30p

BIRMINGHAM LABOUR

# BRIEFING

INCORPORATING NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No.3 MAY 1984

# MINERS MUST WIN!



'The confrontation in the coalfield is rapidly turning in to a push by the anti parliamentary left to reverse the result of last June's General Election. Having failed to remove Mrs Thatcher by the ballot box, the hard left is now trying to do it by force.' So wrote the Sunday Times.

The Tory press and government are indignant at the NUM strike and the challenge it poses both to the NCB's plans to run down the coal industry and the Tories' anti-union, anti-working class laws. In the face of this barrage, for the first six weeks of the strike Neil Kinnock said nothing. His first intervention was to support calls by the NUM's right wing for a ballot. Since then he has been dragged in to supporting the 50p levy and into to saying he would be on strike if he were a miner.

But this limited support came only after the union and LP left had organised support and NUM leaders had attacked his positions. He has had to avoid a position in which left LP leaders were actively supporting the strike while he appear- to side with its opponents.

This pressure must be maintained and escalated. The Scottish TUC has led the way with its call for a Day of Action on May9; now the Labour Movement in the rest of Britain must respond to Arthur Scargill's call for a march on Nottingham and demand the TUC calls a Day of Action. At stake is the future of the Labour Movement as we know it. The struggle has gone beyond simply defending the coal industry. They are fighting the Tories for the rights of all working people. It is a struggle for us all. The Miners must win! •

# MINERS' STRIKE:

## WOMEN SUPPORT THE MINERS




Barbara Edwards (wife of miner at Tower Lodge Colliery)

It's important to keep the coalfield open for the community - there will be nothing if the pits close. If the miners don't win the fight and the union isdemolished then the other unions won't stand a chance. We're fighting for all the working class. Maggie Thatcher was elected, but the majority of the people don't want the pits closed, or nuclear arms for that matter. The government should put money back into the pits. There's a lot of apathy because people outside the valleys don't realise what's going on. Since showing support for this dispute I'vehad some nasty anonymous phone calls, but I think these come from men who are not man enough to speak to my face.

The Kent miners' wives are marvellous. The women are difficult to organise in South Wales - in thisarea there are no community facilities where we could meet. There's apathy from some women and old-fashioned attitudes from the men, too. But women have got to stand up and be counted as much as the men. I'm fighting for my life and my children's lives as well. There's difficulties we face too, while the dispute is on. The rent office is taking us to court next week and we're keeping our families on very little money. If the wives got together these problems wouldn't be so bad. •

Hundreds of people turned out for the West Midlands TUC rally at Central Hall on April 18. The main speaker was Peter Heathfield, General Secretary of the NUM but the biggest ovation of the evening was reserved for Mary Coombes, one of 30 South Wales miners' wives on a one-day solidarity visit to Birmingham:

We have come up here because this is where we should be. The miners' wives should be in front of this fight because if we lose this fight we will never have another chance again as far as I'm concerned. Once the strength of the miners' union has gone every other union is diminished by it.

In our little valley we have lost most factories, with one mine left out of 54. In the 1920s there were 200,000 miners working there; now it is down to 750. •

## Solidarity




Des Dutfield (NUM South Wales Executive)

I cannot stress how important it is for all trade unionists to stand shoulder to shoulder with the miners at this time. Thatcher is conducting a class war against working people and their institutions. We have pinned our flag to the mast of a national strike. We are the focal point of the struggle and we call upon all other unions to rally behind us. The strike is an historical watershed in the fightback against the Tories. I'm sure the whole labour movement will recognise this. •

# editorial

## LIVERPOOL LEADS THE WAY



It is not only in its lack of support for the NUM that the Kinnock leadership has been found wanting. On the question of Liverpool and local democracy, Kinnock has openly criticised Liverpool Labour Council.

But despite this lack of support from the leadership it has been Liverpool which has led the rest of the Labour Movement in the fight against Tory attacks on local democracy. In the words of Derek Hatton, deputy leader of Liverpool Council this fight 'cannot be seen in isolation from other struggles against the Tory Government.

