BIRMINGHAM LABOUR

BRIEFING

SEPT. '88 NO. 2 30p / 50p

NO CUTS

Strike Action Needed !

The "cuts" situation in Birmingham is entering a vital period. Rumours abound in the city, and everyday more cuts are announced. Yet money can still be found for "prestige projects" like the Super Prix (see inside), and for convention centre car parks (£4 million !). The articles, and details of the cuts on the centre pages of this issue highlight the real situation.

NALGO and NUPE are consulting their members about a one-day strike on September 19th over the cuts. At the time of writing the outcome of those consultations is not known. NALGO stewards though have voted to take action, and NALGO members of the council's library staff voted by 295 votes to 25 to take action. *Whether the one-day strike takes place or not, NALGO and NUPE workers, and all the council workforce, must be supported in their fight against the cuts being made by the right-wing controlled so-called Labour council, who prefer to attack the working-class in Birmingham rather than fight the Tories.*

The *BIRMINGHAM LABOUR BRIEFING* initiated **Summerfield Group anti-cuts public meeting on September 9th (7.30. pm, New Imperial Hotel, Temple St.)** will draw public attention to the worsening situation. The fact that the meeting is being sponsored by the Public Service Unions Liaison Committee (amongst others) shows the level of concern amongst the council workforce.

The public meeting is linked to support for the "Birmingham 20" councillors who have had the whip withdrawn for refusing to vote for a cut - the closure of Martineau House. *BIRMINGHAM LABOUR BRIEFING believes the "Birmingham 20" should be making public statements now opposing all cuts, and should vote against them in the council chamber.* The appearance of 3 of the 20 councillors on the platform at the anti-cuts public meeting, and the letter on the centre pages of this issue, is to be welcomed. *Following the Summerfield anti-cuts meeting though, we believe the 20 councillors should convene a meeting on the cuts and democracy in the Labour Group to which all members of the Labour Party within Birmingham should be invited.*

Against this background the left has taken control of Birmingham District Labour Party (BDLP). Many comrades are talking of an agenda for the left now in BDLP. The agenda needed is simple, comrades. It must reflect the struggles going on outside the District Party in the workplaces and the communities in Birmingham, and enable BDLP to link up with public sector unions opposing the cuts. *BIRMINGHAM LABOUR BRIEFING* believes we need a united, democratic left in Birmingham, opposed to the cuts. The position of the left in Birmingham should be clear, as it should be for socialists everywhere -

DEFEND THE WORKING-CLASS !
NO CUTS IN JOBS AND SERVICES !

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

"The big heart of England"



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HIRE OF PITS AND PADDOCK			35,000	00	
SUPER PRIX 1987			5,250	00	
AS AGREED			40,250	00	
V.A.T. @ 15%					
TOTAL					
SUB-TOTAL					
TOTAL CAR TAX					
DEALER FITTED ACCESSORIES					
NUMBER PLATES					
PETROL					
TOTAL V.A.T. AT %					
TOTAL V.A.T. AT %					
ROAD FUND LICENCE					
DEDUCT PART EXCHANGE TOTAL					
TOTAL					

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NEW VEHICLE: VEHICLE AND FACTORY OPTIONS	CAR TAX £	P	BASIC £	P	V.A.T. Rate
PROVISION OF HOSPITALITY			20,000	00	
SUPER PRIX 1987			3,000	00	
AGREED MINIMUM PAYMENT			23,000	00	
V.A.T. @ 15%					
TOTAL					
DELIVERY CHARGES					
SUB-TOTAL					
TOTAL CAR TAX					
DEALER FITTED ACCESSORIES					
NUMBER PLATES					
PETROL					
TOTAL V.A.T. AT %					
TOTAL V.A.T. AT %					
ROAD FUND LICENCE %					
DEDUCT PART EXCHANGE TOTAL					
TOTAL					

Cost: 10 45 00 04

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MAIL 18/8/88

Meals on Wheels cuts roast beef

Roast beef has been cut to once a month for more than 3,000 elderly and handicapped in Birmingham who receive Meals on Wheels.

Instead the City Council will provide faggots fot the old folk and disabled, who are housebound or who attend lunch clubs or live in sheltered accommodation.

It is estimated the menu change will save about £50,000 a year.

But the decision has been greeted with dismay by Age Concern.

By BARRY PHILLIPS

Mrs Theresa Samuels, general secretary of Age Concern in the city where its 15 lunch clubs for around 300 different diners a day are supplied by Meals on Wheels said: "The recipients will be very unhappy."

"Nutritionally faggots will not make any real difference. But they enjoy the succulence and tradition of roast beef with all the trimmings and I imagine we shall have some complaints."

She said it was difficult to criticise, however, if the intention was to supply more meals at a time when caring for more people in the community meant more demands on Meals on Wheels.

The menu changes in the 15 kitchens around the city supplying Meals on Wheels have been ordered by Mr Frank Attwood, principal assistant for direct meals in Birmingham's Social Services Department.

