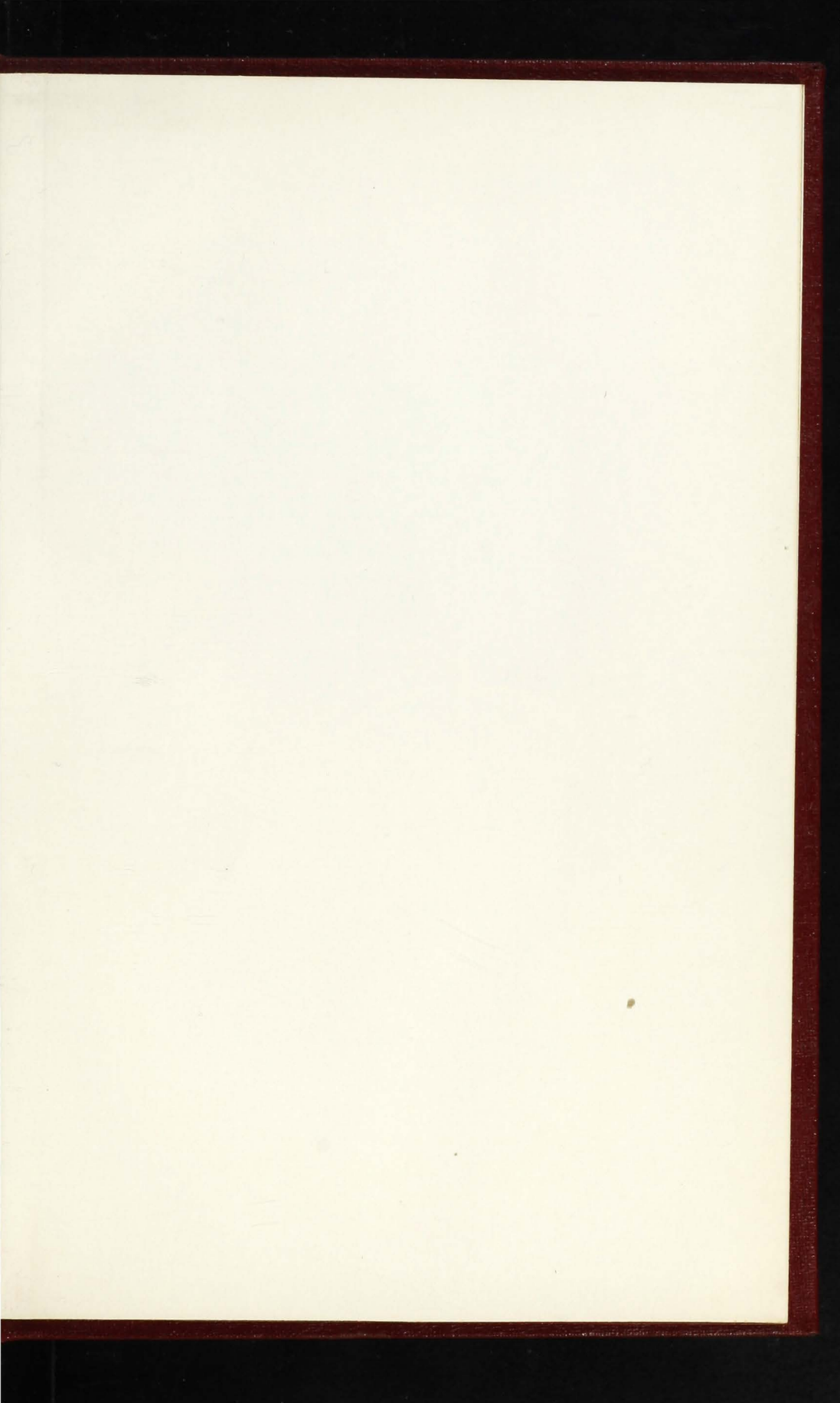


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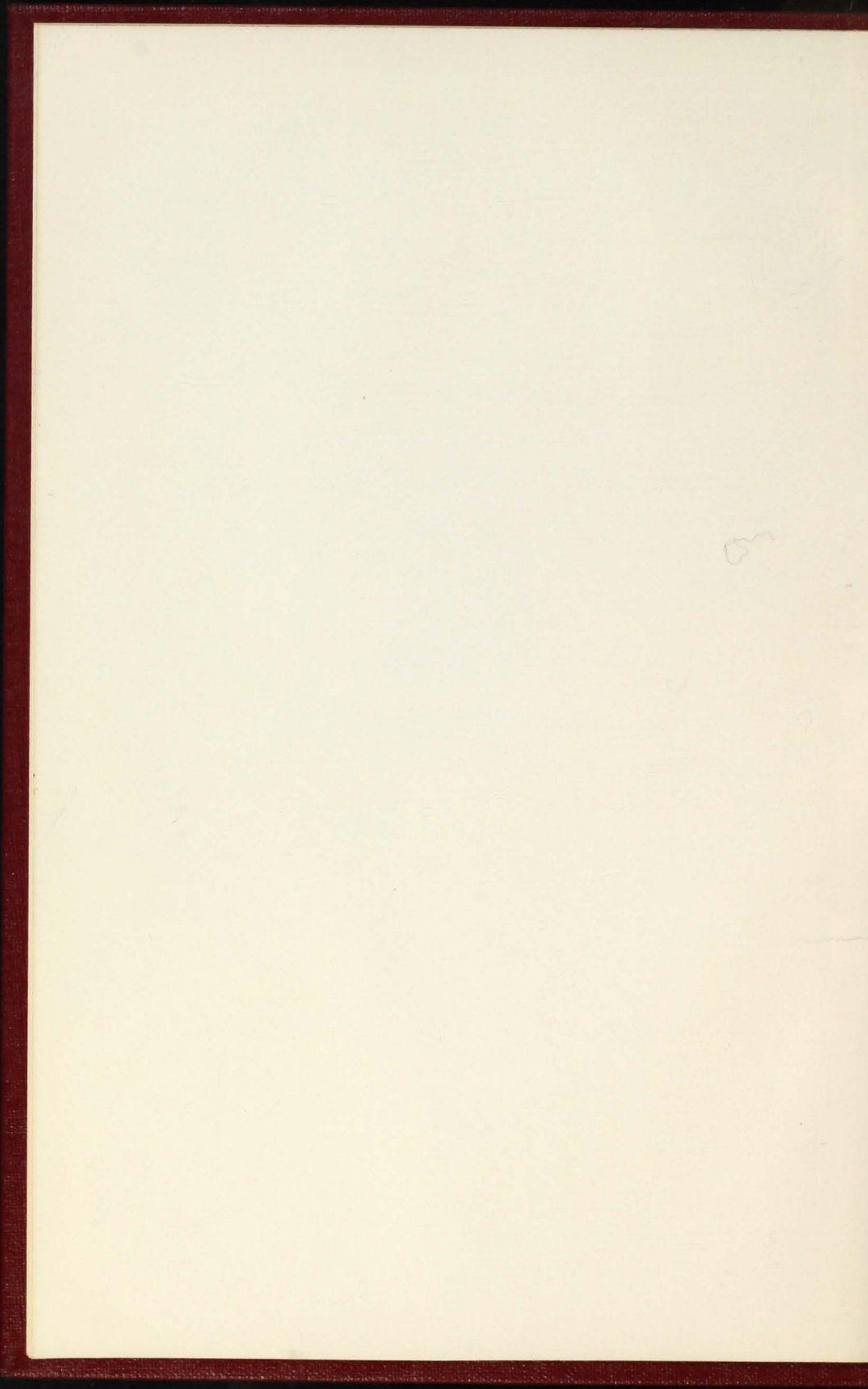
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CRISIS AND PROSPECTS
OF THE FUTURE





the labour party: crisis and prospects

Dianne Hayter
fabian tract 451

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the labour party: crisis and prospects

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the author :

Dianne Hayter is the General Secretary of the Fabian Society. She worked in the research department of the GMWU, with the European-TUC in Brussels and at the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD in Paris before moving to the Fabian Society, initially as Assistant General Secretary. She has a degree in Sociology and Social Administration from Durham University, and is an active member of the Labour Party.

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1. the party and its members

The Labour Party has celebrated its 75th birthday. A government of its members has ruled Britain for half of the last 30 years. County, district and municipal authorities have been run by Labour majorities; and Labour Prime Ministers have participated at UN, EEC, NATO and Commonwealth Conferences.

The beneficial results of party organisation and persuasion have thus been felt and appreciated around the world and Labour has, in every sense, become a party of government. Yet, in many ways, the party itself has failed to respond to these changes, to the changing aspirations of a population, to education advances (made largely by Labour intervention) and to different working and leisure patterns.

Consequently, many activists have started criticising the party. This can be seen in left/right battles, where those trying to convince people of the merits of democratic socialism on the doorstep have looked in vain to their comrades at Westminster to implement what they thought their doorstep chats entailed. It can be seen in CLP moves to oust sitting MPs, where the local members cease to accept that an MP's loyalty to a Labour government should take precedence over his CLP's views. It is seen in demands for the franchise for the election of the top man in the party to be extended beyond the ranks of the PLP. It is seen in the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy.

Within the party machine, the same concern is felt. The Wilson Committee (1955) and the Simpson Committee (1967) sought to reform the organisation of the party. Two earlier Fabian pamphlets, *The Mechanics of Victory*, 1972; and *The Labour Party: an organisational study*, 1971, numerous articles and a *Tribune* pamphlet *Labour—Party or Puppet*, 1972, have all concerned themselves with party structure and organisation. So why is there still a problem?

To some extent, students of such a political party tend to examine the wrong subject. Thus the *Tribune* pamphlet "sets out to make a case for greater democracy

in the Labour Party. It argues that, of all the issues facing the party, this is the one which must be tackled and solved first. The demand that the Labour Party shall be a highly democratic institution is a requirement of both principle and expediency. The principle is clear enough. The party has always campaigned for the elimination of power concentrated in a few hands; for the widest possible extension of civil rights; and for maximum participation by the individual in the making of those decisions which affect his welfare. Today the party is making strenuous efforts to extend participation to the workplace . . . We cannot continue to preach about the extension of rights and the need for wider participation in other organisations unless we practise it in our own. What of expediency? . . . Our party only does its job well and is only successful when its *active* members feel their views are fairly reflected in the policies and actions of the party leadership" (emphasis added).

But already this is limiting its attention to those people who are already in the party. It is not looking at the movement as a whole—at those 9½ million TUC members *not* in the party; at the 11 million who regularly vote for party candidates but who are not members; or, particularly, at potential Labour voters.

The question which is left unanswered is how the party can again motivate itself not only to become internally democratic (there is surely no argument against the basic theme of the *Tribune* quote) but to seek to enroll all social democrats into membership, so enabling the party leadership to reflect and respond to the demands of Labour voters.

It is particularly important in a party whose doctrine was decided many years ago that this continuous input of aspirations can work its way through into policy. Otherwise the party risks assuming it knows what is in the country's interest, either because such programmes were formulated and accepted 40 years ago, or because social surveys or economic necessity prescribe what should be. But the traditional ideals enshrined into

the party's thinking are no longer enough—some (like a national health service and free education) because they've been achieved; others because they have simply been overtaken by events. Two essential demands that the unions well understand but which "pure" socialists find much less easy are the desire for continually increasing living standards and the electorate's preoccupation with current problems. Rather than dismiss these concerns, the party has both to educate and show people why indirect means (such as publicly provided goods) can often actually benefit individuals more than money in the hand; but it has also to adapt to these realities of life. Socialists may well believe that safeguarding our children's future by resisting nuclear energy now is "correct," but this can only be held as a belief of *democratic* socialists if it is the view of all those Labour supporters who vote the party in to the position of power and then have to pay for whatever is prescribed.

