40p

BIRMINGHAM LABOUR

BRIEFING

INCORPORATING NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No. 23 July 1986

HYATT HOTEL HANDOUT HORROR

Hotel bid hinging on £9m grant

By ROY SMITH

Birmingham's hopes of securing its first five-star luxury international hotel hinge on persuading the Government to approve a £9 million grant.

City councillors have agreed to seek Britain's biggest urban development grant so far for the £31 million, 340-bedroom hotel proposed for the Hyatt International Corporation in Broad Street as the flagship of the company's operations in Europe and the UK.

They have been told of a £9 million gap in financing the project, planned as a major complementary element to the city's £106m international convention centre to be built on the opposite side of Broad Street.

It has been confirmed that the hotel project is likely to be a dead duck unless that gap could be bridged by an urban development grant.

500 permanent jobs

Birmingham has already done well from urban development grants, introduced some years ago to put a pump-priming injection of public money into private development schemes in inner city areas that would otherwise be uneconomic and would not get off the ground.

It has secured two of the biggest grants so far, £4.68 million for the hotel and offices being built at



Coun Albert Bore . . . hopes for £9m grant.

Unbelievably, yet another storm seems set to break over the City Council's spending plans. 'Briefing' can exclusively reveal that the City's Labour leaders are planning to give a £2,250,000 cash handout to the international luxury hotel that the Hyatt Company want to build next to the controversial Convention Centre in Broad Street.

Undaunted by the anger generated within the party by the decision to put millions of pounds into the Convention Centre, in defiance of the party's policy to oppose it, Dick Knowles and Ecosnomic Development Chair Albert Bore have chosen to carry on down the same road. This time, however, they have tried to cover their tracks. Until the news was leaked to 'Briefing' by a sympathetic council employee no councillors appear to have been informed of the 'handout' plans. There has been no discussion of it in the Labour Group of Councillors, let alone the District party.

The council's gift is towards the £31 million that Hyatt intend to spend on building their 5 star luxury executive hotel. In contrast to the neighbouring Convention Centre, which the Council leadership still claim 'ordinary Brummies' will be able to visit and make use of the recreation and leisure facilities, the Hyatt Hotel will be an unashamed and exclusive playground for the wealthiest of the western world's business executives. News of the decision to 'levy' the City's ratepayers by giving over two million pounds to the

Continued on page 2...

Inside.....
Anti-Apartheid Solidarity...
Summerfield Caucus...Fascist
attacks...Strip Searches...
...Prisons...Women's
...Centres...and
...here...

...continued from page 1.

Hyatt group was neatly disguised ina press release from Albert Bore's Economic Development Committee. They made the claim that the contribution to the hotel was from the Tory · government's coffers, in the form of an 'Urban Development Grant amounting to £9 million. What they did not reveal - and until now has been kept secret even from Labour Councillors - is that a quarter of the Urban Development Grant actually comes from the City ratepayer and not from central government at all.

The 'Urban Development Grant' (UDG) system is a relatively new form of 'assistance' to the inner city, dreamed up by the Tory government who were uneasy at the success of the Inner City Partnership (ICP) scheme, first devised by Peter Shore MP when he was Environment Minister in the last Calaghan government. Unlike Labour's ICP scheme, the UDG system involves giving cash grants to private firms who invest or build in the inner city. The grant system aims to prop up the private sector land economy by giving grant aid towards private initiatives that it is claimed would not otherwise be profitable. To take an example - supposing it costs £1 million to build a new factory. The building company and its property investors will want an extra 20% (£200,000) as a standard developer's profit. (20% is the usual investment profit margin.) Because of the decline in the inner city economy, it may only be possible to sell the factory to a manufacturer for £1 million - exactly what it cost to build but not allowing the building and property development company a profit. In these circumstances the developer would not go ahead because no profit would be made. But, the Tories' UDG grant system allows a cash handout to be given to the developer to top up the money to a lvel sufficient for what is termed a 'reasonable profit' on the investment.

This is exactly what is intended in the case of the Hyatt Hotel. Hyatt claim that the hotel, as it stands, would not make a profit and that they would not build it unless they got a grant they could use to make the development profitable. The UDG grant money, including £2,250,000 from the city rates is intended as the amount of handout necessary to make the profit sufficiently large to entice Hyatt's into going ahead with the venture.

'Briefibg' would like to know: how can Labour councillors be so easily deceived by their own leadership? How can we sit back and allow our hard pressed city coffers to be syphoned off purely to create profit for international capitalist gangsters like Hyatt? How is it that none of this has ever been discussed - let alone approved - by the District Party who are supposed to create policy?

These scandals have to stop. And party members have to fight to stop them!

BRIEFING

ANTI-APARTHEID ACTION BY TEACHERS

In recent weeks, supporters of 'Briefing in the National Union of Teachers (NUT) have been able to initiate various solidarity actions with teachers in Birmingham.

