



BACK BENN AND HEFFER!

**Fight the
Tories!
Rebuild
the Left!**



Fight the Tories — unite the left!

The left needs a coherent political challenge to Kinnock and Hattersley, avoiding the mistakes of the past ten years. We need to point the way for socialism into the 1990s.

Socialism is based above all on the struggle of working class people. Socialism can only be made by the working class taking hold of power and remaking society, destroying the vested interests that run Britain and establishing democratic economic planning. *Workers' control* in the workplace and in society is at the heart of socialism.

So we need to make it clear that no government can create socialism from above, and the fight for socialism is much more than a question of electing the right number of Tony Benns.

It depends therefore on supporting the everyday struggles of working class people. A socialist Labour Party is one that throws everything it has into supporting and winning miners' strikes, NHS disputes, struggles to defend local democracy and funding. It is one that is as clearly and unambiguously on the side of the working class and the poor as Thatcher is on the side of the ruling class and the rich. And it fights for the working class *now*, with every weapon it has. It doesn't just make promises for the future, it acts in the present.

Capitalism is an international system, and becomes more international, in a sense, all the time. A financial crisis in Wall Street has immediate international repercussions; a crisis in Latin America

could have consequences elsewhere; every part of the world is linked in a thousand ways to every other part.

So no country can 'go it alone'. There is no socialist way out in isolation from the capitalist world market, and it is suicide to look for one. Socialism has to be *international* as international as capitalism is.

And for international socialism to be possible, socialists need to build international working class unity. We need to fight for solidarity with workers in other countries and begin to construct the organisational sinews that can make solidarity effective.

And we need to fight against all those ideas which hold back workers' unity. The enemy of British workers is the British ruling class and other ruling classes, not foreign workers. Controlling imports and other measures designed to create an 'island economy' in Britain won't work, and will divide workers.

Socialists also need to recognise that it was always futile and misguided to oppose British membership of the EEC. Hiving Britain off from Europe is no answer to anything. What we need to fight for is a united, socialist Europe. Pulling Britain out of the EEC won't help achieve that, and could even *limit* the prospects for developing unity with other European socialists. That doesn't mean giving support to the EEC; it means recognising that British withdrawal is a blind alley.

At the same time we have to oppose all manifestations of imperialist militarism, and in particular NATO. As well as a commitment to scrap nuclear weapons,

Labour should withdraw Britain from NATO.

That kind of commitment has to be combined with the defence of people under attack from imperialism, like the people of Nicaragua and elsewhere in Central America.

And the left needs to show that it doesn't share the Tories' double standards. We oppose the imperialism of the United States and their British allies, and we equally oppose the brutal dictators in the Kremlin. We are for Russian troops to get out of Afghanistan, and for the right of all nations in the USSR and Eastern Europe to self-determination. We stand four square with the workers' movements of the 'eastern bloc', like Solidarity in Poland.

Socialists have to be consistent democrats when dealing with national conflicts. We must condemn the brutal repression being dished out by Israel to the Palestinians and demand the right of the Palestinians to a state. At the same time we shouldn't deny national rights to the Israeli Jews.

Similarly, when we support the struggle of the Northern Irish Catholics for a united Ireland, we shouldn't disregard the Protestants. They should have the right to autonomy within a united Ireland; and indeed, until a significant group of Protestants can be persuaded to live in it, a united Ireland will be impossible. The left must call for troops out of Ireland, and combine the call with a proposal for a federal united Ireland.

Along with British nationalism we have to fight racism, another poison that helps to divide workers and make the Tories' job easier. We need to oppose immigration controls. And we need to make sure that the labour movement at rank and file level is ready and willing to defend black people under attack, both politically and physically.

The Labour Party is committed to a Ministry for Women. The left needs to ensure that this isn't just another token gesture, and that the labour movement fights vigorously for women's rights.

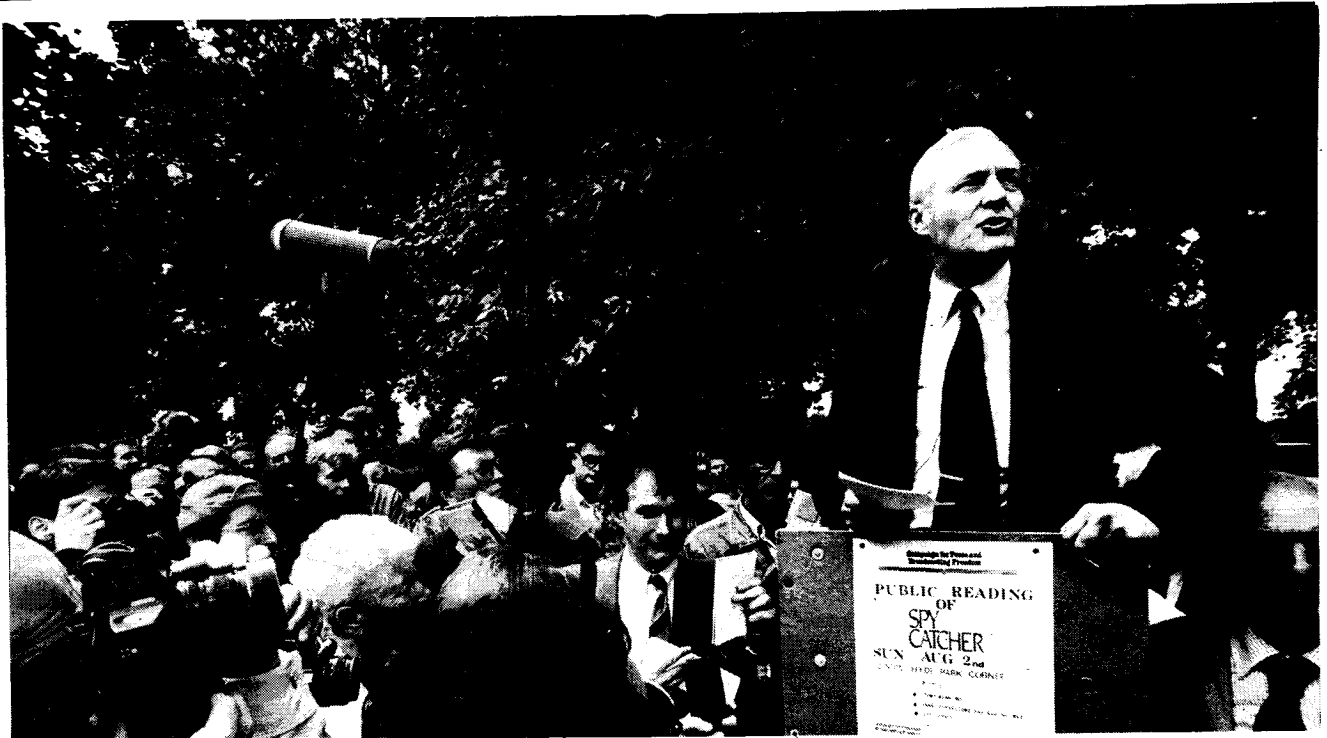
We have to make sure that the Labour Party never repeats the scandalous support initially given by the front bench to Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill. The left must be for the defence of lesbian and gay rights.

All of these issues have to be integrated into a strategy that looks to working class people as the agent for change, and which depends upon open debate within the labour movement, in conditions of the greatest possible democracy. We don't want to replace one leadership that is meant to be beyond criticism with another. We want accountability and respect for the freedom of speech of those with different views. Socialism will be far more democratic than the present system, and for it to be possible, the labour movement also needs to be fully democratic.

Socialist Organiser exists in the labour movement to fight for these politics. This special pamphlet issue is a contribution to the discussion.



A BATTLE FOR THE SOUL OF LABOUR



What is the Benn-Heffer bid for leadership of the Labour Party about?

It is about fighting the Tories.

For years the leaders of the labour movement have failed to mobilise our forces for a serious fight back against Thatcher. Because Kinnock and Hattersley won't fight, they must be pushed aside to make way for those who will — Benn and Heffer.

There is now in British politics a whole series of big political issues around which it would be possible for a serious leadership of the labour movement to organise a powerful crusade to drive the Tories from office. The biggest indictment of the Kinnock-Hattersley 'leadership' lies in the fact that they have failed to seize on those issues and use them.

Registration for the poll tax is now under way in Scotland. About half the population of Britain — including many Tory voters — say they would support a campaign of refusing to pay this tax.

Despite the attempts by union leaders to let the campaign peter out after 14 March,

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Why we are standing

By Tony Benn

We have already put out the Aims and Objectives of the campaign.

A crisis of representation is developing in Britain as party politics are being realised from the top towards a general acceptance of things as they are, denying the existence of any alternative.

Mrs Thatcher has set out to really re-establish the Tory Party in her own image — harsh, repressive, unjust, centralising and strengthening the power of the state to silence and crush all dissent and destroy all opposition.

Meanwhile a succession of Labour leaders beginning with Gaitskell have tried to change the nature of the Labour Party by weakening its links with the unions and diluting its socialism, in an unsuccessful attempt to win the middle ground. This process is now being advanced again in the name of the 'new realism'. But, in fact, the middle ground of British politics has virtually disappeared with the collapse of the Liberal-SDP Alliance and the dissolution of the Liberal Party as it has merged with the old Labour right and has split again.

These developments have been hailed as marking the death of socialism. Actually they have created a huge vacuum in British politics filled by sterile arguments about which in-

dividuals can best run the status quo.

Democracy itself is being undermined and destroyed as the Establishment sets out to impose a new tyranny of the powerful against all its critics, creating a crisis of representation leaving millions of people without a real choice of policies or any voice in deciding their own future.

What we need is a deep and serious discussion about the future and that everyone should be allowed to hear the case for peace and non-alignment, full employment, better public services, common ownership and industrial democracy, devolution and effective local government, social justice, equal rights, stronger environmental safeguards, and major reforms in the structure of the state to end secrecy and the corruption of patronage.

These are what Labour should be arguing for instead of peddling the stale old policies that led to the defeat of so many previous Labour governments.

Those are the issues on which the 1988 leadership election is going to be launched, as part of the campaign for socialism, appealing for the widest possible public support.

We are not prepared to accept that 'There Is No Alternative'. There are two TINAs really. There is the Tory TINA and the Labour TINA; and there is no alternative in effect to the views of two people.

At the moment the campaign is to identify what everybody feels and open it up, and through that gap put forward different proposals.

Look at the NUT vote today — they have turned down the executive on this £42,000 a year job for Doug McAvoy. Look at the seamen, the carworkers, the NHS —



wherever you look there is now a mood of resistance beginning to develop, but that is not reflected at the top.

Parliament is out of touch. In a way, by supporting the people who are in struggle you are giving them confidence and that will clearly encourage them to do more; in return you are hoping to provide a voice for them that has been muffled if not absent.

agitation against Health Service cuts is continuing. A poll before the Budget showed that only 6 per cent of voters wanted tax cuts rather than more money for the NHS, and some 92 per cent wanted more money for the Health Service.

Another poll showed a majority of the population supporting the striking nurses.

The Education Reform Bill is going through Parliament. A poll last June showed 55 per cent in favour of its plan for schools to opt out of local authority control. By this January, only 18 per cent supported this idea. 62 per cent were against a national written test for seven year old schoolchildren.

The huge waiting list for council housing — in many areas, the waiting list means waiting forever — are proof that the Tories' plan to cut back council housing run counter to the needs and wishes of millions. Where Tory councils have tried to push through Government policy in advance — as in Westminster, where they plan to sell off half the council's housing stock as quick as they can — they have aroused fierce opposition.

Previous Tory attempts to revive the private landlord, in the late '50s led to a mass outcry against 'Rachmanism' (profiteering slum landlords) and the ignominious end of 13 years in office for the Tories.

Clause 28/29 of the Local Government Bill, which threatens all facilities for lesbians and gays under the pretext of a ban on 'promoting homosexuality' has aroused the biggest demonstrations ever in this country for lesbian and gay rights. There is widespread opposition to the Tories' attacks on civil liberties on many other fronts.

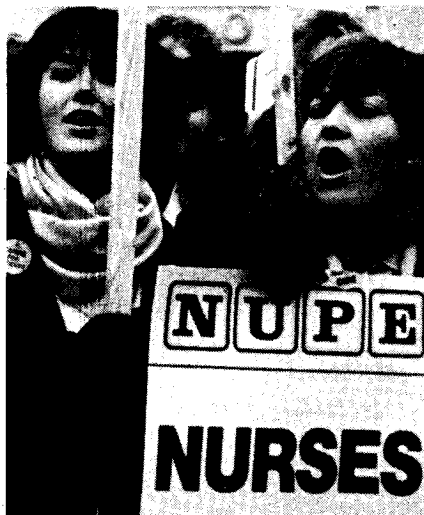
The Ford workers' victory, the

tenacious battle by the P&O seafarers, and the strikes by and in support of the health workers (effectively defying Tory anti-union laws) show that trade union power is not finished.

Strikes and trade unionism have declined. But closer analysis shows that this decline is more or less entirely a product of manufacturing business closing down or moving to new areas. In the public services, strikes and trade unionism have, on average, increased.

And the Ford strike suggests that the recent fall in unemployment, limited though it is, has put a floor under the decline of trade unionism in manufacturing industry. When companies are taking new workers on, even in small numbers rather than sacking staff, then workers feel more confident.

Much has been written and said about the ideological grip of 'Thatcherism'.



Many people on the left argue that socialist ideas in the British working class have been swamped by the tide of market economics and dog-eat-dog consumerism.

There is no hard evidence for this. Detailed opinion surveys suggest that most people's attitudes have shifted, if anything, slightly to the left during the Thatcher years. Workers' confidence has been sapped by unemployment, by successive defeats, and by the feebleness of the labour movement's leadership. That lack of confidence explains the Tories' triumphs. But it is something that can change — and change quite rapidly in the right circumstances.

There is plenty of inflammable material to raise a fire of protest against the Tories — given leadership.

That is why everyone in the labour movement who wants to fight the Tories must back Benn and Heffer.

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The height of the miners' strike. Photo: John Harris (IFL)

Rebuild the left

Since 1983 the Party has been moving increasingly to the right. There is a greater concentration of power in the hands of the leadership and the National Executive has, to a large extent, been down-graded.

Now they plan to change the character of the Party Conference, step by step, so that the Party at grassroots level will not be determining policy.

And there has been retreat after retreat. The most blatant retreat is on the Common Market. Whatever you might think about this new policy, it has never been redefined and discussed by Party Conference — the Labour Party has just been slid and manoeuvred into a total change. Changes are also being made in the Party's attitude to public ownership, the nuclear bomb and a whole series of other issues.

It is time that this was changed. The drift away from basic socialist policies must be reversed.

It's all very well saying we want a nice friendly discussion in the Party. Certainly, we want a friendly discussion. But the Campaign Group felt that the best way to do it was to concretise it, to spotlight the political issues by a contest for the Leader

By Eric Heffer

and the Deputy Leader.

Now the so-called 'soft left' and the centre have got to make their minds up. Are they really left wing? Do they want the Labour Party to be a socialist party which goes out and fights for working class politics? Or have they now abandoned all socialist ideas?

We are standing on a programme defined by the Campaign Group. It contains a number of important points. We want:

- *an extension of public ownership.
- *the restoration and development of the rights of the trade unions.
- *All out opposition to racism.
- *Greater democracy; the abolition of the House of Lords.
- *A restoration of local democracy and an extension of local authority rights.
- *Women to have genuine equality.
- *The labour movement has got to support all those who are underdogs in one way or another, or who, like lesbians and gays, are being persecuted.
- *A different international policy — one of 'realignment' and getting out of NATO.
- *The abolition of all nuclear weapons.

*A move away from nuclear power so that nuclear weapons cannot be restarted again.

*We think Labour must have a much more realistic attitude towards Eastern Europe. At the same time, of course, we defend the democratic rights of all the people in Eastern Europe. We oppose dictatorship in Chile and in other parts of the world. We fight on behalf of those who are fighting for their liberation.

