KENT LABOUR 20p 15p for miners

BRIEFING

ISSUE No.2 autumn 1984

Our Choice: Defend the Unions or Surrender to CLASS LAW

by JACK COLLINS

The decision to fine the NUM was taken by a class judge enacting class laws.

Every society in the world makes laws to defend itself. We live in a capitalist society so we have laws to defend capitalism.

Not a single judge comes from the working class. They are all from the ruling class, elevated by the ruling class to enact ruling class law. It's the judges who should be democratised the working class should have a ballot to decide who the judges are. We don't recognise class laws as these are. Now the rest of the labour movement must rally round and become more involved in our dispute. The financial support should continue, but now when one section of the movement is on strike the rest should pile in behind them. We need days of action, weeks of action and months of action. If everyone woke up tomorrow, got out of bed and just sat on their hands the strike would be over, the government defeated, and the whole trade union movement stronger for it.

BUILD THE MASS PICKETS



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

O.K. O.K.... WE SURRENDER !

Labour leaders & organisations must encourage every single worker

`Respect Our Picket Lines !´

Mary Turner and Les Hartop interviewed Jack Collins, Secretary of Kent NUM, at his home in Hersden on behalf of Kent Labour Briefing.

INTERVIEW with JACK

Briefing; What is the life expectancy of the Kent pits, and how is Kent coal special.

Jack; We can see a triangle of coal between Ramsgate, C'tbury and Folkestone - and stretching far out under the Channel. Four seams, between 500 and 1000 ft deep. We've only just worked one seam - so you can see the potential is massive.

The coal is metalurgic, used as a 'sweetener' to produce good quality coking coal for the steel industry.

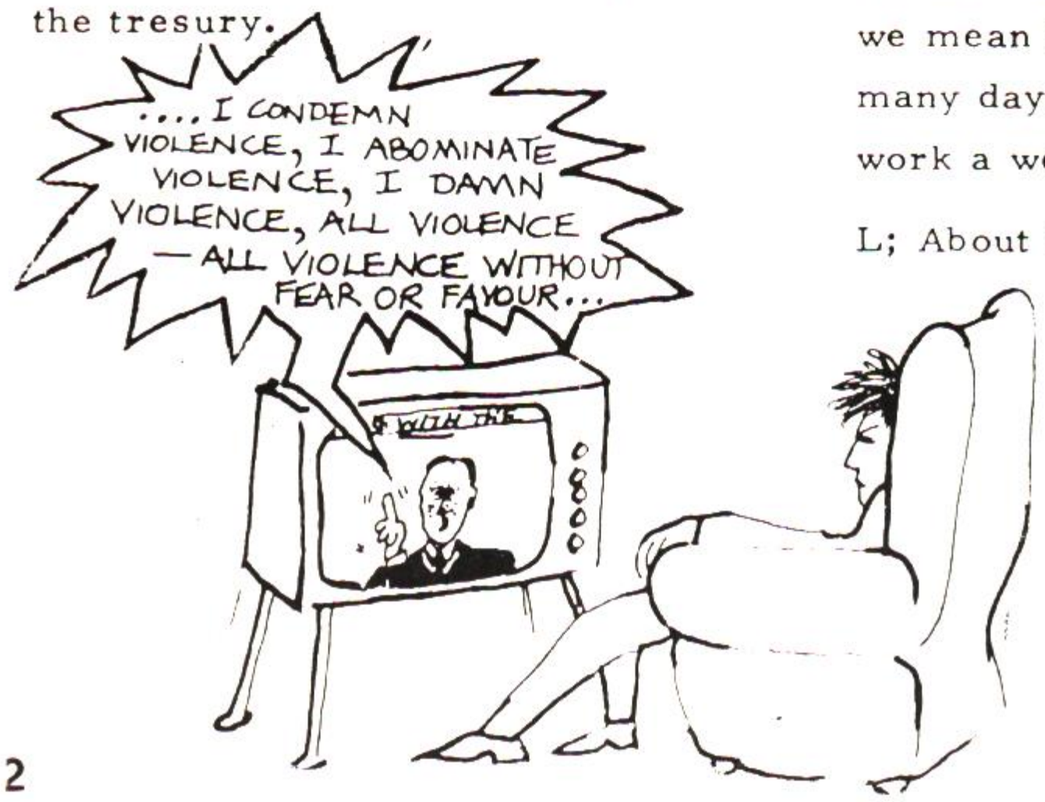
But anybody can use it. Some goes to generate electricity, some to paper and cement works. Most is used here, in Kent and Sussex.

L; How do you see this issue of "Uneconomic pits" ?

J; They see things from the cheque book point of view. I guess they can make anything profitable or unprofitable. The principle of nationalisation is that we look at the industry as a whole, but I don't know if we should look at the ind. or anything on a profit or loss basis.

The industry, last year, paid back £400,000,000, to the moneylenders.

This industry belongs to the nation, so we should go to the government, the army doesn't go to the market-place to borrow money - it goes to the tresury.



The advanced machinery we use was developed by the Brit. coal industry, for driving through rock, loading the coal etc. It was perfected by us and then handed over to 'manufacturing' companies. It is then either sold back to the coal board, or hired to them at a fat profit.

Corrals is another one - you see their lorries running about. Well their logo is 'PD' - Powell Dufryn, these were coal owners noted for their brutality, even amongst other coalowners. They buy coal at £40 a ton, and sell it for £140 or £150.

The industry is paying - it's paying every bastard but the miners.

I don't like the bloke but, a study on the Brian Walden programme showed it would cost more to shut a pit than keep it open, - what with redundancy and loss of taxes etc.

The cost of coal to the electricity board is very high we are led to beieve, but they made £960m profit. They could easily bring their prices down and burn more coal.

L; Privatisation is on the Tories' minds.

J; Well yes, the people in charge of the coal industry world-wide are the oil companies - ESSO etc. They own the big reserves in America, it seems to me that the same could take place here.

I think that we should question what we mean by full employment - how many days do you think you should work a week ?

L; About $3\frac{1}{2}$.

J; Quite, but most people will say 5. If we can satisfy what the country wants in 3 days - or 1 hour, then that is full employment. I would like to see technology and science advance to such an extent that man can direct his energies towards other talents. If the 180,000 miners can satisfy the energy requirements of the country in four days then in the present day and age these things have to be questioned. In 1919 the Sankey reort recommended 7hrs a day in the mines, we still have $7\frac{1}{4}$ plus winding time.