The causes of tension in the party are multifarious. A major weakness is the lack of attraction of the party to new members because of the absence of anything meaningful to offer members, whatever their level of commitment.

the occasional labour voter

The least committed Labour group comprise those who vote Labour when they feel it is in their interest, when the programme offered by the Labour leadership appears most likely to meet their needs. Self interest perhaps, but these voters make the difference to the distribution of those 625 all important seats and they do gain some rights to demand that pledges made and believed are actually implemented. A vote five years later is one such demonstration of this right, but the party should ask whether they are entitled to more than this in the intervening period.

Of course, this group, largely ideologically neutral, could never form the coherent core of a sound democratic party. Pragmatically, their objectives would give

rise to the danger of anti-socialist reaction as working-class voters become better off and were no longer willing to pay for the public goods they once found essential. The lack of socialist idealism would make a party based on this group a temporary phenomenon, existing while sufficient people had much to gain from social-political change, but dying away once the major demands were fulfilled. Already in Denmark and Sweden, the emergence of this move can be seen, as people who have voted for social democracy for years slip in to supporting anti-tax candidates.

We risk losing this group of supporters when we fail to satisfy their material demands if we meanwhile leave them ideologically neutral and outside of membership. In the meantime, they are a part of the movement and by voting have earned certain rights. Their priorities on subject areas not covered in the manifesto need to be heard, as they have elected Labour representatives to look after their broad spread of interests.

the regular labour voter

The second group of supporters—committed more generally than the first—are those who vote Labour regularly. They accept the basic approach and philosophy of the party (largely as seen at election time and at Westminster) and may even give a few hours' work during elections. But they do not join the party and play virtually no role in party activity beyond occasional fund raising.

The party offers this group as little as the first. These are the people who now feel very let down. They have tended to believe Labour help "the little man" (not always themselves) or they are union men taught from adolescence that Labour is their party. They probably could never vote Tory, but the power to abstain is a power they have often used to effect (Ashfield, 1977, country wide, 1970).

Little is done to recruit these members and little is offered to them as members save the job of canvassing on cold even-

ings, or the thankless task of collecting other people's subs. But again this group have the right to be heard, and for the health of the party, they are essential. These are the ordinary working men and women that party activists and leaders purport to represent. The nearest many MPs get to them is in their surgeries or at work place meetings and, during one month in five years, when canvassing.

For such voters to want to join, membership has to mean something. And it is here that the demands for internal democracy are most important. The attraction of membership will be that the party belongs to and is run by its members and not by others unaccountable to meetings of members. Seeing resolutions implemented and elected representatives responsible to the membership would be concrete evidence of the ability of members to effect real decisions.

the party member

The next most committed group are existing party members. Yet even their involvement is small. Most of the important discussions take place in the GC rather than at branch meetings. Parliamentary candidates are selected only rarely—and then the branches can only nominate, not participate in selection (and where a branch's nominee drops out, either voluntarily or because the GC or its executive failed to shortlist him, the branch has in fact no involvement in the selection). A member can, of course, devote additional time and energy to the party, becoming a secretary, treasurer, or GC delegate and can thus participate in these higher levels of decisions. But, as a new or a regular member, there is little activity. At election time members become more important, taking on the work of canvassing, addressing envelopes, delivering leaflets and all the rest. Many also run bazaars, social events and fund raising the rest of the time, but these are aimed at keeping the party functioning rather than at guiding its direction.

Increasingly, therefore, members are demanding more than this minor involve-

ment, and in time they will require the control of the party to move into the hands of members.

Where the *Tribune* pamphlet (*op cit*) goes wrong is to suggest that the right to participate in party policy making should be limited to *activists*. On the contrary, the right should be extended to all members, partly because they have an equal right, but partly, too, for the good of the party, so that the views of Labour people, Labour voters, even though they may not be branch officers, are taken into account. In this way the leadership would be much closer to those on whom it relies for the next round of votes.

The General Committee of a constituency party (GC, until recently known as the GMC—General Management Committee) is hardly the most democratic body. Largely self-selected, it is large enough to comprise the majority of a branch's activists, who thus concentrate their activity at this level rather than at the real party meeting—that of the branch. It is a pity the word *management* was dropped from its name. This should be an organisational committee, passing on members' views and helping give effect to them, rather than a policy formulating body. While party membership is still small, and branch meetings comprise only ten to twenty attenders, it is difficult to see that a larger meeting of representatives, not members, is better qualified to decide what members feel. GC delegates speak for themselves and are rarely mandated. They are those with the time to attend, or with a good way of speaking; they are not necessarily representative of the other members of their branch. It is one of the greatest faults of the movement, however, that the GC has become sacrosanct—the spirit of the party, the decider of policy, the all powerful committee.

It is argued elsewhere in the pamphlet that Labour members should be typical of Labour voters. This is currently not the case. Members—and even more so activists—are very unrepresentative of those who elect a Labour government. Many are employees of the public sector (teachers, lecturers, social workers, local

government employees, civil servants, employees of nationalised industries). This is partly self selection (socialists don't like to work for private industry), partly the middle class nature of many activists, and partly that teaching has been a traditional way out of manual labour for the "bright kids" of the working class. What it means, however, is that Labour Party activists have almost a vested interest in the public sector which may not be reflected by the tax-paying Labour voters at large and may have more to do with their own experience than with their socialist beliefs. It is partly for this reason that there has been a hesitancy in the party to submit the efficiency of the public sector to public scrutiny.

socialists in the party

There is one other group of Labour supporters which falls into none of the above categories. These are committed socialists, ideologically Labour members, but who are not always so sure that the Labour Party will bring their ideal society nearer. Most, of course, will vote Labour as the party most likely to, and some will be active members. This group is not unimportant. They are not necessarily left wing, but comprise those with a particularly clear and well formulated vision of the sort of policy they want implemented. Many of these are our MPs and leaders. Others never quite commit themselves to Labour. But all need to (and usually do) recognise that the difference between socialism and democratic socialism is that the latter demands widespread support. It is the existence of those with an ideological commitment that makes the Labour Party as socialist as it is (which may not be much), but it is also the cause of friction. Many Labour voters—particularly in the first group—want a fairly immediate improvement to their lot. They need a left wing party to define them as the group in need of betterment and to set about helping them. The socialists in the party want a society of equal chance, of justice, of humanity, but need the vote of the less altruistic to have the democratic power to move in this way. Such a coalition has survived three quarters of a

century. In wanting to increase party membership, the balance may be tested. It is asking that the leadership becomes responsive to members perhaps less committed to an ideal than activists have been in the past.

The party needs to talk about its aims, to match these with needs, and to be flexible to respond to people's changing demands and priorities. This is important for the future of democracy, not just of one party, as otherwise the divide between governed and governing will widen still further. Calls for devolution already reflect this gap, and unless the party responds to this, we will not have a people's party to enter the next decade.

the pamphlet

It follows from the above that for the leaders of a party (which is democratically elected in large numbers to parliament) to be responsible to their electors, the party is the intervening body. It is through it that members' feelings and views are passed up to those responsible for implementing policy.

But currently there is friction between members and leaders. Membership is low and atypical of Labour voters. The leaders depend unduly on the electorate and not the party. It is therefore essential that more Labour voters are brought into the party and that the internal working of the party opens up to allow members to have a real influence over the leaders.

The pamphlet will suggest that, as the party is about to face certain challenges, the need for such involvement is all the greater. It will indicate the major weaknesses of the party at the moment (low membership, chronic finances and too much dependence on trade unions) and it will suggest changes to the structure of the party, its Conference and committees to attempt to make it a more democratic and thus effective body.

The demand for a restructuring of the party to face the decade ahead is not original. The GMWU has submitted the fol-

lowing resolution to the 1977 Conference :

" This Conference calls upon the National Executive Committee to institute, as a matter of urgency, an inquiry into the structure, organisation, finances and internal democracy of the Labour Party at all levels and relations with affiliated organisations and other party interests. Conference requests the National Executive Committee to bring back to Conference 1978 a report with recommendations that will lay the foundations of a strong, organisationally and financially sound, representative, democratic socialist party capable of meeting more effectively the political economic and electoral challenge of the 1980s and beyond."

Such an inquiry would be a welcome start to the work that lies ahead and should be used as the opportunity to examine every aspect of party organisation.

It is this organisation which is the subject matter of the pamphlet. The question " why socialism?" is neither asked nor answered. It is the importance of members to the party and not the party to members which is the starting point for discussion.

Why a socialist should join the party is one of the more difficult questions to answer, though if the party can change as suggested and so involve individual socialists in the choices and policies which affect the economy and the lives of the population, then the question will become easier to answer. Meanwhile, those of any socialist persuasion who decry the party from outside for lack of progress should ask themselves whether, by joining and making the party more of a force for change, their very ideals and aspirations might not be nearer achievement.

For years Labour has been...
our party has sought to...
women the vote...
of the economic and social...
of its industrial...
concentrated not only on...
dilemma (such as...
have the right to...
board of directors...
parties for...
mechanism for...
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2. the party in a democracy

For years Fabians (no less than the Labour Party) have sought to teach or persuade others to run their affairs differently. From suggesting society gives women the vote to calling for changes in the ownership of the steel industry, socialists have urged steps to alter the impact of the economic and social environment on its inhabitants. Advice thus given has concentrated not only on matters of principle (such as *whether* employees should have the right to elect members to their board of directors) but also on the apparatus for implementing policy (recommendations for reforming the civil service or the foreign office fall into this category, as do suggestions on *how* employees should elect their board representatives. This pamphlet similarly deals with the machinery and organisation of the Labour Party rather than with its policies. This is not to give administrative matters precedence over philosophical ones, but merely acknowledges that both are important and that the former cannot be left to take care of themselves.

In the late 70s, the state of the party and philosophy presents a new challenge to the movement. In his Chairman's message to the Fabian Society in January 1977, Giles Radice spoke of the crisis of democratic socialism. At the time of Crosland's tragic death in February 77, many in the party admitted the need for a re-think of principles, similar to that handled by Crosland some years before (*The Future of Socialism*, Jonathan Cape, 1956). As the democratic socialist movement approaches the eighties (increasingly as the party of government), and as many of the material demands that brought people into the movement are met, the party needs to think where it goes from here.

The question not only faces socialists. Most politicians and pressure group activists have believed that progress was possible through legislation, public expenditure, nationally agreed minimum standards and a centralised apparatus. Decreasingly do those who benefit from these measures exhibit their appreciation at the polls or in their general attitude to politics. Voting turn-out has failed to rise.

Membership of the political parties has declined. The prestige of political figures lessens. Is this because of a tendency not to care (or to think it doesn't matter), or because of a desire to let others get on with government?

To an extent, it cannot just be apathy for, while party affiliation declines, activity in various other pressure and interest groups rises. Perhaps this growth of pressure group activity is an indication of the lack of confidence people have in the parties being able to deal with individuals' problems and of the lack of fit between the policies of parties and the concerns of people. To a degree, it is not social democracy that is failing, but the ability or willingness of the party machine to respond to the needs of the population.