The events organised were the result of decisions of the NUT executive and general meeting to affiliate to the local anti-apartheid movement, the Trades Council's Black South Africa Solidarity Committee and sending a delegate to the Anti-Apartheid Trade Union Conference. The Trades Council's solidarity bulletin, 'South Africa Frontline', is also cir5culated at general meetings and to schools.

On 11 June, the NUT Education Committee held a well attended meeting with a seventeen year old school student on the schools' struggle in South Africa. An English-born teacher who had taught in the Bantustans also contributed her experience.

In a very impressive speech, the school student, a member of the Students of Young Azania Youth Organisation of the Cape Action League, told how many schools had been taken over by students. With the help of progressive teachers, the curriculum had been reorganised along revolutionary lines. Students studied the French and Russian revolutions and their relevance to the situation in South Africa today. Pop songs, after word changes, became songs of protest.

Repression was often severe. Not only were students being beaten and whipped by the police but also some teachers. The student's own mother was forced to teach a classroom of empty desks at gunpoint.

Several teachers were encouraged to celebrate the anniversary of the Soweto uprising as a result of the meeting. £25 was collected for the students of young Azania.

The Socialist Teachers Alliance is holding another meeting (see advertisement) and a Black teacher will be touring local schools on 9/10 July. He will be appealing for funds for imprisoned members of the Western Cape Teachers Union and explaining the repression and struggle in South African schools.

SOCIALIST TEACHERS ALLIANCE

Public Meeting
Education and Revolution in South Africa

Speaker: Black South African School Teacher

Wednesday 9 July, 8.00 p.m.
Martineau Teachers Centre
Bristol Road.

Unions against apartheid

Several hundred leaders of the independent trade unions in South Africa have been detained. The statements of the trade union federation COSATU cannot be published under the Emergency provisions. ANC leader, Oliver Tambo, has called for trade unions in Britain to enforce 'sanctions' themselves.



Your union might take all or any of these actions:
* not handling any goods from or destined for South Africa.
* ensuring your company or department does not place any orders with firms with South African connections.
* if your firm has South African connections, shop stewards can press management for action to secure the release of trade unionists and their freedom of movement.
* build support for trade unionists who are taking action and pledge to defend those who may be in the front line of the boycott.

The Trades Council can help you to do this. They can provide speakers, videos, information, useful addresses and details of what has been done elsewhere.

Contact the Black South Africa Solidarity Committee of Birmingham Trades Council at:
7 Frederick Street, Hockley, B1 3HE, telephone 021 236 1240;
or telephone:
Pat Tough: 021 708 0823 Or 021 706 4732
Sue Thomas:021 554 3188
Andy Chaffer (also for the Anti Apartheid Movement: 021 471 4312.



SUMMERFIELD CAUCUS - SOFT PEDALLING?

To most party members, the 'Summerfield Caucus' is a complete mystery. Named after its initial meeting place at Summerfield Community Centre, it seems to spend much of its time discussing what it is and who should be in it. Now at least a statement of aims exists which many will have seen for the first time in the last issue of Birmingham Labour Briefing. But how much does it tell us about the group or its likely future?

The background to Summerfield is clear. It began with a group of Black councillors and Black candidates meeting to discuss their future involvement in the Labour Group. Their aim was to push for serious resources for areas of immediate concern to them, and for some real power in a future labour administration. To achieve these objectives, they decided they should seek the support of other group members. They therefore approached individual councillors on the left of the Labour Group whom they considered reliable and committed to change. This brought together the nucleus of the Summerfield Caucus, consisting of Councillors Amir Khan, Murphy, Afzal, Benjamin, Stacey, Livingstone and Stewart, with prospective councillors Manku, Spence, Bridle, G. Khan, Burnett, E. Brooks and Wells. They were soon joined by Andy Foster, a surprising recruit to many, but now apparently amongst its most committed members.

From the outset then, Summerfield Caucus saw itself as part Black Vaucus and part labour left. But as a labour left it had three obvious shortcomings. Firstly, it had no programme of action to base itself on, other than a vague determination to challenge the right wing within the Labour group. Secondly, without such a programme, it had no objective criteria for deciding who should be a member and who should not. Thirdly it consisted entirely of councillors or prospective councillors which meant it tended to see the focus of change as within the Labour Group. Nevertheless, the significance of the Summerfield Caucus was obvious: for the first time a group of councillors was organising to bring about a change in the next Labour administration and there was a determination to develop a programme and broaden the thing out.