He was not available for comment today but a spokesman for the department said: "Roast beef will still be on the menu, but only once a month instead of twice. In addition it will occasionally appear on the separate week-end menu when we always supply a roast."

"If money is saved on the menu, it could enable more meals to be provided within the budget."

—Vote Benn & Heffer—

When Tony Benn and Eric Heffer declared their challenge for the Labour Party leadership many comrades felt they would only get one constituency nomination in Birmingham. Three Birmingham CLPs (Edgbaston, Ladywood, and Selly Oak) though nominated Benn and Heffer. Perry Barr nominated Eric Heffer with Tony Benn only losing the nomination on the Chair's casting vote, and Hall Green was also very close. ***The battle now must be to get as many Birmingham CLPs as possible to mandate their Conference delegate to vote for Benn and Heffer at Blackpool.*** It is vital that Tony Benn and Eric Heffer record as large a vote as possible in the leadership contests so that the ongoing fight for socialism within the Labour Party has a strong and significant platform from which to carry the struggle forward.

Of course, there are some comrades (including some on the left) who argued when Benn and Heffer declared their challenge that there should not be a leadership contest. ***LABOUR BRIEFING*** was among the first to call for a challenge. After Kinnock's unilateralism / multilateralism fiasco can anyone on the left really still believe the contest is not needed ? The present Party Leadership, and its Policy Review process, offer no serious socialist challenge to Thatcher.

The Benn-Heffer leadership challenge has given a focus to the fight for socialism in the Labour Party, combatting Kinnock and his friends' rush to the right. Kinnock's attempt to ditch socialist policies in the Policy Review must be resisted. ***Comrades should argue for their CLPs to mandate Conference delegates to vote against the Policy Review documents.***

The Benn-Heffer challenge has given a focus and a platform for the left alternative in the Policy Review, and the fight for socialism within the Party. Whether Tony Benn and Eric Heffer win or lose the leadership contests, that fight for socialism will go on after the Labour Party Conference in October. The Benn-Heffer challenge is only the beginning of that fight. Clause IV and public ownership, unilateralism, and a whole range of left-wing policies will be under threat from Kinnock and his so-called "moderniser" cronies in the Labour Co-ordinating Committee in the second stage of the Policy Review. What is new, we should be asking, about private ownership, Gould's share-ownership, and the market economy ? These ideas have been around for hundreds of years - they are called capitalism ! What is new about nuclear weapons and building-up our conventional weapons ? Any attempt to ditch socialist policies must be resisted, and countered with clear socialist alternative policies.

A start in the fight to defend the few socialist policies we have can be made by Tony Benn **and Eric Heffer** amassing a large vote in the leadership contest. Don't be fooled, comrades, by Prescott supporters' claims about being able to defeat Hattersley. ***LIKE HATTERSLEY, PRESCOTT SUPPORTS KINNOCK ! HE HAS SAID HE HAS NO POLICY DIFFERENCES WITH HATTERSLEY. A VOTE FOR PRESCOTT IS A VOTE FOR KINNOCK ! THERE IS ONLY ONE CANDIDATE OFFERING A SOCIALIST LEFT ALTERNATIVE IN THE DEPUTY-LEADER CONTEST - ERIC HEFFER !***

VOTE FOR BENN AND HEFFER !!

John Wilton (Edgbaston CLP)

PRESCOTT '88 - "ORGANISATION TICKET" ?

JOHN PRESCOTT is standing for deputy-leader on an "organisation ticket". This basically argues he can organise a better piss-up in a brewery than Roy Hattersley (or should it be Sir Stan Yapp ?). Prescott's campaign in Birmingham has been less than impressive organisationally though. Edgbaston CLP comrades know the real meaning of Prescott's "organisation" manifesto. His supporters in the Edgbaston ward sent their nomination for Prescott in to the Edgbaston CLP Secretary 2 days after the G.C. agendas had been sent out ! At the G.C. they then argued that the nomination should be accepted onto the agenda, and attacked the Edgbaston CLP Secretary for sending the G.C. agendas out too early. They were sent out 8 days before the G.C., so that delegates had them 7 days before the meeting ! Prescott's supporters in Edgbaston ward (including the Birmingham organiser of his campaign) obviously felt it was so important to get his nomination into the CLP Secretary that they took 8 days after their ward meeting to do so !

Rather than nominate someone who supports Kinnock Edgbaston CLP decided to nominate two socialists - Tony Benn and Eric Heffer. Given his supporters performance in Edgbaston it seems Prescott would fit in well with the Kinnock-style of leadership. *Indeed, BRIEFING supporters were not surprised to read on the Prescott campaign broadsheet an article headed "WHY IT MUST BE KINNOCK AND PRESCOTT". There you have it then comrades, straight from the horses mouth !*

New Adult Training Programme

On 27th July the economic develpment committee of the City Council approved a bid for 3000 places on the Employment Training Programme (ET). A protest outside the council house organised by UCATT and other unions was addressed by John Cunningham, UCATT Shop Steward and the new chair of the District Labour Party as well as Councillor Phil Murphy. On August 5th a Tory Minister came to Birmingham to sign the deal in the presence of Councillor Albert Bore. Bore (one-time leader of the Birmingham Labour Left) sang the praises of the new government slave labour scheme in the 'Birmingham Post' and the Tory Minister praised the Birmingham Council and condemned other "left-wing" councils for boycotting the scheme.