Schumacher warned of the dangers of size and bureaucracy—problems from which our own party is not immune. We should perhaps recognise that the young people who concentrate their efforts in fighting for a better deal for battered wives, for increased aid to the Third World, for housing for the homeless or for better education in comprehensive schools are taking a conscious decision to seek to achieve their ends not through a party but through a "single issue" organisation. In America this is commonplace—usually at least partially attributable to the size of their governmental machinery (R. V. Denenberg, *Understanding American Politics*, Fontana, 1976). But here it has been less central and contains lessons for the parties. Why should it matter to democrats if parties are failing to recruit, and if some of the most energetic members of society expend their energies in law centres, human rights groups and Community Health Councils rather than within political parties, at local or national level?

the need for political parties

Before mourning the decline of the Labour Party, we should ask what is its value, both to democracy and to socialism. The pamphlet argues that the parties are essential to democracy and that their de-

cline is more attributable to their inability to respond to changing demands than to a natural decline in community participation.

Political parties developed to meet the needs of a functioning parliament. Organisations were needed to get candidates elected. As groups formed in parliament and made up a government, the opposition, whose job was not only to oppose but to seek an electoral change of power, had to marshal their forces to agree an alternative strategy to offer the electorate. In response, the government similarly had to look forward to the next election when they would be tried on their as yet unimplemented plans as well as on their record.

On the Labour side, such development of programmes and the need to agree a philosophy were taken up as the responsibility of the party. Today the Labour Party and government are only able to formulate a set of objectives and a planned means of achieving these because the organisation has agreed a method of debating and determining policy. If we are not to return to a system of electing individuals on the basis of their familiarity and personality rather than their politics, representatives who thus can achieve little nationally; and if we are to avoid a coalition government whereby the elector votes for a programme as represented by one candidate but then has no power to influence the haggling that goes on between the coalition partners after the election as to what the government will actually do, then this country will continue to need a set of policies and aims which the party seeking office is desirous to implement.

The choice thus offered the electorate is a vital ingredient of democracy and depends wholly on the parties to provide. But this is not a one-off process. The demands on governments and councils, and the changing environment in which they operate require new responses and policy alternatives on all major issues.

The parties' contribution to democracy is not confined to developing policy. Our

electoral system depends on the parties to prepare and print election addresses and to get them to the electorate, to contact those in need of postal votes, to explain the electoral processes to voters, to remind people to vote and often to help them get there, and to bring to the electorate's attention the very fact that there is an election on. Democracy would be much the poorer if five candidates colluded to stand in one constituency, to undertake no campaigning, and to allow one of their number to be elected almost by default. (It should be remembered that in the 18th and 19th centuries, before the growth of political parties, there were always a number of unopposed candidates every election.) Without a system of compulsory voting, it is largely the parties which ensure a sizeable poll.

the party and socialism

What of the Labour Party's importance to socialism? It is very easy to be a private socialist, to sit at a drawing board and define the ideal socialist society which would realise one's aims. Often the far left in Britain forget that this is only the first—and indeed the easiest—step in achieving progress. What democratic socialism then means is the creation of a movement capable of persuading others of the rightness of one's cause and of mobilising electoral support to achieve political power and hence implement one's plans. The compromise this entails is necessarily enormous but the progress meanwhile possible is large by any measure. The party thus has a duty not just to recruit existing Labour voters but to persuade others to vote Labour and to work for a Labour victory at every level of elected government. The party does then also achieve certain rights and its role as a check on its own representatives is discussed below.

pressure groups

Other groups seek to influence elected leaders but not to change these leaders. These are pressure groups which seek to influence government in the interests of

the group they support (usually their own members—such as the CBI, TUC, BMA, AA) but sometimes, altruistically, an outside group (such as the third world in the case of the World Development Movement, or political prisoners in the case of Amnesty International). These pressure groups constitute a vital part of the democratic process, particularly because, in a complex, bureaucratic structure, they are expert at raising issues, following through the implications of policy, delving out information and seeing its significance, and helping the individual to cope with the system. Similarly, pressure groups can help parties to develop their policy on an issue and provide them with the expertise to formulate a sophisticated and workable programme.

But there are four main shortcomings to pressure groups. One is the well rehearsed view that pressure groups are often internally undemocratic and unrepresentative (does the AA even begin to reflect the views of those members who join to have a ready break-down service?).

The second is inherent in their nature: by pressure groups taking up the interests of an identifiable (and often rich and articulate) group, other less homogeneous, more physically scattered, poorer groups actually get a worse deal. Hence car owners have benefited to the detriment of non-drivers; smokers to the detriment of non-smokers; those living near Wing to those at Heathrow. It is especially people who never come together and hence fail to form a "set" that can be most left out by the lobbying process. Mobile pensioners get free bus passes; the housebound (already worse off) lose out even on that advantage. Even now there must be thousands of needy people in Britain not yet defined as a "problem" group (as battered wives until recently, or single women looking after elderly parents) whose condition deteriorates unnoticed for lack of a spokesman. To state this problem is not to cure it. Theoretically political parties should reflect the needs of all groups in society and should be able to take up the cases of unrepresented groups. However, as can be seen with racial groups, the Labour Party

at least has proved itself almost incapable of this type of altruism.

Thirdly, pressure groups usually see as a priority only the issue on which they are campaigning and they tend to fail to see economic and social problems as a whole. They thus cannot develop an overall programme or coherent policy for social change—a task crucial to a left wing movement.

The fourth shortcoming of pressure groups is their "influence without responsibility." They, finally, do not have to take the decision over the allocation of scarce resources. They can lobby a minister over an extension to a university but don't have to weigh that against the provision of a nursery (perhaps for the children of those very students who want to attend the college). Even more between spending departments, Oxfam, for example, does not have to weigh the needs of the third world against those of the poor families represented by CPAG or Shelter. In a political party, it should be possible to discuss these choices as well as that most difficult choice of all: how far can we go on raising revenue through taxation to pay for the never satisfied demand for community services? It is in just such a debate that the party should have a vital role to play—yet, as we shall see below, party Conference (and often the Cabinet) is not brought into many of the major decisions of this type. Similarly at local level, parties far more often talk about the provision of services than about rates. The party, it appears, is concerned with spending but not with raising money.

So it is argued that the party does still have a role to play—both for democracy and for socialism. We thus should ask what demands the public and party members may legitimately make of the party.

democracy's demands on a party

If it is true that democracy depends to a degree for its effectiveness on the political parties, has the public some right to be told of the activities of the parties and

to expect that some minimum criteria for internal democracy within the parties be achieved? Certainly there have been calls for trade unions to have to satisfy the public (and not just their members) that they are democratic and fair, not least in view of the increasing responsibility allocated to unions by society.

In contrast, discussing the political equivalent, Peter Jenkins has argued that far from strengthening the democratic process, "making the Labour Party more democratic can be guaranteed to have the actual effect of making it less democratic according to the canons of Representative Democracy" (*Guardian*, 2 March 1977). In today's Labour Party, he maintains, making the party more responsive to its activists will make it less responsive to its rank-and-file members and still less to Labour voters at large. Even if the party elite did reflect and represent members or voters, Jenkins would still argue that Representative Democracy does not depend upon political parties being internally democratic, as Representative Democracy is essentially a system of government judged by results, and consent can be given or withheld at election time on the basis of a general performance.

This argument contains a number of weaknesses. While it tacitly acknowledges that governments (and MPs) are responsible to the whole electorate and not just party members, it avoids any discussion of how government can be made accountable to *any* group between elections. Jenkins rightly points out that elections alone do not ensure that a body is representative. He could add that a single "yea" or "nay" vote every five years, on the whole range of activity covered by a government, is no form of accountability. Is a voter glad that her child now gets subsidised housing but sorry she had to pay the tax for it if she votes for the continuance of the government? Or *vice versa*? How does a voter register his concern at the decision to prop up Chrysler but his delight at the action taken on South Africa? To an extent he can use his MP—but if this happens to be an opposition backbencher, the impact that

can be made on the government is pretty negligible. It is partly this lack of influence between elections that encourages some people to work via pressure groups.

But the party can also often act as just such a pressure point, at least for Labour members—and often for voters. By supporting the platform on which their government was elected, Labour members can act as a monitor over the extent to which the government is adhering to that manifesto.

Apart from this role in helping make government accountable and responsive, if (as maintained above) parties play an important role in defining the alternatives between which the electorate can choose, then there must be a greater case for saying that this procedure should be open, democratic and participative? It can surely only benefit democracy if this process is as broadly based and responsive as possible and if parties feel under some obligation to undertake their deliberations more openly. Currently, party members cannot even see Labour Party working documents, and Transport House types "confidential" onto papers with more regularity than does the civil service.

Should state finance be made available to political parties as proposed by the Houghton Committee (*Report of the Committee on Financial Aid to Political Parties*, HMSO, 1976), the case for some official scrutiny of the organisation and methods of parties might arise, though (as in the case of trade unions) this would be somewhat at "arm's length." At present, electoral law hardly recognises the parties (though the name of the party can now appear on the ballot form). However, if we were to move over to the sort of Proportional Representation (PR) currently envisaged in the White Paper on direct elections, this would necessitate formalising the parties in electoral law. At this stage, further demands for public accountability may arise.

Before examining how well the party fulfills its various functions, the challenges now facing it will first briefly be outlined.

3. the challenges ahead

Changes in the political environment are about to make demands on the party to which it appears unable to respond. Our constitution, written in 1918, responded to the needs of the time. It has not adjusted to the 70s and, if we are not careful, will so hamper our move to the 80s that we will be left out of the political arena altogether. The changes referred to are, interestingly enough, largely of our own making, yet we have still failed to think through what implications they will have for our own structure. The EEC, devolution, the possibility of state aid to parties and the change from being a party of protest to a party of government all pose new challenges which the party must be capable of meeting.

europe

Both the very fact of being in the EEC and hence subject to decisions made in Brussels and the new phenomenon of direct elections demand a response from the British Labour movement.

Perhaps the easier to come to terms with is the need to prepare for direct elections, whenever they might be held. There is a Socialist Group in the European Parliament to which the Labour MEPs (Members of the European Parliament) belong. The Party also belongs to the Confederation of Socialist and Social Democratic Parties of the European Community. This is financed by subscriptions from member parties and receives a special grant from the Socialist Group of the European Parliament (itself financed from community funds) and from the SPD (the German social democratic party). In addition 29 million Belgian francs (£500,000) will be available from community funds to the Confederation for preparations for direct elections. The Confederation is currently discussing how this money should be shared among member parties and there is some inclination towards allocating it more generously to the financially weaker parties (such as the British Labour Party). *Finance* for the actual elections may therefore be given a slight start (and will show that public finance for elections is

not such a demon), though the Labour Party's National Executive Committee (NEC) is refraining from seeking this money so long as the party remains opposed to the principle of direct elections. However, the preparation for the elections is still causing the party as well as the government other severe problems.

The Confederation is currently considering the conclusions of four working parties set up to draft a common platform—but the Labour Party has refused to take part in these groups on the grounds that the 1976 Conference voted against participation in direct elections. Even when they are considered by a Congress of the Confederation in Autumn 1977, there is a chance the Labour Party will not be present.

