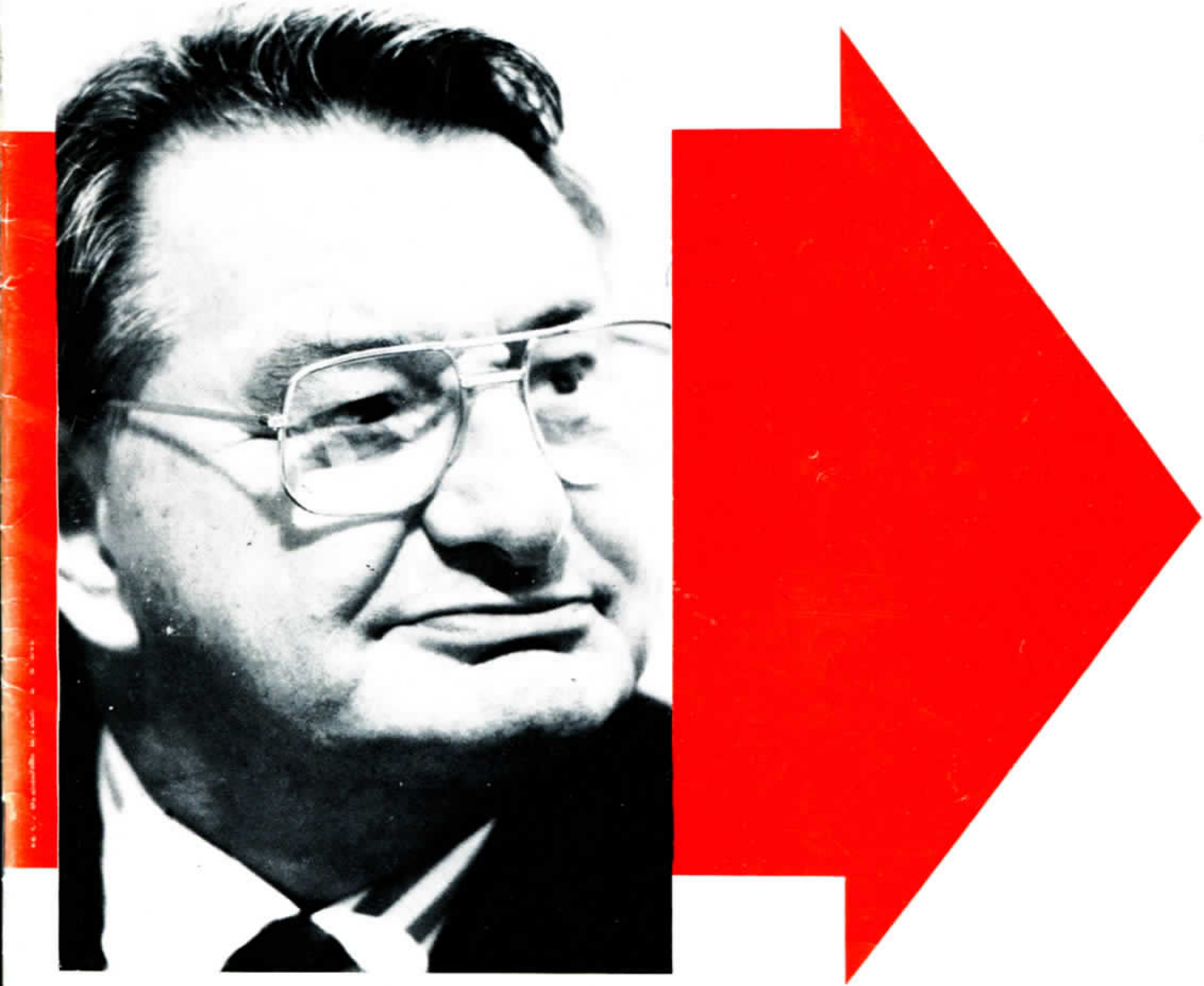
Forward to socialism



by Eric Heffer MP

with a foreword by Tony Benn MP

50 pence

Introduction

By Tony Benn MP

It is a great pleasure to recommend this pamphlet to everyone who is interested in the development of Socialism in Britain and world-wide.

Eric Heffer has, over many years, contributed directly and effectively to the on-going debate about how we can transform this country for the benefit of those who create the nation's wealth, and his writings, lectures, speeches and broadcasts have always been constructive, clear-headed and courageous.

When the 1988 leadership and deputy-leadership election began we agreed that it must be about policy and so it has been, with all the major choices facing the party dealt with in the course of the campaign.

Eric's contribution to this policy debate has been a formidable one, and this pamphlet will remind members of the party of some of the arguments for socialism that he has advanced over the years, following on his earlier books which are already classics.

Eric is a grass-roots trade unionist with long years of experience on the shopfloor, and a socialist with a deep compassion and a vast knowledge of socialist history, and theory, on which he has been able to draw in this collection.

The eighties have been hard for the Left and for those it represents, but when historians look back on these years, it will be possible to see the start of a fightback which will, later, put socialism back at the top of the political agenda.

The historic struggle of the Liverpool councillors — in which Eric played a central supporting role in Parliament and the Party — the miners and print-workers strikes, the Chesterfield movement and the 1988 leadership election will then all be seen as having helped to keep the flame of hope alight for those who would not accept the 'new Realism' with its subtle advocacy of capitulation.

The campaign for socialism will go on until it wins majority support, for if ever there was a moment when it was relevant it is now, at a time when scientific resources available to humanity could provide a good life for all.

Eric's new pamphlet shows some of the ways in which social justice could be achieved within our life-time, and it will be a standard text for many years ahead.
Tony Benn
July 1988



How I became a socialist

(Article in New Socialist, July/August 1982).

I came from a working-class, politically-conscious family, so becoming a socialist was a natural process. There were no guilt complexes because of wealth and no Tory parents to rebel against.

I was born in Hertford, my father was an ex-Royal Artilleryman, later a boot repairer (a trade he learned when he left the army) and my mother was a "Mrs Bridges" figure, a professional cook. She was in service from the age of 12, starting as a scullery maid.

Even after marriage she worked from time to time in the big houses near by, and also took on contracts for regimental and other dinners. Usually, these contracts were taken on to pay arrears of rent and generally keep a roof over our heads.

Politics was a normal topic of conversation in my home. My brother, who was seven years older than me, and his pals used to gather in our small living room and talk at length with my father about unemployment, the nature of society, the evils of capitalism and what was happening in the Soviet Union, the rise of fascism in Italy — and, of course at a later stage, the Spanish civil war.

In spite of being an ex-professional soldier, my father was not imperialistically-minded. He was extremely anti-fascist, and I can see him now grabbing some copies of *Action*, the Mosleyite paper, from a young Blackshirt and throwing them into a nearby river.

I can also remember going to the local Corn Exchange Hall with my father and brother to hear speeches from Wally Carter, a local communist, and from hunger marchers who had that day arrived in the town from Scotland on their way to London.

All of these events had a deep and lasting effect on me. But so did the views of my mother. She had a fund of old sayings and one I often heard was, "Take no notice of him, he talks as his belly guides him". This was something she certainly did not do.

Telling me of life with the gentry she would say with pride, "I never curtsied to the lady of the house". Her reason was simple. They were people like ourselves, no better and no worse and the fact that they had money made no difference to her. She was a strong character and very protective of her husband and family, working hard and long for them.

I served most of my apprenticeship at Welwyn Builders, Welwyn Garden City, travelling there and back each day with Dan Carter, the secretary of the Hertford and Ware branch of the ASW. Dan was a socialist and we would talk politics as we cycled through the leafy lanes between Hertford and Welwyn Garden City.

It was while working at Welwyn Garden City that I met a joiner who lent me a copy of the Webbs' book, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?* At the time, the book impressed me and I believed that the Soviet Union was a truly democratic society.

Their book, however, did not impress me as much as the other book he lent me, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* by Robert Tressell, for that was about the life of building workers in the early part of the century and the characters described were even then all around me at work. In my time as an apprentice the conditions for building workers were not much better than at the time of Tressell.

Tressell had been a member of the Social Democratic Federation and his Marxist ideas, simply explained, were in every chapter of the book. He clearly exposed how working people were exploited by their employers.

At the age of 16 I joined the Labour Party but before I was 18 I had become impatient with it and joined the Communist Party. My father was not too happy about this but philosophically accepted it saying, "it's your bed, you must lie upon it", and that is precisely what I did.

It was in the Communist Party that I met Frank Roy, who had a tremendous influence on me. He it was who gave me my real education. He and another member of the Communist Party, who today is a leading economist, spent hours in discussion with me, and it was through Frank Roy in particular, that I really began to understand Marxism in all its aspects. He also taught me how to express myself in writing, how to examine a book critically and under his guidance I studied economics, political theory, philosophy and theology.

Later, like myself, he was expelled from the Communist Party and we shared the sort of experience so graphically drawn in *The Rotten Elements* by Edward Upward.

I became a socialist, therefore, largely as a result of my working-class background, my life on building sites, observing at close quarters the struggle that workers had to make ends meet, the mass unemployment and the rise of fascism in Italy, Germany and Spain. It was clear to me that if we were to have better conditions, and a decent life, then



Doris and Eric Heffer

it was essential not only to organise in trade unions, but also to organise politically.

I attended Longmore Senior School in Hertford. It had been a grammar school but when I went there it was an elementary school. Like hundreds of other boys, I sat for one of the few scholarships to the Hertford Grammar School, but was unsuccessful.

At my school, we had a teacher from the Welsh valleys. Looking back, I realise he must have been a socialist for I remember that during the Spanish civil war he had a large map of Spain on the wall with coloured pins on it showing where Franco forces were and where the Spanish Republican forces were holding out.

It was that teacher who encouraged me to read more widely. Hertford library was rather small, being housed in a building at the junction of Cowbridge, where I lived, and St Andrews Street and Castle Bridge. I spent many happy hours there and borrowed as many books as I was allowed.

Two books that had a profound effect on me were *War* and *After War* by Ludwig Renn, an ex-German officer of the first world war, who became a member of the German Communist party and fought in Spain in the International Brigade. I also read Maurice Hindus on Russia and many novels such as *Under Fire* by Henri Barbusse and *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Eric Remarque.

My move towards an active political life began when I became an apprentice carpenter and joiner. I joined the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (now part of UCATT) at the age of 15 and attended the Hertford and Ware branch meetings. There I began to understand the connection between the Labour Party and the trade unions.

I met carpenters who were good craftsmen, good trade unionists and good socialists. I also began to read the union journal and other literature which augmented my father's *Reynolds News* on a Sunday and the *News Chronicle* and the *Daily Herald* each day. Politics was an essential part of the life of the union branch.

It was only political action that would eventually sweep away capitalist society and replace it with something better. Socialism could not be created without struggle and that meant political organisation and political action.

There was one other factor that had an influence on me and that was my religious upbringing. It was not unique, or out of the ordinary. I first went to a Church of England school and regularly attended church three times every Sunday.

I sang in the choir and the first "strike" in which I was involved was the choirboys' demand for more cash for their efforts in the choir.

At times we would have visiting priests who would speak about socialism and religion being synonymous. Later I was to study the writings of Conrad Noel and others in the Socialist Christian Movement, and to this day I believe that the teachings of Christ were the forerunners of modern socialism which could only come to fruition with the development of capitalist society.

The socialism I dreamed of as a boy has not yet been achieved, but a great deal has been done, and the lot of the workers is much improved. The basic task, however, remains, and that is to get rid of the rotten capitalist system and create a society in which the working people come into their own, where democracy is further developed, where class power and privileges are abolished, and where genuine freedom of all kinds flourishes.

Contents

Introduction by Tony Benn .....inside front cover
The future of socialism in Britain.....2
Whose freedom, whose choice?.....4
The downgrading of the NEC and Party Conference 6
Labour must not become an intellectual concentration camp 7
Housing: a Labour alternative 7
What now for Labour?.....8
Bold policies can win! 9
Organise for socialist policies.....10
A women's manifesto.....12
Socialists and Europe 13
Positive rights for workers 14
Three socialist pioneers 15
The labour movement and human rights.....16
Eastern Europe 17
Labour: a new way forward.....18
'If they let us...' 21
A socialist foreign policy 22
Working for peace 23
Trade unions and the state 24
An attack on every union! .....back page
Fight for unilateralism .....back page

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The future of socialism in Britain

(Statement to the Chesterfield Socialist Conference, 24th October 1987).

The third General Election victory in a row for the Thatcherite Tories has had a traumatic effect on the Labour and Trade Union Movement. In certain quarters a mood of despair and defeatism has developed, accompanied by revisionist ideological arguments which, although not new — they always occur at times of setback and defeat — are nevertheless being listened to, by some who should know better, on a scale that is deeply worrying.

There are those in the Labour Party and Trade Unions who argue that Thatcherism can only be defeated if Labour drops its "old-fashioned" socialist policies and image, and accepts share-owning Thatcherite concepts, i.e. a "property owning democracy" which the Tories call "People's Power" or "People's Capitalism".

In fact, they accept the Thatcherite agenda. There are others, the more traditional right-wing, who would not go as far as that, but who, whilst accepting traditional Labourite ideas as put forward in the past by such people as Herbert Morrison (suitably revised and updated) in practice repudiate the class struggle and all forms of extra-Parliamentary action, especially strikes. To that extent, the old Right, the soggy Centre and the soft-Left are in collusion, forming a phalanx against the genuine Left which, unfortunately, and to a large extent is fragmented. Socialism, therefore, is on the defensive.

In such a situation it is essential to review our beliefs and rebuild our organisational strength. Despite all that is said by "Marxism Today" and "Guardian" writers, the working class is not dead. It is still there, with its history and fighting capacity, and it is from that premise that we must begin to re-develop the Socialist movement in Britain.

We have a fight, therefore, on two fronts — Toryism and Revisionism — both intertwined and complimentary to each other. The main enemy is capitalism, exemplified by the counter-revolutionary Thatcherite Government — a Government that must be exposed, attacked and struggled against continuously, both inside and outside Parliament. It is the capitalist system which creates unemployment, poverty, insecurity, war, and these scourges can only be brought to an end with its destruction.

To fight the political enemy with vigour and determination, it is important to understand fully what the movement stands for, what its principles are and the policies it will pursue to get rid of capitalism. It is therefore essential that we fight against the current revisionism in the Party and Trade Unions. It is also important that we develop and update socialist policies, making them totally relevant to the struggle today. That does not mean, as some keep saying, that we must get rid of "sacred cows". It does mean that we need to put forward arguments which appeal to the working class, which can mobilise them in struggle and which recognise that we live in the 20th century. The history of the movement must not be ignored or repudiated, but properly used to give an historical perspective for the future. We must build on the struggles of the past so that there is a greater understanding of the nature of capitalism and why only by organised struggle can it be defeated.

The present situation in the Labour Party underlines the need for action by the Left. The recent conference gave victory to the centre-right. The leadership is hell-bent on a red rose way of compromise rather than the red flag of Socialism. That way will not bring us victory — only increased despair and division.

'Despite all the setbacks, defeats and revisionism Socialism has not been snuffed out.'

It has to be openly said the Left in the Labour Party and the Trade Unions have been in retreat, especially since Neil Kinnock became Party Leader on a "dream ticket" which some thought would put the Left-wing in command.

The majority of the so-called "Soft Left" in the Labour Party and Trade Unions still consider that in electing Neil Kinnock as Leader of the Labour Party, they were making a positive contribution to socialism. Their criticism, if any, of the Leadership is that it is sometimes ill-advised.

Since Neil Kinnock was elected Leader, the genuine Socialist Left in the Labour Party have been under constant attack, and to-day the Left is in a difficult if not critical situation. The Party is now saddled with a regime coupled with media glitz, razzmatazz and a slide away from basic principles.

Socialism is being marginalised, the class struggle denounced or ignored and the Labour Party is moving rapidly, as I said in my book "Labour's Future" into a position of being a Social Democratic Party Mark II.

It is no wonder that David Owen said on T.V. that had he known what Labour would be doing under Neil Kinnock he could well not have left the Labour Party.

Socialism in Britain to-day is surely at rock bottom. The flame of socialism, however, is not out because the class society which created it continues to exist, — but it needs to be fanned into new life with a great campaign for Socialism Ever since Socialism first became identified with the Labour Party in Britain, the Socialist left from time to time have had to organise to rebuild that movement.

