LONDON LABOUR 30p
BRIEFING
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RESIST THE REGISTER

DON'T LET THEM SPLIT US!

In 1945 Churchill slandered Labour by suggesting that a Labour victory would mean a Gestapo. We do not now need a Churchill to slander us. We have home-grown versions who are very busy suggesting that Labour has been taken over by sinister forces ready to destroy parliamentary democracy.

It is not surprising if some of these accusations affect the electorate. To be denounced from within is bound to be more effective than when done by political opponents. As a prospective Parliamentary candidate facing an SDP defector, I do a considerable amount of door-step work. I hear voters say: 'Oh, the Labour Party's too far left'. I ask them what policies they disagree with. They never know. Just – too far left.

So I say: 'You mean like wanting to come out of the EEC?' 'Oh, no,' they say, 'I want out as well, we shouldn't have gone in'. 'Or making full employment top priority, tackling the multi-nationals, etc. etc . . .' 'Oh, no,' they say, 'the unemployment's terrible. But its only, well, you know, too far left . . .'

I also hear voters say: 'What is the use, you are all the same, never do what you promise. Thatcher's awful, but why bother to vote Labour, had enough last time . . .' So I tell them this is exactly why the active members have had to take some steps trying to make sure that next time is better.

My doorstep encounters usually end satisfactorily. So they ought, in a Labour area, but people do have some reasons for their attitudes.

They are told by leading figures in the



by Audrey Wise

Labour Party that the constituency parties have been taken over by sinister figures or by the 'loony left'. John Boyd, General Secretary of the AUEW tells them that the Labour Party is a sewer. Is it surprising that with friends like these, our enemies are getting some reinforcement? But we face a despicable government and our policies are basically popular, providing people know about them and providing they believe that we will carry them out.

CLAIM POWER

This last proviso is the reason why party activists have had to claim some power in the party. But the nearer we come to a party which will make basic changes in society, the fiercer and more hysterical become the attacks on us, both outside and inside the party. Now, accompanied by wringing of hands and calls for unity, comes the proposal for a register of permitted groups.

This is a device to prevent free discussion and association in the party, and intended to lead to expulsions. It will certainly not help Labour's reputation with the electorate but adds to the slander that sinister forces must be rooted out.

The two CLPs with which I am associated have greeted the proposal with dismay, and I believe this is typical of CLP feeling. If the register is carried at Conference it will be with the votes of the trade union leaders. I hope wiser counsels will prevail, because it is a recipe for antagonism and resentment. CLPs will refuse to expel members and will blame the unions for the pressure. Let us look at the specific points laid down by

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LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Welcome Merseyside Briefing!

Dear Briefing,

I hope you can find a few column inches in your next issue to announce the birth of *Merseyside Labour Briefing*, the first issue of which was published on September 1st. Its appearance stems from an initiative of the Merseyside Labour Co-ordinating Committee, and from a (mostly) warm response to London Briefing in the area. We have unashamedly adopted the format of LLB, and perhaps more importantly your 'open editorial' policy.

Those involved in MLB hope that the paper will provide a forum for discussing campaigning issues and ideas in a way that is more accessible to ordinary Party members. We also recognise that there is an urgent need for a *real* debate on strategies for socialism; and aim to carry this debate beyond the theoretical, and to emphasise the value of opinions expressed in personal terms.

Our belief in the need for such a publication comes from the conviction that activists can only begin to feel their *strength* when they break out of the isolation that conventional Party structures impose on them.

We are planning to pubish bi-monthly, and expect the bulk of our copy to be devoted to reports on the activities of local CLPs, TU branches and single issue campaigns.

Keva Coombes, leader of Merseyside County Council, and John Hamilton, leader of the city Labour Group, were both contributors to the first (20 page) issue. Also included were articles on the struggle to keep open Croxteth comprehensive, privatisation, a local Women's Action Week and democracy in the NUR (??).

Now that 'Briefings' exist in Brighton, Bristol, Nottingham and Merseyside as well as London, perhaps the time has come for some links to be forged that will help to keep us in contact with each other.

Yours fraternally,
Stuart Marshall-Clarke

P.S. Single copies of MLB, price 25p, are available from me at 8 Ashford Rd., Meols, Wirral, Merseyside. Anyone wishing to take out an annual subscription (£1.50) or make a donation should write to The Treasurer, MLB 69 Lambton Rd., Liverpool L17.

P.P.S. Our first print run of 550 copies looks as though it will sell out easily and we have been forced to order an extra 250 copies!

Audrey Wise (Continued from previous page)

the NEC. These are acceptability to NEC; not secret; open and democratic; no internal discipline.

When people join the Labour Party they sign that they accept its principles, programme and constitution, and I am prepared to believe them. Their acceptance may be according to their lights not mine, but unless we want Thought Police I have to acknowledge that they have as much right to their lights as I have to mine.

Indeed I have some profound doubts about the adherence to Clause IV of some of our leading figures. But the answer is to campaign politically. The left has not sought expulsions.

I am a candidate for the NEC. But I certainly do not wish or expect all party members to be 'acceptable' to me, in their ideas, activities, or associations. I would have one criterion only – members would deserve expulsion if they stood against Labour candidates in Council or Parliamentary elections or if they advocated support for candidates doing so. This is an objective test. It does not rest on any capacity to read people's minds, judge their sincerity or decide what they 'really' think about parliamentary democracy or socialism.

SECRECY

We are told that Militant is secret. How many losers would there be in a 'Spot the Militant' competition? Who is that person standing there selling copies of Militant and saying the well-known passwords? Militant supporters campaign politically for their political views, and this simply cannot be done secretly. There may be secret organisations or people with secret links, but by definition these must be people who do not campaign openly for their views but work by manipulation. If there are CIA links, for example, can it be thought that establishing a register will be the signal for penitence and confession. Or are there to be detectives as well?

OPEN AND DEMOCRATIC

Whose definitions do we use? That of those Front Benchers who scuppered any chance of a Freedom of Information Act in the last Parliament?

I recall Stan Thorne MP going to the first meeting of the Manifesto Group and being shown the door. Will they now put out the welcome mat? Groups are asked to open all their meetings. Does this mean that LARC will be expected to allow SPUC members to participate in their decisions, or Labour CND likewise for pro-bomb advocates?

This proposal comes very strangely from an NEC which has only recently and reluctantly conceded that party members have any rights to know how its own decisions are reached.

We are told that Militant exerts discipline over its supporters. Apart from self-discipline, all discipline involves rewards and punishments. What rewards can Militant offer? Power, prestige, an easy life? What punishments can it threaten? Withdrawal of the, right to sell Militant – oh horrors! Obviously with this to hold over a supporter, Militant's control is absolute!

There is, however, a body which does have rewards and punishments available and does exert discipline over its members. This is the Parliamentary Labour Party, and more particularly within the PLP a Labour Prime Minister or leader via patronage and the whipping system. Preferment in a political career is a very valuable reward. To fall from favour (or even to have 'pairing' obstructed) are real punishments to many who sit in Parliament. This discipline, in my experience, is exerted far more in favour of policies which are NOT Labour Party policies than the reverse.

The fact that some MPs do not think in terms of 'careers' and so are less amenable than others, does not remove the fact of the discipline, nor that it is used to prevent accountability to the movement instead of promoting it.

If people decide to speak with one voice, I think it is boring and less effective. But I have to acknowledge that other people must make their own choices, and that the only discipline involved can be self-discipline. Militant has no power over its supporters. The fact that it does not persuade all of us is immaterial. No one has the right to declare it illegitimate. Supporters of Militant range from people of over thirty years' membership to those who joined last month, and they all have as much right in the party as anyone else who signed the form.

The final paradox is that this register is to apply only to groups consisting entirely of Labour Party members. So for example it would apply to Labour CND but not CND itself because CND has members outside the Labour Party. So it is okay to belong to pressure groups in which members of other parties can participate (even though those groups might be seeking to influence the Labour Party), but if you are all Labour Party members then you have to put yourself at the mercy of acceptability to the NEC.

Of course, it is bound to lead back to a proscribed list as well as a permitted list. Otherwise a group simply needs to open its membership to non-Labour Party members and it will remove itself from the obligation to comply.

CANDIDATES

According to Michael Foot (*Guardian* 6th Sept): 'It would be an absurdity for someone who supported the Miltant Tendency to remain a candidate'. So at least eight more constituencies are to be plunged into chaos by being ordered to drop candidates of their choice. Including Bradford, where Pat Wall has been chosen twice. This is being done in the name of winning elections!

This very statement makes it harder for Labour to win in these areas, whatever happens now, just as did Roy Hattersley's Bradford paper headlined front page attack on Pat Wall immediately after his first selection.

I believe the trade unions and their leaders are very anxious that Labour should win the next election. As a prospective Parliamentary candidate I share that desire. But I must say loud and clear that this persecution of the left is electorally damaging.

Stop the register, campaign against the Tories and the SDP and for our own policies for Peace, Jobs and Freedom.

BOROUGH BRIEFING

MOVING SLOWLY TO THE LEFT IN GREENWICH

CLAER LLOYD-JONES

Councillor Trafalgar Ward, Greenwich
Chair, Community Affairs Committee

The election of a new Labour Council in Greenwich in May seems to have passed relatively unnoticed outside the Borough. It was, however, a significant event and represents a major political change from the previous Labour Council. We took control of 43 of the 62 seats, a larger majority than before the election, but 2 less than in 1978 (we suffered 6 defections during the last administration).

Of the 43 Labour councillors, 20 are newly elected. During the course of selections last year there was only one deselection. The other councillors retired. There was no organisation of candidates, and the fact that there is a working majority of the left in the Labour Group can be put down to chance rather than design.

More radical

We were elected on a manifesto that is certainly more radical than any ever seen before in Greenwich. It was put together through a Borough Manifesto Conference in December last year. It is not a perfect document and it is certainly not the most radical of any Labour Council's in London, but it represents a changing attitude towards local government in the party and amongst those of us who were elected. It is now council policy, having been adopted in full at the June Council meeting.

The first acts of the new Labour group included doubling the number of group meetings, holding joint meetings of the Labour group and local government committee every other cycle. We have suspended the voluntary redundancy scheme and abolished 'Manwatch' — a scheme whereby every vacancy was scrutinised to see if it could be abolished and where ceilings below establishment were imposed.

We have also restructured the committees, abolishing the General Purposes Committee, combining Works and Planning and renaming as Policy and Resources. We have also established our 2 new committees in line with manifesto commitments — Employment and Industry and Community Affairs Committee.

Employment and Industry is in the throes of drawing up the Borough's employment strategy and training strategy. The CAC is charged, amongst other things, with our race policies, our women's policies, health, education, police and open government. We are in the process of establishing sub-committees in the first 5 areas and are holding a Greenwich Assembly this month to initiate our public consultation process and develop our open government proposals. The CAC will have 8 new staff to service it and develop its policies.

The first CAC meeting was advertised and attracted approximately 50 members of the public. There was open debate on each item on the agenda and an open section at the end when any member of the public could raise any item they chose.



Council candidates from Greenwich Labour Party.

The most important thing we have discovered over the last 4 months is quite how much the council machinery alienates the community. We have good positive policies designed to examine and combat discrimination and make the Council more accountable to the community. But the community is so used to being disregarded that most people find it difficult to believe that we mean to do what we say. The black community particularly has a high level of cynicism. For a number of us this acts as a spur.

The new council has a lot to live down. What we have inherited is probably more difficult to change than if we had won control from another party. Quite clearly, older members of the Council find it difficult to criticise a Council they were a part of.

Although the new group started off fairly united, riding on the euphoria of the election, political differences are now beginning to emerge more clearly. The crucial time will be over the next 6 months as we are faced with making decisions on budgets and rate fixing for next year. Budgets have been 'cuts budgets' for the last 3 years. This year there will be pressure from the left to expand them. On top of this Greenwich is facing further pressure from Heseltine to cut next year. We received maximum penalty this year and even with the cuts made by the last Council are still 'overspending'.

What we have done so far has not escaped the notice of the local press. One paper in particular, the Kentish Independent, and one of its journalists in particular, Frank Dunkley has been conducting a hostile and on occasion defamatory campaign against the Council. John Austin-Walker, the new leader of the Council is referred to as 'nonsense talker' and the Community Affairs Committee is used weekly as a butt to Dunkley's tasteless and reactionary journalism.

Inertia

The odds against instigating any purposeful change are not really affected by this type of constant irritation trying to make us lose our nerve, but by the level of inertia in the Council's machinery. Really searching work needs to be done and hard decisions taken if the manner in which the Council discharges its functions and provides its services can change.

It is not a hopeful sign for us that even in Authorities where something of this kind has been attempted in the past, the level of public participation and support for the Council has not increased.

It is also invidious that by virtue of being employers the Council machinery does not seem to be able to provide the opportunity to build solidarity between the Labour Party in office and the Trade Union movement. We are fighting in Greenwich to change this. Whether we succeed or not, it will be the first time in most people's living memory that anything of this sort will have been attempted by a Labour Council in Greenwich.

BRIEFING INTERVIEWS

Phil Turner became Camden Council leader after the May elections, when he replaced Roy Shaw. Phil was interviewed for Briefing by Camden Councillor Alan Woods. We print the text of the interview below.

Phil, very little seems to be known about you and your political past. Could you say a bit about that?

I have been a councillor on Camden for about 12 years now — most of that time as a backbencher, which I suppose is why I am not all that well known. I was a backbencher largely because I was out of sympathy with a lot of the policies which were being pursued by the leadership of the council over those years and I found myself in opposition for a good part of that time. Also I didn't feel that being Chair of a committee was the most effective contribution that I could make to the Labour Party in Camden so I spent a lot of time in those days working in tenants' organisations, particularly with the rents agitation at the time of the Housing Finance Act. I was Chair of the Action Committee against the Housing Finance Act in Camden which was a very effective committee and drew together large numbers of tenants, a lot of people from the Labour Party, from the CP, and other groups. Until eventually the Council gave in under the threat of surcharge, the Committee mounted a pretty successful campaign with major demonstrations on estates. Camden held out certainly not as long as Clay Cross, but longer than most other local authorities and that was a very effective piece of political action.

So I was involved in that kind of thing much more than I was on Council committees and I am still not altogether sure that is not a better way of spending your time. The only committee that I have chaired on Camden has been Building Works and Services, which has had a very difficult period. When I was Chair, in fact, we very rapidly expanded the direct labour force and built up the turnover of the building department very substantially indeed.

Just about when I finished my two years in came the Direct Labour legislation with the result in the end that all that was put into reverse. That was my only real experience of chairing committees and that is, I suppose, why I am not all that well known.

During the period when you were in opposition as a backbencher to the policies of the Labour Group, that Labour Group ran down the building department and allowed almost 50% of the workforce to be made voluntarily redundant; it also pushed through quite severe increases in rents and rates and was called by many people right wing; despite that Camden did exceptionally well compared to other boroughs in the recent elections. Why do you think that was?

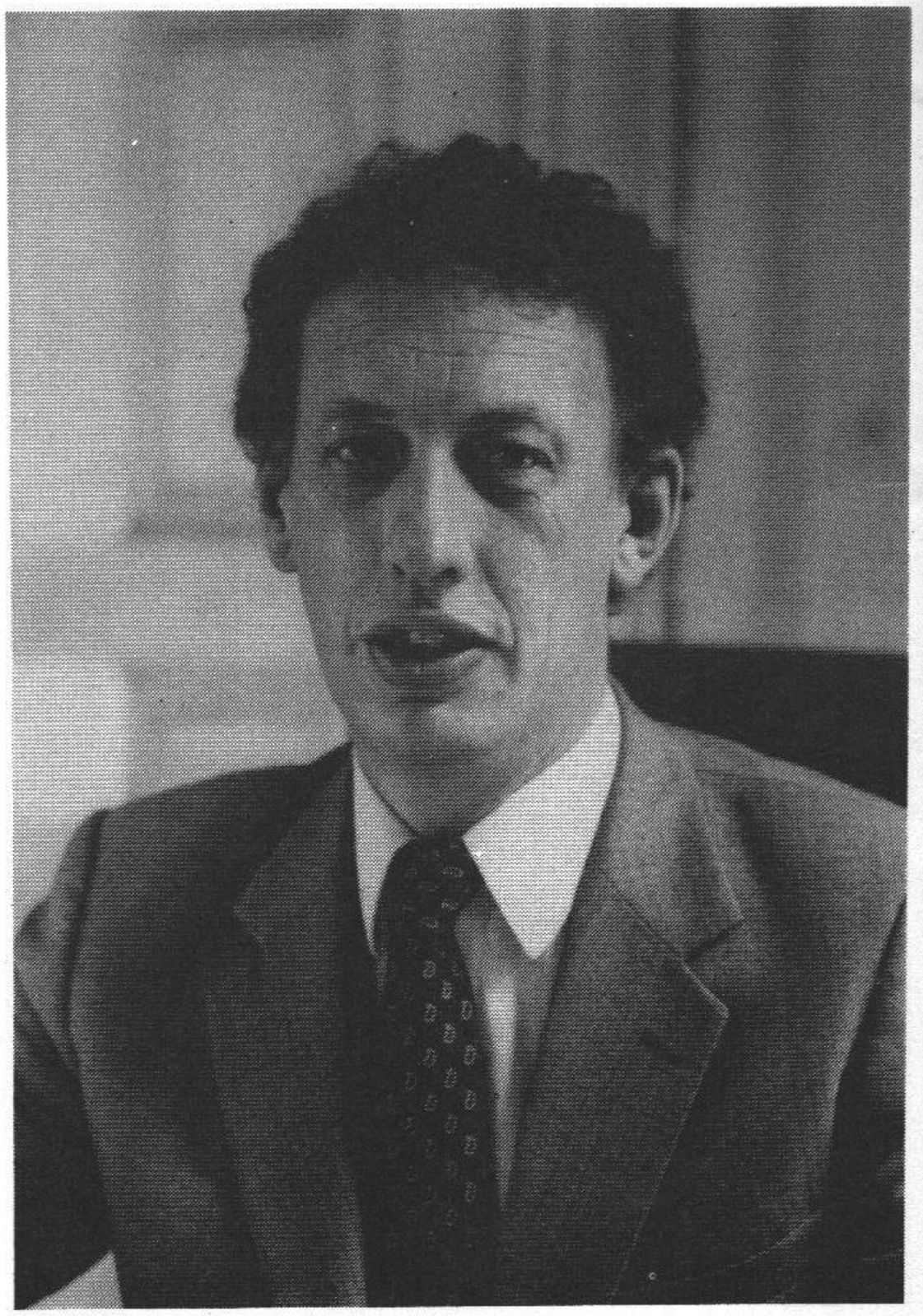
I think there are a number of factors. First of all, despite all that, there is due to the activities of the Labour branches in Camden, still a substantial bedrock of support for the Labour Party and for what it has done on the Council. That's not to say there is support for those particular policies that you have mentioned but, Camden does have on all the public opinion surveys a fairly high reputation with the people who live here in terms of the services that it provides: social services, libraries and so on. And of course we have housed a very large number of people over the '70s in council housing — a huge acquisition and building programme.

