

A Socialist ACTION

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

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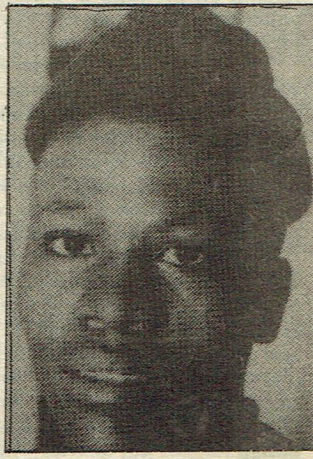
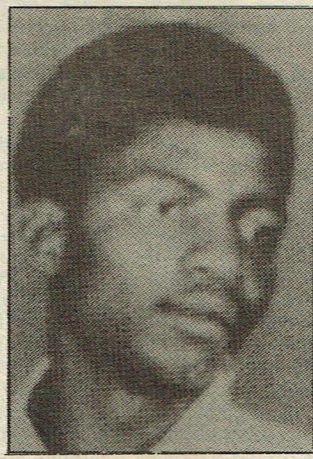
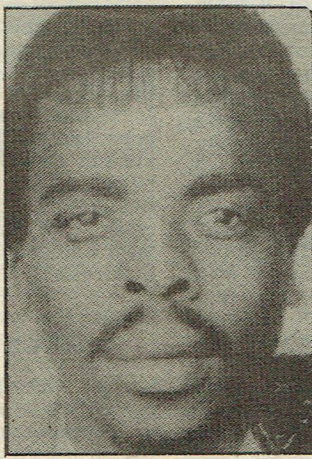
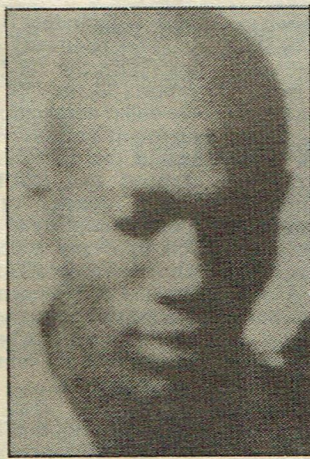
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DEFENDING UNILATERALISM

Tony Benn MP on the policy review p6&7

Ken Livingstone MP on the tasks for the left p3

SAVE THE SHARPEVILLE 6



THE SOUTH African regime has signalled its intention to murder the Sharpeville Six. The refusal by the trial judge on Monday 13 June to reopen the case on the Sharpeville Six marks Botha's determination to have the lives of these six innocent people in a show of strength against the rising tide of opposition to apartheid.

The decision immediately follows the unparalleled success of last week's 3 day stay away by South African workers. As Oliver Tambo explained this was 'the longest in duration, the biggest in mass involvement, organised during a state of emergency and during the banning of the very organisations which would normally organise such an event'.

International opposition has also

grown to unprecedented levels as recent events have further exposed the brutality of apartheid. Last week's screening of the reality of child torture in apartheid's prisons reached new depths of shock.

Saturday's birthday concert for Mandela, transmitted to 60 countries, was the largest and most successful mass event ever attempted by the anti-apartheid movement, whose message will have reached hundreds of thousands for the first time.

Under increasing international pressure both the EEC and the US Congress are being obliged to discuss new economic sanctions.

Pretoria's response is a brutal show of strength. On Thursday 9 June Botha announced the extension of the state of emergency for a third year. In a further attempt to control opposition by limiting freedom of speech, measures have been widened to ban calls for election boycotts

or quoting members of 'restricted' organisations. Even the BBC is under threat of ban or strict curtailment, in response to the *Suffer the Children* programme and the Mandela concert.

The decision on the Sharpeville Six is part of this callous revenge by Pretoria to make the power of the regime unmistakably clear, and the methods it is prepared to use against opposition.

The British government's response has been sickening apologetics for apartheid. Thatcher's opposition to sanctions, as Tambo states 'the one international measure which could end apartheid', is notorious. Whereas 24 Tory MPs put down a Commons motion of 'distaste' at the BBC's decision to broadcast the Mandela concert, the Speaker refused a request for an emergency Commons debate on the Sharpeville Six.

Geoffrey Howe's role at a meeting of EEC foreign ministers was to successfully water down a statement of protest at the decision on the Six. As a result all references to their 'astonishment' and a direct appeal to Botha were excluded. The substitution that all 'legal options' should be used to save the Six is a sick joke.

The clearly massive international opposition which exists to apartheid must be mobilised in time up to 19 July to defend the Six. Weekly Wednesday lunchtime pickets of the Foreign Office are being organised by the AAM. The AAM Mandela demonstration on 17 July must be a huge and unequivocal outcry in defence of the Six.

Save the Sharpeville Six!
Demonstrate 17 July!

Socialist ACTION

Reorganising the left

NEIL KINNOCK'S renunciation of unilateralism, and the clear crisis that it has produced, creates a new situation in the Labour Party. In particular it destroys the political basis of the 'soft left'.

After all what on earth does the soft left claim to stand for any more? It no longer defends the positions of women and black people in the party — the need to bring Labour into line with the changing composition of the working class. For a section of the LCC this was simply a cynical manoeuvre as they believed that by taking up the demands of women and black people they could criticise the 'hard left'. But now that the hard left has corrected some original errors on this among some of its members, and is the chief defender in the party of the demands of women and black people, the soft left has lost any practical interest in the subject — showing these issues did not form any point of principle, or even of political strategy.

Magician

Nor does the soft left have any viable economic strategy. The policy review document on *A Productive and Competitive Economy*, produced by Bryan Gould, is literally incredible. As Ken Livingstone has pointed out even a magician couldn't make the figures it proposes add up. It furthermore suggests that the entire British economy will be reoriented towards modernising the domestic economy but that measures of public ownership or control of capital will be unnecessary to do it — presumably British capital will repent of its ways and reverse its course over the entire last century in a sort of capitalist conversion on the road to Damascus? The economic policy document from the review is not merely not socialist, it isn't even practical.

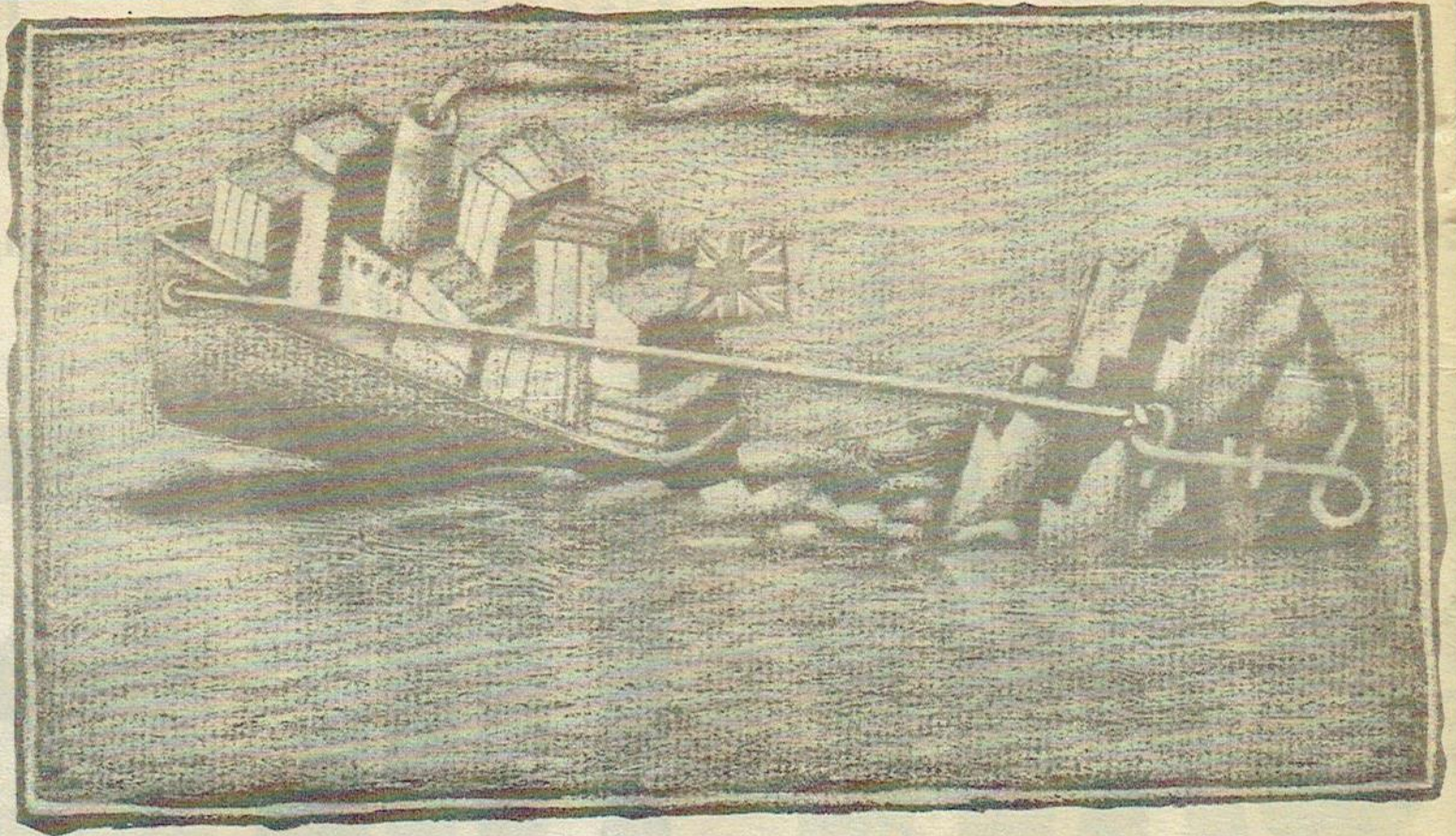
On unilateralism the issue is now brutally sharp. The soft left have spent the time since 1983 explaining, as Alice Mahon pointed out at Chesterfield, that even if other policies were going to be abandoned unilateralism would be maintained. Now the person for whom all these sacrifices of principle have been made, Neil Kinnock, turns round and delivers a crushing attack on unilateralism.

Furthermore the soft left has made the situation worse by its total gutlessness. A year ago a statement on left unity was put out which a few individuals from the soft left — Peter Hain, George Galloway and Joan Ruddock — to their credit signed. The truth of the matter is that if Kinnock had been confronted with a united left he would never have dared to make the retreats he has — particularly on unilateralism. But instead when the rest of the soft left kicked up a tremendous fuss, the soft left who had been prepared to work with the hard left retreated in the face of the criticism. The result was that Kinnock, not being confronted with a united left on the key issues, felt emboldened to go in for further attacks on party policy.

Mid-air

Robin Cook, who emerged as the chief opponent of left unity, has now turned up as the chief organiser of the Kinnock-Hattersley, that is the soft-left plus right, campaign. The soft left was more concerned to keep itself together on any old basis than to take a stand for principles in the party — and this despite the fact that those who signed the statement on left unity were perfectly prepared to face up to criticism by more sectarian elements within the hard left.

Today the situation is different. The soft left is, in essence, suspended in mid-air. Its refusal to act left the space for Kinnock to carry through his attacks on unilateralism and much else besides. The soft left paralysed itself by the fact it started off by support for an individual, Kinnock, and only then decided the policies it would support. It then deepened that by a sectarian refusal to work with others in the party. Instead it must always be principles and policies which come first.



Behind the Thatcher-Lawson rift

HEADLINES ON the economy in the last month have been made by the divisions between Nigel Lawson and Margaret Thatcher over the exchange rate of the pound. But behind the immediate bust up lies much more substantial questions of the present state of the British economy and last October's stock market crash. JOHN ROSS reports.

THE real driving force of the divisions between Thatcher and Lawson which received so much publicity earlier this year is the deteriorating situation of the British balance of payments. Treasury forecasts last Autumn projected a balance of payments deficit of £4 billion this year. But this is clearly going to be vastly exceeded. On the basis of the first three months of the year £7.8 billion is much more likely.

Furthermore projections for 1989 are much worse — the deficits being projected by the forecasting institutes range up to £12 billion. For the first time since the oil boom started in the late 1970s the British economy is running into its familiar post war problem — pressure on the balance of payments. It is Lawson's concern about the non-competitiveness of British industry which underlies his opposition to a revaluation in the pound.

Several factors are now coming together to produce this rapid deterioration in the balance of payments. They are not incidental but built into the entire way the British economy has developed under Thatcher.

Reduced to its essentials Britain, since 1979, has been running a balance of trade surplus with North America, with the OPEC countries, and in oil which finances a balance of payments deficit in manufacturing with Japan and the EEC.

Crucial shifts in world prices were already undermining this before the October crash — notably the decrease in the real price of oil. Britain was increasingly unable to compensate for a deficit in manufactured goods with a surplus in oil.

But the events of the last two years, brought together in the October stockmarket crash sharply worsened that situation as they have

dramatically affected the relations between the three main international economic centres — Japan, the United States, and the EEC.

Prior to the October crash the pattern of trade between the main capitalist centres was clear. The United States has been in balance of trade deficit both with Japan and with Western Europe — producing the well known US balance of trade deficit. Japan ran trade surpluses with both the United States and Western Europe — Japan's trade surplus with the EEC in February was \$1.9 billion. Western Europe financed this deficit with Japan, and the East Asian Newly Industrialising Countries (NICs), through a trade surplus with the United States — the EEC visible trade surplus with the United States in 1987 was \$24.3 billion dollars.

Limping

This situation in the last eight years allowed Western Europe to limp along — although with a growth significantly less than either Japan or the United States — the latter benefitting from huge loans from both Japan and Western Europe. But Western Europe's situation was not particularly serious as long as it could finance its deficit with Japan through a surplus with the United States.

The new fact in the situation, which sharply alters the economic situation of Western Europe, is the rapid devaluation of the dollar since 1985 which accelerated sharply after the October 1987 crash. This has given the possibility for the United States to begin to rapidly close its balance of payments deficit with Western Europe.

Figures for the first four months of this year show the US balance of payments



deficit with Europe down to \$4.6bn compared to \$8.5bn in the same period last year. The US deficit with Japan, in contrast, has decreased much less rapidly — from \$19.3bn to \$17.5bn. This reflects the fact that the US can compete much more easily with the stagnant West European economies than it can with Japan.

Loses

The consequences of this are already beginning to develop. A series of British and European companies, starting with British Aerospace, have started to report major losses as a result of being undercut by US exports made dramatically more attractive by the devalued dollar.

The squeeze on Western Europe is made worse by the fact that the US trade offensive will not lead to a lessening of Japanese pressure. On the contrary as Japanese exports to the United States are cut by dollar devaluation Japan is increasing its export offensive against Europe. In February Japanese exports to the US fell by 14.3 per cent while exports to the EEC rose by 22 per cent.

Western Europe is now coming under a squeeze from two directions — the familiar squeeze from Japan and now, added to this, a squeeze from the United States.

To complicate the situation still further for Lawson, there will not be an equal sharing of this burden within Western Europe. Within the EEC the strongest economy, West Germany, will unload the burden onto the weaker

ones — including Britain.

This is already occurring. With the cut back of exports to the US, due to the dollar devaluation, West Germany's export offensive inside the EEC is being stepped up. During the fourth quarter of 1987, German exports to the US fell by 5 per cent, while those to Western Europe increased by 9 per cent. West German exports to the rest of the European Community rose by 6 per cent in real terms last year.

