BRIGHTON LABOUR CAMPAIGNER

NO.2 MAY-JUNE 1985 20p

NEW UNEMPLOYED CENTRE TO OPEN

Ed Barker
Secretary, Brighton & Hove District Trades Council

Brighton Unemployed Centre will officially re-open on Tuesday May 28. Throughout the week, there will be a range of events organised by unwaged people at the Centre and local community groups. These include :
– exhibitions, displays, video and film shows and talks (see Doleful News for details).

The new centre is big enough for meetings of 100, and conferences. Facilities at the Centre will include a coffee bar, creche, meeting spaces. The Centre will be open to all unwaged people and be run by them and other users of the facilities.

Sharing the building will be the Resource Centre opening in May and the WEA (Workers Educational Association). The WEA will transfer all its courses to Prior House by the Autumn. Courses on Welfare Rights and Womens Rights are already taking place.

To thrive the Centre needs your support. We want the Centre to be a success, which it will be, if people not only use it but ensure it is properly supported financially.

WE NEED MONEY NOW
TO COVER RUNNING COSTS

Tell people about it, encourage your trade union branch/Labour Party ward to organise fundraising events. Ask your branch for a regular standing order,£5-10 per month.

Rooms are available for hire- for your trade union/LP/group meeting.

Visit the Centre, find out what is going on.

IF YOU'VE GOT A JOB

If you can afford it, seriously consider making a regular financial committment, collect money at work-place. Invite a speaker to your labour party ward or TU branch. Contact the Centre if you are prepared to help in the staffing of the place or have ideas or suggestions. The Unemployed Union is meeting every Wednesday at 2.30pm. Open to all unwaged people from 18-80.

We need about £6 000 per year to cover running costs.

MEETING

SPEAKERS INCLUDE

TAM DALYELL

LABOUR MP FOR LINLITHGOW

THE BELGRANO AFFAIR AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

ANDY WINTER

VICE CHAIR BRIGHTON LABOUR PARTY AND EX NO WAR COMMITTEE

Wednesday May 15 7.30 pm

NALGO CLUB, Edward St. Brighton

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FOR AN AMNESTY

THE SITUATION IN KENT

After the historic 12 month Miners Strike for the 'Right to Work', the NUM-NEC recommended a return to work on Monday 4 March after pressure from NUM members in certain NUM areas.

In Kent this recommendation was ignored at a mass meeting held on 4 March in a show of solidarity in support of the Miners who had been victimised in Kent, and to try to force the NCB into sitting down with Kent NUM and discussing the reinstatement of these men. This was agreed with the exception of 7 men who voted to return to work.

On the following Saturday, 9 March, we held another mass meeting with a Kent Area recommendation for a return to work, there were many contributions made, including those from sacked miners. I myself stated that the situation was that Kent was *out on a limb*, where the NCB would just leave us out, also from the point of view of the sacked miners, we had reached a 1926/85 situation where we had to tell our comrades to return to work, to keep the unity of the Kent coalfield which was essential to keep thepressure on the NCB. Our hearts wanted everyone to stay out, but common sense has to prevail in these type of situations, sentiment never won any battles. It was agreed a return to work on Monday 11 March and on the Sunday prior, each branch held its own meetings with a recommendation of non-cooperation with the NCB until all the victimised miners were given their jobs back at their own pits, and this was agreed. At Bettshanger Colliery we all agreed to be at the pit at 6 am on Monday ll March and reconvene the meeting in the pit yard, including those of us who were sacked with 3 of us- Terry Birkett, Brian Foy and myself to make ourselves available to go down the pit to do a Pit Inspection with 3 other members of the NUM who were still employed by the NCB. Under the Mines & Quarries Act, (section 123) this is allowed providing the Inspectors have had 5 years practical experience underground. These 123 Inspections are statutory and have to be carried out once a month, and as 12 months had passed since the last inspection it was necessary to do these before the Miners started work.

The manager of Bettshanger (incidentally new managers had been put into each of the Kent pits just prior to the end of the strike) a MrSymons, refused us the right to inspect the Pit, he also refused to recognise the Secretary of Bettshanger Branch NUM, Terry Harrison who under Section 126 of the Mines & Quarries Act is the **Person Responsible'** (this means in the event of any Accidents, Fatalities or Incidents, he has tobe notified at the earliest possible moment, he also refused to recognise the Branch President John Moyle, or even speak to them both.

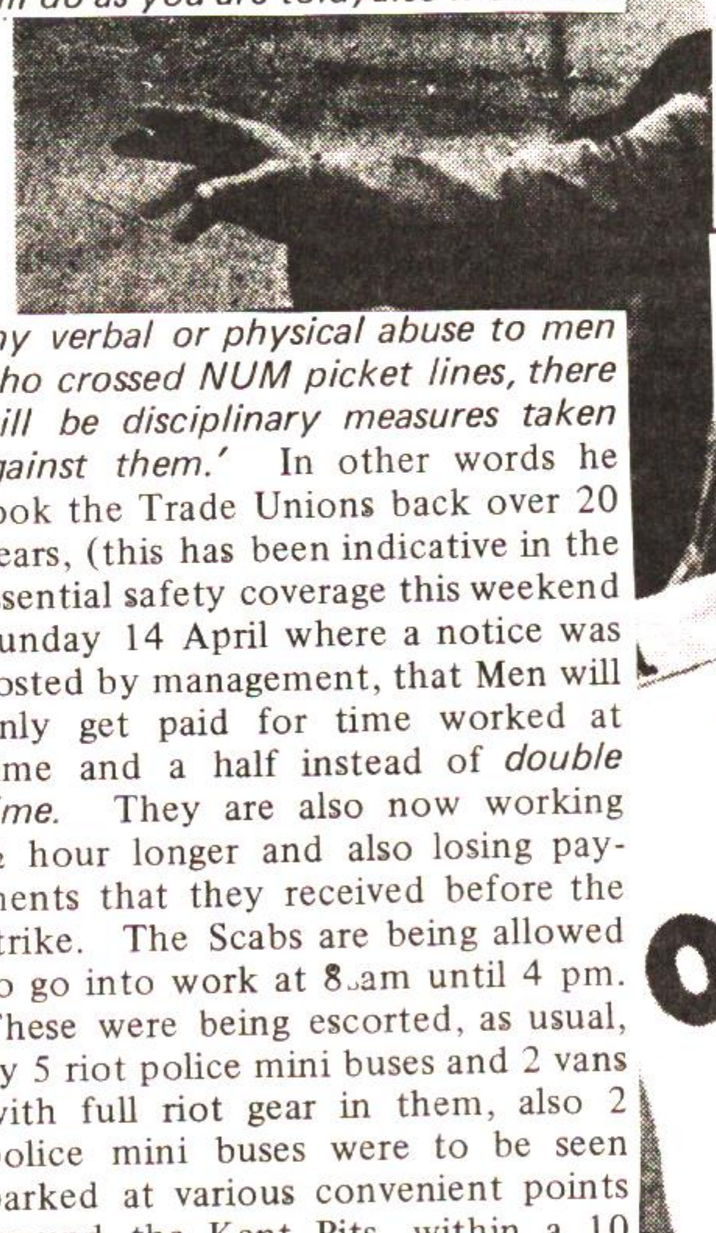
At the mass meeting in the Pit yard, this was conveyed to everyone, and the majority of them wanted to walk out then but were persuaded to stay, during this time, the Scabs were in the Lamproom, near where the meeting was held and there was some verbal abuse to them, but no physical violence. After we, the victimised Miners left the Pit and the Striking Miners got changed into their underground clothes, they went into the Lamproom (which had been cleared first of Scabs) to get their lamps and Self Rescuers prior to going underground, the Manager went to speak to them, and told our lads,*'There will be no more Custom & Practise, no more concessions, you will do as you are told, also if there is any verbal or physical abuse to men who crossed NUM picket lines, there will be disciplinary measures taken against them.'* In other words he took the Trade Unions back over 20 years, (this has been indicative in the essential safety coverage this weekend Sunday 14 April where a notice was posted by management, that Men will only get paid for time worked at time and a half instead of *double time.* They are also now working ½ hour longer and also losing payments that they received before the strike. The Scabs are being allowed to go into work at 8.am until 4 pm. These were being escorted, as usual, by 5 riot police mini buses and 2 vans with full riot gear in them, also 2 police mini buses were to be seen parked at various convenient points around the Kent Pits, within a 10 minute drive of each Pit. Why? It seems to us Kent is still a Police State as far as the Mining Communities are concerned.

Many of the Scabs have applied for redundancy and been accepted, and 2 we know have applied for transfers. In other words, when they crossed our picket lines, they did it for 2 reasons. To help undermine the National Union of Mineworkers and break our strike, and also so they could get their redundancy, and sell a job (which no man has the right to do) for a handful of money, thereby preventing young men being employed in the coal industry.

The reasons for sacking the Miners in Kent were because we occupied Bettshanger Colliery on Sunday 17 June 1984, after the Sunday papers of that day made statements of 16 pits being in danger. In 2 of those papers, Bettshanger Colliery was named and we knew the statement was false and being used for propaganda, so during the occupation the Pit was inspected and found to be in good condition, with no Gas or flooding, consequently on Wednesday 20 June 84, the acting manager made a statement that Bettshanger was in a sound condition, we then vacated the Pit Lamproom, Offices and Control Room. On the 25 June we each received notice of dismissal for Gross Misconduct, we still can not get a definition of this terminology, as there was no violence used or damage done. Perhaps we were sacked because we are activists and trade unionists.

Long live Arthur Scargill, the best TU leader ever. Long live the NUM.