These are the issues we believe we have got to go out and fight for in the course of this campaign.

Why a contest now? Much of what I have been describing is not new. They have been going on for a long time and some comrades and I myself have spoken out against them.

As with everything else, you have to take tactical considerations into account.

If we had stood before the general election, and the election had then been lost, they would have said Labour lost because the left-wing Campaign Group put up candidates. We didn't. It was not because of us that the election was lost. In fact, most Campaign Group members increased their votes.

The election was in June. If we had put up a candidate immediately afterwards

there would not have been time for proper consideration and organisation of a campaign before last year's October conference.

This year is the right time. There are three, perhaps four years before the next election, so there is not much mileage in accusations of rocking the boat — although of course they will still accuse us of it. But people know that there have been elections in the past. Wilson challenged Gaitskell. Nye Bevan challenged different people at different times. In fact, if you look at the record you find a challenge to the leadership on average about once every three or four years.

I cannot understand why the present leadership has reacted so heatedly to the fact of this election.

This is the year when it is important to begin. Maybe next year there will be another campaign, and maybe there will be different left candidates. This year we begin to break the logjam. It is raising the whole question of the leadership and the fact of a contest is making all sorts of people face up to defining their attitudes to what is going on in the Labour Party.

Many predict that we are unlikely to get more than 25% of the vote. Obviously we are out to win, but we are concerned with other things as well.

The campaign can help organise the left, all different sections of the left, throughout the Party, into a more cohesive political grouping, which recognises that we have more in common with each other than we have differences. If they believe in socialism they will work together. That will be a really important spin-off from the campaign.

The campaign will also help to mobilise and hearten many people who have voted Labour in the past — good socialists who are getting a bit disillusioned. Nye Bevan's campaign in the 1950s helped to keep millions of workers in the Labour Party at the very moment when they were getting pretty fed up with things. They felt that here were the basic, compassionate views of the Labour Party coming up again, expressed again, and that serious people were organising again to fight for them. That will happen this time, too.

I went to Bristol to do a housing meeting on Friday evening. Going down in the train people — strangers — were coming up to me saying they thought it was quite right to stand. Then at the meeting itself, although I never raised the question because I was there to speak about housing, people came up and said the decision was good. Then, coming back again on the less crowded train, people were still coming up to me — not all Labour Party members — saying that it was absolutely the right thing to do, that it was about time it was done. Those who say that we do not represent anything are in for a big surprise.

Now the Campaign Group should set about organising the campaign, both nationally and locally. What should we do?

We are going to have to produce publications explaining our aims and objectives, and get them to all the CLPs. I think there should be a series of rallies in the main centres throughout the country. At these rallies we should involve the local parties and the local supporting groups. Those who come to the rallies can then be our supporters in their own localities.

I think we will have the time to cover most of the urban centres, and then people can come in from outside to hear what we have to say.

I hope this will give a boost to the book I wrote. Tony Benn goes on about it being our bible in this situation because he says the book says it all. That can be well used. We will also have to think in terms of a pamphlet. And the Campaign News will have to be effectively used.

In the 1981 Deputy Leadership campaign there were a lot of big rallies. In places they were comparable to the rallies witnessed in the 1945 general election. But there was a problem with the trade unions and the unions were decisive.

What we should aim at is to try to get proper discussions in every trade union so that the issues are fully debated. What are the issues in the unions?

*The attitude that the Party must have to trade union legislation.

*Where the Labour Party stands on the struggles of workers in industry, in the National Health Service, the miners, the seafarers.

*What the Party should say to the — disgraceful — attempt to get a low-paid agreement by one union from Ford management.

All these matters can be properly debated. We will develop the campaign in



the constituencies and then alongside it, and as part of it, we will campaign in the trade unions.

It seems likely that a number of trade unions, and also CLPs, will have an individual membership ballot to determine their attitude in the election.

I have never been against individual membership ballots. But if they are going to be held then our views have to be properly circulated as well as other people's views. An equal number of words in a union journal, or views circulated to all their members. I think that would be a good thing. Representatives of both sides should speak at union conferences.

I stood in the leadership election in 1983 as the left candidate, when many on the left had big illusions in Neil Kinnock. The situation is different but there are some lessons to be learned.

We had a rather ramshackle campaign. A lot of people — like Socialist Organiser — rallied and did what they could. But there was no real financial backing. I think financial backing should come from the party itself. It should not be left to the candidates to finance the campaign, because people without money have as much right to stand as people with a machine behind them. I raised this myself

after the 1983 campaign but it got 'lost'. So we are still in the same situation today.

What ought to be done this time is we should have more than a national group meeting and working on the campaign. **We need people in each main urban area working together as a team, forming a support group. That is one of the main lessons I would learn.**

We need support groups in different unions as well, although union members will be connected with what is happening in each area. Perhaps the Broad Lefts in each union can play a role. I hope they will be supporting us, and I am sure that in most cases they will.

The initial reaction to the announcement that Tony and I would be standing was surprising. I do not think people should react in that way. We have the rules; we are entitled to contest. If you are the leader, you should simply say: they are entitled to do so and it will be a choice between their views and ours. Unfortunately it did not come over like that. Now they are talking about the ideological debate, and that, of course, is right.

This is the point at which the left begins to reorganise itself and starts to rally. I made the point at the time of the Chesterfield Conference that the left needs to do more than just sit around talking about things. I floated the idea of going back to the old Socialist League type-organisation which had existed during the 1930s.

Out of this should emerge something of that kind. Because even if we are defeated in this election, they will not defeat socialism. You cannot wipe it away. Even in countries where the right wing have got firm control of the party — in Germany, Italy and so on — they have not got rid of socialism. Maybe for a period it is in retreat. But the very concept of socialism, of workers' struggle, cannot just be swept aside. As long as capitalism is there the working class will be there and so will socialism.

That is my reply to the kind of statement now being put out by Kinnock and Hattersley, that a victory by them will put the Party's seal of approval on their kind of politics for a very long time, and finally decide which direction the Party is going to take.

Certainly, this is a very serious debate about the future of the Party, and the direction in which it is going.

If they do win, then I trust they will not talk in terms of people having to 'toe the line'. If it comes to that you are no longer a democratic socialist party. We are not going to accept that. Win or lose, it will not stop the arguments, the discussions, socialist ideas. There has always been constant discussion within the Party — that is the essence of socialist politics, socialist democracy.

I was chucked out of the Communist Party over 40 odd years ago for not agreeing to that sort of thing. I have always thought that one of the great things about the Labour Party, for all its faults, has been that in general there has been open and frank and free discussion.

Finally, this is my message to comrades inside the Party who are heartened by the Campaign Group's decision to contest the leadership and deputy-leadership.

You should be mobilising throughout the entire labour movement — in your union branches and Labour Party wards and GMCs. Organise now to make sure we get the biggest possible vote for the socialist policies we are putting forward.

Fighting for women's rights

**By Michele Carlisle
Student organiser,
National Abortion
Campaign (in a personal
capacity)**

WOMEN SHOULD support Benn and Heffer!

Tory policies over the past nine years have severely affected the lives of women. More and more cuts in local government spending have meant job losses for women and cuts in home helps, in nursery provision, in social services generally.

Tory housing policies force local authorities to sell off council housing while women struggle to bring up kids in cramped bed and breakfast hotels run by shady profiteers or in squalid, run-down private rented housing.

The new Income Support system means that the poorest in society — single women with kids — will lose out.

So what is the record of Kinnock and Hattersley? What has the Labour Party under their leadership done to put forward a real alternative?

They have refused to support healthworkers' strikes in defence of the NHS. That is a slap in the face for the overworked and underpaid NHS workers, and for all the women who will have to travel miles on public transport to visit kids in hospital because the local hospital has been closed.

It is a blow against all the women who will die because of inadequate cervical cancer screening, and against all the women who won't be able to get abortions on the NHS because facilities have been axed.

The Labour leaders are witch-hunting socialists in the Labour Party who join with their local communities in fighting

I welcome the fact that Benn and Heffer are standing because they will revive the old debates in the Labour Party around the question of accountability and democracy. What they will achieve will provide some form of counterweight to Kinnockism of which new people to the party will have very little knowledge, not having participated in the debates of the late '70s and early '80s.

They will open up the links with the workers taking action which in the past Neil Kinnock has failed to respond to, turning his attention to witch-hunting and ganging up against those Labour-led local authorities who have shown any fight.

*Susan Carlyle, Labour opposition councillor,
Tower Hamlets.*



cuts implemented by Labour councils.

When the notorious Clause 28 against 'promoting homosexuality' was first introduced, Kinnock's cohorts fell over themselves to outdo the Tories in their denunciations of local authority 'positive images' policies. Not a thought for the lesbian mothers whose lives are made hell worrying whether their kids will be taken away!

Not a thought for the kids of lesbians who will be subject to playground taunts of 'your mum's a lezzie', with teachers unable to do a thing to stop it without fear of losing their jobs!

Not only have the Labour leaders refused to put a three-line whip in votes on the Alton Bill, but Roy Hattersley actually *abstained* on the second reading of the Bill.

When asked by women on a FAB picket in Birmingham whether he was concerned about those women who died as a result of backstreet abortions before the 1967 Act, he replied: "That was their choice, wasn't it?"

Clearly Hattersley has not just contempt for Labour Party policy on a woman's right to abortion, but also contempt for women.

No wonder many women have little faith in the Labour Party to do anything for them. At best we get bleeding-heart speeches in Parliament, at worst stabs in the back. What we certainly do not get is a positive fighting lead.

Benn and Heffer have stated that they stand firmly on the side of working-class struggles — on the side of the health workers and of those who fight against local authority cuts. Women should support the challenge by Benn and Heffer as part of a fight to reorient the Labour party back towards those whom it is supposed to represent — the poor, the oppressed, the working class.

Four women MPs have left the Campaign Group in protest at the decision to run Benn and Heffer. Clare Short has said that it's just another macho battle.

We must say loud and clear that she is wrong. The interests we have as women in supporting a left-wing challenge to the present leadership far outweigh any quibbles about the fact that the challengers are men.

Kinnock and Hattersley have consistently scabbed on women. We deserve better. Support Benn and Heffer!

Local support committees

The campaign for Benn and Heffer needs to be organised with local support committees. This will be done under a number of titles: the network set up from the 'Socialist Conference' last year in Chesterfield; the local Campaign Groups; and the Broad Left Organising Committee in the trade unions, led by Militant. The Socialist Workers' Party also talks about organising a campaign.

Benn and Heffer will have the full weight of the trade union and Labour Party machinery ranged against them, including many of the ex-leftists who are now Kinnock's foot-soldiers in the Constituency Labour Parties. This makes it crucial for the left to unite.

In 1980-1 left unity in the Labour Party was achieved around the issue of Party democracy by the formation of a national umbrella organisation, the Rank and File Mobilising Committee. The fragmentation of the left over the last seven years means that achievement will not be easy to repeat.

Time is short, and socialists in different areas cannot wait until there is a united body at national level. In Manchester and the Wirral, Socialist Organiser supporters have already put out calls for united local campaigns.

Whether a united local campaign is organised under the name of the 'Socialist Conference', Campaign Group or simply Benn-Heffer Support Committee is unimportant, as long as it sets about the tasks of maximising the vote and taking up the arguments with the Kinnockites and the right wing.

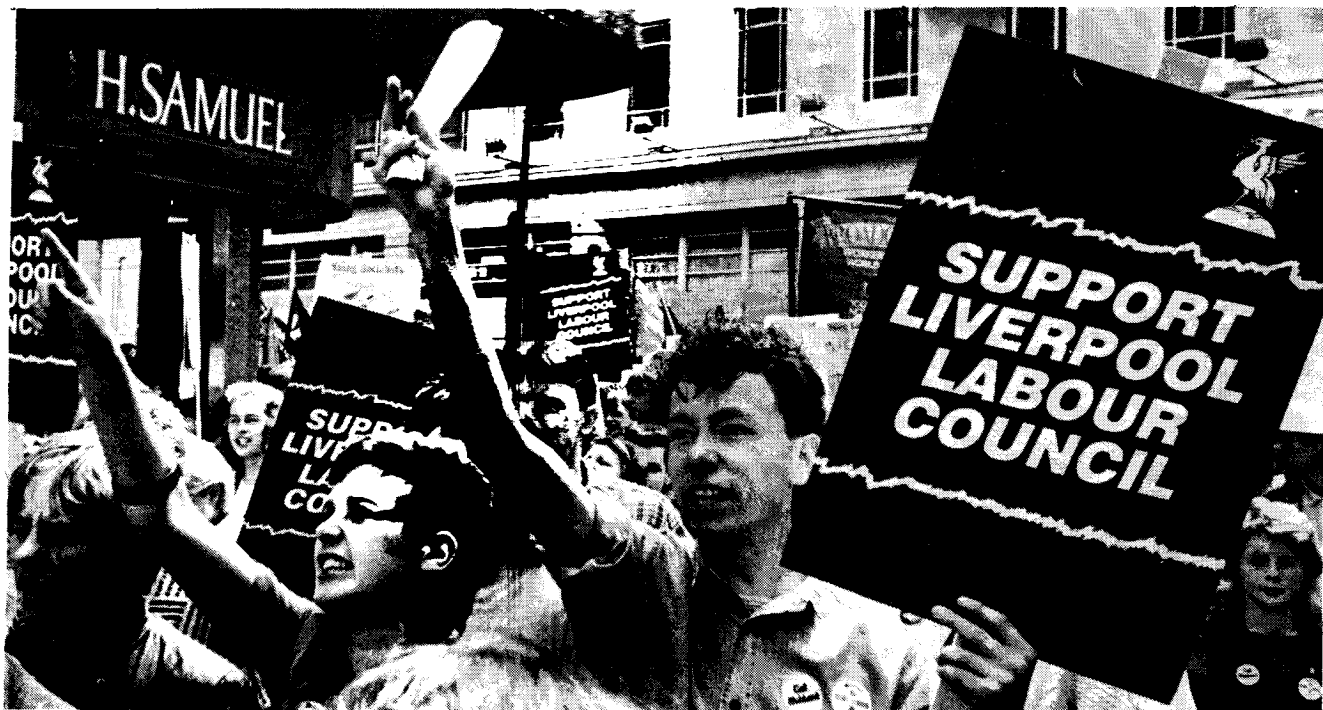
The best structure is probably an ad hoc committee with affiliations from all local groups on the left supporting Benn — Campaign Group, Briefing, Socialist Organiser, BLOC, and other Labour left caucuses and trade union groups.

Whatever they are called, the local committees must draw in everyone prepared to work for the campaign, on a democratic basis, and they must look to both sections of the labour movement, the unions and the Constituency Labour Parties.

In each area, Constituency Labour Parties should be targeted to be won over for Benn and Heffer. This means getting speakers to the wards and affiliated union branches, organising debates, maybe even starting a newsletter to keep Labour Party members informed on the issues.

We must contact the militants in each union, find out how the vote is to be taken, and work out how to take the campaign into the branches. Winning votes is important here, but so is involving the membership. A thorough debate among the membership with large, well-attended meetings, ending in a workplace ballot, is better than a vote in a closed room by a few delegates, even if the wider consultation goes against Benn and Heffer and the decision by a few might go for them.

The Benn-Heffer campaign gives us a chance to revive the left, to take political ideas and debates to new people, and to bring new energy to the fight for socialism. We must take the chance.



Liverpool council march to save jobs. Photo: John Smith, IFL

The retreat from socialism

The labour movement has retreated a long way ideologically in recent years. The new 'values document' by Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley sums it up.

Despite some amendments, and despite the face-saving device of adding Clause Four of the Labour Party constitution — calling for 'common ownership of the means of production' — to the document as an appendix, the document abandons any idea of socialism as something radically different from capitalism.