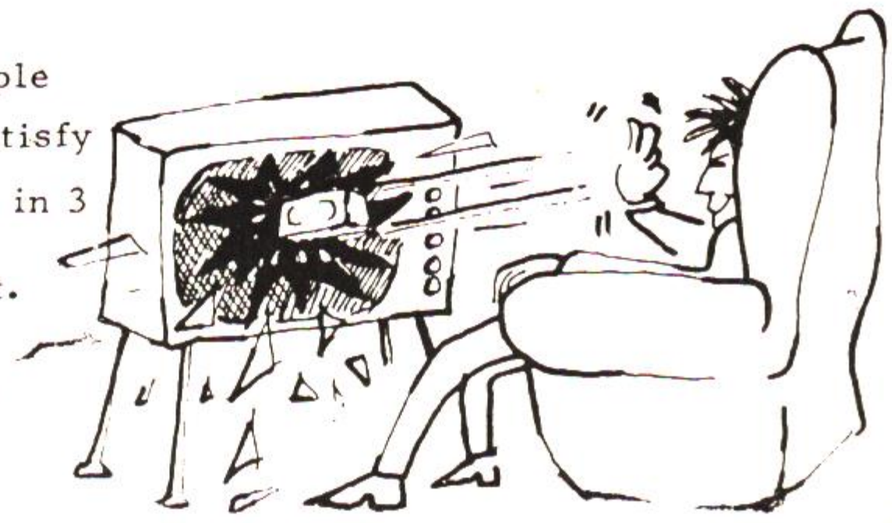
L; How do you feel the Kent NUM compares with the rest of the NUM ?

J; For the last 30 years there was a strong Communist Party branch in Deal, and a strong Labour Party which always found it easy to work together. Then the influence of the CP and socialists in the Labour Party declined, but by this time many of us had obtained leading positions in the union.

The people in the leading positions developed a 'propaganda programme', and we still have summer schools, day release etc. Almost all our schools had a trade union and political content somewhere in them. We then developed the canteen meetings, mass meetings,

At these meetings we said repeatedly that we were opposed to pit closures, we gave the assurance to other areas seeking our support, that we would give it. We've always been true to our word and answered any call for assistance from progressive organisations, CND, Anti-Apartheid, Women's Groups and we got a majority to vote for it.

Yes, I'm sure, the Kent miners have the most progressive attitude of all the British miners.



COLLINS



B; What exactly are MacGregor's plans for Kent ?

J; We don't know. They used to deny any plans to close Snowdown, but then they put it on the 'repreived' list in one of their recent 'compromise's.

B; Can you tell us about the scabs ?

J; Well we have about 20 in this field, and generally they are strange people. Of course McGibbon is a profesional, drafted in after strike breaking at Leyland, he has been seen attending NF meetings in Ramsgate. The others are all people who do not come from the area and intend to move on, plus a couple who are head cases who we just can't hold responsible for scabbing. We won a couple back to the picket line.

B; Have you had any help from the socialist countries ?

J; The position now is that no Russian ship will unload any more oil. The only socialist country which is sending fuel is Poland. We have had help from most socialist and non socialist states in Europe. French and Dutch support has been very good and the miners in the USSR are sending money.

B; Have you spoken to Solidarnosc about stopping exports from Poland ?

J; I wouldn't talk to Solidarnosc, even before Walesa made his infamous statement, that Thatcher should not give in. I wouldn't attempt to excuse the Polish government or people for sending coal in - their contract to the working class is more important than any contract with the capitalists. The Polish government aren't very good in Poland either, they haven't collectivised the land for example.

B; Most regions of Solidarnosc have made statements supporting British miners - including mining regions.

J; Yes Polish miners have committed themselves to a cessation of the exports, but the nature of Solidarnosc was clear to me when they stood side by side with Reagan and the Pope.

B; How do you assess the TUC conference ?

J; The TUC was built-up in some quarters so that if the support was not forthcomeing it would demoralise the miners. But Arthur Scargill didn't go direct to the TUC leadership, he went to the rank and file who gave us their support. And as a result the leadership followed them. They are trying to raise money for us and recommending that workers do not cross picket lines. It is a step forward, but not a big one.

B; And the Labour Party ?

J; Kinnock's not been on a picket line, nor in a village that has been occupied, so where is he getting his information from ? His experience is reading the bosses papers and watching the bosses TV. He should condemn a society which, in order to defeat the miners, is prepared to starve little kids. Kinnock's a complete disgrace, but he's not the L.P. - L.P. are the people who are putting their hands in their pockets for the miners, that are propagating our ideas, like yourselves. In a socialist society we'll have forgotten all about bloody Kinnock. Anyone who can't distinguish between oppression and the working class should be thrown out.

B; I think that like Hobsbawm he wants to move in on the support of the SDP.

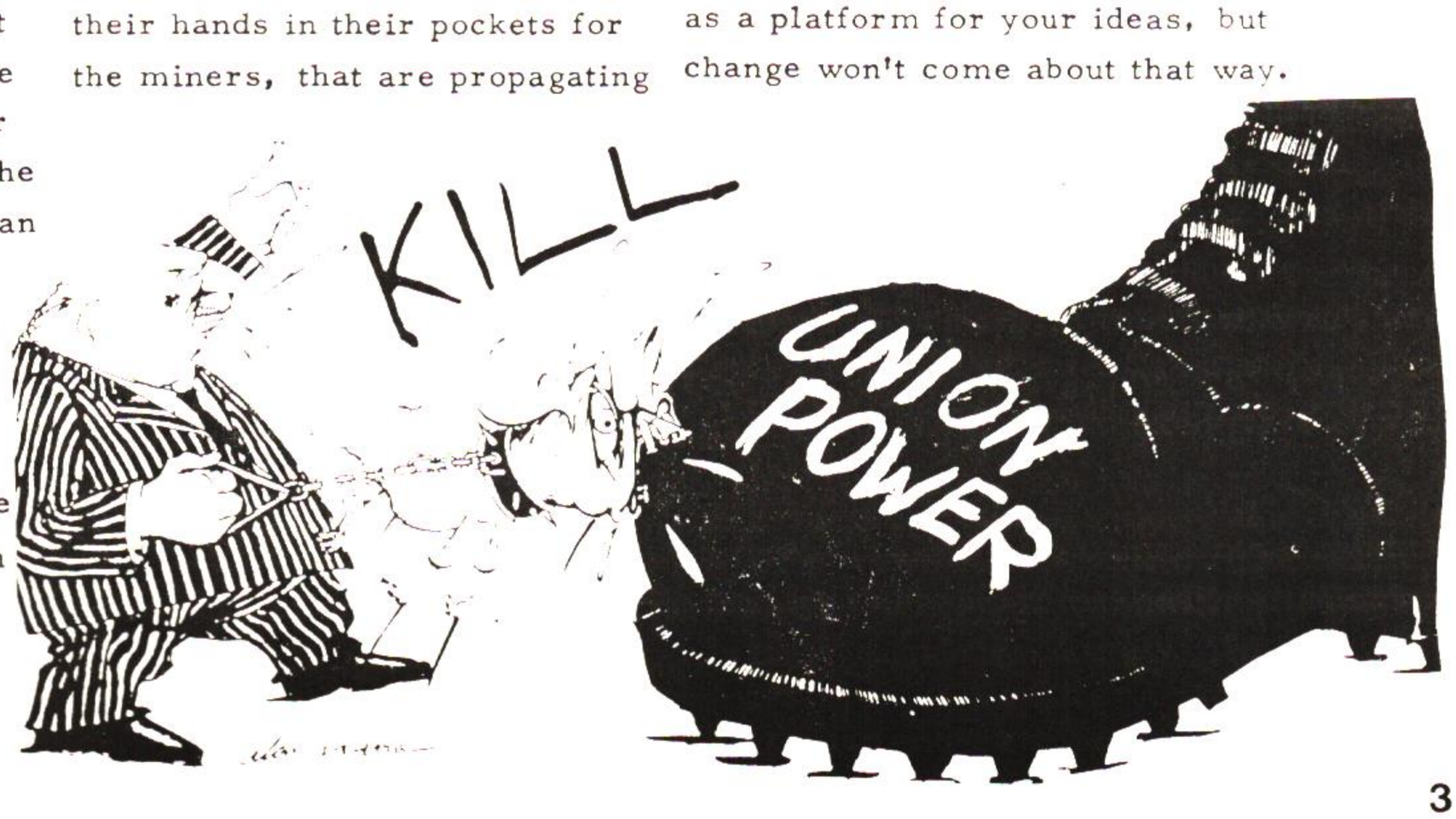
J; He is secretly having talks with them- Steel etc, he's taking out collective insurance, coalitions and everything. It's obvious that they've no confidence in the working class - just like many people felt the miners had no determination. But when you prop up the system you have to prop the whole of it up. The only way to change society is through struggle and direct action. Change doesn't take place in Parliament but on the streets. Things are finalised in Parliament but initiated on the streets.