That is the task facing it again today. Despite all the setbacks, defeats and revisionism, Socialism has not been snuffed out. That was evident at Labour's Conference. It is present in everyday life among industrial workers, in the tenants' movements, unemployed centres, etc.

The problem for the Left is that Labour's leadership are not likely to make frontal attacks on Labour's more radical policies. Socialism as an objective will still be spoken about and will be a part of the language of the leadership, but in practice the leadership are increasingly sliding away from Labour's socialist base. The Party have not yet got into a position where Labour's slogans will be "Capitalism is safe in our hands", but even without that slogan it could be so in practice. Since Neil Kinnock became leader the leadership has continually gone out of its way to indicate to the capitalist establishment that there is no intention of rocking the boat.

On issue after issue the retreat is there for all to see. Instead of Clause IV with public ownership in various forms in order to destroy capitalist class power, we are being offered "Social Ownership" which is being interpreted by some like Bryan Gould as shareholding in capitalist concerns. The concept of taking the commanding heights of the economy into public ownership is completely dropped.

Instead of public Council housing we are increasingly being offered housing associations, private housing and limited co-operative developments. The role of Council housing, particularly important since John Wheatley's 1924 Act, is played down. Labour's Spokesmen are now saying that the sale of Council houses is acceptable, despite the limitations put on that view in Labour's Housing Policy Document which I helped to draw up as Chair of the Committee.

With regard to nuclear weapons, already the unilateral position is being watered down, with Trident accepted as a weapons bargaining factor. As to Trade Union legislation, new so-called rights are given to Tory-orientated members to take their trade unions to Court, the closed shop is not fully supported and a clear unequivocal position of abolishing all Tory anti-Trade Union legislation is not forthcoming. As in most other policy issues the future is

hedged in with all types of qualifications indicating a genuflection to Thatcherite concepts. Many other examples could be given. In essence they add up to an acceptance that Labour is only intent on carrying through some reforms of capitalism, not its total abolition.

The Tory press and politicians have clearly cottoned on to what is happening in the Labour Party and are jubilant. At the same time, of course, they continue to argue that the Labour leadership does not go far enough and cannot be trusted. They would like the leadership to publicly repudiate Clause IV and all previous Labour Party policies, especially on Defence. They are unlikely to get that in words, but in practice they surely could, unless the membership say further retreats are not acceptable.

Socialism in Britain has been under constant attack ever since Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister. Her aim, in the defence of capitalism, is to destroy the power of the Trade Unions and to diminish and marginalise socialist ideas. That is the agenda she has set. It is therefore more than regrettable that her agenda is tamely being followed by the same people inside the Labour Party and the Trade Unions.

We now have the "New Realism" in both the unions and the Labour Party. This "New Realism" in the days of A. J.Cook and the T.U.C. Brunner-Mond accord, would have been classified correctly as class collaboration and that is precisely what it is.

The Labour Party has responded to the present situation in a number of ways. There are three broad positions,

(a) The Right, led by "Solidarity" would move Labour back into a more traditional Right-wing stance, not quite repudiating all past Socialist beliefs and in fact looking sceptically at some of the new soft Left attitudes. They would retain links with Right-wing T.U. leaders and try to utilise the T.U. machine as in the past.

(b) The so-called Soft-Left (actually Right of Centre) grouped around the L.C.C. with the present-day Tribunite Group of MPs, acting as Neil Kinnock's Praetorian Guard.

(c) The genuine Left grouped around the Campaign Group of MPs and the Left Liaison Committee. A few of the "Left" unfortunately are fair weather friends, as some were in the L.C.C. when they were Tony Benn's supporters. Some could easily and quickly desert their political positions if offered either Ministerial office in a Labour Government or even Front-Bench jobs in opposition. Obviously that is not true of most in this group, but one must be sceptical due to past experience.

It was clear at Labour's Conference that most CLPs are still basically Left-wing. That was shown in the vote against Felicity Dowling's expulsion. They are, however, not as staunch as they used to be. Too many left-wingers are becoming disillusioned and leaving the Party. Unfortunately, also only a few Trade Unions can now be relied upon to take a clear and unequivocal



Left Socialist position. The Block votes are being used increasingly as they were in the days of the Deakin-Williamson-Lawther triumvirate, and that means that Left-wing Socialists have a real job to do, both in the CLPs and the Trade Unions.

What is tragic about this situation is that capitalism is in its dying, critical phase. I am not talking about sudden death, it may be a long time expiring, but it is in its long-term death throes.

Capitalism has, in fact, been in a critical situation on a world scale since 1914-18, and yet at this very moment when a serious Socialist analysis is required, with clear socialist perspectives, policies and actions advanced, the movement is being deflected into non-socialist channels and instead of being offered the socialist politics that are required, we are getting razzmatazz, slick media presentations, T.V. commercials and individuals sold to the public like soap powders.

As I said earlier, the working class, despite what is said to the contrary in "Marxism Today", the "New Statesman" etc. is still there, and in the last analysis only the organised working class, politically mobilised can effectively change society. Those who argue that the working class and the class struggle are dead are not living in the real world.

If one begins from the premise that most political struggle is based on class politics, then it is obvious that although the correct buzz words may hide reality temporarily, truth eventually breaks through and a new era of struggle begins.

The question then is, what does the Left do in this situation? Where do Socialists go from here and how do they transform defeat into victory for Socialism.

If we begin from the premise that the working class is still basically the engine of socialist change, then it is clear we have to concentrate on winning their support. That must mean serious work in the trade union movement as well as in the CLPs.

It further means giving the movement a Socialist perspective by developing a programme around which Socialists can unite and work for in the Trade Unions and the Labour Party.

It means the Left will have to organise and that all Left Socialists will have to merge their ideas into the wider stream of Socialist thinking and organisation. The situation for British Socialists at this time is unique.

We will have to seek our own way forward without looking too closely for historical guides, although some historical situations have similarities. For example, in the 1930s after the Ramsey MacDonald betrayal, the Labour Party moved Left, but with the rise of Fascism it was essential to create a unity of Socialist forces inside and outside the Labour Party, and the Socialist League, the ILP (which had disaffiliated from the Labour Party) and the C.P. came together in a unity campaign.

To-day, something similar is required if we are to regain the Party and the Movement for Socialist policies and action. It is no good relying on the fact that workers will get disillusioned with Labour's swing to the Right, or the TUC's "New Realism" (the objective facts of the class struggle will certainly create that), but it will be important to organise, to create groups around a minimal socialist programme in all parts of the country. Something like the

earlier Socialist League will need to be created inside the Labour Party and the Trade Unions.

The Campaign Group of MPs should become the Parliamentary Group of the new Socialist Groups. Such Groups should be formed in all parts of the country. They should have their own weekly paper replacing part of the role played by Tribune and Labour Weekly. In this connection, the existing Socialist Society could help in publication and education.

There are those who would argue that the time has come to set up a new Socialist Party. That, I believe is wrong. A new Socialist Party may at some future date be necessary, but the time is not yet and it may never be necessary, expecially as long as the trade unions are affiliated to the Labour Party and give it its working class base.

The argument for a new Party, whilst a serious one, is, in my view, to some extent, sterile. It is also looking for a short cut and there are no short cuts. The struggle for Socialism in Britain will be long and hard. We must have a perspective, both inside and outside the Labour Party, for the next ten years at least.

The objectives of the new Socialist Group should be (a) the rebuilding of the Socialist Left in the Labour Party with the object of ultimately winning the support of the Party for the Group's ideas, and (b) serious work inside the Trade Unions on both the industrial and political fronts.

The Socialist Group should put forward policies based on Labour's constitution and Socialist policies advocated over the years. As items for consideration. I would suggest that we argue for:

1. The acceptance of the class struggle as the basis of political struggle.
2. The need for the Labour Party to continue to be a working class based political party fighting for socialism, dedicated to Socialist democracy.
3. The acceptance of Clause IV of Labour's constitution with various forms of public ownership and democratic management and control by white and blue collar workers in industry, in order to bring about a classless society and the total transformation of the State from being the instrument of capitalist class rule into the democratic instrument of the people with, in the long term, its powers seriously diminished and eliminated.
4. The political policies around which the Group could unite and fight are those put recently by Tony Benn to the NEC of the Labour Party and which were voted down.

The main thing to come out of this Conference should be the immediate organisation of a vigorous campaign throughout all parts of Britain so that the case for Socialism can be clearly explained.

We must go on the offensive, otherwise the path of revisionism, slide and decline will continue until Britain's politics for years to come follow those of the USA with disastrous consequences.



'The Dream Ticket'?

Whose freedom, whose choice?

(Review of 'Choose Freedom — The Future for Democratic Socialism' by Roy Hattersley, published in the Morning Star).

It is said by many reviewers, including those friendly to him, that in his latest book, Roy Hattersley is taking on the mantle of Tony Crosland, the past guru of the Right Wing of the Labour Party, who wrote "The Future of Socialism". Hattersley fondly quotes Crosland's definition of Socialism, "It is about the pursuit of equality and the protection of freedom — in the knowledge that until we are truly equal, we will not be truly free".

That definition requires careful consideration. Firstly, what is meant by Freedom? And secondly, what is meant by Equality? Hattersley believes he knows the answers — one thing he does not suffer from is humility. He fervently believes that he, almost alone, has the key to the future of socialism, and in his exposition is very rude to those N.E.C. members who, in his view, are "less cerebral". To bolster his argument he quotes Evan Luard, nowadays S.D.P., "By equating socialism with state ownership, therefore, modern socialist thinking serves only to intensify the discrepancy between authority and community". Hattersely then says, "Modern socialist 'thinking' equates no such things. Socialism is equated with state ownership in Daily Express editorials and in speeches of the less cerebral members of the N.E.C., but not by Tony Crosland or by dozens of other less famous but influential writers on the theory of modern socialism". He goes on, "...the less cerebral members of the N.E.C. do provide ammunition for the Daily Express paper gun".

One is entitled to ask Hattersley, what speeches? Where were they made and when did they provide the Daily Express with an editorial? Hattersley's statement is both rude and untrue. If one is talking about ammunition to the capitalist press, what about his statement that the Liverpool Council Labour Group was involved in political and literal corruption, which has been quoted again and again by the Liberal/SDP Alliance, the Tories and the press in Liverpool, all of which has helped the enemies of Labour and has not even been proved true. Yet no apology to the Labour councillors has been forthcoming.

In the chapter, "Is Nationalisation Enough?" Hattersley says, "Labour activists feel instinctively that an extension of public ownership is essential to the pursuit of socialism. But too few of the passionate advocates of what is demagogically referred to as 'nationalisation' have a clear view of why it is necessary to the achievement of their aims". Later he makes the same point, "...that since the earliest years of its existence the Labour Party — even as represented by its most eminent philosophers — has been uncertain about the reasons why public ownership ought to be extended".

Personally, I have come across plenty of socialists in the Labour Party, through reading their work etc., who have clearly understood why public

ownership was necessary and why it should be extended. For example, people like Keir Hardie, George Lansbury, John Wheatley, Nye Bevan, G.D.H.Cole, are but a few who explained why public ownership was essential to create socialism. In case Hattersley has never really understood, let me explain. It is because public ownership destroys class power together with the class nature of society and actually lays the basis of equality with a free classless society. Hattersley also suggests that Sydney Webb, who drafted Clause IV, was not really in full support of public ownership.

In my view, Hattersley deliberately confuses two points. Webb was rightly not tied to a particular form of public ownership, but even the quote from the Observer, produced in Lisanne Radice's "Beatrice and Sydney Webb", leaves it very clear indeed that the issue was the form of common ownership, i.e. from co-operatives to nationalisation, and not whether public ownership itself was actually far more radical than suggested, as any study of his work makes clear. Tawney was strongly opposed to the House of Lords and believed that a socialist Government should abolish it. As far as I can see, Hattersley does not mention the House of Lords seriously and certainly does not advocate its abolition.

One can however, agree with Hattersley on a number of things. For instance, he rightly says that a minimum statutory wage is essential. In accepting that, however, it is essential to insert a number of caveats. Firstly, that unless we are careful, under a capitalist society, the minimum becomes the maximum. It can also be used as the argument for a statutory incomes policy, which in effect means a wages policy, which under a capitalist economy means that wages are controlled and kept down whilst profits increase. The reason why workers in the trade union movement are opposed to an incomes policy is precisely because that has happened in the past. Hattersley says, "The real question concerns how wages can be properly planned and what system can be introduced to ensure that free collective bargaining assists in the creation of the sort of society that socialists want to see."

In a sense this is the 64,000 dollar question. Should we be in favour of wage control whilst private enterprise and the capitalist system exist? I would argue that as long as the private enterprise system exists, in any form, then the control of wages is not acceptable. What we need is for private enterprise to be abolished and a socialist society created on the basis of public ownership in various forms. Unless that happens then wage control operates only for the capitalists against the interests of the working class. Hattersley is correct to say that, "A Government-determined and implemented incomes policy is wrong in principle and unworkable in practice". But, he suggests that planning is not the answer. He says, "Coercion is bound to destroy the element that income planning must contain if it is to be a permanent feature of a socialist society".

Surely, the important question is, if industry is owned and controlled by individuals and groups of individuals, with profit as the main motive, then we cannot have control of incomes at the top and middle level and if controls are brought in, that is because the capitalists want to control the incomes of the workers and thereby make profits at their expense. It is a fundamental question that goes to the heart of the issue, i.e., who owns and controls the means of production, and for what?

Although Hattersley suggests that he accepts the R.H. Tawney concept that the Labour Party, "... forgets it mission" when it seeks "not a social order of a different kind.. but a social order of the same kind in which money and power will be somewhat differently distributed," Hattersley in practice is accepting that a profound change in society is not really possible. He argues one case in theory, but in practice really does nothing about it. It is all words. If we really believe in the struggle for socialism, then we must say openly and honestly that it cannot be achieved until the power and privileges of the present capitalist ruling class are removed for all time. That must mean the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange (in various forms) with a serious element of planning but with the working people in basic control.

Yes, I accept that too often Labour has not had an ideological basis . It has been too pragmatic, and Hattersley has been one of those who has seriously contributed to that pragmatism. It is not before time, therefore, that he and his friends accept that socialism does have a philosophical basis. The difficulty is that although Hattersley belatedly says this, in practice he is weakening and watering down the socialist case.

If we are to build a socialist society we must first accept the reality of the situation which is that we have a Government which accepts class politics and which is active in pursuing them. The class struggle is not dead, it is being waged every day by the Thatcher government.

Against that we have to pursue our alternative class politics and in practice that means that all those who accept class politics must seek to work together to fundamentally change and transform society.

The capitalist newspapers have given Hattersley's book a fair wind. He has even had an hour on the BBC Radio. That is more than proof that they do not consider it a threat. If they did they would have ignored it totally as they have those books which over the years have presented a genuine threat.



With Peter Heathfield, NUM General Secretary



The downgrading of the NEC and party conference

(Speech, 1987)

In my book "Labour's Future" I argue that power within the Party was being transferred from the N.E.C. to the Shadow Cabinet, and therefore to the Leadership of the Party. Policy was being made, I argued, no longer by Party Conference and the N.E.C. acting on behalf of the Conference, but by the Parliamentary Leadership. Events in the recent past have underlined my argument and point. Three recent happenings should be studied because they clearly highlight the changes that are cleverly, but surely being made in the transference of control to the leadership and away from the N.E.C. as a whole.

They are (a) the Defence Statement issued at a Press Conference in December without it first being discussed or vetted by the N.E.C., (b) the Conference held by the Shadow Cabinet at Bishops Stortford in early January where "Strategy" documents were discussed, and the campaign planned to the run up to the General Election, and where no N.E.C. members as such were invited or involved and (c) the dismissal of Norman Buchan, M.P., from the position of Front Bench Spokesman on the Arts. Norman had fought for a paper which had fleshed out a Party Conference decision on the Arts, and which has at the time of writing not been overturned by either the N.E.C. and certainly not by Party Conference.

There is no doubt the Defence document was a retreat from previous Party policy. I understand that Dennis Skinner asked at the N.E.C. if the N.E.C. were to see and discuss the document, before it was issued. This request was refused, on the grounds that if it were put before the N.E.C. before the Press Conference, it would have been leaked.

The really important point is that a document that was to be presented as Party Policy was not presented to or discussed by the N.E.C. before the press received it. Perhaps I am wrong, but I cannot remember such a thing happening in all the years I was on the N.E.C. Certainly, individual Shadow Cabinet members from time to time issued statements and papers, but it was always stressed that they were not necessarily Party policy, because they had not been before or endorsed by the N.E.C. If, however, they had been endorsed by the N.E.C., that was made clear.