We still, to some degree I think, have credit for that. I think also the Labour Party — although it didn't do anything like as much as it should have done in explaining to people why their rates were going up, why their rents were going up — did manage to some degree to get over to people just where the blame for that lay and people aren't as stupid as the other two parties think they are. There was I think a fair degree of understanding of the attack from the Tory government on local authorities.

Also the parties themselves waged a very vigorous and successful straight election campaign. There was a tremendous amount of activity and a lot of good literature went out and in a number of wards there have been local people who are now standing as candidates who had been active in those areas for quite a long time.

If I had to explain why we did get a better result than say Lambeth, I am not sure that I can readily answer that except to say probably that Lambeth has been the subject of really vitriolic press attention.

In a sense though the Labour Party failed to gain public support in the fight against the local government legislation and many comrades in the Briefing circle think that had a lot to do with the policies put forward by the various leaderships and we have read their very critical interview with Ted Knight, and the way in which they are dealing now with the GLC leadership. Do you think it is a question that our policies have not been left wing enough, that if we had the policies we would have got a lot more support or do you think it is something more fundamental that is going to be needed to bring about opposition to local government legislation?



PHIL TURNER

I think left wing policies aren't sufficient. Left wing policies without the support are as useless as right wing policies. I mean what you have got to do is to explain to people why you have left wing policies and what your left wing policies are. Maybe the reason for some of the failures has simply been a failure to counteract the right wing media and really getting over to people the effect of government policies and that only by introducing a left wing approach to the problems can you actually hope to defend people's living standards.

If you take rents for example, people certainly in Camden are now at, or near, the limit of what you can reasonably expect them to pay. Certainly that is the case with rates as well and certainly if we push up rents and rates we can expect now to lose very substantial support. But if we are to go into a situation where despite legislation and so on, we are going to say we will not increase rents and rates, we will fail unless we explain very clearly to people what the reasons are and what the results will be.

The other thing is that I do strongly think you cannot pursue a policy like that unless you can clearly demonstrate to people that you are not wasting their money and I think that is another area in which the left is weak. I mean if we want to get people supporting a policy of resisting government pressure and confrontation we have got to be able to show that our house is in order. I do believe that in some areas the public don't believe our house is in order and in some cases I think they are right. For example, the way in which we carry out our repairs and maintenance service in Camden — that has got to be improved and unless you can actually demonstrate to people that you are doing things for them, then they are not going to support you.

PHIL TURNER, LEADER, CAMDEN COUNCIL

We fought on a manifesto that spoke about decentralisation but didn't explain what we meant by that. Now that was the case in many London boroughs. How do you see decentralisation coming about and is it not going to be a big problem with the trade unions given that many of these changes or proposed changes that would have to come from any form of decentralisation will mean very many changes in the job nature and job structure of individual workers?

Obviously, if we don't take the unions with us on decentralisation then that too won't work. It's going to be absolutely essential that we explain clearly to the unions what we are planning to do, why we are planning to do it and invite them to give their views about the way in which it should be done. But I think that if we do that, the unions will understand that there are benefits for them in it. It will mean that they will become more popular, they will be providing a more accessible, more efficient service and will be able to establish for their members a much closer relationship with the people they are actually supposed to serve.

One of the problems all local authorities have is that they get too distant from the people and that creates all sorts of tensions between the workers and the clients which should never exist. I think in Camden there is already considerable support amongst Local Authority Workers for that kind of policy but as you rightly say, they will want to be consulted all the way along the line and they will want to see how those policies will affect them. But we have got to get to a situation where people who live in the local area know individually who is dealing with that problem and who to go to in order to get it put right. We've got to have much quicker access to the people who want repairs, to their local maintenance team so they know where to put the blame to if the job isn't done, and where the job isn't done the employees concerned can explain to the tenants why it isn't done. If we go down that road we've got a much better prospect — a sort of partnership if you like between the Council and the people.

One of the promises in the Camden Labour Manifesto which has been speedily implemented is the formation of a Women's Committee. Now this Women's Committee has put forward very detailed plans as to how it wants to operate but certainly one of the most impressive things about it so far is the way in which it has decided to open out large consultative processes with women in the borough, and to talk about how they can best meet their needs. They intend to involve women elected from public meetings in the borough on the Council's Committee machinery. Do you think there are any lessons we could follow, and would you envisage more outside input onto the formal Council structure?

I do. I think you're right that the Women's Committee have given us an object lesson in how to get on with the job of establishing a new committee and defining precisely what its role is to be. I think certainly that applies to other new committees that we've establishing: the Police Committee; the Race Relations committee; and the Employment Committee which is now going to be a full committee of the Council. We ought to take a leaf out of the Women's Committee's book and have that type of consultative procedure before we actually formally constitute the Committee. Similarly I think that on the existing standing Committees we ought to be thinking about ways of involving more people on those committees either as co-optees or observers or whatever.

We have tenants on the Housing Management Committee, but there is no real reason why that principle could not be spread to other committees if we chose to do so.

Whatever the Manifesto implications are they are going to cost money. Camden's money from the government has been totally cut off. You've mentioned the rate increase, the rates are at an exceptionally high level and have certainly provoked a great backlash in the borough. How are you going to pay for your manifesto commitments and what sort of political changes do you think have occurred since the election in the Labour Group to enable you to be able to fight for the implementation of that manifesto which will obviously mean a political fight and a confrontation with the government under Heseltine?

There are two parts to that question. How are we going to pay for it? I think the answer to that is not clear because at the moment we don't know how much all our manifesto commitments are actually going to cost. I think the important thing to remember is we now receive no Rate Support Grant from the government. So in a sense we've got over one hurdle in that there is no immediate penalty that the government can impose on us in terms of further withdrawal of Rate Support Grant, if we exceed a certain level of expenditure.

Nevertheless, obviously our manifesto will involve much higher spending and clearly we will have to, when we come to the end of the year, take a view about whether or not that increased rate that is required is a reasonable bill to present to the people of Camden.

At that stage the Labour Group will have to take a view about whether they're prepared to go to the electorate with that bill, or whethr they are going to say — that rates have reached a level beyond which they cannot go, that the government had penalised us to the extent of £30 million or whatever the figure is by withdrawing our Rate Support Grant, and we're not prepared to push that burden onto the ratepayers and therefore we're going into bankruptcy. Now, I don't myself envisage that happening at the end of this year, for two reasons. Firstly, because we have a fair degree of flexibility — how can I put it — we have a fair contingency margin at the moment which will allow us to actually reduce the size of the rate increase. We also have a fairly substantial amount of money available on capital receipts which can be used to help finance our programme.

Secondly, I think it will inevitably take sometime for our new commitments to actually come through into the system and have a marked effect on the revenue position. In other words we may not have a really substantial rate increase demand this year. I think it is more likely for it to happen the following year. In the meantime we obviously have to campaign against government policy in terms of withdrawing money from local authorities and campaign for a restoration of that money and secondly it must make sure that we've not actually wasting money which we are doing by performance reviews and so on. That doesn't mean we will be looking at cutting jobs. We have to make sure that the money that we spend is delivered to the best possible level of service.

I think, I could be totally wrong, but I think we may be talking about major financial confrontation, not this year but next.

How are you going to involve people in that confrontation? And can you answer the second half of my previous question about the Labour Group.

The last Labour Group had a right-wing composition. Certainly the leadership were right-wing and the result of that was that not nearly enough was done in a campaigning way against government policies and actually mobilising opposition to it. It was very much the philosophy as well. We'd send Roy Shaw off to the LBA and AMA and he'd have a quite little negotiation with Jack Smart and Heseltine and Tom King and all those crooks and you know, some way or other it would turn out alright. Many opportunities were missed when the supplementary rates demand and the rates demand themselves and the rents increases were going out to people.

The opportunity was missed really to explain to people why they were getting those bills and the Labour Party too was not as active as it should have been. I think I said at the beginning they did a reasonable job but clearly a hell a lot more needs to be done and it also involves of course talking to the Trade Unions on a regular basis about these sort of problems.

Are you confident that the Labour Group has the political will to fight against legislation? Are you confident that they are prepared to put themselves on the line in a way that, though they didn't realise they were doing it, the previous Labour Group did on the question of the Supplement, leading to the point where the 31 Camden councillors were taken to the High Court over the supplement. In the meantime they stopped the supplement and in fact many manual workers had a crucial cut in their pay, not actual terms but in real terms. The trade unions have contacted the Labour Group and asked for the supplement to be back-dated and restored because the court case was won. How do you think your Labour group will respond to that?

The short answer is, I don't know how individuals will react if they think they are putting their necks on the chopping block. I would hope the whole group will be prepared to do that in the right case, but nobody can actually totally predict that. I think that anybody who claims that he stood for election in Camden without being aware of that danger would be either telling an untruth or astonishingly naive.

But having said that you know I think it will depend upon the issue and how strongly people feel about it, how strongly the local parties feel, the degree of support outside and all those factors.

GOOD RIDDANCE!

When Michael Foot wrote to Bob Mellish after the latter's resignation from the Party on 2nd August saying 'Some of us, the overwhelming majority in the Party and the trade unions, will never give up the common struggle for democracy and socialism' he was participating in a dialogue of the deaf.

For some years now Mellish has not even bothered to disguise his contempt for 'socialism' and 'People who talk about socialism', the concept enjoying for him roughly the same appeal as pornography for Mrs Whitehouse. The lachrymose performance delivered at the MP's second home in Sussex before a succession of cameras belonging to various TV companies, throughout the afternoon and early evening of 2nd August was brought about because Mellish lost control of Bermondsey, the fief he had ruled since the war without any opposition.

He has never recovered from the shock of what he called a 'palace revolution' three years ago when local Party members decided enough was enough and put up candidates to challenge the existing 'mafia' (the term he skillfully chose to denote those who now oppose him), who controlled the scandalously run-down and moribund Bermondsey Party, propping up a hard-line right wing local political establishment which was busy making Bermondsey a safe place for property speculators to go about their business in.

In all the confused, badly informed and



sentimental press coverage given to Mellish's resignation, only the *Daily Mail* managed to put their finger on it by pointing out that Mellish had dug his own political grave by allowing his base to dwindle to a tiny, ineffective, crumbling clique that couldn't defend itself against the rising anger and frustration of local people who saw the Labour Party actually engaged in making their community a *worse* place to live in by its failures to develop the riverside areas for the benefit of the community and its failure to make even a stab at turning the borough in a socialist direction.

Mellish resigned when he did to avoid the humiliation of being ejected from the Labour Party for running an anti-Labour campaign at the last local elections in May. He has one more card to play when he resigns as MP on the day Peter Tatchell is reselected as prospective candidate. By his public posturing he has done immense damage to the local party and he will do more damage still by lending his weight to anyone who stands against Labour in the by-election when it comes.

His political epitaph was provided neatly by Bermondsey Party chair, Don Schiach, who said: 'Mr Mellish has not had any real association with the Bermondsey Party for some time now. I think he is absolutely out of touch with the Labour Party as it is now. He belongs to an era of stereotyped machine politicians. He came up through that system and is a relic of a long-gone past in Labour Party politics.'

No-one who has the interests of the Labour Party and the cause of socialism truly at heart can regret the going of that kind of politics.

Nick Murray

PHIL TURNER (continued)

But you're confident you can fight against low pay with your present Labour group?

I would have thought so, yes.

One of the clearest failures of opposition to Heseltine's local government laws, was that the Labour Party nationally failed to make a campaigning response, the Labour Party regionally failed to make a campaigning response, and the London Labour Party failed to respond in a campaigning way. And we had little Labour collectives running off to challenge Heseltine in this court, other groups challenging him in that court, other groups like the Old Islington Labour Council asking to be let off the hook if they could make little deals. Now the London election results reflected, I suppose that confusion which can only be described as a disaster for London where we lost control of Lambeth and Waltham Forest. We narrowly held onto Tower Hamlets and almost lost overall control of Brent.

How do you envisage a London-wide response against Heseltine's further attempts to restrict welfare spending?

We must ensure that Labour controlled boroughs act together in these kind of issues. We have got to get to a situation where if one Labour council take a decision, for example, to pay a minimum wage or to hold down rents, then that action be taken in a concerted way across London by boroughs, so that the the government, if it wishes to try to stop that, will have to be fighting against all London boroughs rather than picking off one at a time. Not only has the G.L.R.C. got to play an important role in that, but also we have to make sure that our representatives on the LBA properly represent the views of the council from which they have been nominated.

I'm just thinking now we need, for example, to ensure they support the policy that is to be put before, I think, the coming Labour Party conference for an indemnity for councillors who may be surcharged during this government reign of office. Unless and until that indemnity is written into the Labour manifesto, then the pressures on people to buckle under the strain will be that much greater.

Now the LBA, for example, could play an important role in ensuring that is done and I think that all boroughs including Camden cam make sure their representatives support that kind of policy. In other words, LBA representatives have to be accountable to their Labour groups and to properly explain how they are voting on the LBA.

One of the problems Labour faced was the emergence of the SDP and it could be in little doubt that in some cases, the SDP did affect our vote and took a lot of votes off us. And it now looks as if the Party is about to go into a period of internal fighting, with the attempts to exclude from the party certain groupings like the Militant tendency. How do you see the future for the Labour Party in London, particularly with this sword hanging over its head?

Firstly, if we're going to spend the next six months or a year on an internal dispute, about Militant and other groups, then Labour will find it very difficult indeed to win the next election. Those kind of disputes will be totally counter-productive. They will split the party from end to end, there will be another attempt by the right-wing to purge itself of socialists within the party and if they put the same amount of their time and effort actually pursuing official Labour Party policies laid down by conference and less time in trying to get rid of those, most of them trying to uphold party policy, then we would be a great deal more effective.

We have to get out among the people and explain and implement the policies t hat we were elected to carry out. There is one reason why Labour is declining in popularity at the moment, in that people do not seriously believe that we mean what we say and unless we demonstrate we do mean what we say on a local level, then we won't be seen to mean what we say on a national level. So the local Party and the borough groups have a responsibility in the party to carry out their manifestos and to fight for them and to be seen carrying out those manifestos in direct contact with the people who elected them.



Leaders of London's Labour Councils discuss strategy before meeting Heseltine and the DEO officials. Left to right: Margaret Hodge (Islington), George Brooker (Barking), Bryn Davies (ILEA), Val Veness (Islington), Illtyd Harrington (GLC), Alan Davis (Southwark), Ron Stockbridge (Lewisham) and Steve Bullock (Lewisham)

LONDON LABOUR COUNCILS UNITE AGAINST HESELTINE!

The 27th July saw another twist in the torniquet that the Tory government has attempted to put on London. To announce his cut of a further 3% in the rate support grant (from 56% to 53%) Heseltine and his minions called a meeting of London Councils to tell them the bad news and to show a totally irrelevant slideshow of how merchant bankers are helping Liverpool!

In the past, Labour leaders would have sat there, attempted to show they were making cuts and sought a 'Bi-partisan' approach with Tory Councils to impress the minister. Now, however, most Labour Councils in London have new leaders and many of them felt they must demonstrate opposition to this sort of attack.

Islington Council's new leadership called a meeting to discuss this and plan a protest. At the gathering itself, one after another Labour leaders interrupted Heseltine to push the case for more resources and less penalties. His response was to plough on through his 'pep-talk' and film show. Faced with this contempt towards the newly-elected Councils, the London boroughs walked out and went on to hold a press conference to expose the Tories' plans for local government.

This new-found aggression towards the government, and a welcome unity between boroughs under attack, must now be built on. The creation of the Association of Socialist Councils and the preparation of the next round of battles are the logical continuation of this development.