In this competition West Germany is able to use not only the inherent power of its economy but also the mechanisms of the EEC and the European Monetary System (EMS) to reinforce its position. The real value of the D-Mark against the currencies of its chief trading partners has fallen significantly over the past year. West German exporters have gained roughly 2 per cent in competitiveness since February 1987 against its major West European rivals.

Squeezed

The Single European Act, coming into force in 1992, will make this situation worse and West Germany more dominant. While Western Europe as a whole will be squeezed from two directions — from Japan and from the United States — Britain will also be squeezed inside the EEC by West Germany. This is why Lawson has become preoccupied with the exchange rate of the pound against the deutsche mark.

In the immediate battle inside the cabinet Lawson has won out — the first

serious defeat on policy within the government Thatcher has suffered since she was elected. Lawson won due to the massive backing he was given from the CBI and virtually the entire financial press.

Economically, in a capitalist framework, there is no doubt that Lawson was right. The decade when Britain's balance of payments could be kept afloat on a sea of oil is now past. The surplus on Britain's oil trade has halved, from £8 billion to £4 billion, in the last eighteen months.

But politically Thatcher understood perfectly accurately the risks involved. If the balance of payments deficit now has to be plugged by a significant rise in manufactured exports — and that is now the only option open — that means a significant increase in manufacturing output. And with that will undoubtedly come renewed trade union pressure on wages and at least better conditions for trade union militancy. Indeed the first symptoms of both are beginning to appear.

Irony

Under Lawson's economic strategy the economic policy which has kept the labour movement on its back for nine years is going to have to be adjusted. Furthermore Lawson's policy implies keeping down the exchange rate of the pound and therefore running the risk of inflation from the higher price of imported goods. A combination of higher inflation and rapidly rising manufacturing output would simultaneously antagonise the labour movement and place it in a stronger bargaining position.

It is a great irony by Thatcher's greatest international ally, Ronald Reagan, has presided over the policies that are beginning, just beginning, to undermine the base of Thatcher's economic success. For the first time for nine years the tide of economic events is now running not with but against the Thatcher government.

How Mitterrand threw away the elections

THE TWO weeks leading up to the first round of the elections to the French National Assembly saw an apparently bizarre spectacle — a party campaigning against achieving too great a victory. As a headline in the *Observer* put it 'Socialists fear landslide'. In the event the French Socialists under Mitterrand and Rocard so demobilised their own supporters that not merely didn't they win a landslide, but they didn't even secure an overall majority in the Assembly. SYLVIA LEE analyses the outcome of the French elections.

THE performance of Mitterrand and the French Socialist Party in the elections to the French assembly can only be described as snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

Mitterrand entered the election with the clear project, not of winning a powerful victory, but of forcing an agreement for a 'centre' right/SP government with a section of the right. Support from any section of the right looked less likely the greater the SP victory — hence the feeble mobilisation by the Socialist Party.

However, this tactic has rebounded on Mitterrand, and instead of a relatively comfortable five years of office, with the Socialist Party dictating terms to the 'centre' parties, the SP is now squeezed between a strong CP group of delegates, and the right — which will be able to dictate the terms of its support for the government.

Mitterrand's personal success in the May presidential elections, and the refusal of the centre parties to come to any agreement with the minority socialist government of Rocard in the pre-general election assembly, had laid the basis for a striking victory by the French Socialist Party.

Coalition

In fact, as far as Mitterrand and the leadership of the SP was concerned, this was precisely the problem. The SP looked like winning a crushing majority over all its right-wing rivals.

It was this eventuality which Mitterrand was concerned to avoid. His goal was for a majority SP government, but with a narrow enough majority for the pressure to be maintained on the 'centre' parties to break up their coalition with the right and join the government in some form.

Mitterrand is an experienced bourgeois politician, having personally participated in nearly all the coalition governments of the Fourth French Republic after the Second World War. Coalition governments, with no one party established as the 'natural' French bourgeois party of government — unlike the Conservative party in Britain — had been a constant feature of French politics since 1947. It was this situation which created the conditions for the semi-Bonapartist role of the French president under De Gaulle which was built into the constitutional framework of the Fifth Republic in 1958.

In the 70s, under Giscard d'Estaing, a stable right-wing bloc of parties in the UDF appeared to be emerging which could command a stable majority within the French state.

Mitterrand's clear project was to prevent this being created, and to instead build up an alternative political force, composed of the SP on a clear 'Eurosocialist' line, and the 'centre' right parties of the right-wing coalition, on a line of support for big European capital.

Two obstacles confronted Mitterrand on this course. First the SP had to be built up to completely eliminate the CP on its left flank. In this project Mitterrand was aided by the sectarianism of the CP in failing to call for unity of the French workers movement, and secondly the reorientation of the French bourgeoisie from its old 'softness' towards the Soviet Union towards alliance with West Germany allowed no space within bourgeois politics for the CP's international line.

Throughout the early and mid 70s Mitterrand maintained the SP on a left line, arguing for unity of the left, and finally achieving success in the 1981 elections. This 'left' orientation through the 70s ensured the dominance of the SP over the CP within the left, and ensured that when the CP finally broke the electoral pact with the SP in 1984, the advantage entirely went to the SP.

Despite Mitterrand's right turn the absence of unity on the left is seen as the responsibility of the CP, and from the point of view of the French bourgeoisie, which is what Mitterrand has always been interested in, it made the SP a more useful instrument, not less.

The long term decline of the French CP, exploited ably by Mitterrand for his own ends, had reduced the CP to 7 per cent of the vote in the first round of the presidential elections.

Bourgeois

Secondly the SP alone was not considered, and would not be considered a totally perfect instrument for government by the bourgeoisie. The ruling class prefers to exercise its rule directly through its own parties, rather than indirectly through the labour bureaucracy. The SP is not a bourgeois party pure and simple, its ties to the workers' movement make it a less than totally precise instrument for the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie would prefer that the actions of an SP government were given backbone and sharpness by the direct role of some straightforwardly bourgeois force.

Mitterrand has successfully eliminated any foreseeable threat of the emergence of any significant left within the SP. This has been achieved through a combination of incorporation of left-ward moving forces — seen again in his

attempt to achieve a deal with Juquin for the assembly election — a successful 'modernisation' of the party through structures like the Women's Ministry — which won him a majority female vote in the presidential elections — and blocking any closer relationship between the SP and the traditionally SP-aligned trade union federation, the CFDT.

The separation between the SP and the trade unions is a vital component of Mitterrand's strategy. As a result, despite the precipitous decline of the CP, the CP-aligned federation, the CGT, remains the most powerful trade union federation in France.

Alliance

However eliminating the left is not enough. Mitterrand has to draw in some element of the bourgeois parties in order to secure his project, and this was his goal at this election.

Through weakening and undermining the right-wing block between the UDF and RPR, Mitterrand aimed to cement an alliance between the SP and the 'centre' bourgeois parties. Such an alliance, within which the SP was dominant, would act as a guarantee to the bourgeoisie for the actions of the government.

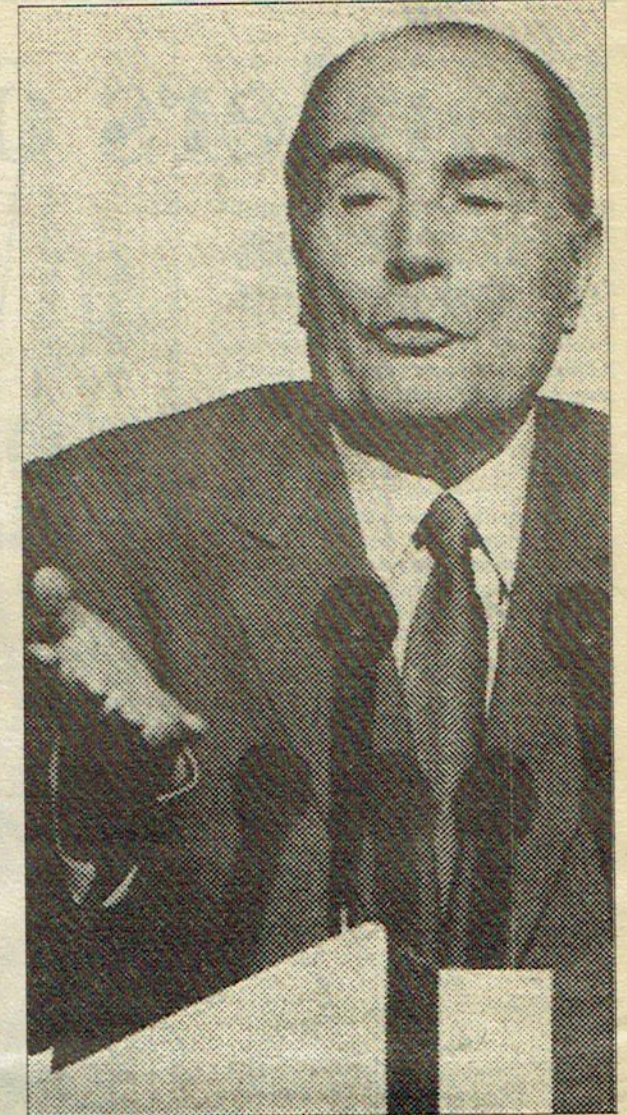
Equally Mitterrand is concerned that the right-wing programme he projects for the government should appear to be the result of constraints imposed by coalition with forces outside the SP. This was the meaning of 'opening out'.

A crushing majority for the Socialist Party would have reinforced the alliance between the 'centre' and right-wing parties as a united opposition, and would have undermined Mitterrand's project of creating a SP/'centre' pact as the stable governmental instrument of big European capital in France.

On the surface there is no reason why an SP with a crushing majority should have been bothered about a united 'centre/right' opposition. However the policy of Mitterrand is precisely to deepen the 'Eurosocialist' features of the French SP, particularly by entering electoral agreements with 'centre' bourgeois parties, to conclusively break his party from the line of an SP/CP alliance.

This means breaking with the policies which the first Mitterrand government was elected on in 1981, and deepening a course towards strengthening the EEC, building up the independent European nuclear force, and support for the Single European Act.

Making the SP the 'natural' party of government of the French bourgeoisie means building a new SP/centre bloc which



can both defeat the old Gaullist right, and be acceptable to the bourgeoisie as a long-term governmental option.

In this context the party which was the least worried about the growth in support for Le Pen and the extreme fascist right was the SP. The existence of a relatively strong extreme right cutting into the support for Chirac and creating tensions within the 'centre/right' coalition was not without interest for Mitterrand's project.

A powerful victory for the Socialist Party would not have aided Mitterrand's project. However, Mitterrand's tactic has backfired, for neither did he wish to be caught in a trap between the CP on the one hand and the 'centre' parties on the other.

There is no way that Mitterrand is going to take his party into another coalition with the Communist Party, but an important CP bloc of assembly members will be a thorn in the side of the government if Mitterrand cannot convince 'centre' deputies to vote for his policies.

Failure

The failure to secure an overall majority for the SP means that Mitterrand is not in control of the situation. The SP has to form an agreement with a section of the right. However this will be on the terms of the right for as soon as this support is withdrawn the government would fall.

It is self-evident that the CP will not vote to keep Mitterrand in office, and the last thing Mitterrand would want is to be reliant on the CP anyway. Therefore rather than having two or three years to work out exactly how to deal with the situation and on what terms, Mitterrand

and Rocard are now posed with the task of forging an agreement rapidly — and one which will last.

This effectively makes the SP government the prisoner of the right.

Left

Mitterrand's tactic of demobilising the SP's vote was ill-judged. Moreover, the higher vote for the CP in the assembly election, which pushed its percentage up to 11.8, indicates that there was some dissatisfaction among a part of SP voters about Mitterrand's strategy of 'opening out' — or more accurately alliance with the right.

Alongside this the result may well strengthen Le Pen and the extreme right. The failure of the right in the presidential election, where there was no agreement with Le Pen, and the relative success of the right in the second round of the assembly elections, where there was an electoral agreement with Le Pen, will allow Le Pen's supporters to argue the right can only seriously advance in alliance with the National Front.

Mitterrand's course of seeking coalition with bourgeois parties to pursue a policy in the interests of big European capital is simply the sharpest example of a trend throughout the socialist parties in Europe.

The response of the left must be to call on the Socialist Party to abandon this project, and raise the demand for a SP/CP government. This is the correct response to the outcome of the elections, and to the right-wing road that Mitterrand has mapped out both for the socialist party and the workers' movement in France.



Mass strike hits Botha

THE BIGGEST strike in South African history took place between 6 and 8 June. Three million workers struck on the first day, responding to calls from COSATU and the UDF to protest at Botha's restrictions on trade unions and the bans on 17 anti-apartheid organisations introduced in February.

The response was strongest in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging triangle, South Africa's manufacturing heartland, Natal and Eastern Cape. All car plants were shut. Most heavy manufacturing closed down. Transport was deserted. Support stayed high over the three full days.

On day three, 72 per cent of workers in manufacturing were still out. The weakest response was in Western Cape and in mining. Gold, which earns 60 per cent of South Africa's foreign exchange, was only marginally affected.

By Paul Atkin

More coal miners came out, but only a small proportion of the 555,000 in the industry. The NUM claimed that 40,000 of its members came out. The Chamber of Mines claimed 9000. It's clear that the NUM is still recovering from the huge exertion of its national strike last September.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming success of the strike has hit Botha's immediate strategy hard. The ban on the legal mass opposition around the UDF was designed to force it underground and prevent mass protests.

The ban on political activity by the trade unions was designed to hobble COSATU into a purely economic role and avoid mass strikes to unite the black working class. This was intended to clear the decks for the re-emergence of a layer of black collaborators at Township level, who would be cemented in place by the elections to 'township councils' sponsored by the regime in September this year.

Botha's recent statement that 'selected' black figureheads could serve as wind-dressing in government was following the same tack. The strike has ruled this out with its massive reassertion of support for COSATU and the UDF.

In the face of Buthelezi's opposition, the strike was particularly solid in Natal. There was no concerted counter-attack from Buthelezi. This puts the UDF and COSATU on an accelerated offensive in the province, having fought off Inkatha's attacks over

the last year.

The white capitalists, who lost £125 million through the strike, spent the strike issuing threats to the unions of dismissal and victimisation of union activists.

In Orange Free State the supposedly 'liberal' Anglo-American Corporation took out injunctions against NUM officials barring them from agitating for the strike. At the same time, they were issuing soft worded statements to the international press proclaiming the virtues of a joint approach to the government by unions and capital, while inside the country they maintained a solid front with the government against the unions.

In the two days after the strike, COSATU reports that 2,000 workers have been sacked. These have been mostly in small companies. The larger concerns seem to be keeping their powder dry for the time being, with the threat of sackings maintained.

Botha's initial response was to renew the state of emergency for a further year because of the 'revolutionary climate' in the country. The bans on opposition organisations and reporting restrictions have been extended. At the same time, all army reservists have been called up because of the sharply deteriorating position of the South African Army in Angola.

Sharpeville

Botha's political bankruptcy has been starkly revealed by the decision not to allow the Sharpeville 6 a retrial. This is an act of naked vengeance. Even with the police and army deployed in the Townships during the strike the regime was unable to risk the response to a massacre like Soweto in '76. Now, with the strike over it has determined to make an example of six people, convicted to hang for being part of a demonstration in which a collaborator was killed.