Thus on the first inter-socialist preparations for European government and co-operation, the Labour Party has been conspicuous by its absence. Equally big problems await it after the elections—in particular, as to how Labour MEPs are going to develop and maintain their ties with the party. This will partly depend on the method of election adopted and whether members exercise a dual mandate. If there are to be large single member constituencies (comprising approximately eight existing parliamentary constituencies), these will at least provide one focus for the relationship. Regional lists for elections, however, would create unmanageably large constituencies.

Even in the former case, the party will need to set up new structures to enable the MEP to develop a relationship with his E-CLP (European Constituency Labour Party). Is there thus to be a E-CLP-GC (General Committee)? If there are to be area Euro-candidates, it seems natural that they should be appointed by, and answerable to, the Labour members in their areas, in the same way as now exists for Westminster. Thus Rod Northawl and Richard Corbett have suggested that they be selected by a joint meeting of all the GCs in the area (*Electing Europe's First Parliament*, Fabian Society, 1977). Maintaining the coherence of a E-CLP after an election,

however, would present particular problems, coming as it does on top of a number of levels of party organisation.

But what of MEPS' relationship with the national party which will be even more important if we adopt the list system so that they do not even have identifiable constituencies? Are they just to be tacked on to conference as a few more *ex officio* delegates? At the very least there should be a European Parliamentary Report to Conference (though hopefully stimulating a more serious and detailed debate than that which currently follows the Westminster parliamentary report). MEPS will need to sit on NEC sub-committees in order to keep in touch and to seek guidance from the party on the issues facing them in Luxembourg or Strasbourg—but is this to be just via some *ad hoc* arrangement? It has been suggested that MEPS could be automatically allowed to sit in a reformed upper house—but is this practicable given the growing desire to abolish rather than reform that anachronistic institution? There is also the suggestion that MEPS should sit in the House of Commons but without voting rights, but even this on its own will not ensure good communication and liaison. As well as involving MEPS in party work here in the UK, party officials will have to get more involved with what is going on in Europe and this will put increasing demands on Transport House.

Perhaps, though, more difficult to handle is the question of how Labour *ministers*, participating in council meetings in Brussels, can develop with their socialist and social democrat colleagues from other countries some sort of agreed democratic socialist view on an issue, should the party want such collaboration. Many will find this notion just too federalist to entertain, but if it was wanted, could it really be left to the civil service and permanent delegation—the diplomatic channels? It is surely not their job, on occasion, to drop a nationalist approach to an issue and adopt a straight political view instead. But how can the party intervene here? So long as even a Labour government extols secrecy above all virtues, the political input possible at Council level

will be minimal. Yet pro-European socialists talked before entry of a social democratic Europe, of an EEC with a majority of members being social democratic governments. But this is meaningless if those of a political like mind are unable to work together before meeting in conference.

In the general formulation of party policy, the EEC also produces new demands. Already our centralist party makes policy at national level for implementation usually at national level (this despite the fact that much is carried out at local or regional level). The party now has to respond to the fact that many questions will have to be answered at an EEC level and that guidance and policy will be needed by socialists at this level every bit as much as at national level. Thus recognition of doctors' training, policy on migrant workers, the snake, and non-tariff barriers have little meaning at national level but are the very issues on which we must participate in debates and divisions in Brussels and Strasbourg. It is likely that the Confederation of Socialist Parties will in time develop annual conferences to decide policies on EEC issues. Whether, however, the other continental parties would accept the current level of union dominance of the British conference in our delegation is subject to debate. Similarly, whether the Labour Party would be willing to accept Socialist Confederation decisions and policy recommendations is very doubtful.

devolution

Assuming that devolution will occur in some form in the not-too-distant future (at least in Scotland), this will similarly pose new demands on the party. Just as the MEPS will require a new relationship with the party, and policy must be formulated on a European level, so too will the Assembly Members need to develop a relationship with their sponsoring constituencies, and the party must be capable of developing policies suitable for implementation by the Assembly. Devolution of decision making to local government in England will similarly give

regional parties a new and strengthened role. The party at present appears unprepared for such changes, but they must be anticipated and considered before they become a reality. How the party responds to devolution and how it can service the new Labour representatives could be as important to the people of Scotland as the fact of devolution itself.

Houghton money

The Houghton Committee recommended the provision of state aid to those political parties with a certain minimum following (*op cit*). While there may be no objections in principle to the public at large helping finance the parties (and the Labour Party itself supports the proposal), it may be very bad for the health of a party to receive such aid at present. Bailing out a sinking vessel is rarely to the good of that ship. Better it mends the hole and is able to float by itself. So with the Labour Party. Its present structure and organisation have failed to maintain it as a large and thriving organisation. Its bankruptcy is largely of its own making and in the long term it is preferable that it puts its own house in order, including moving towards financial viability, before receiving state aid which may risk fossilising the existing structures and shortcomings. Once in a healthier and break-even position, government money could be used to further expand the educational and research work on which the party has a poor record. There is another viewpoint, as argued by Dick Leonard in the PEP pamphlet *Paying for Party Politics*, that the receipt of state money could be the shot in the arm that helps a party modernise. This seems a possible, but not guaranteed, outcome, and risks too much should it be proved wrong.

a party of government

The Labour Party grew and developed as a party of protest, a party dedicated to an electoral change of power, a party of opposition and criticism, involved in formulating alternatives to the *status quo*.

It is now, increasingly, the party of government, its representatives chosen by the electorate to govern on its behalf. This change has enormous implications for party members. Hitherto, their leaders had to articulate their aspirations. Now the elected leaders and representatives have become much more. They are the decision makers, the governing body, responsible not just to the party with its current demands, but to the whole electorate, and to those as yet too young to vote, to the country and to its future citizens who may be drastically affected by decisions taken today.

Chapter five will examine the implications of this change for the role and organisation of Conference, the NEC, PLP (Parliamentary Labour Party) and party leadership. But it has repercussions for the ordinary member in the party. There seems little doubt that many members are disillusioned with their leaders. Apart from the very real fact that the government has often failed to take sufficient note of Conference decisions, this disillusion is also due to the fact that the party allowed itself unrealistic expectations of what could be achieved in government, and led the electorate to similarly expect more than a government has the power to do. It may also be due to party members wanting their representatives to use their new found positions solely in the interests of the movement which initially selected them. This new role, as the party behind the government, thus has obvious implications for the party, as its prescriptions are put to the test, and these should be carefully thought out and discussed.

non elected bodies

Not only does the Labour Party increasingly have to lobby elected Labour members over issues, but there is also a shift away from elected to appointed bodies for decision taking. Thus, at national level, the NEB, NEDC and the Arts Council all take decisions hitherto the preserve of ministers (or private industry) and, at local level, council decisions are supplemented by the activities of law centres,

housing aid centres, consumer groups, neighbourhood councils and so forth. As yet the party has not adapted to these changes, which require the development of socialist thinking at the level of the decision making, be this the OECD, NEB, regional arts council or housing association. Wherever money is spent on the public's behalf, there are political judgements to be made which are too important to leave in the hands of appointed, non-responsible people. In many cases, it will be members nominated by the party or unions who sit on such bodies, yet they rarely have any defined programme as to the objectives they would like to see the body achieve.

other demands

While the PR electoral system proposed for the European parliament need not spill over to domestic elections (where a government and not just members of an Assembly are being elected), the party may still, for different reasons, one day have to come to terms with electoral reform of some other kind. Its appeal will then have to be to a wider electorate, as it will need the second choices of those voting for other parties. Similarly, compulsory voting or a further drop in the voting age may become popular aspirations, and the party will then need to respond to these.

For a party weaned on redistribution through growth, the challenge of nil growth and of having less to offer and promise is consequently great. If the third world gets more militant (see Melvyn Westlake, *World Poverty: the Growing Conflict*, Fabian Society, 1976) and we are finally forced to live out our principles on an international scale, distributing away from us, the party will have to re-think what it has got to sell to the electorate.

summary

All these new—and often exciting—developments can offer great scope and opportunity to a party capable of respond-

ing positively. If, however, the party fails to revitalise itself and become adaptable to change, these new factors in the political environment could sound the knell for Labour. The choice rests with the members.

4. the party today

For a party whose elected representatives form the government, its finances and membership are in a sorry state. Despite the Annual Report's boast of 6½ million members, it is generally accepted that this is far removed from any indication of the true strength. The 6½ million comprises the Constituency Labour Party (CLP) section of 675,000 members, and the 5¼ million trade union affiliates.

individual membership

Each CLP has to affiliate to the Labour Party on the basis of a minimum of 1,000 members. This naturally greatly inflates membership figures. Gallup, in a poll for *Panorama* in February 1977, questioned a half of all CLPs and estimated a total CLP membership of 445,000. They found two constituency parties with membership below 50, and that 46 per cent of those asked (and 37 per cent of those with a Labour MP) had 500 or fewer members.

This will not surprise party activists. The party's own figures, where available, indicate this, and the Houghton report (*op cit*) found that the vast majority of CLPs had a membership less than 1,000. It estimated a total CLP figure of 311,500. Our own Fabian survey of CLPs undertaken at the beginning of 1977 reflected this picture. A constituency with a 7,000 Labour majority, for example, in a 66,000 electorate, had 200 individual members—just over 1 per cent of the Labour voters. Our survey of 58 CLPs indicated an average membership of 644 ; 3.69 per cent of the Labour vote. Dividing the CLPs into those with and without a Labour MP, the average proportion of Labour voters in party membership in the former was 3.43 per cent, and in the latter, 3.95 per cent. Thus the number of Labour voters appears to be inversely correlated to the recruitment efforts.

11½ million people voted Labour in 1974—and even on official Labour party figures, only 6 per cent of these were in the party. This is by far the lowest ratio of members to electors in any European social democratic party (Tom Forester,

The Labour Party and the Working Class, Heinemann, 1976). The proportion is even lower (3 per cent) if Houghton's figures are used. In contrast, Sweden has over 40 per cent of the voters as party members, Norway 20 per cent, Switzerland 25 per cent and Austria 36 per cent. It would appear that our claims to be a "mass party" are pretty fraudulent. We can never be that so long as we remain merely a federation of small caucuses. This situation has not suddenly arisen. In the 20s and 30s (contrary to popular nostalgic folk memories), membership was low. With the unprecedented upsurge in political activity after the war, Labour membership climbed rapidly (including through a period of Labour government) to its 1952 peak. Thus from 1930 to 1940, membership was between 200,000 and 400,000 and in 1952 it was over 1 million. Only for a short time was Labour therefore anything like a mass party. Since 1952, membership has fallen steadily (Tom Forester, *ibid*).

Party membership therefore, while pitifully low, should not surprise us as something new. However, compared with potential membership (which ought, logically, to have increased along with the increasing willingness of people to vote Labour) the position has deteriorated. Television, improved communication, more education might have been expected to make people more familiar with political issues, personalities and parties and to help them recognise the significance of public decisions to their lives. It should perhaps follow that there should be an increasing interest in politics and hence in membership.

The Labour Party has failed to capitalise on these developments. One reason may have been the lack of financial incentive to increase membership. Another is the cosiness of small parties. Many local parties are little more than a clique, allowing a friendly distribution of jobs and responsibilities (often including JPships, school governor positions and similar, in addition to party chairman and treasurer) between a small cohort. The General Secretary of the party himself admitted this in an interview with *Labour Weekly*:

"Some parties" he said "don't want new members. They have got a nice comfortable clique and don't want new faces to upset them." Individual experiences of people trying to join their local parties confirm this.