Les Sweeting- Bettshanger Colliery, Kent
Victimised Miner,



Picture: JOHN HARRIS (IFL)

BRIGHTON MINERS SUPPORT GROUP

Brighton Miners Support Group is still meeting to campaign in support of the victimised miners and those imprisoned. To date 7 miners have been sento to gaol- one for 5 years and the others for 3 years each. We are also helping to coordinate fund raising for the families of those sacked/gaoled. At present 48 men have lost their jobs.

We meet every 2nd and 4th Wednesday in the month at 179 Lewes Road,.

CAMPAIGNER DIARY

TALES OF THE RIGHT

Midday April 1st was the deadline by which all nomination papers for East Sussex County Council candidates had to be in. On the morning of April 1, an SDP–Alliance leaflet was delivered to certain residents of Queens Park Ward. Contained in it was the clear implication that local resident, Tom Forrester and retiring councillor for Hanover, would be standing in Queens Park with the clear aim of taking enough votes from Ken Bodfish, the Labour candidate, in order to let the Tories in. Relations between Ken and Tom have been somewhat strained ever since Ken refused, as Chair of Hanover Ward, to follow Forrester into the SDP as Forrester had expected. Bodfish was denounced as *"an imported left-winger from Hanover"* specially brought in to fight the seat. It denounced Queens Park as a ward which spent most of its time collecting for the miners, attacked Labour Councillors for threatening to defy the law if we gain control etc. In short a typical SDP leaflet. Suspicions were however soon aroused, not least by the very selective way in which the leaflet was distributed. Inquiries soon revealed that it was an April Fools joke perpetrated by Hanover's stone age rightwinger and Fabian delegate, Ralph Bailey. It had its effect though, in that no sooner had dawn broken than a sweating Ken was seen, pacing up and down the town hall steps scanning for the elusive Forrester. In fact the SDP candidate was none other than Brian Saunders, who would have stood for election last year had he managed to get his nomination papers in on time. The irony of the said leaflet is that there is hardly a phrase in it that Ralph doesn't actually subscribe to politically. Indeed it is rumoured that the SDP rejected his application for membership in the days when they were still trying to present a mildly pink face.

TALES OF THE TENDENCY

Two years ago, when Andy Winter proposed at the GC that Regency be placed on a list of Labour marginals in the town, our comrades in the Tendency could hardly restrain themselves such was their amusement. Such was the level of their guffaws, that Andy could hardly be heard above the din. No doubt their smiles were wiped off as news came in of Labour's sensational gain in Regency in the form of the said Winter.But then many of us were sceptical that Labour could ever gain such a Tory bastion with the Liberals then being the major opposition. But at least all wings of the party were present on the day to help in the securing of Labour's victory. All that is with the exception of our comrades from the Tendency who were conspicuous by their absence from the knocking up.



PRINCESS REIBNITZ

Readers will no doubt be shocked by those sections of the gutter press who smeared the poor Princess Michael. Blaming the sins of her aristocratic pater on her royal self, when everybody knows that children can't be blamed for the sins of their parents. But that of course is the whole point of the monarchy- you are what you are because of your parents. Royal Blood its called. No greater sin could be imagined than marrying a commoner. And of course, if the Royal Family is to be confined to inbreeding with the remnants of Europes royal families and aristocracy, its hard to avoid coming into contact with former Nazi/Fascist sympathisers.

There were no stouter defenders of the Princes Purses and aristocracy than the Nazis. Those who believed in elites amongst the races also believed in elites within races, as reflected in the traditional feudal/capitalist hierachies. None should be put off by the smokescreen that St. John Stevas and others have put up. Not only was Reibnitz Snr. *not* exonerated by a denazification court- and those courts had a vested interest in clearing as many as they could- but Reibnitz was a member in 1921 of the Freikorps. A bunch of thugs from which the SA later grew, which was set loose on the workers of Berlin. But then the Princess Michael Reibnitz isn't the only Royal to have had connections with Nazi sympathisers. Edward VII was forced to abdicate because of Hitlerite sympathies and old Edinburgh himself seems to have had a Nazi uncle. And the Queen mum was an ardent fan of Rhodesia's Ian Smith. But on a more re-assuring note, the Jewish Chronicle (19 April) informs us that the Jewish (ie. Zionist) community will stand by Reibnitz/Michael as she alone of all the Royals has demonstrated her absolute commitment to the Israeli state!

Grasshopper

NEWSPEAK '85

In his book 1984, Orwell described how events which had occurred were erased from memory and records at the whim of Big Brother. The means by which this took place was simple. The event or person in question was simply not mentioned. They had disappeared from history. Similarly wars and conspiracies which never existed were given a life of their own in BB's media whenever the nation's morale demanded it. Lies were the truth, black was white, 1+1 =4 and so on. It was an accurate parody of the method of Stalinism which erased from memory and photographs any reference to Trotsky and the role he played as leader of the Red Army in organising the successful resistance to the Allied invasion.

Similar instances of truth bending seems to have affected our close and dear comrades in the Bton Briefing Politburo. February's Briefing announced that Community Politics Briefing was nothing to do with the 'real' Briefing before going on to dissociate itself from specific articles. April's Briefing goes one stage further. We are told that the CP Briefing has 'ceased to exist' and that they are therefore printing a reply to a report by a St. Peters ward member in a paper with which they had nothing to do with, if you follow the argument. A very kind gesture, it may be supposed, s by Briefing towards a paper, which it may be assumed has ceased to function owing to the competition. It might even be thought that Briefing has at last established a role for itself, by printing articles that other papers would have taken if only they hadn't gone out of circulation. Except that CP Briefing, far from disappearing, has been incorporated into Labour Campaigner, as the front page makes clear. This was of course perfectly understood at the parting-of-the-ways meeting held earlier in the year by BLB. Indeed they even wished us success in the minutes of the said meeting! Strange that BLB is now pretending that we don't exist. We suggest that queries are addressed to Briefings very own BB- no prizes for guessing who!

KEMPTOWN PPC

THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED SHORTLY AFTER STEVE BASSAM WAS SELECTED AS P.P.C. FOR BRIGHTON KEMPTOWN. IT WAS CONDUCTED BY TONY GREENSTEIN.



TG: Your selection as PPC was seen by some sections of the media as a victory for the soft left. Would you agree with that?

SB: I've always been a supporter of the Left in the Labour Party, as I've made clear on a number of test issues – non compliance, opposition to witchunts inside the LP, Black Sections. My approach to economic matters, eg. nationalisation would locate me on the radical leftist part of the LP. I am committed to fundamental socialist change, bringing the means of production under socialist control, giving workers a controlling stake in all sections of the economy, transferring power out to the community.

TG: But some would say they are all very fine and pious statements, some of which even Roy Hattersley would support eg. cooperatives and decentralisation, but where do you stand on the main dividing line between marxists and reformists on eg. the question of the State ?

SB: The State has always been seen as the motor of social and economic change. It's only right that we focus much more attention on the way the State works. In the course of the miners strike the State and its institutions have been instrumental in opposing working class opposition to job losses and cuts in production. Without that sort of understanding and analysis, we cannot move forward and take on a socialist perspective. It is essential to destroying the capitalist power base within the State and that means a thorough reform of such institutions as the army, police and judiciary to bring them under democratic control and accountability.

TG: So you're saying it is possible to reform the State and bring it under socialist control?

SB: I don't think you can look at the State, as it is, and say this state is reformable to a socialist position. You have to go through a transitional phase of building a socialist state and structure. Yes there will be a socialist state in that mode of change. I've always seen myself as a libertarian marxist.

ECONOMY

TG: I think that Militant would say that you, like so many of us, are simply in favour of all the good things on earth as long as capitalism reformed and expanded is able to provide them.

SB: Well I've always favoured forms of workers self management within the economy as a whole. Whether you're talking about the private sector in a period of transformation or the various parts that make up the public sector, nationalised industry and municipal and cooperative enterprises. I don't think it would be right to set a precise figure on the number of companies you nationalise. I don't know what the 200th monopoly is, it might be quite a small manufacturing industry. We do have to have massive wholesale nationalisation which will mean rolling back the denationalisation process which is destroying jobs and services and undermining the basis of an economic recovery. Certainly renationalisation and no compensation except in cases of proven hardship.

TG: If I believed in flattery I would say that you are an old fashioned Tribunite who believes you can achieve all sorts of miracles within the existing system. How would you see the fundamental differences between capitalism and socialism?

SB: You cannot correct the problems of capitalism by taking hold of the capitalist structure and reforming it. That's not enough. You have to have a vision, in a utopian sense, of direction within your socialist philosophy that takes you away from that model and mode of operation. That's why the way in which we campaign and organise for socialism is essential to seeing where we are going. The method, mode and style of organisation says a great deal about the society you create in the future. If you look back at the way in which Orwell viewed the revolution that began to take place in Catalonia in 1936 when the anarchists and socialists took over the rotten fabric of the state machine and began to transform it, the basis of that was popular democratic control. Production for need is the basis of any sound, socialist economy. What we must do is remove the irregularities in the market which hold back socially useful production. I don't believe in the social market theory which some social democratic elements of the Crossland school of Fabianism subscribe to.

TG: In the wake of the miners strike, where do you see the Left in the LP going and what is your attitude to the present leadership?