This is bound to goad the mass movement into more determined resistance and undermine Botha's collaborators in the run up to September's Township elections. It is the job of the solidarity movement to ensure the regime pays the price internationally.

Women's Action Committee backs Heffer

THE executive meeting of the Labour Women's Action Committee (LWAC) on Saturday 11 June agreed to support Eric Heffer in the election for Deputy Leader. This follows LWAC's previous decision to support Tony Benn in the election for Leader.

By Anne Kane
Asst Secretary LWAC
(personal capacity)

LWAC's decision was made following approaches to all candidates standing for Deputy Leader on where they stood in relation to LWAC's demands and objectives. Following the April executive LWAC wrote to all three candidates — Eric Heffer, Roy Hattersley, and John Prescott — listing LWAC's demands and inviting them to indicate their views. These included LWAC's demands for the restructuring of the women's organisation, that the election of the NEC women's section should be by women at the women's conference, that there should be at least one woman on every parliamentary short list, and that in line with 1985 party conference decision on abortion there should be no 'conscience' vote on abortion.

By the executive on 11 June the only candidate to even bother to reply was Eric Heffer. More importantly the content of the reply was quite in line with LWAC's demands as stated to the candidates. Particularly highlighted in the reply was Eric Heffer's support for the 1985 conference decision on abortion, including that there should be no vote of 'conscience'. He explained that this was in line with his longstanding support for 'the Steel Bill since I voted for it when he first introduced it in the Commons'.

LWAC was understandably encouraged to receive this statement of support for a woman's right to choose as well as for the changes demanded to give women some decision making power in the party. Despite LWAC's decision to approach all candidates on the matter of the deputy leadership, Roy Hattersley's abstention on the Alton Bill and strong opposition to the right of women to choice on abortion are established facts. That the other candidates did not even take women and LWAC seriously enough even to reply to the approaches deserves the disdain of women and those who support their rights in the party.

LWAC is therefore able to state its support for Eric Heffer as Deputy Leader.

LWAC Fringe Meeting

Modernising the Party Giving Women a Political Voice

Speakers:

Diane Abbott MP
Alice Mahon MP
Maureen O'Mara, NUPE
Ann Pettifor, LWAC
Margaret Prosser, TGWU
Jo Richardson MP

Saturday 25 June
5.30pm, Southcliffe Hotel, Kings Room
(opposite conference centre)



SHIKISHA, the Zulu women's group from South Africa, will play at Saturday night's social during Labour Women's conference.

The social is jointly organised by the Yorkshire Regional Women's Committee, LWAC and LWI. Venue is 'Leisure World'. Tickets are £2.50/£1.50.

Women's conference

A real opportunity for change

THE results of the review of the women's organisation, initiated by 1986 Labour Party conference, are a striking vindication of the Labour Women's Action Committee's nine year long campaign for the restructuring of the women's organisation.

In the responses to the consultation document the proposals that LWAC has fought for, particularly the election of the NEC women's places, received majority support. LWAC's correct campaign has won hegemony among all those supporting change in the Labour Women's Organisation.

The need for a radical reorientation of the Labour Party on women was most strikingly demonstrated recently with regard to the Alton Bill. The 55 Labour MPs who did their bit to clear the way for David Alton, have in fact deepened the groundswell of support for LWAC's proposals among women not only in the constituency parties but also in the trade unions.

By Anne Kane

In contrast to the apologetics of the Labour leadership, the response from the unions to these MPs who failed to vote against Alton on 22 January, many of whom are union sponsored, was very sharp.

Of the union conferences which have recently taken place APEX, USDAW, and NUPE, have all passed resolutions condemning the voting of those sponsored MPs who failed to vote against Alton.

The NCU and the CPSA, in the face of highly funded and organised anti-abortion campaigns — in the NCU for disaffiliation from NAC, in the CPSA for a 'neutral' position on abortion and therefore no policy on Alton — reaffirmed their existing positions.

Unions

The actions of the Parliamentary Labour Party and Labour leadership were way out of line with the views of the majority of the labour movement. Walworth road refused all appeals from CLPs, the national women's conference, and a number of regional women's and party conferences, for firm action such as a 3 line whip.

The Deputy Leader, among many others in the PLP, is firmly against a woman's right to choose and Kinnock is known to have personally fought for the insertion of the 'right of conscience' into the NEC statement on Alton at 1987 conference, in defiance of voted policy.

Not only did the Labour leadership show itself way out of line with opinion in the labour movement, but was willing to take quite exceptional measures to shield some of the most reactionary elements in the party presently in the PLP.

A similar clash is evident in the Policy Review. At the same time as virtually all the large unions — including the TGWU, GMBATU, NUPE, USDAW — are embarking on campaigns to recruit women and at least beginning to grapple with the implications for policy and

structure, Labour's policy review flatly ignores the changes necessary if Labour wants to win the electoral support and the active involvement of women.

Unions like the GMB are promoting themselves as 'women's unions' for good reasons. By 1995 women will be a majority in the workforce. Figures just released for Wales show that working women outnumber working men (378,000 women working full time and 180,000 part time, against 480,000 men working).

The fact is that the trade unions are increasingly dependent on women for their existence and this lies behind the campaigns being waged to attract and recruit women workers by unions like the TGWU, NUPE and GMBATU.

Policy

These campaigns are paying off — figures released in April showed significant increases in female membership amongst some of the main unions. The GMB announced the first increase in its membership since 1979 in the last quarter of 1987, with the majority of the 2,397 increase being women members. NALGO and USDAW, the other two unions to register growth, are well known as unions which particularly organise in areas with high concentrations of women workers.

This concern to recruit more women has placed women more centrally in the real concerns of these unions, and led to demands for sharp action on issues like Alton, but also pressure to improve the representation of women within the unions themselves.

Far from dragging behind women in the CLPs the action taken by women in the trade unions was striking. There was a new level of activity and support from the women at all levels of the unions, from rank and file women, through to national women's structures and officers, to the TUC Women's Committee and conference.

Vote

Much of this support was facilitated by national women's officers who worked directly with the FAB Campaign. Many of these positions have been created in the last few years on the basis of struggles of women in the unions themselves for a greater say.

This is not to say that all is rosy for women in the unions. Many of the changes remain marginal. Nonetheless they reveal



that the PLP and the NEC are no longer simply out of step with the views of women in the CLPs or even the National Women's Organisation, but are increasingly out of line with policy of the mainstream trade unions.

The changes in the unions have added weight to the pressure for progressive changes in the Labour Party.

Kinnock and Hattersley claim their policy review is about 'modernising' the party, but the refusal to take on board the need to update the party on women goes in exactly the opposite direction.

This is why LWAC has been correct to argue all along that the key to updating the party's policy and positions on women, is to create a powerful Labour Women's Organisation with real weight and influence in the party.

WAC's proposals have won out because they are the most serious proposals to come forward in the context of the actual choices available.

LWAC

In responses to the Review of Women's Organisation, a majority were in favour of the right of women to elect the women's section of the NEC, with only one third of trade unions which responded registering support for the status quo.

The real fight now is for the results of the Review to be taken on board by annual conference and the NEC, and implemented.

Unfortunately every indication — from the narrow concerns of the policy review through to the known positions of Kinnock on the women's organisation — is that the NEC and the PLP are resolutely against greater power for the women's organisation.

Despite the clear view coming from some unions and CLPs for change in the women's organisation there is huge resistance from the right. Unions like the AEU

and the EPTU have consistently opposed increased power for women and the demand that the women's conference should have the right to elect the women's places on the NEC. Democracy for the women's organisation is also a threat to the right in the PLP.

Given the positions of the women's organisation, implementing the results of the Review to allow women to elect their NEC representatives would lead to more prominence for policies strongly in defence of the interests of women, such as opposition to the Alton Bill.

Kinnock

For Kinnock therefore, to support the proposals coming out of the Review poses breaking his alliance with the right, the key to pushing forward on the policy review and the wholesale ditching of any commitment to socialist change.

In order to push through any real restructuring of the party on women it will be necessary to create the broadest possible agreement around proposals that take forward the position of women in the party and can begin to cut into the bloc between the 'soft left' and the right in support of Kinnock.

That is why LWAC has decided to strongly support the proposal backed by the TGWU for an electoral college system of voting at women's conference based on 45 per cent each for the unions and CLP women's organisations, and 10 per cent for the socialist societies.

LWAC did not promote this position originally, as it does overrepresent the socialist societies, nonetheless it is the proposal which will take women forward that has the most chance of success. Therefore if women's conference and all but the most right-wing unions can unite around this proposal it will be exceedingly difficult for Kinnock to get off the hook. It is this opportunity for

agreement with a series of major trade unions to take the women's organisation forward that has to be grasped at women's conference this year.

It is in this light that the options being promoted by *Militant*, for a voting strength at conference of around 3000 delegates, and other unworkable options presented as more abstractly 'democratic', are actually a dangerous diversion, which no doubt will be found welcome by the hard right.

Alternatives

Similarly the accepted wisdom of *Labour Briefing* — now organised as 'Women for Socialism' — that the review was an attempt to witchhunt the women's organisation, and therefore it was best to try to wreck the whole business, simply gave aid and succour to the most reactionary forces in the labour movement who are hostile to any progressive change on women.

Militant's proposal is to give one vote per delegate on the ratio of 2 delegates from women's sections, 4 from women's councils and for trade unions 2 delegates per thousand affiliated women members. The fact that this proposal would result in a women's conference of around 3000 potential accredited delegates with an entrenched overwhelming majority for the unions would render this proposal laughable were it not that a majority of CLPs and women's sections initially supported it.

If this was the final outcome of the Review it would mean no change and the right would be overjoyed.

The key to moving forward to a powerful women's organisation is maintaining the unity of purpose of women in both the CLPs and the unions built during this Review. LWAC's fringe meeting at conference is part of this. Speakers include Ann Pettifor, Jo Richardson MP and Diane Abbott MP along with Margaret Prosser from the TGWU and Maureen O'Mara from NUPE.

The Socialist Conference — not the way forward

The turnout of over 2,000 people to the second Socialist Conference in Chesterfield on 11/12 June reflected the wide support which exists for Tony Benn and Eric Heffer's challenge to the Labour leadership and its policies. But, unfortunately, the conference did not tap that support and show it a way forward.

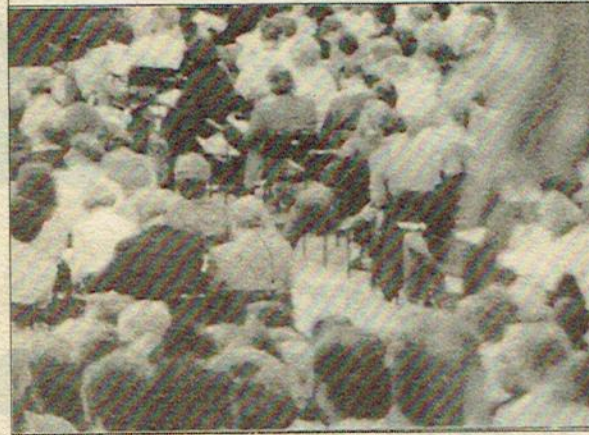
What should have been at the centre of the weekend came at the rally on the Saturday evening when there were a series of blistering attacks on the policy review from Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, Alice Mahon and others. These took up the most central issues facing the labour movement — unilateral nuclear disarmament, public ownership and economic policy, the party's links with the trade unions, the huge change in the composition of the working class in favour of women and black people. The meeting, organised by the Campaign Group also had a clear focus — into the Labour Party. Because it will be at Labour Party conference, and in the trade union conferences and Labour Party meetings which prepare it, that the issue of unilateral nuclear disarmament, or the economy, will be decided. No 'movement', nor any organisation outside the Labour Party, will decide whether nuclear weapons are removed from Britain, or what economic policy is adopted by the labour movement. That will be

decided *inside* the Labour Party.

The problem is that the rest of the conference did not have that focus. It was dictated by concerns of those outside the Labour Party — in particular by the Socialist Society and its concern to try to create a new party outside the Labour Party — and its political focus was therefore flawed. Individual positive developments at the conference did not compensate for that wrong focus.

By John Ross

This came up very clearly in the attempt to create rival organisations to existing campaigns in the Labour Party. 'Women for Socialism' for example, whose platform consisted of people who had been defeated in internal struggles in the Labour Women's Action Committee, is a purely phantom organisation. Since its founding at the first Chesterfield conference it has carried on no activities, circulated no resolutions or proposals for the Labour Party



or elsewhere, played no role in the Fight Alton Bill campaign. Its sole real purpose is to attack the Labour Women's Action Committee. Yet this organisation was given a prominent place at the conference.

Similarly on Ireland there is an authoritative organisation in the Labour Party — the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI). After a series of internal discussions this has adopted clear perspectives. Yet it was those who had been defeated in the LCI who were given a platform at Chesterfield — what was clearly intended was to attempt to launch a rival projected course to the LCI. This is a purely sectarian project.

The reasons for the

ambiguities, and on a number of issues wrong positions, of the conference were threefold.

First, a section of the conference organisers, in particular in the Socialist Society, continue to press right wing policies that do not have the support of the Campaign Group or the wider left in the party. Thus in the workshop on international economic policy support for the EEC was urged as a policy for the left on the basis of the idea that its institutions could be used to control transnational companies* the workshop on foreign policy disarmament was led off by the European Nuclear Disarmament campaign — which gives some credence to nonsense about the 'soviet threat'.

One of the papers circulated by the conference organisers, Richard Kuper, urges support for Proportional Representation. Concretely in Britain today this would simply be a mechanism to prevent Labour forming majority governments and instead increase pressure for it to enter coalition with the Social and Liberal Democrats — which is why PR has the support of those forces in the labour movement, such as Eric Hammond, Gavin Laird, and Eric Hobsbawm, who support coalition with the SLD.

This, of course, is tied to the question of whether to be in the Labour Party or not. If the goal is to set up a rival to the Labour Party then PR is essential. If, on the contrary, the real task today is to prevent Labour being pulled into coalitionist politics with the SLD then opposing PR is essential.

On the economy the statement on 'Aims and Objectives' adopted, and some of the policy papers, were a step forward in clearly reaffirming the centrality of public ownership. This was in sharp contrast to the first Socialist Conference at which Robin Murray had placed all his emphasis on attacking 'traditional' public ownership and it had been suggested by the speaker at

the international economy workshop that joining the European Monetary System might be an appropriate response to the October Wall Street crash. This shift in emphasis on the economy, together with the involvement of the Labour Party Black Section, was the chief positive shift at the conference.

Finally these points came together in the decision to establish a 'Socialist Movement' with 45 member National Committee and the establishment of local groups. The latter in particular goes in the wrong direction.

There are today clearly established rank and file campaigns in the Labour Party which have for years a track record of struggle for party democracy — through the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, for women's rights — through the Women's Action Committee, against racism — by the Black Section, for withdrawal from Ireland through the Labour Committee on Ireland and so on. These have established recognised positions in the party.

The attempt to bypass these campaigns, firstly, will not work and, secondly, is deeply sectarian. Furthermore the politics on which this is being attempted is, in several cases, politically substantially to the right of the existing

campaigns — this is particularly the case where the Socialist Society is concerned.

On a local level, hitherto, the Campaign Group has encouraged the formation of local Campaign Groups. These have a clear focus — winning the activity and political positions which are necessary in the Labour Party and labour movement. 'Chesterfield' groups, which include those not in the Labour Party, have no such clear role. Furthermore, as in the real world it is not possible to build two local organisations simultaneously, Chesterfield groups will cut across building Campaign groups — and therefore cut across the strengthening of the left in the Labour Party.

