GREATER MANCHESTER LABOUR 10p

BRIEFING

No.1.

MANCHESTER BACKS BENN

Tony Benn has emerged as the clear favourite of constituency Labour parties in Greater Manchester for the deputy leadership.

He has received 10 nominations from this area compared with 3 for John Silkin and just 1 for Denis Healey. The 10 CLPs are Bolton East;Eccles;Hazelgrove; Heywood and Royton;Manchester Ardwick,Blackley,Central and Moss Side;Salford East; and Stockport North.

This list underestimates the extent of the support for Benn. For instance, Ashton-under-Lyne CLP voted to nominate him but failed to get listed in the conference agenda. Other CLPs which did not bother to nominate, such as Manchester Withington, are also likely to back him.



BENN AND THE LCC

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee is regularly dubbed by the media as a "Bennite" group. But the LCC was not set up by Tony Benn, its purpose is not to be a fan club, and anyone's judgement can be questioned at times. Nobody is perfect but we are backing Tony Benn in this contest because he is the leading exponent of both the policies and the political strategy which the LCC stands for.

Labour Co-ordinating Committee

Left Labour Activity

The STOCKPORT TRIBUNE GROUP began about 12 months ago and more or less folded following the first few meetings. 3 months ago it restarted and has held 3 successful meetings. Pete Kelly, GMC Police Committee chairperson, will be speaking at the next meeting on the role and accountability of the Police.

Their meetings are open to Tribune members alone. Their basic aim is to promote discussion within the Party, concentrating on topical issues which may lead to activity, resolutions and campaigns at a Constituency and Branch level.

3 out of the 4 Stockport Constituencies (Stockport North, Stockport South and Hazelgrove) have a fairly strong left wing tradition, but since their meetings are mostly taken up with organisational matters, there is little time for discussion, which can lead to confusion on important issues.

Chairperson, Ken Bagnall reported that the Tribune Group also intends to promote the Labour Party and the left in particular, in a broader way, by holding public meetings with well-known speakers.

MANCHESTER LABOUR LEFT began meeting in May and is open to all Party members. It meets on the 3rd Friday of each month (7.30, Star & Garter, Fairfield St., Manchester) and aims to provide a forum for left wing Party members for discussion of the key issues being faced in Manchester. Discussion has focussed round the composition of the panel of candidates for the "all-out" City Council elections in May next year and the Moss Side riots, as well as other issues. A total of 80 people have attended the meetings with an average of 35 for a single meeting.

Is there any organised LEFT LABOUR activity in your area?

NHS war plans



In 1977 the Labour Government issued a circular dealing with NHS planning in the event of war, particularly nuclear war. Health Authorities have been making war plans since then without much public comment.

Manchester's plan appeared in 1980. The appointment of War Planning Officers at a cost of £400,000 was recently announced by the Government.