SB: I don't see the outcome as a complete defeat for the labour movement or the NUM in particular. Very many positive things came out in particular the Womens Action Groups, the support that was built up in the LP branches, Miners Support Groups and so on. They were very positive ways of directing aid to struggles in other areas. Many lessons will be learnt from that for future struggles. Secondly the question of the leadership. Much criticism has been voiced re Kinnock and Hattersley over their role and their absence of leadership and direction in supporting the NUM and the pit communities. We must make our leadership much more accountable. I'm sure the next Conference will begin that. It has been suggested in some leftist quarters that a candidate should be put up against Hattersley and Kinnock. I don't see anybody coming forward and its interesting that members of the Campaign Group don't see anybody coming forward. There is undoubtedly a vacuum of leadership in the left and I hope with the next PLP we will see a much harder left wing group growing and taking initiatives.

TG: But you would still continue yourself to make calls for the leadership to be accountable even though it has demonstrated beyond all doubt that it will not be held accountable?.

SB: I accept that putting up a candidate against Kinnock is a method of holding the leadership to account for its failings. But it must be understood and explained widely within the Labour Movement why that is. Without that there is no purpose in carrying out that strategy.

MILITANT

TG: You were seen as the main anti-Militant candidate and you attracted support from both its left and right. What political criticisms would you have of them?

SB: I'm not anti-Militant. Like a lot of comrades there are elements within the Militant programme which are common to the LP programme and I support those parts. If I have a criticism it is in the way some of the campaigning work they carry out is conducted, with a potential to alienate activists and supporters. On the other hand I recognise that they work very hard in local govt. and in Liverpool Militant comrades have taken a decisive role in campaigning and have undoubtedly mobilised large sections of the working class behind a very strong defence of local government democracy.

IRELAND

TG: I remember you being asked at your selection meeting what your position on Ireland was, and you said you agreed with the Labour Party's own policy. But LP policy, in so far as it has one is one of bipartisanship. On the one hand support for reunification on the other unification by consent. Consent that depends on the assent of a gerrymandered majority in the North. It faces both ways at the same time. What is your position?

SB: There is an ambivalence, though I don't agree there is now a bipartisan policy. We've actually moved away from that. After 79 there was a policy rethink on Northern Ireland. We have a position of a working class, unified, socialist Ireland. I've always supported the withdrawal of troops to speed up that process and to remove the Unionist veto. Without a socialist motor to drive those progressive forces forward, unification is going to be much more protracted. As a Labour Party we must take more seriously the building up of a socialist party in the north of Ireland.

TG: Isn't that a recreation of the traditional social imperialist policy that Labour has followed? Surely its none of our business, as socialists our first principle must be that of national self determination ie. the removal of our own presence.

SB: While I agree with self-determination, I'm not sure I accept the rest. You could say the same about the Trade Union movement. Its essential we have a viable Labour Movement in Northern Ireland.

TG: There are 2 main parties amongst the nationalist in the north. The SDLP and Sinn Fein. The attitude of the LP leadership to the latter has been hostile eg. regarding Ken Livingstone's invitation to Gerry Adams. What is your attitude to Sinn Fein, a party certainly much further to the left than the LP?

SB: The dialogue that some elements of the Labour left have begun to develop with SF is very important and the LP leadership is imperilling the dialogue that is very necessary if change is to happen in the north of Ireland. Sections of the party will react with undeniable indignation when they talk about not having SF coming to the GLC or House of Commons. That is a lot of nonsense. I agree elements of SF policy would form part of a socialist programme and its vital that we develop some of those links, particularly since there is an electoral force now developing within SF capable of commanding broad based support among working class catholics in Northern Ireland.

INTERVIEW

TG: SF is a working class party, radical politically, opposed to the British occupation. It starts from a nationalist position and has taken an increasingly radical stance. If by chance you had been born in Derry who would you support?

SB: If I was a catholic born in Derry, then electorally Sinn Fein would be the preferred option. But its very difficult from a distance. In a sense I'm imposing my cultural imperialism on a political situation.

TG: What do you see as the essential elements of Labour's policy being on international issues?

SB: Clearly we must support national liberation movements where they exist in the 3rd world and ensure that Nicaragua, which is a test case,is given much more support. We should oppose Reagan's destabilisation and one of the more positive things Kinnock has done is to make overtures in that direction. How sincere they are time will tell. Here in Britain, if we get control next year, we should be talking about twinning with one of the Nicaraguan towns as a way of highlighting people's awareness of the issues involved.

TG: Nicaragua and Central America, as you said, are not anathema to Labour's leadership. But on the Middle East, the LP has traditionally had a pro-Zionist stance.

SB: I'm an anti-Zionist, against sectarian states. We must work to ensure that the position in Israel is changed so that a democratic, secular state, in a nutshell, is achieved.

BLACK SECTIONS

TG: Do you see Black Sections as the party's answer to racism?

SB: I think in office our record left a lot to be desired, and Black people don't draw distinctions between our Immigration Acts and those of Tory Governments. We've got very little to be proud of. It's an area where bipartisanship has come into question. We are now seeing more positive policies being adopted by the LP. In particular we are saying we will repeal racist immigration laws. We've got to ensure that promise sticks.

TG: Do you believe you can have non-racist immigration laws, laws which don't discriminate between rich and poor, black and white, those who are oppressed and those who are not?

SB: They are used classically to intervene in the labour market to further the interests of the white population. It's a difficult question as to whether all immigration laws are and have to be racist. The principle target must be to eliminate racist immigration laws that divide families, stop freedom of movement and which lock people up in Harmandsworth for months on end without access to lawyers even. I was disappointed that at the last election, our front bench team didn't think repeal of immigration laws was of sufficient importance for them to be repealed in the first year of a Labour Govt. In the LP, Black Sections have an important role to play. In 10-15 years, the argument about them will be looked back at as being rather an odd argument. They will be looked at as youth and womens sections now. I think that the position of some CLPs like E Lewisham is understandable and I can see the importance of the task of involving Black Sections in the selection of parliamentary candidates. Its certainly made the subject come up high. I am very concerned that some elements in the LP see Black Sections as being just an opportunity for careerism by certain Black activists. That's unfortunate. Black Sections have a very important job to do campaigning around racist violence, immigration laws etc. but it will be important in mobilising the Black vote.

TG: You are faced with a very clever and adept sitting MP in what can hardly be called a marginal any longer. What is your strategy for winning?

SB: I've always believed that candidates should appear on as many doorsteps as often as possible and meet people. More important than that we have to gear up all the working parts of the LP for a campaigning offensive working with unions on employment issues, with all parties on class and community issues. I've seen plenty of evidence over the last 2-3 years that that is possible in

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Brighton LP. Our local govt. offensives have been particularly successful.

TG: That is all very well but Bowden's image is that of a maverick Tory with a special interest and concern for the elderly and disabled. How are you going to tackle that?

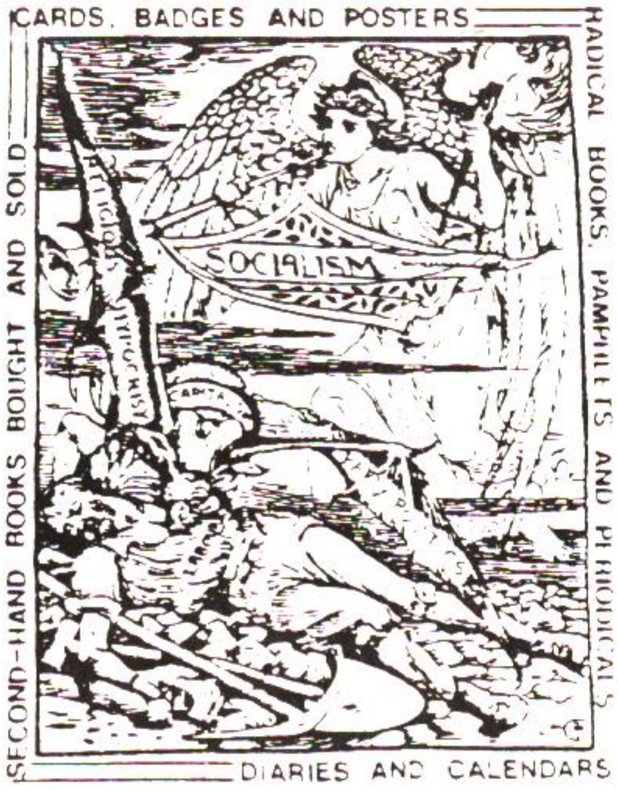
SB: The hypocrisy is the contradiction which faces pensioners in Brighton. I see plenty of pensioners living on £35 per week who aren't enjoying freedom from poverty and a comfortable life style. Yet Bowden claims to be making great gains for those people. They know the Tory Govt. isn't doing them any good. What we must do is take up their concerns within a socialist framework and work hard for them individually and collectively. To pose ourselves as the caring party.

TG: Do you intend to adopt a high personal profile on the issues Bowden has claimed as his own?

SB: Undoubtedly and I've already begun that process. That can only work really with the ward parties putting out more information on those issues and making us appear much more accessible on the issues Bowden claims as his own. I shall be taking up the fight for pensioners rights much more vociferously and show we care about the cuts in living standards they have experienced in the last four years.

THE ODD VOLUME

CARDS, BADGES AND POSTERS



RADICAL BOOKS, PAMPHLETS AND PERIODICALS

SECOND-HAND BOOKS BOUGHT AND SOLD

DIARIES AND CALENDARS

53 UPPER GLOUCESTER ROAD
BRIGHTON (27845)

Regency By-election

Labour's historic triumph in the Regency by-election is an endorsement of both the campaigning activism that characterises Regency Labour Party and also of Labour's policies of defending jobs and services.

This boost, coming as it does just before the County Council elections, rejuvenates party activists and sets the scene for 1986 and the election of a Labour Council.