The retreat on Defence began at the 1986 Party Conference with the stress on Britain being locked into the Atlantic Alliance and with the emphasis being put on building up the conventional defence weapons and expenditure. Although it was rightly argued that Labour would continue with its policy of getting rid of nuclear bases and weapons it was equally argued that the facilities to the U.S.A. would continue and that of course meant facilities for the use of nuclear weapons elsewhere in Europe.

The Labour C.N.D. meeting in December was absolutely correct to say that the E.C. of Labour C.N.D. "expressed its grave concern at the way in which the national Party Campaign is presenting Labour's nuclear disarmament policies, subordinated to increasing conventional arms and to support for the NATO nuclear alliance".

The truth is it was not the National Party's campaign, but the Leadership's campaign, and in place of a firm commitment we now have a somewhat watered down policy based on discussions. The important question is, what do we do, if the U.S. either refuse to discuss or after discussion prevaricate or disagree? I fear that we have shades of Felipe Gonzales haunting us.

The last time the Shadow Cabinet met at Bishops Stortford last year, I was then on the N.E.C. and asked for an explanation of what was discussed, and wanted to know why the N.E.C. had not been involved. I was told that policy matters had not been discussed, despite the fact that the press had been full of the policy questions that emerged. When I said I was not satisfied, anger was expressed and somewhat threatening attitudes were adopted towards me.

What I was concerned about was the position and status of the N.E.C. It is wrong to by-pass the N.E.C. and for the Shadow Cabinet to decide policy on campaigning in the country. That is not constitutionally their role and yet it is a role they are increasingly adopting.

The Bishops Stortford Conference clearly discussed policy and campaigning in the country. Of course, Shadow Cabinet members should be involved in such meetings, but they ought not be exclusive to them. Campaigning and policy making must be under the direction of the N.E.C. The constitutional position with regard to this has never been changed by Party Conference and is clearly outlined in Clem Attlee's book "The Labour Party in Perspective".

Labour must not become an intellectual concentration camp!

(Article in The Independent, February 1988).

Nye Bevan once warned the Labour Party to beware of transforming itself into "an intellectual concentration camp", saying that "If every organised effort to change Party policy is to be described as an organised attack on the Party itself then the rigidity imposed by Party discipline will soon change into rigor mortis".

That warning holds good to-day, particularly in the wake of the violent reaction of the Party leadership to the Campaign Group's suggestion that it may be right to have a contest for the Leader and Deputy Leader this year. To be called, among other things, "a loudmouth minority" is what one would expect from those who do not accept democratic opposition, surely not from true democrats. We should recall the words of Rosa Luxemburg, who said, "that everything that is healthy and purifying in political freedom derives from its independent character and from the fact that freedom loses all its virtue when it becomes a privilege."

Every year, the Labour Party has elections for the National Executive, the Party Treasurer and while in opposition, the Shadow Cabinet. Changes are often made, as I and others know, to our cost. What then is different about the Leader and Deputy Leader? Why should they be exempt from challenge and why should such a challenge be considered divisive? The Leader of the Labour Party is reported as saying, "There are a lot of ways to get socialism, but I think trying to fracture the Labour Party by incessant contest cannot be one of them".

That, taken to its logical conclusion, can lead to the argument that any contest for positions in the Party is wrong. On a national level it could lead to the idea that General or Local Elections would fracture the country and damage its stability. It is the argument of the autocrat who does not take kindly to challenge or democratic elections.

I have been waiting in vain for a repudiation of statements attributed to the Leader, saying that the Campaign Group was a "Champagne Group", "Self-enthroned revolutionaries" and "people who'd rather beat their breasts than beat the Tories ". As there has been no repudiation, I can only assume these statements are correct.

The charge that we would rather beat our breasts than beat the Tories is an insult to those like myself who have spent our entire political lives fighting and beating the Tories. In 1964, on behalf of the Labour Party, I won the Walton seat from the Tories in Liverpool, a seat that had only once been held by Labour in 1945-50, and then only because there had been a split vote between the Liberals and Tories. Labour did not get a clear majority until 1964 and then only with a margin of 2,900. The seat did not change its boundaries until 1983 when Walton lost its best Labour ward and took in two wards which in the past had been Tory or Protestant. To-day, in Walton, Labour has a majority of 23,000. That was achieved, not by breast-beating, but by consistent political hard work, by taking up and looking after the needs of the people and by fighting for the socialist policies of the Party.

To win, you have to deliver the goods and it does not go down well with those of us who have done just that to be attacked by those who have clearly failed on a national basis.

It's no good beating about the bush. Labour did not win the 1987 General Election, despite the highly-praised, slick media campaign. In fact, it failed particularly in those areas where Labour should have won votes to achieve a Labour victory. Labour did its best in its traditional working-class centres, where the people continued to believe in the old basic values of the Party.

I agree with Neil Kinnock, to have or not to have a contest is a matter of judgement. The situation inside the Party, with the review of all the Party's policies, with the possibility of further retreats on many fronts, the increased centralised control, as described in Tony Benn's recent speech, the continuing expulsions, and the suspension of Constituency Labour Parties, have created much disquiet throughout the Party. As a result, there are many who now judge it right that there should be a leadership contest this year. It would be the proper use of the Constitution of the Party, part of which has been lying dormant for five years.

The problem in the Labour Party today is that to some extent it is becoming afraid of its own shadow. Labour should not only be listening, but leading and fighting for its socialist policies. If it does that it will win. It will not win by being timid and conformist. Take, for example, the present conflict concerning the National Health Service, which is now under threat. This year, the year of its 40th Anniversary, Labour should be holding huge demonstrations and rallies in its defence. Questions and debates in Parliament are good, but not enough, and the struggle should not be left only to the staff of the N.H.S.

We should always remember what Nye Bevan said, "Parliamentary institutions have not been destroyed because the Left was too vigorous; they have been destroyed because the Left was too inert...I can give you instance after instance...we are faced with to-day where representative government has been rendered helpless because the representatives of the people did not ask enough. We have never suffered from too much vitality; we have suffered from too little".

I say Amen to that, so let us not be afraid or deflected, but bold and determined to get a democratic, socialist Britain through a Socialist Labour Party. A contest for Leader and Deputy Leader, in my view, can help that process forward.

Housing: A Labour alternative

(Speech in Bristol, 25th March 1988).

Instead of building many more Council houses in a much-needed housing programme, this narrow-minded, ideology-obsessed, private enterprise Government is now floating a proposal that Council house tenants should be offered £10,000 to quit their property. Such money should be going to Local Authorities to pay for pulling down slums and other bad housing, and to build new houses with gardens — what Labour's Liverpool Council has been doing since 1983 and is still doing.

The pioneering work in building housing for working people was begun by the Labour Party in the work of that great socialist John Wheatley in 1924, and carried forward by Nye Bevan during the 1945-50 Labour Government. The Thatcher government is about to close this chapter with its Housing Bill, which becomes an Act of Parliament later this year.

This Government is creating fear and uncertainty among Council tenants. It is nonsense to talk of tenants' choice, when thousands of people are homeless, when the housing situation for working people gets worse and worse and when the waiting lists get ever longer. As well as uncertainty, Council tenants are faced with higher rents and "cowboys" doing repairs.

The Labour Party must offer clear alternatives. It must repeal all Government legislation which does not help create houses for those in need. It must again give local authorities full assistance to build council houses and provide the money to modernise and renovate on a massive scale. It must organise a training programme to increase the number of building trades craftsmen by agreement with UCATT and other unions in the construction industry.

We need develop and apply the ideas of Wheatley and Bevan. We must give real hope to those in need of homes. But only a Labour Government can and will deal with their needs.



Supporting the miners

What now for Labour?

('What Now for Labour', Guardian, 20th June 1987)

It cannot be denied. Labour had a good, very professional media campaign. The best part to my mind was when Neil Kinnock was seen speaking at rallies, clearly putting forward views and policies appealing to the mass of working people. That aspect of the campaign was old style campaigning, in an up-to-date setting with the full use of modern techniques. The use of music, even razzmatazz has its place, providing it does not degenerate into mindless US Presidential style politics. That danger, unfortunately, was clearly evident.

In the constituencies the Party membership responded magnificently. Yet we lost, despite all the hard work and the professionalism of the national media campaign which allowed Labour to set the agenda. That fact cannot be swept under the carpet. We need to think long and hard about it.

That does not mean that Labour must postpone the fight back. The campaign to win the next election should begin now! If Labour fails to do that, it will be helping to sustain the most reactionary British Government this century.

Labour does not need an 'inquest'. The Party and the movement are not dead. We are very much alive. What we do need is an intelligent appraisal of the situation after Thatcher's third victory. We need to learn the lessons of our mistakes. We need to analyse the results and understand the reasons for the difference in our performance in different areas of the country. We need to develop our policies, rooted in the Party's basic socialist principles.

The question has to be asked: why did Scotland, Wales, the Northern areas and Liverpool, with a 10.5% swing, do so well for Labour, while in the Midlands, South, South-East and London we did so badly? In part the answer must be in the high levels of unemployment in the North, together with the nationalistic feelings of the Scots and Welsh. But that is surely not the whole answer.

Under Thatcher, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened in all parts of Britain, not just in the North. That is the real divide in Britain and it ought not be lost sight of. If we forget it there would be a danger that Labour supporters in the North, Scotland and Wales could develop an irrational hostility to workers in the South. That is precisely what Mrs.Thatcher would like. Divide and rule is an old ploy of British capitalism and Mrs.Thatcher has clearly understood and adopted that tactic.

Some political pundits now say that the working class is disappearing, or that nowadays it is concentrated only in certain areas, and therefore that Labour must no longer make its appeal mainly to workers. It is also suggested that Labour should make an electoral deal with the Liberals, to create a new Alliance in place of the Liberal/SDP Alliance. It is not an alliance with the Liberals that Labour needs, but the working class vote — both blue and white collar alike! If it concentrates on getting that it will not need to flounce around seeking new political allies. Labour's success in re-attracting the working class vote would help it with the voters of the middle ground. Success attracts success.

Some in the Party argue that Labour should stop being a truly democratic Party, that all independent thought and action in the Party should virtually cease and that "dissidents" should "shut up or get out". There have been suggestions in newspapers that some leading Party figures want to totally change the character and role of the NEC, making it a two-tier body with a type of "Polit-Bureau" established, concentrating more power increasingly via the PLP in the Leadership, thus further developing Labour's new cult of the individual. Newspapers which did not support Labour in the election now "advise" the Party to press ahead with a "one-person, one vote" system for selecting MPs, and they insist that for the 'moderate' image of the Party to be preserved and extended, so that Labour can appeal to the whole nation next time, the so-called Hard Left must be excluded from the Party, or neutered. They say that policies on housing, defence, etc. must be further changed and watered down to make them more palatable to the establishment and the USA.

I trust that the Party will reject such false advice and that we shall not have

further expulsions and internecine warfare (we have suffered from that over the past four or five years with, in my opinion, unfortunate results); that our policies will not be watered down; and that the press barons and media will be denied the "punch-up" between individual members and sections of the Party they would so dearly like to see.

Labour must now begin campaigning both inside and outside Parliament. After all, extra-Parliamentary activity is a British democratic tradition. Such action will surely take place in Scotland, but it must not be confined to that country. Inside Parliament the PLP must be more vigorous and determined in its opposition than it has been in the past four years. That is why a new Left-wing Shadow Cabinet is necessary.

Dramatic actions inside the House which spotlight Labour's opposition to unpalatable Tory policies should be welcomed, not condemned or frowned upon.

Workers and unions involved in industrial struggles should be supported and the PLP should identify with those involved.

When Labour Councils find themselves in conflict with the Government due to Government policies, in the future, then they should be given unqualified support and not told they are in the wrong and ostracised. The people in such areas do respond politically. This has been proved in both Liverpool and Lambeth.

Policies need to be discussed with a view to strengthening them in line with Labour's Socialist principles. There must be a serious analysis of the true nature of capitalism. We must explain to the electorate how and why the so-called Thatcherite "People's Capitalism" is a sham. We must convince them that the greed and selfishness of this economic system is not only economically wrong but morally wrong too.

On defence Labour needs to argue even more strongly for nuclear disarmament, nuclear-free zones, detente in Europe and for the ending of the Warsaw and NATO Pacts. We must explain how the money then could be used for peaceful purposes.

Lastly, Labour must explain, again and again, why public ownership with democratic planning is essential if we are to end unemployment and poverty and begin to build a new society in which those who produce the real wealth of the country get the fruits of their labours. We must explain that this is the only way to combat the multi-nationals and bring into the public domain the banks, finance houses, etc. This is the type of class politics we have been projecting in Liverpool with excellent results.

The Party must keep close to working people by strongly advocating policies to deal with unemployment, housing, health, education, social security, etc., with the important social and racial issues integrated into the overall class concepts.

It is a big task, but it is essential if Thatcher is to be defeated.



Deirdre Wood at Greenwich count

Bold policies can win!

(Speech to a Campaign Public Rally, Bristol, 27 February 1987)

There can be no disguising the fact that the loss of Greenwich is a setback for Labour. We should have held it and with the unpopularity of Mrs.Thatcher and the Government, Labour should have won the seat with an increased majority.

All of us in the Party must feel very sorry for Deirdre Wood and for all those who worked so hard in the campaign. Deirdre was the victim of a real dirty tricks campaign and did not deserve such treatment. She stood by her beliefs and in no way is responsible for losing the seat.

It must be understood that despite the campaign against her, Labour's vote did not collapse. We actually lost 1685 votes from the General Election figures. The Tories were the real losers. They lost 8298, and as the SDP gained 9504 it is obvious that the bulk of their gains were from the Tories.

Having said that, Labour should have won and therefore there are lessons to be learned. We must have clear distinctive socialist policies. If we seek to appear little different from the SDP it is they who gain, not Labour. Dr.Owen has said that Labour suffers from its deep ideological nature. He is wrong. It suffers when it moves away from its basic ideas. It is precisely clear, bold socialist policies that are needed, which are the only ones which can begin to deal with Britain's crisis due to the present economic system, aggravated by Thatcher's policies.

If Labour appears to be back-tracking and is not forthright, clear and bold, i.e. sounding a cracked note by pussy-footing around, then voters begin to believe that we are purely opportunist rather than determined to change things on their behalf.

It is not Left-wing candidates that lose elections. It should be recalled that when Tony Benn fought Chesterfield, it was said then that a Left-wing candidate would lose, yet Tony put up Labour's vote, winning back votes lost in the 1983 General Election.

What does Greenwich therefore mean for Labour?

(a)That the campaign — unfortunately influencing some in the Party — suggesting that the Party is riddled with so-called "Hard-Left Loonies" was a gift to a hostile press and to our political opponents. It has caused uncertainty amongst the Labour electorate. What is required is unity around policies to overcome what Thatcher has done.

(b)We cannot win by TV packaging, by being afraid of our shadows and with our candidates on the defensive. Our candidates need to be free to get out amongst the people, to be seen on the streets with them, speaking and canvassing, and we must stop being mesmerised by the TV and the press. Our candidates are inhibited if they are packaged like soap powder. As free human spirits they should express themselves amongst the people without so-called "minders".

In simple terms, Labour must say what it stands for and what we intend to do. We must expose and attack the vicious nature of this capitalist, selfish, Thatcherite society and say clearly how we intend to change it. Labour must not be ashamed of its socialist past and policies. It was clear Socialist policies which gave us victories in 1945, 1964 and 1974.

We must not turn in on ourselves. That could be disastrous. We must go forward to win the next election, with firm, bold, positive policies and be outward-looking.

It is the only way to win.

Organise for socialist policies

(Article in Socialist Organiser 31st March 1988).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*an extension of public ownership.

*the restoration and development of the rights of the trade unions.

*All out opposition to racism.

*Greater democracy; the abolition of the House of Lords.

*A restoration of local democracy and an extension of local authority rights.

*Women to have genuine equality.

*The labour movement has got to support all those who are underdogs in one way or another, or who, like lesbians and gays, are being persecuted.

*A different international policy — one of 'realignment' and getting out of NATO.