HESELTINE'S BOYS GO FOR VAUXHALL CROSS

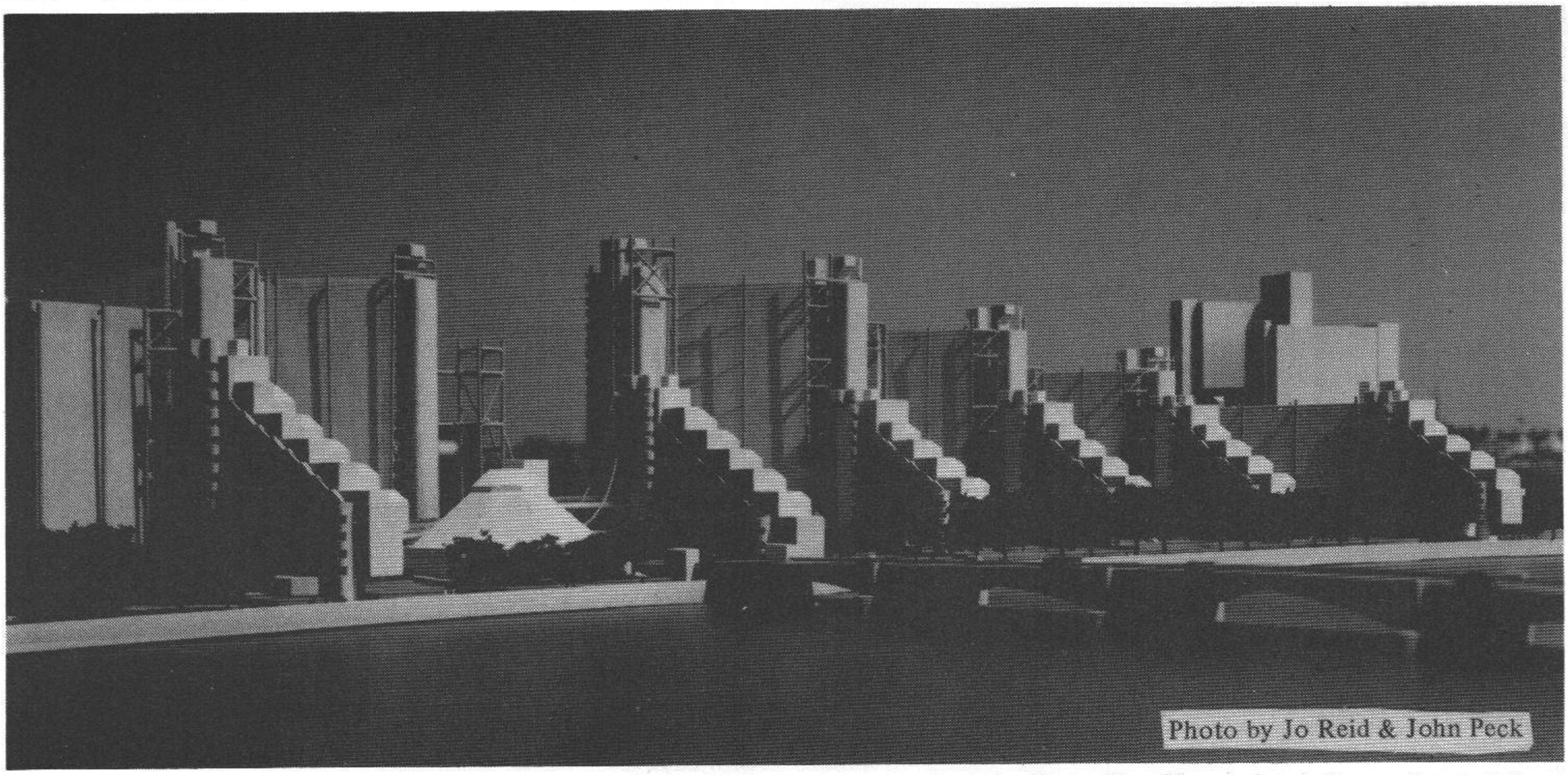


Photo by Jo Reid & John Peck

FOR A man of such limited abilities, Michael Heseltine is trying very hard to established himself as a one-person planner determining the London skyline on the South Bank of the Thames. Not being deterred by little things like Labour planning authorities in Lambeth, Southwark, and the GLC, or by the plans and aspirations of people in the relevant areas, he is using every devious method to get his way and line the pockets of international property speculators.

The latest trick was when he overruled his own Department of the Environment planning inspector and gave permission for European Ferries to build an office complex on the site of St Mary Overie's Dock between London and Southwark bridges. Before that, Heseltine used the Special Development Order – previously used only to put public interests before private ones – to allow a massive development to be approved for the Vauxhall Cross site in the north of Lambeth.

INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL

The Vauxhall Cross example demonstrates how keen Heseltine is to push the interests of international capital over the wishes of democratic councils or local communities. The sceheme comprises 1,150,000 square feet of offices, and was the 'winning' entry in an architectural competition organised by Armbridge Ltd, the development company.

The proposal differs fundamentally from the overall plans for that part of Lambeth agreed by both the borough and the GLC – the scheme has massive 300 ft slabs of offices casting shadows over the remaining residential area to the rear.

Earlier this year Heseltine overruled another report by his planning inspector when he allowed a 750,000 square feet office development at Hay's Wharf, between London Bridge and Tower Bridge.

HESELTINE'S CONTROL

These schemes – combined with the Docklands – give Heseltine a direct or indirect personal control over massive amounts of London's planning, and his interest in the South Bank, perhaps Europe's prime site for speculative office development, will reach its climax this autumn.

Then, the report of the inspector looking into the future of the Coin Street site in Waterloo will be given to Heseltine. After years of wrangling, two public enquiries, and a decade of struggle by the local people to pioneer community planning through the Waterloo District Plan, the final enquiry outcome is expected to be released in the next few weeks.

Which way will it go? No one is sure – if it goes against the local residents (now supported by the GLC and Southwark, and backed by the former Lambeth Council when it was Labour controlled up to May) then it will allow 90,000 square feet of offices over a historic working-class site, destroying a community which has worked furiously to preserve its identity, jobs, and environment. Alternative plans, backed by the local planning authorities, will be thrown out of the window.

If it backs the local groups, the battle may still not be won. Heseltine has overruled his inspector twice this year, and then got the SDO to do his dirty work on a third site, all close by. He could do the same to Coin Street in his megalomaniacal bid to be London's chief planner.

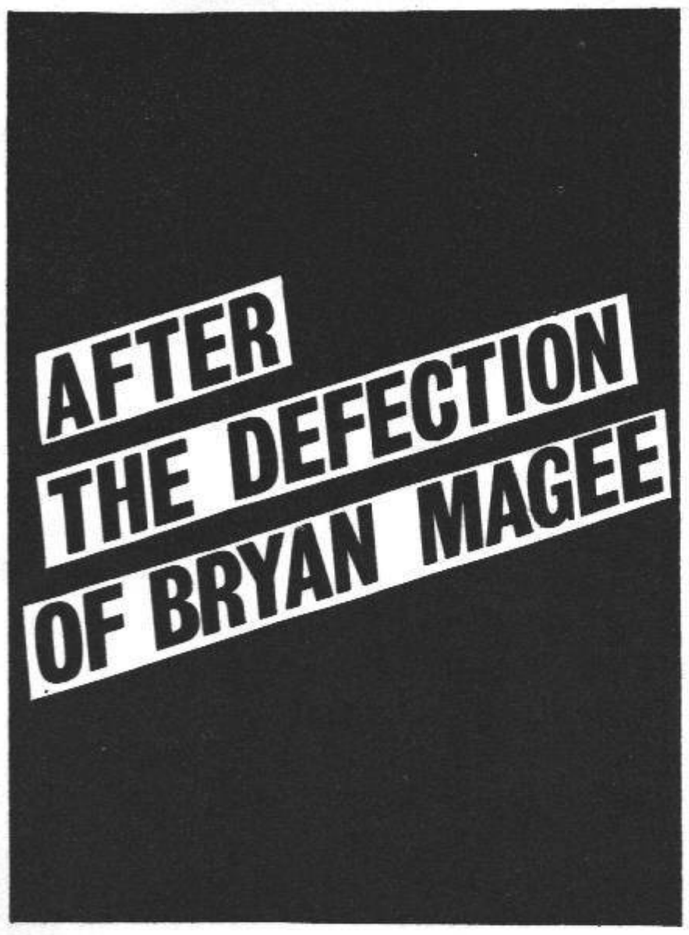
ACTIONS CONDEMNED

Even by the bureaucratic standards which Hesletine and the Department of the Environment like to invoke on others, his actions are condemned. the London Boroughs Association and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities all opposed the use of the Special Development Order at Vauxhall Cross, and his personal planning techniques, because they have usurped the powers of local councils.

Politically, the Labour movement should reject Heseltine's action for sounder reasons – because they are directly in the interests of capital, against the interests of ordinary people.

On the Vauxhall Cross Site, the finance for the controversial scheme is coming from a Bahamas-based bank, the Hay's Wharf development is coming a wealthy Kuwaiti-owned property company; the new St Mary Overie's Dock scheme is for European Ferries, with its

Continued next page



HARRY COHEN SPEAKS

Following the defection of Bryan Magee to the SDP, Leyton CLP have chosen Harry Cohen as their Parliamentary Candidate. He sets out his views below.

It is an honour to be chosen as Labour Parliamentary Candidate for Leyton.

I consider my selection to be a renewed commitment to Socialist aims and ideals by the local Party. Aims and ideals that are not abstract, but on the contrary relate very much to the needs and problems of local people and the attempt to favourably resolve them by Labour campaigning with, and on behalf of, the local community. These aims have not been diminished in the slightest, or the Party split, by the defection of the MP, Bryan Magee, to the SDP.

A great many of the problems faced by families and individuals in Leyton are similar to those in many other working class areas. They have a national dimension. The frustration of unemployment and its consequences. For those in work, the threat that their job could be the next to go, and their wages squeezed so as to fall behind rising prices. The struggle to keep a decent home hampered by the lack of money to do the repairs and improvements wanted. The ridiculously high cost of public transport to travel to work, to the shops or to visit a friend or relative. Insufficient health care and, perhaps, being stuck on a long hospital waiting list.

All these problems and many more are compounded by their administration being in the hands of bureaucrats and politicians who do not have working class interests themselves, nor do they live in working class areas. This is not the case with me, and I will be fighting for working class interests both within the local community and at national level.

At the general election I will be standing for a programme to create jobs and better public services. This is the opposite of Thatcherite policies. Greater public investment and public ownership are essential ingredients to achieve this. But the other vital element, which must go hand-in-hand with our economic strategy, is the cultivation of democracy; at the workplace, in the local community and at all levels in our society. We need to redistribute power back to the people.

I will be working to forge new links, and strengthen existing ones, between the Labour Party and the people of Leyton. This is essential to ensure victory in the general election. The same links are then vital for the political struggle to be effectively taken into Parliament itself.

I believe that this 'grass-roots' approach amongst working class communities, like in Leyton, can result in the strong backing we need in our challenge to the Tories and the capitalist system.

VAUXHALL CROSS

(CONTINUED)

intimate connections with the Conservative Party.

Who can seriously deny that Heseltine – under the facade of acting for the betterment of London – is doing anything other than allowing the friends of international business and the Tories to do what they want at the cost of the ordinary people and modest redevelopment along the Thames' South Bank.

COMMONS VOTE

And who can deny that Labour should have put up a better show in opposing such speculation? Past Labour governments have been too lax on schemes – often opting for grandiose schemes which included speculative sections. And even in the simple case of the House of Commons vote which took place to confirm Heseltine's Special Development Order, there were only 86 MPs opposing the scheme to 132 in favour of it – and some of the 86 were SDP/Liberals!

If Labour is serious about opposition to such an important principle as capitalist speculation, we can expect more from our MPs!

At local level Labour authorities must continue to oppose such plans and – as is beginning very slowly to happen – Labour must concede that popular planning must involve community groups and local people in the fight to preserve communities.

The Coin Street and Waterloo people are giving an example of how to evolve community participation in planning – it is Labour's job to support them and stop Heseltine becoming the man who wrecked the South Bank.

Graham Norwood,
Labour spokesperson
on Planning and
Economic Development,
Lambeth Council.

Dangers in Dagenham

THE LONDON Borough of Barking and Dagenham has been a Labour stronghold for as long as anyone cares to remember. During this period much has been achieved in such areas as welfare, housing, and education. But last year's draconian government cuts on local authority expenditure revealed some alarming prejudices and weakness in the Labour group.

The councillors decided to carry out the cuts. But it is not just for this that I am criticising them. Instead of campaigning with the teachers and mobilising the parents against the real culprits, the government, they acted in such a manner as to become the villains of the piece. The problems occurred when the councillors attempted, to the amazement of some of the local party members, to justify the cuts they were going to make. In fact they did the government's job for them, and therefore took the political responsibility for the cuts.

This meant that the initiative was lost. And the result was that the Labour Party lost votes in the local government elections. Why then did this come about?

To grasp why this position occurred, it is important to understand some of the councillors' views on teachers. Before the local elections many councillors expressed the opinion that the teachers were selfish and had misplaced their aggression in fighting cuts in the borough.

On the whole the arguments were anti-teacher and this ill feeling was even commented on by the secretary of Dagenham CLP, when a motion in support of the teachers was discussed by the management committee. The councillors who bothered to turn up to this meeting were markedly hostile, and it is no wonder that conflict was the order of the day.

This example highlights a common problem in the borough. The councillors have increasingly been sucked in by the administrators and have become less and less answerable to the local party. Another example of this occurred a few weeks ago when I chided a councillor for suggesting that management meetings were a waste of time and that people who attended them had not right to dictate to councillors.

It is obvious that a great deal of work has to be done in the borough in order to return the party to its roots. Failure to do this could result in this most Labour of areas falling to our opponents. The people of Dagenham and Barking are suffering under this government, but locally the Labour party manifests itself as being in the business of just adminstrating and having very little political principle. We must work to make sure that they know we care and that both our elected representatives and party members are leading their struggle and not working as agents of the government.

MICHAEL McKEEVER
(Dagenham CLP)

HARINGEY BRIEFING

HARINGEY STRIKE SUPPORT COMMITTEE — POSITIVE SOLIDARITY!

After the disgusting betrayal by the TUC which put an end to the ASLEF strike, it is obvious that real solidarity with workers in dispute, by means of positive action, can only come from the shop floors and CLPs. Therefore, the political task facing the Haringey Strike Support Committee is to organise solidarity and sympathy among other unions and the general public.

The H.S.S.C. was originally formed in 1977 during the so-called 'Dirty Strike', and picketed along with the School Keepers and others. Fund-raising activities also took place. The H.S.S.C. has recently been started up again following a meeting on the Health Workers strike. So far, many people have given us the names and addresses of their shop stewards/branch secretaries, and we have mailed out leaflets asking for affiliations to the Committee; mailing has also gone out through the Trades Council. On the Health Workers' Dispute, regular leafletting is taking place outside tube stations in the morning and evening, in Wood Green and Tottenham; and on August 7 we held a public meeting in Tottenham Town Hall. During the week of action we joined the picket line at St Anne's hospital on Monday and Thursday, and Noel Park Branch of Wood Green CLP took their banner along. Every Saturday between 11.30-1pm we have a stall outside Wood Green Library in the High Road in support of the health workers, with leafletting, petitions and collecting bucket. Sympathy from the public is very high, with over £100 already collected from just 3 Saturday mornings. The petition is going to the TUC and Labour Party NEC calling on their active support — there's no point in sending it to Fowler or Thatcher! The Strike Support Committee will be an ongoing thing and will be giving positive support to workers in any future Trade Union disputes. If anyone would like to affiliate to the Strike Support Committee, attend our weekly meetings and receive copies of the Petition, please contact:

Mary Archer (Hon. Treasurer),
65 Dunbar Road, Wood Green, N22.
Tel: 889 7637

Linda Clarke
Wood Green CLP
H.S.S.C.

FIGHTING HARINGEY'S RACISTS

On April 23rd, 1977, two thousand National Front members marched through the streets of North London to celebrate St. George's Day. When they reached Turnpike Lane Station, in Haringey, a crowd of anti-racist, anti-fascist demonstrators hurled smoke bombs, bags of flour and rotten fruit at the marchers and chaos broke out, ending with 50 people being arrested. Out of this confrontation the "Haringey Labour Movement Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Campaign" was born, with the aim of uniting all left wing and minority ethnic groups in the struggle against racism and fascism in the borough. The enemy was clearly defined, the National Front had gained a firm foothold in North London and the East End.

They were fielding candidates all over London in the GLC elections and expecting to get 25 to 30% of the vote in some areas. In the event, the NF candidate in Haringey polled a miserable 4,500 votes, and the

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LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

"Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Campaign" drew up a programme of anti-racist and anti-fascist leafletting and public meetings to be held in key areas of the borough. The campaign was supported three Haringey Labour Parties, the Trades Council, Union Branches, ethnic groups and left political organisations, and in November 1977 the first anti-racist anti-fascist conference was held in Hornsey Town Hall.

A year after the confrontation with the National Front at Turnpike Lane, a Festival Against Racism, on the same site, was attended by 400 people and supported by local ethnic groups and the M.P.s for Tottenham and Wood Green. At the same time the campaign was still being fought on the streets, and there were further instances of confrontation with the National Front, but at the same time the struggle had begun against the ultimately far more insiduous and damaging racism which operates through respected and established institutions such as the legal system and the police.

First came the campaign against the SUS laws, then the Test Census in Haringey, when the people of the Borough demonstrated their opposition to being classified according to racial origin by refusing to answer the ethnic questions on the census form. The fight against the Nationality Act was vigorously waged in public meetings, marches and demos — and was lost. This deplorable piece of legislation now hangs like an ominous cloud over the future of residents who had thought themselves secure; the tension is heightened by the menaces contained in the new procedures for assessing eligibility for free treatment on the National Health Service and DHSS benefits. What does it feel like to live under this kind of threat? What does it feel like to be continually harassed in one's daily life, to be stopped, searched and questioned at frequent intervals and to be powerless to do anything about it? It tears people apart, it tears society apart and results in confrontations between the police and young black people such as those at Finsbury Park at Easter, and Wood Green in the summer of 1981.