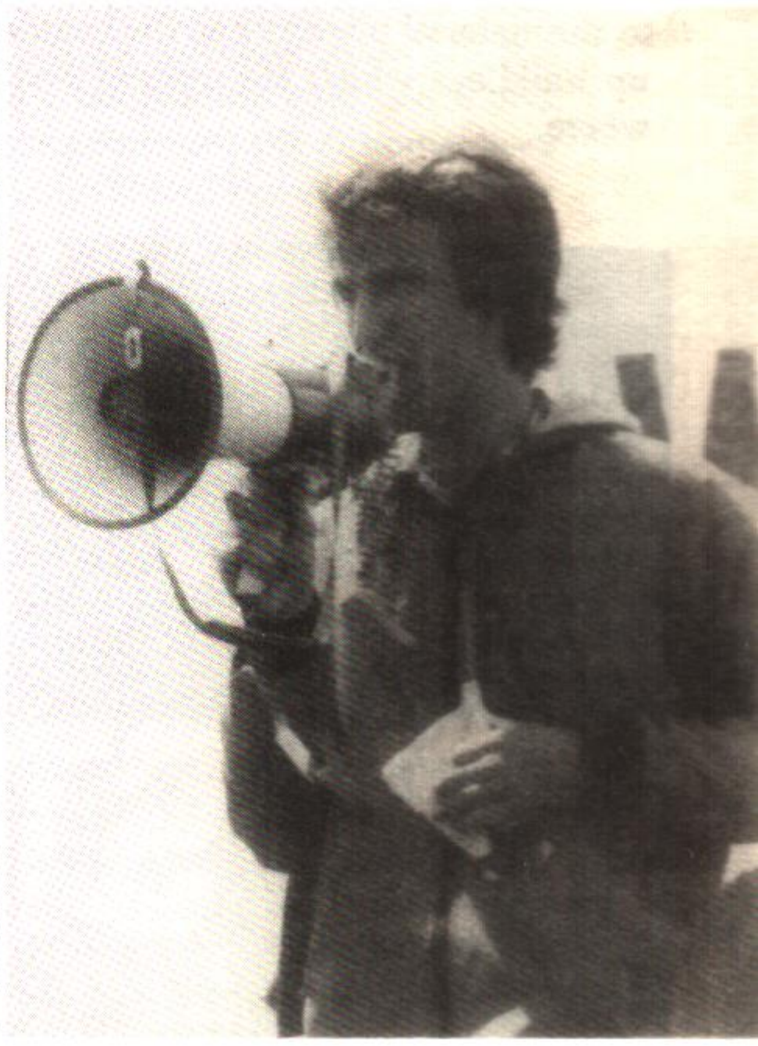
We must seriously review our approach to local government by gaining a better understanding of the implications of our policies and renew our commitment to defending jobs and services.

The election of Sarah Cullen on May 2nd will herald a new Labour stronghold in Regency and virtually guarantee a Labour majority on Brighton Council next year.

Andy Winter

REGENCY RESULT 2 YEARS AGO

REGENCY (three seats). Elected: *Poppy Nettleton (C) 1,208, Christopher Giles (C) 1,175, *Alfred Feld (C) 1,136. Not elected: *John Ungar (Lib All) 1,091, Audrey Simpson (SDP All) 973, Bill Bigwood (Lib All) 831, Brian Wing (Lab) 567, Lynn Rogers (Lab) 559, John Woolerton (Lab) 539.



INTERNATIONAL

Every year on International Womens day, there is a picket of Armagh womans prison. This picket shows solidarity with the republican women who are jailed or on remand in the prison and, for 1985 in particular, was a demonstration against the degrading strip searches which take place there. Every year there is a delegation from Britain at the picket.

I was one of eight women who went from Brighton. Most of the delegation were representing Women and Ireland groups, but other groups were present. These included Troops Out Movement, Sheffield Black womens group, Namibia Solidarity Campaign and most importantly for me and many of us on the delegation, a group of miners wives active in Women Against Pit Closures.

Although the delegation is organised around the picket, which was quite small and low key this year, the value of the experience comes from talking with the people you meet/stay with and getting a small glimpse of life in an occupied country. The women from Brighton stayed in the Ballymurphy estate, just off the Falls Road.

What struck me was the resistance and resiliance of the whole community. The pressure on the individual from the Army and RUC harrassment is great, but it seems that the strength of the community stops them from being ground down. Belfast is famous for its political murals (as seen on posters and postcards!), seeing them on the streets amidst day to day life is stunning. They present a stark contrast to the material poverty and the boarded up buildings which are evident everywhere.

On Saturday afternoon, we saw a burntout bus being dismantled on the Falls Road. A woman in the News Agents told us that it had been burnt the previous night. In her next sentence she casually mentioned that yesterday had been Bobby Sands birthday. In some ways, this small incident summed up, for me, the level of political awareness and debate among the people of West Belfast. In conversations with people topics that come up again and again were: the significance of the miners strike, the state of the labour party, Thatcher and the possibility of her getting in at another election, the popularity of Sinn Fein and their image in Britain....

What was evident was not only the interest in other struggles and the realisation of their connectedness but of exactly *how* they are relevant. Many republican people were talking of their struggle in class terms and were clearly identifying the British ruling class and state as the 'enemy'...

For instance, the Falls Road womens centre is a working class womens centre and women from loyalist areas of Belfast are beginning to use the centre. The women who worked there saw this as great progress and a way of overcoming the British 'divide and rule' policy. The trip was certainly an educational and motivating experience. It made me realise how much educational work needs to be done here!!

Clare Jones

* *Brighton Women & Ireland Group has more information about the strip searches campaign and is prepared to talk to groups, show videos and slides etc.*
Contact them c/o Resources Centre, Prior House



WOMEN AND THE MINERS STRIKE

International Women's Day (March 8) was the focus for various determinedly festive activities in Brighton- films, artwork, a women-only disco, a women's 'bazaar' at the Friends Centre. There, visitors had the opportunity to browse through feminist literature, gain access to information about women's issues and campaigns, or just meet other women in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Children played in one corner, whilst the exuberant sounds of the video *Carry Greenham Home* emerged from another. Stalls offered advice about women's health, Central American solidarity campaigns, violence against women, Irish Republicanism and the peace movement, amongst other items. The ambitions of the day wer e perhaps limited, but nonetheless successful, as women took advantage of the noisy, busy, yet happy and informal environment.

Prior to the day, three of us (women from Brighton's Miners Support Group) felt there was little planned



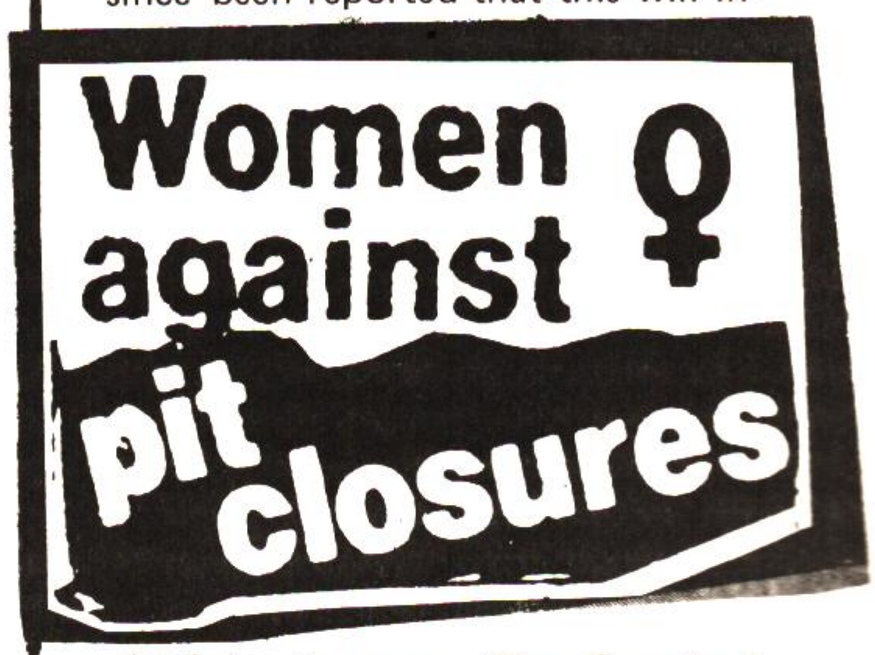
WOMEN'S DAY

which seemed to relate directly to the exciting and important mass mobilisation of working class women in the course of the miners' strike. We believed that to fail to recognise the fight of some of the most oppressed of our gender was a substantial omission on an occasion dedicated to the celebration of women and the opposition to our oppression. In an attempt to remedy the situation, we firstly set up a stall in the 'bazaar' with information about women in the pit communities and their role in the strike. Lest there were those who might still be tempted to regard the latter as an isolated and sectional industrial dispute, we were keen to encourage a recognition that the women's involvement was because of a common interest with their menfolk: that of safeguarding their own communities from the destructive policies of Thatcherism. Secondly, we arranged a public meeting, held on the evening of the 8th at the Eagle pub, with a speaker from Women Against Pit Closures in Deal (home of the miners of Bettshanger colliery) and a speaker from London Lesbian & Gays Support the Miners. Despite the need for women to meet and organise on an autonomous basis, we decided, after some debate, to open the event to both men and women. Not only did we hope this might maximise numerical (and financial!) support, but we felt that International Women's Day should have an educative component, as well as the celebratory. It is vital that men should be made aware of the dynamism and centrality of women's contributions and struggles.

