

'...the contradictions within social democracy are the key to the whole rightward shift of the political spectrum...'

('The Great Moving Right Show'
Stuart Hall)

I find myself in a curious position in the midst of the debates taking place within the Left over the past few years about the rise and fall of Labour and Labourism. Despite the nightmare of the current political and economic depression, I remain an optimist. Not because I think, in the best traditions of the well-intentioned fallen upon hard times, that something will turn up. Because I don't. But because the nature of this nightmare vindicates a critique of the crisis of socialism which is shared among thousands of 'doers' and 'thinkers' alike, people who have not deserted the Left, but whose despair and discontents with some of the movement's bad practices have generated the alternative ways of life for the Left. And so, my optimism finds its allies among pessimists, or rather the so-called pessimists.

While the so-called optimists still seem to be denying the internal fissures in the movement, saying: Crisis, Wot Crisis? it is now no longer possible to delineate a single socialism, a single Left. There are many. And the fact that there are many is testament to more than simply a healthy diversity — it is evidence that the bland barrackrooms of some of the Left's institutions, are besieged by strongholds of democratic socialism, whose imperative is to invent effective socialist renewal in the face of the exhausted examples of Labourism which have broken the spirit of socialism in Britain and by their bad practice have squandered support for the very idea.

LABOUR AND POWERLESSNESS

My argument in this article is that the postwar history of social democracy has alienated the mass of the people from socialism; it is that our renewal is not only a question of programmes and policies — though these are clearly important — but is more importantly about the relationship between the people and the structures, and party Labourism has created, which have alienated the people and left them with the pain of their own powerlessness.

It is clear that because the Labour Party is beginning to claw back some of its lost millions, there are suggestions that the crisis of the Left, undeniable after

Labour's crisis isn't primarily about policies and programmes, it's about relationships with the people. Look at its relationship with women, for example. . .

Beatrix Campbell

How the Other Half Lives

two horrible defeats in general elections, is over and that, in Eric Heffer's words in *Marxism Today* (Dec), our job is to consolidate. I think we should look at Labour's fortunes from a different standpoint — not so much from the perspective of the performance of Labour's leaders, or the unification of the party after a period of bitter strife, but from the perspective of this question: how is Labour to repair the damage done over the whole of the post-war period?

If anything explains the flight to Thatcherism in a single word it is pessimism — a profound disbelief that democracy works. Housing is a useful case of the crisis of the social democratic ideal precisely because it is a sphere that democratic socialism can influence.

Homes fit for heroes?

Postwar consensus among all the main political parties assumed that to pull in the punters you had to promise a solution



to the housing shortage. Housing isn't just a commodity — though it is that — it is also where you live. It may be the only bit of the environment you feel you can influence.

The influence may be limited — but it is felt. It's easy to discern the desire — the owner-occupied houses on council estates disrupt the blank, barren line of the barracks provided for the people, with their mock georgian doors and olde English windows. At least the lucky tenants — the ones with gardens — enjoy a modicum of self-determination mingled with self-sufficiency. Vegetables and the colour of your living room walls was all that most of us who lived in council houses were allowed to determine.

The worst of it was the permanent condensation sweating on those cold concrete walls, the £200 quarterly heating bills in never-warm maisonettes, bringing up a three-year-old on the fifteenth floor, the repairs engendered by housing forms that were quick to build and quick to fall apart. Worst of all was the tenants being blamed for it all. Here I have to declare an interest: I've lived in council housing for most of my life, and I've talked to hundreds of tenants over the past couple of years in the course of writing *Wigan Pier Revisited*. They want better. They also want an apology.

The Labour Party's historic relationship to tenants has been a model of its patrician relationship to its own social base. Tenants rarely get to the point where their organisation is allowed to get beyond complaint and becomes assimilated into the process of design and management. Some local authorities are wising up, largely those populated by women and men of the young, new left schooled in the community struggles of the 60s and 70s, who are viewed so suspiciously by the party's godfathers, keen to make clients of their constituents.

Direct democracy

De-centralisation is just beginning— why didn't it describe Labour's management of council housing and council tenants 40 years ago?