At the time the official Labour Party policy, as decided at the June NEC meeting was to oppose the scheme, although an ambiguous advice note has since been sent out from ythe NEC Local Government committee, leaving it up to the Local Authority themselves to determine whether to participate in the scheme.

In part however, whilst it doesn't exscuse them, Birmingham City Council is trapped. Birmingham always had a large number of so-called community programmes. If ET wasn't developed those working full time on them would have been made redundant. However they are also trapped by their reformist politics; cooperation with capitalism will not produce more jobs. The evidence is harsh, the evidence is real;the more we close our eyes to such schemes and their ancestors the more working class people are attacked.

Until our party adopts class politics, an all out attack on the Tories and a socialist programme such schemes wil not be defeated. Make no mistake; whatever we want to call it, YTS now stretches from 16 - 60. Capital has forced wages down and severely attacked union organisation.

Tony McShea.

The changes in Social Security benefits last April have hit many people. Most of the publicity around the cuts at that time concentrated on housing benefits for retired people - always a 'deserving case' - and some limited concessions were won.

One main group who were hit hard haven't had any sympathetic articles in the press or their cases taken up by the Labour front bench - unemployed youth are now expected to live on £26.05 a week.

Before April any unemployed person under 25 could live in their parents house without affecting their parents benefits. Since April £3 a week is cut from Rates rebates for anyone who has an unemployed 'non-dependent' in their house - and £3 a week is a significant amount of anyone living on state benefits. Any young person who wants to move out - or is pressurised by their parents to move out - will not find things any easier. Even if they are in their own accomodation they will only get £26.05 per week to live on (over £6 per week less than before April.) Out of that they have to pay their own water rates and 20% of their general rates.

Anyone moving into their own accomodation needs furniture. Yet all the DHSS grants have been abolished - the only alternative open to youth would be to apply for loans from the (anti) Social Fund. No regulations cover the social fund; no-one has a <u>right</u> to even a loan and on the DHSS list of 'priorities' unemployed youth are at the bottom.

One alternative may be 'board and lodgings' - but not only is there a restiction on how much the DHSS will pay, but anyone under 25 has to move every 8 weeks!!

If all this weren't bad enough, 18-24 year olds are the "target group" for the new Emplyment Training scheme; and will soon be forced to work for their (extremely meagre) benefits.

J.Denham, B'ham Unemployed Workers Ctre.





GREENBELT THREAT

On 23rd June Birmingham City Council planning committee designated green land in Quinton known as Site "A" for business and industrial use, despite the Secretary of State for the Environment previously accepting the West Midland County Council's proposal that Site "A" should be designated green belt. Thanks to the efforts of Cllrs. Bore and Brookes a planning application has already been received from Marks and Spencer and Tesco to build a supermarket, car park, garage, and high technology centre. These will destroy football pitches, young woodland and meadowland, six hundred year old hedgerows, and the source of the Bourne Brook. A recent survey showed there are 2,020 acres of wasteland in Birmingham needing reclamation. Why not use some of these ?

Building on Site "A" is against Birmingham District Labour Part policy, and infringing on green land is contrary to national Labour Party policy, which also states that new investment must "ensure it meets the needs of local people and not just those of property developers or industrialists". Despite this Councillor Martin Brookes, a member of Quinton Labour Party and vice-chair of the Economic Development Committee, was quoted in the *Birmingham Post* saying "I cannot see how a patch of land between the expressway and the M5 can be seen as green belt". In the immortal words of the call girl to the prosecution "well he would, wouldn't he ?" Perhaps if Councillor Brookes attended his branch Labour Party meetings and consulted people in the ward in which he lives he wouldn't be so swift to act against Labour Party policy. Of course, Councillor Albert Bore, Chair of the Economic Development Committee, has not answered any letters on the subject from Quinton Labour Party over the last three years.

Pat Warren (Quinton LP)

NALGO on the CUTS

On 27.6.88 a job freeze was introduced to all City Council Dept's. The council have tried to dilute the effects of this by calling the process a *'selective filling of vacancies'*. In Social Services Dept the consequences of this action have been twice as desperate because posts frozen in similiar circumstances earlier in the year had not been filled. Add on underfunded Departmental reorganisation and threats of permanent jobs and services cuts to the second job freeze and you will begin to understand how critical the situation is.

Social Services dept provides essential services to the citizens of Birmingham, often in situations where need is very great. It can not operate effectively in this cash starved way without putting people at risk and eroding support that is essential to keep many people living in the community.

Ken Barton, Chair of Social Services Ctte, has blamed the unions for winning 'excessive' pay awards, thus creating a cash crisis. This is absolute simplistic nonsense and it is clearly disgraceful that any allegedly Labour politician should turn on the workforce to hide the councils' inability to budget realistically for pay awards. Services are being cut in the dept because the leaders of the Labour Group don't find them prestigious enough to merit their priority rating. They should defend local government services against Tory cuts not wield the axe themselves.