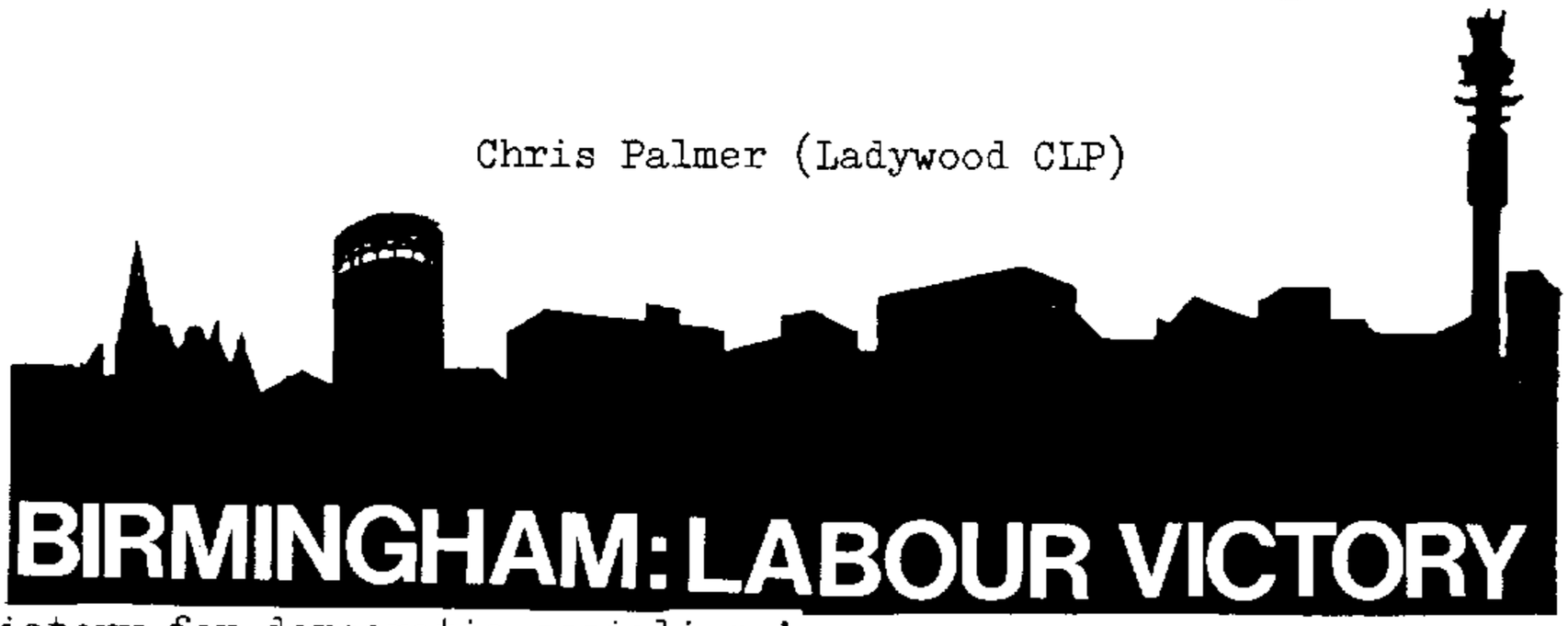
And the problems facing Liverpool are problems that other Labour Councils throughout the country will face. Dick Knowles rejects the Liverpool strategy, but the reality of such a rejection is that it is the rejection of a fight against the Tories. There is no way that a Labour Council can serve the interests of those who elect it unless it is willing to fight the Thatcher government. The strategy of making cuts in Tory areas, like Sutton Coldfield, does not oppose the government but acquiesces to it; such a strategy is the alternative to a fight.

But the election success in Liverppol on May 3, when Labour increased its majority by seven, winning six seats from the Liberals and one from the Tories, proves there is popular support for a strategy of taking on the Tories. The vote is clearly a vote of confidence in the council, illegal budget and all. The way forward is clear.