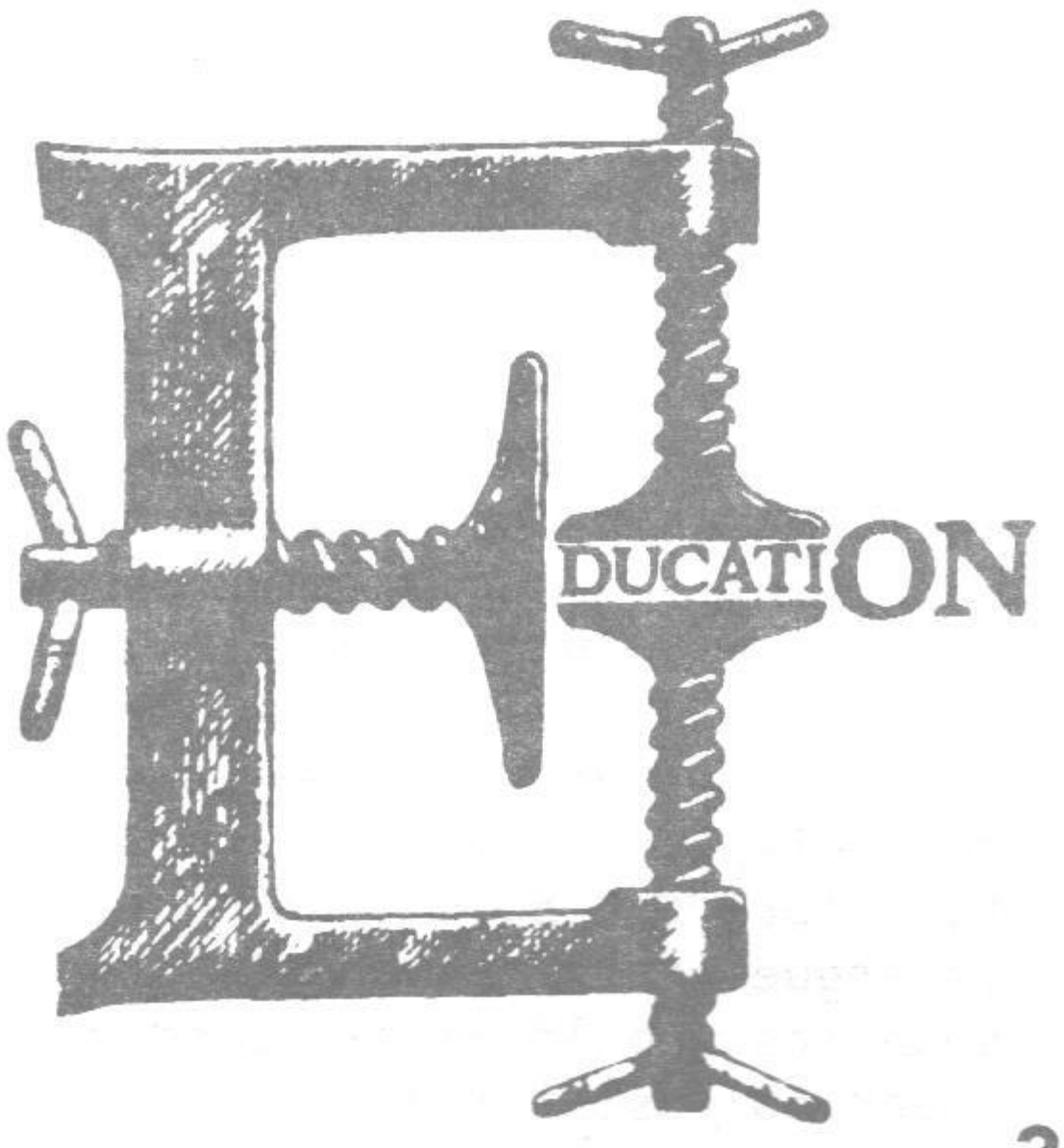
NHS War Plans (continued)

The 3 Manchester Community Health Councils together with Withington Against the Missiles, have organised opposition to these proposals given the futility of undertaking any planning for a post-nuclear health service and the obscenity of providing this extra money when the NHS badly needs extra cash.

What is happening in other areas?

`Science for girls´ Tameside's initiative

Education Committees and Councils have a habit of confusing changes in educational administration with changes in education itself. Rarely do they intervene directly in the content of the syllabus. Tameside, however, has started to do this through a small number of specialist appointments into their secondary schools, to encourage girls to take science.



Recent figures demonstrate that fewer than one fifth of entrants for CSE and O-level physics were girls, while for chemistry it was less than a third. Science is currently a masculine subject. Even those girls who opt for science consistently underacheive.

Tameside chose to intervene in a positive manner by the appointment of 2 teachers with the specfic responsibility of changing the image of science for girls. They will look at syllabus modifications, changes in teaching methods and other ways of increasing the uptake of science amongst girls. This scheme came into operation a few weeks ago with the start of the new school year. It might well be worthwhile for other local authorities to monitor the success of this example of positive discrimination with a view to emulating this scheme themselves.

GMC Labour Party news

THE COUNTY LABOUR GROUP - First Impressions: from Roger Done, newly elected County Councillor for the Baguley - Brooklands division in Wythenshawe.