The "Haringey Labour Movement Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Campaign" supported the Defence Campaigns for the victims of Wood Green and Finsbury Park and supports the cause of all individuals who find themselves the victims of racist laws or racist actions, whether they are perpetrated by the state, by members of racist organisations such as the NF or by other individuals.

Conference 1982 of the "Haringey Labour Movement Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Campaign" was entitled 'Racism in the Council's Services' and aimed at examining what it means to be an 'Equal Opportunities Borough' and how this could be achieved. In the future we shall be holding meetings to examine in detail the departments of Education, Employment, Housing, and Social Services, Community Affairs and Personnel, as well as supporting anti-racist activity which takes place anywhere in the country and individual cases of need. Where is the NF now? In the 1982 Borough elections in Haringey they were unable to muster any candidates. Yet racism is as rife as ever. We shall continue to fight it in all its forms.

HELEN PETERS
Secretary
Haringey Anti-Racist
Anti-fascist Campaign.

POLICIES NOT PURGES

by KEN LIVINGSTONE

We must not make the mistake of assuming that the attempts of the right wing to expel Militant and purge Joan Maynard, Les Huckfield and Eric Clarke from the NEC is a sign of renewed strength by the social democratic wing of the party.

When we examine how the purges against socialists in the party are being organised it merely reveals the ideological and numerical weakness of the right.

The advances of the left within the Labour movement have been around policies. The commitment of the Labour Party and T.U.C. conferences to rebuilding our industrial and social economy via the Alternative Economic Strategy, the withdrawal from the Common Market and Unilateral nuclear disarmament represent a move to the left on policy issues which is in marked contrast to the failures of the Bevanites in the 1950s.

The Social Democratic gains on the NEC at last year's conference were not the result of a ground swell of opinion within the Labour movement but merely the behind the scenes deals of a handful of Trades union leaders who hold lifetime tenure such as Frank Chapple who are never subject to reselection and have no democratic policy making structure within their unions.

FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP

The real problem we face lies elsewhere. It is the failure of the leadership of our party to campaign effectively for our policies and build the base of support that we need amongst ordinary workers if we are to win the next general election.

The solid, basic support that we are retaining amongst the working class which was revealed at the May elections in Manchester, Islington and many other areas across the country is remarkable given the lack of leadership for the Labour Party and TUC leaderships.

When we consider all that is working against the movement –

- ★ *the media campaign which has become more vicious with each passing year*
- ★ *the memory of the disastrous 1964 and 1974 Wilson/Callaghan governments*
- ★ *the determination of Healey, Shore and Chapple to work with the gutter press to rid the party of socialists*
- ★ *the attacks of Thatcher on public services and jobs, resulting in a decline in Trade union membership*
- ★ *the creation of the SDP in order to drain off enough Labour voters to let the tories sneak back at the next election possibly in a coalition with the SDP*

– then we know that our present base is firm and ready to move forward if only it can be given a lead.

The economic problems we face will continue to worsen during the remaining life of the government. If we pose a realistic alternative to Tory policies we can win. But that alternative must be based on control of capital from day one of a labour government. Without control of capital we cannot direct investment into rebuilding our industry and our welfare state.



END THIS GOVERNMENT

But our party has a duty to do all in its power to end the life of this government. The proposals of the GLC to cut fares again has led the Tories to plan to force legislation through Parliament which will give them powers to direct councils to increase fares. Our decision to stop the sham of 'civil defence' work means Whitelaw must get new controls through Parliament if he is to continue with the Tories war plans.

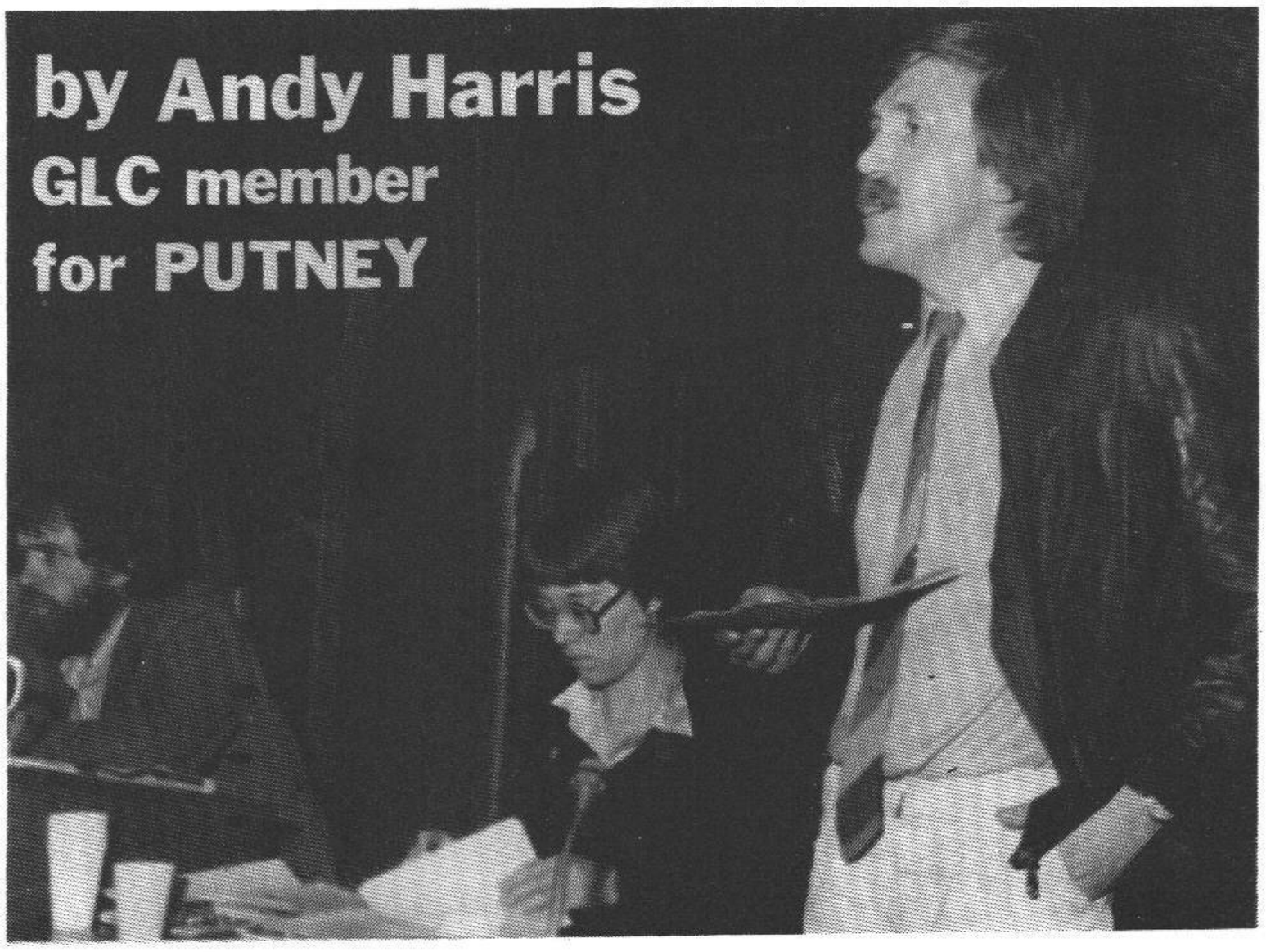
These and all other Tory attacks must be totally resisted by Labour MPs and Councillors who must also give complete support to each group of workers as they come into conflict with the government.

Labour MPs can best serve those who put them in office by making it impossible for the Tories to pass new legislation. Instead of expelling Militant let them lead the struggle to expel Thatcher from government!

GLC - ILEA BRIEFING

FIGHTING FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Attention is rightly turned to the failures and compromises that the two Labour Authorities in County Hall make from time to time. In all fairness attention and expression needs also to be given to the often slow but substantial successes for the working class and oppressed that we have made in just one area of ILEA's work — equal opportunities.



This summer the education authority launched a major initiative on multi-ethnic education. The lynch pin of this stems from a firm statement of non-toleration of racism that will be posted in all the Authority's schools and institutions. Coupled with this are guidelines for staff on the means that should be employed to eliminate both overt and covert racism. At the same time the Staff Code on disciplinary procedures is being looked at to enable ILEA to isolate and deal with racists in the system.

To back the words with resources on the ground we have initiated a number of new developments and also built on the groundwork laid by the previous administration. For instance we are increasing the number of education liaison officers from 3 to 12 (one for each borough). Their job is to work with the different black and Asian communities and enable them to get the best from the education system and to pressure ILEA for further responsive change to their needs. We are appointing ten divisional co-ordinators whose function will be to help schools develop whole school policies, implement them and provide advice with resources and materials.

The nature of discrimination is such that different parts of London suffer particularly viciously. Spitalfields is an area where the history of racial attacks force Bengali parents to restrict their children to schools in very close proximity. We have agreed the provision of a new primary school to relieve the situation and in the shorter term are increasing resources for Bengali-speaking Education Welfare Officers. The new provision of the small but significant 15 full time equivalent posts to teach mother-tongue languages during the school day (to complement the evening and week-end supplementary mother tongue schools ILEA already supports) is crucial in that the Authority has now recognised in resource terms the right to literacy of children in both their mother-tongue and second language (English) and this will have enormous benefits for areas like Spitalfields.

ALIENATION

The cultural alienation of many black school students is a priority consideration. A substantial increase in the staffing of the Afro-Caribbean Education Resource Project to enable further production of curriculum materials that present black kids in a positive light has been one response to the situation.

The ILEA is also evaluating its in-service training in the field of multi-ethnic education so that we can develop it in response to progress.

Radical changes are being examined that could bring ethnic groups right into the power core of the Authority. If this line is followed it will be a major breakthrough.

Last February a conference was held on the education of women and girls. The intervening period has been one of collecting facts from which to launch an initiative next year. We are fully aware of the curriculum areas where girls are not encouraged or expected to achieve and subsequently don't. We are aware of the power structures within our schools that show a majority of women in employment but inordinate power and responsibility is in the grip of men. We are aware of the social psychology of mixed classroom situations where more teachers' time is given to boys. We are aware of early year conditioning in schools through the use of sexist reading books and sexist school organisation. Initial responses have been to support action/research projects that develop girls' education and anti-sexist strategies in mixed comprehensives. We have started a review of all in-service training with a view to developing anti-sexist courses and women-only promotion orientated courses. We support those schools that are getting down to producing whole school policies against sexism. But the major thrust in this area has yet to come.

Between two-thirds and three-quarters of inner London school students could be identified as coming from working-class homes. "Standards" in the traditional sense have been rising in recent years but using "accepted" patterns of measuring achievement, working-class kids still come out of the system having seriously "under-achieved". ILEA will move on to rectifying the cultural alienation that many schools present to working-class school students and parents. I will seek to involve the manual workers' unions in detailed consideration of what the education system does to and for their members' children.

GAY RIGHTS

Another area where we have made positive progress is gay rights in education. Gay teachers in inner London had justifiable grievances with ILEA before the new administration took office. The Gay Teachers Groups were not allowed to book rooms in ILEA schools or advertise in ILEA's staff magazine "Contact". This has been changed. They were angry about the employment ban imposed on John Warburton, an open-gay teacher, seven years previously. He had openly discussed his personal life in the class room when challenged by two students who had seen him on a gay rights march. Any heterosexual teacher can talk about their partners, who they go on holiday with etc. in the natural flow of classroom and casual conversation. Equality of treatment did not apply to John Warburton. After a fraught struggle with the officers we got the ban lifted and after a similar struggle, along with ethnic origin and sex, we got sexual orientation included in the new equal opportunities statement that now applies to all employment contracts. Further development is needed in producing positive curriculum materials, provision for counselling school students who may be gay and getting schools to include positive attitudes to gayness in whole school policies.

Soon ILEA's Equal Opportunities Unit will be in operation monitoring progress, pushing for change and supporting members in carrying out the political will in relation to bureaucracy that is sometimes resistant, sometimes unthinking and together with members sometimes complacent.

This Labour administration has begun the slow push but we cannot achieve the results the movement rightly demands without the

London Labour Briefing, page thirteen.

Transport Poll

Dave Wetzel
Member of the Greater London Council
Council for Hammersmith North
Transport Committee Chair

For the second time since we were elected the Labour GLC has been consulting Londoners about the future fares policy for London Transport.

Adverts have been placed in newspapers, 100,000 leaflets distributed and an opinion poll commissioned in order to find out the views of Londoners on the GLC's Draft Transport Plan which considers 5 alternative approaches for not only fare levels but also the provision of services, capital expenditure, support from public funds and the effects of each option in terms of personal mobility, road congestion, accidents and jobs.

Because of changing legal advice it was not possible to publish the Draft Transport Plan until the beginning of August and as the GLC must submit the final plan during September this consultation has had to be telescoped into only a few weeks.

The five options put forward are based on:

1. 'Break Even' – as dictated by the Law Lords
2. 'Cash Limits' – reflecting the Government's public spending cuts
3. 'Restrained Needs' – the lowest fares without changing the law
4. 'Minimum Needs' – based on the Greater London Development Plan
5. 'Fares Fair' – implementing Labour's manifesto policies.

The GLC has made it clear that we continue to support our Fares Fair policy which would mean halving fares and improving bus and rail services in order to increase LT staff productivity, reduce traffic congestion, cut accidents, reduce pollution, ensure maximum use of the investment in public transport, create more jobs and generally help London to become a better place to live in, work in and visit.

To implement options 4 or 5 the GLC would require a change in existing laws to give us the necessary powers. In fact the Government's recent response has been to threaten legislation this winter which will restrict the powers of the GLC and the Metropolitan Counties to determine our own transport policies and to give greater scope to the private sector to compete for the provision of public transport services. The Minister is also threatening 'to step in if the effect of GLC irresponsibility continues to be damaging to London's transport'.

The GLC will continue to fight to reduce fares next Spring and in the meantime we will co-operate with our AMA colleagues who represent all Metropolitan Authorities, the PLP, the TUC and especially the transport unions in order to prevent Thatcher's Government from destroying even more local democracy.

ILEA cont.

support of the movement. There is a great responsibility on Labour school governors to respond to these consultative policies and to ensure that the schools are helped, encouraged, and if necessary obliged to carry them out. Importantly the most positive means of changing attitudes lies in the hands of governing bodies in appointments and promotion. Governors must refuse to select from all-white male shortlists and make strident efforts to ensure that positive models of power and responsibility are seen in our schools drawn from representatives of those groups who are disadvantaged and oppressed.

The ILEA Labour Group, for it has been a group effort, have made a positive start on making this aspect of the Manifesto a reality.

****STOP*PRESS**STOP*** **TOP*PRESS**STOP***

CPWP COURT OCT 28

AT LAST! After 7 months LT are fulfilling less than ½% of their promise to prosecute ALL CPWPers.

Around 25 summonses have recently been served on CPWP activists including Dave Wetzel and Piers Corbyn. Cllrs John McDonnell and Valerie Wise also expect them.

STAND UP FOR ½ MILLION VOTERS AGAINST 5 LAW LORDS!
PICKET LAVENDER HILL COURT
THURS OCT 28, 1.30pm.
Info: 326-0029 / 701-5691

Workers Co-ops

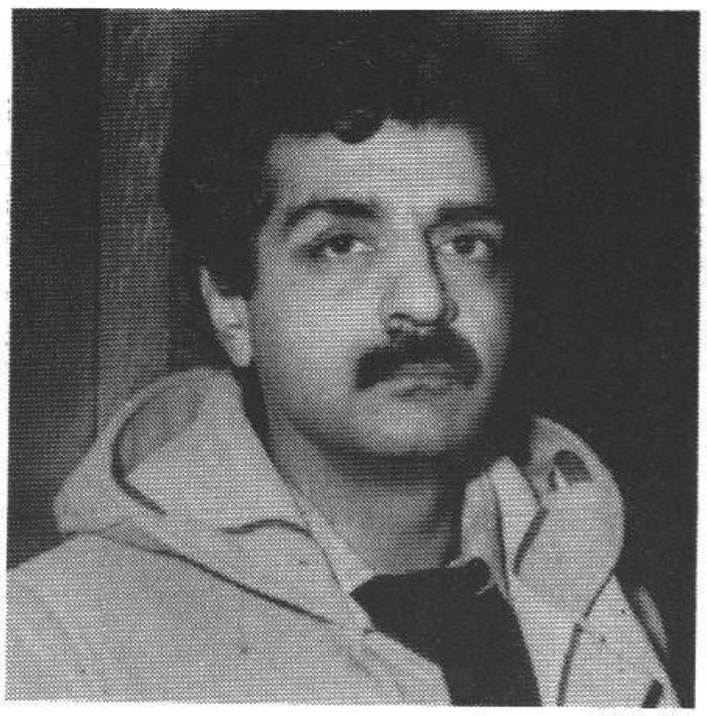
Pauline Ashbridge
Secretary
Haringey Co-operative Party.

Workers' Co-ops will be the subject of a wide-ranging conference to be held in Haringey on 24 October. The all-day Sunday workshop conference, organised by Haringey Borough Co-operative Party, will be based around the title "Workers' Co-ops, Unemployment and Haringey", and will cover co-op organisation and related political issues as well as plans for setting up more workers' co-ops in Haringey.

We hope to draw in not only political activists in the labour movement and labour councillors, but also unemployed people and co-op workers who may at present be relatively non-political in their outlook.

The conference is free, and open to all, and will be held at the Trade Union and Community Centre, Brabant Road, N22, 11am-4pm, Sunday 24 October.

TARIQ ALI, who will be taking part in the Co-op Conference, and who has recently been welcomed into membership of Haringey Co-op Party. The Co-op London Region's Political Committee has no restrictive centralised bans on membership. The Labour Party's National Executive Committee has, however, still not lifted its ban on his membership, despite his acceptance by Hornsey Labour Party.



