrows?

The aim of the '64, '66 and '74 Labour governments, for example, was to harness both capital and labour through the state to a strategy of modernising British capital.

Wilson's half-hearted attempts to do this through the IRC collapsed into attempted reliance on one ingredient in the strategy, incomes policy, deflation and legal attack on the trade unions (In Place of Strife, 1969) — all of which alienated Labour's 1966 major-

ity and paved the way for

The same thing happened in the economic crisis of the 1970s. The failure of the strategy of capital to Labour led to the government's limited instrument of National Enterprise Board Agreements and the Workers' Participation Schemes. These had transformed political concessions available to the working class with Social Democracy. The working class had to be broken to deliver meaningful political change. The 1974-9 Labour government required to control and deliver, and voters on from Labour.

Part

It is amazing that we seek for reasons for Labour's spurious sociology staring him in the face. They are not simply political changes amongst vo-

millions looked to the party but for reforms. None of the Labour supporters were nationalisation of the policies. They were demanding a gradually increasing housing and an increase in welfare.

*Unemployment rose from 1979 from 640,000 to 1,200,000.
*Labour incomes policy was dramatically more than at any

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THEM
LVES



The fight also has to be taken into the unions and into the industrial class struggle



Wilson - Prime Minister 1964-70 and 1974-6. And Kinnock - Prime Minister 1987??

for Heath.
opened in the deeper
late '70s. The resis-
our's state modernis-
cutting of the govern-
ments, such as the
board, the Planning
Bullock Report on
The world recession
s; so there were now
able to placate the
to the attack on the
made more serious.
ernment experienced
social democracy,
discipline its work-
the possibility of
reforms. Not surpris-
The TUC could not
e more moved away

reducing real weekly take home pay by 5.8% in 1975-6, by a further 0.9% in 1976-7 and a further 2.7% in 1978-9. No wonder there was a winter of discontent!

*Healey pioneered the monetarism and the unemployment developed by Mrs Thatcher.

*The cuts in the NHS, in education, in housing, in transport, did not begin in 1979 but under a Labour government.

*Merlyn Rees admitted to racist legisla-
tion.

*Under Labour the top one per cent of the population increased its share of total wealth from 22.5% in 1974 to 25% in 1976. The share of the top 10% went up three percentage points. And the share of the poorest half of the population went down from 7% to 5.5%.

Through its policies and its statements, Labour demoralised its supporters and sustained and developed their miseducation in a way which opened the door for Mrs Thatcher. "We used to think," Jim Callaghan informed the 1976 Party Conference, "that we could spend our way out of a recession and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting government spending. I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists." Dependence on the Welfare State, he insisted, had to stop. Family responsibility must take over. Crosland announced that for local government 'the party's over'. If Wilson gave employers the right to sack strikers, Callaghan lashed the

closed shop, picketing and strikes and told us we couldn't pay ourselves more than we earned. Healey told us that indirect taxation was preferable to direct taxation. The Labour cabinet rehearsed time and again the repertoire of Thatcherism inculcating right wing conceptions and blaming state intervention for reduced wages and lengthening dole queues.

Labourism

It was hardly surprising that Labour voters jumped ship in 1979 and deserted to the Tories or abstained, and in 1983 voted for the new "alternative", the Alliance or again abstained.

Hobsbawm could not be more wrong: Labour's defeat is not explained by changes in the class structure. It stems first and foremost from the failure of Labourism in a crisis to defend the interests of the class it purports to represent. The future for the

"Hobsbawm could not be more wrong: Labour's defeat is not explained by changes in the class structure. It stems from the failure of Labourism in a crisis to defend the interests of the class it purports to represent"

Labour Party lies not in cross class alliances but in acting in the interests of the working class. The compromise between working class and capital which gives Labour its role as broker has disintegrated under the impact of the crisis. This should be welcomed, not as with Hobsbawm, regretted.

Of course reformism is a complex ideology. People do not simply react like Pavlovian dogs to changes in the economic situation and the failure of a party to deliver and in certain conditions support for Labour may be maintained at a certain level of decline.

Traditional

But what seems to have happened is this. Labour has maintained its vote in traditional working class and left wing class struggle strongholds like Scotland, South Wales and the North of England. As Denis Kavanagh's book, *The Politics of the Labour Party*, says, "The peripheral areas of Britain with their higher unemployment and the decline in the inner parts of the conurbations have become steadily more Labour". In areas like the South and the South East, where the loyalties were far less, Labour has been wiped out. The Labour vote there was based far less than in the heartlands on commitment and tradition, far more on prosperity. As that prosperity was not completely dissolved but threatened; as the political attack against Labour was intensified; as the Tories and the SDP provided new "answers"; as Labour was unable to come up with concessions — a vote that had been based on pure quid pro quo reformism evaporated.

There are, of course, other factors explaining Labour's decline: the strength, determination and flair of Thatcherism and the impasse between left and right in the Labour Party. The tragedy of the 1979-83 years was that the left, radicalised by the previous period of Labour government was able to make important but *insufficient* advance. The progressive moves to democratise the party and refurbish its programme stopped short of transforming its structure, its programme and its leadership. The impasse this created was a real factor in alienating voters who were led to view it as senseless division and irrelevant or sinister dissension through the amplification of a bitterly hostile media campaign against Labour and the left. The failure of the left to carry through a thorough and adequate transformation meant that the old gang were able to mount a witch-hunt on the eve of an election campaign. The Tatchell by-election — in which the official Labour candidate was denounced in the House of Commons by Labour leader Michael Foot! — was a microcosm of its impact on the electorate.

Promises

While the right was not able to defeat the left or stop important measures being included in the Manifesto, they were able, during the election campaign and before it, to ignore and denounce left policies. Shamefully, they meshed in with the media campaign against Labour and the inadequacies of the programme itself made it difficult to get across as a real alternative and many tens of thousands of potential Labour supporters were lost because they suspected that Labour was not a serious alternative. Everybody knew that capital was in crisis, that new strategies were required, and, therefore, that Labour's melange of measures was baby talk — the easy and unreliable promise of forbidden goodies in a harsh adult world.

Voters were acutely aware that the crisis was a deep and prolonged one. Their instinctive knowledge of the harsh economics of capitalism led many to see the package of reflation, import controls and the rest of the so-called alternative economic strategy — in the context of Labour's past performances and of Thatcher's realism — as silly fairy tales. How could they believe,

really believe, that Healy and Hattersley would preside over free collective bargaining and unilateral nuclear disarmament?

What Hobsbawm is arguing for is a continuation of the appeasement of the right and therefore a continuing paralysis. The left must not lie down with the right but continue and deepen the struggles of 1979-81 with the aim of transforming Labour into a party which can put forward socialist measures. The fact that there is a limited constituency for socialism today and that there is a strong entrenched conservatism within the working class has to be recognised. If we are really socialists, if we really want to dismantle capitalism, if we are serious politicians this should not lead us to fatalism or pessimism. The leaders of the Labour Party have spent the last two decades virtually campaigning against socialism. They have enshrined in their politics the conclusions that it cannot be achieved. As Tony Benn points out the eight and a half million who voted Labour (not of course socialist) in 1983, *despite everything*, constitute the *beginning* on which socialists in the party must educate, agitate and organise. There is hope: the social crisis which afflicts Liverpool and Glasgow today will grip the South tomorrow: the real failure of Thatcherism is still its economic failure.