But while these key questions became the substance of protracted negotiations, the Summerfield Caucus was faced with its first hurdle: the Labour Group AG,. Their objectives were obviously limited: to replace Cllr Sardul Marwa as Chair of the Race Relations and Equal Opportunities Committee, to make a serious challenge for Deputy Leader and Secretary of the Labour group and to push for some representation among Group Officers. To achieve any of these things it was obviously necessary to win support beyond the Summerfield Caucus itself. They therefore agreed to meet with Cllr Chris Kirk and others to *discuss the possibility of a joint* slate. Talks with Kirk brought the Summerfield Caucus into a temporary alliance with an entirely different section of the party based on the remnants of the last wave of 'left' councillors who set out to change the face of Labour politics in the city after the 1984 elections. Those who didn't abandon this goal soon after their election as Committee Chairs found themselves reduced to loyal oppositionists whose fading left credentials were used to stifle change. Kirk's infamous 'it's time to admit defeat' speech at this year's district Policy Conference is a case in point. Delivered while pushing for no vote on the manifesto commitment to the International Convention Centre, it succeeded in pulling in just enough like-minded delegates to ensure that the District Party's longstanding opposition to the project was never translated into a final rebuff for the Labour group.

THis is not to say that an electoral bloc between the Summerfield Caucus and Chris Kirk et al should never have been considered. But a temporary electoral block is one thing and a strategic alliance another. By what possible criteria does a man who scuttled the party's efforts at enforcing its view on the future of a project costing £106 million warrant inclusion in a caucus whose central stated objective is to democratise the Labour Group and to vest real decision making power in the hands of the District Labour Party? True miraculous conversions have happened, but what has the Summerfield Caucus's debate about programme actually revealed?

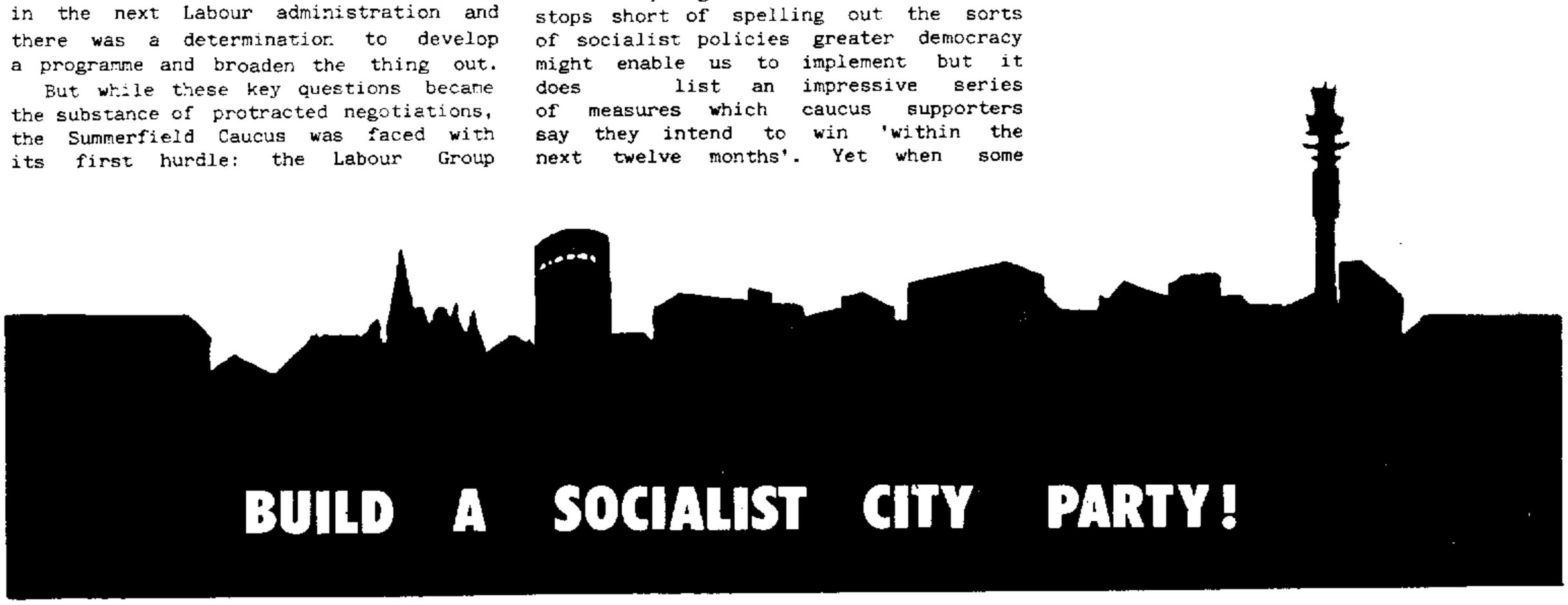
The Summerfield Caucus's programme or the 'pledge' as it became known, stops short of spelling out the sorts of socialist policies greater democracy might enable us to implement but it does list an impressive series of measures which caucus supporters say they intend to win 'within the next twelve months'. Yet when some members of the Summerfield Caucus argued that every supporter should sign this programme as a condition of membership, a new debate ensued. Suddenly, some of the most recent converts to the cause of democracy decided things were going just a little too far. Why this reluctance to append their names to a statement which says the party shoul 'have the final say in determining the electoral policy and programme'?