B; You obviously see that what the L.P. leadership says is important. Have you ever thought of joining the L.P. ?

J; No, we have enough problems in the C.P., I think that joining the Labour Party would definitely be a step back.

B; Of course you realise that Lenin encouraged communists in Britain to join the L.P. - infact the Communist Party was affiliated to the L.P., and you had M.P.s in parliament.

J; Well yes, you can use parliament as a platform for your ideas, but change won't come about that way.



K E E P K E N T N A Z I - F R E E

This summer the National Front has tried to build a movement to "Keep Kent White".
Here our intrepid reporter, Tim Schofield from Medway Labour Party, who found himself being dragged off of the bonnet of a police car by his feet, whilst making a class appeal to the driver, looks back on the poor labour movement response to the demonstration organised against the Front.

On Saturday July 14th the quiet middle class town of Maidstone was awoken from it's summer dreams as the fascists once again took to the streets.

The day had started quietly enough, as Maidstone LPYS held their counter-demonstration through the back-streets of the town.

Only about 100 people (50 of whom came on the coach with Brighton Labour Briefing) from all over the South East, marched along the route laid down by the police. We were not allowed near the town centre.

But in the afternoon anti-fascists did hold a counter-demonstration, as the NF, protected by the police marched through the town centre. The broad left alliance ofcounter demonstrators successfully prvented the Nazi scum from putting across to the people of Maidstone, their evil lies and propaganda.

At Brenchley Gardens, with the permission of the Liberal Council, the NF held their rally.
Encircled by 3 lines of police their deputy Fuhrer, megaphone in hand, shouted his obscene message to a small band of fanatics.

Thirty arrests, and the NF still marched, was it worth it ?
Millions have suffered and died at the hands of the fascists, we cannot stop the fight now, we must not allow the Fascists to spread their lies.



photo, Mary Hartner

disclaimer

The views expressed in this magazine, are the personal opinions of the contributors named on each article.
Unless specifically stated Kent Briefing accepts no responsability, to any persons or organisations named in this magazine.

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EDITORIALS:

By waging a real fight against the Tories, the miners gained the support of the overwhelming majority of delegates to the TUC and Labour Party conferences.

How is it then, that Kinnock's condemnation of picket line violence will now be echoed by the tame shadow cabinet elected by the majority of MPs ?
And how is it, that Willis is able to sit on his backside, not even commenting, whilst the courts sequestrate the funds of the country's strongest union ?

The clue to the answer can be found right here in Kent.
Since the beginning of the miners' dispute the Kent Trade Union Alliance has led the solidarity in most of Kent. The official movement, under this pressure, has just started to get it's act together, and put itself on the line.

If someone were to take the lead nationally, like the KTUA has in Kent, then the pressure would be doubly felt by the national officials.

The right wing of Kent Labour Party has had an easy ride so far.
For our part Kent Labour Briefing calls on the County Labour Group & Party to condemn the violence being done against workers in Kent, by the police.

We are on the threshold of a great victory. If the miners win it will give a massive boost to the whole trade union movement. On the crest of this victory we must be ready to build the movement at the base. But the lesson of the KTUA is, to get the movement, and the officials to do this, we must, at the same time, organise the left.

OPEN PAGES

Kent Briefing, in this, our second, edition, would like to make it clear that our columns are open to all sections of the Broad Left movement.

The Labour and Trade Union Movement are under the most sustained & determined attack since the General Strike of 1926. This government is smashing a battering ram against the doors of the NUM in order to storm the WHOLE working class movement.

We cannot afford any divisions in our ranks if we are to overcome this assault, we must put aside those differences which, compared to the seriousness of the present situation are often trivial and petty.
Our pages are open to various opinions and debate, which is vital if we are to fashion useful policies.

If you have something constructive to say, then we will endeavour to see it gets printed. All we ask of you is that you make the effort.

Make a date with KENT LABOUR BRIEFING

Editorial meetings for Issue No 3.

1) MEDWAY; ~~tuesday~~ December 17th, 8 pm, LPHQ 32a New Road Rochester.

2) CANTERBURY; ~~monday~~ January 8th 8 pm, 'Prince of Wales', King Street.

THREAT to FREE PRESS in Gillingham L.P..

Gillingham Constituency Labour Party has spent months arguing over the sale of Militant on Party premises. As Socialists we have nothing to fear from open debate and a truly free press. We can by choice buy or refuse to buy any newspaper as we see fit, that is our individual choice. No member of our Party should go along with any ban of a Left Wing Publication on political and/or selective grounds. If the selling of a newspaper is found to have a disruptive effect on a meeting then the same must apply to all Publications of the Left. If it makes sense to ban Militant then it must follow that all Publications must be banned from distribution on Party premises. If not the ban is purely on political grounds.