But we cannot rely on a deteriorating economic situation. We need a socialist organisation for what is a long, possibly very long, haul. It is a haul which has to be organised for in both the Party and the unions.

Impact

This must not be a matter of left phraseology or mere token gestures. If the hard left — the people around CLPD, London Labour Briefing, the Campaign Group of MPs, Socialist Organiser, Socialist Action and others — are to make an impact, then they will have to come together on the basis of sustained work in the trade unions as well as the Labour Party. Socialist change will not be handed down to the working class from on high. It will be carried through by the workers themselves. A workers' government will in part be produced by and in turn safeguarded by the direct self-activity of the working class. And the working class will go beyond it.

This view is quite foreign to Eric Hobsbawm, a lifelong and committed Stalinist, albeit now of the Eurocommunist persuasion. In an article in *New Left Review* he salutes the "German Socialist Republic and the fact that this came into existence through the Red Army rather than through the efforts of the German movement would have been perfectly acceptable to the German Communists... For that Republic which can only be criticised if we also acknowledge its remarkable achievements in very difficult circumstances is indeed the child of the KPD... Yet who ever doubted that the great body of upright, brave, loyal, devoted, able and efficient functionaries and executives who returned from exile and from the concentration camps to do their duty as Communists would do a competent job?" (Confronting Defeat: The German Communist Party).

Enthusiasm for the police states, in which there is not a trace of socialism, and disdain for working class self-activity — socialism's irreplaceable precursor — go hand in hand. Hobsbawm's dismissal of the militancy of the early '70s which brought workers into conflict with legislation and the courts and which led to the removal of the Heath government — struggles which have been described by an equally distinguished historian, Royden Harrison, as the most vigorous this century — are dismissed by Hobsbawm as economic, sectional and selfish. This should not surprise us. For those who advocate governing down the pace of social change to the needs of capital, those who embrace 'socialism from above', the self-activity of the workers is not a major opportunity and still less the sine qua non of socialism, but a major problem.

Continued on page 9

The socialist alternative

Continued from page 8

For us the early '70s militancy was an opportunity lost. It failed to find a political expression which went beyond the return of Labour reformism in the election of 1974. Since then it has been pinioned in the corporatist structures of industrial relations reforms and weakened by the recession. We see the direct action of the workers — no matter how limited the demands — as something to be totally supported, extended and developed. Hobsbawm simply dismisses it. Here is his view of the working class upsurge in 1972 which led to the freeing of the dockers jailed in Pentonville under the Heath government's anti-union laws, to the breaking Heath's anti-union legislation and forced the TUC to call a one-day general strike, the first decision for general strike since 1926. [The government caved in before it could happen]. "In the docks dispute the fact can't be blinked that there are two groups of workers trying to do each other out of a job. The ones who win in such a situation are not necessarily those who represent what is best for the working class or the nation: they are simply the strongest." (*Listener*, July 27, 1972).

There are real problems, numerous problems to be solved before we can fuse industrial militancy with a wider political struggle and focus partial — industrial and other — struggles round the work of transforming the Labour Party and the fight to put it in government. Hobsbawm sees an uncloseable gap. He is blinded by the politics of Eurocommunism because in the end these politics require the working class to stay passive, or strictly under bureaucratic control while their self-appointed Stalinist representatives act for them. In practice, the politics of Eric Hobsbawm do not simply involve dismissing the direct struggles of workers. They demand that those struggles should be disciplined and subordinated to something else — to the bourgeois popular front in Britain and Italy and to the Russian Army-imposed bureaucratic police state in East Germany and similar states.

Hobsbawm's vision is essentially nostalgic pessimism where he laments that "...unlike the '30s the left today can neither point to an alternative society immune to the crisis (as the USSR seemed to be) nor to any concrete policies which hold much promise for overcoming it in the short term, as Keynesian or similar policies seemed to promise then." We should rather feel optimistic. We should welcome both the intractability of today's crisis and the gaps which have opened up between the working class and both Stalinism and reformism. We should welcome the fact that this divide creates the space for a genuine socialist politics. We must develop that politics in

relation to the *self-activity* of the working class, and unify and build around it and around the day-to-day class struggle in both the unions and the Labour Party. That is the difficult task ahead.

That task involves limiting and undermining the influence of Eric Hobsbawm and his clones and disciples in the Labour Party, those, for example, who call for unconditional support for a leader who refuses to support the miners and failed even Liverpool City Council.

We must reject not only Hobsbawm's pessimism but the politics it both dictates and feeds off. True, we have to accept that there is no existing majority for socialism. The British working class retains its old political weaknesses. But we can win such a majority for socialism. It has to be worked for. It will never be won if we capitulate to existing working class consciousness instead of fighting tenaciously and patiently to transform it and free it from bourgeois, Stalinist and reformist ideas.

We must reject alliances with capital and build alliances *within* the working class, particularly with women, with black workers, with the unemployed.

We must understand that the way to beat the Alliance is by attacking it, not by joining it.

The way to win middle strata is not by capitulating to their alleged needs but by independently and decisively pursuing working class objectives and by showing them how, in the end, their interests too are best served by socialism.

Above all, we must fight in a serious and determined way to build an extra-parliamentary dimension, subordinating electoralism to it. This means resisting the intrusion of the sclerosed adaptationist socialism from above, represented by Hobsbawm and the Communist Party which in the end always makes its peace with capital. Its influence today can only disorientate and weaken Labour.

Let us instead inscribe on our programme the words of Engels and Marx: "The emancipation of the working class is conquered by the working classes themselves."

Unless specifically cited, all quotes from Hobsbawm are from the following:

The Forward March of Labour Halted in the book of that title, edited by M. Jacques and F. Mulhern, Verso.

Response, *ibid*.

Observation on the debate, *ibid*.

Falklands Fallout in S. Hall and M. Jacques

(editors) *The Politics of Thatcherism*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1983.

Labour's Lost Millions, *Marxism Today*, October 1983.

Labour Rump or Rebirth? *Marxism Today*, March 1984.

Plan for a

This memorandum is submitted to the NEC for its consideration.

It begins with the election defeat of 1983, and the various reasons given for it, goes on to list the changes that have been made inside the party since then, some of which have been put to conference, and concludes with a series of recommendations designed to assist the party prepare itself now for victory at the next election.

Everyone in the party is determined to work unremittingly for the defeat of the present government.

There is no-one in the party who is secretly hoping that we shall lose, in the interests of some supposed 'shift to the left' after another election defeat, and suggestions that this view is held are both untrue and deeply damaging.

We are, all, equally united in our resolve to secure the election of a Labour government, with a large working majority, at the next election, in the interests of the people whom we represent who are, now, suffering real hardships at the hands of the Tories.

The real question that we have to discuss, and decide, in a spirit entirely free from personal animosity, is how best that desire for victory may be realised in practice and we must also accept that there will be genuine and sincere differences of opinion about it.

The aftermath of electoral defeat

The very serious electoral defeat suffered by the party in the 1983 general election has, quite properly, led to an examination of the weaknesses in party organisation.

Some of this examination has involved a political analysis, and the organisational aspects have been undertaken by the 'Review of Reviews' committee, whose official task it was to re-examine the organisational recommendations made by earlier committees of inquiry, to see what lessons might still be drawn from them.

This 'Review' committee was made up of members of the NEC, the PLP and trade union representatives, and will report to the NEC for decisions.