The Labour landslide in May 1981, when 79 members were elected, followed an equally large Tory landslide four years earlier. As a result less than 25% of the present Labour Group has served on the council during the previous four years. The danger of the Group becoming dominated by County Council officers and the long standing members is obvious. How this will be resolved depends on the response of the Group's officers to the situation.



There is a firm commitment within the Group to implement the Party's election policy but unless the Party updates this policy it could quickly become out of date during the four years of the present council.

The major problem which the County will face is how it will respond to the Tory Government's demand to cut expenditure. It claims that GMC was over-spending by £22m. and that this has been made worse by the £5m. subsidy to the PTE to prevent a fares rise scheduled by the previous Tory administration. In fact the major plank of the manifesto was a freeze on fares and this has been implemented immeadiately. The manifesto stated that "we will provide the best service possible" but it was decided that the Group could not unscramble the cuts which had been planned. The recent dispute at Stockport has shown that there will be a problem in convincing staff that no further cuts will be made.

A start has been made to re-establish consumer advice centres and to introduce measures to combat unemployment. The links with the Educational Trust, set up by the Tories to help finance private education, have been cut. The Group's response to the Government circular demanding cuts was to return the budget unchanged. It argued that Metropolitan Counties should be exempted from spending restrictions. The Group has not yet discussed what to do

if the Government holds back grants because of its refusal to cut the budget.

What form will the Tory attack take in 1982:



- cuts in grants as a result of the new block-grant system?
- restrictions on capital spending and controls over rate levels?
- the threat of a new Audit Commission with powers to investigate the 'effectiveness' of council policies?

How will the County Group's resolve stand up to such attacks if they happen? The County Party must give serious consideration to these issues which have to be faced in the near future NOW!

Women workers action

Women clerical workers at the CWS Stationary Division, Stockport took strike action and stood firm on the picket line for 17 weeks, in support of a claim for pay parity with other clerical workers on the "shop floor". The amount involved was between £25 and £30 per week, and the action was only taken after 6 years of negotiation had acheived nothing. The 16 women, members of APEX and USDAW, received a lot of support from the Women's Section of Stockport North Labour Party and from local M.P. Andrew Bennett. After 17 weeks continuous picketing by the women and campaigning by the Party, the CWS management finally made a realistic offer and the women voted to return to work.

The strike brought into sharp focus many of the problems faced by Trade Unionists, particularly women trade unionists. Their male colleagues, members of the National Association of Co-operative Officials (a "management" union) carried out work usually done by the strikers. The women also met with hostility from the shop floor workers when management told them that their jobs were in danger because of the strike and, of course, they met with the attitude that women work only for pin money.

As well as fighting for pay parity the women have drawn attention to the contradictions in the position of socialist organisations which accept the role of employer as defined by capitalist values. This dispute was not just a fight about money, it was also a fight for the ideals of socialism and the rights of women workers

Boundary changes - action needed !

Largely unnoticed amid the political and meteorological heat which has been generated in Greater Manchester during the summer, a very important exercise has been undertaken. Namely consideration of the Boundary Commission's proposals for Manchester's Parliamentary seats, before the closing date for objections (August 22nd).

Nationally, Labour can probably expect to lose 20 to 30 seats from parliamentary distribution. Therefore it is vital that the Party works to get the best deal it can, although you wouldn't think so from the attention devoted to it.

The Regional Office convened 3 meetings fo the Chairpeople and Secretaries of all CLPs in Greater Manchester. By the last of these the attendance had dropped to only just over 50% of Constituencies. At least 1 Constituency din't attend any of the meetings.

Determining the best position for the Labour Party to take is an exceptionally difficult job to do, because of the "domino effect" across the County of any proposed changes.

In most Districts there have been elections on the new ward boundaries which form the building blocks of the new constituencies. The obvious approach should have been to produce a detailed statistical analysis of these results across the County, to assess the Commission's proposals and identify viable objections to improve the Party's prospects (on the criterion of maximising the number of winnable seats, not, as some comrades seem to think,of maximising the Labour majority in the seats we would hold, which wastes Labour votes, or retaining historical predjudices about who shouldn't be joined with whom).