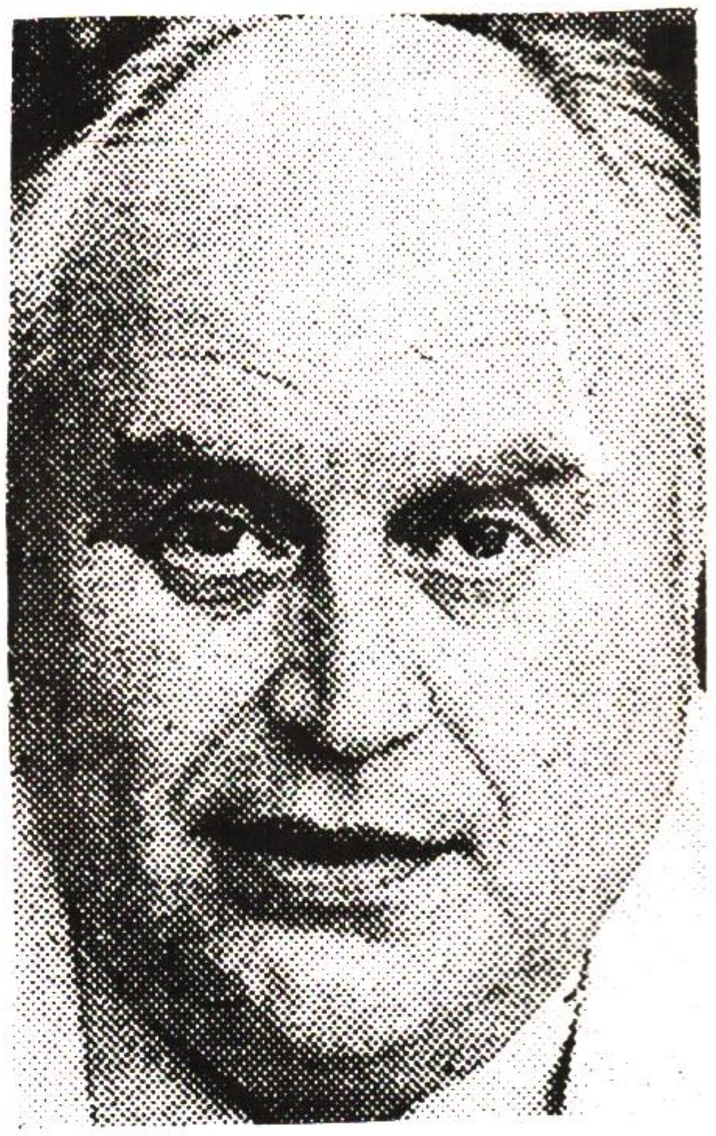
If any attempt to ban any other Left Wing Publication from sale on Party premises is made, be it a National or constituency decision we will oppose it. If, let us say, hypothetically, a future N.E.C., with a Militant majority decided to advocate a ban on the sale of Labour Weekly on Party premises, how many of our members now so passionately supporting the N.E.C., decision would maintain the same committment? We would. We appeal to all comrades to think deeply before pursuing what is for Socialists an unjust cause. Let us leave the book-burning to the Fascists and Nazis. Our job is to change Society to one of Socialism and that will only come by showing tolerance and by encouraging open debate between members who have that aim at heart.

by Derek Spencer, member of Gillingham L.P.

NORMAN WILLIS

Gen. Sec. of the TUC

IN MEDWAY Nov23



HOT ON THE HEELS of Mrs. Windsor, Norman Willis, Len Murray's replacement, will be speaking at Chatham Town Hall at 7.30pm at the invite of Medway Trades Council.
Also on the platform - Eric Heffer MP.

THANET Young Socialists

* * *

Apologies seem to be due to Thanet North CLP. In the 1st issue of Kent Labour Briefing we appealed for information regarding rumours of moves, by the CLP against the LPYS.

We received a letter from the secretary of the CLP saying that they have always had a cooperative and constructive relationship with their YS. We have not heard from the YS involved.
We are unable to reprint the whole of the letter from the CLP, due to it having been lost, but it was succinct and we hope that we have conveyed the meaning it had here.

Southern Reg. Labour WOMEN'S VOICE

Southern Region Labour Party now has it's own mailing/magazine written for and by women members. This now provides a vehicle for the views of all women in the LP.
Get yours from S.R.L.P. Owen Hse, Heathside Cres. Woking Surrey. More info from Brenda Wilkinson 45 Loder Rd Brighton Sussex. tel. 0273 559564

Subscribe...now. £1 a year

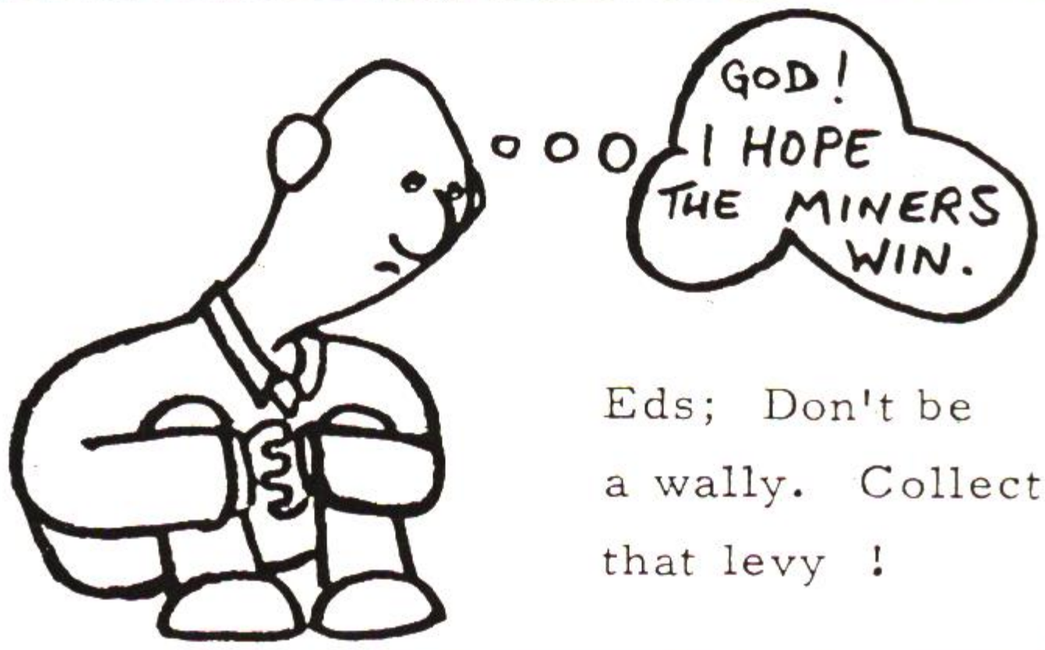
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Don't You Think It's About Time To

Join the Labour Party

Trade unionists, Women, CND members, People everywhere trying to fight for working people ; MUST GET TOGETHER. Only the Labour Party provides the frame-work for hammering out a socialist program covering all political issues. JOIN the Labour Party and make it fight for YOU.



Eds; Don't be a wally. Collect that levy !

Kent Solidarity Committee

A letter from Nick Bradley, on behalf of the Kent Association of Trades Councils, and a circular from the KTUA, attracted about 150 people to the inaurgural conference of the 'Kent Solidarity Committee', - Kent's official miners' solidarity campaign.