*The abolition of all nuclear weapons.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The election was in June. If we had put up a candidate immediately afterwards there would not have been time for proper consideration and organisation of a campaign before last year's October conference.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

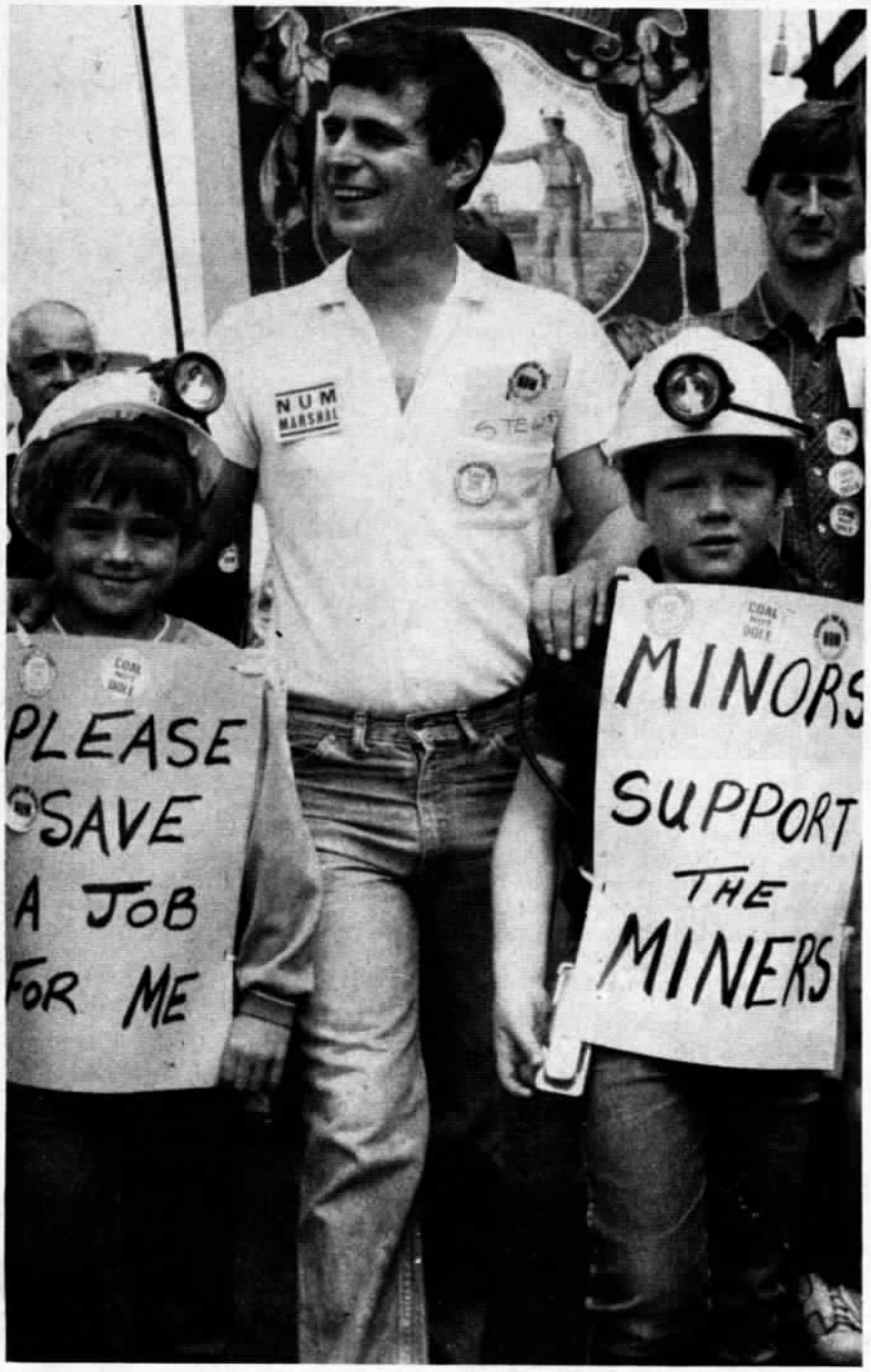
What we should aim at is to try to get proper discussions in every trade union so that the issues are fully debated. What are the issues in the unions?

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

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

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

All these matters can be properly debated. We will develop the campaign in the constituencies and then alongside it,



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

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

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

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

We had a rather ramshackle campaign. A lot of people — like Socialist Organiser — rallied and did what they could. But there was no real financial backing. I think financial backing should come from the party itself. It should not be left to the candidates to finance the campaign, because people without money have as much right to stand as people with a machine behind them. I raised this myself after the 1983 campaign but it got 'lost'. So we are still in the same situation today.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A women's manifesto

(Women's Manifesto issued during 1983 Party Leadership Contest, when Eric Heffer was the left-wing candidate. Socialist Organiser, 22nd September 1983.)



It is crucial that women receive a fair deal from the Labour Party. Women inside the Party are rightly demanding greater power and responsibility, and in addition Labour must persuade millions of women to support socialist principles and positive action if a Labour Government is to be elected at the next General Election.

A Women's Manifesto should be drawn up by the National Executive Committee in conjunction with the Women's Organisations in the Party, and should in my view contain:

*A major programme to provide free and integrated child care facilities for all who want them.

*Changes in the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts to strengthen them and widen their scope.

*The promotion of Positive Action Programmes to deal with discrimination in employment.

*Shorter working hours and a radical look at working conditions.

*The introduction of a Statutory Minimum Wage.

*Action to deal with the sexist and degrading portrayal of women in the media.

As far as presentation to the electorate is concerned, I believe that the Party should give women, and women's issues, a higher profile in election campaigns. We should provide a range of leaflets for women, written by women. We should attempt to explain to the electorate the fundamental link between our socialist principles and the fight for equality for women.

Our society is still caught up in the out-dated image of male breadwinners, with women providing the 'back-up services' of home-making and child-rearing.

A number of actions need to be taken to alter this image and to change the attitudes behind it.

Firstly child care facilities must be a major priority to enable women to have access to work outside the home and to establish the principle of a woman's right to work.

At the same time working hours and conditions need to be altered so that all parents have time at home with their families on an equal basis.

Action needs to be taken to end discrepancies between men's and women's wages: this is one principle reason why I have supported over many years the idea of a Statutory Minimum Wage to reduce the enormous gap between the low-paid — who are mainly women — and those on higher pay. Collective bargaining has clearly failed to achieve this redistribution.

I support Party Policy on the issue of abortion. I believe there should be changes in the law to give women the right to choose whether or not they have an abortion, and to ensure that abortion facilities are available, free within the National Health Service, on an equal basis throughout the country.

I have voted against attempts to restrict the 1967 Abortion Act on three occasions in the House of Commons, and I voted for Jo Richardson's Abortion Facilities Bill in 1981.

The links between the Women's Organisation and the rest of the Party could be strengthened by the adoption of a formal constitution and rules for the Women's Organisation in line with the rest of the Party. It is only through such a formal structure that the Women's Organisation will be able to operate in a truly democratic manner and present itself as a recognised force in the Party.

'...the fundamental link between our socialist principles and the fight for equality for women.'

I believe that the promotion of resolutions direct from Women's Conference onto the Annual Conference Agenda would have two advantages for women. Firstly, it will give direct access to the policy making structure of the Party to the Women's Organisation, and, secondly, it will mean that the views and aspirations of women in the Party will be brought directly to the attention of the whole Party.

I support the principle that the Women's Section of the NEC should be representative of, and accountable to, the Women's Organisation in the Party. I would prefer to see all elections for the NEC conducted at Annual Conference so that Conference remains the supreme policy making body of the Party.

I also believe that we may face problems from other groups such as the Local Government Conference and the Parliamentary Labour Party who may wish to change the character of the NEC and demand similar representation.

However, the arguments concerning the election of the Women's Section of the NEC by women are extremely strong, and I would welcome discussions with women in the Party as to how best we can achieve this aim.

The Party should have a full-time Women's Officer. At present Joyce Gould is not only the Women's Officer but also Assistant National Agent and Campaigns Officer and can therefore only devote a small portion of her time to the Women's Organisation.

I believe that women should have a full-time officer with the appropriate research and administrative staff so they can effectively campaign and develop policy for women in the Party.

I also believe that Regional Women's Officers should be women and that urgent action needs to be taken to end the present ludicrous situation where a majority of Regional Women's Officers in the Party are men.

It is clear that the PLP must have a front bench spokesperson on Women's Rights who supports the objectives of the women's movement. If elected as leader, I would appoint Jo Richardson to that position as she is the woman who has consistently fought for these policies over many years.

Socialism and Europe

('Europe and the Labour Party', 1982)

I have written elsewhere that there is a real danger that socialists of the Labour Party can become "Little Britishers" and that some of those who oppose the Common Market put nationalism well before their socialist beliefs. They are a minority and it is a view that is basically rejected by the party. Although I am personally in favour of coming out of the EEC, and spoke on behalf of the NEC of the Labour Party in support of the motion, I believe that all European Socialists should have as their objective a United Socialist Europe. It is patently obvious that Europe's problems cannot be solved except on a European basis, and as they can only be dealt with by socialist policies, then European socialism is Europe's answer.

It is my personal view that Labour, in considering its alternatives to the EEC, must argue for a type of European EFTA covering the whole of Europe. Those countries not in the EEC could have an agreement with those that are in, and greater emphasis should be placed on the Council of Europe which has in it states which are in the EEC and states which are not. The Council of Europe properly developed could be the institution that could help towards a wider Europe and could be the forum for contact with Eastern Europe as well.

As I said earlier, Labour's position does have a contradiction built in it. Let me now say what my own personal position is, a position I hope will be eventually accepted by the Labour Party as a whole, and one which is socialist internationalist in outlook. The views I set out below are those I recently wrote in "Socialist Community" the magazine of Young European Left.

It is my view that the hopes for European Socialism are greater now than they have been for a very long time. There are a number of reasons for this belief.

Firstly, the very existence of the Common Market (irrespective of which attitude is taken towards it) has made European Socialists conscious of being part of a European Socialist movement, and not solely socialists in one country. Whether one likes it or not, Socialists within the Community have to work together. To combat their political opponents both at the European Assembly and outside it united and organised action is required. That is why, in addition to each party affiliated to the European Socialist Confederation using their own national manifesto during the European Assembly Elections, there was also a Declaration of the Socialist Parties that was issued in all the countries of the EEC.

Secondly there has been the development of Euro-Communism, which,



Solidarity with Solidarnosc

although it may have suffered a setback recently because of the retreat on some issues by the French Communists, is nevertheless a very real and important development. It is not just that the Italian, Spanish and other European communist parties have discovered democracy. That is important, very important, but there have been verbal declarations in that direction before. It is that they have been distancing themselves from the Soviet Union, and the policies, both internally and externally, that this movement presumes that shows its true importance.

> 'It is patently obvious that Europe's problems cannot be solved except on a European basis, and as they can only be dealt with by socialist policies then European socialism is Europe's answer.'

What we are witnessing is, both in the Euro-Communist parties and in some European Socialist and Social Democratic parties, a return to traditional Marxist concepts, which, before 1917, were both democratic and revolutionary, that is, the very opposite of what the communist parties, and certain parts of the social democratic parties, had become.

There is undoubtedly a dichotomy. Some European Socialist Parties have moved to the right, while others have moved to the left. Whether this is so or not, the important thing is that the possibilities are there for serious dialogue between Euro-Communists, Socialists and Social Democratic parties. Such informal, and sometimes formal, dialogues in fact take place now, mainly on a bilateral basis, as the recent talks between Berlinguer, the Italian Communist Party leader, and Mitterrand of the French Socialists, showed.

The third reason for hope is precisely the fact that such a dialogue between Euro-Communists and Socialists is taking place. Socialism in Europe cannot be built without it. There is a growing recognition in the European Social Democratic Parties that in the past they have too often tended to administer capitalism rather than change it. They have also too often appeared to be the mouthpiece for American policies. That is also now changing. There is a feeling that whilst Europe must remain friendly with the USA it also can only solve its own problems by some form of united European effort. It cannot and must not look to the USA to overcome its problems, and neither must it be sucked into the Soviet sphere of control.

What is needed is for European socialists to put forward policies that can do two things, as long and medium term objectives. In the long term, the aim must be a United Socialist States of Europe; in the medium term a nuclear-free Europe from the Polish-Soviet border to the Atlantic (including Britain) should be the goal.

It will not be easy to achieve these ends, but a Labour Government, when returned to office in the UK should make it clearly known that it will have such objectives, and will work positively for them. I think it was Professor Edward Thompson who coined the phrase "positive neutrality", and that is what we should be striving for.

That will mean, of course, that we will have to try to roll back the frontiers of the Warsaw and NATO Pacts. It will be difficult to reach quick agreement, but a beginning could be made by making Southern Europe nuclear-free as a step toward all Europe becoming such a zone.

I accept that the argument if this is done then we are offering up Europe to Soviet control is a very powerful one. It is a real danger, but the other, even greater danger is that when steps are taken toward creating a nuclear-free Europe, sooner or later someone somewhere will press the nuclear button, and Europe could be totally devastated. Europe is in the front line of any third world war, and that is surely a sobering thought.

Socialists, therefore, should be in the forefront of the struggle for the ending of nuclear weapons in Europe. It is true that the Socialist Parties in European countries have differing attitudes to that of the Labour Party, but efforts must be made to co-ordinate attitudes, and the Labour Party ought not to be inhibited in its propaganda on nuclear weapons just because some of its socialist allies take a different stand on the issue at this stage.

With regard to the Common Market, it is clear that Labour's basic attitude is one of opposition. The referendum papered over the cracks; it did not in any way resolve the differing attitudes within the Party. Labour's majority position, expressed in the European Manifesto, which the NEC issued for the Assembly elections was that if Britain does not get

some fundamental change in funding and the CAP then it must look at the alternatives, including withdrawal. In the meantime, the British Parliament should restore to itself the powers it has lost as a direct result of its accession to the Rome Treaty.

I believe that Labour's Manifesto was right. So how can I say that and at the same time proclaim the concept of a united socialist Europe? On the surface, it does seem to be a contradiction, yet it really is not. Anti-Common Market views should not be interpreted as anti-European views. It is perfectly possible to be one without being the other.

What I am suggesting is that all European Socialist parties should move closer, whether in or out of the Common Market. Before getting into the federalism argument joint policies can be worked out on such questions as energy, transport and industry, and policies which recognise the economic integration that is taking place should be followed by parallel political action.

Thus, I believe that the following ideas could be pursued by socialists in Europe.

We must work for a neutral, nuclear-free Europe. The military blocs of Warsaw and NATO must be rolled back as a first step toward their abolition. A wider European Socialist Confederation should be set up, so that Europe-wide political programmes can be formulated and fought for. In the institutions and the European Assembly socialists must work together as closely as possible (despite differences over the Common Market and the Labour Conference decisions) and also with other left-wing parties and groups. Discussions should take place between the Euro-Communists and the Socialists at all levels unilaterally and multi-laterally as necessary. Trade union unity must be forged in Europe as a whole and a United Socialist Europe must be our ultimate objective.

Let me conclude by quoting what the Labour Party itself said in its policy background paper of 1977, i.e. "The EEC and Britain — A Socialist Perspective". It said, "Our objective is to work towards the creation of a wider but much looser grouping of European states — one in which each country is able to realise its own economic and social objectives under the sovereignty of its own Parliament. In such a Europe, a Labour Britain would seek to work at all times in close co-operation with its European partners. Our priority, however, would be to work with the European Left - to create within Europe the climate and conditions needed for the development of socialism in each of the member states. In this background policy document, therefore, we not only reaffirm our opposition to any kind of supranational control; we put forward a number of constructive policies around which socialist forces in Europe can rally in a spirit of international co-operation and solidarity". It is in that way that I envisage a Socialist Europe ultimately being created.

Positive rights for workers

('Trade Unions and the Labour Party', 1986)

The Trade Union Congress has agreed overwhelmingly on a show of hands the joint TUC/LP Liaison Committee Statement, "People at Work: New Rights, New Responsibilities". The document, which says a Labour Government will rightly repeal Tory legislation, could have been unanimously accepted, except for those parts which propose a Statutory framework laying down general priniciples for inclusion in trade union rule books on balloting for strikes and internal elections.

It was particularly that section of the Statement which led some NEC members to oppose it after trying to get it amended. The amendments were defeated.

Later, it is clear that a great deal of backstairs discussions and negotiations took place. It was not, as Ron Todd suggested, a principled agreement but a shabby compromise that was patched up. Barbara Switzer was right when she told the TUC Congress that expediency was being put before principle.