Now the Labour Party once again controls Birmingham with an overall majority of five, the question of the Labour Group's strategy is paramount. All the fine promises in the world are to no avail if the Council will not carry out the fight necessary to achieve them. Now, more than ever, the necessity of the Labour Left organising on a city wide basis is urgently posed. •

---

Chris Palmer (Ladywood CLP)



## BIRMINGHAM: LABOUR VICTORY

'It's a victory for democratic socialism.' So said Councillor Dick Knowles, new leader of Birmingham City Council, in the early hours of May 4. He was of course referring to Labour's victory in the local council elections. Labour now holds 61 seats to the Tories' 52 and the Alliance's 4, for an overall majority of 5. Such a result is very much what had been expected.

The question now is how much of the socialism Councillor Knowles spoke about he will put into practice and how much of the democracy the Tory government will allow. As we see from Liverpool, the more a council moves towards socialist policies, the more the Tories will undermine democracy in order to sabotage such policies.

Nevertheless, whatever problems the fu ture holds, and many are predictable, the victory itself, on a night of nationwide success for Labour, is important in itself. But, as is made clear elsewhere, winning the election is only the first stage; the hardest fights may be yet to come. •

# WHAT'S ON:

**Friday May 11, 8 pm till late**

**Soho/Sandwell LP Women's Section Fundraising Social** (postponed from April 28)

**£1.50 (£1 in advance), 50p (children)**
**FCF Social Club 178 Soho Hill.**

---

Sunday May 13, 7.30 pm

El Salvador Solidarity Campaign
**Film Premiere:**
**'In The Name of Democracy: Life, Death and Elections in El Salvador'**
**plus:**
**'Americas in Transition: US Intervention in Latin America'**
**plus:**
**Speaker from FMLN/FDR**

**Tindal Street School, Tindal Street, Birmingham 12.**
**£1 (waged), 75 p (unwaged)**

---

City of Birmingham Labour Party
Workplace Branch.

Next meeting: Monday 14th May.
6.00 pm. Council House.

Speakers on the abolition of Metropolitan Councils and Rate Capping.

Open to all LP members who are employed by the City of Birmingham.

---

**Saturday May 19, 12.15 - 6.00 pm**

**A Hail of Ballots : Elections and Reality in Central America.**
**with:**
**Jenny Pearce (author of Under The Eagle, recently returned from El Salvador)**
**Roger Plant**
**plus Film and evening Social**
**St Francis Hall, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston Park Road, Birmingham**
**Conference: £1.50 (£1 unwaged)**
**Social: £1.50 (£1 unwaged)**
**Organised by El Salvador and Guatemala Committees for Human Rights**

---

Friday June 1, 10 am

Birmingham Trades Council, Centre For The Unemployed, Opening.

with:
Ken Munro, Geoff Edge and Roy Hattersley
Plus:
Workshop discussions in the afternoon

For tickets 'phone 236 2716

---

Friday June 1, 8 pm

Centre For The Unemployed Benefit Social

with:
Banner Theatre, Rapping Rebel, jazz and folk acts; late bar
The Mermaid, Sparkhill, **£2/€1** ( unwaged )

---

**Thursday July 19, 7.30**

**El Salvador Solidarity Campaign**

**5th Anniversary of the Nicaraguan Revolution.**

**with:**
**Jeremy Corbyn MP ( Secretary of PLP Committee on the Caribbean and Latin America.**

Details of Venue to be announced.

---

**LABOUR COMMITTEE ON IRELAND**

**Honorary Presidents: Ken Livingstone**
**Joan Maynard MP**

Fundraising Meal

Friday 18th. May. 8 pm.

Tickets: £3.00 or £2 (unwaged) available from:
11, Clarence Road, Sparkhill.

---

Friday May 18, 7,30 pm.