Services to every part of the city are being hammered, with the additional threat of permanent deletion of posts where they are still vacant at the end of the financial year. As Barton announced at a press conference on 12.8.88, that some of the frozen posts would be released (it will take at least 2 months to get workers in posts.) a further sinister dimension became apparent - a further permanent chopping of up to 40 posts has materialised to save £439.000 off the staffing budget, with confirmation of a review of the elderly persons homes being carried out to cut 280 to 300 beds because the council won't provide sufficient staff.

NALGO/NUPE members are united in their condemnation of these social services cuts; at a joint meeting recently they voted to continue the policy of 'not covering for vacant posts' to lobby the next council meeting to seek support within the Labour Movement and to coordinate action for a 1-day strike of council workers.

Donald McCombie, Social Services Chief Steward - B'ham NALGO.

—The Axe Sta



—VIEW FROM NUPE—

B'ham Social Services Dept is collapsing fast because of the recent job freeze and threatened cuts in the budget. The director herself has identified some 300 vacancies. 10 years ago trades unionists were worried about improving the quality of services offered. Today they are struggling to provide any service at all . The slow decline in services since Thatcher came to power has been hastened by a series of 'ill-managed' and ill-concieved 'reorganisations' and by a Social Services Ctte led by Cllr Barton which is either deaf or unsympathetic about serious shortfalls in resources which affect both workers and users. While management and Cllr Barton tell us that only 17 jobs in the dept are in danger of being 'deleted', trades unionists and users have to witness wide scale damaging cuts in practice.

Trades unionists throughout the dept have gone through the gamut of feelings - disappointment, apathy, despair, cynicism and now anger. The recent jobs freeze has resulted in unions operating a stringent "no-cover" policy, designed to expose the huge gaps in the services that have previously been filled by goodwill. They realise now that there is nothing to lose, not even quality of service, by refusing to cover vacant posts. They are no longer prepared to be apologists for a service that is clearly not meeting the needs of its users.

Jenny Parrot, NUPE Social Services.

The realit

The following list shows the working class by Birmingham

* Day nurseries are turni shortages;
* up to 100 special schoo Centre place;
* the citys adult training ce a mental handicap, are 30 po a service for scores of clien
* fieldwork offices are clo because there are not enough answer phone calls; large n including child abuse cases. city has just 1 social worke in field social work offices
* 5 childrens homes close physically, sexually and ra childrens home walked out a nowhere to place a resident member of staff and the arm
* Children as young as 6 m same childrens homes as 15- records including assault an staffing levels;
* Elderly persons homes are lists and the continued pr charging exorbitant fees and
* the elderly and people wit months for much needed su adaptations. Successful a isolated clients have virtual

—LETTER FROM

Having met with the City T told the real reasons for th services (to build balances million plus), when I was the Labour leadership is pl Social services I was taken will fight against these c Council Chamber'. There is unnecessary. If cuts are to budgets of promotion etc., n need not hurt the under-5's old.

Yet recently they are consid so that the roadrace can priorities wrong??!!

Councill

rts To Fall—

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true extent of the attacks on the ity Council.

g away children due to staff

leavers have no Adult Training

tres, which cater for adults with s down and are unable to provide s who rely on those places:
ing for part or all of the day social workers to see clients and mbers of cases are unallocated, The only child abuse unit in the there are over 100 vacant posts lone;
. Residential workers are being ally abused daily. Staff in one ter mangement claimed there was who had broken the nose of one f another in one noght;
nths old are being placed in the 6 year olds with serious criminal sexual offences without adequate

being closed despite long waiting liferation of private rest homes offering poor quality care;
disabilities have to wait several port services,and also aids and olications for telephones for y become collectors pieces.

A COUNCILLOR.—

easurer some days before and been freezing of vacancies and cuts in for the next years budget of £20 old, early Saturday morning, that nning another £1.6 million cut in back. My immediate reaction was 'I ts and vote against them in the o need for these cuts, they are be made, they better be made in t Education or Social services. We the disabled, mentally ill or the

ring putting aside over £1 million eak even. Haven't they got their

Gurdev Manku.



—PERESTROIKA IN BRUM!—

"...we are commencing our own Persetroika - our own review of our structures and functions to prepare us for the 1990's. This process will be open and honest, and we will consult with all and hide nothing."

Dick Knowles, Press Release, 6 July '88.

So the current onslaught on jobs and services was announced. How is our perestroika manifesting itself? Firstly in the so-called "selective recruitment process" (the job freeze!!) and secondly in what is called a "systematic review of all city council activities and structures".

How are these finely phrased objectives being realised?

-in Social services over 100 social workers posts are vacant, there are plans to close childrens homes, cut the number of places in homes for the elderly. 40 jobs are being permanently deleted.

-in city treasuries a management report recommends a deletion of 133 jobs.

-in libraries there are plans to cut up to 10% of posts, to cut all work with schools and with the housebound, to slash exhibitions and promotional work.