This is particularly important as the Benn-Heffer campaign potentially gives a real opportunity to organise the left in the party.

The ambiguity of its relation to the Labour Party, and the sectarianism it is led into by attempting to bypass the existing campaigns in the party, means that the potential of those 2,000 people at Chesterfield is not properly utilised. To be effective it has to be clearly reoriented to building an organised political left inside the Labour Party and labour movement.

Ireland — 'Time to Go!'

THE LAUNCH of what is planned as the largest and most wide ranging series of activities to promote support for British withdrawal from Ireland seen for decades will take place on 30 June.

On that day 'Time to Go' a charter signed by a very broad range of political figures, artists and other public figures will be promoted. Planned to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of British troops being sent to Ireland, a broad range of events and political discussion are scheduled, to culminate in a carnival and demonstration in London in August 1989.

By Anne Kane

The Charter's theme is that these have been 'twenty wasted years'. It points out that with nearly 3000 dead and with no progress on some of the most basic demands of the civil rights movement successive attempts to find a British solution have failed.

A diverse range of figures have said yes to its question 'Isn't it time Britain left Northern Ireland?'. These include organisations like the LCI along with representatives of the Federation of Irish Societies and the Indian Workers Association, journalists such as Melanie Mc-

Fadyean, John Pilger, Donald Woods and Joe Haines of the *Daily Mirror*, writers such as Margaret Ward and AJP Taylor, actors Emma Thompson and Robbie Coltrane, poets Benjamin Zephaniah and Linton Kweisi Johnson, and others such as Wendy Savage, Billy Bragg and Peter Townsend. MPs from across the political spectrum have given support and include Clare Short, Ken Livingstone and Simon Hughes amongst others.

The aim of the year is to stimulate the widest possible discussion of British presence in Ireland and to take popular support for withdrawal on to an entirely new level. The programme of events is very broad in scope, including political meetings and conferences, speaking tours and the August demonstration along with cultural events such as film festival, art exhibitions, music and social activities.

Following the press launch of the Charter, a 'rolling launch' around England, Scotland and Wales is planned for Sep-

tember and October. In London, the LCI plans to organise a tour of colleges for Freshers Fairs and to organise a central London rally for mid-October.

This will be combined with contacting constituency Labour Parties in London informing them of events, offering speakers and in particular promoting resolutions on Ireland and the year of action for the London Labour Party Conference. To begin to revitalise awareness in the London party, LCI plans a fringe meeting at the London conference, the first for some years.

These and similar events around the country will be used to promote the National Activists Conference planned for November 26 in London. This aims to consolidate and strengthen plans for local and national activity leading up to the August demonstration. In London for instance it is aimed to use the time after this to hold a borough by borough series of meetings, coordinated through the LCI and other supporting organisations in London.

For spring 1989 the final run into the demonstration and carnival will be started by a conference, being provisionally entitled 'The Great Debate' to feature prominent representatives

of organisations spanning the political spectrum in Ireland and Britain.

A further round of political and cultural activities are planned following this, to build the maximum support for the August events.

Finally it is hoped that a key feature of the year will be the 'Women's Year of Action'. Labour Women for Ireland is working with other women's organisations and individuals in planning events to highlight the experience of Irish women and to take advantage of the already considerable support within the women's labour movement for British withdrawal from Ireland.

An initial planning meeting is being held in the London Women's Centre on 9 July. LWI plans underway include a launch meeting at Labour Women's Conference on June 25 where speakers will include Clare Short MP, Theresa Smalley of the Guildford 4 Campaign, the Irish Women's Abortion Support Group and the United Campaign Against Strip Searching, as well as a national roadshow for International Women's Week in March 1989, and meetings at forthcoming regional Labour women's conferences and TUC Women's Conference.

CAMPAIGN GROUP (SCOTLAND) CONFERENCE

ALTERNATIVES TO THE POLICY REVIEW

Saturday 27th August

10.00am—6.00pm Denny Civic Theatre, Dumbarton

THE RESULTS of the policy review are a profound shift to the right. They add up to shifting Labour's policy on unilateral nuclear disarmament, on the Common Market, on public ownership, on trade unions, and all the main areas where the media have been campaigning against Party policy.

Proposals to re-affirm the commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament, to cut arms expenditure, to fully restore trade union rights, to phase out nuclear power, and to abolish the House of Lords were all rejected by the NEC. An economic policy is proposed for which the figures simply don't add up.

This outcome of the policy review has nothing to offer Labour in Scotland, and will make it more difficult to win a general election.

Campaign Group Scotland is therefore hosting a conference to discuss the alternatives to the policy review statements.

SPEAKERS WILL INCLUDE

TONY BENN MP ERIC HEFFER MP
KEN LIVINGSTONE MP ANN PETTIFOR
ANN HENDERSON DENNIS CANAVAN MP
GAVIN STRANG MP

• The alternative to the Policy Review • Labour's economic policy • The case for unilateralism • Women in the Scottish labour movement • The fight for a Scottish Assembly; and the campaign against the Poll Tax • Scottish Labour and Ireland • Fighting racism • Defend the trade unions

Please register in advance. Discussion papers will be issued beforehand. Easy road and rail access — full directions available, and some financial assistance with fares where necessary. The venue has disabled access. Creche will be provided. Signing provision for the deaf. For more information contact Ann Henderson (Secretary, Campaign Group (Scotland)), address below.

Ann Henderson, 8 Annet Street, Govanhill, Glasgow G42 8XZ



The Policy threatens the entire party.

NEIL KINNOCK'S statement renouncing unilateralism, and the resignation of Denzil Davis, has brought the issues in the policy review right into the centre of the Labour leadership election. Socialist Action asked **TONY BENN** for his assessment of the policy review.

THE EVENTS of early June, Neil Kinnock's renunciation of unilateralism and the resignation of Denzil Davis as Labour's defence spokesperson, have fully confirmed the decision to contest the leadership. To have a party leader abandon and reverse a long established policy on television and then as a result to lose his defence spokesperson in parliament is an indication of the depth of the problem in the Labour Party and the width of the anxiety across the party at the way things are developing.

From the beginning Eric Heffer and I have said that the leadership campaign was not about personalities. It was political. It was about policy. When it was decided to nominate candidates for the leadership it was known that the policy review was coming.

The issue which has now taken centre stage is our defence policy — unilateralism. It was never intended by the leadership that we should enter the next election with a defence policy comparable to the unilateralist one on which we fought the last election. All that was unclear was when they intended to attempt to alter it.

The British public is streets ahead of the Labour leadership. The document *Britain in the world*, which was the policy review paper on international and defence questions, has no analysis of the world as we shall find it in the 1990s.

The situation is really that we don't have an independent nuclear deterrent. It is totally dependent on the United States. This is even clearer with Trident. If the Americans turn off the switch it simply won't work.

Star Wars

Second the polls now show that Gorbachev is far more trusted than Reagan. This is not a question of individuals. Gorbachev knows that for the Russian economy to recover he must disarm, whereas the Americans have actually

relied on rearmament to sustain their economy. That is the difference between a capitalist and a 'communist' economy. Star Wars is the way that the Pentagon refreshes high technology industry in the United States via the defence budget.

I believe we should present our 'defence policy' as a 'peace policy'. Don't misunderstand me, I'm a unilateralist completely. But people are beginning to perceive a change in the whole international landscape. They think the European continent is on the move.

Instead of capitalising on this we are retreating. At the last election, by very careful manipulation of the defence document, we already stepped back from New Zealand's position of not letting US ships with nuclear weapons enter our ports, or aircraft with nuclear weapons land at our airfields.

Defence

The retreat on defence spending, which has now been made explicit, was started before the last election. The conference decisions which were carried before that election, by a two thirds majority, were threefold: mutual dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, reduction of defence expenditure to the same percentage of the GDP as our European allies, and the non-nuclear policy.

Of these three principles the proposal to reduce defence expenditure was abandoned before the last election. In the last manifesto we said we would spend more on conventional weapons. Now the NEC has made this explicit by voting against reducing defence spending to the same level as our European allies.

If we take the other policy review papers, that on the economy is entirely lacking in any analysis as to why things are as they are. The situation is attributed to the government, to the failure of exchange rate policy, macro-economic policy and so on. There is no explanation of what is going on. There is no reference to past experience where Labour governments which have come in with high expectations which have been frustrated by pressures from banks and multi-

nationals. The document even claims that job satisfaction is as important to the employer as it is to the employee! Above all the economic policy document has abandoned entirely the idea that economic power may be in any way linked to ownership. It is a fundamentally anti-democratic document, an anti-socialist document.

Unions

Then there is the document 'People at work' which downgrades the role of the trade unions. The party leadership wants the trade unions for the electoral college, but they don't want the trade unions to play a leading part in the development of future economic policy.

The original draft of the document said that works councils would be open to everyone as in Sweden and West Germany. Although the trade unions would still be 'influential' in the works councils, it would be the works council and not the trade union that would be at central.

There was no reference to the fact that trade unions are more popular than they have been for fifteen years. All the emphasis is that a Labour government would work with business, with the CBI, with Chambers of Commerce and so on, not that it would work with the trade unions.

That draft created so much anxiety that it was withdrawn. But it was indicative that such a document could come forward in the Labour Party at a high level.

Then there is the paper on Economic Equality. This contains the nearest thing to a pledge in the policy review — which is that higher tax rates will not rise above those prevailing in European countries. So we have a firm policy for higher tax payers.

But when I moved an amendment at the bottom end of the scale, that we would write off all the debt owed by the poor under the social fund — in the way that the Rover debts were written off, or



Hundreds of thousands have protested against nuclear weapons in Britain at action.

the coal industry debts will be written off — that was declared to be unacceptable.

The document on the environment doesn't contain any reference whatever to phasing out nuclear power.

The document on democracy makes no reference to attacks on civil liberties, no reference to the House of Lords, no reference to patronage, no reference to the security services.

Finally on the EEC there was the statement by Neil Kinnock, never passed at any Labour conference, that it was inconceivable Labour could ever leave the Common Market. In fact it is clear that a Labour government coming to power in 1991 or 1992, just as the Single European Act comes into force, would be prevented by law — and our domestic law is now subservient to Common Market law — from doing anything about the control of capital, or the stimulation of the economy, which goes beyond the play of normal market forces.

Wholesale

These reviews, taken together, represent more than a retreat. They are a wholesale rout on the part of the party leadership. They unpick the two main ingredients of the Labour Party — first that it is a party based on the interests of working people reflected through the unions and, secondly, that it is a party

which has some socialist perspective however long it takes to realise.

This means we are really faced with the second phase of the leadership campaign — which will last from now to the conference. The emphasis must be on persuading conference to reject the documents, or those points in the documents to which I have referred.

Alternative

We shall also have to say, a point often used against us, that unless there is a two thirds majority, these documents will not be a part of the entrenched programme of the party.

When we got majorities for unilateralism which fell short of two thirds that was always drawn to our attention. There is a very good prospect, if we can get this across, that the party will realise that the survival of a serious alternative to Mr Thatcher is at stake.

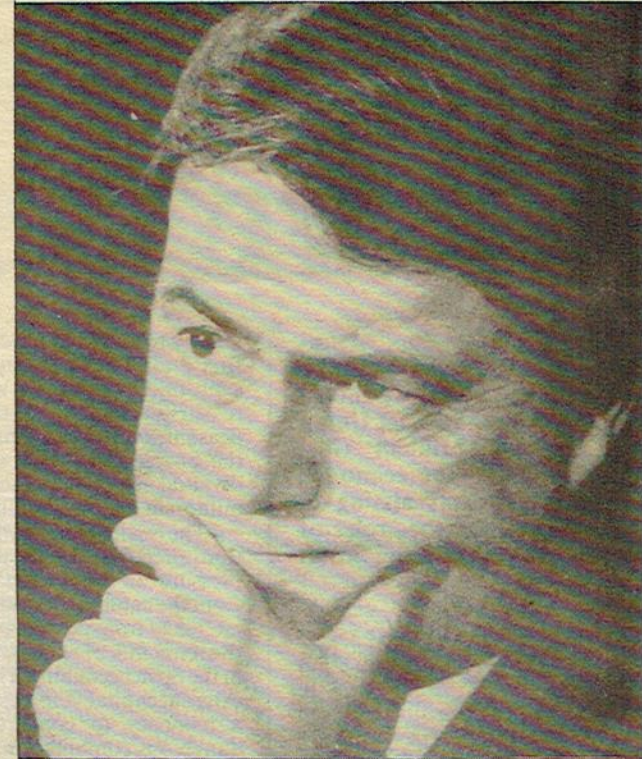
Labour Party membership is falling. It has done for some years. The role of the local parties, and the members, is to be disregarded at the same time as we are dealing with a government whose impetus for the counter revolution is getting stronger and stronger.

I believe that unless there is an alternative structure of power, representing broadly the interests of working people it will be very difficult to dislodge the

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Why vote for Heffer against Prescott

NO READER of Socialist Action is likely to be considering voting for Roy Hattersley in the deputy leadership election. Indeed in the CLPs, although not in the unions, Hattersley will be crushingly defeated. On the basis of previous years voting 75 per cent of the CLPs are likely to vote against Neil Kinnock's running partner. But a candidate who is being promoted, and who will receive a significant vote, is John Prescott. Prescott also has a real chance of defeating Hattersley.

Socialist Action has no doubt that in a second round of voting Prescott should be supported against Hattersley — and union votes make it clear that a run off would be between Hattersley and Prescott. The Campaign Group would gain, and Benn and Heffer would increase their votes, if they made it clear now that in a second round they would be voting for Prescott against the right.

But this also makes it very important to understand why socialists should vote for Eric Heffer in the first round and why it is important to get out the maximum number of votes for Heffer.

This is above all a question of policies — the fact that the soft left, which supports Prescott, has no answers to the key issues confronting the Labour Party. John Prescott does not present a programme which is even remotely capable of dealing with the present situation.

Incoherent

Indeed one of the most striking things is how difficult it is to find out what Prescott's positions are. He was a member of the Productive and Competitive Economy working group of the policy review — the key economic committee. Yet he was not present for any of the final meetings of the committee which decided on the document. Right up to today nobody knows whether Prescott is in favour of the policy document which emerged or not. As this document abandons the party's position on public ownership, and is completely economically incoherent, this is a fundamental matter.

Similarly on the trade unions Prescott has clearly called for closer links with the unions. But no one knows whether he supports the document on *People at Work* which emerged from the policy review or not.

One area where John Prescott has come out with a clear policy is on unilateralism. He has made it clear he stands for a unilateralist defence policy — which is excellent. But he has not made clear where he stands on *Britain in the World* — the policy review document on international and defence policy.

Nor has Prescott any known progressive positions on the issues which aren't in the review but should be. He has not supported the demands of the Labour Women's Action Committee —

and did not even bother to reply to WAC's request to deputy leadership candidates to clarify their positions on the key issues for women in the party. He has never supported Black Sections or black self-organisation. Prescott has never taken a position for British withdrawal from Ireland.

The reason that Prescott has avoided committing himself to virtually any definite policies is twofold. Firstly no one knows where he stands. Secondly because posing the policy issues raises the question of his relation to Kinnock.