Inevitably its work extended far beyond the problems of administration and, as the minutes submitted to the NEC have shown, it has discussed a whole range of subjects including finance, and even the need for a change in the NEC sub-committee structure.

Differing views as to why Labour lost

Many different reasons for our defeat in 1983 have been offered, depending upon the viewpoint of the people concerned:

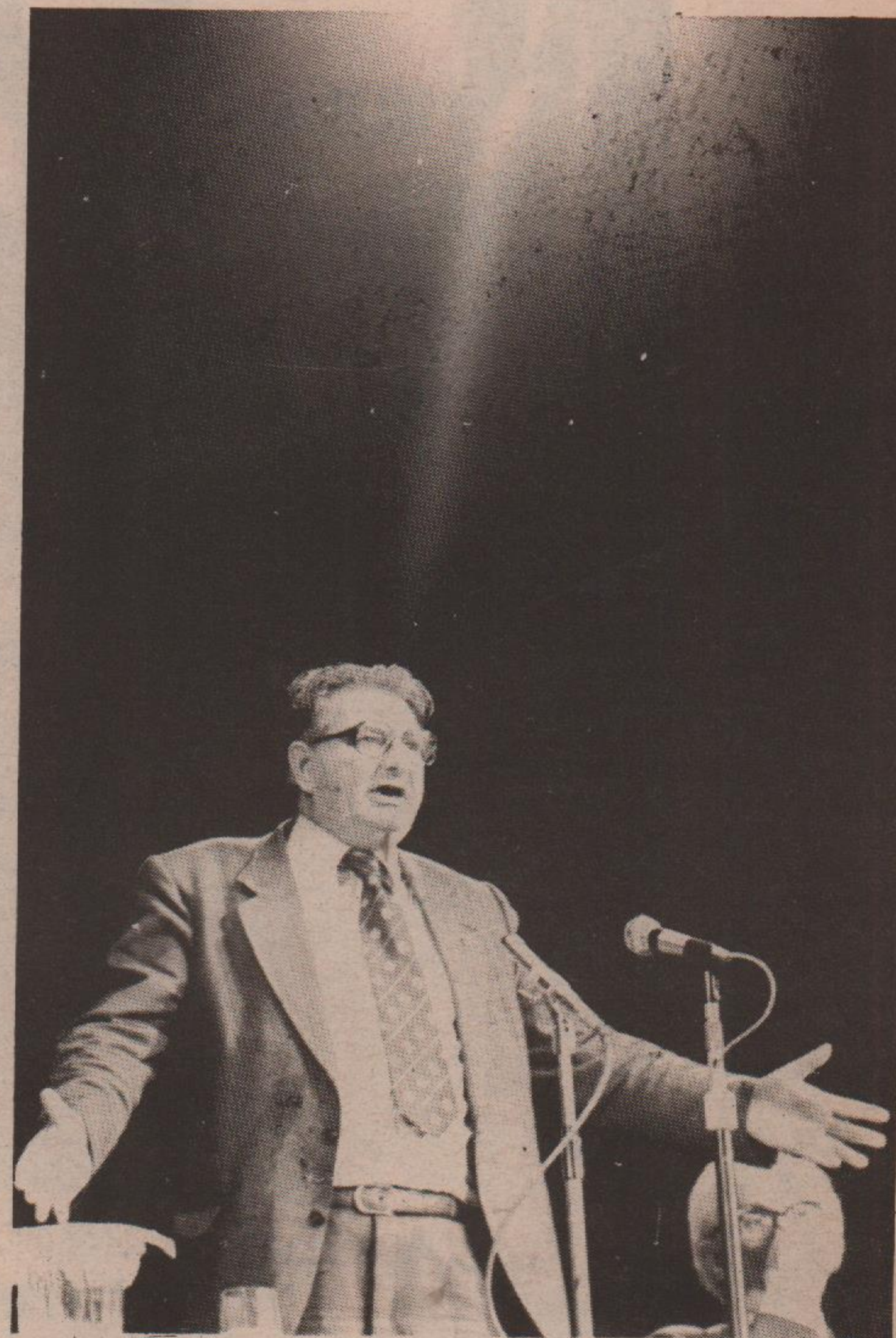
The Consensus, or Liberal, view

†The consensus, and liberal media explanation of our defeat may be summarised as follows:

a) The party, and especially the NEC, fell into the hands of the extreme left.

b) Under the influence of this NEC, Conference was persuaded to adopt a whole range of detailed policies, many of which were unrealistic, irrelevant and unacceptable to the electorate.

c) The 1979-81 campaign for



Eric Heffer

We reprint here the document by Eric Heffer and Tony Benn which the Labour Party NEC refused to discuss. It outlines a bold strategy for a Labour victory and is critical of the Party leadership.

greater democracy in the party was decisive, unnecessary and electorally damaging.

d) These events forced a lot of decent moderates to leave the party and form the SDP.

e) This, in its turn, split the Labour vote, led to mass defections by Labour voters and lost us the election.

f) Therefore the party should now return to a more middle-of-the-road position, leaving key decisions to the more moderate PLP, which is more likely to win public support.

Another explanation for our defeat

There is however another, and quite different view, widely held within the party, which attributes our defeat to very different factors:

a) Mistakes made by earlier Labour governments, which lost us the support of working people and, in particular, the trade unions.

b) The defection, to the SDP, of ten per cent of the Parliamentary Labour Party, including two former deputy-leaders and other former cabinet ministers, people who owed everything to the Labour movement, but who were hostile to the role of conference and to socialism, and

then, with full media support, launched a vitriolic attack upon the party.

c) The apparently unqualified support initially given by [the Labour Party leadership] to the Falklands war which damaged the Party's credibility as a peace party.