On a technical level, it will be proposed below that a minimum affiliation to the national party be abolished and voting strength made to depend on true numbers, partly as an incentive to recruit. However, this would not in itself correct matters. A will to convert people to socialism and to join with them in a socialist movement is a precondition for getting existing members out on the doorsteps and streets talking to non-members.

union membership

So far only individual constituency membership has been discussed. The other 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ million "members" of the party represent the affiliated trade union membership.

This part of the Labour Party structure is perhaps the greatest strength of the British movement. The symbiotic relationship between individual socialists and the organised working population is what makes the party more than a society of theorists and enables it to reflect and represent a considerable part of the electorate. But the figures which represent this most valuable of ties should not be allowed to fool us into thinking these are actual Labour Party members. Some are, of course, and are already counted in the CLP section numbers. But the mass are not. They join a union for good recognisable bread and butter reasons. As a by-product, a vote at conference is allocated to them. But we should not pretend that this is a measure of the numbers in the country holding fast to Labour Party beliefs. It is not.

party income

It is no surprise to say that the party's finances are in trouble. This was admitted when an appeal for funds was launched in 1976. Already in 1977 a new appeal has

been started to raise money to pay for party premises—an appeal largely aimed at the unions.

In normal times, the party is very heavily reliant on the unions for its income, as they provide 80 per cent of central finance, and make up 90 per cent of affiliation fees. Their contribution is less significant at local party level, but is still important. The Houghton Report (*op cit*) showed that in 1973, 39 per cent of CLP income came from lotteries, 12 per cent from subscriptions, 8 per cent from social functions and 7 per cent from trade union and co-op grants. Thus the unions donate 7 per cent of income in addition to the affiliation fees paid to the local parties. The Fabian survey of CLPs indicated that 18.7 per cent of CLP income came from union sources (covering sponsorship, affiliation fees and donations). Where constituencies have a sponsored MP, the trade union contribution is even more significant. The security thus guaranteed can act as a further disincentive to recruit members. The figures on page 14 show that parties in Labour held seats tend to enrol a smaller proportion of Labour voters into membership than do those in other constituencies. Although our sample size was small (less than 10 per cent), this tendency appeared to be greater with a sponsored member, where the proportion of voters in the party was 3.40 per cent as opposed to 4.24 in unsponsored Labour seats. (For a further discussion on the role of sponsored MPs, see John Ellis and R. W. Johnson, *Members from the Union*, Fabian Society, 1974.)

Centrally, individual party members contribute only 8 per cent of income. This is hardly surprising given the astonishing low rates of subscription. Criticisms of these rates have been made on almost every occasion that finances are discussed (though in 1974 there was a recommendation from the NEC that subscriptions be reduced to 50p a year). The current rate (in force for the last 4 years) is 10p a month—£1.20 a year, lower than even the amazingly small subs of 25p per week of the general unions. Compared with our socialist comrades in Europe, Labour Party subs are tiny. Most other countries

have adopted, presumably for fear of excluding low earners while still seeking to ensure a reasonable income, a graduated scale of payments related to income (a proposal recommended to the party in 1967 in the Simpson report).

Hence, for example, SPD members pay 25p a week on a weekly wage of £37, and £5 a week if earning £250. Over 60 per cent of SPD income comes from individual membership dues. (This still does not guarantee a party a sufficient income, however, and the SPD and other European social democratic parties have to rely on the government for a large part of their funds.) The size of the party dues also has implications for the degree of membership involvement. Social democrats in Germany, for instance, maintain that once that level of financial commitment has been made to a party, a more general commitment is made to its activities and the incentive to be involved in how it makes policy and how it uses that income is greater.

Certainly it is very doubtful whether members should continue to get their Labour membership "on the cheap." Current subs are equivalent to 3 pairs of tights or 50 cigarettes a year for a party one hopes to have elected as the government and which thus needs to be properly prepared for the eventuality. It is surely the wrong type of "frivolity" which allows us to treat our political party so lightly.

There seems little reason why individual members should rely so heavily on union support to finance their party. The expectation that the party will continue to be funded by the trade unions should anyway be questioned. It should be noted that there are, as it is, stresses and strains in the relationship of the unions with the party once the party is in government. This tendency is likely to increase and hence make the assumption of continued union funding harder to justify.

A minimum subscription of £5.20 should be instigated, with a graded scale dependent on income on the basis (which would be self-assessed) indicated opposite.

Pensioners and the unemployed would continue to pay a reduced sub, but this would be raised to £1.20 a year. The new rates would include an automatic subscription to *Labour Weekly*.

The minimum affiliation rate for CLPs to the party would also be abolished, with constituencies having to affiliate on actual numbers. There would be no minimum number for affiliation, but a minimum membership of 2 per cent of the last parliamentary Labour vote would be required for a delegate to Conference, with an additional delegate for each additional 1 per cent enrolled in membership. On the figures obtained in the Fabian survey, this would lead to a doubling of the number of CLP delegates, as the 56 CLPs (currently with 56 delegates) would then have 125. (This figure may be a little high, as the Fabian survey estimated a higher average membership than did Houghton.)

Financially, the rate of affiliation subscription to the Labour Party would have to be increased to maintain income, as the CLPs currently pay 21p for each of the 675,000 members they claim to have. Affiliating on truer figures (of 300,000 or so) would thus otherwise reduce their contribution. It is therefore suggested that the new affiliation fee be £200 per 1 per cent of Labour voters, with a minimum fee of £100. The union affiliation rate would remain as now.

PROPOSED SUBSCRIPTION LEVELS	
earnings (£ per week)	annual rate (£)
under 40	5.20
under 60	10.40
under 80	15.60
under 100	20.80
over 100	from 30.00

note: The specified amounts are to facilitate weekly payments if required; thus the minimum rate is equivalent to 10p a week.

party structure

It has been noted that the party's constitution has remained virtually unaltered since 1918. Internally this has

meant that a design fit for a small party of opposition has not adapted to the new circumstances of the latter half of the 20th century. Legally it has made the party vulnerable to the type of petty attack made in Newham North East (where the Annual General Meeting was stopped on the technicality that the notices for it had gone—as usual—to affiliated organisations and not to delegates). Organisationally it has led to a weaker party than might otherwise have been the case. The party is currently an odd mixture of centralised and de-centralised tendencies. Branches (the only meeting place of actual *members* rather than representatives) are in many areas “forbidden” from sending motions and letters to outside bodies or individuals without going through the General Committee (GC). They cannot recruit without names being approved by the GC.

agents

In contrast, our system of agents is de-centralisation at its worst. CLPs decide whether to employ agents, regardless of the needs of the party nationally. Hence the CLPs in many safe labour seats employ full time agents despite the fact that it is in the council and parliamentary marginal seats that electoral victory is so crucial. Furthermore, it is in safe labour seats that membership should be higher and thus the manpower resources within the party should be sufficient to carry the workload by voluntary labour. However, in most CLPs it is heresy to question whether they do need a full time agent, despite the irrational basis for the distribution. A full national agency service should therefore replace the present system, so that these most overworked and hardpressed of Labour employees may work where their efforts might have the most important effect. The party should also consider what it wants from its agents. At present many agents spend over 50 per cent of their time raising their own salary and another 25 per cent carrying out routine typing, duplicating and clerical duties. Very little of their energies are thus left for the vital recruiting and organising work for which they

are so needed. It would be hoped that agents employed by a central agency would in effect be “party managers”, responsible for the routine secretarial work but able to have this actually done by unpaid party activists. The routine jobs of constituency secretary would thus remain in lay hands and the organiser would be seen and used as a manager and professional adviser, not as a typist-cum-errand boy.

regions

A second aspect of party structure is its regional organisation. The boundaries of the regions have largely remained as drawn many years ago, with only slight alterations to reflect shifting population and local government reorganisation. Thus, for example, the Humberside local authority straddles the North East and the East Midlands regions, and Derbyshire includes sections of both the North West and the East Midlands regions. It is recommended that the party resorts to its own “boundary commission” set up for this purpose, every five years or so, to enable the regional parties to reflect the needs of their areas. This demand becomes more acute now as we move towards the establishment of new Euro-constituencies and towards devolution—both of which will give extra importance to the work of the regions.

workplace organisation

A third aspect of the party's organisation is its geographic nature. Traditionally the Labour movement has drawn its basic political power from organisation in the workplace, and its constituency structure—although now well established—was a later graft as power needed to be won on an area basis. Today the party structure—branches, constituencies and regions—completely reflects this priority. Union affiliation may, however, be from industrial groupings, union organisation having largely moved from being residential to workplace based. As seen above, most union members are not Labour Party members and there may

thus be a large area of potential party recruitment at the workplace. If the party were to use the union structure for subscription collection, for example, it is possible that party membership would increase. It should be emphasised that it is not only residents who have a special interest in the future of their area. People whose whole working lives are tied up with a factory have a vested interest in the area both in terms of its local government planning environment and of its infra-structure (transport, shops and services). It could be advantageous for large groups of employees to have some form of local political representation, perhaps as associate members of the CLP. Their interest and commitment to the area may be as great as the area's residents but currently their political input is only either via their branch affiliation to the CLP (and this depended—until recently—on the number of members *resident* in the area) or by lobbying the local authority via their union or trades council.

To argue this is not to call for a complete turnover of the CLP system. But it is to suggest that the party should be more aware of the political force of employees and should be envisaging ways of harnessing this support. Distribution of party literature and regular work-based party discussion meetings (especially with councillors and the MP) might be encouraged, or the appointment of industrial organisers. It is probable that, in addition to strengthening party numbers and activity, the degree of political education thus made possible would be enormous. Such attempts have been made before, but foundered largely for lack of funds.

minorities

The possible scope of industrial organisation and activity turns attention to one of the party's greatest problems—its inability to recruit and represent minority groups. There are no coloured labour MPs and few coloured councillors. Even in areas with large numbers of labour voters of African or Asian origin, their representation in the party is abysmal.

This is perhaps one of the saddest indictments of our "internationalist" party. The party's 1977 membership campaign does acknowledge and attempt to rectify this weakness. To some extent, recruitment of this group could be improved enormously via workplace organisations as many are already in unions and are accessible at work to recruitment efforts.

But, more importantly, a change of attitude within the party is needed. In the past, recognition of minority groups' electoral strength has sent party workers scurrying round their housing areas. It is for other reasons that we should seek to bring them into the movement. If we look, for instance, at the more recent migrants we see that they come largely from rural areas. Their adjustment to the urban experience of our life is, for many, a traumatic time. Our inability as a party to stretch out and greet them and to offer them one of the most important freedoms of our democracy—membership of a political party—has helped force them into ethnic settlements for reassurance and political strength. For it is only via their pressure group, their ethnic group, that they have been taken seriously by councils and government alike. And even they have all too often "got it wrong". They have "come to terms" with migrant groups by dealing with spokesmen—reflecting their belief that such immigrant groups comprise homogeneous families. The "intermediaries" used can, in fact, never represent a whole community, no more than a Tory MP can reflect our interests just because we happen to live in his locality. Various circumstances—including the exclusivity of the union and labour movement—have hampered the integration of black and white people in Britain and have divorced the job opportunities of these two groups. Politically, the party will electorally pay for this but, more importantly, we will suffer culturally and in the development of socialist philosophy.