Kinnock has treated Prescott in a disgraceful fashion. Prescott came second in the elections to the Shadow Cabinet — undoubtedly entitling him to a top job. But instead Kinnock, as part of his bloc with the right, appointed right wingers to all the key posts — John Smith as shadow chancellor, Gerald Kaufmann as shadow foreign secretary, and Roy Hattersley as shadow Home Secretary. Prescott was made energy spokesperson — junior to people he easily defeated in the shadow cabinet elections.

Insulting

Even more disgraceful were Kinnock's remarks when John Prescott made his first withdrawal, earlier this year, from running for deputy leader. Instead of welcoming this as a step to party unity — which was why Kinnock had argued against the contest — Kinnock spent his time insulting Prescott and making threats. This episode showed up Kinnock for the shallow, petty individual he is — unworthy to lead a great party. His attack on Prescott undoubtedly discredited Kinnock.

But Prescott not only has no clear positions on the policy review but his own proposals are wrong. For example writing in *Tribune* on 3 June Prescott argued, outlining his basic platform: 'We must learn the lesson from the last election, when our taxation policy was a mess. For example, it is not credible for Labour to suggest that our policies for full employment or our policies for investing in the health service, funded by taxation, can be financed on a programme of low taxation. It can't and the electorate knows it can't. Socialism is about the language of priorities. We need to argue our case, not duck the issues.'

In other words Prescott argues that Labour should fight the next election as the party of high taxation. Its programme of social reform and economic reconstruction should be achieved not at the expense of capital but by taxing sections of the working class. The real options — gaining the funds for Labour's economic policies through attacking military spending, foreign investment, public ownership and the City of London — are not advocated by Prescott.

The truth is this would be electorally disastrous — and the right can show it would be disastrous. If Labour attempts to finance its economic programme by taxing the working class, not by attacking capital, it will simply split the work-

ing class irrevocably and eliminate any possibility of a Labour government.

Prescott's programme is not mere unclear but wrong.

Finally Prescott's position is fatal flawed by the fact that he is unequivocally calling for a vote for Kinnock. Prescott says he is defending unilateralism, defunding the unions, fighting for full employment, defending public ownership but that he is urging a vote for the chief person, Kinnock, who is attacking all the policies!

This is completely incoherent. If the Policy Review is to be rejected, which must, then it is necessary to vote against Kinnock.

Prescott by running against Hattersley is attacking the key link in the party — the soft left's alliance with the right in the party. As Kinnock's entire strategy is based on allying the so called soft left with the right wing a victory for Prescott would be a devastating defeat for Kinnock. It would place the soft left in charge of the party and leave it with excuses for not carrying out its policies.

But only Heffer offers a socialist policy alternative to both the Policy Review and the fudging of Prescott. It stands clearly for public ownership, rejecting the attacks on trade union rights, for unilateralism, for reduction of defence spending, for British withdrawal from Ireland, and for defence democracy in the party.

Support

On black self-organisation and women's rights in the party we think Eric Heffer was clearly wrong in the past not to vote for Black Sections — although the final NEC meeting he attended voted in favour. But even on this issue clearly sought a short term compromise acceptable to Black Sections where Prescott has done nothing. Prescott has never indicated support for the demands of WAC whereas Heffer supports them. Heffer's positions on women and black people are clearly superior to Prescott — although women and black people will undoubtedly wish to get rid of Hattersley.

The choice is clear. Socialists should vote for Eric Heffer in the first round to express a socialist alternative to the Policy Review and Kinnock. This should be used as a basis to win votes for Heffer and the other Campaign Group candidates, in the NEC elections. In the second round Prescott should be voted against Hattersley in order to defeat the right.

It should be pointed out to those considering voting for Prescott in the first round of the deputy leadership contest — because of the necessity to defeat Hattersley — that the only way to cast a clear socialist vote, and vote against the Policy Review, is to support Heffer. And this will in no way conflict with the possibility of defeating the right. On the contrary the greater the dynamic of socialist candidates, and that means Benn and Heffer, the better the chance to defeat the right.



organised by CND

present government and replace it by one likely to give us a better deal.

Indeed this is now the most important issue of all, namely whether the Labour Party with its democratic machinery is to be allowed to continue or not.

Members of the party, left, right, and centre need reassurance that we are still a democratic party with trade unions, constituencies and other affiliated organisations able to go to annual conference and resolve our differences by the normal process of voting.

There is a crisis of representation at present when people simply do not know what role the party members are expected to play under the principles of new realism.

Opinion

We have always had differences of opinion as you would expect within the Labour Party, but we have always also known that after due debate a decision would be reached that would be clear and straight forward and that next year we could discuss the matter again.

It is not certain that this democratic procedure is a part of the leader's view of the future of the party as he sees it.

That is why, when the electoral college meets, the central issue will be about the nature legitimacy and democracy of

the party as well as about the individual policy questions that have emerged during the course of the campaign.

Finally I believe we should be clear on the outcome. It is interesting that a few years back we were told that if we were like David Owen or David Steel we would have a tremendous electoral success. In reality the centre parties have split and split again. David Steel will be remembered as the man who destroyed the party he led.

Pressure

It is interesting that the Harris poll in the *Observer* found that 14 per cent of the entire British population said that they supported me — which is over six million people. That is above the David Steel vote and far higher than the Owen party.

The left of the Labour party is not a separate political party. But there is without doubt a very large body of opinion, I would say larger than the centre party, which would like to put pressure on the Labour Party in a contrary direction to its current path.

The leadership campaign — not the outcome which is constrained within the electoral college — will bring out a very important element in British politics. I believe it is one we must build on in the year ahead.

Where is Gorbachev going?

FOR TWENTY years of immobility under Brezhnev the tempo of economic and political developments in the Soviet Union accelerated. Mikhail Gorbachev is fighting for economic and political reforms aiming to strengthen the role of market mechanisms in the Soviet economy.

Gorbachev's case for market economic reform rests on what he describes as the 'pre-crisis condition' of the Soviet economy: 'If we look at the economic indicators of the last twenty years separately from these factors we see that over four five-year plans we knew no increase in the average growth of the national income even began declining in the early Gorbachev, February 1988).

Edmond O'Neill

Since 1975, for the first time since the evolution of 1917, the Soviet economy is falling behind the United States in relative growth in size of their economies. In 1975 Soviet production types reached 58 per cent the size of the US economy. By 1983 it had declined to 56 per cent and has since then continued to fall behind.

In the last two years, as a result of the declining price of oil, which together with exports of other raw materials had staved off the crisis for a while, there has been a significant fall in foreign trade — from 100 million roubles in 1985 to 128.9 million roubles in 1987. Trade with the capitalist economies fell by 30 per cent over the same period.

The reforms carried out under Gorbachev's programmes of 'Perestroika' and 'Glasnost' have to date made little impact in reviving the Soviet economy. Gorbachev's strong denunciations of conservative blocking of reforms and calls for their acceleration. Gorbachev requires ever, a major increase of prices — which have not been raised on basic necessities since 1962 — would certainly be as unpopular with the Soviet working class as similar measures have been in Poland.

Immobility

What the changes made under Gorbachev clearly raise however is their relation to the Soviet state itself. In particular what is their relation to the deep immobility which were covered over during the repression of Stalin and the immobility of Brezhnev? This means looking at the nature of the USSR itself.

The state created by the 1917 revolution in the Soviet Union is a workers' state defending public ownership of the means of production. Within this framework a degree of market mechanisms are necessary and benefit the economy. It is not possible for any state to repress the market and in some cases, notably the distribution of consumer goods, the market will be for the most efficient mechanism of distribution.

But the course being followed by Gorbachev goes further than this — it is to the restoration of capitalism but to accommodate with it both domestically and on the international level. To grasp that it is necessary to examine the historical roots of the problems in the Soviet Union.

Contrary to the expectations of Marxists at the time the first socialist revolution, that which created the USSR, took place in the most backward country in Europe.

Russia in 1917 combined a small sector of large scale industry with a gigantic peasant economy in which pre-capitalist economic relations predominated. The October revolution, from the economic point of view, had a dual character. The working class took state power. In industry it expropriated capitalism. But in agriculture the working class opened the way to real com-

modity relations of production for the first time. The large landowners were expropriated. Land was radically redistributed. Without these shifts the peasants would never have supported the Soviet state. The number of individual farms increased from 17/18 million in 1917 to 25 million in 1928.

The Soviet economy from its inception therefore came under a dual pressure of the market — externally from the capitalist world economy and internally from peasant production and the remnants of small scale capitalism in the Soviet economy. The internal and external capitalist forces naturally had a tendency to come together in a dangerous combination.

The economic problems this raised began to become acute in the 1920s. None of the leaders of the Bolshevik Party had believed in 1917 that a workers' state in an overwhelmingly peasant, and backward country, could persist for long without the extension of the socialist revolution to the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe. As Lenin wrote in 1921: 'Even prior to the revolution, as well as after it, we thought that the revolution would also occur either immediately or at least very soon in other backward countries and in the more highly developed capitalist countries, otherwise we would perish. Notwithstanding this conviction we, did our utmost to preserve the Soviet system under any circumstances and at all costs, because we know that we are working not only for ourselves but also for the international revolution.'

Lenin's line was vindicated not merely in the Soviet Union but internationally. Without the existence of the Soviet Union, the victories of the Chinese, Vietnamese, Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions would not have been possible — nor could they have survived.

But capitalism in the advanced capitalist states proved stronger than Lenin and the early Bolsheviks had foreseen. The revolution did not spread to the advanced countries. Seventy years after 1917 the USSR has become the second greatest military power in the world, with the third largest economy, but it remains surrounded by far stronger capitalist economies than its own.

This economic strength of imperialism is just as real a threat to the Soviet Union, and other workers states, as is the military strength of capitalism.

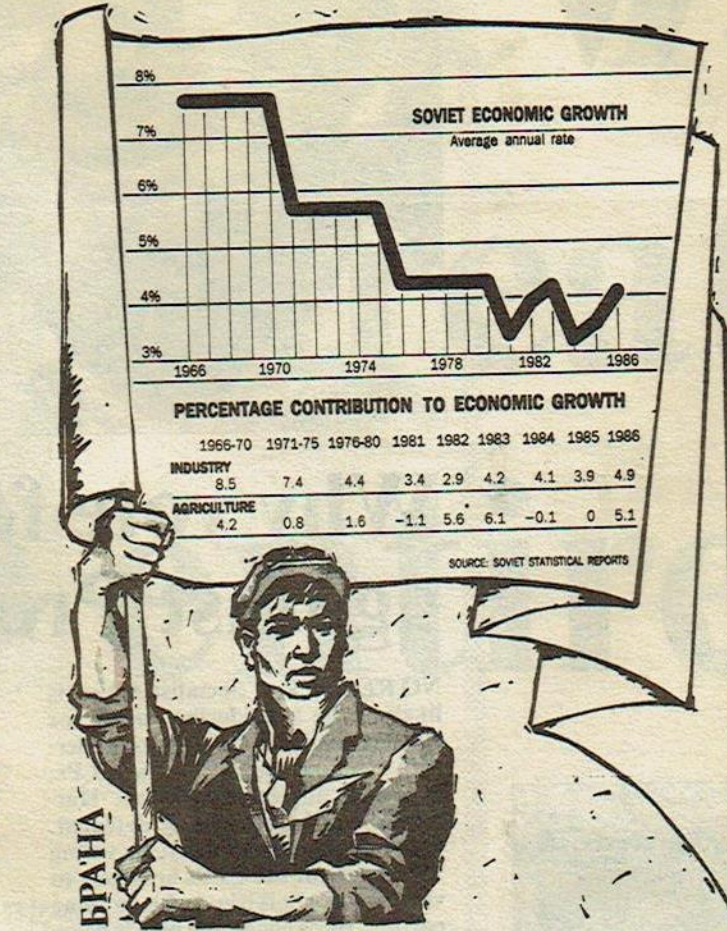
Lenin warned of this in one of his last speeches to the Soviet Communist Party when he spoke of: 'a test to which we shall be put by the Russian and international market to which we are subordinated, with which we are connected and from which we cannot escape.'

Two systems

Within the USSR itself, and even more in the surrounding capitalist world, two systems of production, embodied in different classes, exist. The first is the planned economy of the Soviet Union linked to the rise of the working class. The second is capitalist system of production. Between the two in the 1920s lay the great mass of the peasantry — petty bourgeois in strict class terms. One of these two systems of production would inevitably finally prevail. Either the revolution commenced in the USSR would finally lead to the overthrow of capitalism in its main international centres, or, in the long run, capitalism would be restored in the USSR itself.

The political choices embodied in these key class questions began to develop in the Soviet Union in the 1920s in the three fundamental trends of the Soviet Communist Party — symbolised by Bukharin, Trotsky, and Stalin.

In the 1920s and early 1930s Bukharin, now rehabilitated under Gorbachev, advocated a course of accommodating with capitalism both internally and internationally. Internally he addressed the famous slogan to the peasants of 'Enrich yourselves' — a call



recently taken up word for word in Deng's China. Internationally Bukharin called for a popular front alliance with sections of capital.

Theoretically Bukharin agreed with Stalin, and rejected Trotsky, in advocating the idea of building 'socialism in one country' — that is the belief that it was possible to construct a developed socialist society in the Soviet Union without the international extension of socialist revolution. The social basis of Bukharin's policy, as with Stalin, was the growing Soviet bureaucracy — which put its own privileges above the interests of the workers' state and the international class struggle.

The alternative to both Bukharin and Stalin was Trotsky who pointed out the economically utopian, and politically reactionary, character of the theory of 'socialism in one country': 'The passing of power from the hands of Tsarism and the bourgeoisie into the hands of the proletariat abolishes neither the processes nor the laws of world economy. To be sure, for a certain time after the October revolution, the economic ties between the Soviet Union and the world market were weakened. But it would be a monstrous mistake to make a generalisation of a phenomenon that was merely a brief stage in the dialectical process. The international division of labour and the supra-national character of modern productive forces not only retain, but will increase twofold and tenfold their significance for the Soviet Union in proportion to the degree of Soviet economic ascent.'

Economy

This reality is what is asserting itself in the crisis of Soviet trade and Soviet economy over the last two decades. As the Soviet economy has become more complex so has its necessity to turn towards the international economy increased.

Furthermore Trotsky pointed out the reactionary political consequences of 'socialism in one country': 'The new doctrine proclaims that socialism can be built on the basis of the national state if only there is no intervention. From this there can and must follow (...) a collaborationist policy towards the foreign bourgeoisie with the object of averting intervention, as this will guarantee the construction of socialism, that is to say, will solve the main historical question. The task of the parties in the Comintern assumes,

therefore, an auxiliary character; their mission is to protect the USSR from intervention and not to fight for the conquest of power.'

Trotsky argued that the decisive question was to strengthen the position of the working class within the USSR itself and to link this to the international class struggle: 'A realistic programme for an isolated workers' state cannot set itself the goal of achieving independence from world economy, much less of constructing a national socialist society in the shortest time.'

Tempo

'The task is not to attain the abstract maximum tempo (of industrialisation), but the optimum tempo, that is, the best, that which follows from both internal and world economic conditions, strengthens the position of the proletariat, prepares the national elements of the future international socialist society, and at the same time, and above all, systematically improves the living standards of the proletariat and strengthens its alliance with the non-exploiting masses of the countryside. This prospect must remain in force for the whole preparatory period, that is, until the victorious revolution in the advanced countries liberates the Soviet Union from its present isolated position.' Trotsky maintained that the only finally coherent alternative to his policy was that of Bukharin — and that Bukharin's course would finally end in posing the restoration of capitalism in the USSR.