THere is one possible answer, of course, which is that their support for these measures is a fake. After all, it is one thing to nominally accept such a programme as a means of gaining admission to and influencing the Summerfield Caucus, and another to be tied to it in any way. But the scope for such duplicity is in the programme itself. While it spells out what it wants to achieve, it says nothing about how, which brings us to the issue of broader involvement.

The Summerfield Caucus's targets have no hope of being won unless the caucus takes the lead in a campaign involving supporters at every level of the party in achieving them. There is unfortunately no sign that this is understood within the caucus itself. Indeed after exhaustive discussions about 'broadening itself out' the Summerfield Caucus has settled on admitting only those delegates to Labour Group meetings who are considered acceptable to the majority of its present members. This decision was, of course, coupled with establishing a working party to look at the issue of party involvement more closely. But what does the present decision actually represent?

Talking to members of the caucus it seems that great concern is being expressed about the thing becominh too big. No doubt in campaigning to achieve 'as many as possible' of its stated targets 'within the next twelve months' attracting too much support is the first problem to confront. Then again, perhaps the debate over size is really more to do with control.

Continued on page 4...



...continued from page 3.

Certainly, the decision not to discuss with either Birmingham Labour Briefing or the Labour Co-ordinating Committee suugests that for at least some section of the caucus the involvement of already established political currents is cause for concern. Why then settle on delegates to the Labour Group, and not all of them at that? Can this be seen as a move towards broadening the caucus out?

Politically the answer has to be no. To begin with, it consolidates an approach which concentrates exclusively on the caucus's intervention into Labout Group meetings. Just how such interventions are expected to achieve the caucus's objectives no-one has yet explained. And in reality, of course, they won't. To argue otherwise is just a local version of parliamentary cretinism which most left Labour MPs transcended long ago. Secondly, the decision to admit only some Labour Group delegates means that the process of recruitment is in fact a means of exercising political control over the compositioin of the caucus. You now have the absurd situation where councillors who would rally little or no support from left activists in the wards and constituencies are sitting in judgement on whether or not such activists have a place in the Summerfield Caucus.

The net effect of these steps together, then, is to take the caucus further away from the sort of left that Birmingham badly needs. But what can be done? It is time that the founding members of the Summerfield Caucus explained just what it is they are trying to achieve. As impressive as a programme may be, at the end of the day its authors will be judged by what they have actually done to implement it. Alongside its discussions about who should be in its ranks, the Summerfield Caucus needs to begin to take initiatives to realise some of its demands. Then, and only, then, will we know just who of its present members is prepared to fight for change as well as talking about it. For the moment, however, the Summerfield Caucus seems content to soft pedal at a pace ideally suited to some of its recent recruits. But sometimes progress can be so slow that it is difficult to establish whether there is any movement at all. In the case of the Suymmerfield Caucus there is now a serious danger that it will lose its original direction and momentum if some of its newer members have their way. That would be a serious loss to the fight to construct a real Labour left in Birmingham and could give a new breath of life to a discredited and fake alternative.

Order Witch Hunt News
Make cheques payable to: "Witch Hunt News"
20p per copy (includes postage)
£1 for 10 copies (includes postage)
Send orders to: WitchHunt News, c/o 36 Melbourne Road, London E17.

LETTER

District Party AGM revisited

Dear Editor,

I read with some interest Rob Pocock's analysis of the District Party AGM which appeared in the June issue of Birmingham Labour Briefing and feel compelled to comment on at least two of his conclusions.

Firstly, Rob writes that the 'general pattern of voting reveals the almost total eclipse of the soft-centre Kinnockite left.' This is simply not borne out by the facts. In the contest for chair it is, of course, true that Karen McCarthy was pushed into third place but it doesn't follow from this that the vote she got represented the total support that the 'soft left' can muster anymore than the vote for Malcolm Speake represents that of the 'solid left'.

By Rob's own account, votes from Perry Barr and Ladywood went to Fred Chapman, a point I will return to below. But if this was the case, surely some of these votes could have been considered supporters of the 'solid left'. If they chose to vote for Fred Chapman isn't it reasonable to assume that 'soft left' delegates might have done likewise?

Such a conclusion is supported by the outcome of the election for vice-chair which Rob doesn't mention at all in his page long article. Here Karen McCarthy picked up 84 votes, 65 % of the positive votes cast. Perhaps the situation would be clearer if 'Briefing' had had the foresight to encourage Malcolm Speake to have stood here as well. However, as things stand, the lections merely confirmed the status quo. The right wing of the Labour Group are happy to run things with a loyal opposition so long as it knows its place.