**Latin American Evening with Classical and Folk Music.**

**Organised by Salvador Allende Fund, 4A Oak Tree Lane, Selly Oak.**

**Tickets £1.50; food and drink on sale**
**Proceeds go to projects in Chile**

**Venue: Transport House 211 Broad Street.**

---

**Listings in the What's On section are free. If you would like an event included write to 27 Montague Road, Birmingham 21 or phone 523 3608**

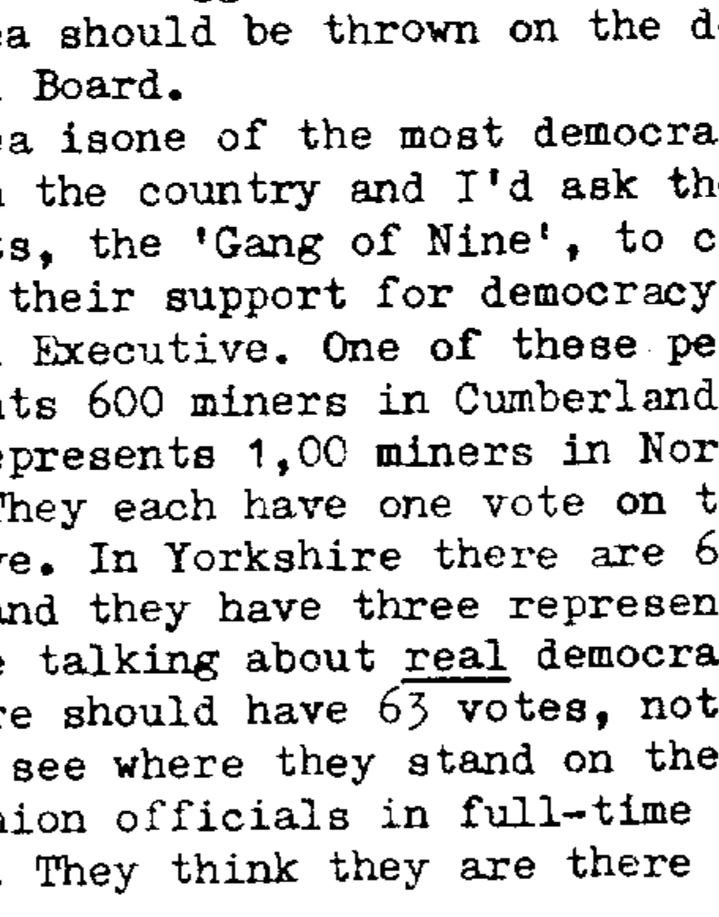
# Ballot for a place in the dole queue!