In the struggle in the 1920s in the Soviet Union neither Trotsky nor Bukharin emerged victorious. Bukharin's policy was applied in the mid-1920s. It strengthened the richest section of the peasantry. By April 1926 58 per cent of all surplus grain was in the hands six per cent of the peasantry. Private trade flourished and industry was developed 'at a snail's pace'. Trotsky's proposal to accelerate industrialisation, and thereby strengthen the position of the working class, by taxing the richest peasants were denounced as 'robbing the peasants'.

Because Russian industry was not sufficiently developed to supply the emerging rich peasants with the goods they needed the result was sharpening antagonism between growing capitalism in agriculture and trade and nationalised industry.

The crisis came to a head in 1928 when the richer peasants responded to the lack of industrial goods, and the huge price differential between industrial and agricultural products, with a more and more stubborn grain strike — choking off food supplies to the cities.

Stalin responded by breaking with Bukharin and attempting to suppress the basic contradictions of Soviet society through naked repression. This meant concretely the 'liquidation of the kulaks (rich peasants) as a class' and forcible collectivisation of agriculture. It meant that more than 1.5 million rich peasants were expropriated and deported; forced collectivisation — with 50 per cent of the peasants 'enlisted' in collective farms within seven weeks (!); crash industrialisation; ultra-centralisation of the economy; the suppression of all opposition and the adoption of the goal of 'catching up with and outstripping' the main capitalist powers within ten years (that is by 1941!). The result of Stalin's methods was to throw Soviet agriculture back by 50 years — a catastrophe from which it has still not recovered — and to institutionalise the ultra-centralisation of the economy which is an element of the Soviet economic crisis today.

The stagnation which has emerged in the last twenty years is precisely the impasse into which the Soviet economy has been led by Stalin's attempt by administrative means to avoid the key choice between the fundamental lines embodied in the views of Bukharin and Trotsky. Stalin liquidated his political opponents, but he proved quite incapable of liquidating the fundamental contradictions which confront the Soviet economy.

Bukharin

Whilst maintaining the framework of 'socialism in one country' Gorbachev stands for a partial break with Stalin, and Brezhnev, and a move towards the politics of Bukharin — that is a break in the direction of still further accommodating capitalism in the Soviet Union and internationally.

The negative consequences of this policy in the USSR itself will become apparent over time. But the reactionary consequences on the field of foreign policy are already quite clear. Gorbachev is not only — correctly — working for the maximum progress in nuclear disarmament; he is carrying through a sharp right turn in Soviet foreign policy and putting pressure on the USSR's allies around the world to retreat from 'regional' conflicts with the imperialism.

Deng's policy in China, which has been pursuing a more radical version of the same course is even clearer. He is quoted in Hong Kong's pro-Peking *Wen Wei Po* newspaper as telling to Chissano, President of Mozambique: 'Judging by China's experience, I advise you not to adopt socialism, at least not vague and unclearly principled socialism.' According to the *Guardian* the commentary accompanying the leader says that the intention was to give a clear indication to third world countries, including China's neighbours that Peking was no longer interested in 'fervently inciting and supporting their communist movements and anti-government plots.'

In the Soviet Union itself exams have been cancelled in Soviet schools because the history books are being rewritten in the light of Glasnost. One consequence has already been the rehabilitation of Bukharin — whose policies are, after all, being applied by Gorbachev — and in recent days also of Zinoviev and Kamenev, all victims of Stalin's show trials and purges. It is no accident that the major leader of the Russian revolution who has not to date been rehabilitated is the one who stood for the only basic alternative to the line of socialism in one country and to the bureaucracy which imposed it — Leon Trotsky.

Alternative Information Centre

Repression extends within the borders of Israeli state

ROLAND RANCE, is an anti-Zionist Jew who has been working at the Alternative Information Centre in Israel, which was closed in February last year by the Israeli authorities. He talked to Socialist Action about recent events in Israel and the occupied territories.

The uprising is now moving into a different pattern. It started as a massive outburst of anger at 20 years of occupation.

Now, in one sense it has quietened down. There are fewer massive demonstrations. This is due to the increasing and effective closure of the territories to press coverage.

But it is also because throughout the West Bank, institutions are being restructured from the bottom up: health, educational, agricultural, cultural, women's organisations, and students' organisations. They are all answerable to popular and local communities, and are co-ordinating nationally.

Popular

It is less spectacular, so it can seem as though nothing is happening. It is also more difficult to find out about, because it is happening outside the eyes of the authorities. The uprising is settling into a pattern that has gone beyond a revolt, into the beginnings of a revolutionary change of the whole of society.

About ten thousand people are now in jail from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, out of a population of about a million and a half. About two thousand of these are under administrative detention, which, under recent changes, means jail without trial for six months, with no right of appeal.

One in two hundred of the adult male population is held under administrative detention. About a quarter of them are held in one jail, Ketzio, in the Negev desert. They are held in tents, in sandy desert, in fierce heat, with little water, no toilets, poor food, with scorpions and snakes for company, and very harsh disciplinary measures.

Schools, police stations and army bases are being used as jails. A few weeks ago a special jail was opened to hold children aged 9-16. On Israel Children's Day, eighty children were released. We have no idea how many are being held.

But the repressive measures are not breaking the strikes. The barrier of fear in the army has been broken. This is beginning to have its effects in Israeli society: so far, 21 people have been sent to jail out of about 500 who have refused to serve in the West Bank.

They are using more troops now to maintain order in Gaza and the West Bank than it took to occupy them in 1967. In 1967 they called it the six day war. Now there is no end in sight.

Inflation

The direct cost of maintaining the army there is in hundreds of millions of dollars; at one stage Rabin said \$412 million.

The continuing strike has brought the Israeli building trade, which is totally dependent on Palestinian labour, to a standstill. In Tel Aviv and other places the streets are not being cleaned. It is estimated that the uprising has cost something like one and a half billion dollars. Inflation has started to rise. Tourism has dropped. The economy is in a mess.

The political impact has been to strengthen both right and left. Overall there has been a shift to the right, and in the elections this year the Likud is likely to win a majority. Forces to the right of the Likud, such as the Tehiya



Party, and the National Religious Party, have also grown.

Support has grown for 'transfer' — the forcible mass expulsion of the Palestinians. Four years ago only Kahane dared to express this view, now it is official policy of the Tehiya and Tzomet Parties. It is likely to become the official policy of the National Religious Party, and although not yet official policy of the Likud Party, it has been adopted by significant figures such as the Deputy Defence Minister.

Public support for it is growing. They are making preparations to start this in the guise of expulsions of 'inciters' and 'trouble makers'. At election time we are likely to see dozens, if not hundreds, of expulsions.

The Labour Party has also moved to the right. Rabin, the Minister of Defence, is in the Labour Party. The Labour Party has come out before the elections with the same platform as last time — the Four No's — no withdrawal to the 1967 borders, no recognition of the PLO, no Palestinian state between Israel and Jordan, no dismantling of settlements.

Rabin, according to polls, is the most popular figure in the Labour Party. There is nothing to their call for an international peace conference. Peres is quite clear: the PLO is not a partner for dialogue.

As well as this overall rightward tendency, there is a strengthening of forces to the left of the Labour Party.

Particularly the Citizens' Rights Movement. Polls suggest that the two biggest gainers in the next election, will be Tehiya on the right, and the Citizens' Rights Movement on the left.

The Citizens' Rights Movement is not for recognition of the PLO, nor unequivocally for an end to the occupation. It is for negotiations with Palestinian representatives which could be the PLO, and for a peace settlement which could involve almost complete withdrawal. It is not a socialist or militant party, but it represents some consistent liberal position and has done good work on the prison camps and the detentions.

Protest

There is also a huge growth in extra-parliamentary politics and protest movements. About a month into the uprising representatives of some 50 organisations attended a co-ordinating meeting of protest movements in Tel Aviv. Some of them were small groups that did not survive.

But there are now about 20 active and militant protest groups working together, on a common agreed platform, of 'End the Occupation! Israeli/Palestinian Peace!'. Some people say that the occupation started in '67, some in all their limitations, are working on the right lines. Material and political support is needed for people inside Israel working for an end to the occupation. Yesh Gvul, the draft

resisters, are paying with their freedom. Some of them have already been sent to jail for the second time during the uprising, for refusing to serve in the army.

The issue of Israeli/Palestinian co-operation is very important, because they are defining any Palestinian or any Palestinian organisation as terrorist.

People involved in the uprising say 'we are the PLO'. Virtually the entire population identifies with the national movement. The PLO is the Palestinian people, certainly in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel is terrified that this will spread over the Green Line: some

Palestinians in Israel already say that the PLO represents them.

The Unified Leadership of the Uprising consists of representatives from the main tendencies involved in organising the uprising. That is: Fatah (the leading faction in the PLO), the Popular Front, the Communist Party, the Islamic Jihad movement, and the Democratic Front, more or less in order of size.

Decisions are taken in the various groups and brought there to be discussed and implemented. It suggests a sophisticated level of organisation, and a close link between the leaders and the people. It is a leadership that has grown not just from the uprising, but from 20 years of occupation, through being in Israeli prisons together.

Political

It is not the traditional leaders that the Western press always talks to like Hanna Siniora. It is people you and I don't know. Mainly young people who have come out of Israeli jails on a number of occasions, and who therefore have worked together. The hunger strikes in jails have almost always represented all the political tendencies in the jails at any one time, and it has always had a unifying effect on the cadres involved.

Israel wants to delegitimise any form of political activity involving Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, particularly Arabs from the '67 occupied territories. They will pick up a Palestinian and say 'this person is a member of the Democratic Front, therefore this Israeli who has contact with them is a sympathiser of the Democratic Front'.

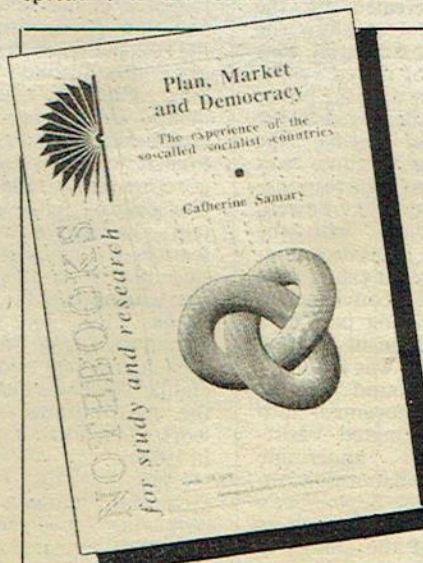
Boycott

In that context, the trial of the AIC and Derech Nitzotz are waymarks that the Israeli liberals will ignore at their peril.

Freedom of the press should be taken up: journalists under administrative detention, the closure of the occupied territories to journalists, the assaults on photographers, denial of press credentials, steps taken against foreign press as well as Israeli and Palestinian press.

Finally the time is increasingly right for a boycott campaign. Israeli artist called for a boycott of the Israel festival. The poets who were appointed by the government to organise the international poetry festival resigned, calling on the poets not to come, and the festival was banned. The 21st Year Committee is organising a boycott of goods produced in the occupied territories. This is starting to take off in Israel.

The very least that can be done here is to follow this, and I would hope that now there is the impetus for a full boycott campaign.



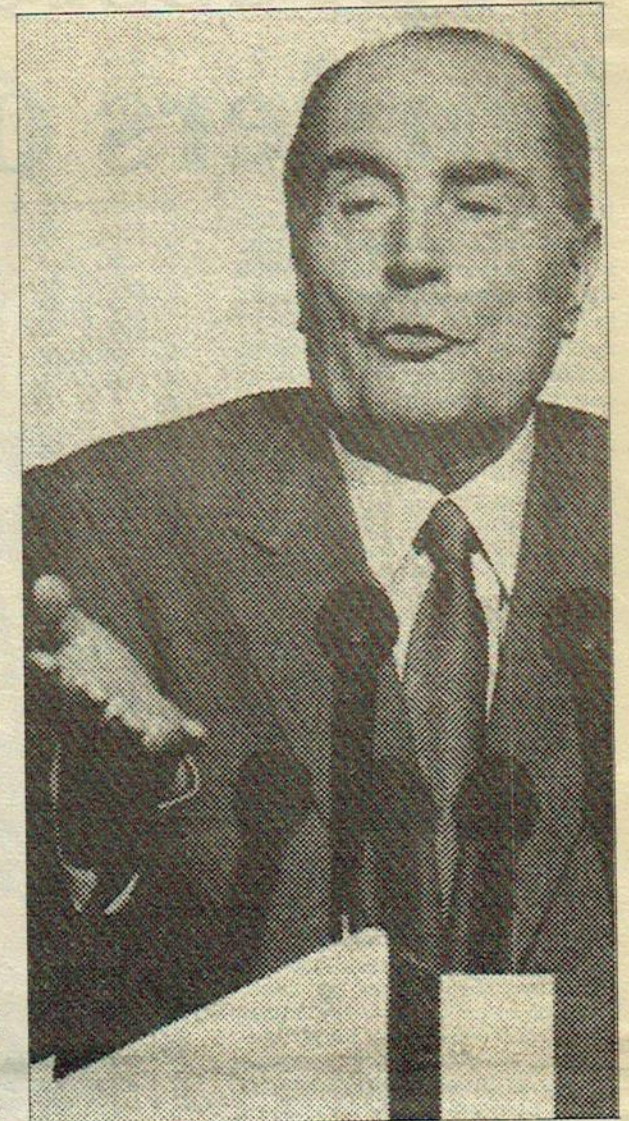
Plan, Market and Democracy

The experience of the so-called socialist countries
By Catherine Samary

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How Mitterrand threw away the elections

THE TWO weeks leading up to the first round of the elections to the French National Assembly saw an apparently bizarre spectacle — a party campaigning against achieving too great a victory. As a headline in the *Observer* put it 'Socialists fear landslide'. In the event the French Socialists under Mitterrand and Rocard so demobilised their own supporters that not merely didn't they win a landslide, but they didn't even secure an overall majority in the Assembly. SYLVIA LEE analyses the outcome of the French elections.



THE performance of Mitterrand and the French Socialist Party in the elections to the French assembly can only be described as snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

Mitterrand entered the election with the clear project, not of winning a powerful victory, but of forcing an agreement for a 'centre' right/SP government with a section of the right. Support from any section of the right looked less likely the greater the SP victory — hence the feeble mobilisation by the Socialist Party.

However, this tactic has rebounded on Mitterrand, and instead of a relatively comfortable five years of office, with the Socialist Party dictating terms to the 'centre' parties, the SP is now squeezed between a strong CP group of delegates, and the right — which will be able to dictate the terms of its support for the government.

Mitterrand's personal success in the May presidential elections, and the refusal of the centre parties to come to any agreement with the minority socialist government of Rocard in the pre-general election assembly, had laid the basis for a striking victory by the French Socialist Party.

Coalition

In fact, as far as Mitterrand and the leadership of the SP was concerned, this was precisely the problem. The SP looked like winning a crushing majority over all its right-wing rivals.

It was this eventuality which Mitterrand was concerned to avoid. His goal was for a majority SP government, but with a narrow enough majority for the pressure to be maintained on the 'centre' parties to break up their coalition with the right and join the government in some form.