The Congress decided (a) to support a composite motion, in rather woolly terms, on ballots; (b) to support the TUC/LP Statement; and (c) to reject a composite resolution, moved by TASS, which would have got rid of the offending section.

'...the votes at the TUC are not the end of the matter.'

What is the truth about ballots, if they are legislated for? Peregrine Worsthorne, editor of the Sunday Telegraph, spelt it out and at the same time revealed the real reasons why the Government introduced its legislation: "Without any possible doubt the necessity of holding secret ballots blunts the strike weapon to the point of rendering it pretty ineffective in most cases...the effect of this piece of Tory legislation has been to turn trade union bodies into cautious cowards. That of course was its purpose".

He said further: "Tory strike ballot legislation has, and was intended to have, something of the same debilitating effect on trade union leaders negotiating with captains of industry whose freedom of action, at any rate in well run companies, is in no way inhibited by comparable democratic inhibitions. For Tories to want to keep this legislation for ever is absolutely understandable and even commendable".

That is the essence of the case for strike ballots, especially pre-strike ballots. What is amazing is that some TU leaders, because of expediency, can allow themselves to agree to it in the face of all practical experience.

Of course the media portrayed those who were against State interference in the internal affairs of unions as being against all the other parts of the TUC/LP Liaison documents. That is not true, and neither are they against organising the service sector workers — low paid, working under terrible conditions — referred to by John Edmunds of the GMBATU.

Improvements can certainly be made in the other sections of the policy document. It is not as clear and comprehensive on collective rights as it is on individual rights. It is surely essential that the use of injunctions against unions should be banned, and that all secondary action permitted. Equally, all dismissals during industrial action should not be allowed. If we are seriously talking about positive rights for workers, then these rights are essential to allow workers to conduct their fight for better conditions.

It has been said that what we are being presented with is a type of "In Place of Strife". That view is rejected by many and Barbara Switzer, in her Congress speech, also said she did not agree. The fact is, however, it does have some similarities. Labour's proposed legislation in 1969, "In Place of Strife", had excellent proposals in it, but these were spoiled by three offending points — (a) compulsory strike ballots for some official strikes; (b) the so-called "conciliation pause" for unofficial strikes, called by most people "cooling-off periods"; and (c) fines for trade unionists that could be collected through attachment on wages.

On the latter, an Industrial Board was to be established with the power to impose financial penalties enforceable in the Courts. In a roundabout way such a proposal exists in the new document. That is the reality of the Independent Tribunal headed by a legal person. Complaints against a union by an individual would be heard and the Tribunal would "be empowered to require a union to take the necessary steps to remedy" them.

But the votes at the TUC are not the end of the matter. The fact is that the real argument will take place when the legislation is being drafted and placed before Parliament.

In the meantime, the Party Conference can let its views be known. The arguments that were overlooked at the TUC should be put forcefully at Conference. We cannot be silent or acquiesce. We should ask for the offending sections to be dropped before it is too late, and future conflict avoided.

Three socialist pioneers

(Review of 'A lost Left — Three Studies in Socialism and Nationalism' by David Howell.)

This book is about James Connolly, John Maclean and John Wheatley. These three early Left-wing socialists are used by David Howell to pin-point the historical connection between the struggle for socialism and the struggle for national independence. Howell quotes Frederick Engels who said, "An international proletarian movement...can only grow out of the existence of independent nations". Connolly, born in Edinburgh of Irish parents, fought eventually for an Irish Socialist Workers Republic which would be free of British domination. John Maclean, who at first was not too involved in purely Scottish attitudes, nevertheless eventually believed in and fought for a Scottish Workers Republic. After the Russian 1917 Bolshevik revolution, he became the Soviet Consul in Scotland. He totally supported the Bolsheviks and was, like Connolly, praised by Lenin. Wheatley's political life began as an Irish Nationalist and like Connolly he was a staunch Roman Catholic. Later he became a Socialist and tended to see Britain as "the Nation" rather than Ireland or Scotland.

All of them were diverse characters. All, however, were strong-minded and convinced socialists. Connolly was shot by the British Army after the 1916 Easter uprising in Dublin in which he played a prominent part. Maclean spent long periods in prison and died in poverty. John Wheatley, on the other hand, became a Minister in the first Labour administration, was reasonably affluent, but was always an ILPer and remained firmly on the Left and as time went on became very frustrated with the Labour Party as led by Ramsey MacDonald. He rightly regarded MacDonald as a trimmer who would betray socialism.

Connolly and Maclean were revolutionaries. They took the view that the workers would only achieve a socialist society by revolutionary action and proved by their actions that they were prepared to take up arms, if need be, to fight for working-class power.

Why then should we be concerned with these three men, and are they not purely historical monuments? No doubt some in the movement will think like that. At the moment, with the Labour Party being increasingly influenced by American "razzmatazz" there are those who would consider it "old hat" to look back at the lives and politics of the three men and the period about which David Howell writes.

The serious issues that Connolly, Maclean and Wheatley faced are still with us to-day. In fact, to a large extent they are even further exaggerated. Clearly, if Mrs.Thatcher gets back for a third term after the next General Election — something I am by no means convinced about — then the demand for an indpendent Scottish Socialist Society would grow. Already the signs are there, even if not too publicly advocated. With regard to Ireland, this country is still not united, and it is by no means Socialist. Labour governments, despite the progressive measures introduced by successive ones over the years, have not, by any stretch of the imagination, carried through consistent socialist policies, and the frustration felt by John Wheatley is now felt by many others to-day, and certainly by those in the genuine Left of the Party.

As David Howell points out, the 1984 miners' strike showed that the character of British society has changed little since the days of Connolly, Maclean and Wheatley. The State forces were ruthlessly used against the workers in struggle, and the media attacked the miners' leaders and poured out its lies and calumnies. TUC leaders and some Labour leaders distanced themselves from the miners' struggle as they did from the Liverpool and Lambeth Councillors' struggle, and pretended that the class struggle was over and a thing of the past.

> 'They did not act like Judases and sell their souls for political office.'

Recently, we have had people like Professor Hobsbawm, the Euro-Communist; Stuart Weir, Editor of the New Socialist; and Frank Field, Labour MP for Birkenhead, arguing for tactical voting. James Connolly pointed out long ago that there always had been tactical voting, and although workers had been involved in it it had done nothing to advance their interests. When Connolly was a Socialist candidate he had once said that workers should not be confused by side issues. The ground should be "clear for the real battle of the election betwixt the representatives of the rankest Toryism and the representatives of militant Social-Democracy". That, of course, was when Social-Democracy genuinely meant socialism and not, as at present, the other side of the Tory coin.

It is said that the three political leaders were all failures. Beatrice Webb, who had admired Wheatley's record as a Labour Cabinet Minister, said of him: "As a rebel in the Party, he has been a failure".

It depends, of course, on what is meant by failure. Certainly, the three leaders did not bring about the socialist society they all wanted. Certainly, Connolly and Maclean did not achieve an Irish or a Scottish Workers' Republic. But what they did do and what they believed in will continue to inspire future generations, when many of those who were the so-called "moderate" leaders will be long forgotten if not totally despised by activists in the movement.

We are living in an extremely complex society. Genuine nationalism and genuine community spirit cannot be ignored. The lives of the three comrades — Connolly, Maclean and Wheatley — bring out this fact. Personally, I was against devolution for Scotland and Wales. Looking back on it I think I was wrong about Scotland. From the start of the Socialist movement in Britain there has been a serious demand for Scottish Home Rule, and ultimately that will be the only way to ensure the British Isles remain united, on a Federalist basis.

David Howell is correct when he says: "the political legacy is a tangle, attempts to draw implications for the present may be often naive. Yet there is perhaps a significant perception. British socialists should face up to the problem of how to characterise those national communities that are presided over by the British State. Through this there may be some hope of creative relationships between national and communal movements, and a socialist politics informed by an ecumenical view of strategy".

I am profoundly grateful to David Howell for producing this book and using the lives of Connolly, Maclean and Wheatley to make his case. I am in any case a devotee of all three as I feel they represent the best in British Socialist politics.

These three socialists need to be studied more. They should be known throughout the movement because they do have real significance for to-day. They were Socialist comrades who did not fail. They did not renege on their basic socialist beliefs. They did not act like Judases and sell their souls for political or Ministerial office.

Wheatley, who did become a Cabinet Minister, used his position properly and ensured that 500,000 houses were built by Councils for the poor. He may have become, as Beatrice Webb said, "sullen, his words...bitter", but he did so because he could see the way the Party leadership was going. It should be remembered that shortly after his death his views of MacDonald were the accepted wisdom of most of the Party because MacDonald had carried his apostasy to actual betrayal.

I found this book totally absorbing. It revealed things which I had read about but had either forgotten or had not seen in the same light as David Howell does. I would urge all those who want to understand our movement properly, its past, present and future, to read it. It is a great contribution to socialist politics.



At an East European Rights Meeting

The labour movement and human rights

(Speech at Amnesty International Conference, 14th September 1985).

It is important that the Labour Movement should have as clear a view as possible on human rights. One of the most important of them being the right to organise in free trade unions which are not subject to State control, a right slowly but surely being taken away.

The Labour Party in its constitution, Clause IV, sub-clause V, says the Party's objects are "Generally to promote the Political, Social and Economic emancipation of the people and more particularly of those who depend directly upon their own exertions by hand or by brain for the means of life".

Or as Keir Hardie says in his "From Serfdom to Socialism" - "To the Socialist the community represents a huge family organisation in which the strong should employ their gifts in promoting the weal of all, instead of using their strength for their own personal aggrandisement".

In these words, Keir Hardie, in a sense, defines our attitude towards Human Rights. Socialists believe the strong should help the weak, protect them and create conditions to advance them, not use strength to hold them down by taking action which can destroy their organisations by legislation, through imprisonment and by discrimination of all kinds.

Some years ago I wrote a Foreword to a pamphlet published by the "Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign", called "The British Labour Movement and Oppression in Eastern Europe". In that foreword I said:

"It is impossible to create a socialist society without freedom. Socialism and freedom are indivisible. Socialism means the flowering of the human spirit not its destruction. Yet in parts of the world, and in particular in the Soviet Union and the East European Communist-controlled countries, oppressive measures and administrative actions are taken against people in the name of socialism. Such oppressive measures have to be opposed, especially by socialists".

There were some who accused me of being a cold war warrior, because of that.

I said, in fact, there were two embassies in particular that I did not get invited to at the time, one was the Soviet Embassy, the other was the American Embassy, because of my opposition to U.S. policy in various parts of the world, where they were supporting Right-wing dictatorships, supporting reactionary regimes, and helping to destabilise governments which had a Left-wing bias.

As a socialist, as someone who passionately believes that we cannot create a just and sane society without publicly owning our industries, under democratic management and control, I also passionately believe that it can only be achieved with real success if we ensure that free institutions exist with free elections, freedom of speech and freedom to worship according to one's own choice.

Socialists cannot in my view have double standards. We must defend the rights of working people to have free Trade Unions and political rights in South Africa, in Chile, in Turkey, in Pakistan, in the Phillipines, in Iran, in East and West Africa. But, we must defend and support the right of all people, including in particular those in the so-called socialist countries, to freely organise independent free trade unions, with genuine democratic rights.

It is for that reason that I have always supported the Polish Workers' right to organise "Solidarity". On one occasion, I had to point out that the arguments being used against them were similar to those being used by Mrs. Thatcher against our British Trade Unions.

I have met with, to some extent, similar attitudes, when I have been to see Czechoslovak Embassy people about the oppression of those who in Czechoslovakia supported "Charter 77".

Freedom of speech, freedom of association, human and civil rights, if they exist, show the strength of a democratic society. If they are suppressed they show its weakness.

Let me again say in my view Socialism nowhere can be achieved without democracy. The twin concepts of socialism and democracy are indivisible. The struggle, therefore, in Eastern Europe for democracy is also part of our struggle for socialism.

Freedom must mean the right to disagree. I accept there are ways of disagreeing which play into the hands of your political enemies, but if one believes it is important to disagree then one should, no matter who are upset.

Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish/German/Jewish Socialist who was murdered by Right-wing officers in Germany, after the First World War, spelt it out better than anyone. She said, speaking of the Soviet Government, although she supported the Bolsheviks in principle,

"Freedom for supporters of the Government only, for the members of one party only — no matter how big its membership may be — is no freedom at all. Freedom is always freedom for the man who thinks differently".

She went on to say, "The suppression of political life throughout the country must gradually cause the vitality of the Soviets themselves to decline. Without general elections, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, life in every public institution slows down, becomes a caricature of itself and bureaucracy rises as the only deciding factor. No one can escape the workings of this law".

We who are Socialists and concerned with human rights, whether we like it or not, have to be concerned with the question of the State. What is its role, how far should it operate, and what should its character and objectives be.

I want to make it clear, I do not believe that the State is above society, like a great mediator sitting there adjudicating between conflicting groups, or classes in society. It can at times have such a role, but the State is really a reflection of the strength of the political and economic forces and classes in society.

There are those who believe the State as it exists under capitalism must be destroyed and a new State created. A State that eventually will die and wither away.

The reality is that even when the capitalist state has been replaced it has not withered away, but has usually been strengthened until like an octopus has its tentacles in every aspect of life. If one ignores the State, under such conditions, then they find themselves in prison or concentration camps of one kind or another. They can find themselves without work, and therefore without status. That is a real attack on human rights. It not only applies to intellectuals, but to workers also.

Socialists must build a society where the State is not all-pervading. Where it does not control every aspect of life. Where the prisons are not full of political prisoners, of dissenters, but where freedom of opinion, of thought, of free speech and free institutions exist.

Let me conclude by saying the question is not a simple one. There are no simplistic answers. After all, the Tories argue for the Freedom of the Individual. So do we as Socialists, yet we are not always arguing for the same things.

Freedom — Human Rights, implies some restraint. It cannot be otherwise. Philosophic Anarchism has some merit in it, yet no one can go along entirely with unrestricted "freedom" and I put that in inverted commas. There are many rights. The right to work, the right to eat, the right to have a decent home, the right to organise, to have free insititutions, and also the right to use the State to protect the weak against the strong.

The Labour Movement must at all times concern itself with the basic issue of Human Rights. They are vital and wherever there is injustice, as in South Africa, Chile, etc., it must speak up and organise because in Britain we would not have had a free trade union movement or a free press, or democratic elections unless we had fought for these things.

INTERVIEW WITH ERIC HEFFER
(Eastern Europe Labour Focus)

MARK JACKSON: You have recently been involved in discussions on the Labour left about the development of a non-aligned foreign policy for Britain. At the same time you have a record of involvement in activity in support of democratic rights in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, as president of the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign for example. To many people these two things might seem to contradict one another...

ERIC HEFFER: Well, it is quite clear that the people who came together to formulate or to begin the campaign for a non-aligned foreign policy were a somewhat divided group in the sense that while all of them were against American policy in Nicaragua and Latin America, or British involvement in NATO, there were clearly some people at that meeting who were not particularly critical of either the internal regime in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and tended to be dismissive of criticism of Soviet foreign policy. When I talk about a non aligned foreign policy, I am talking about a socialist policy independent of both the Soviet bloc on the one hand and of the Americans on the other. We need a distinctive foreign policy of the left, which we should fight for a Labour government to put into practice, which does not involve lining up either with American imperialism or with Soviet expansionism. I would admit that Soviet expansionism has up to now been largely defensive, but this doesn't justify what has happened with regard to the East European countries.

MARK JACKSON: Yes, but isn't the struggle for democratic rights in Eastern Europe a secondary question compared to the fundamental struggle against the threat of war?

ERIC HEFFER: The two things go hand in hand. I don't think you can talk seriously about fighting for a democratic foreign policy without arguing that the rights of people inside any country, including the Soviet Union are fundamental. You can't have double standards; you can't say we want peace with the Soviet Union, but that means that we can't be critical and support the fight by the people within the Soviet bloc for their rights. Otherwise you have a double-think policy. The fight to overthrow right-wing dictatorships in Latin America is part of the same struggle as the fight for the democratic rights of people in the Soviet bloc. The objective is the establishment of democratic socialism. This doesn't mean a right-wing policy. Many people have either never read or forgotten the works of Rosa Luxemburg. Nobody could suggest that Rosa Luxemburg was a right-wing social democratic hack. She was killed by the right-wing forces in Germany after the first world war because she was a revolutionary socialist. But she made it absolutely clear that in a socialist society there had to be pluralism and that the individual had to have the right to disagree if they were in the minority. I read these words many years ago when I was young and had been thrown out of the Communist Party. It was like a revelation; here was somebody who was a revolutionary socialist but who understood that in a socialist society you had to have rights for the individual; you had to have the right to independent trade unions, the right to a free press, and the principle of free elections. If you didn't have that you have an increasingly bureaucratic set-up which ends up via the dicatatorship of the party in the dictatorship of individuals.