It is therefore vital that attempts are made quickly to rectify our mistakes—the appointment of minority representatives to party positions would be no bad start, with agents and constituencies

asked to make special efforts in this direction. Industrial organisers, if appointed would, one hopes, include coloured members, and all should be asked to try and increase socialist adherents in minority groups. Many coloured citizens—unlike many present party members—were not lucky enough to come from labour families, but that is surely no reason to exclude them from our movement, merely because it means that they have to be convinced that the movement has something to offer society, rather than learning this “at father’s knee”. It should also be remembered that many immigrant groups vote Labour with more regularity than their “British” neighbours.

summary

This chapter has suggested that there are major weaknesses in the structure of the party. Far too low a proportion of Labour voters are in membership and this, combined with the low subscription rate, means that little of central income comes from individual members. In contrast, the unions pay heavily into party funds, although few trade unionists are individual party members. Regionally, the organisation has failed to adapt to change. Agents are located where they have always been rather than where they’re needed. Regional boundaries haven’t adapted to new local government demands. Party activity is too constituency based and racial minorities have been left out of the party altogether.

These are examples of areas where the party has to put in some serious effort in the near future. Scotland and the problems of some inner city areas have not been mentioned but the thesis holds good there: a collection of small caucuses, called CLPs, contributing little to party funds, often working inefficiently and undemocratically, does not merit the description of a mass party working for change.

5. whose party?

The "party" is usually defined as Conference—the body representing members and laying down policy. But often the head office is regarded as the party or the NEC which is at the reins from 7 October to 1 October each year. The reality is that the party is its members. However, the most obvious manifestations of the party are the party's policy making and governing body—Conference and the NEC. These will therefore be considered in some detail. How their members are chosen and controlled is central to the internal democracy of the party and hence to its future strength.

party conference

There are two main questions to ask about Conference. One is: can and should it determine policy? The other is: how can it best reflect the party's membership?

On the first question, this can be extended to ask whether perhaps Conference should be not a policy making body but a socialist pressure forum. Hence it would be able to exert a left wing pressure on governments, trying to counter the many weighty pressures hostile to socialism. The difficulty with this view is that Conference would always tend to take a harder and less flexible position, as any good negotiator would advise, so as to allow the government to settle for a compromise position somewhat nearer to what was really wanted. These positions would then further increase the existing frustration within the party caused by Conference decisions being disregarded by government. This pamphlet has argued that party membership has to have something meaningful to offer—such as participation in decision making, not in dream making. Conference would be unlikely to ever give up the expectation that its demands be implemented; thus encouraging Conference merely to voice aspirations would not be accompanied by Conference renouncing its role as "conscience of the party".

Consequently, ways of improving Conference's role as a policy maker will be

considered. It is easier to imagine Conference as the decider of objectives if the party is in opposition. The desirable elements of an ideal society or criticisms of the present situation are capable of being discussed and voted on by representatives of socialists. However, in determining a *government's* programme, the procedure becomes more complex because of the variables involved. Conference has only to decide it wants free nursery education. The government has to decide whether to levy extra taxation to provide this or whether to cut back on some other public service—probably equally demanded by a Labour Conference. In other words, one returns to the axiom "socialism is the language of priorities" and one notes that Conference never does have to define priorities, to choose between alternative desirable ends.

In 1975 the Conference noted and approved a *programme* which included: reversing all cuts in housing expenditure and giving money to councils for improvement of older housing, levying of low (as opposed to fair and economic) rents; extension of nursery education to *all* 3-5 year olds; public ownership of the major pharmaceutical industries supplying the NHS, with compensation; increase of basic state pension (for a couple) to 50 per cent of adult male gross average earnings; increased investment in public transport and an increase of overseas aid to 0.7 per cent of GNP.

Nowhere did the delegates have to say either what burden of tax they would accept to pay for these nor did they have to order the priorities by which these various objectives should be introduced. The *resolutions* passed by Conference had the same one-sidedness. In 1976, on Monday Conference called for an expansion of the social services; on Tuesday for an improvement in rural transport; on Wednesday for the implementation of a massive hospital building programme, the abolition of all prescription and similar charges and an expansion of health centres and creche facilities, and for the full implementation of the child benefit scheme with benefits set

at a generous level; on Thursday for a drastic increase in the funds available for the NEB and even on Friday for increased government finance to develop more economic and efficient methods of electricity generation.

a programme for the party

Instead of continuing to build up frustrations each year because of "resolutions not being implemented", a five year programme should be presented to Conference, with the costs of each proposal included and a time schedule for implementation attached. Thus for example, in Year One, a start in increasing nursery education and increased food subsidies might be on the agenda for parliament; in Year Two, subsidised fees for foreign students and the introduction of child benefits; in Year Three, beginning of phased implementation of the remaining Finer Report recommendations and increased aid to the third world; in Year Four, an accelerated school building programme and the end of prescription charges, and in Year Five, state aid to political parties as proposed in the Houghton report.

This programme (in its true sense) would then be debated and the order of proposals could be changed by vote. (Thus, for example, a start on nurseries may wait while overseas students are helped in Year One.) Though the programme would be able to be revised each Conference, it would give to government the party's priorities of what it should be aiming to achieve over a given period, within whatever economic constraints it finds itself. Not only would frustration and disappointment be less, but the party would be involved in the really important decisions faced by government—not just what to do but when and how to do it. It is essential to this process that costings are included in every stage of the debate so that the party might have to experience the real choices which have to be taken.

The programme itself would be drawn up by the NEC, with the help of its sub-

committees, much as the 1975 Programme was put together, though naturally involving *choices* at each stage, hitherto excluded. Debate on the programme would be limited to two days of Conference, still leaving time for the debate of some ordinary resolutions. Such motions, however, should, like the programme, include some estimate of costings and an outline of the method of finance and administration involved.

unions at conference

On the second issue, the representativeness of Conference, one fact stands out. This is the predominance of the unions. Over 50 per cent of the delegates are from affiliated unions, but they control 89 per cent of the votes. When it comes to the Conference Arrangements Committee—a not unimportant body—this is now totally in the lap of the unions who hold 100 per cent of its places. This voting strength reflects their enormous contribution to central party finance. And even at this level it could probably be higher. The Transport and General Workers' Union, for example, affiliates on the basis of only 1 million of its 1.9 million members. Simultaneously it has additionally funded the Labour Party via the subsidised rent it charged for Transport House. If this amount came in affiliations, the combined voting strength of the unions at conference would be even greater.

It is hardly surprising that constituency delegates get frustrated that, having debated resolutions at their branches and gcs locally before arriving at Brighton or Blackpool, all they are allowed is a speech, as (with a mere 11 per cent of the votes) they can make little impact on decisions. (They can, in contrast, affect the membership of the NEC—partly explaining its current left wing nature.) CLPS must be given some influence if Conference is to retain any meaning for them.

Various questions arise from the union voting strength. One is whether a union vote should equal an individual Labour

Party member vote. As indicated above, workers join unions for a variety of reasons and as a result are (if they don't opt out of the 32p a year political levy) allocated a vote at conference. An individual party member, however, joins very specifically to give energies, assistance and/or support to the party and often to be involved in its policy making and activities. Are their two voices to be equated?

As suggested above, the individual constituency membership is substantially below what it could be, but even if it doubled (to 2,000 a constituency), they would still have only the same number of votes. The NEC, as well as the unions, should think seriously about whether they approve of this state of affairs. It can hardly be in the unions' interests for them to be seen to be dominating a political party to such an extent. It also may not help their relationship with their own members, who may feel they have too cosy a relationship with a Labour government.

unions and the party

The unions' relationship with the party also has implications in the longer term. Just as the relationship of the party to its leaders changes when those leaders are also the government, so also does the relationship of the unions to the party. A growing proportion of union members are employed not by private industry but in the public sector—by government, the health service, local authorities and the nationalised industries. Their unions are thus not negotiating with "capitalists" but with elected representatives of the people—increasingly with Labour representatives. Even in private industry, as the law replaces collective bargaining over wage increases, wage levels (as under Equal Pay), health and safety regulations, boardroom representation, terms and conditions of work, fringe benefits and so forth, so it is with Labour representatives that the unions negotiate. Strains may develop here which will put stresses on the decision making process of the party as well as on the willingness

of unions to continue to fund 80 per cent of the party's income and on the party to accept this degree of union control.

composition of conference

Proposals for changing the composition of Conference would therefore include (a) CLP voting strength being related to real membership and with an increased vote relating to membership above the minimum required to vote (b) giving individual voting cards to each delegate, so that within a delegation, voting may be split if the delegation so wish. In addition, the composition of Conference Arrangements Committee must be changed to include CLP as well as union representatives.

One other group present at Conference comprises the official Labour parliamentary candidates and MPs. These attend *ex officio* with the right to speak but neither vote nor move or second resolutions. The presence of MPs at the rostrum often causes problems as lay delegates feel (rightly) it is their one chance a year to make representations to the NEC (and government), whereas MPs, by their status and physical proximity, can usually get a hearing in Smith Square or Westminster. It is therefore recommended that these *ex officio* members (and also including the MEPS) cannot speak, save for three of their number elected by them who will then be fully fledged delegates with all the rights of delegates (MPs appointed by CLPs or other organisations as delegates would not have their delegate status altered by this change).

In addition to this, however, it should not be left for ministers to have to seek election to one of these posts in order to speak in a debate on their subject. In any debate at Conference, the minister responsible should have a right to an intervention the same length as the mover, probably immediately before the response by the NEC.

One group currently absent from Conference (apart from full time agents who

can speak at private sessions on organisational matters) is the Labour Party staff. Yet it is surely time some industrial democracy came home to roost and it is therefore suggested that they too should elect one delegate to Annual Conference.

The role of women's conference, the Young Socialists' annual conference, the local government conference and the regional conferences should also be considered. At present these can lead to frustrations because their debates and resolutions often do not get fed into official Labour Party policy. Hence despite the women's conference passing motions favouring abortion, we were told for years that the party had no policy on this. It is therefore recommended that two resolutions may be sent from each of these conferences to Annual Conference and that each conference elects five delegates to Annual Conference. We should not be afraid if this contains hints of a federal structure—if it increases the involvement of lay members in party affairs, that should suffice to justify the change.

the NEC

The overwhelming predominance of the union vote in Conference is not reflected in the NEC. However, the predominance of professionals is. At present (1977) every member of the NEC is a full time paid representative or employee of the movement. The CLPs elect MPs, the unions elect full time officials, the socialist societies elect an MP and the whole Conference elects five MPs to the women's section.

The Labour Party is therefore in the position that its executive comprises wholly the "agents" or "servants" of the movement—those chosen to carry out the policies of the movement. They thus hardly represent a check on these agents. We see this nonsense in Conference, where the minister responsible for a governmental area may answer for the NEC the Conference debate—a debate which should be the lay members' review

of their agents' record. Hence in 1976, Shirley Williams, the Secretary of State for Education, answered for the NEC on a debate proposed by lay members and critical of the government's role. While no one would deny ministers the chance to put their case, it should be for a largely lay executive and Conference to pass judgment on what has been done. The composition of the NEC should therefore be changed in two basic ways. Firstly, the type of person able to stand. Secondly, in the groups to be represented. On the first, MPs should only be able to stand as Chairman and for the three seats allocated to MPs and candidates; paid union officials should be eligible to stand for only one third of the union places. Secondly, a new set of groups should be recognised. The women's section seats should be abolished and replaced by a representative selected by the women's conference (if this has to continue to exist). The other groups mentioned above which should be represented at conference (local government conference, Young Socialist and the regional conferences) should each elect one NEC member (as now happens at the Young Socialist conference). The existing socialist societies' seat would remain unchanged, but the number of union and CLP section seats should be reduced by 3 and 2 (making 9 and 5 seats respectively). One NEC seat would go to a representative of all Labour Party employees—agents and staff together.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO NEC COMPOSITION

section	existing numbers	proposed numbers
union	12	9
CLPs	7	5
women	5*	1‡
young socialists	1	1
socialist societies	1	1
PLP	—	3
local govt. conference	—	1
regional conferences	—	11
ex-officio & treasurer	3	3
	—	—
total	29	35

* elected by annual conference.