Stephanie (L&GStM) spoke first. Whilst remarking on the significance of alliances formed during the strike-especially in the absence of much needed mass trade union solidarity-she emphasised the opportunity such sympathetic alignment had offered to undermine pernicious, popular stereotypes of homosexuality. In the Welsh mining village her group had supported and visited, people had spoken openly of previously widely held prejudices, which were now recognised as false. Misrepresentations of the miners' cause in the media had forged a common bond with those generally depicted as sexually deviant. Furthermore, it gave some covert gays in the village the chance to express their feelings to those who were quite open about their sexuality. Finally, of course, it was possible for people to define the links between their own experience of state oppression and those of another, hitherto seemingly disparate group.

Then the main speaker, Sue (WAPC), talked at length of her extraordinary and difficult past year. In an anecdotal and surprisingly (given the gravity of the subject) optimistic and witty narative, she told of the seemingly impossible task of maintaining a family of five on £19 a week; of the rancorous divisions, as well as thephysical damage (her car was vandalised and further threats had been made) caused by scabs; of the political victimisation by the NCB (her husband was one of the members of the union committee sacked for taking a TV crew into the mines to disprove Coal Board claims that neglect during the strike had severely damaged a coal face). She referred to her increasing awareness of the bias of the media and the fallacy of police 'neutrality'. (Before the meeting, she had been saying how obvious it hadbecome that there was a war between the 'bosses' class and its hirelings, and the miners and their families, the outcome of which was to have serious repercussions for all working class people). Dwelling on her personal knowledge of the strike, she told us of the growing politicisation of all involved. Even the children perceived the police and scabs as their enemies. For the women, of course, the implementation of the decisions to join men on the picket lines, to co-ordinate the food collections, to leave on speaking tours (nationally and internationally), was vitally significant. They met with opposition from some of the men, and, whilst Sue felt the women's determination and activity had begun to alter not only their own consciousnesses, but those of the men around them, she was aware of the extent of the sexism still to be combatted. We learnt how the women 'stormed' the men-only room in the miners' welfare club. Before the strike, the women entering that bastion of entrenched male privilege was unthinkable. Now women were there to stay. Changes in attitude to childcare and domesticity had also come through involvement: no longer could they be seen as purely female domains when the women were out, raising funds and addressing meetings, and the men were at home. (Some men, of course, responded more willingly than others).

Questions from the floor, (coming mainly from women, as urged by the chairperson), centred on the effect of their actions on the women as women, and whether the transformations in gender relations could be sustained with the momentum of the strike disappearing. Forcing men to recognise necessary change is one thing; maintaining the substantial gains in the face of a period of post-strike retrenchment is another. Sue felt optimistic about the women's collective strength and ability to build on the positive consequences of the women's engagement in the struggle. She also spoke of the hope of the Women Against Pit Closures groups continuing on a national basis. (It has since been reported that this will indeed be the case. 'The Guardian', 6 April 1985). The problem of representation within the NUM was also mentioned. Whilst there was a feeling that greater female involvement would be desirable, the possibility of the women's network becoming a mere adjunct of the male-dominated NUM was obviously worrying.



Despite the uncertainty about the exact future of Women Against Pit Closures groups, there could be no doubt about their tenacious bravery and achievements during the past year. Sue's concentration on the women's burgeoning confidence and the alterations in their home lives was a telling reminder of the feminist tenet that the domestic sphere cannot be divorced from social and political forces; indeed, that it is constituted by them. In defying the onslaught against their livelihood and pattern of existence, many women had also begun to recognise and resist the oppression they suffer within their class. Sue left us to draw our own conclusions about the importance of the miner's strike on International

conclusions about the importance of the miner's strike on International
Women's Day, but those conclusions are, perhaps, inherent in the women's activities in striking pit communities.

Linda Steele

The SPD: facing both ways

The state of German Social Democracy

Pete Lambert

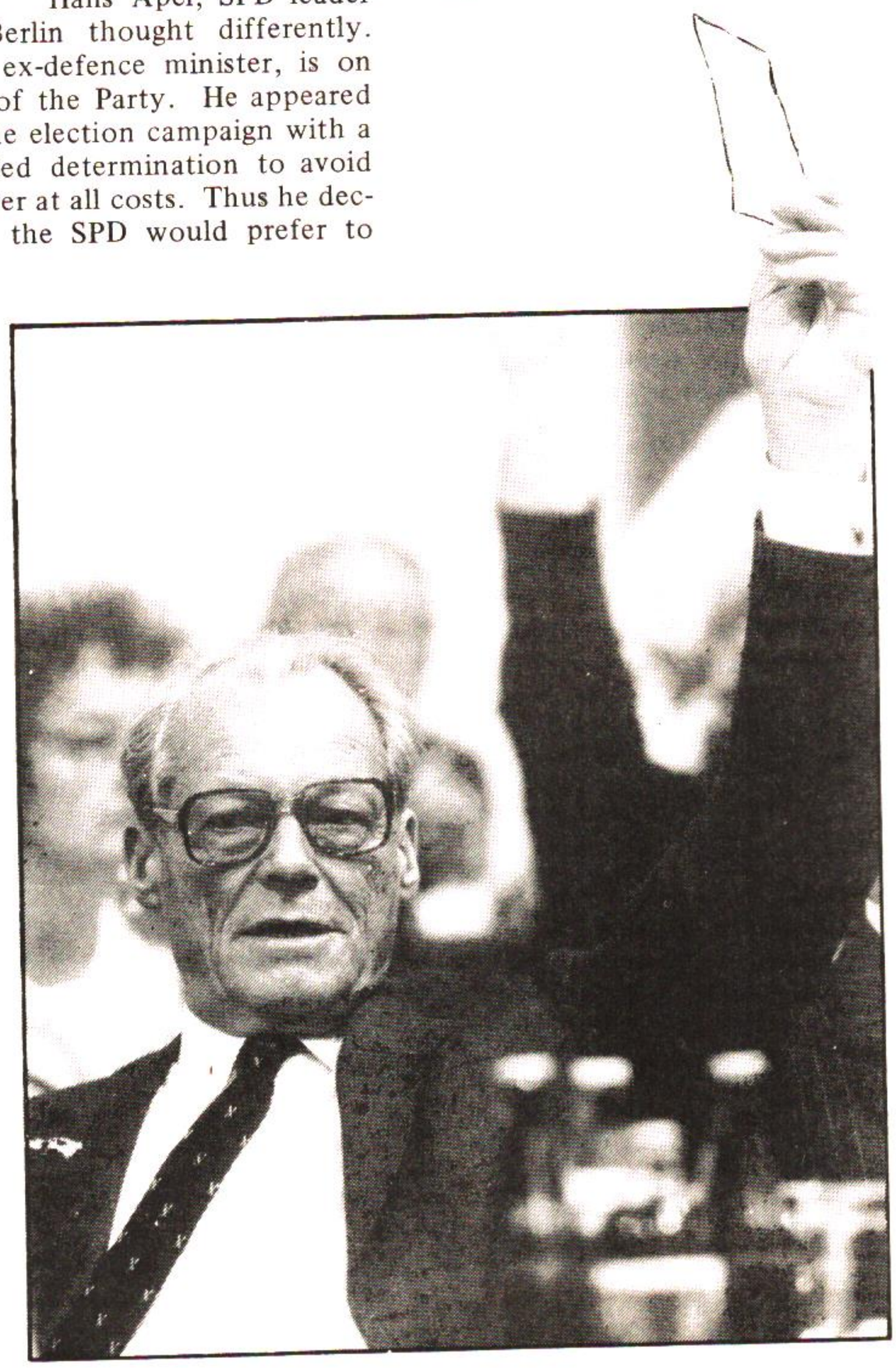
In early March, the SPD faced an electoral test in two German states. The manner in which it campaigned in these two elections left open the question of the over-all strategy its leaders propose to adopt ina future challenge to the ruling Conservative/ Liberal coalitionand did so quite intentionally. Nevertheless, it does not seem by any means premature to begin to draw lessons from the Social Democrats performance in the recent local elections.

One of these two campaigns took place in West Berlin. In many respects, it is a city which would seem to lend itself admirably to the presentation of the left face of German Social Democracy. Nowhere else in Germany is there so large and so readily identifiable a Left vote, boosted by the peculiar attraction Berlin seems to hold for almost every footloose radical in the Federal Republic. With the Berlin Greens in some disarray, notoriously vulnerable to neo-Nazi entryism (a result at once of the Greens devolved organisation and their nebulous ideology)and disowned by their party nationally, all seemed to bid fair for a concerted drive on the part of the SPD to regain lost ground on the Left.

Hans Apel, SPD leader in West Berlin thought differently. Apel, the ex-defence minister, is on the Right of the Party. He appeared to enter the election campaign with a single-minded determination to avoid taking power at all costs. Thus he declared that the SPD would prefer to tolerate a continued CDU-FDP State administration than to enter a coalition with the green Alternative List. With happy indifference to the consequences he made it as hard as he possibly could for any Socialist to support the working class party.

The Saarland, the scene of the other election, is socially as different from Berlin as it could be, though alike in having experienced a narrowly elected CDU-FDP regional government. It is a heavily industrialised area, but suffering decline and increasingly severe unemployment. Here, arguments of caution might have seemed more appropriate than in Berlin. Would a campaign focussing on issues raised by the Greens, would demands for disarmament let alone no growth economics, benefit the SDP and appear of pressing concern to its traditional industrial working class base?

Oskar Lefontaine, a rising star of the SPD and reputed to have the ear of Willi Brandt, evidently thought they would. He campaigned vigorously on Left policies, not exactly in order to facilitate coalition with the Greens, but rather to obviate the necessity of coalescing at all. In short, he appeared at once to renounce the middle ground which Apel in Berlin was retreating to, and to be as insistent on gaining power as Apel was on avoiding it.