-in education an already overstretched budget is being cut still further.

The workers involved in this "systematic review" are not, however, prepared to see the destruction of jobs and services. NALGO and NUPE members in Social services have voted in favour of industrial action. NALGO members in Libraries have voted to take strike action on **SEPTEMBER 19th** and all NALGO members will be meeting on Sept 12th to discuss industrial action on the 19th.

Perestroika in Birmingham could prove a double-edged sword as it has in the USSR. It might just provoke a real fightback. It is the obligation of all those who wish to save jobs and services to join and assist that fightback in every way they can.

Nick Hay, Secretary Birmingham NALGO.

** BLACK SECTIONS' NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE **

As part of the programme to raise the consciousness of black sisters, women in Labour Party Black Sections will be holding their first ever national conference on Saturday 10th September, 1988 at the Summerfield Centre in Winson Green. As well as addressing the serious issue of racist and sexist oppression common to all black women, the conference will provide an opportunity for Black Sections to mobilise and discuss the major role they have to play in the struggle for black liberation.

With the recent Tory onslaught on basic individual rights, the major debates will focus on the impact of new legislation on women, the poll tax, the new Immigration Bill, the Housing Bill, and the Education Bill. The afternoon session will consist of various workshops looking at issues such as employment, young black women, sexuality, and the older black community.

An international perspective and a discussion on how black women can build solidarity links with women in independence struggles abroad will be provided by a representative from SWAPO who will also highlight the current political situation in Namibia.

This conference will be the first of its kind and is an important step towards the mobilisation of black women and the fight against racist and sexist exploitation. It must be supported. For more details contact : Harkitan - tel : 554 1748 (home) or Maggie - tel : 236 8620 (work)

Harkitan Gill (Ladywood CLP)

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"INSIGHT" — ROGER THE DODGER'S "BEANO"

Want an insight into the way the cuts are affecting the people of Birmingham ? How services can be defended ? How to combat disrimination and inequality ? Then don't rather to read "Birmingham Labour Insight", the right-wing answer to the success of *BIRMINGHAM LABOUR BRIEFING*.

Recently launched to combat the "Bennite" and "Trotskyist" left, it attacks the "well-organised and funded" activities of the left. Well organised ? We'd like to think so, but well-funded ? *BIRMINGHAM LABOUR BRIEFING* just manages to pay its way by selling at cost price ! "Birmingham Labour Insight" is given away free ! Who are its mysterious financial backers ? Or is it just the case that no one would seriously pay good money for such a journal ?

One interesting point is "Insight's" criticism of the incompetence of the Knowles leadership. If they are losing friends like "Insight", then Knowles, Charlton and co. really are in trouble !

However, if stories of manoeuvring and intrigue across Birmingham Labour politics are your staple diet "Insight" is for you.

The journal only seems to have two authors, Roger Murray and Ray Woods. Democratic socialists seem to be rare in Birmingham. Roger Murray, of course, is well known for bringing his Stalinist practices, learnt from 18 years in the Communist Party of Great Britain, into the Labour Party. His disastrous stewardship of Birmingham District Labour Party, and his fixing of meetings in Sparkhill, are well known.

Less well known is Ray Woods from Erdington Labour Party, the author of the infamous document, "The Enemy Within". The document not only brought Thatcherite language into internal Labour Party debates, but also personally denigrated Pam Dean and other figures in the Labour Party. However, a real "Insight" into Ray Woods' politics was indicated by his response to the Miners' Strike. When a proposal was made to have a miner to speak at the Erdington Ward Labour Party, Ray Woods replied saying it was all very complicated "should we have a working or striking miner ?"

BIRMINGHAM LABOUR PARTY

AROUND THE CLPS

PERRY BARR CLPs Annual Conference resolution is on South Africa and expresses support for the African National Congress, calling for support for building international links at all levels between workers in South Africa and other countries. It calls upon the N.E.C. to carry out a campaign to defend COSATU; to organise a national workers boycott of South African goods, and to work for the release of political prisoners. The resolution applauds the setting up of self-defence units by youth and workers in South Africa against the death squads, police attacks, and for the eventual overthrow of the Botha regime.

YARDLEY CLP; BRIEFING'S reporter writes from the "Star Chamber" - Bloody, but unbowed, brave, battling Yardley continues the fight to keep the REDS at bay !! Leadership contests come and go but here there is no time for such matters - after all we must get our priorities right in this bastion outpost of the Birmingham Labour (sic) Party. The re-admission of Yardley branch is to be considered in October - if its members keep their noses clean - bring out the Andrex !! Meanwhile any threat of socialist infection spreading to Sheldon receives novel treatment - send out the notice of branch meetings so late that it cannot be fully circulated, then have to cancel said meeting.

SELLY OAK CLPs Annual Conference delegate is Cllr. Lyn Jones. The hard left candidate got 25% of the vote. Resolutions were passed attacking Kinnock for his equivocation on unilateralism, and Cllr. John Charlton for apologising to Edwina Currie about the H.H.S. protest. Another resolution called for a ban on nuclear fuel being transported through Selly Oak. The CLPs amendment for Annual Conference is on Lesbian and Gay rights.