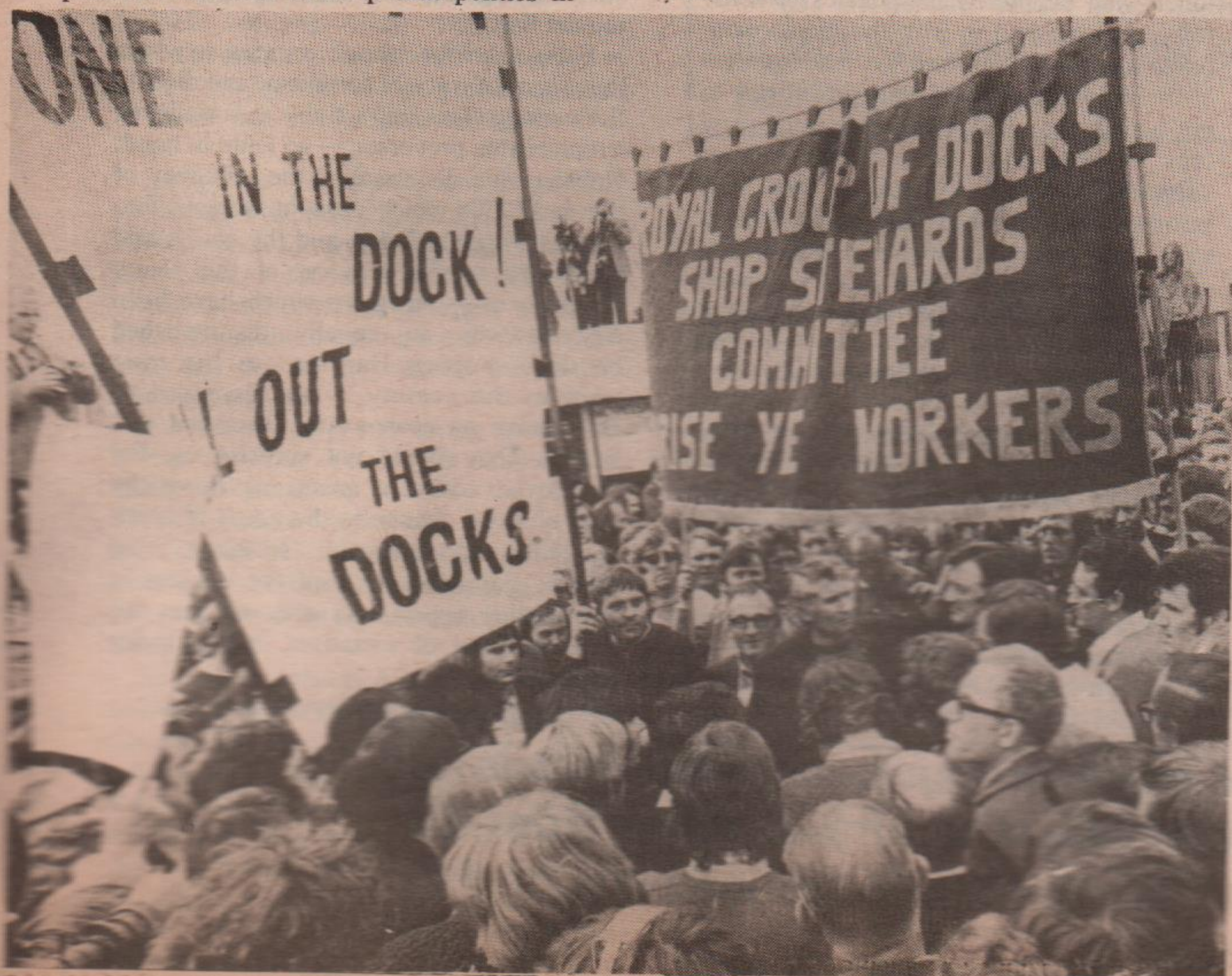
d) The fact that many Labour MPs, including a number of its most senior members, amongst them the two previous Party leaders, had spoken out strongly against Conference decisions and the Manifesto, before, and during, the election campaign.

e) The attacks upon the Left, from within the Party, as at Berrymondsey, which gave the public the idea that the Party leadership itself actually believed that the party had been taken over by wild extremists.

It is necessary to recall this background if we are to understand what has happened inside the party over the last eighteen months and look ahead to the future.

What has happened since 1983

The new NEC, elected after the general election, has reached a number of very important decisions about the party, which have now been implemen-



Demonstration to free the Pentonville Dockers, July 1972

Labour victory



Benn campaigning in Mansfield (John Harris)

ted. This quiet revolution is still in progress, but so far, its effects may be summarized by listing the decisions that have been taken:

1. Removal of policy making from the NEC.

Basic policy-making is no longer undertaken by the NEC, through its sub-committees, many of which have been wound up, but by joint committees composed of selected NEC, PLP and trade union members, who are charged with the task of drafting these new statements, subject to the technical right of the NEC to change them at the last stage.

2. A shift of power from the NEC to the PLP.

The role and authority of the PLP and especially the Parliamentary Committee has, as a result, been immensely strengthened, as compared to the NEC and is, increasingly, separately financed through:

a) continuing with the allocation of all the — extra — Government (or Short) money to the PLP, some of which is used to finance research assistants, working personally for front bench spokespersons, who are not paid trade union rates, are not answerable to the NEC, or conference, and do not have security of employment;

b) continuing with the principle that trade unions directly finance some PLP spokespersons with money that does not go through the central funds of the party.

3. A shift of power from the NEC to Trade Unions for a Labour Victory [TULV].

The TULV, made up of trade union leaders, or their deputies, who are not elected by the Labour conference, have been given a more influential role in managing the party.

This has been achieved by the NEC adopting the practice of applying to the TULV for money for specific purposes, which then has to be justified, to the TULV, case by case, rather than by using the TULV as a collective fund-raiser, leaving decisions as to expenditure to the

NEC itself, subject to conference.

4. A downgrading of CLP members on the NEC.

With one exception, NEC members elected by the Constituency section have been removed from chairmanships of all the main NEC committees thus eliminating them from their ex-officio membership of other committees.

In addition a new campaign strategy committee, including some NEC, PLP and trade union members, has been set up, from which other NEC members are excluded, which has been justified by reference to a wrong interpretation of a conference decision.

This committee has established its own sub-committees still further distancing the NEC itself from real power.

5. Changes in party policy.

The party's policies have been altered in a number of key respects, some of which have gone to conference.

a) The 'Alternative Economic Strategy' has effectively been replaced by a more general 'Jobs and Industry' campaign, from which some of the clear socialist commitments on public ownership, economic planning and exchange control have been omitted.

b) The commitment that Britain would withdraw from the Common Market has been replaced by a reference to 'an option to withdraw', the exercising of which, has been left deliberately vague.

c) The commitment to reduce Britain's defence expenditure to the same percentage of the GNP as our European allies in NATO, has been explicitly dropped and in its place we have a commitment that such a change could not be made during the lifetime of the first Labour government, and indeed, there is a new pledge actually to increase expenditure on conventional weapons as British nuclear weapons are phased out.

d) Other policies that had been in *Labour Programme 1982*

and in the 1983 Manifesto, have either not been referred to, or appear to have been replaced by 'Charters' which are more vague, illustrative and general.

6. A purge of the Left.

Despite solemn assurances given to conference that there would be no witch-hunt based upon the opinions of party members, the attack upon some of the Left has been stepped up.

An Appeals and Mediation Committee has been set up, with only one CLP representative on it, and its main work has been to carry out this purge.

Some of the key decisions made by this committee, and confirmed by the NEC, include:

a) The expulsion of one party member for selling Militant in another constituency from the one in which he lives.

b) The refusal of a transfer of membership to a party member who was alleged to have sold Socialist Action.

c) The expulsion of members of another party, mainly on the evidence of a Labour councillor who then left the party and joined the Liberals.

d) Non-registered organisations being denied a listing in the conference diary, whereas all-party groups may be included.

This may be contrasted with the confirmation, after a recorded vote on the NEC, of Frank Cnapple's continued membership of the party, despite his refusal to take the Labour whip in the House of Lords, and his consistent attacks upon the party in his column in the Daily Mail.

This purge is, presumably, designed to fend off attacks from the media, which has run, and is still running, a campaign designed to denigrate socialist ideas and those who hold, or advocate them.

7. Distancing the party from struggle.

A stand has been taken, by some in the PLP, against any suggestion that non-compliance with Tory laws could ever be justified; and strong criticisms

have been voiced, within the PLP, about the conduct of industrial disputes, notably during the miners' strike, which appeared to distance the party from certain aspects of that momentous struggle.

8. Reorganisation to support these changes.

Though apparently limited to the task of dealing with the efficiency of the Party HQ and its staff, the thinking behind the 'Review of Review's committee seems to be that there must be a further reshaping of the party's organisation to support the major changes outlined above.

Conclusions and recommendations

The changes described above are all of fundamental importance; represent a far bigger change in the party's constitution than occurred in the 1979-81 period; take us back to the structure that existed pre-war and post-war when the PLP and the General Secretaries of some major unions effectively ran the party and the NEC was weak and ineffective; and though some of these changes have been carried out without the party, as a whole, really realising what has been happening.