'Socialism', as defined by Kinnock and Hattersley, may have a few more utilities in public ownership than the Tories would wish - but it would not renationalise all that the Tories have privatised let alone bring new sectors into public ownership. It may have a higher level of spending on public services than the Tories would wish — but it would not even completely restore the cuts that the Tories have made since 1979.

It would try to reduce unemployment, but it would renounce any attempt at a comprehensive planned economy to guarantee decent jobs for all. It would get rid of the worst of the Tories' anti-union laws, but it would not even try to restore the balance of legal power between workers and employers to what it was in 1979, let alone go for workers' control to replace the employers.

In short, this 'socialism' would be a version of the Tories' system, only run with less ruthlessness and spite.

On 23 March Labour's National Executive defeated an amendment from Tony Benn which sought to add to the 'values document' a commitment that 'the commanding heights of the economy be brought into social ownership'.

Logic and reason show less cause than

ever for socialists to abandon or water down our opposition to the profit economy of capitalism and our support for a planned economy under workers' control. Capitalism is in terrible chaos all over the world.

In the 1950s and early 1960s Labour 'revisionists' used to argue that modern

Our constituency has already sent off a message of support because we think it is important that there is a leadership contest. Not because of the personalities of Neil Kinnock, Roy Hattersley, Tony Benn or Eric Heffer, but because we think it is important to have the arguments about the way forward for the Labour Party — whether that is going to be market forces socialism or as we believe, a working class socialist alternative. That's why I am supporting Benn and Heffer.

I will be pushing for local events to involve the full membership of the party in discussing who we will be supporting and the reasons behind that support. It is important it isn't left to personalities.

Lol Duffy, Chair, Wallasey CLP.

capitalism had purged itself of the system's inherent drive to produce slumps, create unemployment and make for poverty and inequality. The socialist aim of a free, equal, secure society could be achieved by modifying capitalism.

Nobody argues that today. The defenders of capitalism just say that stability, full employment, and equality are impossible. We 'can't afford' even to attempt them. They are utopian goals.

So it is admitted that capitalism cannot allow us to achieve our aims. Yet socialism is not even tried!

The bad experience of the Stalinist states of the USSR, Eastern Europe and China is no justification for this. These states were never socialist. Marxists explained long ago that a bureaucratic com-

mand economy, without workers' democracy, is not only brutal but inefficient and unproductive — sometimes less efficient and productive than market capitalism.

It does not follow that the old system of market capitalism already discredited for anyone who cares to study history by the decades and centuries of suffering it has imposed on humanity, should be defended! Where the bureaucrats of Eastern Europe have gone in most enthusiastically for market economics — as in Hungary and Yugoslavia — the consequences are the same as socialists have always predicted: unemployment, inflation, inequality and insecurity.

Logic and reason do not count for much with the new Labour 'revisionists'. They just reflect and rationalise a mood — the mood of demoralisation, despair and defeatism which the Tories' triumphs have created in the labour movement. The chaos, inhumanity, and brutality of capitalism has thus become a force pushing the labour movement's leaders to accept capitalism!

Whatever arguments there can be among the supporters of Tony Benn and Eric Heffer about exactly what socialism will be and how we will get there, the contest for the Labour Party leadership is undoubtedly, and above all, an attempt to put on the agenda of the labour movement the idea of **scrapping capitalism and replacing it by a new sort of society.**

That idea is the key to reviving the labour movement. It is even the key to success in workers' immediate battles on jobs, wages, and conditions — for it is the only answer to Thatcher's cry that 'There is No Alternative'.

A fight to change minds

By Jon Lansman

There is widespread disillusionment with the direction of the party. The present leadership makes continuous concessions to Thatcherism. It talks about "individual rights" in the Thatcherite sense rather than collective rights provision. It has abandoned the principles of solidarity and defence of basic trade unionism. Not just the left, but some I would consider to be on the right of the Party deplore Neil Kinnock's flirtation with Thatcherism.

CLPD supports contest

CLPD welcomes the Campaign Group's decision to contest the posts of Leader and Deputy Leader in the NEC elections and urges support for Tony Benn and Eric Heffer.

CLPD particularly welcomes the Campaign Group's intention to consider holding annual contests. There are compelling reasons to do so. The leadership today is adopting policies and establishing an internal Party regime far removed from Labour's socialist aims and democratic traditions. But for a campaign for an alternative programme to be effective it must also promote an NEC and leadership that supports it.

Regular contests for the two positions would make those holding them accountable to Conference in the same way as the other NEC members. Furthermore, annual contests will undermine the mystique which the British Constitution confers on the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition and help reduce the corrupting powers of patronage which these posts bestow.

CLPD therefore rejects decisively the present leadership's claim that contesting all NEC positions will inevitably distract the Party from its overriding task of dislodging the Tory government. In fact, offering a

In this election we are not just trying to maximise our vote. We also want to try and change the climate of opinion in the Party on the broadest possible range of issues. We want to change and shape the attitude of the Party to trade unions in struggle, like the health service dispute. We want an end to the witch-hunt.

Even if we lose on the leadership and depu-

choice of candidates for the leadership should help maintain Party unity. It would make the PLP take more notice of Conference decisions.

The way Party elections are conducted is no less crucial than the contest itself. Every effort should be made to keep mass media involvement to a minimum. The most effective way to do this is to restrict campaigning to normal Party channels. The policy issues raised by the contest should be discussed only at Party and trade union meetings and in the socialist press. The use of the capitalist media to promote candidates in these elections will merely give them the opportunity to portray Labour as a divided Party, whose claim to be an alternative government cannot be taken seriously.

Most Party members and trade unionists are only too aware of the adverse effects that public debate of internal differences has on Labour's electoral chances. Yet many MPs and leading figures, including some on the left, frequently allow themselves to be used by the media because they think they can manipulate the media to their own ends. This belief is quite mistaken. All it does in practice is to give a veneer of impartiality to biased coverage and to disguise the mass media's function of serving the status quo. So far the leadership contest is concerned, all a media-orientated campaign will do is to harm the Party, the policies the left is promoting and the future use of the electoral college.

The campaign will inevitably be misrepresented. The left must not respond in kind. Rather it should boycott the media's attempts to use Labour's internal differences as entertainment for TV viewers. If it does so it will soon become obvious to Party members that it is not the left that is bringing the Party into disrepute.

The only way that issues are going to be raised and the only way that support will be given to struggles such as the health workers is by the Campaign Group standing for Leader and Deputy Leader.

John Nicholson, ex-deputy leader, Manchester City Council.

We need somebody to speak for us, somebody who knows how we feel and is not afraid to say so. That's why I'll be supporting Benn and Heffer.

Lorraine Smith, secretary Leasowe Women's Section

The thing that I have learnt during our dispute is that there are only a few MPs like Benn and Heffer who are prepared to give full support to workers in struggle. Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley kept a discreet silence. Trade unionists should support the campaign to get a Labour leadership that knows which side it is on in the class struggle.

John Walsh, Deputy TGWU convenor, Land Rover

ty leadership, we should be aiming to make gains on the NEC and also in the unions. Even if we do not get support for Tony and Eric, then we can hope that out of the campaign we can win real concessions on issues of policy and the witch-hunt.

We will be organising fringe meetings at trade union conferences, and meetings throughout the country. But the most important thing is this, that the campaign provides an opportunity for people at a local level to organise within their own Constituency Labour Parties, in their own unions. We want local people to organise it themselves.

We will organise some meetings centrally, and obviously we will do what we can to assist people locally. But this is mainly an opportunity for people to take initiatives themselves. We want people to organise meetings in their own CLPs and, if the candidates themselves are not available, then we will try and provide Campaign Group speakers. But perhaps, rather than speakers, they will want discussion meetings.

What we want is to force discussion in every GMC and throughout the trade union movement about the direction of the Party.

We will be circulating a leaflet explaining the Aims and Objectives of the campaign to all constituency party secretaries. We will produce a leaflet for much wider circulation. There will be separate leaflets for unions, particularly those holding ballots.

We will be more sensitive than we were in 1981 to the question of media coverage. We will not debate directly with other Labour politicians on TV or radio. To get our message across we will do one-to-one interviews. There will be a lot of meetings for Labour Party members and trade union delegates only.

Both Tony and Eric have had floods of correspondence since the Campaign Group's decision to sponsor candidates was announced.

In the short-term what the campaign wants most is nominations. I think the right will be well-disciplined on this, and be quite happy to simply move Kinnock and Hattersley without any discussion. But we want discussion! There is no point to all this if we get nominations which are nodded through, involving very few people.

To ensure full discussion in ward, union and GC meetings, we would like CLPs to have full preliminary meetings before any nomination is made.

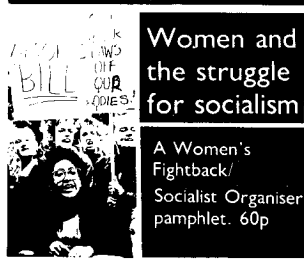
Of course, we want to maximise the vote, but we are probably less concerned with the final result at the electoral college than we were in 1981. There are likely to be very important spin-offs too — on the NEC elections, on policy questions, on the witch-hunt. We want to change the climate of opinion in the Party for the battles over the next few years.

Kinnock's outlook is no further ahead than on General Election day. He has no conception of what he is going to do afterwards. That is incredibly short-sighted. We have got to have a strategy for winning the next election; but we have also to have a strategy for delivering something after that and winning further elections. Kinnock-Hattersley don't. Benn-Heffer do.

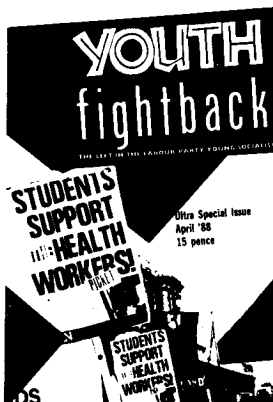
The present leadership is not following socialist policies. They pander to the press and so-called public opinion. They have ducked out on such issues as the health service. I'll be supporting Benn and Heffer because they are arguing for straightforward socialist policies and they have consistently shown their support for workers who fight back against the Tories.

Eric Smith, shop steward, Vauxhall, Ellesmere Port.

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Women's Fightback pamphlet: 60p plus 20p postage from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



Youth Fightback: 15p plus 13p postage from 33 Hackworth Point, Rainhill Way, London E3.

The platform of the campaign

The Labour Party is a democratic, socialist and internationalist party, with a membership made up of men and women, young and old, who are widely representative of all aspects of life; closely linked to the trade unions, and other affiliated organisations in pursuit of the historic role of Labour as a non-doctrinaire party of class struggle.

We work for the election of Labour candidates, in all local and national elections, on the basis of the political programmes put before the electors.

We believe that the party has a duty to defend working people and their families, and to campaign actively for policies that will help them.

This statement of our aims and objectives has been prepared to provide a focus for political discussion and education within the party; to allow those who join the party to understand the policies for which we stand; and to be the basis of our long-term political work.

WE BELIEVE:

That there should be certain rights which must be won and maintained.

- The right to life, free from fear, oppression, ignorance, preventable ill-health or poverty.

- The right to useful and satisfying work, balanced with leisure, to meet the needs of society.

- The right of everyone to receive an income sufficient to maintain a decent standard of living.

- The right to a good home for all in which to live, bring up children and care for all dependents.

- The right to receive the best possible medical care, free, and at the moment of need.

- The right of access, throughout life, to the full range of human knowledge, through education at school, in college and afterwards.

- The right to mass media which provide accurate news, free from bias or distortion, and a diversity of views.

- The right to enjoy dignity, and a full life, in retirement in suitable accommodation, free from financial anxieties, with proper medical, and other facilities, including personal care, necessary to make that possible.

- The right to expect that any government in power will work for peace and justice, and will not provoke international conflict or hostility or divert resources from essential purposes to build up the weapons of mass destruction.

- The right to equality of treatment under just laws, free from all discrimination based upon class, sex, race, life-style or beliefs.

- The right of free speech and assembly, the entrenchment of civil liberties and human rights and the right to organise voluntary associations and free trade unions for the purpose of protecting and improving the prospects for those who belong to them, and in particular, the

right to withdraw labour as a means of securing justice.

In democracy.

- We are deeply committed to the democratic process in the political, economic, social and administrative spheres, and believe that no person should have power over others unless they are accountable to, and removable by, those over whom they exercise that power or by elected representatives of the people.

In socialism

- We are socialists because we believe that these rights cannot be fully realised in any society under capitalism, which, as in Britain now, has entrenched by law, the power of capital over labour, and subordinated human values to the demand for profit, at the expense of social justice and peace.

In internationalism

- We are an internationalist party believing that all people, everywhere are entitled to demand the same rights.

In the rights of self-determination.

- We believe that the people of every nation have the right to govern themselves and to be free from any form of colonial or imperial domination.

In solidarity

- We believe that we have a moral responsibility to defend all those who are attacked for protecting their own democratically gained rights, and with this in mind we are establishing workplace branches so that each can help others more effectively.

That conscience must be above the law.

- We assert the right of all people to follow their own conscientious beliefs even if it involves them in breaking the law; and that while there may be a legal obligation to obey the law there is no moral obligation to obey unjust laws; but we also know that those who break the law on moral grounds, may face punishment for their beliefs, and the final verdict on their actions will rest with the public and with history.

In the rights of all to their beliefs

- We believe that socialist ideas which have been evolved in this country and abroad over the centuries have given us a rich inheritance; but we do not believe that truth can be captured in any one creed to which all must subscribe under threat of expulsion or exclusion; and we respect the rights of all members of the party to hold their own views, and to organise within the party to promote them, being convinced that diversity of opinion adds strength to our cause.

In progress through collective action.

- We believe, in the light of our own experience, that the only secure basis for social progress must lie in collective action; and that those who have the privilege

of representing us, at all levels, must remain accountable for what they say and do, and that no one can demand blind obedience from us, in the name of loyalty or unity.

That we are servants of the community

- We see the Labour Party, and all its representatives, as servants of all those who live and work in Britain.

THE POLICIES WE WANT:

For Britain

- The return to full employment and the adoption of the means necessary for that purpose by, amongst other things, the common ownership, under democratic control and management, of the commanding heights of the economy, including the banks and finance houses, the land and all the companies which dominate our industrial system, and the development of new forms of social ownership.

- A shorter working week and earlier retirement.

- The establishment, as of right, of a comprehensive welfare system which will safeguard the living standards of our people.

- The elimination of all discrimination and injustice.

- The introduction of a system of taxation which will radically reduce the present gross inequalities of wealth and income.

- The provision of good housing, health and education for all, by absorbing those private facilities that might be necessary to achieve a fully comprehensive system giving real choice to all.

- The introduction of a major programme for the democratic reform of the apparatus of the state including the abolition of the House of Lords; the ending of all patronage in making major public appointments; the democratisation of the magistracy, and lay supervision of the judiciary by the introduction of assessors from all walks of life into the High Court; and the democratic control of the police by elected local authorities.

- The ending of all nuclear weapons and bases in Britain; and the phasing out of civil nuclear power in favour of coal, conservation and alternative benign sources of energy.

- The provision of cheap and safe public transport for the use of the public, to protect us from the chaos that would follow from leaving key decisions to unrestricted competition.

- The protection of the environment so that this, and future generations may enjoy it, free from pollution and exploitation for profit.

- The proper provision for a leisure and multi-cultural society.

- The protection of the animal kingdom so that this, and future generations, may enjoy the natural wild life of Britain.

- The upholding and enforcement of existing legislation relating to animal abuse, and efforts to secure the introduction of further legislation making all blood-sports illegal.

Tory daylight robbery

Nigel Lawson's budget was the latest in a long list of measures to increase inequality. Despite all the talk of tax cuts, the average person is paying more in all taxes — income tax, National Insurance, VAT, rates and so on — today than in 1978. But the rich have had big tax cuts, while the poor pay more.

A married couple on half average pay now lose 18 per cent of their income in direct taxes. In 1978 it was 16 per cent. Meanwhile, a married couple on ten times average pay have seen their tax cut from 67 per cent of income to 38 per cent. They have been given £700 a week in tax cuts!