SPARKBROOK CLP; Don't all laugh, but BIRMINGHAM LABOUR BRIEFING'S mole in Sparkbrook had us in stitches when they told us that Sparkbrook CLPs Annual Conference resolution is on MEMBERSHIP !! The resolution begins : "This Conference recognises the difficulties caused by the dual membership scheme, believing it ... causes administrative problems both locally and nationally." - BRIEFING presumes they mean in the production of membership lists ! We presume by "dual membership" they are not referring to certain of their leading members who are former members of the Communist Party (stood as a candidate in opposition to an official Labour candidate) and Liberal Party. The resolution actually calls for the removal of the dual membership system (i.e. reduced and ordinary rates) and its replacement with a flat rate contribution of £6 per year.

EDGBASTON CLP; 2 wards (Harborne & Quinton) passed resolutions sponsoring the Summerfield anti-cuts meeting on 9th Sept. Edgbaston ward, without seeing the resolution, but in true L.C.C. open democratic fashion, "viewed a public meeting as unhelpful" and mandated its G.C. delegates to vote against the resolution (without them seeing it !). The resolution in question to Edgbaston G.C. opposes cuts. BIRMINGHAM LABOUR BRIEFING concludes therefore that Edgbaston ward is in favour of cuts and shares the views of councillors Charlton, Knowles, and Barton on the issue !

HALL GREEN CLPs Annual Conference resolution calls for reaffirmation of the principle that there should be at least one woman nominee on every parliamentary short-list. It calls for the N.E.C. to carry out the decision of the 1986 Annual Conference on this by bringing forward the appropriate constitutional changes. Clare Short Public meeting 8th Sept., 8.00. pm, Warstock Community Centre.

LADYWOOD CLP; Sandwell ward is running a public campaign against the policy of racial discrimination being practised by Handsworth Horticultural Club. There is a picket of the club on 16th September between 7.00. pm and 9.00. pm. (details from Cllr. Gurdev Manku). A campaign meeting is being held on 20th September at 7.30. pm. at Laurel Road Sports Centre (off Oxhill Road). Sandwell ward also passed a resolution sponsoring the Summerfield anti-cuts meeting. Ladywood CLPs Annual Conference resolution supports the right of black members of the Labour Party to organise in black sections, and calls on the N.E.C. to act upon the recommendations of its working party in favour of black sections.

NORTHFIELD CLPs Annual Conference resolution "calls on the party nationally to join with public sector trade unions, organisations representing the poor and wageless, the voluntary sector, churches, and others, to campaign inside and outside parliament to expose government policies on the Social Security cuts and the Poll Tax for what they are - the callous treatment by the rich of those they think they do not need - and furthermore, to demonstrate this as morally wrong, economically flawed, and only sustainable in the long run by ever-increasing repression and violence." (It occurred to BRIEFING when we were typing this up that given the CLP it comes from this resolution could equally be applied to the right-wing controlled Labour Group in Birmingham - especially the last bit about repression and violence !)

SUTTON COLDFIELD CLPs Annual Conference resolution calls for 'one woman to be included on every parliamentary selection short-list'. A resolution condemning the Labour Group for withdrawing the whip from the "Birmingham 20" has been passed.

Letters

WRITEBACK!

WE WELCOME YOUR LETTERS!
Send to 27a Westminster Rd,B21.

Birmingham Labour Briefing recently came across a copy of the following letter which we feel it is necessary to reprint.

Dear Mick,

CLAUSE 29 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL.

Thank you for your recent letter.

You will know of course that there is no way in which any embargo is placed on any employee of this City Council by reason of their sexuality, that is quite clear in the Conditions of Service and indeed in the statement that we have drawn up for employees of the City Council.

Whether in fact the Clause can have any impact on Council Services in Birmingham I don't know. I suppose if some lunatic goes in to complain about the works of Shakespeare or the works of John Dunne or anyone of that kind we could have a case on our hands. Birmingham is not overburdened with lunatics *and particularly not with lunatics on the Labour side of the Council, or at least I didn't think so until a few weeks ago.*

Yours fraternally

Councillor Dick Knowles.

++ Martineau — A Mothers View ++

The closure of Martineau House has created many problems for the Labour Party in Birmingham. We need also to remember the children and their families because they are the people who have been most affected by the loss of this important educational asset.

My son suffered brain damage at birth. I know from personal experience what a relentless struggle life can be at times when you have a disabled child to care for and educate. The twenty may have broken the rules but they have succeeded in highlighting the need to provide more not less facilities and support for children with special needs.

I believe that the City Council should consult with the parents and others concerned to reach a solution without further delay. They should also refrain from taking punitive action against the councillors who recognised their responsibilities to these children and voted accordingly.

Mary Arnold

...Dear Roy...Thanks for moving the endorsement of my .... nomination at the NEC....You are invited to a celebration. banquet at the Zambesi cafe...Councillor Suleman.....