The Left has been slow to abandon a statist and managerial approach to housing and embrace the opportunities afforded unusually and easily in the housing case for direct democracy to function alongside representative democracy. Its lethargy is less to do with the bureaucratic problem of joint management between workers, administrators, councillors and tenants than with its fear of losing control. The

Labour Party's panic over *loss* of control is mirrored in tenants' pessimism caused by their *lack* of it. By excluding tenants from the decision-making processes — whether they be architectural, financial or political, Labour *created* mass alienation from the process of politics itself. It de-politicised the people. It reduced them to consumers. So what could have been the classic case of social democracy's success has become the classic case of its failure. It has allowed the Right to set the political agenda.

. . . my optimism finds its allies amongst pessimists, or rather the so-called pessimists

The Tories have expressed the political transition brilliantly in their own coinage, 'the property-owning democracy'. Disaffection with democracy as politics has metamorphosed in right-wing propaganda into democracy as consumption and ownership. The Tories thereby appear to support freedom of choice, something Labour has never offered to its council tenants. It is a measure of the poverty of control most people feel they have over their physical environment that the simple fact of home-ownership should appear as self-determination. But the Tories' slogan speaks directly and effectively to that poverty of power which is most people's experience. Instead of empowering it's own people, the poorest people in Britain, the Labour Party in local government has taken power away, it has rendered them powerless, it has detonated democracy. And before anybody says that Labour's process of renewal is complete, how are they going to make that deep, political pain better.

SEX AND THE LABOUR PARTY

The story of housing is about Labour's relationship to the people outside the party. Now let's turn to a relationship inside the party, which is also about power and powerlessness.

The feminist Labour MP Harriet Harman said at the 'Labour's Lost Millions' debate in London earlier this year that the Labour Party was a single sex party. We know what she means — women certainly know what she means. She's talking about a party created in the image and interests of one sex.

But it isn't only a men's party. Women have always tried to organise in it and for it. So we are talking not simply about a party that excludes women, but one that

has subordinated women. Women have always had their own organisation within the party — it has about 1,000 women's sections. But room for manoeuvre has been conditional — they have been required to service the lifestyle of the party, and once the rank and file women's sections embrace feminism which challenges the social relationship between men and women, they put the men's permission in jeopardy. Not for the first time, the use of the trade union bloc vote is seen to be a problematic force in the party. But rarely can it have been so clearly seen as a men's vote against women, than when in the 80s the bloc vote was rolled out like a B-52 to blast the demands put to the party conference by the women's conference.

What they feared was a constituency they couldn't control. Neil Kinnock has admitted as much: 'What men and women in the labour movement will distrust is any effort to use the women's movement to tactical advantage.' Did that refer to women's role in the inner party power struggles between Right and Left? 'That's putting it very crudely, but OK, it'll do.' (In an interview with me in *City Limits*, September 1983 No 104).

So the women's rights were suppressed both because they represented a radical force in the party that couldn't be controlled, and as a women's vote that couldn't be controlled by men.

Women in the world at large

But what about the world outside? Labour can claim, though usually with less than boisterous enthusiasm, that it is the only party that has legislated *for* women (equal pay, sex discrimination and domestic violence — although abortion came from the Liberals, and in the struggle to save the 1967 Abortion Act in the 70s, some Labour MPs were caught with their virility hanging out.)

Nevertheless, it is not a party that has appealed to women at large *as women*. And before some of our male comrades splutter that this is a slanderous lie, let them be a fly on the wall at Labour Party women's meetings. And let us not forget instances like discussions over the party's latest manifesto, and the proposition that the married men's tax allowance — a patriarchal perk if ever there was one — be abolished and transferred to an increased child benefit paid to mothers. It was greeted with horror by some prominent left-wing protagonists. 'The lads on

¹ Ed Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques *The Politics of Thatcherism*.

the shopfloor won't like it,' they said.

Eric Hobsbawm pointed out in his article 'Labour's Lost Millions' in *Marxism Today* (Oct), that 70% of women don't vote Labour. Why didn't they? Part of the answer is: because Labour never really asked them to. And if that's unkind, coming from a communist, let's go to the horse's mouth. The May 1983 edition of the Labour Party Campaign group newsletter says: 'Labour has always regarded itself as the party of the underdog. But if the image of Labour as the champion of the working class has declined, that of it as a champion of women and ethnic minorities has never existed.'

Voting patterns

What did women do in recent elections? Labour's support among women declined from 38% in 1974 to 35% in 1979 and a staggeringly bad 26% in 1983. The Tories gained from 39% in 1974 to a massive 47% in 1979 and held the line with 46% in 1983.