‡ elected by the women's conference.

One further change should be made. At present, the NEC includes members who have sat on it for many years and whose contribution after this length of time cannot keep improving year by year. They block the entry of younger activists on to this vital body and prevent it changing so as to reflect changes in the party. A seven year maximum term should thus be instigated for all but the party leader and Chairman, with members being eligible to restand after three years off the executive.

party chairman

As will be argued at greater length in chapter six, it is now increasingly important to strengthen the non parliamentary party leadership. The party chairmanship should thus no longer be an almost ceremonial post which rotates annually amongst the NEC in line with seniority. Instead (as now happens regionally), the chairman should be elected by Conference and be eligible to stand for re-election.

6. the party's representatives

The "party" comprises a number of groups, each a vital ingredient of the whole. Thus, in addition to the affiliated organisations, there are CLPS, PLP, MEPS, the Cabinet, the government—and the NEC.

Only the NEC and Conference are acknowledged as being the policy makers, the "conscience" of the party, representatives of the movement. However, it is, in fact, the PLP, government and Cabinet which in the public mind comprise the party, and it is largely their activity which determines how people vote. It is also, in a world of ministerial government, they who actually do or do not implement policies.

How responsible are the PLP and its leaders to the party—and how responsible should they be? The PLP is clearly very accountable in so far as each candidate has to be selected by his local CLP. The leader of the party (and hence the Prime Minister on many occasions) is, in contrast, chosen only by the electoral college of successful Labour parliamentary candidates. The rest of the Cabinet and government (when Labour is in office) is chosen solely by the Prime Minister. The shadow Cabinet (in Opposition) is chosen by the same electoral college as elects the leader of the party.

party leader

There has recently been an increasing demand for a broadening of the electorate which chooses the party leader. This culminated in a recent NEC Report to the 1977 Conference which outlined three possible methods for electing the leader: (a) (as now) a ballot of MPs (b) by vote at Annual Conference or (c) by an electoral college of CLPS, with some representation of unions, candidates and MPs.

However, before deciding which of these alternatives (if any) is the most attractive (which usually means, which of these would produce the "desired" result), the *role* of the party leader ought first to be considered. He is, primarily, the parliamentary leader and his chief responsibilities (especially when in office) are as

Prime Minister. What therefore is now needed is a recognition of this separation between the party and the government, in the form of a non-parliamentary party leader. His responsibility would be to the party and not to the House of Commons, the Queen, or any other interests. He would speak on behalf of the party—with no divided loyalties—and his task would be to promote party policies as laid down by Conference or the NEC. His constituents would be, quite clearly, Labour members.

It is therefore suggested, as outlined in chapter five, that the current method of electing the party Chairman (by "Buggin's turn") is replaced by a true election of Chairman by Conference each year. Only the leader and deputy of the PLP would be excluded from standing.

The election of parliamentary party leader could then probably remain as at present (perhaps with some input from those parties without a representative in the PLP), with the leader being chosen by his colleagues with whom he has to work in parliament. It is important to remember the need for him to command their support (compare, for example, the Tories' inability to work with Alec Douglas Home, a leader foisted upon them) and to be capable of leading the majority party in the House and of fulfilling the specific and onerous job of Prime Minister.

the PLP

Apart from their relationship with their CLPS, MPs currently hardly fit into the party machine. Some may sit on NEC sub-committees—but their positions there are more related to the "old boy" network than anything more democratic. Apart from the Transport House press office handling their speeches, many MPs may have no formal relationship with Transport House. While it is clear that the Labour Party staff are employed by the party, by the NEC, and it is them they serve, is there not a case for more servicing of the PLP than just the eight staff

members attached to the House of Commons? The need for more here is growing as the amount of legislation passing through the House expands and also as the Government consults with Liberals (backed up by publicly financed staff) as well as with the PLP—who have no such aid.

One of the frustrations of MPs is that they are not involved in the formulation of ministerial policy. A further strengthening of the system of PLP subject committees, serviced by research staff and able to discuss with ministers areas of their responsibility would bring MPs into government work at an earlier stage than the finality of a White Paper, and on a broader spread of topics. In addition, the PLP committees should link in with the NEC committees—perhaps by appointing members to the latter. This increased involvement of MPs would also be to the benefit of Transport House's development of policy as it could use the wider expertise of MPs (ex-councillors and ex-ministers as well as a wealth of variety in their previous jobs) on the various committees.

ministers' advisers

In addition to the MPs' (and MEPs) relations to Transport House, there is the question of ministers' relations with the headquarters. Recently there has been a move towards a system of political advisers for senior ministers. It would perhaps be more appropriate for at least some of the functions currently carried out by political advisers to be done by research staff, at least nominally on the payroll of the party and, in effect, on secondment to the minister. This type of relationship will be more important as the party staff perform the liaison with the European socialist and social democrat parties, whose ministers will be facing British Labour ministers in Brussels.

During an adviser's secondment to a minister, he would be answerable to that minister and could be dismissed from that post only by him. Thus his first loyalty would be to the minister, though

the knowledge of his eventual return to Transport House would remind him that he was actually in the party's employment.

selection of candidates

Discussion of the responsibilities of MPs raises the question of the selection of Labour candidates for public office—or, in its more popular form—"reselection of MPs." The increasing demand for reselection is seen in the 44 motions on this submitted to the 1977 party conference. While this question may be more a symptom of the conflicts outlined earlier, it does now have a greater practical importance and thus will be discussed in some detail.

Two separate and conflicting aspects of this question have already been touched on. One is the very proper desire for accountability—of elected officers to their electorates, be this GC delegates to their branches, MPs to constituents, the PLP to Conference or the leader to the party. The second is the definition of the constituencies.

Looking first at the role of candidates and elected representatives when the party is in opposition, the conflicts between the two aspects does not emerge. The representatives have to reflect the aspirations and demands of the movement, to articulate the party's opposition to government and generally to act as spokesmen. In contrast, however, when MPs form the government (or the majority party on a council), these elected representatives take on a new responsibility, wider than just the Labour movement.

Even within the party, there is no clear sponsoring group. MPs owe a measure of accountability to their own local party which selected and nominated them and ran their constituency campaign. But they also have a responsibility to the party nationally which articulated the programme from which the manifesto was taken and on which the campaign was based nationally; to the Labour govern-

ment (or opposition) which up to the election was the most manifest part of the movement seen by the public; to their constituents who actually voted them into parliament; and to their union or co-op if they were sponsored. While there would seem to be little doubt that the members of the party locally are the MPs first point of reference, these other obligations should be recognised and when parties seek to "mandate" an MP they should realise that his allegiance is to larger groups than just the GC. In return MPs should remember that all these various groups which helped him get elected also gain some rights to expect a measure of accountability, and that no individual has a "right" to continue representing a constituency as a Labour member purely on the choice of the electorate. Having stood on a Labour ticket and with the strength of the party behind him, a candidate must fulfill his obligations to the party. In parliament these are severe (his life and choice being greatly curtailed by the Whip), but even locally his party must have the right to replace him if they so chose without the scandal and furore this now causes.

CLPs must never be allowed to mandate MPs—but in return CLPs must be allowed to change their candidates if they feel the existing one is in some serious way unsatisfactory. An appeals machinery could ensure that a member was safeguarded from capricious or malicious attacks.

It is therefore recommended that no MP be automatically readopted as the candidate each election, but that, if the party decides by a GC vote that it wants a contest (and it would have to take such a vote between each election), the selection of a candidate be carried out by the whole of the Labour membership in the constituency.

So long as party membership is as small as it now is, there is no reason why this cannot take place in one room at a single meeting (shortlisting having taken place in much the same way as now). When (hopefully) party numbers increase, each branch could hold a selection meeting to

which a set number of candidates (including, if he so wishes, the sitting MP) would be invited. The votes for each candidate from each branch would then be totalled to obtain the final result. In both cases, affiliated organisations would be entitled to send one delegate to each such selection meeting.

more power to the branches

Allowing party members—and not just their representatives—to select their preliminary candidates is one step in handing back power and responsibility to the branches. Branches also need to be allowed to take new people into membership, pass and send on resolutions, send deputations and other such activities which acknowledge the role of members in party affairs, without having to go via the GC. Constituency parties, it should be remembered, coincide with electoral boundaries—which are hardly sacrosanct to Labour philosophy. They are important at election time but they should not be used as an excuse for a centralised and undemocratic system which gives individual members little say other than in the selection of delegates. The GC and executive should strengthen and support branches, not control them and lay down policy.

As with parliamentary candidates, branches should also have a say in the selection of delegates to Conference. It is recommended that a CLP should not be able to send the same person to Conference year after year (all too often this privilege lies with the same one or two people) and that branches do the selecting. This may mean that delegates will tend not to be as expert in the procedure of Conference, but it would be hoped that higher levels of membership will allow more than one delegate and that improved finances will allow more members to attend as observers. It will necessitate non-delegates being eligible to stand for the NEC, otherwise no one could sit on the NEC for any length of time.

Looking at the party outside of Conference, it will become increasingly impor-

tant to establish good communication between the various levels of the party—branch, constituency, local authority, Assembly, parliamentary, European. The functioning of Transport House should adapt to this and not aim simply to serve one layer of party work—the NEC. To some extent this happens now, particularly in the international and local government departments. However, such work must further expand, and, in particular, account taken of the EEC. This is no longer an “international” matter and it is important that *all* people dealing with one subject, be it at local authority, parliamentary or EEC level, are closely in touch and working with a shared understanding and approach. Thus, for example, concerning the EEC proposals to allow children of migrant workers to study in their own language, Labour members of education authorities, parliamentary spokesmen for teacher training and those actually dealing with the directive in the European Parliament or elsewhere should be able to come together to decide on a party approach before then arguing out their views with other groups.

Various administrative and other changes have been proposed in this chapter. The aim of these is to help make the party a more democratic body—in the sense of involving ordinary members in the activity of the party. Earlier, it was argued that for the good of the party and to help ensure the Labour government remains in office, more potential members should actually be recruited into the party, making it less elite and more representative of Labour voters. The need for good communication and understanding between different levels of the party is also apparent, and responsibility for promoting this rests largely at the top—with the Cabinet and NEC. Communication is a two way thing, and the government cannot expect the party to understand its problem if it does not take the trouble to talk—and listen—to the party.

7. summary and recommendations

This pamphlet did not set out to present a blue print for the party structure in the eighties nor to formulate hard and fast rules for change. Rather, it set out to point to some areas for concern within the party and to raise questions to which members' attention might now be turned. If Conference agrees to carry out an investigation into the party organisation, which would be an excellent step for it to take, it would be hoped that the issues raised here would be on the agenda for consideration.

Central to the pamphlet is the belief that a large, dynamic, healthy party is a precondition for socialism, and that the time to start building such a party is now.