* IT DEPENDS WHO YOUR FRIENDS ARE ! *

The District Auditor for Birmingham City Council is to investigate the awarding of contracts to a public relations firm. Apparently commissions awarded to Castle Communications, of Solihull, were not properly approved by the commissioning sub-committee. Public relations contracts totalling £40,000 with the Education, Housing, and Recreation and Community Services departments were awarded last year to Castle Communications. They included a five year contract to pay ***Paul Castle (of Castle Communications) £220 a day, plus VAT, for 80 days work a year for the Education department. BRIEFING*** calculates that one contract alone amounts to £20,240 a year, or £101,200 for the 5 years in total. (Martineau House costs £99,000 a year to run!

Castle Communications also have contracts with South Birmingham Health Authority (Chair, ***Cllr. John Charlton***), and Sandwell Health Authority (Unit Manager, ***Cllr. John Charlton***).

While all this money is being paid out for "public relations" ***Councillors Charlton and Knowles*** are cutting the wages of low-paid cleaners and kitchen staff employed by the Education department ! It could be said that the distribution of the Education department budget depends on who your friends are ! Don't preach to us about socialism comrade Knowles.

BRIEFING
LABOUR LISTENS!

* PLAIN BROWN ENVELOPES WANTED *

Who in the Council House gets their *BIRMINGHAM LABOUR BRIEFING* delivered in a plain brown envelope? Yes comrades after our re-launched first edition we received a request from someone in the Council House for a copy to be delivered to them in a plain brown envelope. Similar bulk orders can be obtained from the Editor !

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* EDUCATION DOESN'T COME CHEAP *

BRIEFING'S mole tells us that the bill for trips abroad since 1st December, 1987 for the City Council's representatives on Birmingham Polytechnic's governing body amounts to £90,000. (Martineau House costs £99,000 a year to run!) It is rumoured a bill of £16,000 (excluding the fares !) was incurred by the Education Committee Vice-chair, *Najma Hafeez* (Lab. Fox Hollies), and 2 other representatives from the City Council, for a trip to the British Education Conference in Kuala Lumpur !

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* THE LEFT AND THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM *

PART ONE ; Which comrade on the left in Birmingham rents a city centre office from Birmingham District Labour Party at Bristol Street for less than £17 a week ? Answers on a postcard please to the convenor of the Birmingham Summerfield Group.

PART TWO ; A member of the *BRIEFING* Editorial Board was surprised to hear that a new pamphlet had appeared in the famous carrier bag of one of *BRIEFING'S* leading paper sellers. Is the pamphlet yet another hard-left attack on capitalism, which the intrepid paper seller would be selling all round Birmingham ? Not exactly. It turned out to be the Inland Revenue guide to Capital Gains Tax !

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* NASTY UNIONS AND INFLATED WAGE RISES *

BRIEFING invites you to fill in the name in this recent article in the Birmingham Post, "..... blamed the social services unions for the cuts, saying they were a product of inflated wage increases." Was it Margaret Thatcher, or Nigel Lawson perhaps ? Very close comrades ! In fact, the person "defending" the workers of Birmingham was *Councillor Ken Barton* (Lab. Stockland Green), the Chair of Social Services !. Well done Ken, with people like you on our side who needs Tories !

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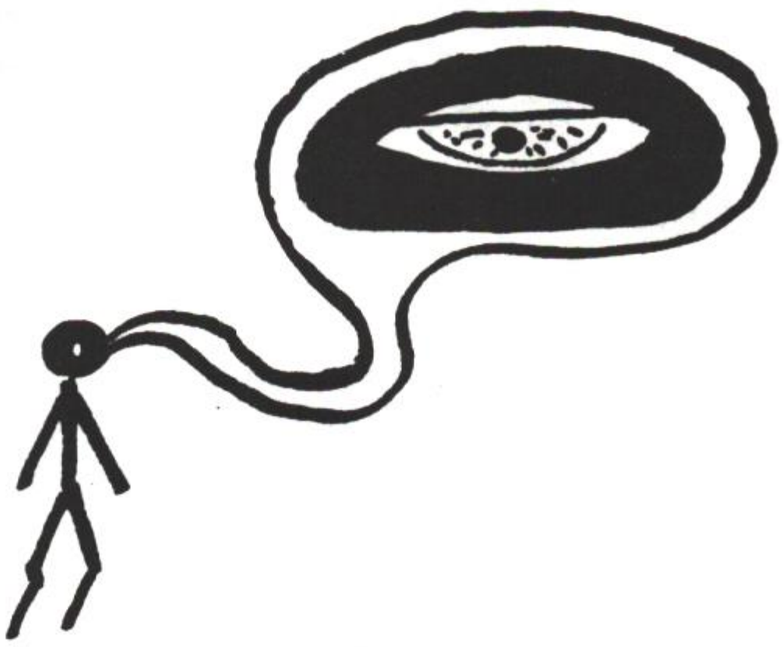
* THE "EMOTIVE" WORKING-CLASS ? *

A quote from a soft-left comrade opposed to *BIRMINGHAM LABOUR BRIEFING'S* resolution to the Summerfield Group, calling for a public meeting on the issue of job losses and cuts, linked to the "Birmingham 20" - "Anyone could have got a resolution through by that margin if they use emotive language like 'the working-class'". The *BRIEFING* resolution was carried by 30 votes to 1 (with 3 abstentions) !