These figures can't be explained away as the innate conservatism of women. They should be looked at in the light of interesting statistics on peace. There is no evidence that women are *naturally* more peaceloving than men. A Mori poll conducted just before the last election showed that a majority of 52% were anti-Cruise, and more of that 52% were men (58%) than women (47%).

By 11-12 December 1983, Greenham's fence-shaking weekend and the screening of the American post-holocaust film 'The Day After', there was a five-point majority among men against Cruise, and a spectacular two-to-one majority against Cruise among women. Women were lost by Labour but gained for peace — the one and only piece of politics organised for and by women. And it worked.

When Gwynneth Dunwoody slandered Labour Party feminists at the 1982 conference as just a bunch of middle class women, no doubt echoed by not a few men, she also shut her face to the Greenham Common effect. It wasn't class she objected to, it was politics. We haven't heard the same complaint against Attlee, Gaitskell, Wilson or Foot. The attack presumably aims to conscript *working class* women against feminism. This kind of disdain of feminism isolates the very women in the party who are seeking to make amends for Labour's neglect of working class women's sex and class. Naturally, feminism challenges consensus about what constitutes 'normal relations' between men and women within the

working class, and it draws on the discontended commonsense shared among women about the balance of power between men and women — that's what gives the women's movement some of its strength. Labour's failure to give it a public, political profile is part of its weakness.

Taken for granted

Instead the Labour Party has been schizophrenic about women and their culture, harbouring a conservative politics of everyday life which sits uneasily with a sporadic rhetoric about equality.

The Right, on the other hand, consciously mobilises a conservative ideology of everyday life — it celebrates domesticity without ever questioning the conditions in which domestic work is performed. The women of the Labour Party don't necessarily want the domestic banished from the political agenda, they want its conditions transformed. For feminism, as for many 'ordinary' women, the domestic sphere is about work *and* much more, it is the site of the production and reproduction of human relationships, inside and outside families. Women want the work *valued, redistributed and resourced*, both privately and publicly.

The Right is simplistically positive about women's caring role in domestic life, and carelessly cavalier about its conditions. The Tory Party is treading softly, softly about domestic relationships. Its last manifesto declined to prescribe a model family — in the knowledge that the model nuclear family of husband, dependent wife and 2.4 children is now a



rarity, and in the knowledge that personal life is unstable and changing radically in our culture, largely as an expression of women's changing aspirations. Tory social policy may seek to reorganise the model family as the norm, but at the ideological level the Tories are stuck — they may invoke the family, its economy and ideology, but they now know that whether they like it or not, they can no longer appeal to a conservative family construct. But neither can they embrace the creative fissures and contradictions in private life

on the side of women. What they have done is to abstain from private life: cabinet ministers' affairs with their secretaries are their *private* affairs, comfortably consistent with Victorian values after all; on the other hand they *publicly* mobilise, in Stuart Hall's phrase, 'authoritarian populism'.

Dangerous places

In Tory ideology private space is safe, public space is dangerous; the home becomes people's last line of defence, the streets are represented as the haunts of the reckless, the restless and the riotous. Tory ideology puts pickets and pickpockets into the same category, and both into the same category as child molesters and rapists. Street life becomes conflated in a Tory almanac of street crime. And that resonates in the minds of many women with a widely-shared fear of public space. The repressive Right has plenty to say about women's fears. The liberal Left doesn't.

But, while seeming to address women's fears, the Right is only mobilising panics about marauding masculinity for its promotion of private security as the best insurance against public disorder. In other words, the Tories trade on people's vulnerabilities as victims, and in the case of women they trade on women's sense that they're the victims of men. That allows the Tories to *appear* to represent both women's *fear*, and women's sense of *exclusion* from the world of men, whether it be a picketline or a football pitch. Tory ideology appears to address women *as women*. They've moved in where Labour fears to tread.

The Labour Party's panic over *loss* of control is mirrored in tenants' pessimism caused by their *lack* of it

I am not suggesting that by becoming a feminist party the Labour Party would recapture the millions of women who it has not only lost, but never had (though maybe I should). But I am suggesting that unless it takes responsibility for building a radical and feminist consensus among women, then the best that can happen is that women will remain its lost cause. And worse, Labour will remain women's lost cause. To change that, and I believe it must, the Labour Party needs to modify its view of political consciousness, how it is formed and how it moves. And it needs

to overhaul its view of political alliances, how they are made and how they are lost. Neil Kinnock might lose support among men if he went on television and argued that it's time men (including himself) did the housework, and shared the care of their own kids, but imagine how it would make the average women feel.