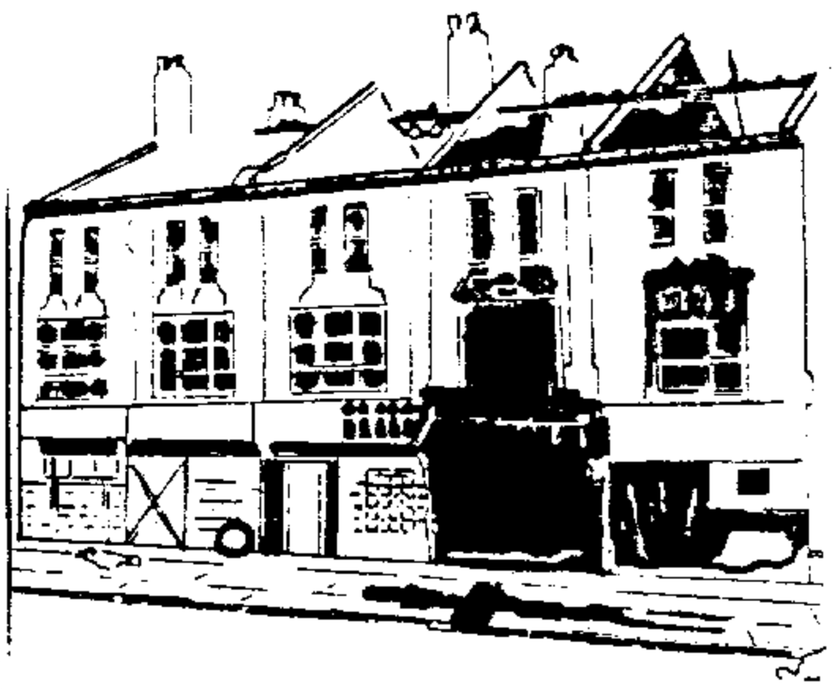
As for Rob's later assertion on the election for Chair, a much more worrying point emerges. Rob writes 'Fred Chapman, the long standing incumbent won again with 74 votes, picking up some unlikely support from Perry Barr and Ladywood delegates presumably repaying debts they felt they owed from other events earlier in the year.' Firstly, I am not aware of any Ladywood delegate having voted for Fred Chapman. But even accepting that Rob is right, to put it on the same level as the support given to him by Perry Barr is to obscure the essential fact. Perry Barr nominated Fred Chapman. Ladywood nominated Malcolm Speake. Given that Fred Chapman received 74 votes compared to the 56 received by the other two, this is not an irrelevant point. Ten votes cast for one of the other candidates would have necessitated a second ballot. It seems reasonable to assume that if the Perry Barr delegation backed Fred Chapman then it was them that secured his first round victory.

Secondly, I know of no debt Ladywood owes Fred Chapman whereas in the case of Perry Barr it would seem that Rob is alluding to the dispute over the Handsworth Ward selection for the District Council elections. Perhaps, given the alleged involvement of James Hunte in this affair and his historical associations with Soho Ward, Rob considers that Ladywood owed for this too. But since the Ladywood G.M.C. nominated Malcolm Speake there is no evidence that its delegates took this view. Certainly, I know that many Ladywood delegates would have nothing to do with the 'you scratch our backs and we'll scratch yours' approach Rob's statement not only infers but apparently sanctions.

Yours sincerely,
Mick Archer.

NEXT MONTH...

To be reviewed in next month's 'Briefing': Villa Road Lozells Road Action Plan, the council response to last September's uprisings. Meanwhile, comrades will be pleased to know that at least one of Julius Silverman's recommendations has been acted upon. The Thornhill Road Police Station has started its proposed facelift with new windows throughout - installed by a white workforce of course. Unemployment and social deprivation remain at the same high levels as before.



Armagh Delegation - Women's solidarity against strip searching

Every year a delegation of women goes to Ireland from Britain for International Women's Day. Below 'Briefing' features an edited version of the report made by Dawn de Kock, delegate from Birmingham Polytechnic Labour Committee on Ireland.



Back in March, over 100 women travelled to Belfast to protest against strip searching. The delegation took part in the annual picket of Armagh jail and then marched along the Falls Road.

On Saturday, the day after our arrival there were educational workshops. The most popular workshop appeared to be the one on strip searching. The speaker for the Prisoner of War (POW) Department outlined conditions in the prisons in the north and in Portlaoise. She compared figures for strip searching in all prisons, showing that the total was disproportionately higher in Armagh than in men's prisons. Men are strip searched every six months on average, whereas in Armagh about 45 strip searches are carried out each month on 20 - 25 women.

Other repressive tactics were noted. For example in McGilligan, where prisoners serve the final stages of their sentences attempts are made to break down the Republican prisoners' social structure to prevent them becoming involved in further political activity after their release.

The brutal use of the PTA was revealed in an incident reported by two women who planned a holiday in Scotland for a party of children. They arrived at Stramraer with the children at 7.30 pm. They were questioned under the PTA until 11 pm, stripped and thrown into a cell. One of the women who was pregnant was told she might suffer a miscarriage if she was further mistreated. This plea was ignored. The NCCL is currently investigating the case.