Everyone present saw the establishment of this body as a big step forward, both in terms of building greater unity, and in terms of pulling the officials into ongoing work for the miners.

There were platform speakers from; NUM, South East Region of the TUC, NUPE, and the KTUA. It was unfortuneate that nobody spoke specifically on behalf of the KATC (who called the meeting), nor were the women's support groups given an official slot.

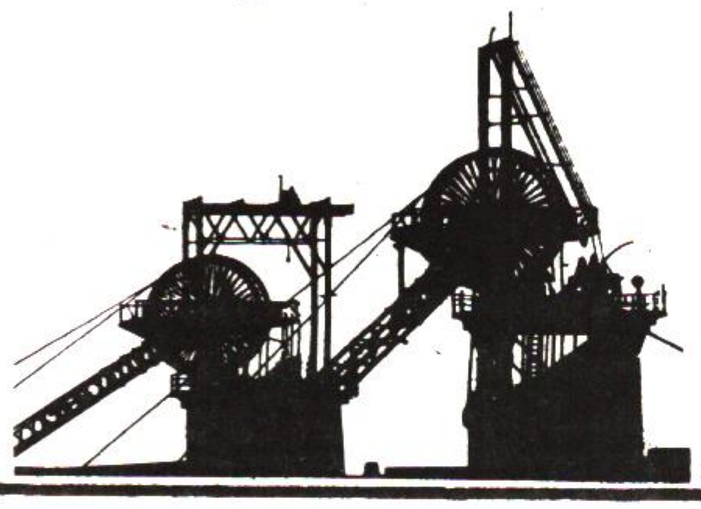
A very open discussion was had however, with plenty of opportunity for contributions from the floor.

" BUILD

Several delegates spoke about practical activities, like door-to-door collections. Paddy Sutcliffe, from Dover, described how he used old Labour Party canvass cards, to avoid encounters with 'Sun' readers. Another delegate from Aylesham, thought that we should be breaking new ground however and described how he organises teams of 3 per street, one with a clip-board noting the doors that contribute, so as they can return only to that give.

If there was a general theme to the conference it was the building of mass pickets to stop the movement of coal during the winter. One delegate, from Greenwich, called on the SERTUC to officially build the mass pickets of power stations. Several people on the platform and other delegates spoke on the same theme.

NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS
COAL NOT DOLE



ONE SIDED COPS

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ELVINGTON - VILLAGE UNDER SIEGE

We have seen, for some years, the Post Office's two-tier service, but I never thought that I would see the day when we had a two-tier police service.

In Elvington we have seen discrimination by the police depending on whether you are a working or a striking miner.

On the evening of tuesday 4th a group of miners, their wives and children, were demonstrating outside a 'working' miner's house. The 'working' miner came out with a shotgun. He was told not be silly and to put the gun down. His response was to fire the gun. As it was dark, there was panic and the men women and children went running in all directions.

In the morning when I heard about the incident, I asked the Superintendant in charge at Tilmanstone colliery if he would stop the scab bus to arrest the man. He said that I would have to make a written formal complaint. I immediately wrote one to the Chief Constable. I followed this up with 15 individual, signed, complaints from all the people involved that I could trace. I have still not heard if this is being investigated.

Another evening (Sept. 12th) I was contacted by a striker who was in a state of panic. He and a friend had been chased by police. The police had surrounded the house and the two men were petrified. When I arrived at the village there was a small demonstration outside the house, and the police had gone. The wives and children of the two men were close to tears.

I was told that three men had been walking around the village with the women's support group when a police transit van pulled up alongside and the police jumped out and indiscriminately chased the group. One of the men was arrested, whils the other 2 had managed to run hom They heard an officer outside ask whether to break the door down.

If there was a group of thugs outsid you would phone the police. But whe it was the police outside, what coul you do ?

Eventually I did call the police and after a lot of arguement an Inspecto agreed to come out.

the MASS PICKETS"

Other ideas were also given an airing;
the production of a regular bulletin by the committee,
the need for the NUM to send full-time officials to other countries to get support, and,
the possibility of making contact with solidarity groups in other areas areas of the country, with a view to building national initiatives, thereby putting pressure onto the national officials.

At the end of the conference, groups elected people to the regular committee (see list). 24 places in all, but if your organisation would like to send a delegate, get one elected, inform the committee c/o Nick Bradley, Garland Hill Hse, Sandy Lane, St Paul's Cray, Orpington, Kent, BR5 3SZ, and the committee will then decide on whether to co-opt her/him, to it.

TRADE UNIONS:
Jim Griffiths GMBATU
Nick Bradley NUPE
Eric Humphries TGWU
Sheila Morgan USDAW
Ray Allow NGA
Reserved for NUR/ASLEF

WIVES SUPPORT GROUPS:
Liz French DEAL
Kay Sutcliffe AYLESHAM

OTHER SUPPORT GROUPS:
C'BURY/WHIT/M'GATE/FAV
Ruth Manley or Alan Grimley
M'WAY/G'END/D'FORD/ SIT/
Graham Moody or Jack Osborne
DOVER/M'STONE/A'FORD/
F'STONE/ROMNEY MARSH
Paddy Sutcliffe or Lesley Gaskin

NUM:
Kent Area Rep
George Beever SNOWDOWN
Reserved for Tilmanstone
Reserved for Betteshanger

Trades Council
TRADE COUNCILS:
Vince Drongin M'WAY
Bob Herley M'WAY
Nigel Sheahan
LABOUR PARTY:
Chris Jone T. WELLS
Eddie Pynn M'WAY
Eric Seagull F'STONE
UNEMPLOYED:
Andy Roberts
YOUTH:
Andy Gilbertson M'WAY
Christine Pugh

RKERS' Defence Com-erence now confirmed nber in Camden Town don. Scargill, Benn, speak plus workshops.

Details from the campaign c/o Ken Livingstone at County Hall or phone 01-981 3289. Publicity available now.



An emotional moment: Bill Martin (Medway Picket Organiser) speaks, after his release, outside Rochester Police Stn. He was arrested on the 500 strong march organised by the Kent Assc. of Trades Councils. Four more people were arrested whilst picketing for Bill's release. A fund has been set-up for legal costs, c/o Vince Drongin 19 Randall Road, Chatham.

He alleged that a man had thrown a brick at a working miner's house, and they believed that the description given may have fitted one of the three men.

I asked the inspector what would have happened if the two men who phoned me had not got away. He said that they would have been detained identified and released.

I put it to him that if the men had indeed been arrested but then released, the police would then be open to being sued for wrongful arrest, and to avoid this the men would have been charged under the wide ranging Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875. (6 men had been charged under this act the previous day, their crime was to walk past 'working' miner's house on the way to the shops - or 'WATCHING OR BESETTING THE HOUSE WITHOUT LEGAL AUTHORITY'. One of the men turned out to be a farm labourer who was on his way to buy a loaf of bread.). The Inspector refused to comment.