It is essential that any report, on party organisation issued by the NEC to the 1985 conference should make absolutely clear what is happening, and what is now planned, so that the party may know precisely what is going on, before it makes its own decisions.

The recommendations given below were drafted to help secure that victory.

1. Campaigning around real struggles.

To win the next election the party must be seen to be giving whole-hearted support to all those who are in struggle against the government, and that all party campaigns should centre around those struggles, as well as during all by-elections,

local elections and the trade union ballots, and all must be used for basic socialist education.

2. The NEC and conference must run the party.

The central direction of the party, its policy and administration, must, under its own constitution, remain with the NEC which is elected by, and accountable to, Conference, since Conference is the only link that the membership have with political decision-making.

3. The PLP must be integrated into the Party.

The PLP must be brought closer to the party, the NEC and Conference:

a) by integrating PLP standing orders into the party constitution;

b) by channelling all PLP finances through the NEC, including all government funds (which would then be used by the NEC for PLP work); and all trade union funds (leaving the unions with the right to earmark their own money, if they wished to do so, for certain purposes — including the support of the PLP).

c) by providing greater accountability of the Parliamentary Committee, and the Cabinet (when Labour is in office) to conference, perhaps through annual election by the same Electoral College as now elects the Leader and Deputy Leader.

4. The need for socialist policies to win.

Policy-making has a major role to play in the present deepening crisis, where the government has the initiative.

Labour must be able to respond with a considered socialist alternative that has been discussed, agreed and put to conference for decision as soon as possible.

The 1983 policies, far from being too radical, are likely to prove quite inadequate to deal with the situation that the next Labour government will inherit, which will be so critical that we shall almost certainly be forced to consider the development of stronger policies to deal with it.

We therefore intend to submit another paper to the NEC which will concentrate on future policy.

6. A socialist dialogue instead of a purge.

The Labour Party is the principal political instrument for working people in Britain, having been established by the trade unions for that purpose, and having consciously adopted socialism as its objective.

Here, and world-wide, the socialist debate is rich in variety and experience of successes and failures and we must be able to learn from both, and then build our own brand of socialism, based upon social morality and a deep commitment to democracy and human rights.

There are a number of different schools of socialist thought in this country, many organised around their own newspapers or magazines, and attracting a following of a few hundred or a few thousands.

None of these groups are capable either of taking over, or of replacing the Labour Party, and their contribution should be seen as a part of the on-going discussion about socialism.

Nor is there any evidence to suggest that any of them are actually planning the overthrow of democracy in Britain, or are engaged in the preparation of violence.

Most of them are made up of decent and serious people who work hard for the labour movement and whose arguments deserve serious consideration.

If such people, or organisations, put up candidates against the Labour Party then they are ineligible to join us, but that should be the sole criterion by which they are judged to be eligible to join the party.

Any policy by the NEC of seeking out, and then expelling

them, or more generally of attempting to isolate what the media choose to call the 'hard left' — whatever that may be — is a mistake because:

a) it suggests to our opponents — quite falsely — that the party is deeply penetrated by a whole lot of violent revolutionaries whose secret objective is to destroy Britain's democratic institutions — which we all know to be rubbish.

b) it diverts the party, locally and nationally, from its central task of defeating the Tories and the SDP.

c) it gives the impression that we are frightened of socialist ideas, but are unable to answer them and prefer to eliminate them by organisational means.

7. Extending affiliations of the party.

The NEC should recognise that a whole new range of political issues, and organisations, have emerged since the party was founded in 1918.

More recently, the women's movement, the ethnic communities, the peace movement and a mass of other special interest groups have come into existence, as evidenced by the long list of registered groups within the party itself and by the campaigns for greater rights for women and blacks within the party.

Many of the most active people in these new movements and organisations are socialists or Labour supporters, much as they are in the trade unions.

The issues and policies that the party takes up are designed to meet the needs of many of these groups, including, of course, women and the ethnic community and we should seriously consider opening up affiliation to allow those that wish to do so to join, on the same basis as the unions and the socialist societies did in the past.

This would broaden the range of party membership, help us to escape the — largely legitimate — charge that the party is dominated by white males, and help to make us the instrument for all working people in this generation, as we were in the past.

There is, therefore, a strong case for establishing a committee to examine this possibility, to report to the NEC in time for the 1986 conference.

If these proposals were acceptable there would be, later, a major constitutional conference, like the 1918 conference, to which all appropriate and acceptable, movements and groups would be invited, with a view to their affiliation to the party, on the same basis as the trade unions and socialist societies are now affiliated.

8. Organising for victory.

All the organisational changes that the party now makes should be geared to support this alternative view of our future.

We believe that this would also offer the best possible prospect of winning the next election, by showing ourselves to be sensitive to the new situation, the new issues and the new organisational structures which are emerging in the politics of Britain in the eighties and nineties leading on to the next century.

The time has come for the Labour Party to look to the future, dare to have a vision of 'socialism in our time', and have the courage to re-shape itself so that it can discharge, for this generation, the historic task that the founders of the movement dreamed of so many years ago.

CONCLUSION
The National Executive is invited:

a) to note this memorandum, and;

b) to refer it to the appropriate committees, and

c) to consider it again when they report back to the NEC.

TONY BENN
ERIC HEFFER
MAY DAY 1985

GERRY BYRNE'S
TV
WATCH



Happy families, broken homes

Remember the Generation Gap? All those rows about hair (too long, too short, too flat, too spiky, too greasy, too pink) and music (too loud). With the Battle of the Sexes they formed the twin pillars of domestic comedy. A comedy of mutual misunderstanding which always resolved itself, reassuringly, into a Happy Ending. We love them, really. Ah!

Whatever happened to all those Happy Families? Well, you still spot a few of them. Only the children have grown younger, as have Mum and Dad (or more likely, Mom and Pop). Not hulking great teenagers any more, but cheeky ten-year-olds. And most of them are black. (Different Strokes, Cosby Show).

But, by and large, the Happy Families have been superseded by what used to be called with a sad shake of the head, Broken Homes. Thus is social change creepingly reflected by the popular myth machine. I suppose no-one wanted to play Mum anymore. And who would blame them? All that Fairy Liquid may be kind to your hands but it sure does rot your morale standing elbow-deep in soapsuds and simpering at the family's funny doings.

Now comedy writers did make a few scant forays into the territory opened up when Mum put down the dishes and stepped out into the world as an Independent Woman. Somehow the formula didn't gel. Too much acid. The comedy curdled. And soon the script-writers scurried her off to the safety of a Happy Ending with a Second Family.

Part of the problem with deserting the traditional Happy Families scenario is that it had built-in audience identification. Most of the viewers would fall into one side of the divide or the other and you could always throw in Gran for the Old Folks (besides they'll watch anything). While most women will happily identify with Mum washing her hands of the whole shower and striking out on her own, this presents a disquieting vision for man and boy. There's only so much comedy to be squeezed out of Dad burning the boiled egg for the nth time. Eventually relief has to be afforded by Mum returning to the fold repentant (or at least refreshed).

So how to break the mould without upsetting the jelly? The answer seems to be the Oedipal nightmare coming "Home to Roost". Dad has been managing on his own after a fashion. Enter strapping teenage son who proceeds to sprawl all over his furniture, eat him out of house and home and, here's the rub, eye up his "birds".