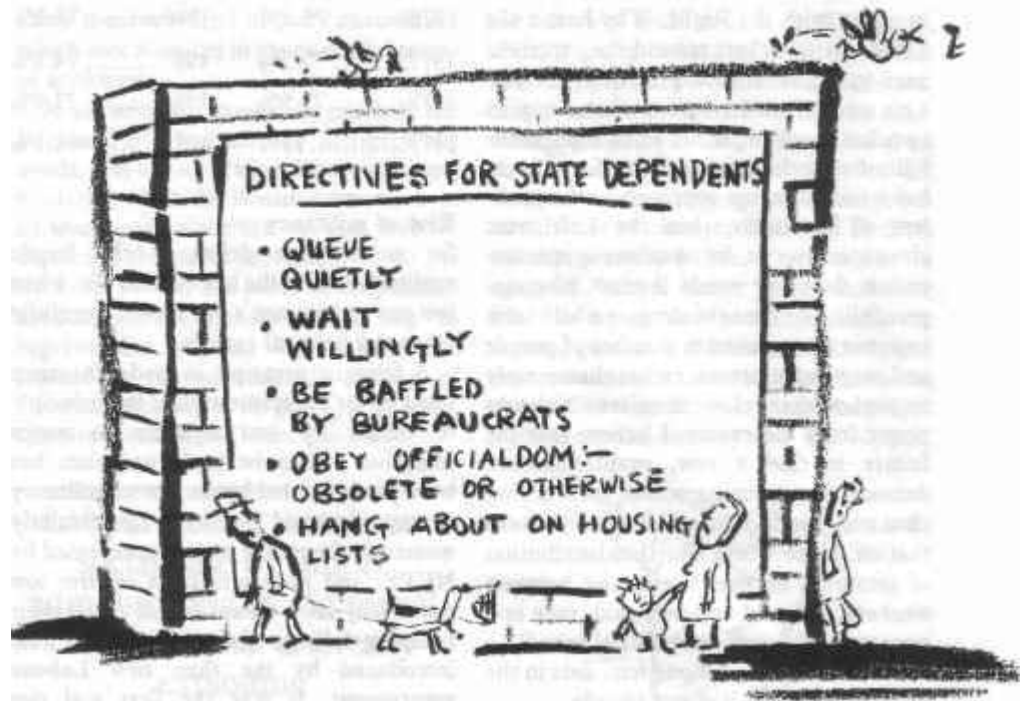
Are they daft?

And while we are at it, what's happened to men's allegiance to the Labour Party? Thatcherism has hijacked many men from some of the heartlands of masculine Labourism. To some on the Left, there is apparently nothing to explain. There is no such thing as Thatcherism Tony Benn told me in an interview in *City Limits* (Jan 84, No 120): it is 'a complete mistake. What's wrong with Britain today is capitalism and oppression.'

How, then, are we to explain the terrible collapse of Labour's support among working class men? Part of the explanation lies in the way social democracy created despair about democracy, but isn't there more to say? Between 1974 and 1983 Labour's support among men slipped from 43% to 30%. And for the Tories it rose from 32% to 42%. Why? It can't simply be that they're daft, duped. I believe that part of the explanation lies in the Tories' appeal to working class men as *men*. The sectional self-interest which had fuelled so much traditional wage-bargaining has now worked against Labour since the late 70s and for the Tories. The Tories, after all, talk that language. During the 70s, the popular press made much of attempts within our movement to change the balance of power between blacks and whites and men and women. Thatcherism crossed the boundaries of working men's class allegiance to Labour and appeared as the authentic voice of men's 'sexual Toryism.'

The Campaign Group within the Labour Party suggests that 'Labour's electoral prospects will inevitably suffer unless the Party regains the confidence of its traditional supporters and gains the support of other disadvantaged groups.' How? And can it do both at the same time? Can it appeal to the racism and sexism of one group without forfeiting the right to represent the rights of millions of poor black people and women? No. It can only gain the confidence of the latter if it takes the responsibility for the reform of the former. It can't buy its way into the heart of the old labour aristocracy. But neither can it desert them.