While the maximum tax rate for the rich is now 40 per cent, the combined effect of the Tories' tax and benefit changes is that some low-paid workers will lose 96p in every pound of pay increase. What tax and National Insurance leaves them will be wiped out by loss of Housing Benefit.

Inland Revenue workers complain that they have not enough staff to chase up an estimated £4.5 billion of tax evasion. Custom and Excise, similarly short-handed, make it a rule never to pursue possible VAT fiddles if the amount involved is less than £100,000.

Meanwhile, increasing numbers of special investigators are sent to chase social security fiddling estimated at between £5 million and £135 million. £886 million of social security entitlements go unclaimed because people don't know their rights or are put off by bureaucracy.

Profits have doubled since the Tories came in, and the profit rate is higher than it has been for 20 years. Inequality of wealth and income has increased. About 42 per cent of people were worse off in 1987 than in 1979, but a small minority were much, much better off.

That is what Tory rule is all about: making the rich richer, and doing it by squeezing and beating down the poor.

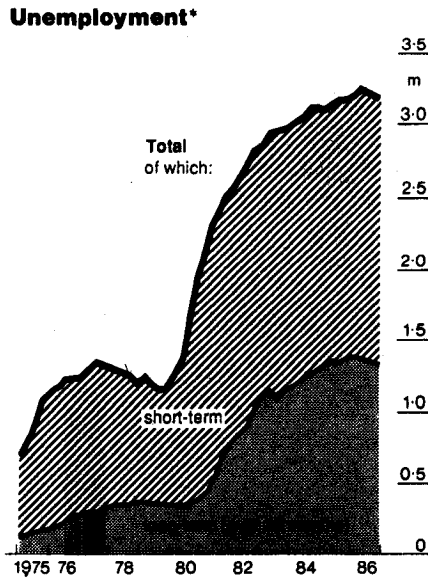
Registration begins this month in Scotland for the Poll Tax. Scots are due to pay this new tax from April 1989, and people in England and Wales from 1990. When it replaces rates, Margaret and Dennis Thatcher will save £33 a week. The average person in Labour Camden will lose over £6 a week.

The Poll Tax straightforwardly takes from the poor to give to the rich. It also threatens democracy: many people will stay off electoral registers, and forfeit the right to vote, in order to avoid being caught for Poll Tax.

From 11 April, about four million claimants will have their benefits cut under the new Tory Social Security law. Some disabled people will be up to £50 a week worse off.

16-18 year olds will lose all benefit — either they accept conscription on to YTS,

By Martin Thomas



or they get no money. There are now 413,000 young people on the Tories' cheap-labour 'training schemes'.

Public investment in housing has been cut by over half under the Tories. The number of families officially registered as homeless has risen from 57,000 in 1979 to 112,500 today. This figure grossly underestimates the real number, because single people cannot register as homeless.

25,000 families are living in hostels, mobile homes, and squalid bed-and-breakfast hotels. This figure is more than double what it was in 1980 and is rising by 20 per cent a year.

The new Housing Bill will make things worse. The Tories' avowed aim is to stop councils building any more houses, to force them to sell off what housing they have now, and to open up housing to the free market.

According to the Tory-controlled Association of District Councils, around

30 per cent of households in southern England cannot possibly buy a home because their earnings are too low — and that is getting worse, as house prices in London go up by over £60 a day. A rapidly increasing number of those who have bought houses are unable to afford to keep those houses in good repair, or are being evicted because they cannot keep up the mortgage payments.

To these people the Tories offer a return of private landlords — and private landlords who will be able to charge any rent the market will bear and to evict tenants more or less at will.

US cities show us where this Tory programme leads. In some of the world's wealthiest cities, like Los Angeles, thousands of people live on the streets, and hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers live in garages, without plumbing or heat, or in such overcrowding that several people share the same bed, sleeping in shifts.

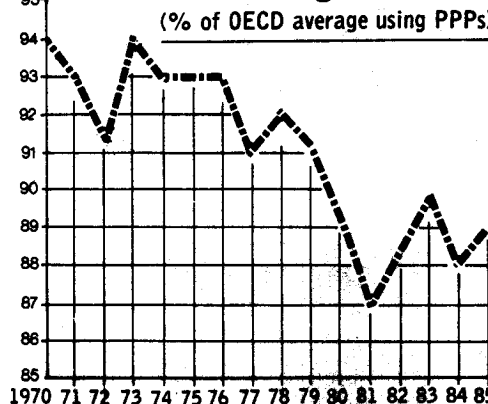
According to a Tory dominated committee of MPs, hospitals and community health have had £1.8 billion cut from them, in real terms, under the Tory Government. 161 NHS hospitals have been shut since 1979 — while 78 new private hospitals have opened. Student nurses are paid less than £60 a week; two nurses in every 5 are below the Low Pay Unit's poverty threshold.

A doctor summed it up last year by estimating that about 15 people a day die needlessly because of the NHS cuts. In fant mortality is now increasing in Britain.

While health, housing, education, and public services decay, state repression has boomed. Military spending went up 30 per cent in real terms between 1978-79 and 1985-86, and spending on police, prisons, courts etc by 41 per cent. The jails are overflowing; now the Tories plan to use army camps as extra prisons, with military police as warders.

The Tories now spend over £25 a week for each family of four on the military machine. The Trident programme will cost as much as 500 new hospitals or

Britain's living standards



300,000 council houses.

However heavy the hand of the state, it cannot keep a lid on the tensions and vices bred by despair and demoralisation. In 1980 the police cleared up 40 per cent of crimes reported to them; in 1987, only 33 per cent.

The Tories' battle cry is free enterprise — everyone for themselves, dog-eat-dog, nothing counts except cash in the hand. This is freedom, so the Tories say, because it means allowing people to spend their money themselves rather than having a bureaucrat to spend it for them, rolling back the frontiers of the state.

Far from it! When the spirit of grab-all-you-can is unleashed, more heavy-handed state power is imposed so as to keep orderly conditions for profit-making.

Trade union rights have been whittled away, so that today British trade unionists are more hamstrung by the law than workers anywhere else in western Europe. The courts have just banned the seafarers' union from even balloting its members over strike action across the ferry companies.

The judge ruled that such strike action would be unlawful 'secondary' action, and therefore the ballot was unlawful too: but the boss of Sealink Ferries had already declared that his company will demand exactly the same sort of job cuts and speed-ups that P&O manages to win! It is legal for the ferry companies to plan a concerted offensive against the union, as they prepare for competition with the Channel Tunnel; but illegal for the union to try to organise any concerted fight back!

The Tories are ramming through a clause in the Local Government Bill which will make illegal any support by councils for 'promoting homosexuality'. This could outlaw local lesbian and gay centres, unbiased sex education in schools, or even libraries stocking books which portray gay and lesbian characters positively.

The Tories also plan a law which will effectively ban from TV anything that Mary Whitehouse finds offensive.

The secret police, MI5, have been exposed as tapping the phones of peace campaigners and trade unionists, vetting people who apply for BBC jobs, and conspiring against Labour governments. So what do the Tories do? Tighten the screws, bat down the hatches.

They are still trying to stop ex-spy Peter Wright from publishing his memoirs.

When the BBC made a TV series on 'The Secret Society', the police raided BBC offices and seized the films. Civil servants Clive Ponting and Sarah Tisdall have been prosecuted for revealing information which embarrassed the Tories.

The Tories' Police Act gives the police huge stop-and search powers. Their Public Order Act extends the powers of the police to pick up whom they wish from demonstrations and pickets. The police can set the time, place, and maximum numbers for any march or picket. New catch-all offences of 'disorderly con-

According to civil servants, £19 billion is needed to put local authorities' housing stock in good repair. An official report estimates that £2 billion is needed for hospital maintenance, and that upkeep of school buildings is running 40 per cent short of what's needed. Public transport, roads, sewers, libraries — all have been left to decay.

Most of the new jobs that have been created under the Tories are part-time, casual, or temporary, and non-union and low-paid.

Privatisation is part of the policy of boosting profits and squeezing the working class. The Telecom sell-off allowed many middle-class people and some better-off workers to pocket a few hundred pounds easy gain; but since then Telecom charges have been sharply increased for ordinary households, and reduced for big business.

In the Health Service, standards of cleaning and other services have been dangerously cut back by privatisation, and cleaners and ancillary workers have worse pay and conditions.

Britain's Tory government played a leading role in persuading the EEC to restrict food aid to Africa. It has cut Britain's aid budget, so that now Britain spends on aid in one year only as much as the military budget for three weeks — though much of the aid consists of arrangements to sell British goods on easy terms to Third World countries, and bring back a great deal in profit.

That miserable aid is completely swamped by the 'aid' flowing from the starving people of the Third World to the rich bankers of the City, in interest on international loans.

Dog-eat-dog Toryism encourages racism. When unemployment was low, it was equally low for black workers: the same rate, 4 per cent, for black and white in 1974. Now unemployment is twice as high for black people as for white.

A major cause of this is racial discrimination by employers. Researchers put in sample job applications in Leicester, and found that 42 per cent of whites were offered jobs, but only 11 per cent of similarly-qualified blacks.

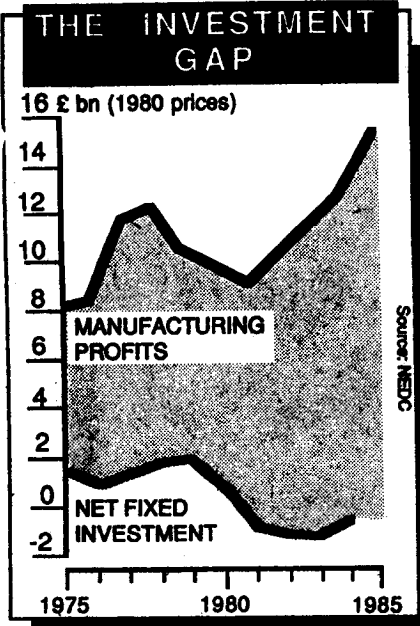
37 per cent of West Indian and Pakistani men aged 16 to 24 are out of work.

The Tories have further tightend Britain's racist immigration controls with their Nationality Act, and they have increased deportation — to 780 in 1987.

The Tories offer a Britain where all spirit of solidarity is broken; where each pursues his or her fortune, as best they can, and devil take the hindmost; and where a gang of profit-gougers, speculators and exploiters lord it over a crushed working class.

The current Labour leadership has not responded as we need to. It has argued that large parts of the Tories' programme — cuts, privatisation, restoration of market forces, anti-union laws — must be accepted. It has 'fought' the Tories mainly by trivial and quibbling Parliamentary point-scoring.

We need something better.



duct' (£400 fine) and 'violent disorder' (five years in jail) have been created.

The Tories have starved education of resources, and taken away teachers' right to negotiate their own wages. Now their 'Education Reform Bill' threatens to undermine all attempts at progressive and innovative education, to harass school children with a relentless system of 'testing' and to reintroduce grammar schools by the back door ('opting out').

Unemployment is still over three million on the official method of calculation used before November 1982. There is plenty of work to be done on restoring the fabric of Britain's public services and public assets, but the Tories choose instead to direct the money to private profit.

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Militancy's last rites?

By Jim Denham

Administering the last rites to militant trade unionism (and even to the working class itself) has become a fashionable pass-time in right wing circles in recent years.

Even sections of the 'left' have taken to writing off the organised working class and looking round for new 'alliances' to defeat Thatcherism.

Meanwhile, at the top of the trade union movement defeatism is the order of the day. 'New' forms of trade unionism — no strike/single union deals, cheap holidays and even credit cards — are conjured up as the alternatives to 'old fashioned' class struggle.

But reports of the death of the class struggle are, as Mark Twain might have said, somewhat premature. The Tories have inflicted a series of important setbacks on the working class since 1979 but they have not succeeded in imposing a decisive defeat. Even the outcome of the miners' strike has not set back the industrial struggle in the way that — for instance — the defeat of the 1926 General Strike did. Union membership is down (to around 9 million compared to 12 million in 1979) but the unions remain intact and shop floor organisation is still remarkably strong.

In recent months the rank and file in the motor industry, the NHS and the Channel ferries have shown a fighting spirit that puts the cowardice and defeatism of the union 'leaders' to shame.

This resurgence of militancy shows every sign of continuing and spreading and it will further sharpen the divisions that exist within the trade union bureaucracy.

The leaders of the TGWU, COHSE, NUPE and the 'left' of the TUC are willing to put themselves at the head of rank and file struggles if only to recruit members.

Meanwhile, the leaders of the EETPU, the AEU and the TUC right are now more or less openly committed to company unionism and regard militant action from the rank and file with undisguised hostility.

The left bureaucrats, of course, are quite capable of sabotaging struggles (witness the TGWU's handling of the Ford dispute and NUPE's response to calls for a one-day general strike on 14 March) but in the face of an upsurge in struggle the lefts feel obliged to give at

The new realism has played havoc with the party in Manchester. A campaign to support Benn and Heffer along the lines of the policies we are going to need to fight the Tories is long overdue and can only strengthen us.

Pete Keenlyside, executive member, Manchester District Labour Party



Defending the NHS. Photo: S. Caballero
least some token leadership.

In this situation an open split within the TUC and even the emergence of an alternative, right wing trade union centre becomes a real possibility. Socialists would, of course, oppose any attempts of the right to split the TUC. But we should not delude ourselves that the left bureaucrats offer a qualitatively better alternative to the open class collaboration of the Hammonds and Lairds.

What is required is a new leadership based on, and accountable to, the rank and file.

Some people on the left argue that we should ignore the question of leadership and concentrate exclusively on promoting rank and file struggle at the point of production. But even generalised militancy (of the type that occurred in Britain between 1972 and 1974) is not in itself sufficient to bring about socialism. Unions are the bedrock organisations of the working class but they fight *within* capitalism, bargaining over the price of labour rather than fighting to abolish wage labour altogether.

Only a total transformation of society can guarantee and extend gains made by workers in struggle. Militant trade unionism must be combined with a political struggle for working class power

I am supporting Benn and Heffer to get the Labour Party back on the road to socialist policies. Instead of Kinnock who is attempting to outdo Thatcher with his talk about shares. While you shouldn't have any illusions in Benn and Heffer producing major changes they will begin to open up the debate and get us on the right road so that we can win people back to socialist ideas. At present with every day of the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership it becomes less of a socialist party.
Richard Moore, Vice Chair, Metropolitan South Branch NCU.

and control of society as a whole.

That is why we need to build a new leadership in the unions that will not only give wholehearted support to workers in struggle but will take those struggles to the political arena and will make them part of the fight to transform the Labour Party.



Health workers march in Nottingham, February 1988. Photo: Richard Cross.

Where they stand

Thatcher

SOCIALISM

Socialism is evil, and moreover impossible. There Is No Alternative to capitalism.

WORKERS' STRUGGLES

Out to beat down workers' struggles.

THE CITY

What's good for the City is good for Britain.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Nothing can be done except wait for a free enterprise boom to 'trickle down'.

PRIVATISATION

All for it.

ANTI-UNION LAWS

Extend them.

CUTS

Extend them.

POLL TAX

Impose it.

STATE REPRESSION

More money for the police and the armed forces. More attacks on civil liberties.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

For them.

RACISM

"Afraid that this country might be swamped by people with a different culture. People are going to react and be rather hostile" (Margaret Thatcher, January 1978).

IRELAND

Seek cooperation with Dublin through the Anglo-Irish Agreement; in the meantime, a heavy hand against the oppressed Catholic minority in Northern Ireland.

Kinnock-Hattersley

Socialism is a good idea, but either it means sugar-coated capitalism or it is impossible, or both. There Is Not Much Alternative to capitalism.

Embarrassed by workers' struggles. Voted down a Labour NEC motion to support the nurses' strikes. Plan wage controls under a new Labour government.

Roy Hattersley spends much of his time dining with bankers to try to convince them that what he thinks is good for Britain is good for the City.