The focus then returned to Armagh for the talk on strip searchimng which began in November 1982 after two young offenders were caught in possession of the keys to the courthouse door. Reports began to filter in that remand prisoners were being strip searched before and after court appearances. THose resisting were forcibly searched: Catherine Moore was pinned down by 14 warders.

The Northern Ireland Office continues to claim that strip searching is a necessary security measure. This is untrue:

* women are searched before and after court appearances even though they don't leave a top-security van during this period and have an escort and RUC armed guard.
* strip searches often aren't carried out at visiting times when the security risk is greatest.
* some women are strip searched on their release.
* strip searching is not a thorough method of searching and does not involve a body search.

Age has no bearing on who is strip searched - neither young girls nor old women (including one 72 year old who could hardly walk) have been spared this ordeal. Physical condition or illness is not a mitigating factor - menstruating and pregnant women are regularly strip searched and denied sanitary protection. One woman with a history of gynaecological problems which required surgery was strip searched on arrival back at the prison, one hour after the anaesthetic had worn off.

But the main purpose of the searches is humiliation. They take place in a cubicle in the reception area with a curtain that only reaches the waist and often facing a window. Derogatory comments are often made. The woman in then made to crawl over the floor to pick up her scattered clothes. Most of these searches are carried out on remand prisoners, supposedly innocent until proven guilty. Women who are acquitted have often endured up to 100 strip searches while on remand.

In the afternoon we went for the last picket of Armagh jail. The women are now in Maghaberry. Outside the prison, the rally was chaired by Maura McCrory. Ann Marie Quinn, an ex prisoner, gave a detailed description of the searches and spoke of the emothional effects of such treatment. Other speakers were Dodie McGuinness and Noleen Anderson, sister of Martina Anderson. She brought solidarity greetings from Martina and Ella O'Dwyer in Brixton Prison. Christine Perks spoke on behalf of the delegation and, finally, Jim McAllister, Sinnfein elected councillor for South Armagh condemned the degrading portrayal of women in society and the belief that women have achieved 'liberation' because they have won the 'right' to appear on page three.

On the Sunday, the delegation assembled at Beechmount Leisure Centre to march to Andersontown. Ann Marie Quinn spoke again and Gerry Adams, in addition to condemning strip searching, underlined the responsibilities of republican men in sharing in child care which allows women to become more active.

Finally, there was a meeting at the Falls Road Women's Centre, allowing women to share their experiences. One particularly encouraging aspect of the meeting was the support by women from the mining communities. It was through the miners' strike that these women came together in solidarity and have become a powerful element in women's struggles everywhere.



Gerry Adams - underlined the responsibilities of Republican men.

REVIEW

AEKTA PROJECT ਏਕਤਾ ਪ੍ਰੋਜੈਕਟ ایکتا



BAD BOSSES LET OFF THE HOOK:

HOW WEST MIDLANDS CLOTHING WORKERS HAVE BEEN LET DOWN BY THE WAGES INSPECTORATE.

Price £1-50

The Aekta Project, or Clothing Industry Action Research Project was set up in January 1985. Its job is to investigate and research developments in the West Midlands 'new' clothing industry and to campaign to improve the wages and working conditions of the clothing workers. This pamphlet, prepared by Raghib Ahsan, reports the work of the project so far and outlines some of the typical cases that have been dealt with.

The clothing industry in the region has developed since 1977 against a backdrop of growing unemployment and a sharp decline in prosperity. Now the industry employs 20 - 30,000 factory workers in the region along with many homeworkers. It is now a bigger employer in the area than the motor manufacturing industry. But the mainly Asian workforce has a majority of women workers who are new to the labour market, unfamiliar with traditional labour practices and open to exploitation. Few are in unions.

The report makes it clear that the Wages Inspectorate, who are supposed to ensure the legal wages and conditions laid down by the Wages Council, have been severely deficient. They have not ensured workers have received their minimum entitlements and have allowed employers to flout the law.

This already poor situation is further threatened by the Wages Bill currently before Parliament. No longer will the Wages Council be able to set a minimum amount of holidays, nor will it cover workers under 21. In April the Government announced it was going to reduce the number of Wages Inspectors by 40%, leaving just 71 inspectors to cover the whole country.

All this means a particularly bad deal for Black workers, for most of the country's one million Black workers are in industries covered by the Wages Council. The operation of the Wages Inspectorate, as the pamphlet shows, is another instance of the phenomenon whereby, whatever the intentions may be, supposedly equal treatment of workers does not produce an equal or just result.