What is clearly happening in our soc-



iety is that relations between conflicting interests within the working class are unstable and volatile — our culture is heaving and steaming, it's all on the move, but which way? Backwards or forwards? Labour cannot remake its social base by simply administering an old sexual consensus that is already exploding.

A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN HER UNION

Any meaningful discussion of people's experience of Labourism can't omit the trade union movement. Here, above all, mass values are created in the daily practice of our collision with the class enemy. The Labour Party may not be a mass party (it is the only mass working class party we've got, but participation in its affairs remains a minority sport) but the labour movement is a mass practice. It holds contradictory values simultaneously: it is an egalitarian movement and at the same time it is not. The key to that conundrum is its relationship to women.

'A women's place is in her union,' says the slogan. Until recently, that wasn't true — the movement wasn't a place that welcomed women. Now it is true, but the effort to be in her place speaks of the transition the labour movement is going through, and speaks volumes about who's movement it is. The labour movement isn't a women's movement. It isn't a movement represented by women. Let's hope that one day it will be, but meanwhile our task is to cope with the legacy:

the movement's personnel and its political priorities express the results of the historic struggle between men and women.

Reality not rhetoric

Our questions need address not the rhetoric of the labour movement, but the reality from the point of view of the people, particularly the poorest people in the working class: does the daily activity of bargaining adequately shift the balance of class power, and intra-class power? None of these questions can be asked without fully appraising ourselves of what exactly the class enemy is up to. But the analysis of the enemy won't substitute for analysis of what collective bargaining does and does not deliver.

For the last 15 or 20 years, leading figures in the trade union movement have pressed for a reform of collective bargaining. And again Len Murray has launched a discussion within the TUC about renewal. In his paper he warns that divisions within the working class are as intense as divisions across classes. The movement must show that it is truly representative, says Murray. The implication is, of course, that it is not. But Murray is putting forward a wrong solution to this real problem. As always, the Right's inclination is to solve the movement's crises of representation by sitting on struggle rather than setting it alight. So, the Right's modernisation of the movement is managerial rather than radical. The Left often seems to abstain from these debates about the reform of bargaining yet that leaves the

initiative with the Right. Why hasn't the Left initiated debate around the perceived need to democratise wages struggles. The Left can't sit in its corner conserving its own fortifications, it has to take responsibility for modernisation, too. If the Right has a minimalist approach to the problem of hegemony, then the Left must always answer it by *maximising* participation. In other words it must take responsibility for forms of struggle which both *empower* the maximum number of people and map out strategic, rather than simply tactical, working class offensives which *take* power from the enemy. I believe that the failure to find a new, egalitarian and democratic settlement within the working class itself, undermines our capacity to take that on. Since World War II redistribution of resources between class, and between workers, low paid and well paid, men and women, has been on the political agenda — from time to time. Among feminists in the labour movement it *is* our agenda.

Challenging conventional wisdom

One of the important changes in trade unionism in the 70s was the presence of a new force: the low paid and women — the caterers, carers and clerks who are so easily scorned by some people in the labour movement. Their presence was strongly felt in collective bargaining strategies which implicitly, if not explicitly, challenged the conventional wisdom that the bargaining successes of the higher-paid would be passed on to the lower-paid. The challenge was concretely manifest in the limp Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act, together with two other important features: the assault on low pay in the public sector, particularly by NUPE, and the brief introduction of a state-initiated flat rate, the £6 flat rate of the social contract.

But if the mid-70s was a period of priority attached to the low-paid, the restoration of collective bargaining was associated, and remains so, with the restoration of differentials. This is *not* an argument against collective bargaining — collective bargaining is simply the necessary context in which British workers slug it out with the employers. It is only our *form* of bargaining. The issue at stake is the content. What has the content of collective bargaining come up with over the past decade for women?

Women's hourly earnings, compared to men's reached their peak during the period in which the flat rate policy of the social contract and the last stages of implementation of the Equal Pay Act were active.

1976.....	75.1%	1980.....	73.5%
1977.....	75.5%	1981.....	74.8%
1978.....	73.9%	1982.....	73.9%
1979.....	73%	1983.....	74.1%

Rise of militancy

So we see the defeat of the fragile egalitarianism of the late 60s and 70s, when low pay and women's pay moved forcefully on to the political agenda.