Nothing can be done except increase public spending a little and hope.

Against it in principle, but renationalisation is not a priority.

Repeal a few, but leave many Tory laws standing.

Reverse some of them, slowly and cautiously.

Protest against it, but oppose any campaign of refusing to pay.

More money for conventional armaments, more support for the police. Support in principle for the Tories' attempt to silence Peter Wright. Applause for the SAS's shoot-to-kill in Gibraltar. Initial failure to oppose Clause 28/29.

Against them in principle — but try to avoid any hard commitments.

Afraid of Black Sections in the Labour Party. No campaign against immigration controls.

Support Tory policy.

Benn-Heffer

Socialism must be put on the agenda now. It means a planned economy and workers' control.

Support workers' struggles, including on the picket lines. Oppose wage controls.

Fight for public control.

A socialist planned economy and a shorter working week can make decent jobs for all.

Renationalise. Labour local authorities should fight the Tories.

Repeal the Tory laws and legislate for workers' rights.

Reverse them all.

Campaign to defy it.

Fight for democracy. Abolish the House of Lords.

Scrap them.

Scrap racist immigration controls. Support black people fighting back.

Work for a political solution through a united Ireland and British troops out.

What might have

The Tories are not invincible, and many times since 1979 there have been occasions when they could have been driven from office.

If when Thatcher was first elected the labour movement had waged a militant campaign against them, they could have been beaten. If the trade unions had refused to talk with them, and instead had thrown themselves into winning disputes and building solidarity with workers on strike, Thatcher could have been humbled.

There were big demonstrations against unemployment in 1981, but for the most part the Labour and trade union leaders ran for cover.

The steel workers posed the first major threat to the Tories. A general strike was being called for by rank-and-file militants — but the TUC refused to act.

They refused to act later, in 1982, to win the health workers dispute.

In 1984 the miners embarked on the greatest national strike in British history. But the TUC, firmly committed to the

theory of 'new realism' — do nothing in case it doesn't work — sat on their hands, even when the NUM's funds were sequestered. Neil Kinnock and the Labour Party leaders sat on the fence, and failed to throw their weight behind the strike.

So the miners were allowed to go down to a bitter defeat.

Many other workers have been left to fight alone, or sold out before a fight.

Passivity on the part of the labour movement's leaders paved the way for defeat. Defeat was seen to justify more

The Left since 1968

Sometimes, as Thatcher approaches her tenth year in office, she seems invincible. She looks immune to the kind of mass action that forced the last Tory Prime Minister, Edward Heath, to resign in 1974. What has happened to make the left, which seemed so strong in 1974, seem so weak today?

The left has played a part in making itself weak. In the late 1960s, the left in Britain was far stronger than it had been for many years, mainly as a result of the big upsurge in student radicalism in 1968. The trade union movement, too, was strong — strong enough to prevent the Labour government imposing anti-union legislation. By the early 'seventies, sections of the 'new' revolutionary left — especially the International Socialist group, which today is the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) — were able to sink some roots into the trade unions. At the time of Heath's defeat by the miners, IS had a few thousand members.

But IS believed, as the SWP still do, that it was possible to build a new political labour movement from scratch, as an alternative to the Labour Party, which they said was 'dead'. Many other socialists had similar attitudes.

The Heath government was battered throughout its period in office by industrial militancy, reaching near-general strike proportions in July 1972, and culminating in the government's downfall. Yet the political counterpart of this strength and militancy remained the Labour Party — and it was a Labour Party which in office was to prove as anti-working class as Heath had been, and was to pave the way for Thatcher.

An alternative to the dominant politics and ideology of the labour movement needed to be fought for *within* the Labour Party. Yet virtually all the left, like IS, had abandoned that arena of struggle entirely.

The strongest far-left group before '68 had been the Socialist Labour League, which had long since destroyed itself politically with the sectarian fantasy that it was already the 'alternative leadership' of the labour movement. Within the Labour Party there was, by the early

'seventies, only the Militant tendency, in practice a highly sectarian and bureaucratic group. Militant's prominence in the Labour Party Young Socialists and in Liverpool were largely also the result of the exodus of so many other socialists from Labour in that period.

It was just possible in 1983 to regard Neil Kinnock as a left-wing candidate for Leader. The last five years should have disabused everyone. This election is about renewing socialist policies and leadership and widening the appeal of socialism to millions. The only candidates that are capable of winning people to socialist ideas are Benn and Heffer. The sad truth is no one else will try.
Reg Race, former MP for Wood Green, Socialist Conference organising committee member.

The Labour Party proved that it was not dead, and was sufficiently alive to dampen down the industrial militancy of the early 'seventies. Under the Wilson and Callaghan governments, many socialists came to recognise the need to challenge the Labour Party leadership directly by fighting for democracy and accountability

within the Labour Party.

This *internal* challenge gathered strength after the Callaghan leadership lost the general election in 1979. Important changes in Labour Party rules were pushed through, giving local Parties the right to reselect or deselect MPs, and putting the election of Leader and Deputy Leader into the hands of the Party conference.

The issue of democracy was combined with issues of policy. The democracy campaign was about ensuring that there would never again be a Labour government that rode roughshod over the wishes and decisions of Party conferences; democracy was needed to ensure that governments implemented Party policy. It was because this was too much for them to stomach that the Social Democratic Party split.

The climax of the political counterpart of the democracy battle was the nearly-successful campaign to get Tony Benn elected as Deputy Leader in 1981.

Politically, the democracy movement was quite diffuse and incoherent. And this incoherence was to matter.

A lot of the Bennite left, as they rose to prominence within the radicalising



France '68

been

passivity. So the downward spiral of defeat went on.

The health workers today show it is still not too late. The labour and trade union movement could still turn the tide. But it needs to change course.

The Tories have been allowed to get away with several instalments of anti-trade union law — without serious resistance. They have been allowed to set the agenda of political debate.

The best time to stop them in their tracks would have been right at the start. But better late than never.

Labour Party, moved into the corridors of town hall power. In many local authorities, and in the Greater London Council, the left took over.

Their early intention was to use local government as a power base to mount an attack on the Tory government. But they had no clear idea how to do this, and soon were faced with political choices. Were they to be working class leaders — or benign administrators?

Without a clear perspective, the 'local government left' retreated from any confrontation with the government. Their benign administration gradually turned less benign as they had to enforce Tory cuts.

The biggest exception was Liverpool, which for a while made a brave stand. But the opportunities there were frittered away by the sectarianism and bureaucratic leadership of the Militant tendency who dominated the council.

The rise of the Kinnockite 'centre' — which today is at least as right wing as the Callaghan leadership was — thus depended on three things in particular. The political weakness of the labour movement as a whole left it unable to meet the challenge of a determined 'radical right' Tory government. Socialists in the unions were too weak to fight the demoralisation that followed Tory successes and fed into the 'new realism' of the union leaderships. Weakness on the industrial front contributed to the widespread feeling that labour needed to rebuild its credibility — by moving to the right. Kinnock matched this mood.

The 'local government' left moved to the right under the logic of its own situation. Its failures helped sow confusion and demoralisation.

And the sectarian left, like the SWP, in refusing to participate in the fight within the Labour Party, gave Kinnock a clear run, while the 'hard left' in the Labour Party was too weak and isolated to be effective. The *abstentionism* of the SWP thus aided and abetted Kinnock.

The Benn and Heffer campaign gives the left an opportunity to reorient itself, to learn the lessons of the past and to rebuild a socialist movement. A fight against Kinnockism is needed within the Labour Party. But it also needs to be a fight based on clear socialist politics.



The Wapping print dispute. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, Report.

What is socialism?

If you earn £100,000 a year, the recent Tory budget will have landed you with a nice little windfall of an extra £20,000. But if you are a single parent, as a result of changes in social security you will lose £14 a week, and according to the Tories, if you're unable to manage, your children will have to be put into care.

That's Thatcher's Britain: a paradise for profiteers and a nightmare for the poor.

The whole system is constructed to serve the rich, and in the past Labour governments have worked within the

Kinnock refused to support the health workers in order to appease the press. He should have been straight down on the nearest health workers' picket line. The leadership of the Labour Party is doing a Thatcher by concentrating power in their own hands, using witch-hunts to get rid of the opposition. The Labour Party should be about the members telling the leaders what to do, through conference and democratic discussion. Instead Kinnock is using his position to force policies through which the members don't agree with. I'll be supporting Benn and Heffer in campaigning to make the party more accountable to its members and to make it a party that supports working class people when they are fighting for a better deal rather than worrying about what the Tory press says.
Kenny Murphy, shop steward, Vauxhall, Ellesmere Port.

system as much as the Tories. It's a system based upon making money by selling on the market. Working class people's needs are ignored.

Where we have services that meet our needs, like the National Health Service, they are there only because working class people fought hard for them, and because the bosses thought it paid in the long run to provide them. If it doesn't pay any more, and if the bosses' chief political representative, the Tory government, think the labour movement is not strong enough to fight back, such services can be

taken away.

To guarantee that all our needs are met at all times, we need a completely different system — one that puts need before profit: *socialism*.

Socialism is a system of economic planning, where decisions are made by working class people themselves, in the most democratic way that can be devised. Central government finalises the economic plan only after widespread consultation and preparation.

The government would itself be subject to democratic control in a way that no government can be in capitalist society. Workers' committees will run workplaces and localities, areas, cities, regions and the country (and ultimately run things internationally). And because the economy is also under democratic control, there should be no vested interests to ignore the committees' decisions.

So socialism is quite different to the kind of system in the USSR and similar countries, where there is no democratic control, and where, indeed, workers have fewer rights than they have in Britain. Planning in the USSR is not on the basis even of mild consultation, with the result that it is utterly chaotic, and vast resources are simply wasted. The inefficiency of bureaucratic planning is part of the background to Gorbachev's reforms.

The democratic system we need is only a first step. Ultimately, once the workers have taken over society and brought it all, under their control, classes as such will disappear. All manner of radical changes in the way we run our public and private affairs will be possible. Humanity will be liberated from all the different forms of oppression it has suffered.

But socialism can only be achieved if the working class fights for it, and is politically prepared to take on and defeat the power of big business. Socialism depends upon the mass action and involvement of the working class. It can't be handed down from above. And the creation of a movement able to fight for socialism depends upon the organisation now of the committed socialist minority in the labour movement.

Beating the ce

How, when Labour is in power, do you really establish a commanding position over the Establishment which you have democratically won the right to control? We must strengthen the role of Ministers. It may be it would be better if we put committees of MPs into Departments.

You would have 15 or 20 Labour MPs in each department to keep an eye on what was going on and to maintain contact with the trade union movement, with the Parliamentary Labour Party, and with the Party outside.

A Freedom of Information Act would also tip the balance very substantially in favour of democratic control.

In the nationalised industries, you can't have elected chairmen. But I think the appointment of Ministers over nationalised industries has got merit. Because what happened to the nationalised industries under the Herbert Morrison scheme was that when they were set up, the chairman — Edwardes or Robens or Marsh or McGregor — had absolutely dictatorial powers.

The Treasury insists that they follow the economic criteria appropriate to a private enterprise, and the result is that public ownership has become in many ways an instrument for restructuring capitalism on capitalist criteria.

I am an absolutely committed believer in workers' self-management. It has always seemed to me strange that we should accept as normal that the electorate can hire and fire a Prime Minister but that workers can't hire and fire their management. The right of the workforce to control management would be one of the most significant ways of dealing with that situation.

The task of a socialist is to analyse where power really lies. The Press tells us the power lies with the 'Left-dominated National Executive Committee' and the 'trade union bosses'. That's the way the Mail, the Express or the Sun put it.

But anyone who has thought it out knows that true power in our economy

Tony Benn explained some of his ideas about socialism in a 1980 interview with Socialist Organiser

does not reside there. It still resides with the landowners and the bankers and the multinationals and the IMF and the EEC and so on.

If you try to change things, how can you beat those centres of power? To answer that, you've got to convert yourself into a different sort of analyst, and say: they've got power now, but they've got the power now because we accept that they have power. If we decide that they won't have power, then they would not be as strong as they appear to be.

In March 1974, when we were elected, the financial and business establishment was really totally demoralised by their defeat. One of the tragedies of the last Labour Government was that 18 months later, after the referendum, the morale of the Establishment had been completely re-established. But it didn't have to be re-established.

They were in a position then, even when the Labour Government had a small majority, of having to go along with whatever we asked. The trouble was we didn't ask enough. Indeed, we not only didn't ask enough — in the end as you know it became a retreat. That Government almost ended up in an alliance with the Establishment.

Although there would be difficulty, I don't believe that the British people would accept an act of sabotage by the Establishment against a clear mandate given to a Labour Government by the electors. It would be a tussle, but a tussle to be won by consent, provided, and always provided, that you have said clearly before you

start what you intend to do.

The Labour Party exists, and existed first, *outside* Parliament. The theory which is advanced by some revolutionists, that the whole Parliamentary process is inappropriate for social change, forgets the fact that the Labour Party was founded outside Parliament and it fought its way in by election.

The original idea of the LRC was the right of working people to be represented in Parliament. Despite this, some of the tendencies have developed in the last 30 years of revisionism have moved towards Edmund Burke's idea that when an MP gets there he or she then represents everybody, and the Labour Party is seen as just another pressure group. That is not acceptable. The Party is entitled to determine policy and see that those views are put forward in the House of Commons.

That is not to say that the only instrument of social change is the House of Commons, because the House of Commons is inevitably the last place which pressure for reform reaches.

Of course the transformation towards socialism by democratic means will involve changes in institutions, and I've mentioned some of them: the possibility of sending committees of MPs into ministries, the possibility of having Ministers in charge of certain operations with respect to nationalised industries and so on.

This does not lead you to the need to analyse, in greater detail than the Labour

Reviving the Left

Last month activists in Stoke South Constituency Labour Party organised a public meeting in support of the health workers.

They produced thousands of leaflets and went out and campaigned in every section of the working class. In an area with a strong tradition of a right-wing Labour Party and weak trade unionism, where there had been relatively little action by health workers, they drew 150 people.

Out of the meeting an NHS campaign committee and a regular NHS workers' bulletin have been set up.

That is the sort of activity that can revive the left. The Benn-Heffer leadership challenge provides an opening for similar campaigning activity within the labour movement.

The campaign can draw back into activity left-wingers who have become demoralised and stopped attending Labour Party meetings. It can bring militant trade unionists, especially from the Health Service, into the Labour Party. It can inspire and energise thousands of workers attracted by a

clear call for socialism.

It can begin to repeat what happened in 1979-81, when the fight for democracy in the Labour Party brought thousands of new activists into the Labour Party — activists who did not limit themselves to the internal Party battles, but also mobilised their Parties on the streets and the picket lines over issues like the 1982 health workers' struggle.

To do this, the first essential is left unity in action. Of course the left is divided on many issues. There is nothing wrong with that as long as we can agree to work together loyally and democratically where we have common ground, and to debate the differences honestly.

The 1984-5 miners' strike pushed the left into unity. Different groupings and papers on the left had different ideas about how the strike should go. But we were all able to work together in the miners' support committees. By doing so we were able to help the miners, and to draw thousands of new people into left-wing political activity. That should be a model.



True power lies with the rich

Centres of power



Benn is elected in Chesterfield. Photo: John Harris.

Party has done for a very long time, what are the necessary steps for the democratic transformation of society. I don't think you would win without having a broad socialist perspective. If you did then inevitably you would be drawn into being a management team of a system whose criteria you didn't accept and end up with another confrontation with the people who put you there, which is what's happened time and again: 1970, 1979 and so on.