The first essay in this direction was "Relative Strangers". But Matthew Kelly's ageing hippy Dad was too young, unkempt and pally. The whole mix was a little too sugary. John

Thaw is suitably acerbic: he plays disgruntled middle-aged men as if he'd invented the ulcer.

Sharp-eyed readers will have spotted the fly in this confection. Where are the women? Indeed, women are peripheral: the shade of the absent mother hovers, the housekeeper/cleaner interferes and the "birds" add a sprinkling of decoration. The important relationship is father and son. (Now where have we seen that before?) Now this doesn't really matter because women have been fed a diet of male-oriented fiction for years and, if not pleased, are accustomed to swallow the idea that real human beings are men.

Having located one lost generation gap highlights another. Remember when the last thing on earth you wanted was a Proper Job? You might want money, to get away from home, an unfettered sex life, studying, grape-picking or working behind a bar could, hopefully, provide that and you tried to string it out as long as possible until the fateful day when you had to knuckle down and take a Proper Job.

Grown-ups, parents slaved away in factories and offices and for that you pitied them their long hours, their daily grind. Today's youth are to be pitied for their lack of Proper Jobs. It is said a woman who wants to be equal to a man lacks ambition. How pitiful, how soul-crushing that the limits of youth's ambition should be to have a job like their parents'. Far better the modest aim to change the world.

A relic of that job-swerving age is "Shelley". This, in my opinion one of the funniest programmes around, consists largely of Shelley (Hywel Bennett) delivering monologues either to himself or listener on the deficiencies of the world and all its works. The situations (wet Sundays, waiting rooms, a stopped tube train) are merely flimsy pretexts for Shelley to rabbit on. He, too, has an absent (separated) wife and quite rightly, he's funnier solo. But it does make you wonder: is there any actress who'd be offered such a script and be left to get on with it?

Apropos of this (or maybe not) have you noticed the Plague of Dancing Men? I pay more attention to the adverts most of the time than the programmes.

Commercial television seems to have been invaded by men in boiler suits can-canning around butch locations such as garages and DIY shops. How do they manage to change those tyres and put up those shelves mid-chacha? It may be alright for Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra "On the Town" but at least they had dames.

Is this the Post-Feminism I've been reading about? Or ergot poisoning?

Slaughter in the name of socialism

Mick Ackersley reviews 'The Killing Fields', on general release

ist regimes with positive support for them.

China is not Cambodia; nor are Cuba and Vietnam. But that does not excuse those 'Trotskyists' who pretend that Castro runs a workers' democracy and

that Stalinist Vietnam is, apart from being poor, a model for socialism.

Nor those — including Labour MPs — who think Gaddafi — compared with whom Ian Paisley is a liberal — a socialist and deserving of our support and sympathy.

"The Killing Fields" tells the story of Cambodia under Pol Pot through the experience of Dith Pran, who is a real person. He is played by Dr. Haing S. Ngor

who also survived the Pol Pot years, though he belonged to a social category marked for extermination. There is much to do about Dith Pran's relationship with American journalist Sydney Schanberg (played by Sam Waterson), but that's the way of commercial films. The film convincingly and brilliantly conjures up what life must have been like for Pol Pot's victims. Socialists should see The Killing Fields.

'The Killing Fields', which has been on general release for some months, is a film about a subject which is of great importance for socialists — what was done in the name of socialism to the people of Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge regime which took over after the Americans were driven out in 1975.

For that reason it is worth a belated review here.

Of course 'The Killing Fields' is "anti-communist propaganda". The story it tells could not but damn those responsible for the horrors that engulfed the people of Cambodia after Pol Pot's Stalinist liberation army freed the country from American occupation.

The totalitarian Pol Pot regime conducted a bizarre and barbarous experiment in social engineering which decimated the people of Cambodia.

Urban

The entire urban population was ordered out of the cities, which were left to rot. Whole layers of the population were marked down for extermination — and duly exterminated. Out of a population of seven million perhaps as many as three million perished under the Khmer Rouge regime between 1975 and 1979, when the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia and drove out Pol Pot.

Guided by ideas which were a mixture of Maoist Stalinism and a Cambodian nationalism which looked to the distant past for its models, the Pol Pot regime was uniquely vicious and bizarre. But it was still an identifiable member of the Stalinist family.

In some ways it was only a speeded up and concentrated — and therefore more murderous — edition of what the Maoists did in China, where — it is now officially admitted — many millions perished in Mao's so-called "Great Leap Forward" and the "cultural Revolution".

Centrally it had in common with the other Stalinist states a totalitarian Party-state against which the atomised population was helpless, unable to defend itself against anything the small ruling elite decided to try to do. What Pol Pot tried to do was unique; the political system which allowed him to do it, wasn't.

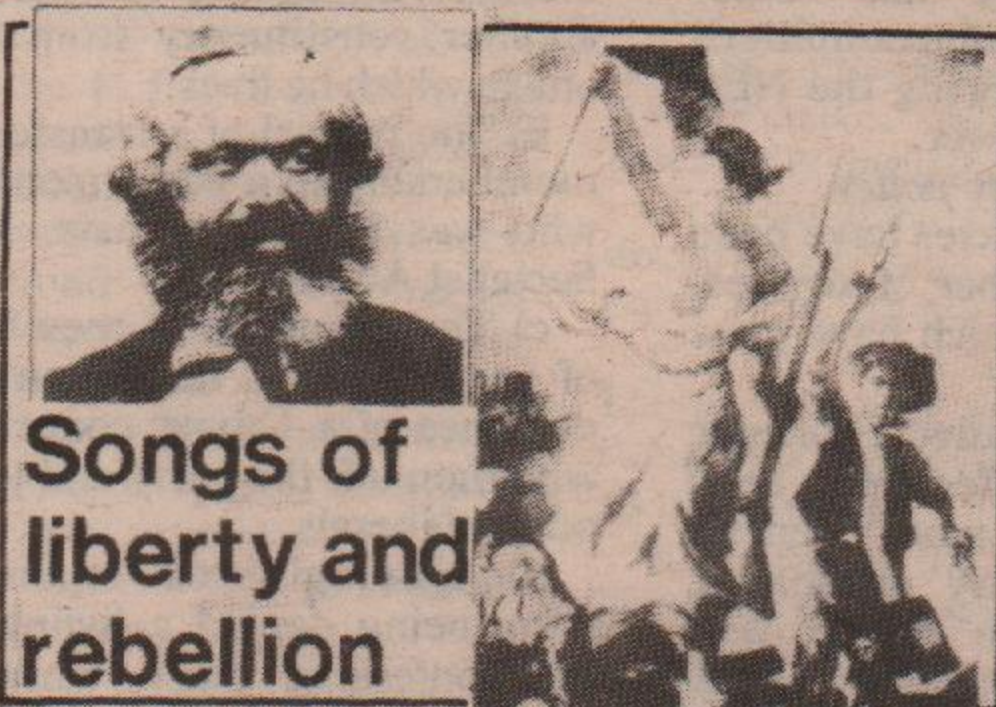
USA

Of course the USA bears much of the responsibility for what happened in Cambodia. Their wanton, almost casual 1970 decision to flatten Cambodia created the conditions which bred the Khmer Rouge. It was the Americans who first started to de-urbanise Cambodia from the air. Today, Britain and the USA continue to recognise and support the remnant of the Khmer Rouge regime, still led by Pol Pot, because it is making war on the Vietnamese. But imperialism is imperialism; the Cambodian regime of "The Asian Hitler" Pol Pot called itself Communist and socialist.