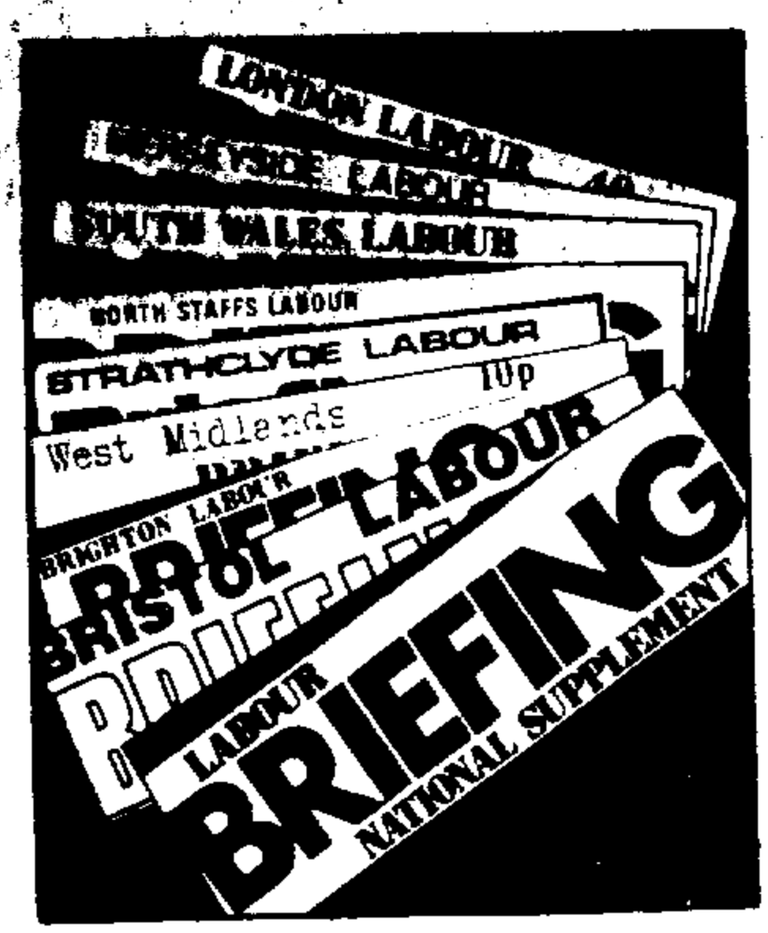
The pamphlet concludes with a series of suggestions for change at both government level and at the level of the Wages Inspectorate.

The pamphlet costs £1.50. For more information contact:
Aekta Project, 346 Soho Road, Birmingham B21 9SE, or telephone 021 554 8747

BRIEFING

Outraged? Critical? Something interesting going on in your constituency, women's section, Black section, LPYS or union? Write and tell 'Briefing' about it. Help us make it a better magazine.

Send all articles and letters for 'Birmingham Labour Briefing' to:
'Birmingham Labour Briefing,
49 Thornhill Road,
Birmingham 621
Or telephone: (021) 551 9174.



'Briefing' meets regularly on the second Monday of each month. Phone for details of venue etc.

August 'Briefing' will be out on Friday 1 August.

Deadline for articles and adverts etc. is Friday 25 July. When you send your article please enclose any pictures or illustrations you think may be useful.

FASCIST ATTACKS

In March this year, Birmingham Labour Briefing carried a short report on the increase in fascist attacks on socialist bookshops in Birmingham. Since then, further attacks have taken place and the Daily News has carried an article reporting on them. For this issue, 'Briefing' spoke to Bob Smith from 'Birmingham's Other Bookshop about the present situation:

"Since Christmas of last year, there have been a whole series of attacks on the outside of our premises which have forced us to turn it into a bit of a fortress. Entry has also been forced on three occasions when shelves have been overturned and stock damaged.

Key Books and the Star Club above it have also been attacked. They and Friends of the Earth were recently broken into and cash was stolen from both premises.

Chief Inspector Birch of Digbeth Police Station was quoted in the Daily News as saying he thought these were 'isolated acts of vandalism' but that he 'does not rule out a political motive'. Yet fascist graffiti is regularly scrawled on these premises and in the break-ins at Key Books and Friends of the Earth fascist symbols and slogans were daubed on the walls. I have personally received death threats from the National Front through the post and by phone. Maybe the police will take this business more seriously when someone is murdered or our premises are burned down. It is the same response that the Black community has gotten for years. Fascist and racist attacks are presented as simple acts of 'vandalism'.

It is obviously important that socialists in Birmingham respond to these attacks. I strongly suggest to people who want to get involved in anti-fascist activity to get in touch with the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism at the Trade Union Resource Centre, 7 Frederick Street, Hockley, Birmingham B31 3HE."

More information on the activity of fascist organisations can be found in 'Searchlight', a monthly anti-fascist magazine.

Women's Action Committee and trade union women

Labour Women's Action Committee has a thriving West Midlands regional organisation with about 65 members.