In most areas this exercise was not carried out in detail or, if it was, the results were certainly not brought together on a County-wide basis. Instead there was undue reliance placed on the speculative projections of long-standing Party wothies of dubious psephological ability.

Most significantly, the Regional Officers were unable to undertake the crucial background work because of the Warrington bye-election.

It will be interesting to see how many constituencies actually got it together in the 10 days between the last meeting and the closing date for objections, to make a submission at all. There is no overall submission being made by the Regional Office. One thing is certain, the issue could not be more important.

Trade Union News

One of the most important aims of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee is to build a more active alliance between activists in the Labour Party and the trade union movement. Superb initiatives such as the Peoples March for Jobs are only the beginning. We now need to build up such alliances at a local level as well. Already in Greater Manchester attempts are being made to set up joint Labour Party - Trade Union Liaison Committees and many party members are involved in trying to establish unemployed workers centres and unions. At the regional level the NW TUC are following up their work on the Peoples March with a new 'Peoples Campaign for Jobs'.

Unemployment

"Labour Briefing" intends to follow these developments and the LCC will be campaigning for closer trade union - party links throughout Greater Manchester. For this to be successful we need more contacts, on a union by union - branch by branch basis, people willing to keep us in touch with what's going on; strikes, disputes and campaigns. At present we're particularly interested in work around unemployment, e.g. setting up unemployed workers centres and unions, organising on YOP schemes etc. Please let us know if you're involved in any of this work.

EVENTS:

SEPT. 18th. Manchester Labour Left meeting. 7.30pm Star and Garter, Fairfield St., M/cr. "Moss Side Riots - The Inquiry".

SEPT. 24th. GMLCC meeting. Students Union, Oxford Rd., M/cr. 7.30pm.

OCT. 3rd. "Campaign for Manchester" Anti-Cuts Demo. 11.30am assemble Mancunian Way, Oxford Road.



Conference

The GMLCC will be holding a conference for trade union activists in the area, probably in November. This will be a follow-up to the LCC's highly successful "Trade Unions and Socialism" conference held nationally in July. The aim will be to provide a local forum for discussion fo political action within the unions. Write to GMLCC 18 Sylvan Ave,Sale, if you would like to be sent details.

LABOUR
Co-ordinating Committee

WHAT IS THE GMLCC...?

In Greater Manchester the Labour Co-ordinating Committee aims to link together activists across the boundaries of districts, constituencies and unions. The fight for greater democracy and accountability in the Party does not stop at national level. At region, county and district levels old habits die hard!

JOIN US... LCC activists campaign for the development of socialist policies and the strengthening of the Party's democratic structure to ensure that they are implemented.

With your help BRIEFING hopes to shed a little light on some of the Party's darker corners.

The GMLCC is open to any Party members within the County or adjoining areas. Subscription rates are £2 (local) or £7 (local and national). Send to Nick Harris, Treasurer GMLCC,36 Highclere Rd, Manchester 8 (Tel 795 9740).

Other contacts: Eric Shaw,18 Sylvan Ave,Sale (Tel 973 1296) and Peter Hildrew,13 Grange Ave,Manchester 19 (Tel 224 3594).

Join us and support
'Labour Briefing'

Greater Manchester LCC's "LABOUR BRIEFING" needs YOUR help if it is to be a success; we need CONTRIBUTORS, DISTRIBUTORS and DONATIONS (as well as bulk pre-paid orders) especially from the outer boroughs of the county. We want to build up a good contacts list covering as many wards, constituencies, trade unions and other labour movement bodies as possible. If you're interested please contact:

Sorrel Brookes, 516 Beverdale Close, Beswick, M11. 225 6398.
Dave Carter, 7 Buckhurst Road, Levenshulme, M19. 225 9782.
Margaret Pollard, 28 Malton Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport. 432 7232.