Mitterrand is an experienced bourgeois politician, having personally participated in nearly all the coalition governments of the Fourth French Republic after the Second World War. Coalition governments, with no one party established as the 'natural' French bourgeois party of government — unlike the Conservative party in Britain — had been a constant feature of French politics since 1947. It was this situation which created the conditions for the semi-Bonapartist role of the French president under De Gaulle which was built into the constitutional framework of the Fifth Republic in 1958.

In the 70s, under Giscard d'Estaing, a stable right-wing bloc of parties in the UDF appeared to be emerging which could command a stable majority within the French state.

Mitterrand's clear project was to prevent this being created, and to instead build up an alternative political force, composed of the SP on a clear 'Eurosocialist' line, and the 'centre' right parties of the right-wing coalition, on a line of support for big European capital.

Two obstacles confronted Mitterrand on this course. First the SP had to be built up to completely eliminate the CP on its left flank. In this project Mitterrand was aided by the sectarianism of the CP in failing to call for unity of the French workers movement, and secondly the reorientation of the French bourgeoisie from its old 'softness' towards the Soviet Union towards alliance with West Germany allowed no space within bourgeois politics for the CP's international line.

Throughout the early and mid 70s Mitterrand maintained the SP on a left line, arguing for unity of the left, and finally achieving success in the 1981 elections. This 'left' orientation through the 70s ensured the dominance of the SP over the CP within the left, and ensured that when the CP finally broke the electoral pact with the SP in 1984, the advantage entirely went to the SP.

Despite Mitterrand's right turn the absence of unity on the left is seen as the responsibility of the CP, and from the point of view of the French bourgeoisie, which is what Mitterrand has always been interested in, it made the SP a more useful instrument, not less.

The long term decline of the French CP, exploited ably by Mitterrand for his own ends, had reduced the CP to 7 per cent of the vote in the first round of the presidential elections.

Bourgeois

Secondly the SP alone was not considered, and would not be considered a totally perfect instrument for government by the bourgeoisie. The ruling class prefers to exercise its rule directly through its own parties, rather than indirectly through the labour bureaucracy. The SP is not a bourgeois party pure and simple, its ties to the workers' movement make it a less than totally precise instrument for the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie would prefer that the actions of an SP government were given backbone and sharpness by the direct role of some straightforwardly bourgeois force.

Mitterrand has successfully eliminated any foreseeable threat of the emergence of any significant left within the SP. This has been achieved through a combination of incorporation of left-ward moving forces — seen again in his

attempt to achieve a deal with Juquin for the assembly election — a successful 'modernisation' of the party through structures like the Women's Ministry — which won him a majority female vote in the presidential elections — and blocking any closer relationship between the SP and the traditionally SP-aligned trade union federation, the CFDT.

The separation between the SP and the trade unions is a vital component of Mitterrand's strategy. As a result, despite the precipitous decline of the CP, the CP-aligned federation, the CGT, remains the most powerful trade union federation in France.

Alliance

However eliminating the left is not enough. Mitterrand has to draw in some element of the bourgeois parties in order to secure his project, and this was his goal at this election.

Through weakening and undermining the right-wing block between the UDF and RPR, Mitterrand aimed to cement an alliance between the SP and the 'centre' bourgeois parties. Such an alliance, within which the SP was dominant, would act as a guarantee to the bourgeoisie for the actions of the government.

Equally Mitterrand is concerned that the right-wing programme he projects for the government should appear to be the result of constraints imposed by coalition with forces outside the SP. This was the meaning of 'opening out'.

A crushing majority for the Socialist Party would have reinforced the alliance between the 'centre' and right-wing parties as a united opposition, and would have undermined Mitterrand's project of creating a SP/'centre' pact as the stable governmental instrument of big European capital in France.

On the surface there is no reason why an SP with a crushing majority should have been bothered about a united 'centre/right' opposition. However the policy of Mitterrand is precisely to deepen the 'Eurosocialist' features of the French SP, particularly by entering electoral agreements with 'centre' bourgeois parties, to conclusively break his party from the line of an SP/CP alliance.

This means breaking with the policies which the first Mitterrand government was elected on in 1981, and deepening a course towards strengthening the EEC, building up the independent European nuclear force, and support for the Single European Act.

Making the SP the 'natural' party of government of the French bourgeoisie means building a new SP/centre bloc which

can both defeat the old Gaullist right, and be acceptable to the bourgeoisie as a longterm governmental option.

In this context the party which was the least worried about the growth in support for Le Pen and the extreme fascist right was the SP. The existence of a relatively strong extreme right cutting into the support for Chirac and creating tensions within the 'centre/right' coalition was not without interest for Mitterrand's project.

A powerful victory for the Socialist Party would not have aided Mitterrand's project. However, Mitterrand's tactic has backfired, for neither did he wish to be caught in a trap between the CP on the one hand and the 'centre' parties on the other.

There is no way that Mitterrand is going to take his party into another coalition with the Communist Party, but an important CP bloc of assembly members will be a thorn in the side of the government if Mitterrand cannot convince 'centre' deputies to vote for his policies.

Failure

The failure to secure an overall majority for the SP means that Mitterrand is not in control of the situation. The SP has to form an agreement with a section of the right. However this will be on the terms of the right for as soon as this support is withdrawn the government would fall.

It is self-evident that the CP will not vote to keep Mitterrand in office, and the last thing Mitterrand would want is to be reliant on the CP anyway. Therefore rather than having two or three years to work out exactly how to deal with the situation and on what terms, Mitterrand

and Rocard are now posed with the task of forging an agreement rapidly — and one which will last.

This effectively makes the SP government the prisoner of the right.

Left

Mitterrand's tactic of demobilising the SP's vote was ill-judged. Moreover, the higher vote for the CP in the assembly election, which pushed its percentage up to 11.8, indicates that there was some dissatisfaction among a part of SP voters about Mitterrand's strategy of 'opening out' — or more accurately alliance with the right.

Alongside this the result may well strengthen Le Pen and the extreme right. The failure of the right in the presidential election, where there was no agreement with Le Pen, and the relative success of the right in the second round of the assembly elections, where there was an electoral agreement with Le Pen, will allow Le Pen's supporters to argue the right can only seriously advance in alliance with the National Front.

Mitterrand's course of seeking coalition with bourgeois parties to pursue a policy in the interests of big European capital is simply the sharpest example of a trend throughout the socialist parties in Europe.

The response of the left must be to call on the Socialist Party to abandon this project, and raise the demand for a SP/CP government. This is the correct response to the outcome of the elections, and to the right-wing road that Mitterrand has mapped out both for the socialist party and the workers' movement in France.



Mass strike hits Botha

THE BIGGEST strike in South African history took place between 6 and 8 June. Three million workers took part on the first day, responding to calls from COSATU and the UDF to protest at Botha's restrictions on trade unions and the bans on 17 anti-apartheid organisations introduced in February.

The response was the longest in the Pretoria — Johannesburg — Vereeniging triangle, South Africa's manufacturing heartland, Natal and the Eastern Cape. All car plants were shut. Most heavy manufacturing closed down. Transport was paralysed. Support stayed high over the three full days.

On day three, 72 per cent of workers in manufacturing were still out. The weakest response was in Western Cape and mining. Gold, which earns 60 per cent of South Africa's foreign exchange, was only marginally affected.

by Paul Atkin

More coal miners came out, but only a small proportion of the 555,000 in the industry. The NUM aimed that 40,000 of its members came out. The Chamber of Mines claimed 19,000. It's clear that the NUM is still recovering from the huge exertion of its national strike last September.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming success of the strike has hit Botha's immediate strategy hard. The ban on the legal mass opposition around the UDF was designed to force it underground and prevent mass protests.

The ban on political activity by the trade unions was designed to hobble COSATU into a purely economic role and avoid mass strikes to unite the black working class. This was intended to clear the decks for the re-emergence of a layer of black collaborators at township level, who would be cemented in place by the elections to township councils sponsored by the regime in September this year.

Botha's recent statement that 'selected' black figureheads could serve as window dressing in government was following the same tack. The strike has ruled this out with its massive reassertion of support for COSATU and the UDF.

In the face of Buthelezi's opposition, the strike was particularly solid in Natal. There was no concerted counter-attack from Buthelezi. This puts the UDF and COSATU on an accelerated offensive in the province, having fought off Inkatha's attacks over

the last year.

The white capitalists, who lost £125 million through the strike, spent the strike issuing threats to the unions of dismissal and victimisation of union activists.

In Orange Free State the supposedly 'liberal' Anglo-American Corporation took out injunctions against NUM officials barring them from agitating for the strike. At the same time, they were issuing soft worded statements to the international press proclaiming the virtues of a joint approach to the government by unions and capital, while inside the country they maintained a solid front with the government against the unions.

In the two days after the strike, COSATU reports that 2,000 workers have been sacked. These have been mostly in small companies. The larger concerns seem to be keeping their powder dry for the time being, with the threat of sackings maintained.

Botha's initial response was to renew the state of emergency for a further year because of the 'revolutionary climate' in the country. The bans on opposition organisations and reporting restrictions have been extended. At the same time, all army reservists have been called up because of the sharply deteriorating position of the South African Army in Angola.

Sharpeville

Botha's political bankruptcy has been starkly revealed by the decision not to allow the Sharpeville 6 a retrial. This is an act of naked vengeance. Even with the police and army deployed in the Townships during the strike the regime was unable to risk the response to a massacre like Soweto in '76. Now, with the strike over it has determined to make an example of six people, convicted to hang for being part of a demonstration in which a collaborator was killed.

This is bound to goad the mass movement into more determined resistance and undermine Botha's collaborators in the run up to September's Township elections. It is the job of the solidarity movement to ensure the regime pays the price internationally.

UCW conference

THE UCW annual conference proved to be very lively. The chair of conference summed up the position by saying that the EC had taken a pasting over the week.

By Steve Bell

The postal group of the EC was censured by conference over the working week campaign, after delegates pointed to the breach of conference mandates and missed opportunities.

However despite being censured, and overturned on nearly every major policy question in the week, the EC remains firmly in control having been re-elected before conference by the membership.

No alternative to the solid Kinnockite block that dominates the EC has been developed, but the response of delegates at conference indicates that this is now clearly on the agenda.

Alan Tuffin, general secretary, who has been closely personally identified in the TUC and Labour Party with support for 'share-ownership' schemes, received an almighty snub when conference voted this policy down.

Similarly, Tony Clarke, union deputy general secretary and member of Labour's NEC, received a blow when conference voted by a huge margin for a campaign against the poll tax which did not rule out civil disobedience. It was understood that this involved challenging the idea of staying within the law, and divided delegates normally supportive of the EC.

Conference voted for

industrial action on a number of issues, in each case by large margins against the advice of the EC.

However, the EC did successfully defeat the proposal to hold a ballot of the membership on the Labour Party leadership. The EC, which has already nominated Kinnock and Hattersley, defeated the ballot proposal by 100,000 to 60,000 on a card vote.

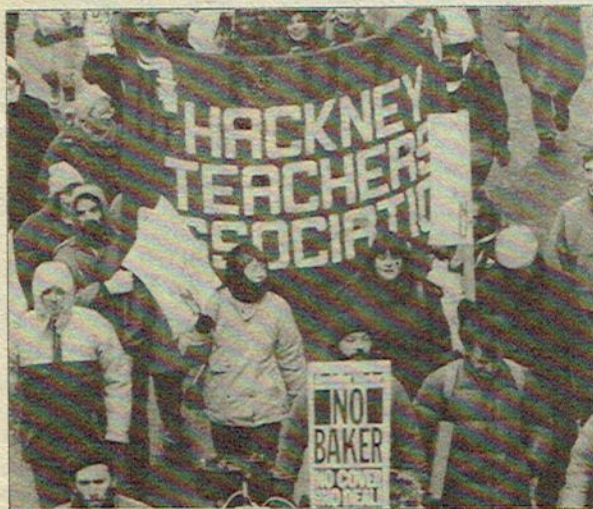
A proposal to endorse 'compulsory arbitration' deals was also endorsed by conference, after Tuffin had been forced to withdraw explicit reference to 'no-strike' deals.

Conference reaffirmed support for merger with the NCU, an urgent necessity for all communications workers, supported by both left and right. These discussions are now being extended to SOGAT and other media and communications unions.

On international questions the conference initiated an important discussion on Palestine. Resolutions supporting Palestinian self-determination and a Palestinian state were defeated after Tony Clarke equated them with anti-Semitism but the minority support for the Palestinians marked another step forward for the left.

The Broad Left had a good conference with supporters playing a key role in many debates. Eric Heffer addressed a meeting of around 100 delegates, and a further meeting on P&O was attended by 60. The journal of the Broad Left sold well.

Following conference the AGM of the Broad Left takes place on 3 July.



NUT elections

Resounding victory for STA in London

FOLLOWING internal turmoil inside the NUT in a year when the 'Broad Left' were more intent on fighting the left of the union than fighting Baker, the two STA nominees in Inner London, Bernie Regan and Betty Hunter, were both elected to the union's national executive.

By Ray Sirotkin

This is the first time that the left has won both seats in Inner London and means that on the 47 seat executive there are 10 left wing

members, mainly from the STA.

This success in Inner London was despite the 'dirty tricks' of the national officers who put two Broad Left members on the ballot paper, even though they were not nominated by any branch.

This result contradicts the 'new realist' drift of the Jarvis-McAvoy leadership which denies that there is any future in strategies which require any action.

With a special conference imminent this result demonstrates that the membership will vote for an alternative when one is offered. In Inner London this was proved decisively so.

The EETPU and the TUC

No backing down

THE potential split of the EETPU from the TUC would be the first significant split in the TUC since it was founded over 100 years ago. However the issues involved in the dispute with the EETPU leadership are so important that if they are not faced up to this would inflict far more damage on the trade union movement than the split itself.

In the last two years the EETPU leadership has conducted an exercise in brinkmanship in its relations with the TUC. However in the current dispute over single union deals and encroachment by the EETPU on areas of recruitment of other unions there is little space for bluff.

By Jude Woodward

In the confrontation with the AEU over the acceptance of government money for ballots, despite the union's breach of the united front against Thatcher's interference in the unions, it was never seriously posed that the TUC would split over this issue.

The dispute with the EETPU over Wapping was far more serious. However the immense unpopularity of the EETPU's actions forced a limited retreat by the union leadership.

However Wapping did force the TUC to stand up to the EETPU leadership and posed the necessity of a future split, which had clearly embarked on a course of confrontation with the rest of the trade union movement.

The current issues of dispute on single union and no-strike deals involve matters of central trade union principle, however what has provoked the crisis in the TUC is unfortunately not the principles involved but the bread and butter of other TUC affiliated unions — their membership and ability to recruit.

Flashlight, the organisation of the left in the EETPU, has correctly pointed out that the dispute is not about single-union agreements as such, but about the attack by the EETPU on other unions.

The core of the matter is the defence of the ideas behind the Bridlington agreement, not simply with regard to the direct poaching of other unions' members but in new sites.

The EETPU leadership's current policies are a systematic development of those it has been pursuing since the end of the 1960s, when the current EETPU leadership took control following the ballot rigging scandal which destroyed the union's old CP leadership.