I then asked the Inspector whether the brick throwing had been reported in an emergency call or in a written formal complaint.
He told me they had responded to an emergency call !

Finally I asked him why 'working' miners were being protected but stiking miners, who had vandalism and threats made against them, wer not. He informed me that the role of the police is to 'defend the minority against the majority'.
It appears therefore, that the police no longer defend the public at large !

A. J. SANSUM
Dover District Councillor.

snips

compiled by Derek Spencer

From "Tribune" 6th July 1984.

A taste if you will excuse the pun, of things to come in the privatisation of the National Health Service:- according to Jack Massey of the Hospital Corporation of America. "The potential in hospitals is unlimited. Its even better than Kentucky Fried Chicken".

Its hard to follow that you might think, but just try this one from "The Worker" 30th July 1984.

When Claud Cockburn interviewed Al Capone in Chigago, the gangster talked philosophy. "Listen, don't get the idea I'm one of these goddam radicals. Don't get the idea I'm knocking the American system". He praised freedom, enterprise and the pioneers; he spoke of "our heritage", says Cockburn. Several times he repeated: "My rackets are run on strictly American lines and they're going to stay that way .... This American system of ours, call it Americanism, call it capitalism, call it what you like, gives to each and every one of us a great opportunity if we only seize it with both hands and make the most of it".

Such an attitude strikes a contempory chord. Capone would be a great supporter of privatisation, a form of daylight robbery in which the public get fleeced.

Both pieces, though short on words, speak volumes. For example in a long sympathetic article on Frank Chapple, General Secretary E.E.T.P.U. in the "Evening Standard" on 16th August 1984 an impression of the man's position in Trade Union History can be ascertained by noting two of the most telling parts from the interview. .... If Frank Chapple had not become a union leader he would have liked to have become a womaniser. He reflects on this while his Chauffeur waits outside the Savoy and we talk inside .... And after speaking on one of his favourite pastimes, pidgeon racing, in his early years, he says "Forty years later I was having lunch with the Queen at Buckingham Palace and we talked for ages about pidgeons".

Inside information tells us that there is no truth in the rumour that when the Queen entered the room Frank Chapple waited for her to courtsey!

-- --

How about this revelation of the workings of capitalism taken from the "Morning Star" 29th August 1984 under the heading "Labour kicks out Edinburgh blues" and quoting Labour Group Leader Alex Wood. "While still in opposition Labour's Councillors and thousands of Council tenants in Pilton were scandalised by the selling off of 719 houses for a knock down price of under £4m. to Property Developers notorious as among the biggest contributors to Tory Party funds. The Developers were then grant aided by the Government to the tune of £3.6m. to upgrade the houses and sold them at around £20,000.00 each. They made millions; Edinburgh lost hundreds of dwellings and Council tenants went on coughing, shivering and re-papering the walls".

All this proves is, that you don't have to carry a gun or rob a Bank if you are a beneficiary of the system which is so favourable to the well off.

Finally let us allow a Tory to make the most telling point in relation to the Miners' current dispute with the N.C.B. This comes from "Tribune" comment 31st August 1984. Speaking of the T.U.C. instruction of a return to work in May 1926 after a nine day General Strike, Lord Halifax said that the T.U.C. leader's surrender "was so humiliating that some instinctive breeding made one unwilling even to look at them".

Let us hope that when this current dispute is over the T.U.C. will be able to look us directly in the eyes!

If there isn't a quote from your favourite paper have patience. It will come.

Labour CND newsletter 10p

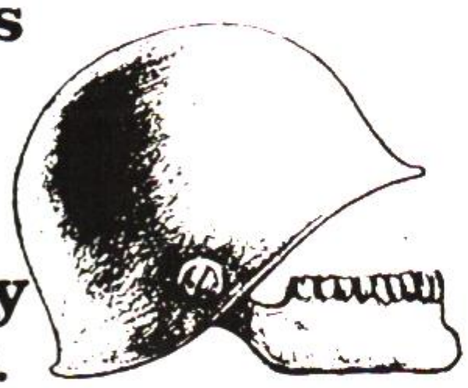
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JOY HURCOMBE 11 PEMBURY ROAD,
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PHONE: WORTHING 206588

OR PHONE CAROL TURNER
DURING THE DAYTIME ON 01-359 8180

REMEMBER

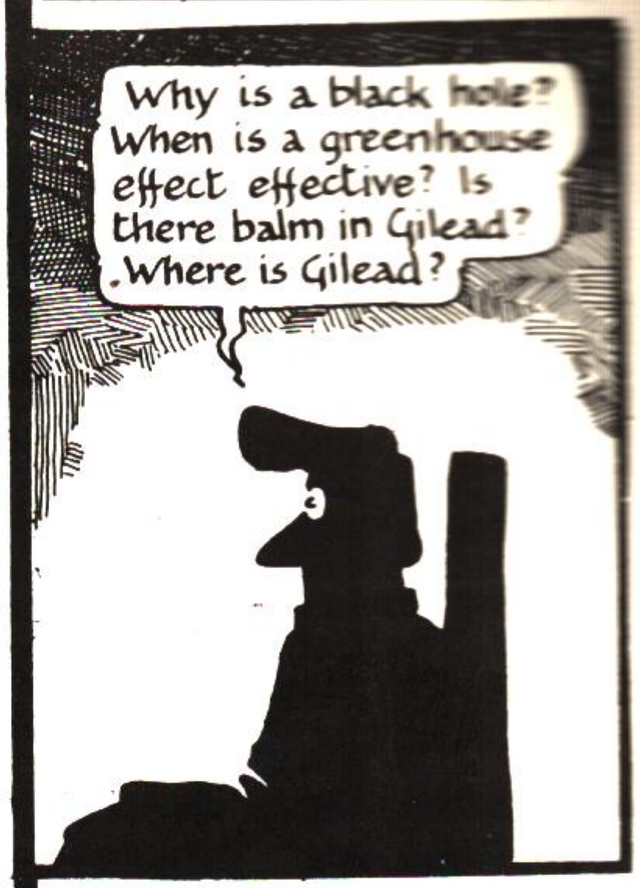
The money required to provide adequate food, water, education, health and housing for everyone in the world has been estimated at $17 billion a year. It is a huge sum of money