WORKERS' CO-OPS, UNEMPLOYMENT AND HARINGEY

Sunday, 24 October, 11am-4pm
Brabant Road Trade Union & Community Centre, Wood Green, N22
(Free, open to all, close to Wood Green underground)

Morning Session:
Speakers:
LES HUCKFIELD, MP, Chair of NEC's sub-committee on workers' co-ops
NORMAN ATKINSON, MP, president of Haringey Co-operative Party, chairing the conference
ERNIE LARGE, Chair of Haringey Council's Borough Economy and Employment Committee
NICK M. HONEY, Hackney Co operative Development Agency

Afternoon Session:
Working Groups:
WHAT IS A WORKERS' CO-OP? (Discussion leader *Pat Olley,* Vice-Chair, CRS London Region Political Committee)
CO-OPS, AND UNEMPLOYMENT (*Reg Race,* MP)
CO-OPS, PUBLIC OWNERSHIP AND SOCIALISM (*Tariq Ali*)
SETTING UP WORKERS' CO-OPS IN HARINGEY (*Ernie Large*)
FINANCE AND CO-OPS

GLC Women's Committee

Valerie Wise

The GLC Women's Committee has now been in existence for nearly 5 months. This article is a report-back of progress.

The Women's Committee is operating in a totally new way in that it is involving as many women as possible in its decision making. This is being achieved in a number of ways. Every 3 months an Open Meeting is held which is widely advertised in magazines ranging from Ms London and Girl About Town to City Limits. Leaflets are also produced to publicise the meetings. The purpose of the Open Meetings is to enable as many women as possible in London to have some involvement in the work of the Women's Committee. The Open Meetings provide the opportunity for women to give their opinions on what the Committee has been doing, is about to do, and also to tell us what we ought to be doing. The last meeting in July was attended by 300 women and shows that many women do want to» have at least a limited involvement in what we are doing.

However having Open Meetings every quarter is not sufficient if women really are to be involved in the Committee's work. So Working Groups have been set up covering the following areas — industry and employment, childcare, public transport, Lesbians, violence against women by men, Black women, media and planning. These groups have not been set up by the Women's Committee but by the women involved in each group. They are run autonomously but are serviced by the GLC. Their function is to propose policy and actions for the Women's Committee and also possibly later to monitor our progress.

A Co-ordinating Group has been set up to liaise with the Women's Committee and also bring together representatives of the Working Groups. At the moment it is meeting about once every two weeks with 50-60 women attending each time.

The GLC has also agreed that 8 women should be co-opted to the actual Committee. These women will be full members of the Committee with votes. It has not been immediately obvious how 8 women should be selected to serve on the Committee. Some of the questions that still need to be resolved are: (1) Should there be a stipulation that each woman co-opted should be a member of the Labour Party, (2) Should it be stipulated what proportion of the co-options should be women from the ethnic minority community, (3) Should there be some places specifically set aside for Lesbians, and (4) Should every woman be on the Committee representing an organisation.

The Co-ordinating Group is discussing this question and will be making recommendations to the next Open Meeting on 8th October. I will then put that meeting's recommendations to the Labour Group for ratification.

Women's involvement in the work of the Committee is maintained as we send out regular mailings which keep women informed of what is happening. A group of women is producing a monthly Bulletin on the Committee which is mailed out to everyone on the general mailing list; in addition, the Working Groups have minutes and other information which is circulated by us.

Programme

As women are hardly mentioned in the GLC Manifesto and since the Manifesto had not proposed having a Women's Committee we have started off very much with a blank page as far as policies for the Committee is concerned. I am anxious that very quickly the Committee needs a framework in which to work within. So it is proposed that we produce a "Programme for Women in London". The Working Groups are contributing to this as are other organisations. It is hoped to take the draft programme to the next Open Meeting for its comments and then the programme will be presented to the Labour Group for ratification.

In terms of policy the Committee has made a good start. We produced a report on Health Workers and Low Pay which came out in support of the health workers' dispute. This Report was later agreed by the whole Council. We have supported the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, had a report highlighting the fact that women will be worse affected by the Nationality Act, and had a report on women and advertising. The Committee agreed a report on Women and Housing which showed how one parent families were being unfairly treated as regards mobility in certain parts of London. And we have produced an excellent statistical document "The Economic Status of Women in London" which draws together the most up to date statistics available on women. The Report shows that 24% of households in London are headed by women, that 60% of married women are economically active in London, and that women still receive much less pay than men. The Report looked at wages, hours worked, type of work, qualifications, training, transport and childcare amongst other things.

There is no doubt that the tasks ahead of the Women's Committee are enormous but we have been greatly strengthened by the formation of other Women's Committees in London. Women's Committees now exist in Camden, Islington, and Southwark, sub-committees exist in Greenwich and Hackney, and there is also the Lewisham Working Party on Women's Rights. Hopefully we will start to see Women's Committees being set up in other parts of the country. I think the new way we are working is showing a way ahead for all Councils and many women are now having a dialogue with the GLC who would never have touched us with a barge-pole before. Only good can come out of this for the Labour Party.

WOMEN'S COMMITTEE OPEN PUBLIC MEETING

Friday 8th October, 7pm, The Conference Hall, County Hall, SE1.

Creche. ALL WOMEN WELCOME.

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and debit my/our account accordingly.

Account to be debited:

Account Number . . . . . .

**Signature(s) . . . . . Date . . . . .

WOMEN PROTEST!

Valerie Wise

As described in my article on progress of the Women's Committee we are consulting widely on how to co-opt women to the Women's Committee and who these women should be. I wish to report a decision which the Policy Commitee of the London Labour Party has taken and would ask you to get your organisation to object to this decision.

The Policy Committee decided to pre-empt the Women's Committee consultation with London women about this issue by saying that a proportion of the places have to be elected by the Regional Executive of the London Labour Party after having sought nominations from the Labour, Trade Union and Co-operative Movement. They decided that there should not be a stipulation that all the co-opted places should only go to women in the Labour Party.

I am pleased the Policy Committee took the latter position. I personally hope that many of the women will be members of the Labour Party but I am opposed to this being a stipulation. Many women distrust the Labour Party (hardly surprising in view of our record) and so this trust is having to be built up slowly. Having the GLC Women's Committee is part of this process and I am aware of some women who have joined the Party since the advent of the Committee. However to make this a stipulation would mean that the Committee will be treating some women as second class women. It's okay if you are a member of the Labour Party you can be on the Committee, but sorry if you are not a member then you can't — you can only do the rest of the hard slog. This is an utterly ridiculous position. Thank heavens the majority of the Policy Committee saw this.

However it is outrageous that the Policy Committee decided that the Regional Executive should elect a proportion of the co-options. The Regional Executive Committee did not do anything to create the Women's Committee. It wasn't their idea and they played no part in it.



co-options

The Regional EC Policy Committee wants women co-opted from the labour, trade union and co-operative movement. Fine, so do I, but not through the Regional EC. Any woman active in the labour, trade union and co-operative movement can be involved now in the work of the Women's Committee. I have made every effort to get Women's Sections involved and have written to each Constituency Party asking for the address of their Women's Section so that I can put that Women's Section on our mailing list. Many constituencies have let me have this information but not all of them.

After the consultations regarded co-options have taken place it is quite possible that women from the labour, trade union and co-operative movement will be among those selected to serve on the Committee. However I ask the Regional EC to wait for the outcome of these discussions.

Also I don't think it should be forgotten how few women are on the Regional EC. 7 out of a Regional EC of 48. So it will be men choosing the women that should be on the Women's Committee. I don't think the men on the Regional EC are qualified to do this. I am fed up of this Party being run by men for men. I want women to decide who should be co-opted to the Women's Committee.

precedent

It isn't even as though we don't have a precedent to follow. Let's look at what happens on other GLC Committees. Housing, for example, has 2 places for the London Tenants" Organisation and the LTO decides their representation, not the Regional EC or even the GLC Labour Group. The Greater London Manpower Board has 9 co-opted places — again these people were not decided by the Regional EC or by the GLC Labour Group. Each of those co-options was chosen for the expertise they could contribute to the work of the GLMB. So why this undue interference in the Women's Committee? We want women co-opted to the Committee to bring expertise (not necessarily in the traditional sense) to our Committee.

So I am asking the Regional Executive to allow the Women's Committee to come forward with its proposals on co-options. If you agree with this then get your organisation to write to George Page, General Secretary of the Greater London Labour Party, objecting to this decision. Send copies of your letters to me at County Hall. All the goodwill and trust that we are building with women will be greatly harmed if this decision goes ahead.

What I Said in Belfast

Steve Bundred
GLC Councillor, Islington North

On August 7th this year I visited Belfast with a Troops Out delegation and subsequently spoke at the annual internment rally organised by Sinn Fein. The weekend in Northern Ireland taught me a great deal about the politics and strategies of the Republican Movement. The following week taught me a lot more about the British Media and the extent to which the Establishment in Britain fears the growth of a broad-based anti-war campaign.

My speech was a straight-forward call for British withdrawal and an end to partition. It was similar to speeches and comments I have made about the war in the North of Ireland on many previous occasions (which was the reason I was invited in the first place), and it was in line with the declared policy of the Greater London Labour Party as well as the long-established policy of my own CLP in North Islington (one of 50 constituencies to submit Troops Out resolutions at last year's Party Conference).

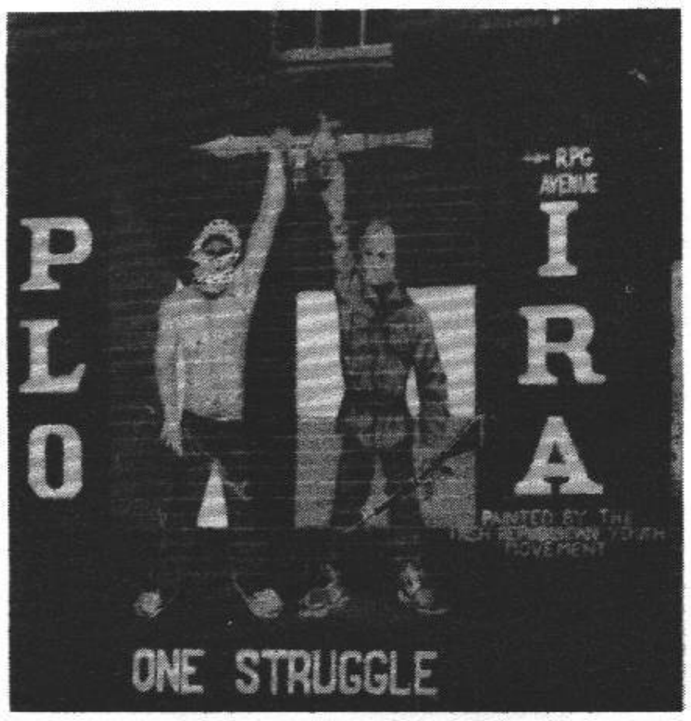
The gist of it was that if condemnation of violence were enough to end the war, the killings would have stopped years ago. Instead, the present struggle has continued for 14 years because despite 60 years of existence the artifical boundaries that constitute the present Northern Ireland state can never hope to win acceptance among the Irish people. Successive British Governments have tried various ways of suppressing Nationalist feeling from military repression to political reform, and yet another new initiative is about to be attempted. But all such moves have failed and will continue to fail because they involve the maintenance of British colonial rule and a guarantee to Ulster's Loyalists that the British army will continue to defend their privileges. In fact the only way to end the war is to end this guarantee and to allow the Irish people as a whole to determine their own future, free of British military, political or economic intervention.

THE WAR WILL CONTINUE

Until that happens the war will continue and for every innocent victim shot dead by the British army in Belfast and Derry even more recruits will be drawn into the armed struggle by Republicans against British rule. The responsibility for horrific deaths on London's streets therefore lies with those politicians who ignore what the army is doing in our name in Northern Ireland, and who show no interest in ending the war that has already cost more than 2000 lives.

I mentioned also that while there are socialists in this country who favour a phased withdrawal, feeling this offers the best means of protection to the catholic population of West Belfast, it had been made clear to me by many people in West Belfast itself that withdrawal must be *total* and *immediate*. Britain has no moral authority for its presence in Northern Ireland and no role to play in solving the problems of the province, for British rule itself is the Irish Problem, and while the British presence remains, lasting solutions will not emerge.

Even Fleet Street's notoriously indolent lackeys should not have been surprised by these remarks. Such views are widely held within the Labour left, especially in London



and are supported by a growing number of people elsewhere also. Yet the 'shock horror' reaction of the gutter press was swift and astonishing.

'TRAITOR'

On Monday 9th August, the *Sun* devoted its entire front page to a wildly distorted account headlined 'Traitor! Leftie Police Boss Boasts The IRA'. The *Guardian* published a lengthy but accurate report with photographs on its back page. The *Mail*, *Times* and *Telegraph* all gave prominence to alarmist though reasonably factual accounts, while the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Star* virtually ignored it. The *Morning Star* made no reference at all to the march or rally or the 170 strong delegation.

By Tuesday however the Fleet Street bosses had got to work in a big way. The *Sun* published an imaginative account of my background with colourful phrases about my being 'hell-bent on power' and 'armed with a Labour Party Card'. The reference to my 'address which seemed to change from time to time' was a particular triumph for the anonymous author of the article and clearly established my authenticity as the bed-sit infiltrator of Fleet Street demonology. In fact I am an owner-occupier who has lived in the constituency I represent on the GLC since I first came to London in 1973.

The *Daily Mail* published an editorial headlined 'The Murderers Must Love Him'. Provincial papers in Liverpool, Birmingham and elsewhere did likewise. The *Mail* also published an interview with Clifford Mann, a bandsman injured in the Regent's Park bombing in which he pretended to be a constituent of mine (he is not!) and complained that I had not consulted him before my visit. Has-been GLC Tory member Horace Cutler appeared on LBC radio and denounced me for being unable to represent Londoners because of my Liverpool accent. (I resisted the temptation to point out that unlike Horace I actually live in London). The leadership reject on the Tory GLC Group Alan Greengross, then waded in with a press release that apparently suggested calling me a 'disgusting rat' would be too kind. He didn't trouble to send me a copy of his statement, but then neither did any of the other Tory self-publicists who leaped in to defend the Army.

While all this was going on my parents were on holiday in the Costa del Sol oblivious to the row being whipped up in London. I did not know this, but someone obviously did, because the *Daily Mail* managed to track down my father on his holiday with a request for comment. I cannot understand why his comment was not subsequently printed. Nor why the *Mail* did not publish my parents' remarks after they returned from their holidays to discover that two journalists had been waiting on their doorstep in Liverpool for six days.

The pompous Tory MP Vivien Bendall (no, I'd never heard of him either!) wrote to the Home Secretary demanding a security investigation and must have been pleased when it got him a mention in the Ilford Recorder. And Paul Cook of Capital Radio, displayed a dishonesty I will not readily forget, in an interview with me which outstripped all the newspaper hacks for the sheer inanity of the questions.

SHOT DEAD

But just as it began to look like the story might run longer than The Mousetrap, Sean Geraghty brought the presses to a halt in support of hospital workers and all was quickly forgotten. So, when a week later a Belfast Coroners Court found that a 14 year old boy who had been shot dead by a British soldier was innocently sitting on the wall outside his home at the time, not a word of it appeared in the same newspapers which had so recently found space for editorials about rights and responsbilities in Northern Ireland.

A word of warning though should be passed on to the sales managers of those newspapers. If they think that by distorting and suppressing alternative views about Ireland, they can maintain public support for Government policy, then they are sadly mistaken. Within 10 days of my speech I had received 58 letters from members of the public both in London and elsewhere, including a telex from the Belfast Chamber of Commerce. 15 were anonymous death threats but 21 were messages of support. Of the 10 letters I received from constituents 7 expressed solidarity and congratulations. And of all the letters which were critical a number criticised only the timing and venue of my speech while supporting the views expressed, or criticised the demand for immediate withdrawal while supporting an end to partition.

Among ordinary working class families, many of whom have relatives in the army, there is now a strong body of opinion which is tired of the killings and knows that Britain cannot hope to win a military victory. If that opinion found better representation in the Labour Party our electoral prospects would not look so bleak.

But first of course, the leadership on the left within the PLP must acknowledge that after 14 years of war, it is time to stop running for cover whenever the issue of Irish self-determination thrusts itself inconventiently into British political debate.

After September 11th Conference.....

If the NEC Report is accepted at Conference, CLPs are going to be in the front line. If expulsions are demanded it is CLPs who will be told to implement them. It is vital that CLPs begin now to organise a campaign of non-cooperation.

Hackney North has initiated such a campaign and has written to all CLPs in Greater London asking them to join in. Tottenham has started to extend the mailing outside London. (More financial help is needed — its an expensive business writing to every CLP in the country.)

The aim of the campaign is to encourage total non-cooperation with the recomendations of the Report. No expulsions, no registration. Hackney North will risk being disaffiliated rather than expel anyone. If the NEC are prepared to break up the Labour Party and lose the next election, they must be forced to take responsibility for it.

Hackney North have written to the NEC telling them our position and we urge every other CLP opposed to the witch-hunt to do the same. The NEC must realise that it is not just Militant and other threatened groups who are active against the witch-hunt, but CLPs as well.

Whether Conference accepts the Report or not, there will be a need for the campaign to continue after Conference. If the Report is accepted the witch-hunt will start. If it is rejected, don't be under any illusions that that will be the end of it — the right will try again next year.

We have called a conference of CLPs Against the Witch-hunt for October 30th at County Hall, London. This will be a working conference to co-ordinate the campaign of non-cooperation.