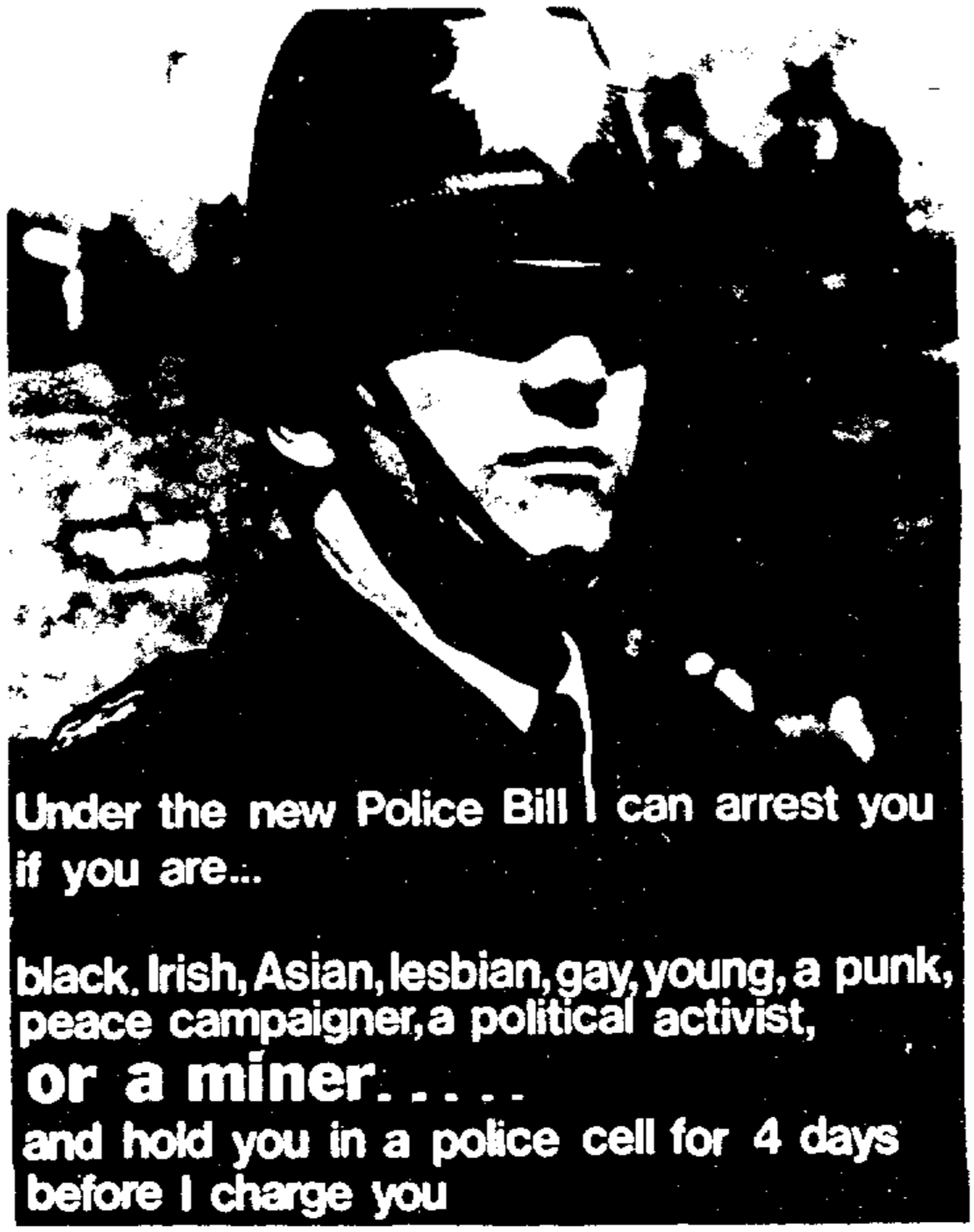
Everyday in the press we are confronted by a barage of abuse aimed at the NUM. Arthur Scargill is branded a tyrant, those who support the strike as bully boys and a threat to democracy. Labour Briefing asked Jack Collins, President of the Kent Area NUM about democracy in the Union:

Miners have got the right to sack me because they employ me but no miner has the right to sack another miner by placing a cross on a piece of paper.

The people that are calling for a ballot are doing so to kill the present struggle. They've got the audacity to suggest that they want a ballot to recommend national strike action. Why do they want to do this when we're already on strike? Roy Ottey should accept a challenge and come into Kent and hold a ballot in Kent to determine whether he should be employed any longer. The answer he would give to this is that he's not employed by Kent miners, so we can't sack him. So why should he have the right to suggest that the miners in the Kent area should be thrown on the dole by the Coal Board.

My area isone of the most democratic areas in the country and I'd ask the super-democrats, the 'Gang of Nine', to carry through their support for democracy to the National Executive. One of these people represents 600 miners in Cumberland. Another represents 1,00 miners in North Wales. They each have one vote on the Executive. In Yorkshire there are 64,000 miners and they have three representatives. If we're talking about <u>real</u> democracy, Yorkshire should have 63 votes, not 3. We'd like to see where they stand on the election of union officials in full-time posts as well. They think they are there for life. •






# striking for a future!

Tyrone O'Sullivan (Secretary, Tower Lodge NUM)

In the 1981 strike we won a victory against the government when they withdrew the immediate closure list. But we returned to work to quickly, before we had any positive assurances from Thatcher or the Coal Board about the future of the industry. So we never really achieved the victory. And now most of the pits on the 1981 list have been closed. This time we have to have definite guarantees before we go back to work. We need a new plan for the expansion of the coal industry. The money can come from the cancellation of the nuclear power programme. The billions of poundsinvolved in building nuclear power stations end up with private business. £10 billion would guarantee the expansion of the coal industry for 30 years, £10 billion would finance the building of modern coal-fired stations, which would leave £10 billion for social services and education. •

# SOLIDARITY ACTION

## WHAT YOU CAN DO:



* invite a striking miner to address your union branch, LP ward etc. For speakers 'phone 632 4551.