The lesson for the left from Cambodia and also from Mao's China, about which large segments of the left were for long starry-eyed, suspending disbelief in face of preposterous claims, is this: never again to give credence to any police state "Socialist" regime, nor to confuse solidarity against imperialism with states ruled by Stalin-



Haing Ngor as Dith Pran



Black people arrived on the American continent in chains. Black slavery was legally abolished only in 1863. It was 1865 before Abraham Lincoln's Union Army, victorious in a four year civil war which killed a million people, actually freed the last enslaved blacks. For decades before the Civil War, radical Americans agitated and campaigned against slavery. One of these was William Lloyd Garrison.

After a short spell in jail for an outspoken attack on certain named slaveowners — he said they were "enemies of their own species — highway-robbers and murderers" — Garrison founded 'The Liberator' in January 1830. For 35 years 'The Liberator' championed the blacks, being wound up only in 1865 when there were no more chattel slaves in the USA.

God speed the year of jubilee,
The wide world o'er!
When, from their galling chains set free,
The oppressed shall vily bend the knee
And wear the yoke of tyranny,
Like brutes, no more:—
That year will come, and Freedom's reign
To man his plundered rights again
Restore.

God speed the day when human blood
Shall cease to flow!
In every clime be understood
The claims of Human Brotherhood,
And each return for evil, good—
Not blow for blow:—
That day will come, all feuds to end,
And change into a faithful friend
Each foe.

God speed the hour, the glorious hour,
When none on earth
Shall exercise a lordly power,
Nor in a tyrant's presence cower,
But all to Manhood's stature tower,
By equal birth!
That hour will come, to each, to all,
And from his prison-house the thrall
Go forth.

Until that year, day, hour arrive,—
If life be given:—
With head and heart and hand I'll strive
To break the rod, and rend the gyve,
The spoiler of his prey deprive.—
So witness heaven!
And never from my chosen post,
Whate'er the peril or the cost,
Be driven.

Socialist Organiser

Free the pit strike prisoners!

ROMAN armies in ancient times were sometimes subjected to a savage punishment.

For cowardice or mutiny one man in ten was taken out for execution. That is where we get the word 'decimated' from.

Beaten mutineers would stand by while their comrades and leaders were made an example of.

Isn't it something like that which is happening now to the miners who 'mutinied' against Thatcher and MacGregor?

Many hundreds of miners have been sacked and jailed. Two miners have been given life sentences.

Yet the labour movement and especially the leaders of the labour movement, remain impassive and inactive as miners continue to suffer the martyrdom of jail or the soul-eroding routine of life on the dole and no hope of a job.

The labour movement must defend the sacked and jailed miners. We must demand of leaders like Kin-

nock and Willis that they support the call for an NCB amnesty, the release of jailed miners, and an end to court cases arising out of the miners' strike.

Demo

Called by NOMPAS.
(National Organisation of Miners in Prison and Supporters).
Assemble: 2.00 p.m. at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park.
Nearest Tube: Marble Arch.

Scots victims

AT the Scottish Miners' Gala, to be held in Edinburgh this Saturday (June 8), there will be no shortage of platform speakers at the rally condemning the vindictive attitude of the Tories and the NCB towards miners both during and after their strike.

Such speeches will be in marked contrast to the complete lack of any systematic labour movement-based campaigning in Scotland in support of victimised miners.

The Labour Party Scottish Conference, held at the beginning of March, passed a resolution pledging "full support for the campaign to ensure reinstatement of all men victimised by dismissal during the strike".

But the resolution has remained a dead letter.

In April, this year's Congress of the Scottish TUC demanded "the re-engagement of all victimised miners" and pledged "full support for a day of activity expressing the solidarity of the Scottish people with the miners".

But this too has not meant anything in practice. The "day of activity" (whatever one of those is) is yet to materialise.

In any case, the STUC is undermining its own nominal commitment to the demand for reinstatement of all sacked miners by backing a petition calling for

each case of victimisation to be judged individually. Resolutions calling for wholesale reinstatement have, therefore, easily been countered by right wingers pointing to the "official STUC position" of judging each case on its merits.

Worst of all is the record of the Scottish NUM leadership, given the obligation on them to give a lead in the campaign in support of victimised miners.

Like the Scottish TUC, it has simultaneously put forward the contradictory demands for reinstatement of all sacked miners and for judging each case individually. It has maintained a stony silence about the imprisonment of Solsgirth NUM member Brian Millar. And it has done nothing to help Scottish miners currently on trial for alleged incidents during the mass picketing of Orgreave.

The victims of this situation are, of course, the victimised miners themselves. Financially, they are worse off than ever, as fund-raising activities die away in tandem with campaigning in general. Their morale suffers as the labour movement continues to turn its back on them. And the NUM's advice to them to sign on the dole has been greeted with bewilderment and anger.

The sacked miners have fallen foul of multiple victimisation.

*They are the victims of the Tories' and the NCB's strategy of rooting the militants out of the coal industry (and not just the militants either).

*They are victims of the Kinnockite Labour Party Scottish Council's concern to preen itself for the general election - in three years time - by plucking out and discarding what it judges to be unpopular issues.

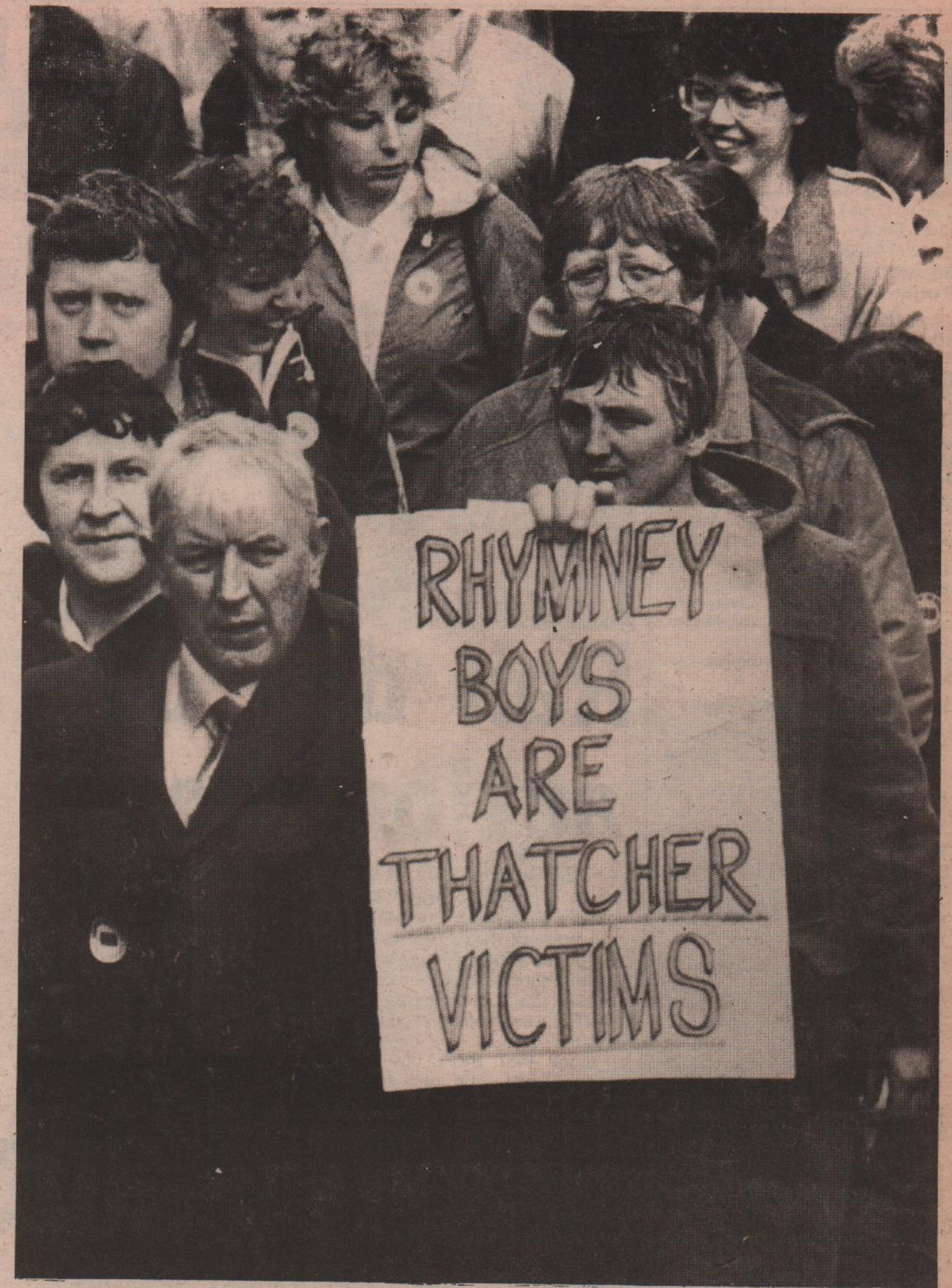
*They are victims of the Eurocommunist-dominated leadership of the Scottish NUM and STUC, which seeks to substitute ineffectual if heart-rending appeals to "public opinion" for serious labour movement campaigning.