No co-operation with NEC report

On September 4th a meeting was held to organise the conference. Over 50 people attended, including 20 CLPs who had already agreed to sponsor the conference — a good turn out considering many GCs had not had a chance to discuss our proposals. The meeting agreed to the aim of the campaign and delegates will be invited to the conference on October 30th from: CLPs, LP branches, affiliated unions, Young Socialist branches and all other affiliated organisations. A steering committee was elected.

To promote the campaign at Labour Party Conference, there will be a fringe meeting on "No cooperation with the NEC Report" on Thursday September 30th.

We urge every CLP opposed to the witch-hunt to:

1. Write to the NEC telling them so
2. Sponsor and send delegates to the Conference on October 30th
3. Write and let us know your position, at Hackney North CLP, 28 Beatty Rd, London, N16

Verbal opposition to the witch-hunt is meaningless unless you are prepared to translate it into action. No cooperation with the NEC Report!

Hackney North and Stoke Newington CLP

SUPPORT THE LEFT SLATE

Constituency Section.
FRANK ALLAUN
NORMAN ATKINSON
TONY BENN
ERIC HEFFER
JO RICHARDSON
DENNIS SKINNER
AUDREY WISE

Women's Section
MARGARET BECKETT
JUDITH HART
JOAN MAYNARD
BARBARA SWITZER
FRANCES MORRELL
Treasurer
MICHAEL MEACHER
Conference Arrangements (constituency representative)
PETER WILLSMAN

Articles for *Briefing* must be typed by the contributor. Hand-written articles will not be accepted in future. Use triple spacing and a very wide (2") margin each side; type one side of sheet only. NOTHING will be accepted after the deadline published.

UNREGISTERED ALLIANCE

The "Unregistered Alliance" — co-ordinating those Labour Party groups and activists determined to resist the Register — was set up following a decision at a London Briefing 'Target 82' meeting. It has now produced a four page broadsheet, bulk copies of which can be obtained from Jeremy Corbyn 28 Middle Lane N8.

Party Conference at Blackpool:
No Right Turn: A Fringe Meeting on Labour Transport Policy

Wed 28th Sept:
Winter Garden Opera House Foyer
12.30-2pm
Speakers:
Albert Booth — Ken Livingstone
Andy Dobbs — Bill Morris

Organised by Lambeth Transport Campaign, for details ring 326 0240.

LABOUR COMMITTEE ON PALESTINE
CONFERENCE FRINGE MEETING
TUESDAY 28th SEPTEMBER 6.30pm

Speakers: Joan Maynard
Ken Livingstone
Peter Tatchell
Bobby Owens

For further information on the Labour Committee on Palestine, contact Andrew Hornung, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Road, London N16.

Chartist Readers Meeting
"Will Labour Stop Supporting Israel?"
Tuesday October 12th, 7.45pm, County Hall
Speakers: Moshe Machover
Bernard Misrahi

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CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACIST LAWS ACTION CONFERENCE
10am Saturday October 23rd
County Hall, London SE1
Details from Dave Cook, 56 Edithna Street, SW9
No racist deportations!
No internal passport checks!

PRIVATISATION

At the Policy Committee of the GLRC of 2 September, it was agreed that the proposed article for *London Labour Briefing* by Vidya Awand on "Privatisation and the GLC" should be held up until the facts contained in it are placed before the Policy Committee.

WOMEN'S FIGHT IN LP —70 years on

Ann Pettifor

In 1909, three years after its formation, the Women's Labour League (WLL) sent its first representative to the Labour Party Conference. She was Margaret Bondfield (later to become the first Labour woman cabinet minister) and she had the responsibility of moving three resolutions on subjects chosen by the WLL.

However, by 1918 the WLL's special relationship with the party was brought to an abrupt end with endorsement of the party's new constitution. This had been drawn up by Arthur Henderson and his National Executive Committee with the "Representation of the People's" Act very much in mind. The Act came into force in June of that year, and extended the vote to propertied women over thirty years of age. According to Lucy Middleton (who has written an account of the early days of the WLL*) "the fact of this partial enfranchisement of women *led to a new status for Labour women*. The WLL was merged with the party; special representation of women on the party executive was provided for: a Women's Advisory Committee was *appointed* and 'Labour Women' was taken over and became a party publication." (my italics)



An all-women platform at WLL Fringe Meeting at 1912 Labour Party Conference in Birmingham.

THE RIGHT TO DECIDE OWN POLICY

Now, almost seventy years later, Labour women are once again demanding the right to decide their own policy priorities and to elect representatives who will promote these policies at Annual Conference and in the wider Labour movement. If Annual Conference accepts and supports this demand then the National Labour Women's Conference will, finally, have to be formally constituted, standing orders drawn up and its executive elected by women attending that Conference as delegates.

The demands take the form of 26 resolutions and amendments submitted to Annual Conference this year. They will almost certainly all be moved by women as many parties have heeded WAC's advice and elected an extra woman delegate to represent their affiliated women membership; others, conscious of the disproportionately low number of women delegates that get to conference each year have purposefully elected women. So the stage is set for a major debate on Women's Rights within the party with women constituting a forceful presence at an otherwise male dominated Conference!

Twelve of the resolutions take the form of advice to the NEC to introduce constitutional changes which will accomplish 3 objectives. The first would allow the executive of the National Labour Women's Conference as well as the Chairperson to attend Annual Conference ex-officio — in the same way as MP's do. This would provide for direct representation of the Women's Conference at Annual Conference. Clause VII Section II of the Party's constitution deals with ex-officio delegates and it is this section which women want amending.

However the amendment goes further and makes the second major demand: that is, that the chairperson and executive should be elected by the Conference of Labour Women itself.

In the past the National Women's Committee (the body that presides over the Women's Conference and represents Labour women in Britain and abroad) was *appointed* — as Lucy Middleton has pointed out. Then a system of *regional* appointment/election (by secret postal ballot) was evolved. This system continued in operation until last year, when Militant, in an attempt to defuse WAC's demand for the direct election of the executive by the Conference, proposed that the National Committee be elected at Regional Women's Conferences. The existing National Women's Committee agreed to that and the first of these elections take place in the autumn. WAC believes that these elections are unacceptably undemocratic, for the simple reason that women elected regionally will not be elected by, or be accountable to, the delegate Conference over which they will preside and whose interests they will represent both in the British Labour movement and International socialist forums. However not only is this non-accountability unacceptable, it is also completely out of line with all constitutional practice throughout the movement. Not even the YS, whose women members show such enthusiasm for regional elections, conduct their elections in this way. The YS national executive is elected each year at the YS national conference. Why should the women's organisation not be permitted to elect representatives on the basis of their policies, and then annually hold them to account for their record in promoting and advancing these policies?

It is in order to correct this anomaly that twelve resolutions on the Agenda propose that the constitution be amended to enable the National Conference of Labour Women to elect its own executive.

DEBATED AS OF RIGHT

The third demand embodied in the model amendment is for "five resolutions to be chosen by the National Conference of Labour Women and a discretionary emergency resolution chosen by its Executive Committee to be debated as of right on the final agenda". This demand is clear-cut. It will enable women to begin to compensate for their virtual exclusion from the powerful policy-making bodies of the party — the Annual Conference itself, where only 5% of bloc-vote-wielding delegates are women, the NEC and its policy-making sub-committees, the PLP and the TUC-LP Liaison Committee.

However, of the twelve resolutions referred to, only one states clearly that "these motions are to be debated as of right on the final agenda in whichever section of the Conference they are relevant". This is the Islington Central resolution and WAC very much hopes that the other movers will accept the Islington wording in the final composite.

There are other 'omnibus' resolutions on the agenda embracing the foregoing demands and in-

cluding the demand that the Women's Section of the NEC be elected by the Women's Conference. Watford have put down a constitutional amendment on the latter, which under the '68 ruling will not be debated until next year. WAC believes that a long campaign lies ahead before election of the Women's Section by Women's Conference can be won at Annual Conference. For this reason we have not promoted a model resolution on this subject this year, although we will be campaigning vigorously to gather support for this proposal as a key component in a package of constitutional amendments designed to finally give women direct access to policy and decision-making within the party.

AT LEAST ONE WOMAN

Finally, three resolutions on the Agenda call "for it to be mandatory for each CLP to include at least one woman in the short list of its Prospective Parliamentary Candidates." This has been one of WAC's major demands and gathers urgency as the selection process nears a close and it becomes quite clear that there may be even fewer than the pitifully low number of eleven Labour women in parliament after the next General Election. We urge all delegates to support this minimal gesture and thereby give constituencies the *choice* of a woman candidate. The majority of CLP's have no choice as they are invariably presented with all-male shortlists!

Women elected to the NEC's Women's Section this year will play a key role in supporting and furthering our demands — or actively blocking them! It is for this reason that WAC have carefully prepared a slate of candidates who have in our view the best chance of defeating our opponents. We wrote to and interviewed all the candidates who have confirmed their support for, and commitment to, our campaign. They are: *Frances Morrell* (an active member of WAC's executive committee) *Judith Hart, Joan Maynard, Margaret Beckett* and *Barbara Switzer*. We urge CLP's to mandate their delegates in support of these candidates.



Women debate the feeding of schoolchildren at the 1910 WLL Conference – in the presence of delegate Mrs Robinson's baby. There were no creche facilities – and women are still fighting for adequate creches at conferences.

SPECIAL WOMEN'S CAUCUS

WAC will be holding a special Women's Caucus on Sunday 26th September at 4.15pm, in the Planet Room of the Blackpool Conference Centre. Further details of that meeting and subsequent WAC caucuses will be announced by women on CLPD's platform at the CLPD fringe meeting. On *Monday 27th September* at 7.30pm WAC in conjunction with RACS political committee will be staging a major WOMEN'S RIGHTS RALLY, with Jo Richardson, Frances Morrell, Harriet Harman, Hilda Smith and others. There will be ample opportunity for questions from the floor and debate. DON'T MISS THE BIGGEST WOMEN'S RIGHTS EVENT AT CONFERENCE!

*'Women in the Labour Movement' edited by Lucy Middleton and published by Croom Helm. Available from the Labour Party Bookshop.

Ann Pettifor is a leading member of the Women's Action Committee (WAC) of CLPD and is also Secretary of the Lambeth Labour Women's Council.

SUPPORT PADDINGTON AMENDMENT

DEFEND MANDATORY RESELECTION: SUPPORT THE PADDINGTON AMEMDMENT.

Mandatory Reselection continues to be undermined by artificial "Shortlists of One", whereby Trade Union and other branch nominations are crudely excluded from consideration without so much as a hearing.

Such manoeuvres are in theory opposed by the N.E.C. itself. As Sam McCluskie argued from the platform at last year's Conference, "We did not want the 'Mikardo' formula. We wanted the Mandatory Reselection. And we wanted it on the same principle as is normal when you are electing a candidate".

Yet despite the statement of its position and despite the continued flouting of its own guidelines (by Swansea West, Dunfermline, etc.), the N.E.C. still seems reluctant to support the simple Constitutional Amendment on the subject which would actually give effect to what it says it wants.

Paddington's Amendment, submitted to the 1981 Party Conference and still awaiting debate, is reproduced on page 27 of this year's N.E.C. Report. It would quite simply forbid "Shortlists of One" when more than one person was validly nominated.

A proper debate on this subject has now been demanded by no less than 15 submissions on the 1981 and 1982 Conferemce Agendas. But there's still a serious possibility that it'll be put to the vote (if at all) *without the arguments getting a hearing*.

Although a Composite calling for proper discussion should certainly be printed in this year's booklet, there's no guarantee that even this will actually be timetabled for debate. It may be left to delegates to demand that this be rectified.

Supporters of Mandatory Reselection are therefore urged to instruct their Blackpool delegates to:-

1 **Support** *the Paddington Amendment* **and** *the Composite calling for it to be properly debated;*

2 **Speak against** *the Conference Arrangements Committee's report on the first morning, unless such a debate is positively guaranteed;*

3 **Ensure**, *if all else fails, that page 27 of the N.E.C. Report is fully debated and voted on.*

The bitterness and division caused by "Shortlists of One" were movingly attested at last year's Conference by the delegate from West Bromwich West. As Bermondsey's amendment to this year's Agenda emphasises, "A constituency party will unite far more effectively behind a candidate who is chosen in fair and open competition than one who artificially avoids it by means of a procedural manoeuvre".

Such unity is now more vital than ever. We can't afford to carry on without it.

Reform House of Commons Too.

Peter Tatchell



Labour's commitment to abolish the House of Lords has entirely over-shadowed the equally important task of reforming the House of Commons. The weakness in Labour's Programme '82 of proposals to achieve this end is a major flaw requiring redress. It is long overdue that Labour had a firm commitment to 'modernise' the Commons and rid it of petty and antiquated traditions which serve no useful purpose, and indeed, impede the Commons as an efficient and effective legislative body.

It is difficult to discover any compelling rationality for the twelve week summer recess from the end of July to mid October 1981. On the contrary, it is deplorable that in the midst of major political events such as last year's inner city riots, parliament was not sitting.

It is surely absurd that for a huge segment of the year, the House of Commons is not in session and that events occuring then are not subject to parliamentary questions and debate.

It would seem quite reasonable for the Labour Party to have a clear commitment to drastically cut the summer and Christmas recesses and to abolish the Whitsun recess altogether. This would ensure that the House of Commons sits more or less continuously thoughout the year to scrutinise all political events and the government's response.

By reducing the length of recesses in this way, perhaps parliament could adjourn for the week on Thursday evening, instead of Friday. This would be an important reform for those of us who want to encourage a new style of grassroot MPs, strongly linked to their constituency parties and with deep roots in their local communities.

An adjournment a day earlier would have the advantage of giving MPs all day Friday, plus the weekend, to campaign, attend meetings and deal with constituents' problems locally. It would enable MPs to have more regular and continuous contact with their constituents (and families); thereby helping to diminish the seperation between MPs and their electorate and the sense of remoteness and inaccessibility that many people feel towards parliament and their elected representatives.

More sensible hours

Related to the question of cutting the parliamentary recesses, is the issue of establishing more sensible hours for the conduct of parliamentary business. What other group of employees start work at 2.30 in the afternoon and finish at 10.30 at night, or later? Is it wise that the future of the nation is frequently decided in the middle of the night, often by small numbers of tired MPs?

It is all very well for MPs to complain about the long hours and the stress this places upon their marriages. However, it is difficult to sypathise when they show not the slightest inclination to reform the ridiculous hours of parliament.

It is about time the Labour Party and its MPs officially campaigned for the House of Commons to begin sitting at 10am and conclude by 8.30pm. This would reduce the need for late night and all night sittings. It would enable MPs to have a more normal and less strained family life and put an end to them doing other jobs in the morning. Hard luck for the Tory barristers and company directors!

Indeed, perhaps we should go one step further and actually campaign for a ban on MPs holding outside paid jobs. After all, these create divided loyalties and divert MPs away from parliamentary work and the job of representing their constituents.

No one can be a good part-time MP. It is a full time job which requires undivided attention (a view evidently not held by 170 Tory MPs who between them share over 450 company directorships).

I put forward these innocuous suggestions for reform as an interested outside observer who soon hopes to be working from within the House of Commons. Until then, perhaps some of our present Labour MPs could share with us their experiences and proposals for reform. In particular, I would like to hear their ideas on how the unhealthy concentration of power in the Cabinet can be weakened and greater clout be given to backbench MPs through a strengthening of the House of Commons Select Committee system.

Secret Reports Survive

The proposed drawing up of a 'Staff Code of Conduct' is the Orwellian outcome, so far, of *Briefing*'s exposure of confidential political reports written by the Labour Party's regional organising staff on parliamentary selection meetings.

A debate on the issue at the July meeting of the National Executive Committee, led by John Golding, who wanted even stronger action taken, led to confirmation by the NEC of the staff committee's recommendation that a Staff Code of Conduct should be drawn up to define the limits of political activity in which party members employed at Walworth Road might participate. Despite the protests of Golding and other right-wingers, it was confirmed that no further individual action should be taken against the *Briefing* supporter working at Walworth Road as a secretary who had been charged with assisting in the publication of the confidential reports by helping in a *Briefing* production session in her spare time one weekend.

The main issue – the writing of such reports by regional organising staff – has been ignored by the NEC. In order to raise the issue again, constituency parties will need to send in resolutions putting demands that, for instance, organisers' reports on selection meetings (and other matters) should be confined to organisational and procedural matters and should not give personal and political information about individuals, and that such reports should be made available to those concerned, for checking of inaccuracies. In fact, a 'code of conduct' on the writing and keeping of confidential reports is what is needed.

The NEC's 1984-ish 'solution', the proposed Staff Code of Conduct, will, presumably, be put before the staff trade unions at Walworth Road before General Secretary Jim Mortimer submits his draft to the NEC, and it is to be hoped that the unions will fight hard to prevent a clamp-down on the political rights and activities of party employees. The proposed 'Code' is in many respects another facet of the proposed compulsory register of party groups, in that one of its effects would be to render 'suspect' any mobilisation around political ideas and activities other than that which takes place within the structure of the branch and GMC.

What is needed at Walworth Road is quite the opposite of a restrictive 'Staff Code of Conduct'. The level of political involvement, among the lower-paid grades in particular, is low as well as being limited in range. A positive programme of staff political education, together with encouragement of involvement in a wide variety of voluntary political activities outside working hours, is long overdue. For a party 'machine' to function in a democratic and accountable way, it needs to be staffed by people who are not afraid of political ideas and open debate.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

BRIEFING

ON PERSONAL POLITICS

CAN GAYS LOOK TO THE LABOUR PARTY?