* raise money to support the miners - a regular levy, collections at meetings etc.

* get your ward to organise a support the miners canvass. Collect money and the LP levy at the same time.

* organise meetings at your workplace, e.g. at the factory gate. 'Phone Trades Council on 236 1240.

* get your union/LP to take supplies of 'The Miner' and the Trades Council Support Bulletin for distribution. 'The Miner' is available from AUEW/TASS, 6-8 Holloway Circus, the Support Bulletin from 191 Corporation Street.

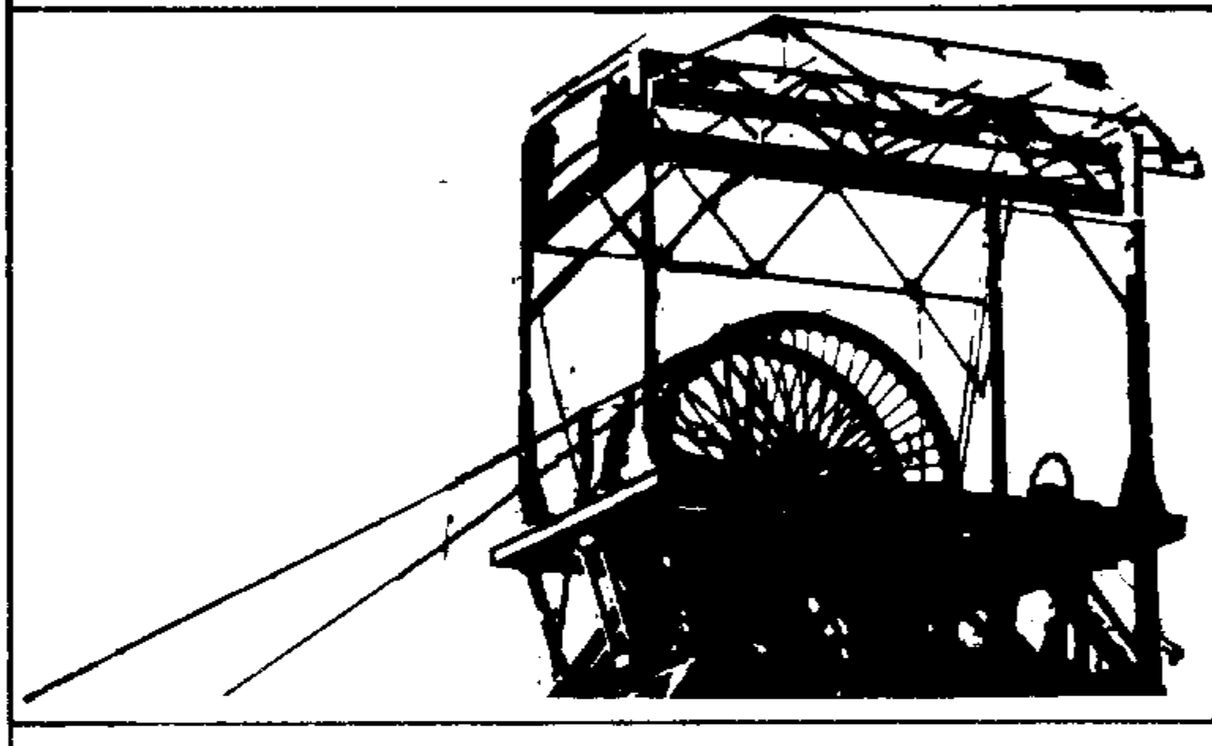
* Send money collected to Jackie Brown at AUEW/TASS (address above) or direct to Miners Solidarity Fund, St James House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield or into any bank, quoting Miners Solidarity Fund, Co-op Bank, Sheffield Branch, A/C no: 3000 0009, sorting code: 08-90-75

* get your ward/union etc. to send delegates to the Birmingham Trades Council Miners Solidarity Committee. Meetings every Wednesday at the Trade Union Resource Centre, 7 Frederick Street, Birmingham B1 3HE.