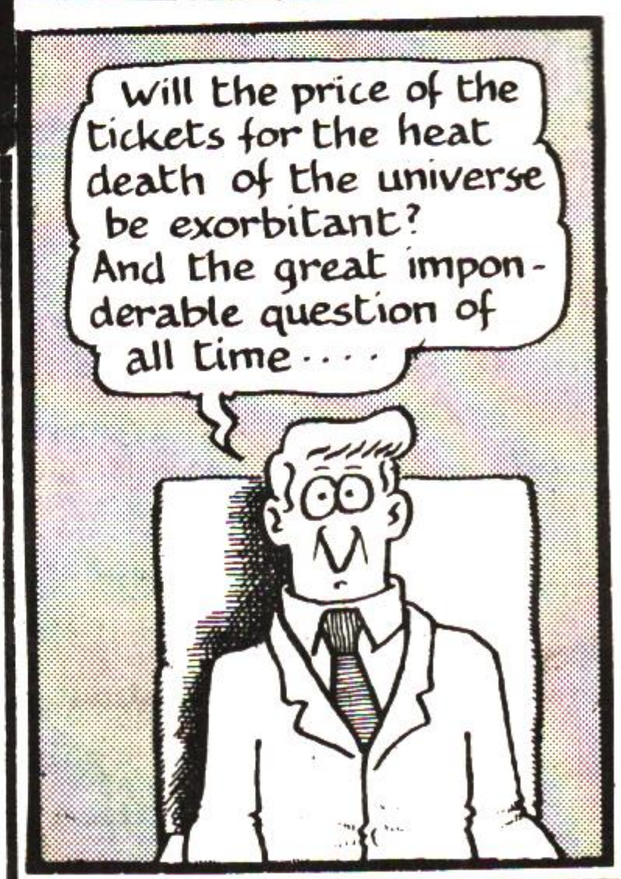
...about as much as the world spends on arms every two weeks.

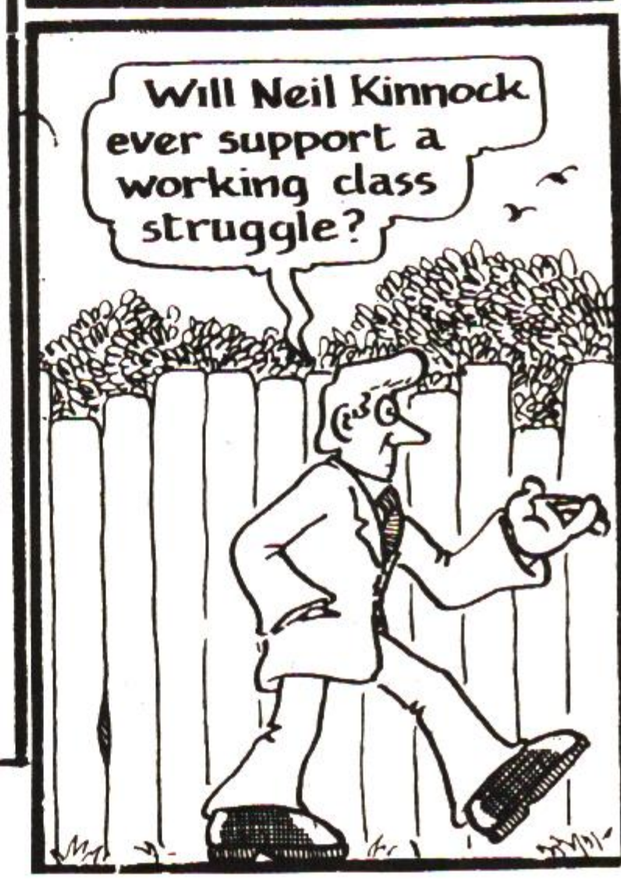


ETHIOPIA









QUESTION; What do we need a womens' section in the Labour Party for ?

ANSWER; To help us win the next election, and end discrimination against women.

WOMEN'S SECTIONS

by

LINDA KEEN

Labour Councillor for Canterbury.

Without coherent Labour policies designed to meet the particular needs of women, we will not attract women voters, and, without more votes from women we will not be able to gain power and put our policies for women into practice. Women's Sections in the Labour Party play a crucial role in reaching out to more women.

Firstly, evidence has to be gathered and attention drawn to the vast range and extent of discrimination against women, and policies have to be made to put an end to it. There is no reason why this research and publicity should not be done by both men and women, but unfortuneately history shows us only too clearly that men show little interest in these areas, and it is only when women themselves get together, and organise, that anything gets done.

The initiative has to come from women themselves. Involvement and support from men are welcome and, indeed, necessary, but without continual pressure from well organised and committed women, experience teaches us, that policies for women tend to get a low priorirty.

Secondly, we need more women in the Party, and women's sections are necessary to attract women into the Party locally. They can organise around local issues - as we did in Canterbury against the threatened closure of a day nursery - make contact with local women, as consumers and workers, and demonstrate clearly by example that only through political consciousness and socialist action can our services be preserved and increased.

Many women feel more comfortable, initially at least, with other women, and are likely to be more open to approaches from women Party members to get involved and attend Party meetings.

Moreover, women often tend to feel overawed by the usually male dominated and bureaucratic atmosphere of many branch meetings, with the complex ramifications of debating procedures, standing orders etc. Women's sections can provide a safe and unthreatening introduction to the Labour Party for many women, who, through lack of previous opportunity, are completely unfamiliar with the processes of conducting and taking part in formal meetings.

In the absence of men (who can unwittingly intimidate women at branch meetings) the women's section meeting allows women the chance, for the first time in their lives for many, to run meetings, be Chairperson, Secretary etc and to develop the confidence to speak in debates.

Women are badly needed at all levels of the Party organisation - on local, regional and national executives, as MPs and Councillors.

Women's sections play two roles here. Firstly, they give women the confidence to stand for these positions, and secondly they continually draw attention to the appallingly high levels of discrimination that continue to exist in the Labour Party - only 4.9% of MPs, and 17% of Councillors are women, etc, and the sections can demand changes in Party structure to end this discrimination.

Organisational changes were being demanded at national conference this year, to enable more women to fill offices and posts in the Party.

Directly as a consequence of grass-roots pressure through women's sections and the women's conference, numerous resolutions on this subject were sent in by constituencies and trade unions.

It is essential that women are represented properly in these positions - so that Labour is seen clearly to be THE party for women, and so that women's policy issues are discussed and not ignored, as can be the danger with a predominantly male membership.

Representation by women, at these levels, accustoms party members to the FACT of women's participation at higher levels, and makes them realise that women ca do the job as well as men.

Until genuine equality of opportunity is acheived both in the Labour Party and in all areas of women's lives, we will continue to need women's sections, to lead the fight against discrimination.

We need women's sections - not to discriminate against men, but to lead the campaign to redress the present inbalance, towards equality of treatment for all, and to gain the support of women voters at the next election.

IRELAND

The death of Sean Downes during the visit to Northern Ireland of a NORAID representative, coupled with the moving of a private members' Bill to relinquish sovereignty over Northern Ireland by Tony Benn, has created more interest in the problems of the 6 Counties. Below we start a discussion around the issues raised.

DEBATE

LES HARTNER

SUPPORT SINN FEIN

Ireland has always had an enormous impact on political developments in Britain. The repeal of the Corn Laws, and the adoption of Home Rule by the Liberal Party, were both watersheds in British history. Not only that but Irish politics showed their greater potential for socialist and revolutionary advance when in the Easter uprising of 1916 they turned Lenin's dictum 'turn the world war into civil war' into reality.