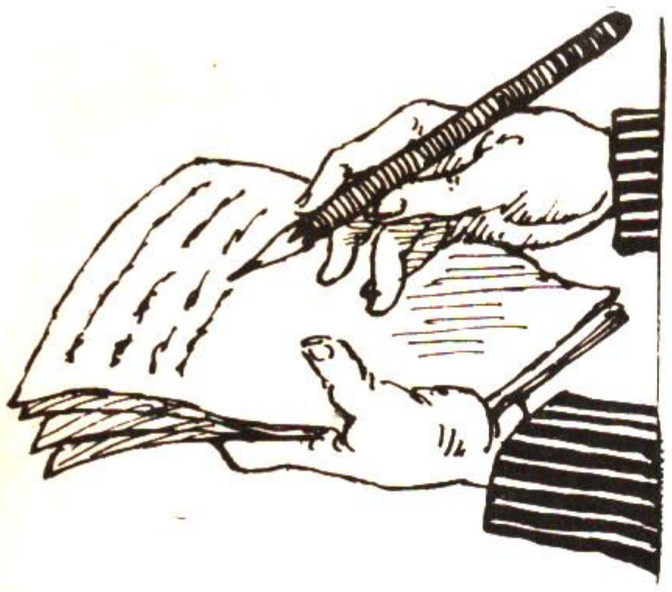
Ninety minutes after the close of the poll on March 10, Apel conceded victory to the CDU in Berlin. This unseemly alacrity in heralding in a further era of right wing rule was entirely of a piece with his behaviour throughout the campaign. His centrist electoralism yielded a catch of just 33% of the vote,compared with a total of 54% for the conservative-liberal coalition. The Alternative List, with nearly 11% did slightly less well than had been anticipated, but their loss was obviously not the SPD's gain. Presumably, there was a substantial abstention on the Left.

In the Saarland the story was quite different. The Greens share of the poll fell to 2.6% and are therefore not entitled to representation. Lafontaine's strategy paid off: with nearly 49% of the vote, the Social Democrats are now the ruling party in the Saarland.

One might have felt that the contrast between the respective fates of the Berlin and Saarland strategies might have required no further comment. But politics in the SPD are rarely so simple.

Willy Brandt, apparently concerned that the SPD's image nationally might be damaged (!) by a too close identification with the Greens spent the run-up to the state elections exploring possibilities of a return to the 'Great Coalition' uniting SPD, CDU and FDP in office and packing off the peace movement and ecologists to thepolitical ghetto where their subculture can continue its mirky existence without seriously impinging on the counsels of government. It was precisely on questions of foreign and economic policy that Brandt invited the CDU-FDP to define areas of future co-operation with the SPD. No great flights of imagination are required to imagine the stance such a coalition would take with regard, for instance, to NATO and its missiles. Brandt is a much admired tactician. It is therefore very much to be hoped that,whatever his shortcomings as a principled socialist his populist and electoralist instincts will get the better of him at last. For, if it demonstrated nothing else, Lafontaine's triumph in the Saar must surely have shown that, for any electoralist in the SPD, an anti-NATO, anti-nuclear andsocially radical platform is the only rational course to adopt. The pursuit of missiles and the 'middle ground' appears unlikely to provide enough votes even to secure for the Social Democrats the dubious advantage of sharing office with Herr Kohl.

LETTERS



ST PETERS DEBATE – A REPLY FROM THE CHAIR

Graham Dawson's article on St Peters and the miners strike has caused quite a stir. Its sorry tale of a ward failing to organise effectively around the miners strike has provoked strong reactions both inside and outside the party.

On behalf of the St. Peters Ward Executive- yes, *those who attend meetings* I would like to make a few points. Whilst recognising a number of telling observations and uncomfortable political home truths, I/We feel it necessary to point out some factual corrections.

Firstly the article is, not as presented in the **Community Politics Briefing cum Labour Campaigner**, a 'Ward Report'. It is a polemic, someones strongly worded and personal interpretation. *A more accurate report* on the state of the party in February 1985 would surely refer to the process of **rejuvenation** that the ward has **undergone** over the past four months.

A working party was set up in November to look into ways of **enlivening** ward meetings and attracting the greater participation of party members. Its report was overwhelmingly carried at the ward's December and January meetings and St Peters is now formally committed to less business at meetings, more discussion and debate, a new post of Political Education Officer and a new system of local street contacts (based on the miners collecting rounds). In addition, at its AGM in January the ward elected a new executive composed almost entirely of members who had been centrally involved in the **'rejuvenation'** working party. Clearly things are happening in St Peters which **Community Politics Briefing cum Labour Campaigners'** Ward Report failed to mention.

Secondly the article describes St. Peters as *'a solid Labour ward'*, when only 2 years ago it was a split ward in terms of council representation and before that, a *'solid Tory ward'*. If St. Peters **now** has 4 Labour councillors and appears a solid ward this is in large part attributable to the good many hours of organising, campaigning and canvassing that members have given to ensure the success of the ward's election candidates. Last May, for instance, Jenny Backwell's re-election to the borough council with an increased majority was one of the best results for Labour among all the sitting councillors in Brighton. A success for which the (maligned) Ward Organiser above all deserves great credit.

Clearly the frustration which Graham articulates is very strongly felt and widely spread across many wards and among many Labour activists- particularly those who have become involved through the miners strike. It is recognised on one hand that individual members have given a great deal of time, money and effort ot the miners cause. But it is felt that the party as a whole has been unable or unwilling to draw the diverse forms of support together into a coherent strategy designed to build mass support for the NUM. The leadership at national and local level has (usually) been happy to endorse the actions of party activists, but it has not initiated those actions nor given the strike the full degree of backing and public profile necessary for an NUM victory. The Labour Party, a party which has historically sought to defend and advance the demands of labour, seems unable to organise a united and effective response to the most important class struggle since the war.

How we, as a national and local party, confront this apparent powerlessness- and the frustration it generates- is crucial. We can partake in a new variant of an old right/left debate- the strike as **'an electoral liability'** versus the strike as a **'celebration of class solidarity** or (hopefully) we can reconsider our approach to our major task; making radical and oppositional politics more popular. A debate about how we involve the party membership, how we engage people and intervene in experiences outside the party, how we present our ideas on our terms and how we make connections between different forms of opposition- say, the miners strike, the campaign against cuts and even a campaign to save a local school swimming pool- is most necessary and long overdue. If Graham's article has helped to focus attention on such a debate then it is to be welcomed.

Tim Lambert
Chair of St. Peters Labour Party

ST PETERS DEBATE – A REPLY TO THE CHAIR

I welcome Tim's reply but find that he doesn't engage with my main argument.

Reading between the lines, one can guess that my article was felt to attack and *'malign'* **individuals** in the ward, denigrating their hard work and calling them to task for failing to deliver during the strike. In fact, I have a great deal of respect for their dedication and commitment, and see no sense in personal attack. My intention was rather to introduce the question of all those other comrades – by far the majority– whose LP membership is effectively tokenistic. They pays their dues and makes their mark on the day, and that's about it. Is there, perhaps, a significant link between the dedication of the few and the tokenism of the many? And what relationship does the LP set up between them? My remark about St. Peters being a *safe* seat stands corrected, but my point remains: enough Labour voters to return a clean sweep of councillors; membership of around 180; a handful of activists. Why?

My article suggested that the 'political culture' of the LP might be an important factor. We run on the prickings of Conscience and the promptings of Duty. (That stern rallying cry, *'It is the duty of every socialist to...'* is heard on the far left most of all). This voluntarism runs deep: *'if only I do more, then we'll win.'* I share in this myself, and felt it acutely during the strike. But there **are** limits and we are **all** defensive of those we have chosen for ourselves. So I find perfectly understandable the *'failure'* of people who have just fought an election campaign and are routinely up to their ears in work anyway, to organise around the strike as well. Dedication has a limit; people have other needs and commitments. In the LP it seems to be hard to say this. But perhaps this duty and sacrifice ethos is one of the reasons many people are not prepared to get involved at all? If you dip your big toe in, you too find yourself up to your ears in water before you know where you are.

For example, its been suggested to me privately that, after my article, my head is 'on the block'. Unless I turn out to every possible party meeting, go on all the canvassing and petitioning events, get involved in fund-raising and the newsletter, etc, – then I'm fair game. Its as though I have no right to speak without the soundest of credentials – on LP terms; as though without them its not my party. To become active is to cross the Tiber (or is it the Styx?) out of ordinary life. And its exactly this that most people refuse to do.

I agree with Tim's points about the need to avoid unhelpful infighting, but I also believe one of the preconditions for the LP's success in *'making radical and oppositional politics more popular'* is to take a long hard look at the state of its current 'popularity'. My article may have articulated frustration about the LP's involvement in the strike among ward activists. More importantly, I think it articulated the feelings of many 'tokenistic' members, as well as many people who aren't in the LP at all: not just about the strike but about the LP itself. These people are already committed socialists of high political awareness. Many are experienced and currently active campaigners and organisers. Many have recently been active in the LP. None of them are active in the LP today. These are the people the party needs to relate more actively to, if it is to succeed in 'popularising' socialism among those who are **not** already socialists.