A feminist principle in trade unionism must be for the restoration of the principle of democracy and equality to wages offensives. Feminist trade unionism has been partly guided by the rise of militancy among low-paid workers, particularly women in the public sector represented by NUPE, and their attack on relative low pay. Many shop stewards still recall their complex feelings about the £6 flat rate introduced by the then new Labour government. It was the first *real* rise low-paid women had ever enjoyed. During the 70s NUPE did achieve a minimum for its members equivalent to two-thirds of the average male wage, *pro rata* for part-timers (women). But that success among ancillary staff has been dissipated — they would now have to be earning a basic £100 a week. In fact their basic is £65. At the end of the decade, the low paid suffered a mighty counter-attack by the employers which found an echo in elements of the trade union movement itself: the employers' pay package met the premium put on restoration of differentials — the poorest trade unionists paid the price. Equality, it seemed, was a sometime thing.

Today, when low pay is once again an acute issue, even if it is not yet on the political agenda, according to the Labour Research Department 25% of pay claims nationally include a flat rate element. Will it be followed next year by the restoration of differentials? Flat rate *is* a feminist approach to pay bargaining. However, the £6 flat rate was part of a completely disastrous package designed to sell the industrial quiescence that the Labour government wanted.

Amongst public sector non-manual workers, women's earnings in relation to men's are now worse than they were in 1970. The peak was in 1977. We might have expected the differential between men and women to stabilise after 1977, the best year. In fact, the bargaining strategies deployed involved not only a retreat from the egalitarian wage offensives of the mid-70s, but an organised reversal. With a vengeance.

By their deeds. . .

It is these contradictions which makes the Left an odd place for women. Naturally drawn to it as a movement of change and a movement for equality, women find themselves encircled by practices and priorities which speak the opposite. For the labour movement today is not an area in which everyday life between men and women is markedly different from anywhere else. How, then, do we test the 'ideology' of the labour movement? In its manifestos and resolutions, or in its daily deeds? For men, their bad faith, their domestic indolence, their megalomania in relation to women is shrouded in their philosophical good intentions. And we all know where they lead. This makes the Left a puzzle and a problem for women. For its stated commitments incite an alliance between men and women for the liberation of women, as women. Its lived life incites disaffection not to say despair. It also demands change.

ALLIANCES DON'T FALL FROM THE SKY

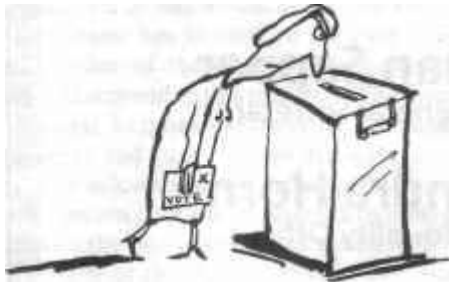
These figures describe the conditions in which women participate in the labour movement. Its an alliance which is still organised at their expense — although clearly trade unionism is the necessary condition for women's collective self-determination in the economy. What is now at stake is the reconstruction of men and women's alliance with each other, and with it the reform of the labour movement.

Alliances aren't arithmetic aggregates of disparate interests. Alliances are only conversations. They are the political space in which different political and social forces encounter each other, enter into dialogue and are transformed by each other. What is at stake for the Left and the labour movement now is whether the necessary conversation between the people and the people's parties is one that the parties are prepared to have. And it is whether the forces contending for power within the movement can come to a different historic settlement.

Preoccupied with Eric Hobsbawm's fleeting reference to a possible electoral arrangement, many of those involved in the 'Labour's Lost Millions' debate unfortunately reduced the issue of alliances to a wrangle over the possibility of an electoral alliance with the Alliance.

Eric Heffer, in *Marxism Today* (Dec) boldly banished such a notion to the swamp of reformism. He argued that the Labour Party must beware of alliances with hungry deadbeats, isolated and itchy for a

piece of the action. He proposed instead that individual party membership should be increased and workplace organisation encouraged, especially in industry. This is party chauvinism. But if Heffer has got it wrong, and I think he has, then so have others on the Left in the Labour Party. The interview with Tony Benn referred to earlier, revealed the same lacuna. He *assumed* an alliance between men and women in the movement. Ken Livingstone is among the most sensitive Labour politicians around, and has certainly done most to get hold of feminism and sexual politics. Talking about his parliamentary



prospects he said (again in *City Limits* Jul 83, No91) 'it would be a mistake to stand in a safe seat with a solid, white skilled working class who can't stand blacks or poofs, who'd probably think I was a new degenerate.'