But unlike other old colonies, Ireland still has direct British rule over one part of it. Similar to other colonies 60% of capital in Southern Ireland is still owned by Britons, but crucially, it's native ruling class is too weak compared to it's working class to rule on it's own.

Though they often resort to waving the Green flag, to maintain their support, the main bourgeois parties in Southern Ireland fear a real move towards a united Ireland. For this reason republican politics in Ireland are profoundly working class in their dynamic.

This is being proved today. With Gerry Adams as leader, Sinn Fein regards itself as a socialist organisation, and is building a mass base, both in the north and south of Ireland. They want to talk to Ken Livingstone and other Labour lefts. They even have a growing feminist women's section.

These are big changes and must not be dismissed as opportunism. Opportunists do not lie on their death beds like M.P. Bobby Sands and say " I was only a working class boy.....I shall not settle until I acheive the liberation of my country, until Ireland becomes a sovereign indepentent socialist republic.".

We must treat the republican movement like Karl Marx when he defended the Manchester Martyrs. Not create another Labour Party with affiliations in Britain, thus deepening the divisions between Northern & Southern workers, and alienating republicans from us, but blame the whole war on Britain, and demand total troop withdrawal.

TIM SCHOFIELD;

NEGOTIATE

As socialists we cannot accept the continued presensce of British troops on the streets of Northern Ireland, protecting the ruling classes and all that they stand for. But how can Ireland be united under an independent and democratic state.

It is suggested that this can best be acheived by support for the IRA, and the armed struggle. But does the violence acheive anything ?

Northern Ireland is one of the few remaining colonies left in the British Empire. It is instructive to look at how the others gained their independence.

Although some tried to rid themselves of us by force, it was only when the British people actually expressed their indignation about the British control of these colonies that they gained their independence.
This cannot be gained by the murder of innocent people and indeed can only serve to alienate the British people from the Irish cause.
No small colony can combat a modern army by military methods. Continued war will will only cause the deaths of more people.
In the late 1960's we saw the British people gradually becoming enlightened to the wrong that was happening in Northern Ireland, but when the British troops went in all this was lost in the ensueing violence.



continued on next page

Labour Party CONF. '84

MICHAEL McKEEVER
(POEU Broad Left supporter, and treasurer of National Labour Briefing)

As delegates arrived in Blackpool for the eve of Labour Party Conference, few were ready to guess at how the major debates would go.

The first day was one of success. With the miners recieving solid support from the delegates, and Kinnock, and his friends on the 'right' recieving a massive defeat on their plans to change the procedures for reselecting MPs.

But the euphoria of monday was overshadowed by a sell-out of the miners on tuesday, by the Transport & General Workers Union. Moss Evans mounted the rostrum and withdrew an emrgency proposal that gave concrete support to the NUM. This was carefully disguised behind the old trick of knocking the media, to detract attention from this TGWU retreat.

On the wednesday we were witness to an alliance between the 'right' and Militant supporters - to stop the official endorsement of Black Sections.
It is a pity that our comrades in Militant do not recognise the inherent racism that exists in the structure of the Labour Party, and in all it's members. I would ask them to explain, why even in areas where they are strong, hardly any propositions come forward on issues that effect black people.
Black Sections are here to stay, they will not go away, and in time will be seen as an essential part of the Party, like Youth and Women's Sections.

In both the deabtes on Ireland and women the arguements of the Labour Cmte on Ireland and the Women's Action Cmte, had grown much stronger. Very interesting was how, on these and other issues like reselection, the NUM were fully involved and supportive of the left. They even issued a statement saying they wanted a debate on Gay rights !

On thursday evening 'Briefing' held a public meeting in defence of the NUM. Arthur Scargill made his famous statement "Gaol us - at your peril", and the 700 people present raised a collection of £1200.

Contribute

WE NEED PEOPLE TO HELP MAKE KENT BRIEFING BETTER.
SEND REPORTS TO US ABOUT THINGS IN YOUR AREA.
WRITE AN ARTICLE ABOUT YOUR ACTIVITY, YOUR ORGANISATION, OR YOUR IDEAS.
TELL US WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.
Phone Derek Spencer on 0634 366887.
Write to Kent Briefing, c/o
69, Richmond Rd, Gillingham, Kent.
ME7 1LN



details from 01-278 8394

To counter the extreme media bias, a series of 13 video's are available from the NUM which cover everything from the decline of the British coal industry to the vital role of the womens support groups. Organise a meeting show a video & raise some cash for the NUM.

(Eds; Perhaps a Militant supporter would like to reply to Michael's point, in issue no. 3 of KLB ?)

IRELAND (Tim Schofield) continued;

The answer to the problem can only be in Westminster. The next Labour government must commit itself to a phased withdrawal of the troops, an end to the undemocratic electoral procedures, and the removal of the Unionist veto.
However, these things must be done through negotiations with the Unionist people, who have to come to terms with the idea - or another civil war will replace the old one. Only in this situation can we hope to begin negotiations towards a united Ireland.



KENT TRADE UNION ALLIANCE CONFERENCE

Chatham Town Hall
sat. Dec. 8th 10-5

TONY STEVENS
(Convenor K.T.U.A)

Tebbit reckons this is the dispute to "break the shackles of trade unionism in Britain". In their desperation the Tories are having to destroy all opposition.
This has galvanised our class, restored our confidence, and our strengths have come to the fore.
But this struggle has also highlighted weaknesses in areas like Kent. The neglect of many trade union branches particularly in the industrial sector. The decline of many Trades Councils, and the appalling state of the KATC.
In many cases union machinery is rusty or downright defunct. The fact that, out of 16 miners' support groups in the county, only 4 were set up by Trades Councils, speaks volumes.

Therefore the KTUA, an unofficial body, emerged out of necessity. It's existance is an indictment of the official lack of leadership.

The KTUA is not however a long term solution, or an end in itself. The times necessitate that we draw together the best of the official with the unofficial.
And also draw in the women's groups, unemployed, independant support groups, and the youth.

All this is why we participate in the, long overdue, Kent Solidarity Committee.

But we need to look ahead also. The situation at Reeds, APCM, in the old people's homes, on the railways, with the school meals service - will all need inter-union support.

After the miners' dispute, we can not afford to go back to square one and let all the old problems reemerge. If the support groups & women's groups dissappear, it will be at our own cost.

This is why the Kent Trade Union Alliance has called a conference in conjunction with the Kent NUM.

We urge all activists to contribute to the discussion at the conference. We can use the conference to take the spirit of the miners struggle into every sector of the movement in Kent.

Major Speakers, Workshops



photo, Mary Hartner

What Future for the **Support Groups**

for more information about the conference, or the KTUA, write to 25, Beacon Road, Herne Bay, or phone Tony on 02273 62664.

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