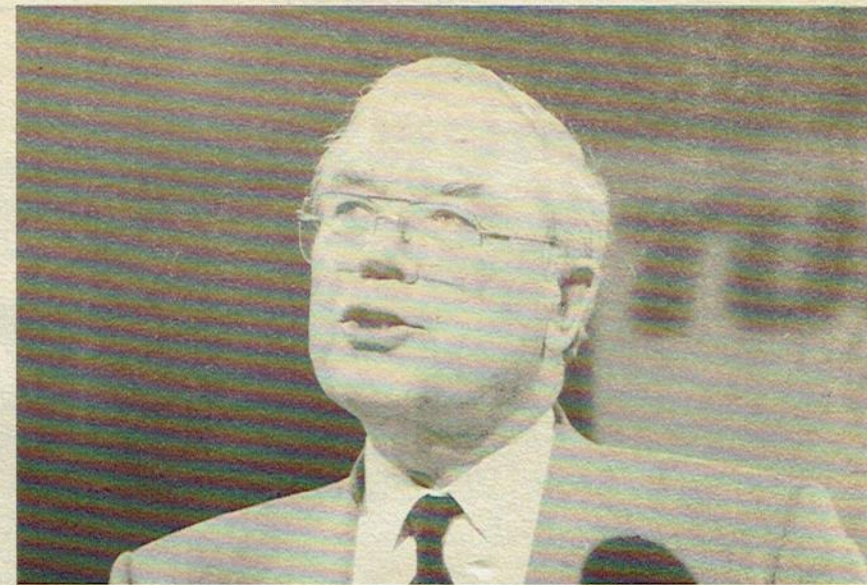
Its main membership base was in the electrical contracting industry. Its policies today, of outright and frontal attack on other unions, developed out of the class collaborationist policy it pursued in the electrical contracting industry throughout the 70s.

Militancy

In conjunction with the electrical industry employers, the union leadership set itself to bring 'order' to an industry that had a particularly high level of industrial militancy and a high rate of unofficial strikes and walk-outs. It was also about the best organised sector of the contracting industries.

The mechanism for this was the 1968 Joint Industry Board agreement whereby the union worked with management to prevent unofficial strikes. The smashing of the left in the union through the early 70s achieved this goal, but not without an enormous cost to the union's membership levels in this its largest sector.

Management protected the union's and its own interests by introducing check-off where the employer paid union subs automatically to the EET-



Eric Hammond

PU. The quid pro quo was that the EETPU introduced more on site full-time officials to 'police' the larger sites; in 1979 it introduced the infamous private health agreement; in 1983 it integrated YTS and cut apprentice rates by 30 per cent; and most recently has accepted self-employed working at the employers' insistence.

Again this has had a further impact on membership forcing the union to look for other areas of recruitment. The introduction of new technology in the print industry similarly cut into some of the most industrially powerful sectors of the EETPU's membership.

Response

Wapping presents the clearest example of Hammond's strategy in response to this — to make the most favourable deals with the employers to cut out other unions, and secure exclusive membership and negotiating rights.

This solves the short-term membership problems of the EETPU, but from an overall point of view has a devastating impact on union membership as a whole. High drop out rates and low levels of union membership are now emerging as the common pattern from plants which have hard-hitting 'Japanese style' single union no-strike deals.

For example at the new Nissan plant in the North-east, where the AEU concluded a single-union no-strike deal, unionisation is now agreed to be at only 7 per cent.

Aside from the principle of no-strike deals themselves, it is becoming increasingly clear that the single union no-strike agreements legitimise de facto virtually non-union plants.

The debate in the unions over EETPU-style deals has centred on how to reverse the decline of three million in union membership since the end of the 70s. Hammond's claim that the single union no-strike deal is the answer is ringing increasingly hollow, even from the narrow point of view of maintaining union membership.

Secondly however in order to maintain its own membership the EETPU leadership is increasingly entering into direct competition with other unions in areas not traditionally organised by the EETPU. By offering the most favourable deal to the employers, regardless of the employees interests, the EETPU leadership has attempted to cut out other unions.

For example the EETPU directly interfered in the rail unions' normal sphere of influence in trying to negotiate a single-union, no-strike deal at the Docklands Light Railway. The current blow-up is over the Hammond's attempt to cut out the TGWU at Orion in South Wales.

It is this aspect that is causing the crisis in the relations between the EETPU leadership and the TUC. While the left unions have maintained a principled opposition to no-strike deals as such, even 'centre' unions like the GMB have come out in qualified support of some no-strike deals.

It is not the principles of trade unionism and the defence of workers interests which is forcing the show-down between the TUC and the Hammond, but the straightforward, corporate conflict of interest between unions over recruitment strategies and maintenance of membership levels.

Expulsion

The TUC now faces no option, it must stand up to Hammond, including through expelling the union. And it appears that this is now on the agenda.

A series of unions, including the UCW, NALGO, as well as print unions and those affected by the latest of Hammond's deals, have now said the union must abide by TUC rules or be expelled. Only if Hammond and the union leadership were prepared to submit to a total climbdown and state their willingness to abide by TUC rules, including on the two deals they have been asked to cancel, should they be allowed to stay.

Hammond's announcement of a ballot of the membership essentially on the union's relations to the

TUC has thrown down gauntlet. If the TUC backs off this time in order to keep the EETPU in the TUC it will allow membership war to be fought between TUC affiliated unions, with competition offer the employers most favourable deal, the driving down membership levels across industry.

For the sake of the principles involved the TUC must not back off.

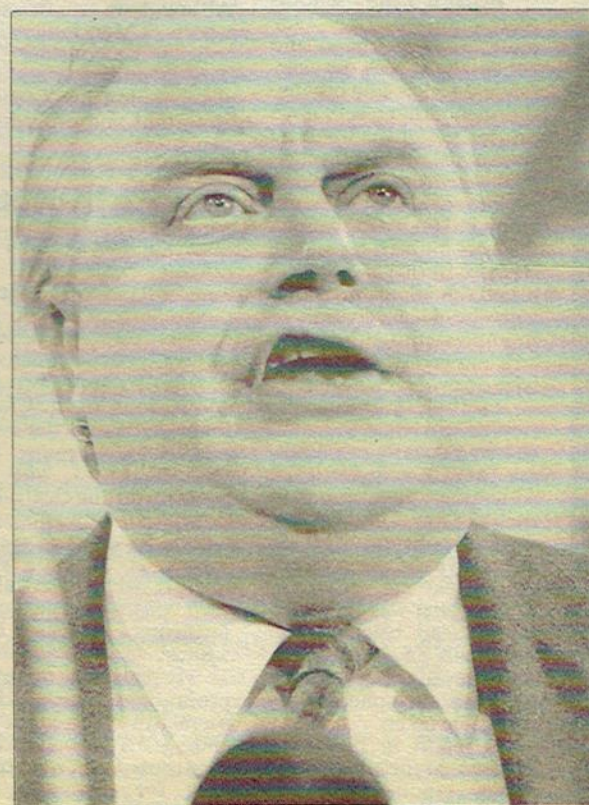
A number of unions, including the R and the AEU, have already given the cold shoulder to Hammond's proposal to establish a new trade union centre. The only 'unlikely' to work closely with an EETPU leadership side the TUC is the UI and this alliance is a threat to the other unions in the TUC.

Outside the TUC EETPU would unrestricted poaching of members, and would undoubtedly lose section its membership to other unions immediately. I Street electricians were prevented from leaving EETPU to join SOGA the application of TUC's Bridlington rule. Outside the TUC it would not protect the EETPU leadership.

Principle

If Hammond refuses to back down the only course is for the EETPU to be expelled from the TUC, every member of the union to be encouraged to leave and join another appropriate TUC affiliated union and for the union to be disaffiliated from Labour Party so it has political voice for its union policy in the labour movement.

The best defence of the unity of the labour movement, for the defence of the basic principle of trade unionism, and protection of workers whole range of industrial for the EETPU leadership to be forced to toe the line or for the other unions combine to inflict the maximum damage on a union leadership and policy which is threatening to drive down union membership and undermine workers' rights.



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Burnage — the new white backlash

THE REPORT conducted by the McDonald Inquiry team into the racist killing of schoolboy Ahmed Ullah in 1986 at Burnage High School has prompted the biggest press response on any education inquiry for years. Even before the report was published, Manchester city council had become the subject of widespread notoriety through its refusal to publish the full version because parts of it were held to be libellous.

The findings of the report prompted a hysterical campaign, led by the *Manchester Evening News* and soon taken up in the pages of much of the general press, against the anti-racist education policies championed by the GLC and ILEA, and followed by authorities such as Manchester.

By Mike Wongsam

Indeed, despite whatever good intentions the authors of the report may have had, it is now being used as the rallying cry of those who seek an opportunity to further roll back the ideological conquests made by the left during the last decade.

Yet, the report starts by stating the actuality of racism as it is institutionalised in the education system, and unambiguously lays the blame for the slaying of Ahmed Ullah at the feet of that racism. Its problem however starts from the identification of the causes of tension that existed in the school, in the existence of anti-racist policies, and the way in which they were carried out.

Racism

From the report, 35 per cent of the student population was black, while 2 per cent of the teaching staff was black. The report chronicles a catalogue of incidents of racial harassment both in the school and in the neighbourhood of the school. Moreover, it elaborates the particular history behind the peculiarly severe racial tensions that existed.

Because the schools reorganisation in 1982 didn't affect Burnage, and hence there was no curriculum review, and because this meant that a very large proportion of the teaching staff at the time of the incident were from the pre-1982 period, a lot of the old ethos and prejudices among the teaching staff remained. Because Burnage was a protected school, the arrival of a new head team committed to implementing the council's anti-racist policies met with growing resistance.

In 1982, following the riots in Moss Side, the Manchester Education Committee (MEC) called for all educational institutions in the city to produce individual policies on racism, although it did not issue any guidelines, etc. Also, in 1982, a letter was circulated to all head teachers and principals on the monitoring of racial tension, giving guidelines on immediate action to be taken.

A report in 1984 concluded that the city council had policies on multicultural education,

but that schools were not really aware of the details and implications thereof.

In 1984, the council approved the following statement: 'We are committed to the development of a programme of positive action in our education provision to tackle the underachievement of women and girls, members of ethnic minorities, working class families and disabled people. All our institutions will oppose racism and sexism and should be multicultural and non-sexist in their practices.'

Also, in 1984, the council agreed: 'The committee expect their employees to behave in a non-racist way towards the public, other employees, and students. More than this, employees are encouraged to be critical and/or to help change institutional practices and procedures that work against equality. Racist abuse, harassment and discrimination is not acceptable. Employees must know that such behaviour will be subject to disciplinary action possibly leading to dismissal.'

The report concludes that in fact, the implementation of the policy was hampered by bureaucratic procedures.

The report goes on, however, to record its regret that the issue of class discrimination was dropped by the council, whereas the issues of race and sex were not. It cites this approach as the main reason for the fostering of division and the alienation of white males.

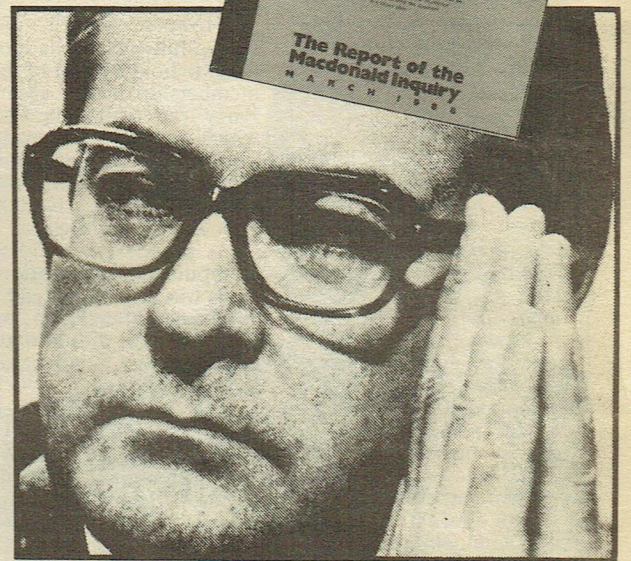
It is from this standpoint that the bourgeois press have plunged themselves into the fray. The report records that: 'Although we are critical of aspects of Manchester city's policies, we consider that their formulation and implementation has been an important and progressive step.'

Apologists

Yet it has become the rallying call for the apologists of racism precisely because of this counterposition between race and class — concretely, because it objectively makes concessions to a new racist theory, that of the white backlash.

John Lloyd, who has been one of the clearest exponents of this approach, wrote in the *Financial Times*, 21 May, of white liberals, who have 'salved their consciences on race by favouring blacks over whites'.

He praises the report for prompting: 'a new debate on racism. In its call for an ending to a period in which race is used as a weapon of guilt, for recognition that where race can be an op-



pression, so too can poverty, unemployment and alienation in the white working class; in its call to blacks and whites in schools and elsewhere to understand each other without the ascription of blame or original sin — in these words, it may usher in a new order on how we address race.'

Concretely, Lloyd's new order consists in the frontal attack on all policies that advance any notion of positive discrimination, whether explicit or implied, that have the intention of installing real, as opposed to formal equality in society. The method is to counterpose the interests of the working class to the interests of black people, women, etc.

The reality is different, however. The fact that a working class school such as Burnage could have 35 per cent of the student population black, and those black working class students were subjected to an unacceptable level of racism, is a class question. Moreover, such matters are becoming in the latter part of the twentieth century in Britain among the chief class questions.

Differential

John Lloyd talks about the 'oppression' of poverty, unemployment and alienation, without realising that racism has resulted in, among other things, the differentially severe level of poverty, unemployment and alienation of black people.

The 1984 Labour Force Survey gave an overall rate of unemployment of 11.1 per cent, comprising 10.6 per cent among white people and 20.4 per cent, ie double, among black people. This differential level of unemployment, and the resulting poverty and alienation, is entirely due to the accumulated effects of racism, and clearly, because many of the anti-racist policies were stimulated by the events of 1981 and 1985 in the inner cities, black people demonstrably will not wait until the white working class has satisfied its peckishness before doing something about its own starvation.

Lloyd wants to prepare the ground in order to roll back the progress made on race policy to the pre-GLC, ILEA, etc 'new left' era, by making ideological inroads into some of the left's most profound programmatic

conquests. The left therefore needs to reassert some fundamental principles, namely:

- The material determinants of racism are located in the historic defeat of black people with the onset of world capitalist development.

- The historic defeat of black people has resulted in black nations existing in an unequal relationship with white imperialist nations in the world economy, and black communities suffering material disadvantages in the imperialist countries themselves.

- The elimination of racism must be based on the equalising of the economic relation between the black nations and imperialism on the one hand, and the elimination of social differentials between black populations and white populations in the imperialist countries on the other.

- This elimination of racism is a conscious act which must be carried out by nations at the level of state institutions first and foremost. This implies the adoption of positive policies, which means prioritisations, at the level of resource allocation — concretely, black people must receive, and cannot avoid being seen to receive, a bigger slice of the cake.

- The working class in the imperialist countries must realise that the most powerful alliance that it can make to pursue its own interests is with those nations that exist in an unequal relation to its own imperialist economy, and with those communities with the least stake in the existing order in their own countries. In other words, the best way to pursue selfishly its own goals is not to protect its social advantages over black communities and semi-colonial working classes, but to actively promote the elimination of these differentials against the interests of its own bourgeoisies.

Clearly, those sections of the left who accommodate to the 'white backlash' by arguing that positive discrimination, and hence logically, anti-racism by any sensible meaning of the word, is divisive, are really exhibiting a backward sectarianism which will advance consciousness of the white working class by not even one inch.

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