CL: 'So you're talking about a kind of politics which is about everybody who isn't the white, skilled working class.'

KL 'The dispossessed. We got that vote in the election — that's why there were the swings to Labour in Brent, Westminster, Hampstead and Hornsey, areas where you've got a cosmopolitan approach to life. We've got that, so somehow we've got to reclaim the skilled working class by concentrating on economic policies and convincing them they'll work.'

Doing sums

All these representatives of the Labour Left in one way or another know that the crisis for Labour lies in part with the collapse of its internal and external alliances. Nevertheless, even they are divided. What we are now witnessing, is a contest within the Left in the Labour Party, between those hoping to secure a new alliance with 'the dispossessed' and the mollification of the traditional white, skilled base, and those seeking to retain that old base as its core, while adding to the alliance the agenda of 'the dispossessed' But what is characteristic of all the Labour Party positions is an instrumental view of alliances, which seeks statistically to aggregate random or conflicting interests. Part of their problem is that in the Labour

Party there is a kind of party chauvinism which sees alliances in terms of affiliations or arithmetic.

It all wouldn't matter so much if the Labour Party had actually delivered the goods. But has it? It's just lost two general elections, when the British economy is in its worst crisis since the last one. Labour depended the peace movement to do the *work* that put war and peace on the political agenda. It was Labour's task only to express that political work electorally. Instead it was squandered. Instead of Labour appearing as *the peace party*, peace appeared as the site of inner-party struggle.

Labour cannot remake its social base by simply administering an old sexual consensus that is already exploding

In fact it confused two issues: its own inner party struggle, and the nuances of policy fought over between Right and Left in the party: and a viable electoral strategy, one that described just how much and how little the party could do within five years if it were elected to government. This typifies the Labour Party's tendency to conflate two distinct entities, in this case the party, the peace movement and the people. To secure unilateralism as the strategic position of the party is one thing — to plan precisely and tactically how to make that operational in a five year stretch of government is quite another. All of us on the Left have to learn that hard, horrible lesson. That was Labour's task as a possible party of government. It failed, therefore, to do justice to itself or to the peace movement which had successfully and subtly shifted the centre of political gravity in Britain about nuclear weapons.

Finally, let it be said participation by the Labour Party in the peace movement would be good for both of them, but it wouldn't necessarily increase the individual or affiliated membership of the party. By Heffer's criteria does that make it a movement the Labour Party can disengage itself from? Of course not. But Heffer *et al* have to learn that the Labour Party cannot any longer participate in political action as if it were only 'for the party'.

Agents and subjects

Alliances are not about reducing movements like women and peace to satellites of the party — the party perhaps cannot be

the centre of such an alliance. The party, then, is going to have to learn that it has something to learn from these movements, that it will be changed by them. In other words, the party — and this applies to all the parties of the Left — have to see themselves as not only agents of change but as subjects of change. But Eric Heffer's position sees the Labour Party only as an agent of change. Heffer makes this clear when he argues that 'to a large extent the renewal process has been completed, and now the time has come to consolidate the changes, to translate them into campaigns throughout the country and win support



for the party.' Well, what can you say? All I can say is: tell that to the women and the black comrades in your party.

Typically, the Labour leadership opposed the TUC's support for the 1982 People's March for exactly these reasons — it might have interfered with the party's electoral campaign. It couldn't imagine that mass mobilisation around unemployment would have benefited both the Left in general and the unemployed in particular, irrespective of immediate electoral gains for the Labour Party itself. More seriously, it couldn't imagine involving itself in anything concerned with simply changing consciousness. And here we have another clue to the failure of renewal in the Labour Party. It's own-party chauvinism seems to make it think that changes in the Labour Party are changes in the culture, are changes in the people. But the party is *lagging behind* changes in the culture and in the people — it doesn't meet their need of organisation, it can hardly keep its own organisation together, and it doesn't express the dynamic fissures and contradictions in popular consciousness and culture. Primarily, it doesn't see itself changing the political universe we all inhabit by *creating* politics — except as a kind of narcissistic reflection of itself. In other words — it doesn't take responsibility for change. And it doesn't see itself as a problem in the contemporary constellation of politics and culture.

Perhaps the truth is that the process of renewal, far from being complete, is barely begun.