MARK JACKSON: But here you are associating with pro-Soviet forces over non-alignment. A right-wing critic might say that whatever your personal views you have given yourself to those currents, and abandoned the struggle for democratic rights in Eastern Europe.

ERIC HEFFER: That's not true. If you look at the people involved in establishing the non-alignment committee, only a minority were in favour of giving a privileged importance to the views of the Soviet Union. Of course they have the right to be in there and to argue their case, but they didn't dominate the proceedings and are in a minority within the committee. In any case, you have to admit that if there were a nuclear war then all the arguments about democratic rights would be academic anyway. People who believe that there would be some kind of future after a nuclear war are barmy. I think it was Koestler who said that the dropping of the atomic bomb was a fundamental change in the whole concept of war. You are now talking about the future of mankind as such.

MARK JACKSON: Do you think that there is more sympathy on the left of the labour movement for the struggle for democratic rights in the Soviet bloc than before? What is the evolution?

ERIC HEFFER: The recent miners' strike was a very good example of people learning lessons from experience. People who had illusions in the Eastern European trade unions and governments discovered for example that the Polish government which had opposed Solidarity as an unofficial breakaway movement — and who maybe had drawn the analogy in their minds between Polish Solidarity and the moves towards a breakaway from the NUM in this country — discovered that the Jaruzelski regime was only too happy to send coal to this country in the middle of the strike when the miners were being attacked in much the same way as Solidarity was attacked in Poland. Scargill said at one stage that he thought he owed an apology to Lech Walesa. Clearly lessons were being learnt and people began to realise that the unions inside Eastern Europe were not free democratic organisations.

MARK JACKSON: One last question; in this issue we are commemorating the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. What impact did it have on you?

ERIC HEFFER: Until I was expelled from the Communist Party in 1948, like all young communists I was a supporter of Stalinism. We fought the CP leadership in this country because we thought they were revisionist and were moving away from Leninist concepts. We thought that if only we could get some comrade to go and talk to Stalin he would understand what we were trying to do; we thought that the leadership in Britain were against the concepts of Stalin. What a fantastic illusion! Once I was out of the CP I started to read wider material. I discovered another world. I discovered that there had been forces inside the Soviet Union who have been put into camps, that the trials had been phoney. Among other things I read Trotsky seriously — although I have never actually been a Trotskyist, I thought Trotsky was wrong about Kronstadt or the militarisation of the trade unions — but I read widely and my ideas developed rapidly so that by the time the Hungarian Revolution took place i had a clear position. I had already taken the side of the East German workers in 1953. I was a construction worker and they were building workers fighting norms. If I had been a building worker there I would have been fighting them too. Of course in Hungary there were right-wing groups who took advantage of the situation, and they were supported by American money, but how could you avoid that? That did not mean that the Hungarian Revolution was anything other than a genuine revolution of the mass of people for democratic rights. As in every other upsurge in Eastern Europe, the position of the workers was for democratic management of production. The same was true in Poland; the workers wanted not the restoration of capitalism but the right of the workers to run and control industry. For this reason all the upsurges in the Soviet bloc had a tremendously positive effect on me as a socialist.

Labour: a new way forward

At certain stages in their history, all important political organisations go through periods of severe crisis, the outcome of which either renews and rebuilds them, as Disraeli's reforms did to the Tory Party, or, as in the case of the ILP in the 1930s, signals the beginning of their end as a major independent political force.

A serious crisis within a political organisation reflects the crisis of society in general. Labour's present upheaval does precisely that because both party and capitalist society are undergoing a crisis.

During the past few years, the party has changed partially in character. Increased democratisation has been accepted by the party conference and the rank-and-file membership has a greater say than ever before. This is true especially where the relationship between MPs and their constituency parties is concerned. The membership has also changed to some extent with younger, professional middle-class members becoming dominant in some areas, particularly in the big cities.

Policy has moved leftwards and the party's attitude on most issues is more radical. The changes both in reorganisation and policy cannot now be easily reversed, although some on the right of the party would be happy to see that happen and they continue to work to that end.

The Labour Party was founded because the working class organised in the trade unions recognised through bitter experience that they needed independent political representation in the House of Commons. The party was not fully socialist at first, although socialist organisations were present at the founding conference and were an integral part of the party. It became a socialist party only after the first world war, when Clause 4, drawn up by the Fabian, Sidney Webb, was written into the new constitution.

The party has always had a diversity of views and has included in its ranks revolutionaries as well as dyed-in-the-wool reformists. It is this many-sidedness which has given it the character of the "broad church". But the socialist trend was always present.

Keir Hardie, the first Labour MP and a founding father of the party, said in his book *From Serfdom to Socialism,* published in 1907, "In the international socialist movement we are at last in the presence of a force which is gathering unto itself the rebel spirits of all lands and uniting them into a mighty **host** to do battle, not for the triumph of a sect, or of a race, but for the overthrow of a system which has filled the world with want and war. Workers of the world unite wrote Karl Marx; you have a world to win, and nothing to lose by your chains".

(Article in New Socialist, Jan/Feb 1983).

And George Lansbury in opening the Labour Party conference in 1925 said, "Socialism is inscribed on our banners... we intend that the land of Britain and all its resources shall be owned and used in the service of the British people". In Lansbury's *Labour Weekly* on 29 May 1926, he wrote, "We will capture government — that is our revolutionary aim and object; and capture government not for reformist purposes but for revolution. Others have used parliament for political revolution. We shall use it for the social revolution. Trimmers, compromisers, must quit our ranks or we must quit theirs". That was before the betrayal of Ramsay MacDonald in 1931 and our latest defectors, the "trimmers and compromisers", of the SDP. How right Lansbury was.

In his book *The Coming Struggle for Power* John Strachey correctly analysed the role of social democratic parties in 1932 when he said that "The social democratic parties (the Labour Party is such a party), although they were created to express the workers' revolt against capitalism, have today another purpose and character... They satisfy the workers' need to dream of socialism, whilst remaining tied to capitalism". It is this role that is now increasingly being challenged by party members. Since world war two there have been six Labour governments. Two under the leadership of Clement Attlee and four under Harold Wilson, with Jim Callaghan taking over as Prime Minister towards the end of the last Labour government. The Attlee government created the welfare state, extended public ownership and advanced the interests of the working class on the home front. In international affairs the government faltered, and the foreign policy was clearly wrong in tying Britain to the USA. The Wilson government also made important gains for the working people but they were by no means as radical as those of the first Attlee government.

The Wilson governments, as did the one headed by Jim Callaghan, got into serious conflict with their supporters in the trade unions and paved the way for the victory of the Thatcherites in 1979, with all the disastrous consequences for the British people.

Over the past two decades there has been widespread disillusion among workers because of some of the policies pursued by previous Labour governments. To some degree Labour's failures have been exaggerated and it is quite wrong to suggest that the Wilson govenments did nothing for the working class and were no better than Tory governments. The 1964/70 and 1974/9 governments carried out a number of important reforms, all of which have been or are being reversed by Thatcher.

In my view, no matter what defects a Labour government might have, it is preferable to have a government that will defend the gains made by the working class, and under pressure from organised labour, advance these gains, even if in a cautious manner, than to have a Tory government. This is particularly true with the present government, which is dedicated to turning the clock back to the days when British workers had little power and few rights.

During the post-war period there has been a growing realisation that the political system in the Soviet Union and the Eastern block countries was not the answer to any political shortcomings of Labour. The Khruschev report and the uprisings and revolts in East Berlin, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, together with Tito's break with Stalin, revealed that the "workers' paradise" was not such a paradise after all. This realisation affected in particular the students and other young people who were attracted to a number of leftist revolutionary groups, which for a period recruited widely among the young and effectively stopped them from joining the Labour Party for a number of years.

Today, thousands of those who were involved in the left groups have become disillusioned with their narrow sectarianism and have now joined the Labour Party. Not surprisingly, they carry with them much of their previous intellectual baggage. Some are thrusting, impatient and can be intolerant. They seek to get things done quickly and tend to push aside seasoned members who have done things differently and who are steeped in older, reformist traditions.

Many of the younger members are intellectuals — lawyers, teachers, doctors, journalists — and although many have working-class origins they have had little experience of real working-class life and tend to look at the world through the books they have read, rather than basing their views on both literature and the experience of industrial struggle. The other side of the coin is that some older members, especially the more right-wing, (although by no means confined to them) have been equally intolerant and have branded some of the new recruits as "trouble makers" without trying to understand their ideas.

It is important that there should be understanding on both sides, a genuine tolerance towards one another and for all ideas. Out of such tolerance and understanding there must develop a strategy and tactics that the entire party can work for, allowing naturally for degrees of difference in approach and policies that are bound to take place in a democratic party.

During the Bevanite controversy in



the early 1950s, it was argued in a Bevanite pamphlet *Going Our Way* "There can be no justification, in a democratic organisation, for the authority given by a mass membership to be used against the known feelings of those members. Yet that is precisely what has been happening during the past few months".

In my book *The Class Struggle in Parliament*, published in 1973, in reply to comrades who asked "How can we be sure that the left-wing members of the parliamentary party would not do the same if they were in cabinet or leading the government?" I said, "The real answer is that the party and party members must be vigilant and when they see serious mistakes being made must draw them to the attention of those responsible. It is even more important, however, that the party in the country must exercise control over its parliamentary representatives". I went on to make a number of proposals which in some ways were forerunners of those that have been made and carried by Labour's conference since 1979 on re-selection of MPs, election of leader and deputy leader and other constitutional changes.

The move towards a more democratic party has taken place. It has been resented by some members in and out of parliament who, in an elitist manner in the past, had happily accepted the fact that control was to be in the hands of the "top people". When it became clear that they could no longer retain such control in the future, they — "the trimmers and compromisers" — quit our ranks.

There is no doubt, however, that the effects of the constitutional and policy changes have caused an upheaval which is still being felt. The advances made by the left are being resisted fiercely by some; a "counter revolution" would take place if it were possible. It is now being tried but it is too early to say if it will be completely successful. It is this action and reaction which have produced a public image of internal strife which has been readily used by much of the media, especially the gutter press, with the objective of doing long-term damage to the party. But the internal argument has been inevitable. Historical circumstances created the demand for greater control and influence by the rank and file. It was the culmination of a process that had been going on since the debacle of the MacDonald government in 1931.

Old ideas have given way to new ones. There has been a qualitative transformation. Stalinist concepts based on Soviet experience have been rejected by the overwhelming mass of the labour movement. Even the Communist Party in Britain is now Euro-Communist, although it is not as advanced as the Communist Party in Italy. The various Trotskyist groups are either breaking up or seeking a home in the Labour Party. The party itself has changed and has new, positive socialist policies. Organisationally, the rank and file have a greater say than ever before.

It is at such a stage in the history of the party that a period of consolidation and reflection is vital, so that we can properly appraise our condition, and decide what is required in the future. It is important to look at the basic nature and character of the party. It is generally accepted in all sections of the labour movement that the Labour Party has been a reformist parliamentary party. To some, particularly in the various sectarian groups, the party's reformist parliamentary character is sufficient to damn it for all time, The view held by the ultra-left is that the party is a useless body which has to be destroyed, or so fundamentally changed in character that it is no longer a democratic Labour Party but more like the sectarians themselves. In their view, the Labour Party with its pragmatism and non-dogmatic outlook, stands in the way of genuine socialist advance,

Those who believe this theory begin from the premise that socialism cannot possibly be achieved except by the seizure of power by an elitist vanguard party through the violent overthrow of the capitalist class. They believe that force, to a greater or lesser degree, is absolutely necessary, and a dictatorship, supposedly of the working class, or of a vanguard party acting on its behalf is essential.

The dilemma facing democratic-socialists, who wish to transform capitalist society into a socialist one, is a choice that appears incompatible, between principle or power. If you believe in persuasion and reject dictatorship, then discussion, vote-getting and parliamentary action are the way forward, rather than violence and terrorism.

This dilemma was described by Harold Laski in 1935 in his book *Democracy in Crisis*: "A capitalist democracy will not allow its electorate to stumble into socialism by the accident of a verdict at the polls". It was clear to Laski then, and it is particularly clear today, that a genuinely socialist Labour

government elected at the polls would face determined political opposition and sabotage from the opposition parties, the House of Lords, the financial community, the bureaucracy and probably some sections of the armed forces. No doubt attempts would be made to try to use the crown against it. Again, as Laski said, "A party which in effect is attempting a revolution by constitutional means is bound to at least consider whether in fact the means of the constitution are at its disposal".

Can socialism be achieved by peaceful, parliamentary means? The answer must be that if it cannot and a violent revolutionary overthrow of society is essential, with the type of dictatorship that inevitably flows from the "socialist revolution" as exemplified by the regimes in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China and Cuba, then such a society is not worth having and certainly not worth living in.

In such bureaucratic societies the people may have employment (in some cases in labour camps), industry may be nationalised, educational standards may have risen and hunger for the majority of the masses may no longer exist, but if the people have to live their lives in intellectual, political and physical chains, then those regimes cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called socialist. They are the opposite of what socialism is about.

Although no-one can be sure that socialism can be achieved peacefully, due to the use of force by reactionary elements against a democratically elected socialist government as in Spain in the 1930s and Chile in the 1970s I believe that socialism in Britain, as a result of the arguments put forward by Marx and Engels during the latter half of the past century, can be so achieved and that the objective conditions for such a peaceful transition continue to exist.

As a result of the Russian revolution, the socialist movement in the advanced countries became side-tracked and divided. It is only now, after decades of not always successful social democratic governments in Western Europe and Stalinist bureaucratic control in Eastern Europe, that new hope has arisen. Both concepts, Stalinist and social democratic, are being rejected and socialism is being restored to its pre-1917 position, but on a new and higher level.

Yet there are some who never learn. In his book *The Bennite Heresy*, Alan Freeman criticises Tony Benn because of Benn's adherence to parliamentary democracy. There are other, more legitimate, criticisms of Tony Benn's position that Freeman fails to give. He argues that Benn says that we should wait "if there is a danger of creating a new government that does not have a mandate from parliament. But parliament will not give a mandate to a government that threatens the state...Benn is then compelled to turn his back on this very movement he inspires, at the moment when they might fail to ensure a parliamentary mandate and yet succeed by other means. Against Benn I lay the very charge he lays, in our interview, against the Bevanites — he lacks a strategy to win".

That is a most revealing passage and sums up the position of the ultra-left. To say that parliament with a Labour majority would not give a mandate is a false argument. Surely we must achieve socialism by using the democratic machinery that is open to us, transforming and democratising parliament, and not, as the ultra-lefts suggest, by destroying it and thereby laying the seeds for new authoritarian organisations, such as those in the Soviet Union.

Dr Alfred Salter, the MP for Bermondsey in the 1920s, has been widely quoted of late and I would like to add to his quotations. After a visit to Russia during the 1930s he said: "The absolute and ruthless suppression of all views contrary to those held by the government clique may be necessary during a short period of revolutionary history, but the perpetuation of tyranny of this sort, with no prospect for years to come of freedom of speech, thought or action, represents a condition which is intolerable and unthinkable to a democratically-minded man".

Otto Bauer, one of the leaders of the Austrian Social Democrats, wrote in *Zwischen Zwei Weltkriegen* in 1936,

"Both parliamentary action and extra-Parliamentary action are essential if we are to achieve a truly democratic socialist society'

"The dictatorship of the proletariat has become something entirely different from what was originally conceived by those who established it. It is not the dictatorship of freely elected soviets. It is not the 'superior form of democracy' that Lenin imagined, without a bureaucracy, or police or a standing army. It is not the free self-determination of the working masses exercising their rule over the exploiting classes. It has become the dictatorship of an all-powerful party bureaucracy which stifles all freedom of speech and actions even in the party itself, and it dominates the people by means of the powerful apparatus of the state and economic bureaucracy, the police, and the army".