On Saturday 7 June, the West Midlands Women's Action Committee held a meeting to discuss women in the trade unions. Two active women trade unionists (from NUPE and TASS) came to talk about women's organisation in their unions and the struggles they have experienced in seeking to promote women's issues.

Certainly it was made very clear to WAC women present that we need to understand the difficulties trade union women have to face in combating their male-oriented buraucratic structures.

There was a lengthy discussion about the division which emerged at Labour Party Women's Conference this year. The majority of the trade union delegations at the conference refused to participate in the approved shadow elections for the five women's seats on the party's National Executive Committee. When the NUPE resolution, which called for a process of consultation about women's representation and was thus a step backward from previous demands passed by Women's Conference, was defeated, the gap widened between the trade union women and Labour Party feminists.

WAC is campaigning for specific constitutional demands for women in the Labour Party, but these demands cannot be seen in isolation. Certainly in West Midlands WAC we see the need to meet women in trade unions as an important part of our work. This meeting was, hopefully, the first of many such meetings.

The next WAC meeting will discuss the block vote for women at the National Women's Conference. It is on 12 July, 10 am to 12.30 pm, at 50 Clarence Road Moseley, Birmingham B 13.

For further information, contact Jill Ambler on 449 2528 or Teresa Davies on 449 5875.



AT WALWORTH ROAD...



WITCH HUNT IN WEST BROMWICH

The Chair and Secretary of West Bromwich West LPYS have been suspended. All the signs are that the right wing is intent on going for their expulsions. George Law (a well-known right winger) claimed they had admitted to being 'members' of 'Militant'. Paul and Ian, the two members in question, were asked to leave the General Committee meeting and the local party executiver are making enquiries.

These days, anyone in Sandwell who doesn't slavishly follow the hard right's narrow dogma runs the risk of being a 'Militant member'. The3y are likely to find themselves facing disciplinary charges in the establishment's drive to 'sanitise' the party in the wake of Kinnock's Conference call.

C'llr B.R.Taylor (Sandwell)

PICKET SHELL

(Organised by Youth Against Apartheid.)

12 hour picket of the Shell garage on the Moseley Road, Sparkbrook (opposite Runcorn Road).

Wednesday 30 July from 7 am to 7 pm.

Shell Oil is one of the largest investors in Apartheid. Its presence in South Africa directly aids the Botha government and the white racist regime. Demand that Shell withdraw now from South Africa and Namibia !

RE-INSTATE KEVIN SCALLY AND AMIR KHAN

The campaign to re-instate Kevin Scally and Amir Khan continues. It holds meetings every Tuesday at 7.30 pm at the Unemployed Centre on Stratford Road. All Labour Party members are welcome to attend either as individuals or as representatives from affiliated bodies. For more information about the campaign, contact Bernie Wilde on 236 8323 (daytime) or Amir or Gina Khan on 449 8350 (evening)

Meanwhile a model resolution for conference calling for the re-instatement of Amir and Kevin has been circulated to constituency parties throughout the country. Ladywood CLP passed the model resolution as its resolution for national conference. Selly Oak CLP amended their resolution with other resolutions on the witch hunt. The next task is for other CLPs to send in amendments to these resolutions. The closing date for amendments for resolutions for party conference is 15 August.

The resolution, proposed by ASTMS Birmingham District Branch reads:

' Conference believes that the party must remain a broad coalition of various shades of opinion and that tolerance should be extended to those who hold minority views.

Conference welcomes this tradition of tolerance, which extends back to the election of Harold Wilson as leader in 1963.

Conference notes:

1. that while the majority of the party disapproved of James Callaghan's televised denunciation of the party's nuclear defence policies prior to the 1983 general election, he was not subject to disciplinary action;
2. that a large number of Labour Party MPs have criticised one or other aspect of party policy without being subject to disciplinary action.

Conference does not necessarily approve of such public dissension but also notes:

1. the rejection of the appeal against expulsion from Birmingham Sparkbrook CLP of Cllr Amir Khan and Kevin Scally. Cllr Khan was expelled for calling a meeting to discuss the formation of a Black Section. Kevin Scally was expelled for appearing on a television programme and criticising the constituency party;
2. that both Khan and Scally are long standing party members who ahve given years of service to the party.

Conference believes that these comrades have not been treated fairly or consistently and calls on the NEC to readmit them to membership.'

TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT

PUBLIC MEETING

Thursday 10 July, 7.30 pm.
DIGBETH CIVIC HALL

Speakers:
Lily Fitzsimmons (Sinn Fein Councillor)
Maire O'Shea
Labour Councillor
Chair:
Geraldine Egan (President, Birmingham Trades Council)

Meeting for those wishing to go go on the annual Troops Out Movement delegation to Belfast on the weekend of 9 August:
Thursday 17 July, 7.30 pm
Digbeth Civic Hall, Lecture Room 3. (Supported by Labour Committee on Ireland.)