We have got to the point where capitalism cannot function with strong trade unions and the democratic process. We are stuck in this impasse. Unless Labour is prepared to take the initiative and move towards a transformational strategy, it will be destined to get elected

As the political wing of the labour movement, it is vital that the Labour Party has a leadership which will actively support workers in struggle. This is particularly crucial at the moment as workers face more and more attacks from Thatcher. Kinnock has repeatedly shied away from putting the weight of the Labour Party behind workers' struggles — in 1984-5 the miners, and now the health workers. With Benn and Heffer as leaders, workers will have a Labour Party leadership they can count on for support.
Trudy Saunders, CPUSA

on the disappointment of people with the injustices of capitalism, on the rhetoric of change — and then get driven back again when in office.

Labour and the ballot box are sufficiently strong now to dislocate the market

economy. And because they are so strong that they can dislocate it, unless you're prepared to change the framework of the market economy and the framework of power that it supports you're going to end up in the same cul-de-sac every time.

Jackals of the press

One thing is certain about the Benn/Heffer leadership challenge — they won't get a fair deal from the press.

The tabloids have kicked off already with mindless abuse — accusations that Benn and Heffer are "past it", mirroring Neil Kinnock's assertion that 'old-fashioned' socialism is 'past it' too.

Mouldy old bigot Woodrow Wyatt of the scab News of the World has frothed hysterically at the mouth, though unfortunately hasn't yet given himself a heart attack, at the idea of these 'lunatics' leading

Her Majesty's Opposition.

We've had every sort of scurrilous muck-raking and lying. As Benn's and Heffer's campaign goes on so will the press campaign of smears, lies and distortions.

The Tory press magnates know what they are doing. They are only too happy with the ineffectual Kinnock-Hattersley leadership, a leadership crippled by terror of its own electoral credibility, its desperation to court the "middle ground". The Press barons sell their stultifying pap to the working class hoping that fed on a diet of lurid horror stories about the 'loony lefts', they'll be duped into accepting that Thatcherism is the only answer.

There's nothing that terrifies these people more than the spectre of a fighting united working class movement — they'll do anything in their power to sabotage it.

The answer to this isn't to sit back and ignore it. We should use the media in so far as we can to get our arguments across. For certain they will attempt to distort those arguments — they are doing that anyway.

The Benn-Heffer campaign needs to use all the means at its disposal to publicise the alternative to Kinnock.

How the left united in 1980

IN 1980-1 the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy offered a model of how the Labour Left can unite.

It was probably the best and widest example of broad left unity in the entire history of the Labour Party. Initiated by Socialist Organiser, it brought in almost every grouping on the Left — Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Militant, Independent Labour Publications, the then-left Labour Coordinating Committee and National Organisation of Labour Students, and others.

We united to defend and extend the

By John Bloxam former organiser of RFMC

democratic reforms in the Labour Party — reselection of MPs, election of the Party leaders by the Party as a whole. We organised big meetings all round the country, with speakers like Tony Benn. We produced a series of campaign broadsheets.

We coordinated tactics — without that

coordination on the issue of how the electoral college for the Labour Party leadership should be set up, we would probably have lost the principle of the Party leaders being elected by the Party as a whole.

CLPD and Socialist Organiser did most of the hard slog, while some other groupings, like Militant, just tagged along. And the different parts of the left advocated their own special ideas. Socialist Organiser, for example, argued that the democracy struggle must be extended into a fight for a *workers' government*, and spread into the trade unions, while others disagreed.

But none of that needed to, nor did, cause any strain to the RFMC's unity. We all knew that the fact that it united the whole of the left gave the RFMC tremendous power.

While basically hostile themselves to what they describe as 'the outside left', David and Maurice Kogan give a reasonably comprehensive picture of the RFMC in their book 'The Battle for the Labour Party' (1982).

"As the Campaign for Labour Victory and the party leadership ineffectively tried to organise against the attacks of the left, moves were made to bring the left-wing groups together.

On 10 May 1980, John Bloxam, secretary of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, an avowedly Trotskyist organisation, wrote to the CLPD proposing collaboration. SCLV wanted in the period leading to the Blackpool conference in September 1980 to mount a 'big campaign to muster and organise support for the decisions of the Brighton conference (of 1979) on Labour Party democracy'.

Progress was made quickly and at the special party conference on 31 May it was announced that the groups on the Outside Left were to collaborate. Apart from the CLPD and the SCLV, the groups involved at this stage included the Labour Coordinating Committee, the Institute of Workers' Control, Independent Labour Publications (ILP), Clause Four, the National Organisation of Labour Students, and, most important of all, the Militant Tendency, and the Labour Party Young Socialists, a group dominated by Militant.

Superficially, these groups might appear the same, united in their disenchantment with the record of Labour Governments and the elitism of the Labour leadership, and sharing a vision of the socialist future. But, in practice, they are markedly different in their campaigning and organisational methods, and have serious ideological differences on the nature of the political process.

They squabbled vigorously among themselves until the formation of their alliance, and the effective combination of so many disparate groups is surprising.

Far too many disparate resolutions were being flung into the argument and, with the alliance introduced in May 1980, disciplined coordination was to be achieved. The RFMC

IN THE UNIONS

By Mick
O'Sullivan

1980-1 were great years for the left in the Labour Party. At the 1980 Party conference and at the Wembley special conference in early 1981, far-ranging reforms were passed to democratise the Party. It is those reforms which allow the present contest to take place.

In those days the Constituency Labour Parties were solidly behind reform. Activists bitter about the betrayals of the Wilson/Callaghan government took up the slogan: Never again a Labour Government like the last one. Never again a Labour Government which rides roughshod over the labour movement and cuts wages, jobs and services.

A section of the trade unions was also bitter about the Wilson/Callaghan government's greater willingness to listen to the IMF than to the labour movement. Many top trade union officials were willing to ally tactically with the Left to bring the Labour Party leaders to account.

With the 'Benn for Deputy' campaign in 1981 — the contest in which Tony Benn only just failed to defeat Denis Healey for Deputy Leader — the top trade union leaders began to think that they had bitten off more than they could chew. Labour Party politics and trade unionism had been different worlds for decades, but now politics was coming into the unions.

This was to produce such upsets as the railworkers' right-wing General Secretary, Sid Weighell, being forced to resign not

because of what he had done on any industrial issue, but because of the way he misused the union's block vote in the Labour Party.

Tom Jackson, the leader of the Communicatoin Workers, attempted to stop Benn speaking at a conference fringe meeting. The then left-wing NUPE leadership refused to make a recommendation for Benn. In the TGWU there was all sorts of bureaucratic manoeuvring, which ended with the Labour Party conference delegation voting for Benn. In ASTMS

The Labour leadership should listen to the rank and file rather than going for phoney public relations exercises that are nothing but a cover for abandoning basic socialist commitments. This election gives Labour Party members the opportunity to make their voice heard and to put real socialism back on the agenda.

Mick Rice, Secretary, Birmingham Trades Council and Birmingham councillor.

Clive Jenkins claimed he swung the vote behind Benn; in fact his delegation had forced him to vote that way.

The union leaders' determination to avoid such embarrassment in future, and their demoralisation in face of the Tory onslaught, has now welded them firmly to Kinnock's new realism. To counter this, militants must organise in each union. We must seek the most open debate.

In each union resolutions should be going to conference calling for equal time for all candidates to put their views to conference and equal space in union journals. If an individual membership ballot is called, then literature must be distributed from all the candidates.

WHERE WE STAND

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

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system

— a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

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

socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

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

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

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

For left unity in action; clari-

ty in debate and discussion.

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

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



STIFFENING LABOUR'S BACKBONE

From our point of view Benn and Heffer backed the miners throughout the dispute. Benn and Heffer have since called for the reinstatement of all sacked miners. Benn and Heffer are the democratic socialists who people could go along with. This campaign could be the making or the destruction of the Labour Party. Many people like myself are beginning to doubt whether there is a place in the Labour Party for us with the present direction in which it is going.

Bob Burnett, President Barnborough Main NUM.

programme was drafted in such a way that all the groups within the organisation could agree with its main propositions.

The five demands in the programme include some familiar points: reaffirmation of mandatory reselection; defence of the present structure of the NEC; the implementation of the conference decision on the drafting of the manifesto; the electoral college (in spite of reservations expressed by some); and the assertion of the duty of the PLP to implement party policy, to be accountable to the party and internally democratic in all of its operations 'with all its deliberations and voting made public.

During July and August 1980 the RFMC kept up its campaign through letters, resolutions, and tactical planning.

The RFMC successfully broached one of the main obstacles to power for the Outside Left: the trade unions. The Outside Left had long tried to win the trade union block votes. The RFMC continued this campaign in 1980, as the subsequent changes in trade union voting patterns at Labour Party conferences clearly show.

The same point was taken up boldly by the committee formed to support Tony Benn's bid for the deputy leadership. Although the Labour Party is historically the political arm of the trade unions, it was a radical change in the relationship between the two for the trade unions thus to be brought directly into small group politics within the party.

There was a consultative meeting held before the formal launch of the RFMC on 4 June 1980.

The minutes of this meeting are businesslike and record the systematic programme that the groups undertook to implement. The minutes also show the proliferation of outlets among the Outside Left on which activists could rely. For example, Frances Morrell was invited to write a press release which would go to the following journals: *Labour Leader*, *Tribune*, *Militant*, *Socialist Organiser*, and *Socialist Youth*.

The last three of these journals are Trotskyist. Notwithstanding this, however, the RFMC had its own broadsheet, *Mobilise for Labour Democracy*.

The RFMC's records show that *Militant* is assiduous neither at attending meetings nor at distributing *Mobilise for Labour Democracy*. Whereas the CLPD might take 2000 copies of the paper, *Militant* is not recorded as taking any.

There was intensive campaigning during the first three weeks of January 1981. Constituency delegates were contacted, newsletters sent out, and the Outside Left newspapers, such as *Socialist Organiser*, published interviews with leading activists. This concerted campaign was designed to put across the message that 40-30-30 was the only left-wing motion that could possibly win at Wembley.

By the day of the conference most delegates had been contacted or had seen CLPD literature at the group meetings held the previous night.

In April 1981 Tony Benn announced he would be standing for the Deputy Leadership against Dennis Healey.

The RFMC supported Tony Benn's decision to run for the deputy leadership. Its leading members — Reg Race, its Chairman, Jon Lansman, its Secretary, John Bloxam, its Organiser, and Rachel Lever, the Treasurer — all became members of the Benn election committee after Benn declared his candidature.

The RFMC continued to plan as it had for Wembley. Minutes of its meetings in April contain a detailed analysis of trade union conferences and of the votes that each union held at party conferences. They also detailed the work that needed to be done within each trade union and the people to be contacted.

Leafleting was, for example, planned for the Scottish TUC, and CLPD fringe meetings

were arranged for the USDAW and AUEW annual conferences. Detailed plans were made for every conference, taking place in every conceivable place from Leek (the textile workers' union) to Paignton (the pattern makers' union) to Bridlington (the bakers' union).

The emphasis placed by the RFMC on activity at trade union conferences was a remarkable feature of the Benn election campaign. For the first time senior politicians were rushing to small seaside towns in an effort to convert the vital few thousand votes of each of the minor unions into a substantial proportion of the electoral college.

The Benn campaign became a campaign for trade union politicisation. Thus when the Tribune Group refused to back Benn, or when he earned rebukes from Michael Foot, it barely seemed to matter in comparison with the work of persuading previously uncommitted and unpoliticised unions to take a firm political stance.

Other political organisations, such as CND, also mounted propaganda exercises, in which Labour Party members took an active part. At the CND conference the Rank and File Mobilising Committee put out a *Mobilise for Labour Democracy* conference special which linked the issue of nuclear weapons and CND's campaign to the issue of accountability within the Labour Party and the defence of the Wembley decision.

This widespread campaign to attract supporters, both for the RFMC's five aims and for Tony Benn's campaign, is a new feature of campaigning within the Labour Party. The RFMC brought political debate into what had previously been solely a personal issue.

Benn's campaign was focused on trade union conferences. Meetings at conference were held ostensibly to discuss Benn's candidature, but in fact they covered the whole range of issues supported by the left''.

Organise the rank and file!

By Paul Whetton

I do not think the campaign is exclusively about getting Tony Benn and Eric Heffer elected. I think it is about reaffirming our commitment to socialism, and we must go on doing that whatever the result of this election.

One of the reasons why the left has appeared so weak over the last few years is that some of its 'champions' have shown their true colours as out and out careerists. They have used left politics to get to a particular position and then turned their backs on socialism. The rank and file, however, in both the Labour Party and trade unions, is still prepared to put forward people who have proved their worth in the past and fight to get them elected.

I think the campaign should be organised at a rank and file level by the kind of groups that were formed during the miners' strike.

The miners have good reason to be bitter with the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership. They sat on the fence during the great strike. They are still causing us problems with their attitude to the UDM in Notts.

The main issues concerning miners are; the privatisation of the electricity supply industry; privatisation of their own industry; the future of the British Coal industry, including pit closures; 6-day working.

If Kinnock and Hattersley win then miners cannot look forward to any kind of support for a fight on those issues from the leadership of the Labour Party. If we had Benn and Heffer, and it came to crunch time, then we could certainly expect support from that leadership.

The main argument is not about what Kinnock did and did not do, but about what we see as the way forward. The way forward is still building a working class, democratic Labour Party that is committed to bringing in socialism.

Paul Whetton is a member of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

The malice of traitors

Some of the most bitter enemies of the Benn-Heffer campaign are to be found in the camp of the so-called soft left — organisations like the Labour Coordinating Committee and the Tribune Group of MPs.

When it was set up in 1978, the Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC) presented itself as a broad forum for the Labour Left. It was part of the Labour Party democracy movement, and backed Benn for Deputy Leader in 1981.

But the LCC were the first section of the Left to get cold feet, the first to pull out of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy. The real turning point was Labour's 1983 General Election defeat.

The LCC drew the conclusion that 'disunity' in the Party — that is, campaigns for accountability, and anything that caused too much of a fuss — was Labour's problem. The answer was to stop rocking the boat and to look for 'new ways' to build Labour's support.

The LCC backed Kinnock for leader in 1983, and were, indeed, the bedrock of

Kinnockism inside the Party from then on. They were the hard core of the soft left — or, as it would be better described, the new right. They were the new Labour Party Establishment.

Hostility to 'Trotskyists' has become central to their politics. Right from the start, the LCC had been organised and led by people who were sympathetic to Eurocommunism. Subdued enthusiasm

editing the official *Labour Party News*, was the Treasurer of the 'Benn for Deputy' campaign in 1981. His path is a model for many others.

The LCC were the first to heed the call when Kinnock and his allies in the trade union leadership decided that the left upsurge in the Labour Party in 1979-82 had gone far enough and the lid must be put back on. They were the first to rationalise,

Why it must be Kinnock and Prescott

Tribune's editorial headline

about the USSR under Gorbachev, and wild enthusiasm about such groups as the South African Communist Party, mould their international outlook.

Now the LCC is firmly against Benn and Heffer. The *Tribune* newspaper, which under Chris Mullin was 'hard left', nowadays is more or less the mouthpiece of the LCC. Nigel Williamson, who has recently moved from editing *Tribune* to

theorise, and make a credo of the demoralisation that hit the movement after the Falklands War and the rise of the SDP.

Now, as the old saying goes, there is no malice like the malice of the traitor. The LCC and *Tribune* face the Benn-Heffer campaign with the malice of people who have lost their bottle and whatever socialist conviction they once had.

SWP and the wheelbarrow

'If you want to push a wheelbarrow, don't sit in it'. So said Paul Foot, *Daily Mirror* columnist and front man for the sectarian and obscurantist Socialist Workers' Party, explaining his policy towards the Labour Party.

According to the SWP, the Labour Party possesses such truly fantastic power that socialists had better keep it at arm's length if they don't want to be corrupted by it. Membership of the Labour Party can rot your brain, and the main corrosive influence is 'electoralism', under pressure of which even the best socialists will gradually move further and further right until they have completely abandoned socialist principle.