* phone in names and addresses of people who are willing to put up flying pickets on 236 2716 or 236 3380. •

## RAILWORKERS

At Saltley Depot ASLEF have organised around the strike and since been joined by the NUR. Apart from special deliveries of coal for hospitals and pensioners' homes no coal has moved in the Birmingham area for weeks. •



## WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES

South Wales Miners made the following statement:
'Money collected will go to keep the pickets on the road and for hardship funds. Things are going to get very tight. We get no supplementary benefit for ourselves - only wives and children. And then they take away £15 from that for assumed strike pay. This means a family with 3 children gets just £4.50 plus their family allowance. Of course, they know we aren't getting strike pay. The union hasn't has a separate strike fund and it's had to move its money out of the country in case courts seize the funds to stop the union picketing, like they did to the NGA. The government and the Board think they're going to beat us. But with your help they won't. We're not going back. If it takes two Christmases, we're going to win.' •

## SOCIAL

Thursday May 10, 8.00pm

Support the Miners
Fundraising Social
'Guild Club', Station Street, Birmingham
with Banner Theatre and others. •

# ENQUIRY IN SPARKHILL

Recently the left has been successful in several ward AGMs. Soho was one example, where the left victory was followed by attacks in the Evening Mail and a Regional Party inquiry into the meeting. Similar events occured in Sparkhill. The following is an outline of the facts:

The run up to the meeting and its handling have run into a storm of criticism from the GMC of Sparkbrook CLP who have now ordered an enquiry. As a result of the furore the results of the election have been quashed and the ward left in limbo pending the enquiry.

The actual train of events leading up to this decision stretches back to the start of the year.

Some six weeks before the AGM was scheduled, a batch of 180 new membership applications was received by the ward. But at the next meeting a debate on the Health Service meant there was not enough time for them to be considered. In the light of this, the CLP ordered a special ward meeting to be held in order to take the new members and for the AGM to be postponed for a month.

The sudden flood of new members into the ward was viewed with some scepticism and the ward executive therefore visited the prospective members to ensure that their applications were authentic.

The visits showed that many were not. Some applicants had never filled in the forms and had absolutely no intention of joining the party. Others were found not to live at the address given on the membership form, or not to be a member of a union as stated. Indeed, a group of applicants were actually believed to be members of the Tory Party. Therefore at the special membership meeting, a substantial number of applications were either rejected or deferred.

When the AGM was finally held in March, there were three members of the constituency present and extensive checking was carried out to make sure everyone present was a ward member. The results of the AGM and the election of delegates to the constituency GMC were not challenged at the meeting and the successful candidates obtained resounding majorities.

Five days later at the GMC meeting, the results of the AGM were wiped out following claims of irregularities. An enquiry was ordered into the handling of the AGM and the results frozen until it was completed. The situation now is that those members elected to the GMC at the AGM have been effectively blocked from taking up their positions. Moreover, some of the members who voted for the enquiry by the constituency executive and Regional Office were among those who had not been re-elected at the AGM. The GMC has now postponed its own AGM until the situation in Sparkhill is thrashed out.

It has also told the ward to accept any new members in 'good faith' and not to check up on their applications unless there are specific grounds for concern.

Thus, three months after the ward AGM was planned to take place, Sparkhill finds itself in a sorry state. The votes and feelings of the ward have been ignored until the enquiry can be held. Meanwhile, members must sit back and wait and wait and wait...•


# BRIEFING

Editor: Chris Palmer.