An immediate start could be made with a real attempt to recruit existing Labour voters into the party. Either at the polls, or when canvassing, as soon as a Labour voter is identified, he should be given a card saying "Thank you for voting Labour. We hope you will continue to support us once Joe Smith, our candidate, is elected. We hope you will consider joining the party. We meet on Thursdays at 8 at the local meetings room, and we look forward to seeing you there."

Of course to offer someone membership is not enough. He must have a reason for paying his dues. The pamphlet has argued that the only real thing membership can have to offer is the ability to participate in meaningful debate and in real decision making. That doesn't mean umpteen votes on endless, meaningless, cover-all, resolutions. It means a thorough discussion of the options and a considered vote. As important, it then means seeing such votes being interpreted into party policy and thence implemented by elected party representatives.

For party policy to reflect and respond to the demands of the electorate, many more of them need to be in membership than are now. We boast 6½ million members, but have nearer 300,000 individual members—3 per cent of those who vote Labour. The party also needs to be less

dependent on the trade unions, who currently provide 90 per cent of central party finance.

The time ahead is a challenging one for Labour. The EEC, devolution, the possibility of public finance for the party, increasing experience of being in government—all these are exciting opportunities for an adaptable and healthy party. In order to be able to respond to these demands, to build up a proper membership, and to make the party more democratic so that members can participate in its deliberations, the following major proposals are put forward for discussion:

1. A substantial increase in subscriptions, to a minimum of £5.20 a year, rising according to income to £30 plus. An automatic subscription to *Labour Weekly* being included in these rates.
2. The minimum affiliation of 1,000 for CLPs to be abolished. CLPs in future to affiliate on true numbers. 2 per cent of Labour vote in membership required for a delegate to Conference, with an additional delegate for each further 1 per cent. Affiliation fees £100 per one per cent, with a minimum of £100.
3. The establishment of a national agency service; creation of some industrial based party activity and a positive attempt to recruit immigrants.
4. Annual presentation of a Five Year rolling programme to Conference.
5. Voting cards at Conference being distributed to individual delegates.
6. Restructuring of the Conference Arrangements Committee to ensure constituency representation.
7. Young socialists, womens', local government and the regional conferences each to elect five delegates to Conference and one person to the NEC, and to send two resolutions to Conference.
8. Women's section of the NEC to go. Replaced by three PLP seats and one Labour Employees seat. Size of union

appendix : *ian pamphlets* acknowledgements

In preparing this pamphlet, the author spoke to and poached ideas from a number of different people. In addition, various members of the party read earlier versions of the draft and their comments have, in the main, been incorporated into the final product. Thanks are therefore particularly due to Phil Edwards who did much of the research, to the local Fabian societies who produced a wealth of information on CLPS, to Panorama and Gallop for permission to use their findings, and to the following whose help has been invaluable: Brian Abel-Smith, Elizabeth Arnot, John Cartright, Dame Margaret Cole, Colin Crouch, Bryan Davies, Bob Eadie, John Gyford, Ian Haig, Geoff Harris, Rod Northawl, Dick Leonard, Michael Morris, John Parker, Michael Parker, Chris Pryce, Karamjit Singh, David Walker, Phillip Whitehead, Reg Underhill and Arthur Clare.

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the labour party : crisis and prospects

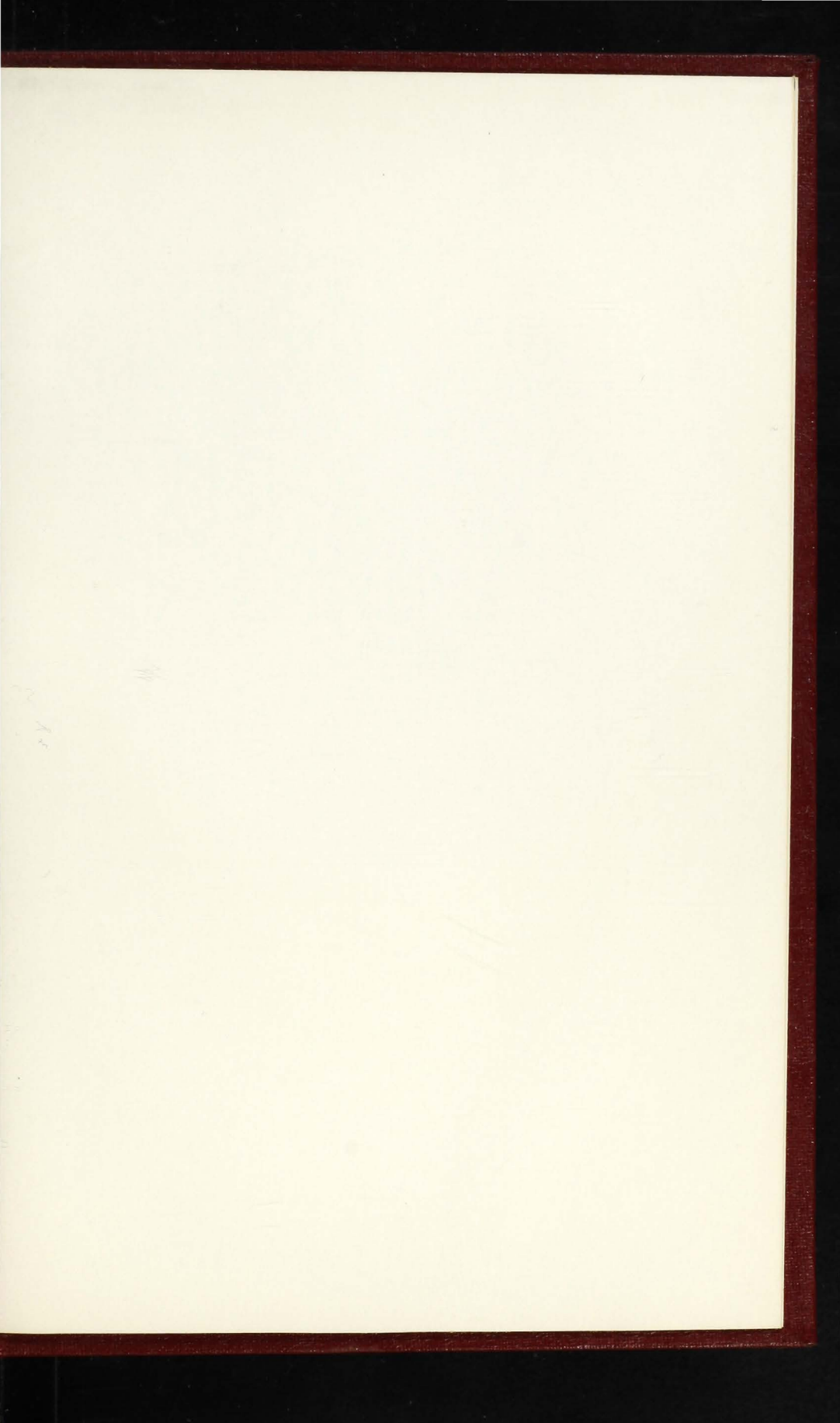
In this pamphlet, the author suggests that the machinery and organisation of the Labour Party are in need of attention. This is important to democracy as well as to socialism, she maintains, as in our democracy the parties have a unique and necessary role still to play. As for the party itself, Dianne Hayter suggests it is particularly important for it to sort itself out now as new challenges (such as Europe and devolution) are arising with important consequences for Labour. The author indicates the major weaknesses of the party today (tiny membership, shaky finances, over dependence on the unions, excessive control by MPs and other employees of the movement, lack of membership involvement in policy making) and she proposes changes to the composition of the NEC, Conference and to the method of selecting representatives, all aimed at making the party stronger, internally democratic and electorally successful.

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The Fabian Society exists to further socialist education and research. It is affiliated to the Labour Party, both nationally and locally, and embraces all shades of socialist opinion within its ranks — left, right and centre. Since 1884 the Fabian Society has enrolled thoughtful socialists who are prepared to discuss the essential questions of democratic socialism and relate them to practical plans for building socialism in a changing world. Beyond this the Society has no collective policy. It puts forward no resolutions of a political character. The Society's members are active in their Labour parties, trade unions and co-operatives. They are representative of the labour movement, practical people concerned to study and discuss problems that matter.

The Society is organised nationally and locally. The national Society, directed by an elected Executive Committee, publishes pamphlets, and holds schools and conferences of many kinds. Local Societies—there are one hundred of them—are self governing and are lively centres of discussion and also undertake research.

Enquiries about membership should be sent to the General Secretary, Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1H 9BN : telephone 01-930 3077.



The United States is a country of freedom, and the Government is committed to the principle of the right of every man to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It is the duty of every citizen to support and defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States, and to bear arms when called upon to do so. It is the duty of every citizen to vote in the election of his representatives in Congress, and to support and defend the Government in time of war. It is the duty of every citizen to pay his taxes, and to obey the laws of the United States. It is the duty of every citizen to respect the rights of other citizens, and to live in peace and harmony with them. It is the duty of every citizen to be true to the principles of the Constitution, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the Union. It is the duty of every citizen to be loyal to the United States, and to support the Government in the defense of the Nation. It is the duty of every citizen to be honest and upright in all his dealings, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the integrity of the Nation. It is the duty of every citizen to be patriotic, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the honor and glory of the United States. It is the duty of every citizen to be brave, and to support the Government in the defense of the Nation. It is the duty of every citizen to be just, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the rights of all citizens. It is the duty of every citizen to be kind, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the peace and harmony of the Nation. It is the duty of every citizen to be faithful, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the trust and confidence of the people. It is the duty of every citizen to be diligent, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the prosperity and well-being of the Nation. It is the duty of every citizen to be obedient, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the authority and respect of the laws of the United States. It is the duty of every citizen to be true to the principles of the Constitution, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the Union. It is the duty of every citizen to be loyal to the United States, and to support the Government in the defense of the Nation. It is the duty of every citizen to be honest and upright in all his dealings, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the integrity of the Nation. It is the duty of every citizen to be patriotic, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the honor and glory of the United States. It is the duty of every citizen to be brave, and to support the Government in the defense of the Nation. It is the duty of every citizen to be just, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the rights of all citizens. It is the duty of every citizen to be kind, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the peace and harmony of the Nation. It is the duty of every citizen to be faithful, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the trust and confidence of the people. It is the duty of every citizen to be diligent, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the prosperity and well-being of the Nation. It is the duty of every citizen to be obedient, and to support the Government in the maintenance of the authority and respect of the laws of the United States.

Federal Government

The Federal Government is composed of three branches: the Executive, the Legislative, and the Judicial. The Executive branch is headed by the President, who is elected by the people for a four-year term. The President has the power to appoint and remove officers and judges, to grant pardons, and to make treaties, subject to the ratification of two-thirds of the Senate. The Legislative branch is composed of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House of Representatives is elected by the people for a two-year term, and the Senate is elected by the States for a six-year term. The Senate has the power to ratify treaties, to confirm and remove officers and judges, and to impeach and remove the President, judges, and officers. The Judicial branch is headed by the Supreme Court, which is composed of nine Justices appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The Supreme Court has the power to interpret the Constitution and the laws of the United States, and to review the actions of the Executive and Legislative branches. The Federal Government is committed to the principle of the right of every man to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and to the maintenance of the Union and the defense of the Nation.

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Further information regarding the Federal Government may be obtained from the United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20540.

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