

NOTE

CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS FREEDOM

Mike Power writes: The Campaign for Press Freedom was launched during the Trades Union Congress in Blackpool 1979. The need for the labour movement to counter the uniform hostility of the media became brutally clear during the winter of discontent 1978/1979.

The Campaign has formulated seven points in its statement of aims which include: challenging the myth that only private ownership provides genuine press freedom, to find ways to encourage diversity and new forms of ownership including co-operatives and independent trusts, and for greater access and accountability of the media.

It calls for the creation of alternative newspapers, including the consideration of a national daily sympathetic to the labour movement, and is currently sponsoring the *East End News*.

The Campaign aims to encourage industrial democracy in the media, and will follow up the principles enunciated in the Minority Report to the Royal Commission on the Press which included the idea of a National Printing Corporation. It also calls for a reformed and reconstituted Press Council and a Freedom of Information Act. Many media, trade union, political and academic personalities are among its sponsors, and its affiliates include many national unions as well as having a growing individual membership.

In February over 300 attended the Campaign's first public meeting in London which was addressed by Tony Benn. At a follow-up meeting groups were set up to promote research and activity around the statement of aims.

The first 10,000 copies of the Campaign's manifesto *Towards Press Freedom* were quickly sold out and it has been reprinted. Several thousand copies of the bulletin *Free*

Press have been circulated. This fledgling organisation is very speedily establishing itself and its potential has been widely recognised. Its importance and long-term influence could be immense. *Details of Membership* both for organisations and individuals can be obtained from the convenor: John Jennings 274-288 London Road Hadleigh Essex SS7 2DE.

Towards Press Freedom 30p is also available from John Jennings.

**THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

Peter Brimson writes: Many inner urban areas - plundered by cuts and abandoned by industry — now have high rates of unemployment and no prospects for the future. The alternative economic strategies put forward by the Left as a response to these issues often

seem abstract and not specifically relevant to the problems of particular areas.

Hence mobilising people (other than workers directly affected by closures or layoffs) on a local level around employment issues is a problem. Some ideas for local action (though not solutions) are contained in the last part of *Small Firms: Magic or Myth?* and *Islington's Multinationals* published by the Islington Economy Group.

We discuss what a left Labour local authority should be doing, together with possible actions on the part of trade unions and community groups. Both councils and unions should be openly pressing the Government for more cash (we show how this could be raised) to be spent on expanded services and building up Direct Labour. Direct involvement in industry is important: the setting up of factories to manufacture local authority building and stationery supplies, the establishment of industrial co-ops (especially where a private firm has failed) and support for workers wanting to develop alternative products. The labour movement must involve itself in such programmes to make them truly democratic ie, it is no good having expanded services unless they are planned by local people (which means mobilising around alternative plans). Direct Labour must be closely tied into tenants' needs: the development and technical competence on the part of workers involved. To help the process along and provide educational and investigative back-up to the movement, we suggest the establishment of TU resource centres.

The need for these alternative approaches is established by the two studies: *Islington's Multinationals* (which describes with 17 detailed case histories why 17 large firms pulled their subsidiaries out of the borough causing several thousand jobs to be lost) and *Small Firms, Magic or Myth?*, which shows

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