It is not just my 'personal interpretation', but a matter of fact, that many of them aren't involved because they find the LP frustrating and boring. This isn't simply a question of policies. They don't like its routines, the way it conducts its business, the way it organises its activities. They don't find it relevant to the way they live their lives. It doesn't provide them with the space as socialists, to do what they are good at doing and enjoy doing, in ways that are connected to politics. It doesn't connect with and express their political feelings. Much of the time it seems narrowly inward-looking, existing in a space of its own, unable to relate – as the LP – to other kinds of directly political activity that people are involved in. To my mind, its not so much a question of how we 'intervene' in experiences outside the party, as of learning from those experiences, and adapting our internal practice as a result. The kinds of political work that excite and stimulate people, or give vent to their anger or give them the beginnings of control over their lives, nearly all take place outside the LP: in forms of feminist, green, cultural, community, anti-imperialist and racist, even minority-nationalist politics. Through these forms many people have come to feel politics to be central and relevant: and many want to generalise outwards, into a broad socialist

LETTERS

movement that connects up, as Tim suggests, many different forms of opposition. The LP needs a political culture that is responsive to these developments, if people are to feel this is **their** party, where what they think and feel matters and makes a difference, and which offers them something (in return for the hard work more of them might then be willing to put in).

This is not a problem unique to St Peters Ward. The LP nationally is passing through a crisis of representation concerning its adequacy to represent its chosen constituency. This constituency can't be **assumed** anymore: think of South Wales, where some of the largest and deepest rooted LP majorities in Britain were decimated by swings to the Tories in '79 and the Alliance in '83. It has to be built by making the party relevant to people's lives in the widest possible sense. Of course its **also** about getting them out to vote. Dedication and hard work are at a premium: and the duty and sacrifice ethos does deliver. How else, at present, do you get people out canvassing? Without the faithful few, the LP (and the Left) would collapse. But nor will the faithful few win socialism. The days when the LP could function as an electoral machine and not much else are over, and in the days to come we'll need to mobilise the popular support Tim wants even to sustain our elected representatives in office.

The difficulties of changing a political culture and building that support are of course major, and long term. But I don't mean to be negative. The LP nationally and locally **is** moving, and in St Peters, too. small beginnings have been made. Tim is right to mention the **rejuvenation** group, but a little disingenuous in not mentioning that I was involved, and indeed proposed it initially. I, too, am one of *'those-who-attend-meetings'* And now I have to end, so I can go and deliver my election leaflets...

Graham Dawson
St. Peters ward

JEWISH IDENTITY

Dear Labour Campaigner,

As long time members of Hove CLP we are glad to see the appearance of your new paper. As Jews, we are glad to see that you are still as concerned with Jewish matters as ever. We'd be happy to continue the discussion about *'Jewish identity'* that Tony Greenstein began in the interview with Nira Yuval-Davies. First, however, we'd like to clear up a small but important point arising in your report on the GMC motion to disaffiliate Poale Zion. Your correspondent says that *'the majority of the Jewish members of the GC supported the motion.'*

We'd like to know how your correspondent decides which GC members are Jewish and which aren't. We can only assume that she regards anyone born of Jewish parents as Jewish. This is the criterion that Hitler used, and it is quite wrong. Socialists should be able to do a bit better than this. Here's a try.

Jewishness is obviously not something genetic. It is well-known that Jews belong to virtually every race in the world. There are Chinese Jews, Arab Jews, Black Jews and white Jews.

Jewishness is in fact a cultural matter. It isn't something you **ARE**, its something you **DO**. Certain things that some people do can be described as Jewish. For instance, many Jews light two candles at sundown every Friday and say some words in Hebrew. This is a Jewish activity. Anyone can do it if they want, regardless of who their parents are. With cultural activities (as with anything else), the more effort you put into studying them and thinking about them, the more you get out of them. But anyone can participate to the extent they choose.

Some people whose parents participated in Jewish activities, and who therefore gained from knowledge of Jewish culture as children, later decide not to participate themselves. They have every right to do this. They do not, however have the right to do this and still call themselves Jews. Jews are people who do Jewish things: celebrate Jewish festivals, study Jewish culture and history, participate in Jewish communal life. People who do none of these things are not Jews in any useful sense, no matter who their parents are. The opinion of such people about Jewish matters such as disaffiliation of Poale Zion has no special status whatsoever.

We do not deny that such people can still suffer from anti-semitism in a variety of ways. Anyone who identifies as a Jew in order to make a stand against antisemitism deserves nothing but praise. If this leads to active involvement in Jewish matters as well, so much the better. We repeat, however, that just because Hitler adopted a certain criterion for who he hated, that doesn't mean that socialists have to accept this criterion.

We hope that this clears up the point. We would like to wish you and all your readers Good Yomtov for Pesach.

Yours in Solidarity,

Chana Moshenska
Raphael Salkie

IN REPLY

Really this letter consists of a lot of mystical nonsense. Apparently you are Jewish if you light a couple of candles on Friday night but if you devote your time to taking on the anti-Semites of the NF tough luck.

They ask how do I know that certain members of Brighton GC are Jewish and antiZionist. Because they define themselves as such and who am I to question that?

Yes of course Hitler used the definition of Jews as those whose parents (and grandparents & great-grandparents) were Jewish. So too do the Jewish and religious Zionist authorities, none more so than in the Israeli state where the Rabbinical Courts have on occasion consulted the Nazi records to establish whether someone is Jewish or not. It is that definition that the racist Law of Return rests upon. laid down by the Halacha, the Rabbinical code, is a racial one. It is one accepted by 99% of world Jewry.

Raf/Chanas problem is in locating Jewish identity in culture. Jewish identity survives only so long as there is a distinct political and even economic role that Jews can play.

Culture is a reflection of that role. Today the role of Jews in the world is primarily political not economic, hence why Jewish identity, culture, religion has been Zionised and why a few of us define our identity as anti-Zionists (and anti-fascists). In any case there is no specific Jewish culture,

Their definition of Jews as people who do **'Jewish things'**begs a question. Who is to define what is a *Jewish thing*?

There are many Jewish radicals who do not identify with Jewish communal life as it is internally suffocating, permeated with bourgeois and anti-Arab racist values

We do however have a particular claim to some authority regarding Poale Zion, as the latter claims to be a Jewish socialist society not simply a Zionist socialist group

Tony Greenstein

Dear Labour Campaigner,

I would like to correct an error which occurred in the first issue of L.C.

Your report of Marine Ward's AGM said that I was 'hanging on' as a delegate by virtue of being elected Secretary. In fact Di Stansfield, who lives in Whitehawk, was unanimously elected this year as Secretary, with Jon Allen (FBU), last year's Secretary, elected as Chair. I have only ever been Secretary in Marine in a temporary capacity back in 1983, when I was a delegate from the Womens Section. This

CONT. NEXT PAGE

Letters CONT.

year, as in 1984, I was pleased to have been elected as a ward delegate.

The results of the AGM may have seemed disorganised from the pointof view of groupings outside the ward; but I would resist the impression that ward activity in general is. Over the last few months there has been some very effective campaigning work done on housing issues, led by the new ward secretary. A lot of energy is going in this direction; and I hope L.C. will concentrate on this over the coming months.

Yours (hanging- on -in - there!)

Gill Haynes

QUEENS PARK WARD REPORT

Over the past 11 months, the main activity in the Ward has been support for the Miners, in the form of twice weekly collections. This has been a great success not only in the £4 500 approx. raised during the strike, but also in contacting members and Labour supporters, bringing about an increase in membership and feelings of cohesion throughout the Ward. Attendance at Ward meetings has risen too, and a new format has been implemented so that business is carried out quickly in order that we have time for political discussion and speakers at the meetings. To date we have had a ward member and student nurse speaking on the *'controversy of Aids'*, Julien Barker on *'Homopathy and the NHS'*, Les Sweeting a sacked Kent miner on the Amnesty campaign for the 700 victimised miners and Brenda Wilkinson speaking about her experiences as a delegate from the National Womens Committee sent to the womens prison in Armagh where strip searching is used to break and humiliate the republican women prisoners. We also had a lively debate on a motion calling on Neil Kinnock to resign. The motion was passed by a majority of nearly 4-1. All speakers have provided a positive response at meetings and resolutions arising from these talks are awaiting debate. At the next meeting we will be having a speaker on the Teachers Dispute and a speaker on Enoch Powells Bill.

Canvassing for the County Council elections is also well under-way with our last ward meeting being held in the Committee rooms to familiarise all members with canvassing procedures and encourage those who formerly felt diffident about canvassing to become involved. Again this proved a success with 12 new faces coming forward to supplement our canvassing team so that we feel confident of a win for Labour on May 2nd.

Gill Stephens
Secretary- Queens Park Ward

REVIEW

RACISM AWARENESS TRAINING

'RAT and the Degradation of Black Struggle' **is published in** *Race & Class,* **Spring 1985, price £2.50. available from Institute of Race Relations, 247 Pentonville Road, London N1 and Public House Bookshop.**

A Sivanandan, **director of the IRR, is author of 'Race, class and the state', 'From immigration control to 'induced repatriation', 'Imperialism and disorganic development in the Silicon Age' . A selection of his articles is published as** *A Different Hunger* **by Pluto Press (1982)**

RAT — a technique now avidly availed of by the statutory and voluntary sectors — education and the church— is, says Sivanandan, nothing more than a fake therapy, a substitute for anti-racist struggle. Racism for its practitioners *'is a combination of mental illness, original sin and biological determinism.'* **All those born white in a white society, RAT believes, are born racist. The best one can ever become is an** *'anti-racist racist.*,

The Degradation of Black Struggle

RAT's ascendancy today (with its pretensions to politics) is itself a reflection of *'the flight from class within the Black movement'* and the degradation of black struggle. What had made 'black' a political colour common to Afro-Cabibbeans and Asians and linked to class was the sense of 'black community' which grew up here in the 50s and 60s through a culture of 'black resistance' to racism and colonialism. The state policies of multi-culturalism and later ethnicity were attempts to break down that culture and destroy the sense of 'black community'. In the process, he argues, a class of black collaborators was created— and it is from this class that the justification of RAT has come.