Michael Foot made the front pages of the July edition of Gay News – or, at least, his waxworks dummy did. The headline was: "Foot: wax in the right-wing's hands?" and the story covered the butchery performed by the NEC on the guts of the legislative and social programme for homosexuality prepared by the Party's Human Rights Study Group.

Brian Kennedy
Larkhill Ward LP

Out went Equality. A discriminatory age of consent for male homosexuality of 18 years was approved, rather than parity with heterosexuals at 16, leaving teenage gays out in the cold.

Out went Liberty. Gay women and men in the Armed Forces and Merchant Navy are to remain a completely isolated and restricted minority within a minority, unable to participate even in the limited advances of the 1967 Act, which patronisingly **granted** certain freedoms to gay people.

There is precious little Fraternity left. Oh, yes, gay socialists will still beaver on, trying to convince a reluctant and nervous Party hierarchy that the world will not crumble if we are given the same inalienable human rights which they themselves take for granted (and have done for generations), but a huge amount of damage has been done. Better, perhaps, if no vote had been taken at all, than to have a 9-8 split **against** equality. Socialist France has already introduced an equal age of consent at 15, Holland did it long ago.

Positive Support

The vast majority of gay people are not committed **via their gayness** to any political party. True, as well as the Gay Labour Group, there are gay Conservative and Liberal/SDP groups but no-one seriously expects Margaret Thatcher to lead the way to equal rights and when the Liberals gain control of a Council, their admirable gay rights policy has a way of remaining a verbal commitment rather than a practical reality. By contrast, the Labour GLC is not only backing Ken Livingstone's statements with positive proposals for long-overdue support of the sizeable London gay community, it is also prepared to put money and facilities where its mouth is – ignoring the usual intemperate and bigoted outbursts from heterosexual chauvinists.

Islington's new council is not playing the usual 'cop-out card' either, but is moving positively to create a better deal for its gay community, making use of the inside knowledge of gay councillors such as Bob Crossman.

Second Class Status

These local initiatives are welcomed, and get sizeable coverage in the gay press, but need the complementary support of a national policy which will remove the oppressive (and closely enforced) laws which consigns us to a harassed, second-class status. Instead, we are seeing in the Labour NEC a return to piecemeal reform – which has the side-effect of further entrenching the remaining inequalities, as the 1967 Act demonstrated. One can only hope that CLP amendments at Conference can rescue the situation and restore confidence.

There is a sort of heterosexual arrogance which is at work here. From a position of blind confidence in belonging to the 'dominant' sexuality (in terms of power, if not necessarily population behaviour) it seems appropriate to dispense occasional reforms with largesse (and a **great** deal of fuss!!) while always retaining a differential, a token that heterosexuality is still just that much better, that much more . . . **valid**! For Whom?!

I don't care if Sam McCluskey has a lot of members in his Seaman's Union who don't like homosexual behaviour. They don't **have** to participate. Meanwhile, his gay union members ought not to have him and his ilk legally imposed as a role-model.

I don't care if Eric Heffer thinks that many people are uncomfortable with gay people. That is their problem, and should not be legally imposed on a community which is parallel to their own. Would he suggest curfews for the disabled, a ban on kissing between black and white couples – because of the disapproval of bigots?

Democracy must always have room for tolerance and protection of individual behaviour insofar as it does not impose unreasonably on others. When a 17 year old man decides that he prefers another man to a woman, the law should get out of his bedroom. When a 36 year old WREN falls in love with another woman, she should not be booted out of her

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Gay Rights at Annual Conference : BETWEEN COALITION AND PETROL

David Poolman
(Secretary, Wood Green CLP)

Just a casual look at this year's agenda for the Annual Conference is all that is needed to prove that gay rights are not exactly in the forefront of socialist thoughts at the moment.

Not that they ever were predominant. It's a little galling, to say the least to find that this year, the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots which led to the birth of modern gay liberation, is the same year that Britain's leading socialist Party sandwiches gay rights between resolutions on coalition governments and petrol prices along with peers and the channel tunnel. Once more a substantial minority within the party and their comrades outside have been humiliated. Being number 514 in any list makes a point that open hostility never could!

Not Important?

This relegation is, of course, not due to ignorance. How could it be? In the large towns there never has been so much knowledge of gay matters. Indeed, many parties have open officers who are "out". (For some odd reason, there seem to be many CLP secretaries who are gay, but I assure you there is no plot . . would there were . . .) In my own CLP, Wood Green, most of the GLC have by now got used to the idea that their secretary is a "poof" (as one of our leading members so fraternally put it the other day). The truth of the matter is simple. The demands for gay rights to an overwhelmingly straight group has yet to be demonstrated as important enough to precede other matters. The sickening thing to us is that this year so many in the Party have in the process not seen the irony of the situation in which their urgency is given to, wait for it, defending the rights of minorities within the party! All the debate on witch-hunts is worthy of support but you cannot defend one group by pushing down others.

Oddities

Gays are sometimes regarded as oddities. In fact one tenth of the party's membership and money is dependant on gay support. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to demand one tenth of its time. More support for the party can only be expected from any minority if it is prepared to challenge itself. The conference itself, our GC and branch meetings all are, after all just indirect heirs of the English public school debating society and thus they never allow for different cultures. I would argue, as one who has been involved in some form of gay politics for a decade, that most gay activists, both women and men, have experimented with forms of organisation that the party could learn from. Too often resolutions are seen in the LP as a substitute for action. Away from the party I get involved in meetings where the task is all and procedures are serving the end not the other way round. Many women's groups, both gay and straight, meet at times and in places that suit them, not in evenings in rooms near clubs to suit their husbands.

I would call for each CLP to mandate its delegate to support resolution 514 and to attend the fringe meeting called by the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights. They should get behind the wording and find out the cases that led to the motion being tabled. Delegates would find that all 514 calls for is decent behaviour to gays. There are nine demands listed. The first calls for "basic human freedoms of opinion, expression assembly, movement and residence". These are not platitudes. A formidable file has been drawn up of cases of gay women and men who have been harassed or worse for wearing badges, publishing (as in the Gay News case), renting rooms or holding meetings (my own council . . . Labour controlled . . . has banned such an event). The second demand calls for an end to discrimination before the law, referring partly to the contemptible practise whereby only gays, apart from "common prostitutes" can have their past records brought up in court before sentence is given.

Children

The third clause deals with children. Many gays do want to have and to care for their kids. In divorce proceedings too often lesbians and gay men get set aside and custody of the children goes to the straight partner or to homes. The next part calls for an end to violence against gays. In my own area gays are seen with blacks as fair game by local right wing thugs. On the borders of the constituency there was even a murder of a gay man by "queer-bashers" not so long ago. Such a demand means, therefore, bringing into any police monitoring system representatives of the gay community. The other clause I would like to emphasis is the seventh: it deals with employment. Gay people are particularly vulnerable at present with so many out of work. There are cases known of women and men being

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career any more than if she fell in love with a man.

Antithesis of Socialism

There is no clear link between the gay movement and socialism, but the Labour Party was **just beginning** to seem a party to hang your vote on if you ever hoped for a better deal for gay people. Most of us have, at one time or another, come up against a situation which says quite clearly: 'you are not approved or fully welcome in our society'. This seems to me the antithesis of socialism, which is surely about a diverse and complex society of individuals working together for mutual support and the common good. Fragmentation, discrimination and the isolation which results, destroys the cohesiveness of society and leads inexorably to the ghetto – a situation which both sides ought to be wary of. At present, the gay ghetto offers a much more attractive and fulfilling lifestyle than the heterosexual 'straight' mainstream. As time goes on, this situation may well be entrenched and institutionalised and gay-identified people will relate less and less to straight-identified people and we'll eventually create our own alternative world, buffered from undue heterosexual interference.

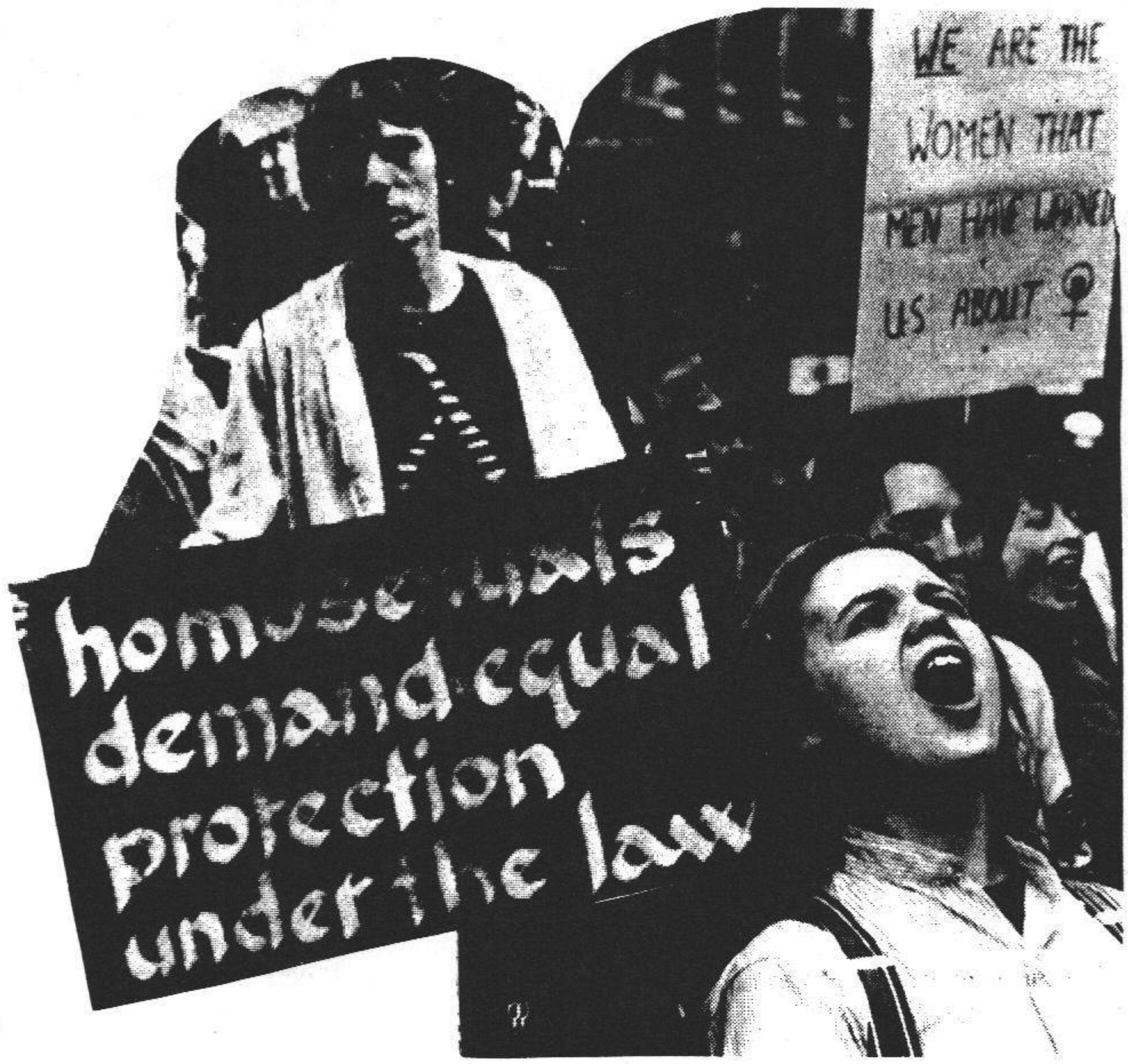
What price a unified, free, socialist society then?



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sacked without real reason except that they were gay and therefore without recourse to natural justice. A recent court decision made it legal for any employer to sack a worker who was gay if their responsibility included children, even without any activity having occurred! The only reason that such cases have happened is that workmates have not given adequate and timely help to the victimised person. Labour members must be prepared to defend, even by industrial action, such workers. It also means being just that bit more than caring. It means cutting out the "queer" jokes just as you did the "nigger" ones. It means making yourself a bit more socialist in reality and not just in GCs.

Resolution 514 is well-written but not rhetorical. Every phrase has a story behind it. Together the 9 demands and the amendment from Hornsey add up to nothing that the rest of you do not take for granted. With us the whole struggle for recognition and equality is an extra dimension in our fight for socialist principles. It makes our calls for fraternity within the party rather poignant and not a little ironic if delegates mean only for some. Gays hope for full support from all comrades. It will be a long time a-coming. In the meantime, thank you, St. Pancras North, for getting us on at all!



Gay Rights At Annual Conference

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights
Fringe Meeting

WHY THE LABOUR PARTY SHOULD FIGHT FOR GAY RIGHTS

Speakers: JOAN LESTOR M.P.
KEN LIVINGSTONE
JO RICHARDSON M.P.
PETER TATCHELL

8pm Tuesday 28th September

Cliff Hotel, Queens Promenade

The Labour Party N.E.C. is proposing a discriminatory policy on gay rights at party conference. The age of consent for gay men would be reduced to 18 not 16; gay relationships for both sexes would remain illegal in the armed forces and merchant navy; lesbian sexuality would still remain unrecognised.

This meeting will discuss why gay rights is an important political issue for all socialists and what Labour Party members can do to support the campaign.

LABOUR CAMPAIGN FOR GAY RIGHTS AND THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE

In response to the N.E.C.'s decision to recommend to Conference a discriminatory policy on gay rights, L.C.G.R. is mounting a campaign to have resolution 514 on gay rights discussed. The support of all those in the Party who believe it is important to stand up for the rights of gay people is needed. Badges and stickers with the slogan 'GAY 16 OK', will be available. A broadsheet produced by 'Mancunian Gay' will be on sale containing a poll of the views of N.E.C. candidates on gay rights. In recognition of the importance of this year's Conference for gays, Gay News are producing a special party conference edition.

Anyone interested in joining the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights should contact:

PAUL FAIRWEATHER, c/o MANCHESTER GAY CENTRE, 61A BLOOM ST, MANCHESTER M1 3LY.

It is a political issue!

Mike Haran

When I came out at work, the immediate reaction was a mixture of embarrassment and purported indifference. Thereafter, the subject was never raised by my colleagues; it was sanitised and I became an honorary straight.

On the rare occasion when I have spoken about gay campaigning, the mask drops to reveal an antipathy to 'going on about it'. These are intelligent people whom I would not regard as homophobes, but by accepting me without my sexuality, they are rejecting an important part of my identity as a human being. I have found this experience to be extremely common, from the parent who doesn't want to know to the liberal who objects to a same-sex couple kissing in public. What I want to discuss here is the need to develop attitudes in the labour movement beyond mere acceptance, as a prerequisite to recognising and adopting our concerns.

The stance that 'it is not a political issue' in its starkest form is surprisingly rare. Debate in the far-left parties on sexual politics and autonomous movements generally took place in the early seventies, and the CP, SWP and IMG have positive positions on gay rights. However, the matter is important owing to the importance of Militant and their control of the Young Socialists. Their rejection of autonomous movements and of non-economic issues together with their dogmatism and hierarchical structure, make it extremely difficult to initiate discussion, particularly when starting from a position which can only be described as reactionary. At the very least, their brand of marxism fails to recognise the complexity of power relations and the inter-reaction of sexual and political ideology and economic conditions. Having said that, I fervently hope that comrades in Militant will engage in dialogue even if they cannot at the end of the day incorporate non-economic issues.

The rejection of gay rights for other than ideological reasons is the result of overt or covert homophobia, fear of the electoral consequences or ignorance of the nature and channels of gay oppression. I only intend to address the last. The influence of sexual politics in the labour movement is skin-deep beyond the pages of New Socialist. Feminism is still seen as primarily a demand for economic opportunity: a fight for women's rights rather than against sexism. An understanding of the position of gay people must begin with the recognition of a sexual power structure which is the basis of and sustained by sex roles. Gay people are outcasts since they fail to conform to their place in the sexual hierarchy, threaten its institutions and question the existence of the status-quo. This is not to deny the prevalence of sexism among gay men: the vehemance of our denials makes our hypocrisy the greater.