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* IF YOU WON'T LET ME WIN, I'M TAKING MY BALL HOME ! *

At the District Party AGM part 2, when the right was defeated over suspension of standing orders, *Cllr. John Charlton* announced that the Council Chamber was only booked until 9.30. Who is responsible for Council House bookings ? - Cllr. Charlton. At 9.35 the right marched out, but the meeting stayed quorate. At the District Party AGM part 3, when *Roger Murray* found the meeting was just quorate he walked out with 2 cronies, making the meeting inquorate and unable to proceed. Well done, Roger. *BRIEFING* presumes this is what the right mean by democratic socialism !



* TEA & POLICY, BUT NO WOMEN ! *

What were the new officers of District Party having a heated discussion about around the table in the Museum and Art Gallery tea-room on the Saturday afternoon on the District Party AGM, part 3 ? *BRIEFING'S* mole moved in closer, grasping tea and a bun and looking disinterested. Did our mole hear correctly ? The District Party Trade Union Liaison Officer and the Assistant Secretary (Policy) were arguing against the inclusion of the women's, equal opportunities, ethnic minorities, and youth groups on the list of suggested re-formed District Party policy groups to be put to the E.C. ! The new District Party officers won the day though and the groups were included.

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* WHY WAIT FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE *

Birmingham Trade Unionists for Labour (TUFL) have booked *Larry Whitty* for an evening meeting at the end of October or early November on the new Labour Party membership scheme, with reduced rates for trade unionists joining the party. Nice to see Birmingham TUFL and Larry don't bother to wait for the democratic process and see if the Labour Party Annual Conference approves the proposed membership changes at Blackpool in early October !

DEFY SECTION 28

Lesbians and gay men in Birmingham, together with straight supporters, continue to fight for their rights. Birmingham Stop the Clause campaign held a successful public meeting in Josiah Mason Hall (owned by B'ham Council) on 22nd July. About 100 people heard speeches from Clare Short MP, Paul Patrick of the Stop the Clause Education Group, and Mark Bestell from the B'ham group. Apologies were received from about half of the "20", and Cllrs. Carole McKeown and Gurdev Manku came to express their support.

The next major event planned will be a weekend school/festival on 26th/27th November. This will be a major step in educating ourselves and others about Lesbian and Gay rights, and in thinking about the next steps in our campaign. Workshops at the day school will explore a variety of important and interesting themes - sexuality, the law, the labour movement and the lesbian and gay struggle, racism, disability, to name but a few. Also at the weekend school we will be welcoming comrades from the European Benefit Tour, hearing from them about the situation in their countries and discussing with them international links in the struggle for Lesbian and Gay rights. These comrades will be starting a tour of Europe on 14th October in support of British lesbians and gay men. It will finish in London, with a conference on 3rd December. On the Saturday evening, we will be holding a gig. It will be possible to attend the gig, without attending the day school, but we hope that many comrades will do both.

Although we are doing a lot, the Stop the Clause campaign has not been without its problems. These have been in large part due to the activities of SWP comrades. Though some of them have worked hard in support of the campaign, it is clear to those of us who have worked with the SWP before, that they have now decided that it is time to go on to their next thing. In time-honoured fashion, going back as far as the Anti-Nazi League, they do not seem to be able to pull out of a campaign without first indulging in wrecking tactics. One week they do not attend at all. The next they pack the meeting to overturn decisions made the previous week.

The particular issue on which they did this successfully was that of self-organisation for lesbians and gay men. A previous meeting had decided that one Stop the Clause meeting in four should be open to lesbians and gay men only, and that decisions taken by them, while not binding of the campaign as a whole, should be taken very seriously. Black comrades and women have discovered the need for self-organisation of oppressed groups and lesbians and gay men have this need too. Any straights who say they support us, but do not allow us space to explore and discuss our own oppression need to think very seriously about their own motives. And for comrades to say, as the SWP did, "We don't mind if you meet separately, but not in StC time" is simply adding to our oppression.

Debbie Epstein (Selly Oak CLP)

** LABOUR CAMPAIGN FOR
LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS **

The Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights is holding its Members' General Meeting in Brum on October15/16th. Full membership is open to all lesbians and gay men in the Labour Movement, with supporting membership open to others. TU and Labour Party branches can affiliate, and CLP secretaries have been written to asking that CLP's, branches and women's sections do so. Supporting members receive *Lesbian and Gay Socialist* and our mailings and can come to meetings of LCLGR as an observer. *Briefing* readers who want to join LCLGR should contact Kate on 021-449-4428

BIRMINGHAM LABOUR BRIEFING

Our meetings are held on the LAST TUESDAY of every month.

All National
Labour Briefing Supporters.

Phone John (422 1366) for meeting details.

All contributions to;
25,Worlds End Ave,B32.