Continued from page 1

board and lodging entitlement to between two and eight weeks, thus forcing young people back to their parents' homes).

*Students' right to claim benefit during the summer to be abolished.

Claimants could be excused for thinking that Fowler's proposals are motivated purely by malice and vindictiveness. In fact, the reviews are part and parcel of the government's strategy for driving down wage levels,



Cardiff demonstration in support of Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland. Photo: John Harris.

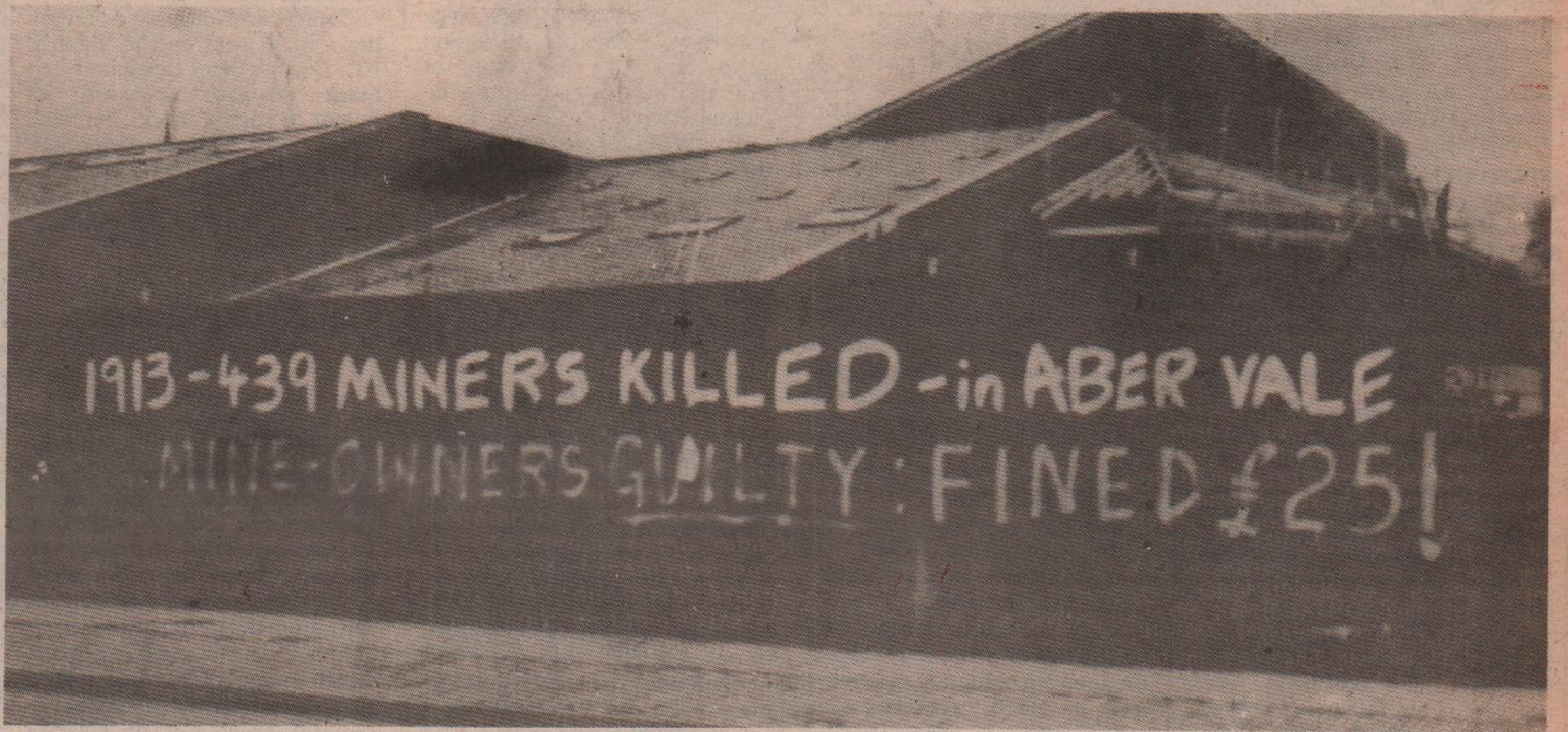


Photo: Yorkshire Miner.

Robbing the poor

removing legal "restrictions" from employers and forcing the unemployed into low-paid jobs offered by cowboy bosses or onto Manpower Services Commission schemes like YTS.

It is no coincidence that the Green Paper follows hard on the heels of proposals to erode employment protection legislation and abolish the Wages Councils which give very limited protection to certain categories of workers earning around £35-£40 a week.

The other major effect of Fowler's proposals will inevitably be worse conditions,

greater pressure and fewer jobs for DHSS workers.

As a result, in a number of areas, CPSA and SCPS members have united with claimants to campaign against the government's plans.

"Action for Benefits" (initiated by the SCPS), and the "National Campaign Against Social Security Cuts" have already done some worthwhile work in bringing DHSS staff and claimants together to plan for action.

The immediate task is to expose the Tories' plans and to organise for defence of the

Welfare State amongst all workers. But we need to go further: the one grain of truth in Fowler's case is that the present benefits system is a bureaucratic and confusing maze of obscure rules and regulations as far as most claimants are concerned.

The labour movement needs to develop its own proposals for a fairer, simplified system that can be readily understood by all claimants, based on the concept of a national minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average wage.



Join the Labour Party.
Write to: The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.
Subscription is £8 per year, £2 unwaged, 50p OAPs.