Editorial collective: Chris Palmer
Bob Findlay
Martin Hoare

Birmingham Labour Briefing is produced monthly to accompany the National Labour Briefing Supplement.

Articles, letters, donations, etc are welcome and should be sent to:
Chris Palmer, 27 Montague Road, Handsworth, Birmingham 21. Telephone 523 3608

Articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of Labour Briefing which are contained in Editorials.


OPEN EDITORIAL MEETING

All sellers and others interested are welcome.

Monday May 21, 7.30 pm, White Lion, Bristol Road.



# LABOUR'S EMPTY PROMISES NOT ENOUGH - BLACK SECTIONS ARE A MUST

Paul Sharma (Ladywood CLP, Treasurer LP Black Section.)

A few weeks ago, Neil Kinnock attempted to produce Labour's time honoured prescription for buying Black votes. This occured at a meeting with over forty journalists from the ethnic press at the House of Commons. He said that Labour, when elected, would repeal the 1971 Immigration Act and the 1981 Nationality Act.

Both these pieces of racist legislation are repugnant to most people, Black or white. As the legislation is directed at Blacl people our community not only suffers most, but has been at the forefront of the campaign to get it repealed.

It is high time, however, that Neil Kinnock realised that matters of immigration and nationality are not the only concerns, or even the prime concerns, of the Black community. Many Black people have been born in Britain and most others have been in the country so long that, on paper at least, they are full British citizens.

Our prime concern is the racism that exists throughout British society. In almost every category of social and economic disadvantage Black people are over-represented. This situation has not come about because Black people do not try to succeed or that there are so few of the required claibre. This immoral state of affairs has arisen because the cancer of racism is resident in the minds of so many white people whose fair mindedness is a prerequisite for the success of Black people.

Many of the institutions of our society, though perhaps not intentionally or overtly racist, are racist in effect.

The Labour Party itself is structured in such a way as to be over responsive to vociferous WHITE MEN. The channels of influence in the party are not open to all equally. The party is not sympathetic to groups in society, or even within its membership, in proportion to their needs, disadvantages or even numbers. The terms of the constitution do not prevent the expression of Black interests within the Party. However, the inherently white bias in positions of power means that Blacks rely on a paternalistic understanding by whites of these problems . Whereas Blacks should have a legitimate right to be heard and action should result from a duty to act.

With Neil Kinnock at the press conference was Dennis Howell, shadow spokesperson on Race Relations and Immigration. His constituency, Small Heath, has a Black population of 36% yet the GMC has only a handful of Black members. The GMC is not representative of the constituency and therefore it is open to question as to how well it represents the constituents. Dennis Howell is also a member of a NEC working party looking into the question of a Black Section within the Labour Party. Mr Howell can obviously draw evidence from his own backyard.

On an unofficial basis, there are 10 or 11 Constituency Black Sections in London, with more being formed all the time. Moves are afoot in Bristol and Liverpool for Black Sections. There is a steering committee that is assisting Black socialists with the formation of Black Sections. We have produced a draft constitution which outlines terms on which we want the party to recognise Black Sections. This constitution will be discussed and amendments taken at a national meeting on June 9 at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. The meeting is open to all card carrying members of the party who are Black or of Afro-Caribbean or Asian descent and who have registered in advance. Please contact us at the address below for further details. I urge all members to support Black Sections and to put our suggested resolution as your resolution for Conference:

**Conference recognises that whereas over 80% of Black voters support the Labour Party, Black people still remain the least politically represented group within the Labour Party and in the country generally.**

**Conference therefore considers that positive action must be taken by the Labour Party to remedy this situation and recommends the creation of Black Sections in the Party as a base on which Black people can devise and propose strategies for change so that equal representation and racial equality can be created through the development of a socialist society.**

**(Please alter the wording slightly so that resolutions are printed separately in the book of resolutions.)** •

LP Black Section, 39 Chippenham Road, London W9. Tel 01-286 9692 or 01-221 7050.

**Published by Birmingham Labour Briefing, 27 Montague Road, Birmingham 21.**