Foot made his wheelbarrow joke in 1982, just as the Militant editorial board were being expelled from the Labour Party — in other words, just as the Party bureaucracy were getting things back under control and reasserting their authority. For the SWP, the witch-hunt only went to show that the whole struggle to change the Labour Party had been a complete waste of time — about as much use as trying to revolutionise a wheelbarrow.

The moral, then as ever, was meant to be that the best thing to do was get out of the wheelbarrow and do something else. It is pointless trying to change the Labour Party because it is built for the wrong purpose: since socialism doesn't come through elections, it's pointless trying to win them. 'We need a different sort of party', the SWP insist — one that gets stuck into strikes.

This general argument of the SWP's led them to pour scorn on the big democracy struggle in the Labour Party in the early 'eighties, promising that it could only end in tears, and later happily concluding that they had told us so. The fact that it might not have ended in tears if they had thrown their own not insignificant weight into it never seemed to occur to them.

In fact the abstention of people like the SWP from that struggle helped pave the way for the rise and consolidation of the New Right under Kinnock.

But the SWP gave it all a particularly quirky twist at the time. They have a theory according to which the British working class

is suffering from a long-term 'downturn' in its combativity and rank and file organisation. The trouble with the Bennite movement was that it had no real base among rank and file workers; it didn't understand that the rank and file was moving to the right. So there was no point having all this left wing democracy stuff in the Labour Party anyway, as it was way above the heads of most workers.

In other words — the Bennite movement in the early 'eighties was *too left wing* and rushing too far ahead of the working class.

Later they were to comment, revealingly: "during the period of Bennism in the early 'eighties we had to steer a course away from the rest of the left for fear of being pulled in to the 'swamp'". (*Socialist Worker Review*, April 1987).

For fear! The SWP was afraid of the Labour left.

Having thus stood on the sidelines giving everyone these classically sectarian lectures the SWP suddenly found a miners' strike on their hands. For the miners' support committees they initially had nothing but scorn (again), describing them as 'left wing Oxfam' — until they realised that there was real life in these committees — and that most of the life came from Labour Party members.

The SWP lurched again, and went on a 'be nice to Labour' binge, which included a series of unrequited love letters to Militant ('revolutionaries except for being in the Labour Party') and a number of general appeals to Labour Party members to leave it and join them.

Now they woke up to the witch-hunt, decided it was a very bad thing, and launched a petition against it.

After years of considering the Labour Party to be 'dead', or at least too middle class to bother with, they found themselves with not much to do except stand outside Labour Party meetings selling Socialist Worker. Indeed, a Central Committee document commented that "the sales help us to get a feel for the local working class movement and understand the sorts of arguments we are up against." (*Socialist Worker Review*, April 1987).

It would, of course, be a capitulation to electoralism actually to go inside the meeting to participate in the discussion: far better to go to the pub.

The SWP's basic problem is that they see mass electoral activity, and work in the Labour Party, as *counterposed* to industrial struggle. Come elections, they call for a Labour vote ('without illusions'), and indeed in 1979 dropped all criticism of the Labour government ('For the next three weeks I shall be a solid Labour supporter', said Paul Foot). But it doesn't hold together very well politically: in 1987 they understood the significance a Labour victory would have, but refused to draw the obvious conclusion that they should go out and canvass — too electoralist, you see.

But the division they make between industrial and political activity is identical to the one made by the right wing — who are quite happy to have socialists avoid general political activity, like elections, as it lets them off the hook. In fact what socialists need to do is to *integrate* industrial and political activity into a coherent strategy.

Of course the Labour Party is usually electoralist, and often crudely so. But the way to challenge that is to fight it, not to run away from it. Socialists in the Labour Party have shown that they can run left wing election campaigns without sacrificing their principles. It is indeed the argument of the *right* that you have to be right wing to win votes.

Now, of course, the SWP are cheering on the Benn and Heffer campaign — not quite their attitude to the Benn for Deputy campaign in 1981! But their approach is characteristically illogical.

Either it's a good thing if the Labour Party has a left wing leadership, in which case they should seriously join the fight to see that it gets one; or it doesn't matter one way or the other, in which case they should say so. Logically, from the SWP's point of view, it's a bad thing if the Labour Party moves to the left, as a new generation of workers will have to learn how awful it is.

But it's not just an illogical approach; it's also opportunist. They don't spell out what their 'leave the Labour Party' policy really means (and if we all leave the Labour Party there would be no chance of electing Benn and Heffer, would there?), because it would make them unpopular.

Socialism means freedom

This breakdown of the authority of the Soviet Union produced a development which severely tested the commitment of the Labour Party to those struggling for freedom in Eastern Europe — the Polish workers' formation of Solidarity. It was clear that the official trade unions in Poland were basically adjuncts of the State, and instruments of the Party hierarchy.

The workers in Poland wanted a trade union organisation of their own which was free and independent of the State and the Party, and which they could control themselves. The fact that the Church, or at least some of the priests, supported Solidarity in no way detracts from the importance of the development, neither does it make the movement of workers basically anti-socialist as some, including left-wing trade union leaders, have suggested.

When I first raised the matter of support for Solidarity on the NEC, I had a tremendous struggle to get my resolution accepted. Some of my natural allies opposed it and one trade union member suggested that Solidarity was not a real union but a breakaway, and therefore it could not be supported.

I reminded him that he himself had supported an unofficial movement, in the Seamen's Defence Movement, in his own union years before. That movement had, at one stage, talked of forming a new union and I was one of those who urged them to remain in the NUS and fight to change it because they had the opportunity to do so. In Poland such opportunities did not exist and the workers had to forge new instruments to make any progress.

The NEC were proved right in giving their support to Solidarity and that was particularly underlined when the miners' strike took place.

The Polish Government, like the South African Government, exported coal to this country during the strike. The 'official' unions (Solidarity had been suppressed) did not object and Arthur Scargill and the NUM leaders had to make a strong protest to the head of the Polish Government.

In a foreword I wrote in a pamphlet issued by the Eastern European Solidarity Campaign titled *The British Labour Movement and Oppression in Eastern Europe*, I made it clear that in my view it is impossible to create a socialist society without freedom. Socialism and freedom are indivisible. Socialism means the flowering of the human spirit, not its destruction. Yet in parts of the world, oppressive measures have often been taken against critics in the name of socialism. Such actions are a blot on the name of socialism, and have held back the progress of the workers' movement in Western Europe for decades.

Many trade unionists and workers in the West who over the years have gained hard-won democratic rights and fight to protect them, sometimes unsuccessfully, look at what happens in the so-called 'socialist' countries and say, 'If that is socialism, we want no part of it'.

Within the Labour movement there are, however, a tiny minority who continue to live in the past. They defend just about every action of the Soviet leaders, believ-

Excerpts from Eric Heffer's book, 'Labour's Future: Socialist or SDP Mark 2?'

ing that in doing so they are protecting the Soviet Union from capitalist forces internally and from hostile capitalist elements outside.

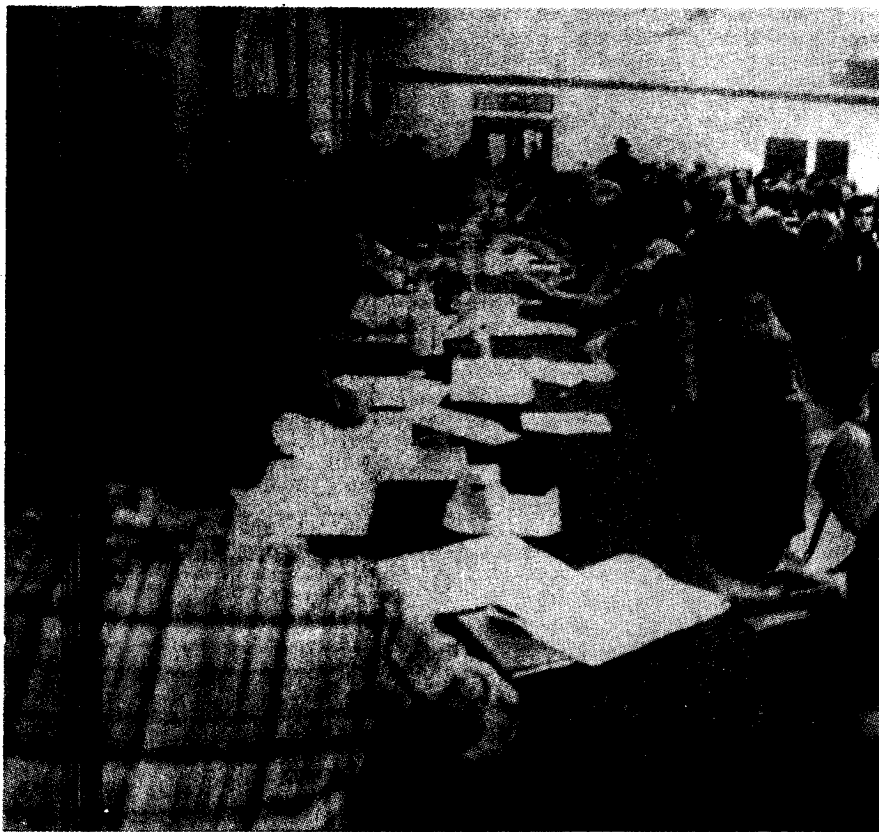
Because Soviet diplomats and visitors from the Soviet Union tend to meet predominantly with trade unionists and politicians who hold these views, they get the wrong impression of how their countries' policies are perceived outside. Socialists should at all times attempt to put the record straight.

Dissident groups and individuals seeking democratic changes should receive the support of socialists in the Western capitalist countries, even if we do not always fully or even partly agree with their political ideas or positions.

To give such support does not mean that one is siding with those reactionaries who wish to create confrontation and possible war.

Unfortunately, the Soviet and other East European communist leaders are helping the reactionary forces by their actions against those who are critical of the regimes. They are, of course, protecting their own privileged positions.

If free and open debate took place in these societies, the people would demand changes, just as they did during the Polish Solidarity upsurge, the Hungarian revolution and the Czechoslovakian Spring.



Workers' democracy: Solidarnosc in session

An agenda for socialism

Socialism is hardly mentioned by the current leadership and a socialist society is not the objective being advanced. What then should be the strategy of those who do believe in creating a socialist society with a Labour Government as the instrument of change?

We must not, in the face of this revisionism, keep our heads down until Labour is elected. We must openly argue for the public ownership of the banks and the land; the abolition of the House of Lords and all the privileges that go with it; the renationalisation of those publicly-owned industries which have been privatised without massive compensation

and possibly in some cases without any compensation at all; the reduction of hours without loss of pay to even lower than a 35 hour week; the repeal of all anti-trade union legislation and restoration of legislation giving workers rights they previously enjoyed; and a system of genuine workers' management in industry, along the lines outlined by G.D.H. Cole and others.

We should also campaign for the right to a free press, the first step to this being legislation for the right of reply; full freedom of information to the workers in industry, but also to all citizens through a Freedom of Information Act which would

take the mystery out of Government; the democratisation of the Civil Service, and the police; and a socialist foreign policy that is distinctive and neutralist, which clearly shows that we do not accept the hegemony of either Moscow or Washington.

These are the policies which the left must continue to advocate, with maximum vigour, in the run up to the next election. In addition we should be arguing inside the Party for a number of organisational strategies. Firstly, we should call on the Party to build branches in every factory, workshop, mine, construction site and office. Factory branches were agreed by the Party a few years ago, but have not yet been vigorously pursued.

Secondly the Party must seriously consider the democratic involvement of all the membership in both elections and the development of policy. At the moment participation in policy-making is very patchy and could be greatly improved.

Thirdly, we must emphasise the importance of involving black and Asian people in the work of the Party. That means appointing full-time organisers in this area and going beyond the present policy of setting up Ethnic Minority Committees. I believe the black and Asian comrades must have direct representation on the NEC.

Fourthly, the Party must build a mass membership, with the objective of having party groups within the branches in every street and block of flats in the country.

Fifthly and finally, we should point out that the time has come to create a really effective political education programme. This should not be solely concerned with organising work for elections, but with teaching the political theory of socialism and developing the organisation to put that theory into effect. Since the demise of the NCLC there has not been an effective socialist educational organisation, and the Party should move quickly to create one.

The Black Sections' position is we support Benn and Heffer because they support black people. We are holding true to our socialist principles and that is why we are under attack from Kinnock and Hattersley, but we have also said that the platform of Benn and Heffer must be specifically anti-racist and they must include Black Section speakers at their meetings.

We are disgusted at the way the current leadership have conformed to Thatcher's agenda. This means the abandonment of blacks as an electoral liability.

Labour Party Black Sections

The campaign to elect Benn and Heffer gives socialists a boost in the unions as well as the Labour Party. The leadership of the NUT have retreated from the Tories like Kinnock has done. Teachers who want to resist the government will be supporting the Benn-Heffer campaign.

Andy Dixon, NUT EC member, Greater Manchester.

It's a good thing and I hope the teachers will go to their ward meetings and vote for Benn and Heffer. Many people in Haringey are fed up with the Labour Party who they see as the ones making the cuts and attacking them. Hopefully the Benn-Heffer campaign will make it clear there are two different Labour Parties and many are fighting back against what the Labour Party did here. There is a need for a regroupment of the left and the campaign will provide that.

Tony Brockman, secretary, Haringey NUT.



'Revolutionary reformism'

If second chambers have proved so obstructive to progressive policies then why do democratic socialists believe that socialism in Britain can be achieved through Parliament?

It is a question which those on the left, who are democratic socialists, but who believe in revolutionary socialist policies, cannot avoid facing up to.

There have been plenty of examples where democratically elected, progressive socialist governments have been overthrown by force. Hitler destroyed democracy in Germany, Mussolini in Italy, Franco in Spain, the colonels in Greece, the military in Turkey.

Unfortunately, in most countries in the world, democracy is weak and dictatorship is strong. Democracy under certain circumstances could be destroyed here but Labour will never do anything to endanger it.

We are opposed to the use of force to remove opposing political forces and the only occasions on which Labour might resort to it would be in the defence of democracy, as the Austrian socialists did when they fought to try to preserve democracy in their country in 1934.

The Labour Party is not a pacifist party and there are occasions when anti-democratic forces have to be dealt with in a democratic society. But it is essential to make sure that in the process all the basic democratic rights of the people are protected.

The type of policy required is what I have described for want of a better phrase 'Revolutionary Reformism'. To some extent Cole was the precursor of that concept, although he never used the phrase.

In 1954, he wrote a pamphlet published by the *New Statesman and Nation* in which he said:

"This pamphlet is about Socialism, by which I mean a society without class, and not one in which a new class structure has replaced the old.

"It is not about the policy to be followed by a Labour Government which is not seeking to establish a classless society, but only to nationalise a few more industries and add a few more pieces to the equipment of the Welfare State. It is an attempt to indicate a way of action for those socialists who feel a sense of frustration because to them Socialism means something radically different from the management of the Welfare State...

"If we mean to constitute a really democratic society, permeated by the spirit of social equality, we shall have to find ways of replacing old incentives of fear and habit with new inducements more consistent with the recognition of equal human rights...

"Social ownership is only half the battle; the other half is real participation by the workers in control — not only at the top, but at every level from the work group upwards. By participation I do not mean merely consultation; I mean real control."

At the moment, despite the new NEC document on social ownership, we are neither being offered real social ownership nor real control by the workers. With the concept of 'new partnership' we are back in the realms of Gaitskell's pamphlet, *Industry and Nationalisation*, Tony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, John Strachey's *Contemporary Capitalism* and the Party Policy Statement of 1957, *Industry and Society*.



I believe that the Party today has to take a tremendously important decision as to the direction in which it is going. Is it to remain a basically socialist party, or is it to become a sort of Social Democratic Party Mark 2? The signs are that it is moving in the latter direction. For a short period after the leadership election the direction the party was taking was not clear. The election of the 'Dream Ticket' was supposed to be a balance between right and left and this confused many people.

But very quickly, at higher levels if not at grass-roots, the Party was tilted to the right.