The Austrian Social Democrats were prepared to take up arms in support of democracy and they did so, going down to honourable defeat, unlike either the social democrats or the Communist Party in Germany, who allowed their political divisions to destroy them. Force under certain circumstances, to defend democracy, must not be ruled out. But to impose power without a democratically elected base is the prelude to the end of democratic rights which have been fought for and defended against the forces of reaction. Rosa Luxemburg outlined this clearly in her pamphlet on the Russian revolution and I believe that she said all that was important on this subject from a revolutionary socialist stand.

It is often argued that the choice is between revolution and reformism. I believe that to be a false argument. Yes, we are in favour of a socialist revolution, but a peaceful democratic revolution with — and only with — the full consent of the people through parliamentary means. Force should be resorted to only as it was in Austria and Spain in the 1930s, when democratic society is being attacked by violent means. It must not be advocated as the method of change. On the other hand, it is essential for the Labour Party to be bold and decisive in carrying out its policies. Unless it does so, we shall never fundamentally change society. Timidity has always put the brake on our socialist hopes.

Fernando Claudin wrote in *Eurocommunism and Socialism*, "While it is essential to maintain and develop the traditional organs of representative democracy as a guarantee of the democratic process, it is equally important, if there really is to be greater participation by the people, to develop multiple forms of democracy from below, in mass movements and organisations".

Both parliamentary action and extra-parliamentary action are essential if we are to achieve a truly democratic socialist society. Extra-parliamentary action should not be seen as the alternative to parliament but as part of the same process. Excellent examples of successful combinations of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activity were the struggles against In Place of Strife and the Heath government's Industrial Relations Act. Today, due to mass unemployment, the struggle is somewhat muted with relatively weakened trade unions and an internal debate in the Labour Party that has slightly blunted the parliamentary attack.

If socialism is to be achieved in Britain there must be unity between the political and industrial wings of the movement. That unity must not only be expressed at the top through the Labour Party TUC liaison committee but equally and more importantly, at grassroots, district and regional levels. The role of the trade unions will be decisive in creating a democratic socialist society in Britain. That is why the unions must be encouraged to strengthen their links with the party at all levels, particularly by greater participation at constituency level. The block votes of the big unions at the party conference do not always accurately reflect the views of the rank and file, which can be argued at constituency party level through their delegates from local branches.

The Labour Party is a coalition based on the organised working-class movement. If that coalition were to break up and the trade unions were to withdraw from the party, it would mean the end of the party as we know it. It might become more purist ideologically but it would be



narrower and more sectarian and, under British conditions, we could find ourselves becoming isolated from the working-class movement, as the socialists did in the USA.

It is argued correctly that Labour's working-class base is less secure than it used to be. This leads young people such as David Coates to say in a piece called "Labourism and the Transition to Socialism" in *New Left Review* 129, that "To join and spend time working inside the Labour Party is to lend credibility to the whole Labourist tradition, to the ultimate detriment of a strategy for socialism that sees the shedding of Labourist illusions as a vital precondition of its own success".

But the "Labourite" tradition is not something to be sneered at. The Labour Party, with the backing and support of the trade unions, created conditions for workers that were a tremendous step forward. These gains are now being undermined and destroyed by the Tories. Secondly, to join the Labour Party as an individual with left-wing views is not a crime. Thousands have done so and have made a great contribution in steering the party towards a more left programme and policies.

All socialists of a left-wing hue who believe in genuine democratic socialism and who want to fundamentally transform society should be individual members of the Labour Party. Those who run newspapers should, if they have support, continue to publish and propagate their ideas. But it would be quite wrong for separate parties to act inside the Labour Party, with their own central committees, using the party as a recruiting base for their own organisations and living like parasites off the lifeblood of the main body.

I am not in favour of witch-hunts, and I am not in favour of the proposed register, but I believe that it is important that groups that function within the party should not have their own discipline and centralised organisations. Their first allegiance should be to the party, its policies and constitution. That is the essence of a democratically organised socialist party, in contrast to the "democratic centralism" of Stalinist and Trotskyist groupings.

To sum up, the Labour Party has been in crisis and to some extent still is. The character of the party has changed considerably. It is now more left-wing and its old, purely reformist social-democratic stance has gone despite the shift to the right on the NEC at the last conference, although serious attempts will continue to be made to turn back the clock. The time has come to concentrate on gaining support for the party's policy in order to win the next general election.

Socialism is on the agenda. That requires the widest possible unity in the labour movement. It also means building the widest possible international unity, starting in Europe, with the concept of a socialist Europe which does not accept the bureaucratic authoritarianism of the Soviet Union and its satellites or the unfettered free enterprise system of the United States.

But the crucial question remains: Can socialism be achieved by democratic means? My firm answer is that we must try.

The Spanish socialists have been elected to government. They do not intend to transform society to socialism, but to strengthen and widen democracy. Yet the military are opposed to them and may resort to force.

In Britain a socialist Labour Party would be faced with all the powers of the old ruling class who would do all they could to halt democratic socialist advance, including the use of anti-democratic force.

So I conclude: let us try the democratic road but without any illusions that we will succeed and be prepared to use the strength of the labour movement to defend our gains and defeat potential aggressors.

"If they let us..."

"The Last Two Years of Salvador Allende" by Nathaniel Davies, published by I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd., reviewed by Eric S.Heffer, M.P.

Nathaniel Davies was U.S. Ambassador to Chile during the years he has written about. The last two years of the Allende regime were indeed the most difficult ones for the President. His democratically elected regime was systematically sabotaged, and the U.S. Government clearly played a significant role in the sabotage.

Davis quotes a speech by President Allende on the 21st May 1971, that is six months before a visit to Chile by Castro from Cuba. Allende said, "Our revolutionary course, the pluralist way, was anticipated by the classical Marxists, but never before realised...To-day Chile is the first nation on earth called to fashion a new model of transition to a socialist society built according to a democratic, pluralist and libertarian plan".

That speech clearly expressed the basic views of Salvador Allende. I was part of a Parliamentary delegation which met the President and lunched with him at the Presidential Palace. He said then, and I have never forgotten it, "That our Socialist revolution will be different from Russia etc. It will be democratic, free, with joy, with wine, song etc. If, of course, they let us". Unfortunately, they did not let him and his friends carry through their democratic, pluralist, socialist revolution. They overthrew him by force, and established a terrible military dicatatorship which continues to this day. All those who worked for and supported that overthrow did a great disservice to democracy and freedom throughout the world. The multinational companies, the C.I.A., and the American Government, who were all involved have a heavy responsibility and they helped to commit one of the biggest crimes of this century.

What is interesting is the Ambassador's assessment of the President. After saying that it was well known that the President had a roving eye for the ladies, he asks the question, "Was Allende a Democrat? Did he genuinely want to bring Chile to socialism through legal and institutional means? Was he sincere when he presented his vision of the Chilean Way in his May 1971 address to the Congress?" The answer the Ambassador gives is absolutely clear. He says, "I believe the answer is 'Yes', Allende wanted these things".

Let me quote what Davis further said about the President:-

"His aspiration was for a better Chile and for happiness and fulfilment for his compatriots. Not just personally, but in the selfless political sense, he loved the women and children of Chile and had laboured over a lifetime for their welfare and opportunity. He unfailingly displayed great, generous, and compelling personal attributes. Few people are altogether consistent in outlook, and Salvador Allende revealed more contradictions than most. Nevertheless, he was an extraordinary leader and a profoundly impressive human being".

He certainly impressed me when I met him, and I shall never forget the terrible devastation I felt when I heard on television that he had been killed in the military uprising.

A socialist foreign policy

('Labour and Defence', 1986)

Labour's Defence policy is a compromise between conflicting views. It would be foolish and dishonest to say otherwise. There are those who accept the Atlantic Alliance and therefore are wedded to NATO, and those who are not, and who are passionately in favour of Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament.

The essence of Labour's policy (carried at last year's Conference) is clearly outlined in "Defence and Security for Britain", which was put to the Conference by the NEC. It says, "For many years, the Labour Party has been arguing for changes in Britain's foreign and defence policies. The 1983 Annual Conference reiterated Labour's commitment to collective security within NATO, our continuing opposition to the deployment of Cruise missiles, support for the cancellation of the Trident submarine system and the removal of all nuclear weapons and bases — including Polaris — from British soil and British waters".

It should not be forgotten that those who left the Party, forming the SDP, were extremely hostile to Labour's Non-Nuclear Defence policy. There were no unilateralists among the so-called "Gang of Four". There is still a minority, some in quite high places, who do not really go all the way with Labour's policy on nuclear weapons, i.e., with the removal of all nuclear bases. That is why the Defence Policy document is a compromise. What we as a Party are doing is accepting the reality of being in NATO, but at the same time arguing for a change within that organisation. The question we need to ask ourselves is, what is the reality of being in NATO? NATO was ostensibly created to "defend democracy". The reality has been somewhat different. It should be remembered that the Greek Colonels who overthrew a democratically elected Government in Greece, and subsequently acted against President Makarios in Cyprus, were using NATO weapons and were in the NATO Alliance, while NATO powers looked on, taking no action against them at the time. Turkey is also part of NATO, the Turks moved into Cyprus, occupying Northern Cyprus, to the so-called Green Line, yet again, no action was taken by NATO powers against them. Jim Callaghan wrung his hands, but that was about all that happened. Turkey also used NATO weapons, supposedly only to be used to defend democracy.

The Thatcher Government in its policies, underlines the reality of NATO. Whereas Labour's policy as set out in the Defence Document, is to seek positive progress toward genuine political Detente in Europe and to work for the ultimate ending of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, a policy stated in Labour's 1983 Manifesto. The Government policy which is Tory policy, is to ensure that Britain is totally committed to NATO. As the Central Office of Information says in its pamphlet, "Britain and NATO" — "Despite Britain's economic difficulties, the Government intends to implement in full a NATO target of a real increase of 3 per cent on defence spending each year until 1985/86...The British defence budget in 1984/85 was more than £17000 million, which is an increase of 20 per cent in real terms since 1978/79, despite the reduction in public expenditure generally...."

The document also boasts, "In 1983 Britain contributed 5.4% of its gross domestic product to defence and devotes more of its defence budget to equipment — 46% in 1983 — than any other NATO member".

These figures clearly outline the priorities of this Government, with their failure to deal with the real needs of the people. The old slogan "Guns before Butter", certainly applies to Thatcher and Co.

The truth is, that unless Labour deals with defence expenditure, by cutting it drastically, we cannot hope to begin rebuilding the economy, creating real jobs, and moving towards a full restoration of the Welfare State, leading ultimately to the establishment of a Socialist Britain.

> 'The politics of Labour must be the politics of peace.'

The T&GWU resolution on Defence at last year's Labour Party Conference rightly called for a more determined campaign, inside and outside Parliament, to win support for Labour's peace policies and to promote the economic arguments for disarmament and arms conversion.

The 1985 NEC Report to Conference, unfortunately does not give a picture of such a determined campaign being carried out. That could be due to the fact that there are contradictions in the Party's defence policy. Although the T&GWU Defence Resolution was overwhelmingly carried, another resolution from Glasgow Cathcart was rejected on a card vote. That resolution called for the "next Labour Government...to take the necessary steps to unilaterally rid the Nation of all nuclear weapons and missiles, without exception, and to close all American bases in this country".

To me, that was a perfectly acceptable resolution, and is fully in line with the T&GWU one which was overwhelmingly accepted.

I believe that if our policies are carried out when we are elected then Labour will run into difficulties with the US Government, who will want to retain their bases and nuclear weapons in Britain. They could, as they did in Chile, try to destabilise Britain's internal democratic system. Contrary to the NATO declaration about the defence of democracy, democracy has been attacked and undermined by the US in many parts of the world, and I see no reason why Britain should be considered an exception.

Labour, therefore, must face up to the consequences even of its present policy. If we decide to close down all nuclear bases, and to get rid of nuclear weapons, then it will not be accepted cheerfully and we could find ourselves in a crisis in the NATO Alliance, and particularly with the USA.

I believe we should reconsider our policy of remaining in NATO and there are many CLPs who have supported that view.

The Party membership clearly wants to see our policy on nuclear weapons put into effect. It must ensure that it is, and be prepared for the battle when it happens. At that stage, whether people like it or not, continued membership of NATO will become an issue of the greatest importance.

In the meantime, we should be deeply concerned with developments taking place in Britain. In these past few weeks we have seen a military exercise in which the enemy was the Soviet Union. I believe that psychologically we are being conditioned to accept the idea that a war with the Soviet Union is inevitable. Fortunately the NEC's International Committee has protested at the Government's propaganda. Whatever our view of the regime in the Soviet Union, and no genuine socialist can be happy about it, that should not lead us to accept war with that country. The policies of Mrs.Thatcher and Reagan, which are to protect the capitalist system, must be fought vigorously.

It is vital that the Labour Party should now go out to the public and fight for its defence policy. It must fight against nuclear weapons, for the removal of all bases and for a reduction in arms expenditure. It needs to devote more thought to this last question. Unless it does, Labour could find itself being against nuclear expenditure, but in favour of so-called traditional weapons on a large scale, with no real reduction in defence expenditure.

The fight for peace must also be a fight against the capitalist system. War is endemic to capitalism, and that is why it needs to be removed. War is not above politics, because Clauswitz rightly said: "War is the continuation of politics by other means". The politics of Labour must be the politics of peace, which also means the politics of struggle to end capitalism, with its inequality, class and race discrimination.



Working for peace

(Speech at the Bristol May-Day Rally, 4th May 1986)

This week the so-called Defence White Paper was published. Nowadays, however, its covers are not white, they are blue, and have been for a few years. Perhaps that is because we have a Tory Government, led by a thoroughly reactionary leader, Mrs Thatcher, who unlike some previous Tory Prime Ministers who were prepared to show degrees of independence from the USA, is a real Reaganite poodle, either rolling over for a pat on the tummy or licking the American President's boots.

The Defence White Paper, like previous Tory Defence White Papers, automatically advances the thesis that the Soviet Union is our enemy. In fact it says: "Britain's strategic nuclear force must be certain of inflicting on the Soviet Union an unacceptable level of damage. It must, therefore, be capable of posing a credible threat to key aspects of Soviet State power; and of posing such a threat at all times".

Yet earlier, the White Paper says: "Given the present size of NATO's defences, we have no reason to believe that Soviet leaders have any intention of attacking NATO countries".

Also, it earlier states: "...it is a country obsessed with its own security".

That is understandable. Russia lost 20 million people dead and suffered great devastation in the Second World War. They are obsessed with their security and we must fully understand that.

The truth is, the world is in a Catch 22 situation. The West builds up arms to frighten the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union builds up arms to frighten the West. The build up of arms, particularly nuclear arms, costs both East and West a great deal of money. As the Defence White Paper says: "Trident will undoubtedly cost a lot of money: money that will not be available for other defence purposes".

I would say, money that will not be available to rebuild our industries, to create employment, to eliminate poverty and to build decent homes and schools for our people, money not being used to deal with hunger and famine in various parts of the world, especially today in Africa. Actually, instead of sending in larger quantities of financial and other aid to countries sorely in need, we are selling arms abroad.

I think we should take note of what Peter Walker said at the Cambridge Union on Thursday evening when he said that:

"...substantial falls in unemployment can take place over five or six years. Part of the fall in the 30s was due to rearmament but that was only in the latter years and would have contributed less than one third of what was achieved. Substantial improvements were made by the massive rise in house-building".

The Defence White Paper says: "...the United Kingdom's share of the world market, at just over 6%, leaves us the free world's third largest defence exporter". In other clear words, we export arms on a fairly large scale, which no doubt are used against those who in the Third World countries are fighting dictatorships and for freedom and democracy.

It is a scandal that we should be doing so, and a scandal that the Government should boast about it. We are told it creates 130,000 jobs.

I say to that, we could be using these resources to look to our own non-nuclear defence, and at the same time create employment in other peaceful industries.

What we need in Britain today is a Non-Nuclear Defence policy. The type of policy spelt out in Labour's Defence Document.

Labour's policy is to work for the moment within NATO, at the same time arguing that a Labour Government will get rid of all nuclear bases, British and American, from and around British shores.

That is the policy agreed at Party Conference and unless it is changed we must accept it.

What worries me is that there are people within NATO who want to extend NATO's role into other parts of the world. It is possible that the Bonn Declaration, out today, will move us further in that direction. I am sure that both Reagan and Thatcher are much in favour of that.

The Defence White Paper clearly spells it out. It says: "NATO has acknowledged that developments beyond the NATO area may threaten our vital interests and that the Alliance members need, therefore, increasingly to look to Western Security concerns over a wider field than before".