An Import From the USA

The credo that all whites are racists, whether intentional or not; that all whites have power over all non-whites by virtue of skin colour; that racism is a disease of the white psyche to be cured by therapy, was created in America in the wake of its 1960s 'race riots'. Educationalists and psychotherapists exploiting the language of Black Power and drawing on techniques from the Women's Movement concocted a set of exercises to deal with such 'personal racism', which became known as RAT.

LORD SCARMAN'S REPORT

But it was Lord Scarman's report on the 'Brixton disorders' of 1981 which gave the green light to RAT in the UK. *'Racism for Scarman was in the mind'* and what he effectively did was 'to *reduce institutional racism to black perception and replace it with personal prejudice — and so shift the object of anti-racist struggle from the state to the individual, from changing society to changing people, from improving the lot of whole black communities, mired in racism and poverty, to improving the lot of 'black individuals'.*

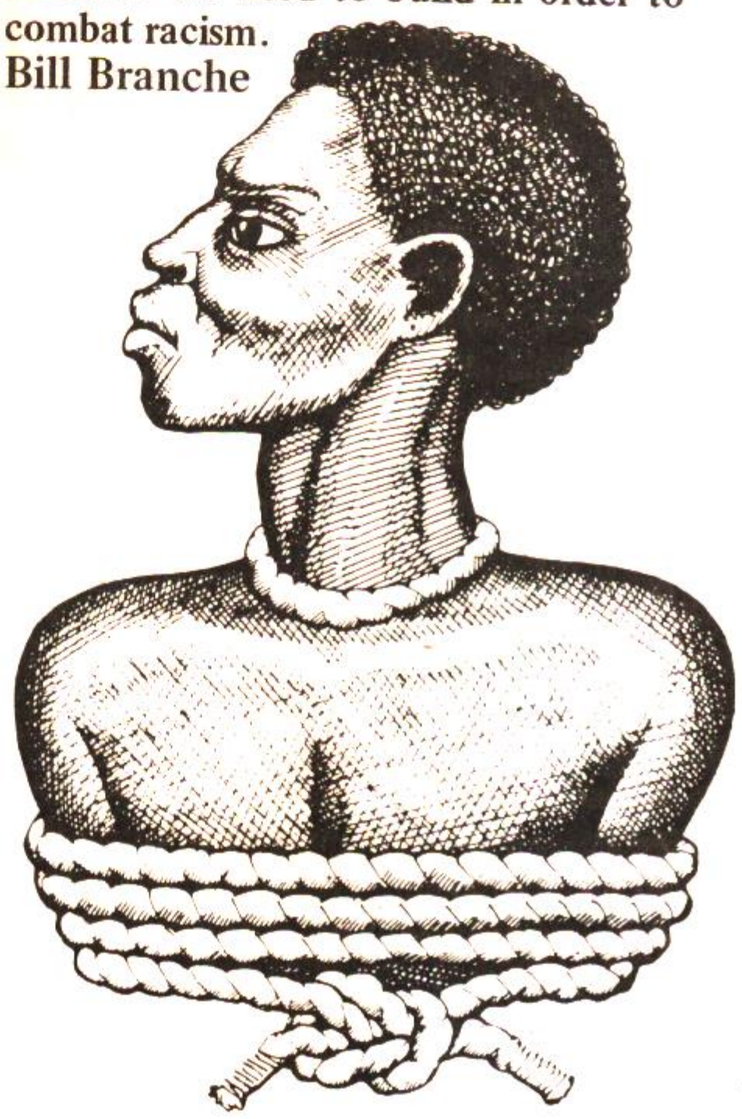
PUTTING CLASS 'BACK INTO RACE

Sivanandan sets the race/class dynamic straight:

'Racism is not as RAT believes a white problem, but a problem of an exploitative white power structure; power is not something white people are born into, but that which they derive from theirposition in a complex race/sex/class hierachy; oppression does not equal exploitation; ideas do not equal ideology; the personal is not the political, but the political is personal; and personal liberation is not political liberation.'

Not to distinguish between the different racisms of the different classes and the power that each class wields, argues Sivanandan, affects the strategies and alliances we need to build in order to combat racism.

Bill Branche



BRIGHTON LABOUR

CAMPAIGNER

POWELL'S THREAT



WOMEN'S ABORTION AND FERTILITY RIGHTS UNDER ATTACK: OPPOSE THE POWELL BILL

Enoch Powell's Unborn Child (Protection) Bill is a testimony to its racist, far right sponsor's cunning ingenuity. It emerges at a time when the (im) Moral Right (Gillick et al.) is gaining in confidence, its reactionary views popularised and encouraged by the gutter press (witness the designation of AIDS as a 'gay plague', its victims somehow 'meriting' its appalling consequences). The bill also capitalises on the fears and confusion about the implications of embryo research and *in vitro* fertilisation in the wake of the Warnock report and recent scientific developments. Advances in genetic science far surpass the limits of the moral dynamic in whcih the former should ideally take place. A retrogressive step, the bill pre-empts genuinely rational and ethical debate about the treatment of the one couple in ten which is infertile and the contribution to eradication of congenital disorders (such as diabetes and Down's Syndrome) that embryo research can provide.

If the Bill is enacted, the permission of the Social Services Secretary will be needed for each human ovum to be fertilised outside the womb and the woman receiving the implanation will have to be named. Apart from the possible distress or embarrasment caused by the patient's loss of anonymity, IVF fertilisation has a low success rate and more than one fertilised egg usually needs to be transplanted. Experimentation will become illegal and the suffering of thousands of human beings born with disabilities will be overlooked in favour of what is only a *potential*, not an s

with disabilities will be overlooked in favour of what is only a *potential*, not an *actual* human being: the foetus.

The possibility of such legislation obviously threatens women's control over our own bodies and hence our lives. Not only does it seek to prevent research into infertility and genetic abnormalities, but it clearly constitutes an attack on abortion rights. At present, these are insufficient – NHS abortions are difficult to obtain in most areas and women are forced to turn to charities such as BPAS and private clinics, if they can afford to. If legal status is conferred upon the foetus (or, significantly, the 'Unborn Child' of the Bill's title), the next step will be to ban or restrict abortion (and perhaps contraceptive and post-coital methods such as the IUD and the 'morning after pill') on the grounds that it is destructive of human life. Nobody should be fooled by Powell's claim ('The Guardian', 16.02.85) that he is not concerned with abortion. Support for the bill from anti-abortion pressure groups SPUC (Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child) and Life, as well as from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Hume (who wrote to every MP urging support for the Bill) and the Church of England's General Synod (who voted not to support embryo experimentation) suggests otherwise. Unfortunately the Parliamentary Labour Party (despite Labour Party policy advocating 'a woman's right to choose') does not seem to have awoken to the fact. Instead of imposing a whip, the Party allowed a free vote and the second reading (agreed by 238votes to 66) saw 44 Labour MPs (including left wingers Bob Parry and Tom Pendry) voting for, with only 41 against.

Powell's bill must also be seen in the context of a wider attempt both to reverse the gains established in an era of liberalisation during the 60s and to increase state control in many areas of our lives- political, social, domestic, sexual and so on. Of course for women, any move to reduce or deny reproductive independence will increase the pressure to leave the workforce and return to childbearing as our sole function. sDespite these issues– and the bill's Parliamentary

childbearing as our sole function. Despite these issues– and the bill's Parliamentary success thus far – united opposition has been slow to emerge in Brighton. Several groups (Labour Party Women's Section, SWP, RCP et al) have been campaigning against the Bill, but an amalgamation of these forces has only just been achieved, due mainly to an SWP initiative.

Approximately 30 people attended the first meeting (15 April) of the Brighton Campaign Against the Powell Bill. Given the severe time restrictions placed on effective mobilisation, (the 3rd reading is on May 3), it had a necessarily practical emphasis. Among the actions decided upon (or announced, if already organised) were the following.

*A picket of Tory MP's (Bowden and Amery) surgeries on Friday 19th April. Approximately 50 people attended, but, unsurprisingly, we were not admitted to see our MP's. We were, however, exposed to the fine sensibilities of one policeman who, no doubt appreciating the religious tranquility of the occasion, told us not to shout slogans as we were in a church hall.

*Mass petitioning in Churchill Square (Sat). (Whilst it is impossible, at this stage, to rival the 2 million signatures collected by those in favour of the Bill, it was felt that this action would increase general awareness of the attack on women's abortion and fertility rights and would clarify some of the areas of public uncertainty).

*A public meeting in Brighton.(Thursday 25th).

*National Abortion Campaign march in London. (Sat 27th- coaches arranged).

Also mentioned was the CP's anti-Gillick meeting at the Queens Head, near Brighton station on May 9 at 7.45, and the NAC anti-Gillick march in London on June 23rd.)

Those who attended were urged to put forward emergency motions at union meetings and it was agreed that the Trades Council should be called upon to pass a resolution condemning the Bill.

Recent reports suggest the Bill's opponents may try to talk it out during the Report stage. One cannot, however, depend on the intricacies of the legislative procedures to defeat the Bill; Powell has proved to be quite adept at manipulating the system himself, having already ensured the Bill was sent to the Committee stage 6 weeks earlier than expected. Whatever happens, the parliamentarians alone evidently cannot be relied upon to safeguard women's rights. Moreover even if the Bill were to fall,socialists and feminists could well find themselves having to argue against the conclusions of the Warnock Report (roughly, that 'life' begins not at conception but after 14 days). We must ensure that we point out the distinction between that which is human but not human being – a group of cells, be they for example, dermic or embryonic- and that which is now human life – actual, not merely potential human beings, many of whom will suffer if Powell's bill becomes law.

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