Some on the left began to talk about the Leader being captured by the right, that Neil Kinnock was a prisoner who needed saving from those on the Shadow Cabinet around him.

All of this was very interesting at the time, but in the light of subsequent events it was irrelevant. The membership has now clearly been told that the Party is moving in a new direction.

It could, of course, be moving sideways, upwards or downwards, retaining the same political positions but pushing for them in a different way. But it is not; the move is rapidly right-wards.

The position advanced by Hobsbawm and other Euro-communists like Bob Rowthorn and Dave Prescott is, in essence, a revision to the type of argument for a government of 'national unity' put forward by the Communist Party towards the end of the Second World War when the party leadership argued that such a government should include 'progressive' Tories like Churchill and Eden.

It also draws heavily on the politics and experience of the Italian Communist Party, the PCI, whose search for a 'historic

The NEC under Kinnock and Hattersley voted not to support NHS workers who strike. We need leaders who will stand solidly behind us, who will defend the health service now and not ask us to wait four years for a Labour government.

Karen Reissman, COHSE shop steward, Springfield Hospital, North Manchester.

If elections are seen to be a distraction then it is a very worrying time for the Party. It is a dangerous argument because we have annual elections for the NEC and they are not a distraction. Elections are good because they always offer the opportunity to decide which way we should be going.

The leadership election will be no different. It offers socialists the opportunity to discuss and debate in which direction the Party should be heading.

Billy Hayes, Branch Secretary, Liverpool UCW Amalgamated Branch (personal capacity)

This provides the labour movement with an opportunity to get us back debating socialist policies and fighting on socialist principles. It will bring the class struggle back into the Labour Party.

George Hall, sacked Sun FoC, Branch committee, London Clerical Branch, SOGAT

I'll definitely be supporting Benn and Heffer because they have made a stand in disputes like the miners' strike. They were with us. Kinnock showed his colours in the miners' strike and the Wapping dispute. He's just not interested in people's struggles. It's about time we went back to socialist ideas rather than Kinnock's way of thinking. He has lost contact with the working class.

Liz French

compromise' with sections of the ruling class has been a governing strategic objective.

I have the greatest admiration for the PCI. It is a genuine mass party of the Italian working class. But to translate the situation they face in Italy directly into a British context is a major mistake. It ignores the vital asset which Hobsbawm admits Labour has: 'The capacity to win an election and form a government single-handed'.

It is that asset which caused Labour in the late 1930s to reject the Popular Front, and which made Labour go all out for Government in 1945 instead of the 'national unity' administration advocated by the CP. That asset must today be the cornerstone of Labour's forward thinking.

It is the pessimism of Eurocommunists like Eric Hobsbawm which I find most depressing. For them, the struggle for socialism must be postponed.

Their constant theme is that the central task facing the workers' movement is the removal of Thatcher. What replaces her is of secondary importance. I argued against this view as far back as 1975 when in an article 'Two Labour Parties or One?' for the *Political Quarterly*, I wrote:

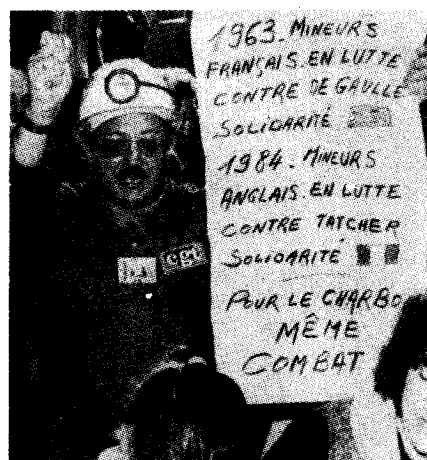
'The left view is that the crisis of capitalism must be the occasion to introduce socialist measures and move towards a classless, egalitarian society. This is the very opposite of those who say "Get the crisis over first, then move towards socialism later". The face is that once the immediate crisis is over and the pressure is off, then the opportunities for getting measures through which can lead towards socialism are lost and it becomes more difficult at a later stage.'

Hobsbawm's views on the prospects for socialism are founded on a belief that class politics are no longer key in the struggle. Whilst he has highlighted important changes in the structure of the working class in recent years which need to be taken into account in Labour's campaigns and policies, I believe he and the other Eurocommunists are quite mistaken in emphasising what they see as a fall in the importance of the workers' movement.

Labour must certainly bring its propaganda and methods up to date by taking into account the shift from manual to white collar and service jobs within the working class. It must not, however, abandon its basic class orientation. If it does, the core of its base of support will disappear and it will be little different from other reformist capitalist parties.



Eric Hobsbawm



International solidarity: French miners back British miners

Fight in EEC

Not all European countries are in the EEC, and some have no wish or intention to join. This is the case with most of the Scandinavian countries as well as Austria and Switzerland. One cannot ignore the EEC, it is a fact of life which affects our legislation and our political and personal lives. I believe we should work for socialist and working class internationalism in Europe without making the EEC a major issue of contention at the present time, even if some of the European Socialists wish to do so.

I am not saying here that the Party should abandon its position on withdrawal from the EEC, that is still essential. But I do believe that we should step up attempts to bring the left together in all parts of Europe to fight in the EEC on the Council of Europe, and in all wider European organisations for nuclear disarmament, the phasing out of nuclear power, greater control over the multi-nationals, concerted aid to the Third World and working class unity in action throughout the European trade union movement.

In 1980, the Labour Party issued another pamphlet, *The Dilemma of Eurocommunism* which, though now bypassed by certain events, does not date in its essentials.

Part of its message is that in the EEC it is important that the industrial and political working class movement should as far as possible, join together in action to fight the multi-nationals and to put forward an internationalist perspective. Though this will not be easy it must in my view, be tackled. British socialism cannot build a wall around itself or solve its political and economic problems in isolation. The movement should enter into discussions with all sections of the labour, socialist/communist movements in the EEC at the earliest possible moment and at all levels.

There are some positive discussions that can take place immediately, not on the basis of defending the Common Market by discussing the best way to operate the capitalist system which exists in the countries of the EEC, but on the basis of what actions we can take in all the EEC Countries to spotlight trade union solidarity advocating socialist policies which stretch across national boundaries.



The London Labour Party: a black socialist denounces those who want to ban Black Sections. Photo Stefano Cagnoni, IFL

An open, democratic party

I see from the press that the Labour Coordinating Committee is holding its Annual Meeting in Liverpool tomorrow, and the Secretary says it has 1,000 members nationally. Whether it is registered or not, the truth is surely that it is an organisation. What about Labour Solidarity, the heir to the Gang of Four, and all the other groups? Labour is a "Broad Church" and in my view should remain one.

The important thing to remember in this situation is that the Party has been here before. Various left-wingers in the Labour Party have been expelled in the past and action taken against Constituency Parties because they did not agree to go along with the actions of the NEC. The ironical fact is that some of those expelled either, when they were let back in, moved to the right, or are now referred to by most people in the Party as Party stalwarts who were folk heroes, especially, of course, after they died.

The most prominent of the latter group is Aneurin Bevan. Today, we often hear Nye Bevan quoted and to some in high places in the Party he is a God-like figure. Yet he was once expelled, in 1938, from the Party, and almost expelled again after the Second World War when the Attlee Government had gone out of office.

The story of Nye Bevan's expulsion is told in Michael Foot's book about him. It is too long a story to be told in detail tonight, but it should be remembered. In 1932, the Socialist League was formed. According to Michael Foot, "The Socialist League mounted a big attack on what it regarded as the Party's unsevered attachment to 'gradualist' ideas." One of the leading figures was Stafford Cripps. Whilst at first Nye Bevan did not join the Socialist League, he did later because he felt Stafford Cripps was a cleaner and more wholesome influence on the Labour leadership than any of the others. As Foot says, Bevan thought "Cripps' approach to Socialism might be crude, but was not a crude vitality greatly preferable to cynicism and lassitude?"

The basic cause of Bevan's expulsion was his support for Sir Stafford Cripps over the issue of the Popular Front. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the

Popular Front concept, it was no reason to expel people from the Party. Cripps put forward a petition. He was expelled from the Party. Bevan said, "If every organised effort to change Party policy is to be described as an organised attack on the Party itself then the rigidity imposed by Party discipline will soon change into rigor mortis."

I would say to Party Leaders today, take note of what Nye Bevan then said, that the Party should take special care not to transform itself into "an intellectual concentration camp".

Re-establish

How should we respond? Not by sectarianism, because this is not a sectarian movement. Not by leaving the party, because it belongs to us. Not by splitting the party, because unity is strength. Not by personalising it, because our whole objection is that when they want to attack us they pick a personality and try to destroy that personality.

Our answer is to re-establish within the labour movement the traditions of socialism that brought it into being and gave it the greatest gains it had. Our business is to restate the demands that working people make: the right to work, the right to a good education throughout life, the right to proper health care free at the point of need, the right to a good home, the right to dignity in retirement, the right to peace. That is our job: to restate those demands, and go on making them until they're met.

Our job is to rediscover solidarity, to rediscover internationalism. The struggle we are waging in Liverpool is exactly the same struggle as the miners, exactly the same struggle as the people of South Africa, exactly the same struggle as the people of Nicaragua and Turkey. The internationalism of capital, which would deny Liverpool the resources to earn a living, has got to be replaced by the internationalism of Labour.

We are going through very hard times at the moment. But having said all this, I believe the Labour and socialist movement in Britain today is far stronger than at any time in my life.

Stronger because of people like the Liverpool Councillors, the miners, and the black communities who stood up for their rights.

It is frequently suggested that groups within Labour's ranks constitute separate parties within the Party. There is undeniably a grain of truth in this.

Any organisation within the Party must to some extent have a membership with a dual loyalty, a commitment to both the Labour Party itself and to the organisation that is working for its objectives within it.

There is nothing wrong with that provided the group takes the view that its objectives are to maintain, protect and develop the fundamental principles of the Party.

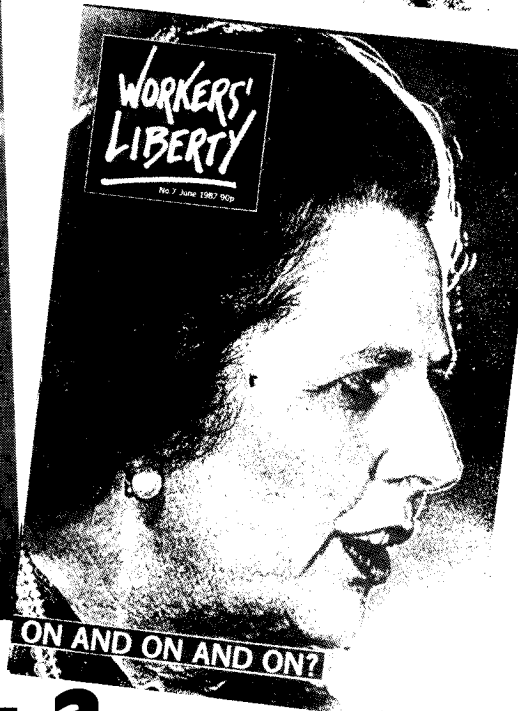
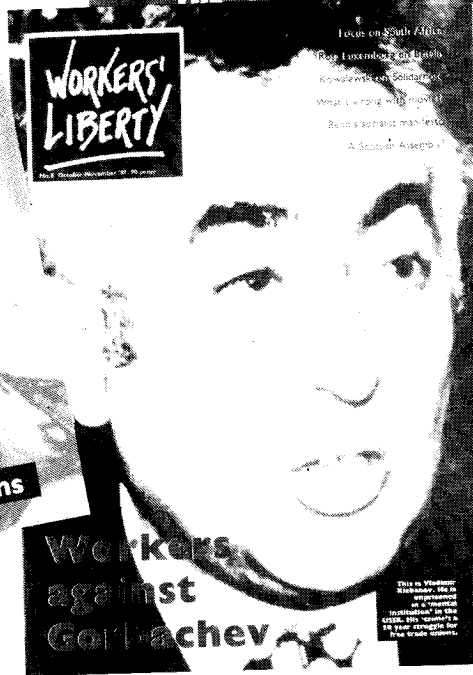
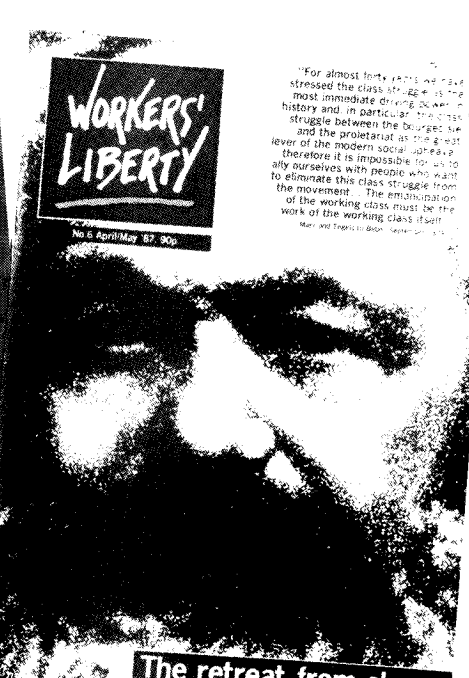
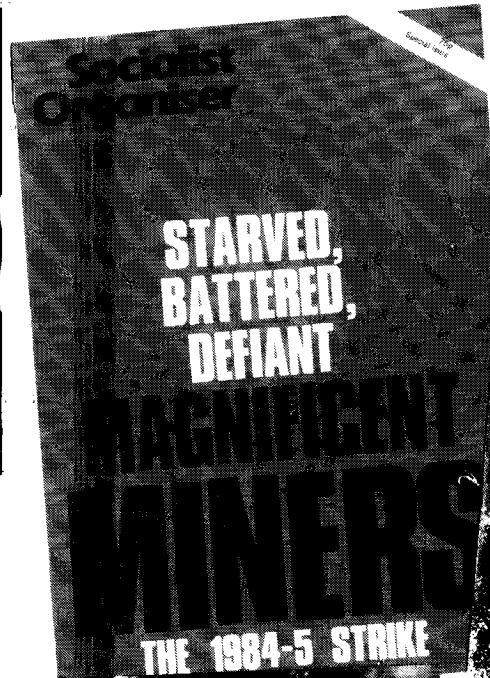
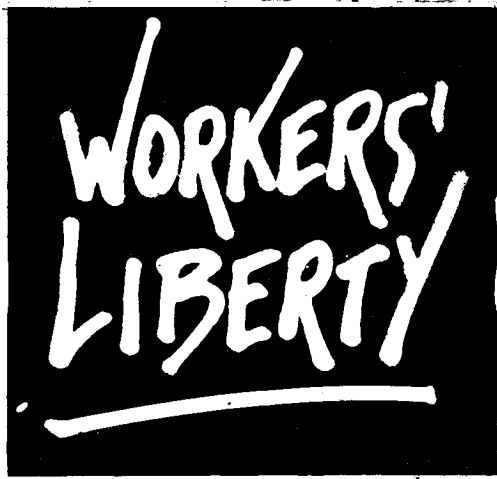
We have always been a federal organisation and should not fear changing back towards a more federal, decentralised structure.

The Labour Party has never been a democratic centralist organisation and in my view should never become one. Democratic centralism is advocated by both the Communist Party and the Trotskyist groups. It is a theory which allows democratic discussion within the organisation but demands that all members present the majority position in public. In practice the centralist half of the equation has tended to dominate the democratic half.

Today, compared with the days of my youth, the books by Marx and about Marxism are more widely available and more numerous.

But whilst there are university courses in this field there has been little education, since the collapse of the NCLC, amongst working class organisations in the basics of Marxism.

The various Marxists groups have helped fill the gap left by the NCLC. Socialist Action, Socialist Organiser, Militant, The Morning Star, Labour Leader and many others, do an important job of helping to teach young workers the nature of society, the character of the State, and the centrality of the class struggle. It would be a serious retrograde step if such papers were banned for sale in the Party, and their supporters driven out.



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