In other words — if the people of a Third World country wish to create a socialist government and society, that does not look to America or NATO powers for inspiration, and rejects capitalism, then action could be taken against them, and it could be interpreted as a threat to Western NATO security. We can see that happening in Nicaragua by Reagan. It happened in Cuba in the past, and in Chile, when a democratically elected Government was overthrown with US connivance.

I believe we must make our position clear. We reject, as Socialists, the bureaucratic system of the Eastern Communist countries. We oppose their military interventions in Hungary, Czechoslovakia in the past and their threat to Poland in the last four years, and in Afghanistan. But we understand their actions without agreeing to them because of their fear for their security.

At the same time we reject totally the US Government's policies of interfering in the internal affairs of countries in all parts of the world.

Labour must say, a plague on both your houses. We will work for the end of nuclear weapons, East and West. We will seek to roll back the frontiers of war by working to end in the long run both the NATO and Warsaw Pacts.

We believe in working for peace because there is no other way. Modern war, with nuclear weapons, has meant a fundamental change in world warfare. The change began on the day the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. If war came it would destroy society. Labour must work to see that doesn't happen.

Trade Unions and the State

(Inaugural Helliker Trade Union Lecture, Trowbridge, 30th March 1985)

Thomas Helliker, who was hanged at the tender age of nineteen was a true martyr to the cause of Labour — as much a martyr as those six brave men and true from Tolpuddle who were transported to Australia in 1834, and as those cut down or killed by mounted troops in Manchester at the Peterloo Massacre in 1819.

Thomas Helliker was a brave young man who, whilst declaring his own innocence in taking part in the burning of the Naish Mill, clearly knew who was involved, yet he refused to give his comrades away. It is no wonder that he was revered by his work-mates, who carried his body over the plain to Trowbridge, ensuring that he was buried at St. James Church and given a full Christian burial.

Thomas Helliker was hanged on the 28th March 1803, that is 182 years ago almost to the day. It is fitting that the Trowbridge and District Trades Union Council should honour him by having a Memorial Day to commemorate his brave and honourable stand for, as it said at the time, on the illegal Shearman's Trade Union Card, "Industry, Freedom and Friendship".

The theme of my lecture today will be the role of the Law and the State in the struggle for a free Labour and Trade union movement in Britain. The unfortunate truth is that the rights for which people like Thomas Helliker fought, which have been built up over the past two hundred years, are now under serious threat.

Firstly, let me say a brief word about the times in which Thomas Helliker lived. They were a period of social upheaval.

Although trade unions were illegal, they did exist, and like the miners today, trade unionists put up a great struggle





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for their jobs, the future of their industry and the protection of the communities in which they lived.

The full majesty of the State and the law was used against them, just as it is used against Trade Unions today. The law is not above society. It is the product of the balance of class forces, of the dominant section in that society at a given moment. That is as true today as it was then.

Adam Smith's book "The Wealth of Nations' is often referred to by Mrs Thatcher but I fear little understood by her. Whilst Adam Smith argued that class divisions in society were natural he also said that in a civilised society "... the poor provide both for themselves and for the enormous luxury of their superiors. The rent which goes to support the vanity of the slothful landlord is all earned by the industry of the peasant...The labourer who bears, as it were, upon his shoulders the whole fabric of human society seems himself to be pressed down below ground by the weight... In a society of a hundred thousand families, there will perhaps be one hundred who do not labour at all and who yet, either by violence or by the orderly oppression of law, employ a greater part of the labour of society than any other ten thousand in it... those who labour most get least".

I would draw your attention to the words "either by violence or by the orderly oppression of law".

The struggle for freedom, for democracy, for a free press, for free institutions, such as a free trade union movement, has always been met with repressive measures. No ruling group in society has ever given up its power and privileges cheerfully, out of the goodness of their hearts. We can see that today in every part of the world, such as Latin and Central America, in Africa and Asia, and even those parts of the world which supposedly have got rid of capitalism and introduced socialist economies in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Trade unions as we know them today, are a product of the capitalist system. Prior to capitalism, workers protected themselves in Guilds, many of which laid the basis for craft unions once capitalism became the dominant economic system.

Prior to the growth of the industrial system in Britain, wages had been fixed by the local Justices of the Peace. This practice went back to the days of the Statute of Labourers of 1351 and the Statute of Apprentices of 1563. Any combination of workers was illegal. Clearly, as industry developed such a system was unsatisfactory. In the manufacturing areas, local Justices increasingly failed to exercise their wage-fixing powers. From time to time, workers appealed to the Justices of the Peace to fix a wage, but they failed to do so. The workers organised illegal Trade Unions, in order to collectively fight for a decent wage and better conditions.

Towards the end of the 18th century, Parliament had passed the Combination Acts, and they provided for a general prohibition of trade unions.

Trade combinations or unions, were held to be in violation of the doctrine of freedom of trade and capitalism. It was the same as the Thatcherite policy of anti-trade unionism, and the Lawsonite philosophy of low wages, as the way to build the economy.

Although the Combination Acts were repealed in 1824, Trade Unionists were still attacked in various ways for creating unions. In 1834 we had the Dorset agricultural labourers, the "Tolpuddle

Martyrs'' transported for taking an oath. They were prosecuted under an Act of Parliament brought in to deal with Nore Mutineers in the Royal Navy.

One often hears that violence has never been part of Labour's tradition That is true, but whether we like it or not, violence forced on the workers at times has made Governments look into issues. That is what happened in 1870. New legislation arose out of a Royal Commission, which in turn was appointed following an outburst of violence by a small group of trade union members in Sheffield.

The Trade Union Act of 1871 was a positive advance for unions, an Act, incidentally brought in by a Tory Government, which recognised that in future Tories had to compete for working men's votes.

In 1875, another Law was passed, ''The Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act'', that despite its title actually helped the unions. It gave peaceful picketing legal protection. It gave legal protection to workers taking action in pursuant of a trade dispute. In effect, it ruled out the offence of ''conspiracy'' for trade purposes. It did, however, include a section which made it a criminal offence to break a contract of service wilfully and maliciously.

Those words over the years caused many an argument.

In 1901, the House of Lords gave a decision known as the Taff Vale decision, which made funds of a Trade Union liable to claims for damages for actions taken on its authority.

In 1906, following the election of the Liberal Government, with an increased group of Labour Members elected to Parliament and with the Liberals keeping one eye over their shoulder at the workers' votes, a Trades Dispute Act was brought in which overturned the Taff Vale decision. Again in 1911, the Liberals brought in a Trade Union Bill No. 2 and the Liberal attitude at the time was put by Winston Churchill, the then Secretary of State for the Home Department, who said:

''It is not good for trade unions that they should be brought in contact with the courts, and it is not good for the courts. The courts hold justly a high and I think, unequalled prominence in respect of the world in criminal cases, and in civil cases between men and men, no doubt they deserved and command respect and admiration of all classes in the community, but where class issues are involved, and where party issues are involved, it is impossible to pretend that the courts command the same degree of confidence. On the contrary, they do not, and a very large number of our population have been led to the opinion that they are, unconsciously, no doubt biased''.

Then in 1909, a railway worker, W.V. Osborne, took action against his union on the grounds that the use of trade union funds for political purposes was unlawful.

That went to the House of Lords who gave a decision against the Union. Obviously the unions pressed very strongly for legislation to reverse the judgement.

In 1913, a new Trade Union Act was brought in which went some way towards giving the unions what they wanted.

The battle for trade union rights has always reflected itself in legislation. In 1927, following the General Strike, the then Tory Government, who wanted to curb the power of the unions, brought in the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, which clearly curtailed trade union rights.

It was repealed in 1946 by the Attlee Labour Government. However, that was not the end of the struggle. In 1963, the House of Lords made another decision against the unions in the Rookes versus Barnard case. That decision modified the 1906 Act. It had been considered up to then that a threat to take strike action in breach of a contract of employment, but which was in pursuit of a trade dispute was protected. The Rookes v Barnard decision took away that protection.

Again, we see the Law Lords and Judges making decisions against the Unions, a practice which continues to this day. We recently saw the Judges' decision against the NUM to send in a Receiver to take control of the NUM's funds, a decision that was new and unique, but again in line with the tradition of Judges in this country to act against the unions.

In 1971, we had the Heath Industrial Relations Act. That Act caused a tremendous struggle both in Parliament and outside. At one stage, the General Council of the TUC threatened a day's General Strike against the imprisonment of the dockers, known as the Pentonville Five, who had been imprisoned under that Act. They were released through the intervention of the Official Solicitor, somone who appears to be kept locked away in a cupboard and is only brought out when the Government of the day is in dire trouble.

The Heath Act was repealed in 1974 when Labour again took office. In its place Labour brought in new legislation which benefited the trade unions, and gave them rights they had never had before.

All that changed with the election of a new Conservative Government under Mrs Thatcher. To her, and to her guru, Sir Keith Joseph, Heath's policies were creeping socialism. It is clear that if you believe, as she does, in the competitive market economy, then the trade unions have either to be curbed, with their powers taken away, or destroyed altogether.

Let me conclude by saying a few words about the miners' dispute.

The government from day one of the dispute decided to intervene against the miners. In fact they planned for it.

The whole thing was revealed in the Economist in 1978 when they published the report by Nicholas Ridley on Conservative Plans to deal with publicly-owned industries.

The main theme of the report was that the industries should be privatised. There was an appendix, a most important appendix, and it was in that Ridley outlined his ideas to deal with the miners.

He said that there would need to be a confrontation with certain unions, and that the miners would undoubtedly be one of those unions taken on.

He argued that coal stocks should be built up in Britain and abroad. That power stations should be turned over to oil-firing as well as coal-firing, that non-union lorry drivers and companies be used to move coal, and that the Police should act as a national Police Force to deal with picketing, flying pickets etc. It was also urged that efforts be made to divide the miners by supporting those in prosperous areas who remained at work.

The Ridley plan was ultimately put into effect in 1984. In 1981, it was not ready and that is why the Government backed down from a confrontation at that time, but by 1984, they felt that their plans were advanced enough to be put into operation.

The Government's view was, if the miners were defeated, that would demoralise the entire trade union movement. The NUM, in a sense, were Labour's Brigade of Guards, and the Government felt they had to be taught a lesson, like the Shearmen of Trowbridge were taught a lesson with the hanging of Thomas Helliker. The mentality of the government was exactly the same then as it is today.

Labour must look to its own strength to deal with immediate issues.

I agree with what Keir Hardie said about the 1887 Parliament, but it applies today. ''Miners need not expect much from the present Parliament. The capitalist wields too much power in it for much to be done in the interests of Labour''.

He further said, ''Labour representatives should create opinion, both in the House and out of it, and this can be done by activity. Their present-day duty is to agitate''. He said he wanted more working people in Parliament, but ''... what difference will it make to me that I have a working man representing me in Parliament if he is a dumb dog who dares not bark, and will follow the leader under any circumstances''.

What we must do now is pledge that on the return of a Labour Government, all anti-trade union legislation will be repealed and that it will be replaced by legislation which protects and enhances trade union rights and the rights of all working people: that all the legislation which penalises, bankrupts and disqualifies Councillors who fight Tory policies will be repealed; and that all those who have been affected by Tory class laws will be indemnified either as individuals or as trade unions.

Let us go forward in the spirit of the young martyr Thomas Helliker, until we have built a just, free and democratic society, where the dreams of the miners and the Trade Unionist and Labour Leader, Keir Hardie, are really carried out.

An attack on every union!

(Statement on NUS Strike, 5th May 1988)

This is a real crunch dispute. The future of the National Union of Seamen (NUS) is at stake. If the NUS is destroyed, that will undermine and demoralise the whole trade union movement.

Some people in the labour movement might think that it is an exaggeration. It isn't. Think about what is happening in Britain right now. Everything in the Tory arsenal of anti-trade-union legislation is being used, or made ready for use. P&O is pouring vast amounts of money and resources into the job of undermining the union. The P&O drive to derecognise unions has the more or less open backing of the Tory government.

Employers in other industries are waiting to follow the P&O lead. Derecognition of trade unions is already a feature of British industrial life — and on a fairly big scale. There has been a tendency to shrug it off as being of little importance. Now the Dover dispute highlights the mortal threat of derecognition.

Obviously the NUS is breaking the law, and that means that the union can have its funds seized, even though the action is unofficial. The law is used to protect capital against labour. There is no room for argument about that. There are as many police on the picket lines as there are pickets.

The state machinery is rolling in to back the employers against the workers. That is what the law is designed to do. It is such open class law that workers now have no alternative, if they want to defend themselves, but to break it. Everywhere workers turn now, they come up against the law. There will soon be legislation on the statute book saying unions cannot expel strike-breakers from their ranks.

Other unions have got to step up the fight. Just purely on their own, the Dover strikers are not going to be able to win. You can see what they are up against every night on TV — from the hard-faced P&O businessmen to the laws and the Tory government. The bosses are determined, and they have the full backing of the Thatcher government.

So this is a dispute about fundamental things where the working class movement is concerned. The entire movement has got to rally and back the seafarers. So far about 150 MPs have signed a motion giving support to the NUS. The Labour Party NEC has passed a pretty good resolution. **But we need much more than that.**

- The seafarers urgently need financial aid.
- The rest of the movement must provide alternative resources, and make all its facilities available, to the NUS if the seafarers' funds are seized.
- The whole machinery of the trade union movement must move into action to build solidarity with the men and



women who now stand in the front line of the war to defend the labour movement. If it means things like cutting off supplies, then trade unionists should be prepared to do it.

- Other workers must help on the NUS picket lines.

I am worried to see that the TUC up until now, has done nothing. Other seafarers have already responded to the dispute. In Liverpool, the people have responded as always. The solidarity action promised by the workers in France, Holland and Belgium is absolutely first class.

French dockers and seamen have shown real international working class solidarity. When we talk about working for a socialist Europe to replace Common-Market Europe, we have in mind such examples of international workers' solidarity as this. We must build on such solidarity and work with European fellow-socialists to replace the present Europe of the bosses with a Europe of working class socialism. Real international solidarity means solidarity of workers joining with each other to fight against — basically, in the long run — the same employer.

In those European countries today it is not illegal for workers to take solidarity action as it is in Britain. Britain now has the worst anti-trade union laws in the whole of Western Europe. Ironically you have to go to a country like Poland to find parallels for the laws which are now being operated against our people.

Fight for unilateralism!

(Statement on leadership's attack on unilateralism, 23rd June 1988).

If we hadn't had the contest for Leader and Deputy Leader, the political issues would not be coming to the fore as they are at the present time.

The leadership is being forced to discuss policies, even though they would prefer not to. The debate on unilateral nuclear disarmament has come about precisely because there is a leadership contest.

When Neil Kinnock gave his 'personal position' on television it amounted to an attempt to change policy on the hoof.

There has been a very strong reaction to that. Denzil Davies resigned. He was never a unilateralist but nevertheless he did go along with Party policy on the basis of spending the money saved by scrapping nuclear weapons on other armaments. He was fed up with policy being made on television without consultation.

The whole position is in total disarray despite the fact that in the *Independent* the leader of the Party is now saying that he maintains the policy of the Party.

It was not a proper statement from the Leader's office. It is an attempt to rebuild bridges and fences. There has been a clear groundswell coming up from the membership of the Party and the trade unions. Neil Kinnock obviously wants to try and maintain the support for the leadership, and to convince unions like the TGWU that there has been no real change in policy.

But if Kinnock's original statement didn't represent a change in policy, people like Peter Shore wouldn't have welcomed it with such open arms. Nor would Bruce Kent from CND have reacted in the way he did. All the serious commentators regarded it as a real move in Party policy.

To me it indicates how correct it was to have the leadership contest. We are doing much better than anticipated, with support coming particularly from constituency parties. There is a very strong body of opinion in the Party which does want a radical socialist programme and policy, and wants the leadership of the Party to carry out such a policy and programme.

It has all been worthwhile, and between now and Party Conference there is a hell of a lot to play for in terms of support.

As for Kinnock's accusation of "contrived cynicism" I gave a statement to the *Morning Star* pointing out that if it was contrived cynicism then from my point of view it started a long time ago. In 1985 my book *Labour's Future — Socialist or SDP Mark II* gave a very clear analysis of what was happening in the Party — and if you analyse something years before, you are not being cynical. We pointed out some considerable time ago what was happening and what the Party membership had to do to stop it.

I think the personal attacks are an indication that they are getting very concerned and very worried by the results of the campaign.