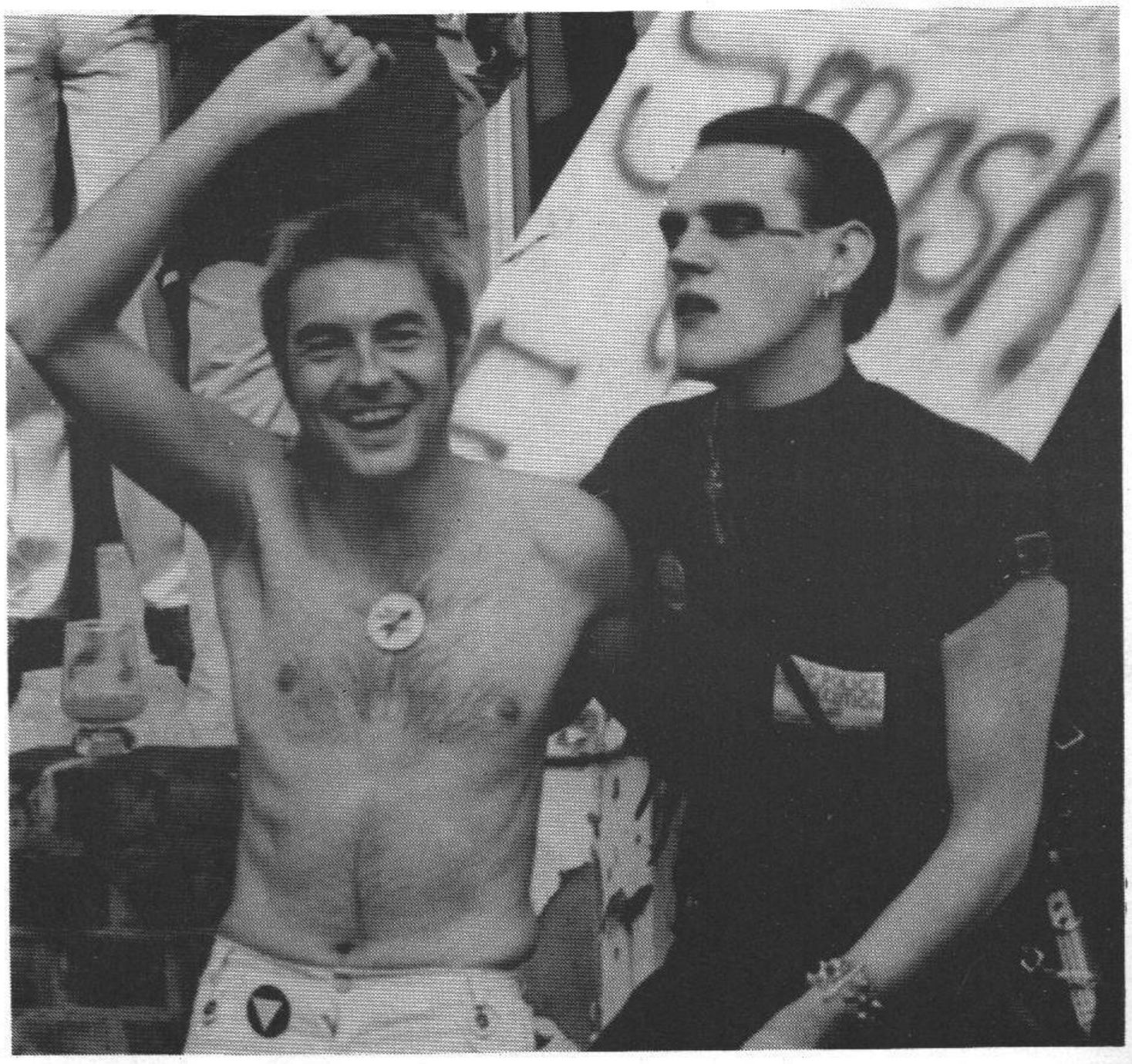
The analogy with the oppression of women, and to a lesser extent ethnic minorities, involves the recognition that status inequalities are as pernicious as those of income or power: that personal life is a legitimate concern for political activity. Gay people suffer more from internalised guilt, verbal abuse, physical attacks and, most importantly, fear of discovery, than from more concrete legislative and administrative discrimination. For most gay people their sexuality is their most important concern. In many ways I have more in common with a gay tory than with a straight socialist, and more of my time is devoted to gay campaigning than to distinctively left causes. Divided loyalties will remain a problem for activists for the foreseeable future; this does not mean that unparalleled commitment is on offer to whichever party buys the loyalties of the gay community; this may happen, but our concerns are important in their own right, and our politics as varied as the rest of the community.

If my straight comrades are able to appreciate the importance of our sexuality to us and the extent of the oppression which results from it, what consequences follow? For a start, it means a rejection of Programme '82 except as a tactical victory. Under this, the Party commits itself to removing various anomalies in the criminal law as it affects gay men, but not, crucially, to equalising the age of consent. The whole tone is one of reaction to blatant anomalies without a strategy for changing attitudes through the labour movement.

There are however important developments taking place locally. In London, Brent, Greenwich, Islington and the GLC have adopted equal opportunity employment policies; the GLC has awarded grants to gay self-help groups and along with NALGO is refusing to make referalls to Care Concern which sacked Judith Williams as a houseparent solely because she is a lesbian; and Islington is requiring its contractors to adopt non-discrimination clauses.

However, much more needs to be done. All Labour authorities should have equal opportunity employment policies, properly monitored and enforced. Selection conferences should not quail at selecting OPENLY gay candidates – three were elected in May – and GCs should cease forcing candidates, councillors and MPs to conceal their sexuality. Sanctions should be taken against Labour authorities which prevent teachers from coming out, refuse to afford public facilities to or actually dismiss gay people – it does happen!

Only the labour movement has the strength, and incipiently the will, to work actively for gay rights. Without a concerted campaign and radical policy, up to 10% of the population will have little reason to embrace socialism as a focus for change in their lives.



Catharine Tate

Lesbianism - hard to beat!

Mary Evans
Kensington CLP

The woman I sat opposite in the tube was wearing a navy blue suit, cream blouse and navy blue shoes. She had fair hair, long slim hands with long red finger-nails. She was probably in her early forties.

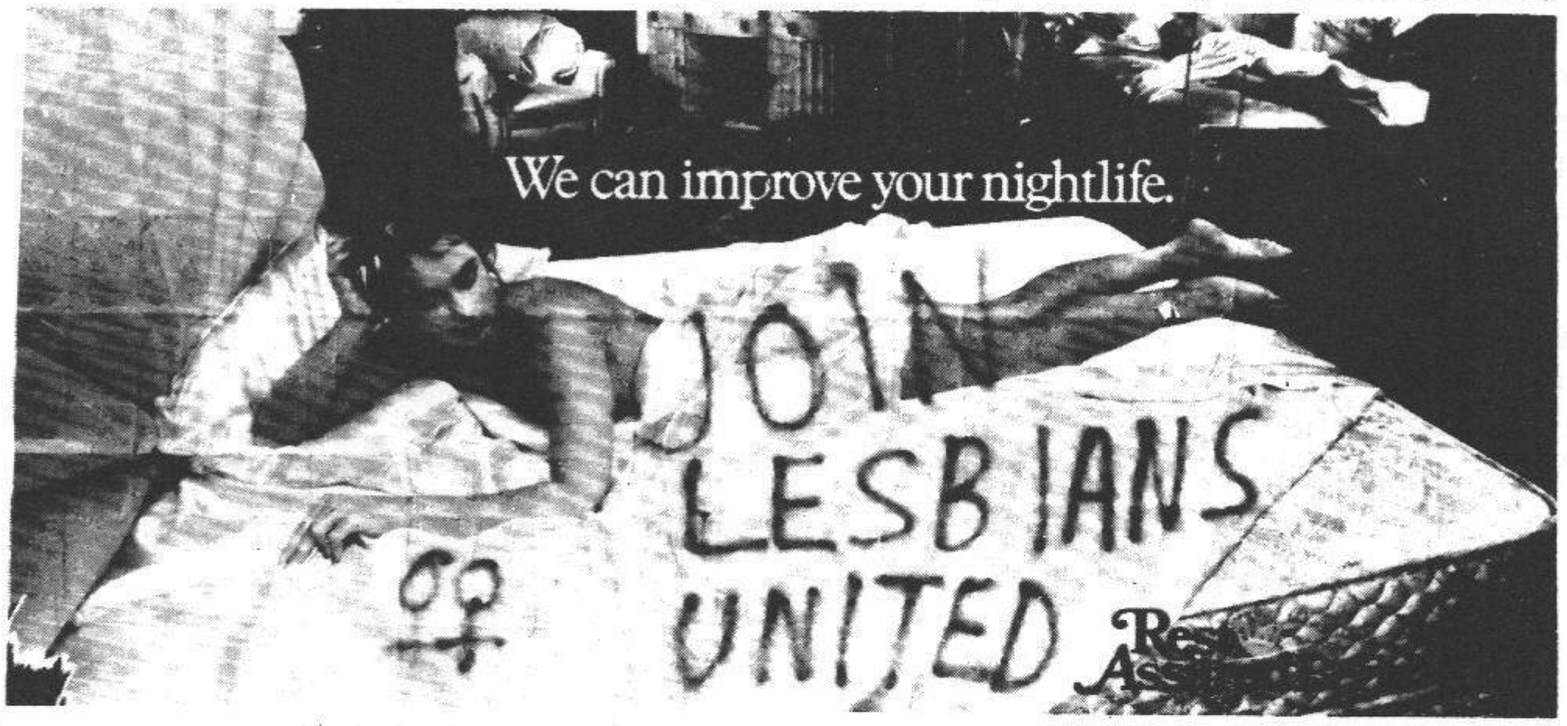
I found myself looking at her and she must have felt my eyes as she eventually looked up at me. We smiled at each other. I felt myself go hot as it suddenly hit me what was happening. I blushed and quickly got out at the next station. I never saw her again although I deliberately travelled on the Central Line around the same time for several weeks afterwards!

I was about 21 when this happened and I am now 36. I'm a wife, a mother, a worker; I live at Notting Hill Gate. I go to the cinema, enjoy sewing, knitting, cooking, eating, wine, real beer, country walks, swimming, fresh air – I could go on, but all I'm telling you is I am very, very ordinary. Already I've told you enough about myself for you to fit me into some category – except for one thing – I like women – which I think makes me a lesbian.

Almost all newspaper articles are aimed at men, heterosexual men. Of course there are a few trendy exceptions – and then they are aimed at heterosexual women. It's assumed everybody is heterosexual. Of course, if I wrote to the Guardian Women's Page and said this, back would come a reply saying their articles are of interest of all women – and yes they are – but when did you last read an ordinary, everyday article about the trials and tribulations of a lesbian? Or an article advising lesbians how to throw a successful dinner party? It seems the only articles of interest on homosexuality are when somebody gets sacked from a job, when the vicar is screwing the choir-boy or the Queen's private policeman is asked to resign. Even then we are usually reading about men. Lesbians are invisible, we don't exist. The reason for this is it threatens men, it means women can have a nice time without those magic things – cocks!

This article is deliberately for hetero-sexual readers, so bear with me lesbian sisters and gay men, as I try to explain what being a lesbian means to me. Then, hopefully, next issue we shall have heterosexual women and men telling us what their sexuality means to them and how and when they decided that they would identify as heterosexuals: I think one of the major differences between gays and non gays is that most gays actually *choose* their sexuality.

The story I told at the start happened about 15 years ago and as I did not know any lesbians at the time I did not know what to do about being attracted to a woman. I did not feel guilty or frightened, but I had been used to being picked up (and dropped) by men. The decision was theirs, so I had no models to go on because lesbian culture is denied and unavailable to public eyes and this conveniently allows myths, prejudice and fears to ferment and grow. Thankfully along came the women's movement which I got involved in. Many women have turned to lesbianism as a political choice and so I found myself in company of many lesbians – but being predatory is not feminist and there's a problem – how do you convey to some-one that you think she's 'a bit of alright' – in a non-sexist way? With difficulty!



Many women find it hard to convey that they *do* fancy each other.

A combination of not wishing to be predatory and no models to go on means that many women miss out on the warmth and love of a woman who is special to them, for no good reason. For me, lesbianism is not only about what I do in bed (but that's nice too!) – its about the way I feel about and relate to women and their bodies and my own body. From an early age women are encouraged not to like their bodies. We paint our faces, shave our legs, slim, alter our shape with girdles and bras, colour and curl our hair all in order to make ourselves more attractive (to men) and we are encouraged to compete against each other for men's attention – and whilst we're busy bitching each other or helping to make each other feel insecure or jealous, men are able to pick up all the benefits, rewards (and power).

So what do lesbians do in bed? Well, if the stories told in my sexuality group were anything to go by, usually a lot more than men and women do. According to women in the group, many male lovers are in the 'whip it in, whip it out and wipe it" brigade, or are one of 'the greatest technicians' or, asking every five minutes 'Did you come darling?' (and its at the woman's peril to say 'no' – she'll be up all night till she does (or pretends) – and HE feels better!) Often women said that for them the most important part of 'love' making was kissing, cuddling, touching, holding and nibbling, but that their male lovers saw these only as the first step, necessary to be gone through, as quickly as possible, to get to the REAL thing – the fucking. So doesn't it make sense then if women, who are not that fussed about fucking get in and do what they consider are the real things – getting close, exploring, making love for hours, rubbing her neck for an hour, stroking her feet (and getting very excited) – or just doing things 'cos they are nice.

There are lots of myths about lesbians using dildoes, but I have never met a woman who is into dildoes. Perhaps its a myth put around by men who don't like the thought that cocks are not necessary to 'satisfy' women. ('Satisfy' – what a loaded concept that is!). As the women's movement has grown and the delicious feeling of sisterhood has been experienced, getting THAT little bit closer has been the natural thing to do. And as the women's movement has embraced lesbianism, so we have rejected the all embracing title 'Gay' and have positively reclaimed our own word. 'Lesbian' – a funny word, isn't it? I remember finding it much harder to call myself a lesbian than to say I was gay. It seems much more forceful and I also remember thinking after my first lesbian experience – 'God, its so – what IS all the fuss about?!! As I mentioned at the beginning, I am married and although this is not the place to discuss that side of my life I would not feel happy to deny it either – and as I also said earlier, unless I state exactly what I am, people do incorrectly label. I would never be happy to describe myself as bisexual. There are no hidden secrets about being a lesbian – any woman can be one. No qualifications are needed and we're not fussy! Actually we are very fussy – you have to be a woman!! So, if you've ever been tempted – try it. I recommend it – it's lovely, dead easy, and here's a few of its less obvious advantages:

- Nicest, safest, natural method of birth control.
- No need to shave your legs, armpits (or pubic hair!).
- No need to worry about being fat.
- No make-up needed.
- No need to hide your emotions.
- No need to come.
- No age barrier.
- No mess.
- No need to have 'head-aches'.
- No men.

Takes a bit of beating, doesn't it Comrades?

Gays and a socialist housing strategy

Many gay women and men are married and/or have children and seek housing as married couples or as families. But a large and growing number specifically seek housing as single people with dependents. We wish to live alone, or in couples, or in groups of three or more.

Because housing policies in terms of house size, finance, and allocation have been geared overwhelmingly to the needs of families, those seeking housing as single people are at a disadvantage. The single state is often regarded as a temporary phase between the parental home and marriage or remarriage. This 'temporary' state no longer conforms to many people's lifestyles. For most gay people it does not apply at all.

Debates on housing on the left should not only be about the distribution of resources or tenants' rights, but should also question the ideology behind present policies, in particular, the bolstering of the nuclear family as the ideal mode of living, the dominance of the idea of the (male) head of household and the growing privatisation and consumerism in living arrangements. No place here for the single man of thirty who wants a council house with a garden, or the group of lesbian mothers who wish to share household and childcare arrangements, or the two gay teenagers who want a self-contained flat at a price they can afford.

SQUEEZED OUT

Gay people, like most single people, experience the worst effects of the housing crisis. We are squeezed out of the Council sector by allocation policies favouring families, and out of the private rented sector (the traditional source) because of its decline and high rents. Owner occupation is still for professionals only.

The evidence that gay women and men in London experience severe housing problems can be gauged from a survey of accommodation calls to London Gay Switchboard in 1980[1]. Of the 400 people questioned, 100 were threatened with immediate homelessness, with another 200 actually on the streets when they called. Almost 150 people, mainly teenagers, had left home because of a dispute with their parents. Altogether 1 in every 4 callers said that their housing crisis was connected to being gay. The gay press (but not the rest of the media) is full of accounts of discrimination by landlords, building societies, local authorities and families.

A ROOM OF ONES OWN

The importance of 'a room of one's own' for every young person is recognised, if not always easily achieved. For those young people trying to establish a gay identity it can be essential. Living at home may be cheap – but hell. Local authorities fail to recognise the legitimate housing needs of young people and then go overboard to cater for couples, usually of the heterosexual, married kind. Then when old age is reached the only recognised way of life is to be packaged into a single bedroomed flat with no thought for relationships already established or to be developed.

Some specific issues to do with gay peoples housing needs can be tackled now. The recent Labour Party Discussion Document 'The Rights of Gay Men and Women'[2] highlights some of the main areas by advocating greater access to public housing by single people alone or in groups, joint tenancies and the right of succession for gay couples as well as proposing legislation to outlaw discrimination by landlords and building societies. Unfortunately not one of these points has found its way into 'Labour's Programme 1982' so there seems little chance of them reaching the Manifesto, although similar provisions relating to women and blacks are mentioned. Some local authorities such as Islington have made a start by offering joint tenancies and inviting gay couples to enter their 'young couples scheme' for hard-to-let flats.

NOT ENOUGH

But equal rights in housing are not enough (although we want them too!). Turning gays into model couples so we can join the bottom rung of the housing ladder crammed with everyone else is no solution. Any solution will mean more resource being diverted to housing. But it will also mean a change in our conceptions about how we house ourselves. A socialist housing strategy is not only one where a decent house is everybody's right and not a commodity available to the highest bidder, it is also one designed to meet people's housing needs as they themselves express them, and not, as at present, one where allocation, design and finance is grounded on the maintenance of the nuclear family as the natural, predominant and prescribed mode of living.

Gay people, like single people generally, do not need special provision. A reorientation of socialist thinking in housing policy is what is needed. Because we, as gay people, feel most acutely the inadequacies of present policies, we aim to be at the forefront of reshaping them.

Bob Marshall
(Labour Campaign for Gay Rights and the Gays and Housing Group)

Footnotes:

1. London Gay Switchboard 01-837 7324
2. The Labour Party 1981.

Sacked for being a lesbian

One of the places where gay people are most vulnerable is at work. We often feel unable to come out and be open with our friends at work. And one reason for this is the fear that we would lose our jobs if we did For the idea that we are unsuitable for a wide range of jobs is still very strong.

Judith Williams is the latest victim of this appalling prejudice. On 27th May this year Judith was sacked from her position as a house parent at Berwyn College, Llangollen for being a lesbian. A week earlier she had been recommended for promotion by her superiors and her work had been considered of the highest standard.

When Judith was sacked the Defend Judith Williams Campaign was set up by Gay Rights at Work and the Gay Welfare Workers Group. They are demanding the immediate and unconditional reinstatement of Judith and have called for the blacking of Care Concern until Judith is reinstated.

For details of the campaign to have Judith Williams re-instated, contact Judith Williams Campaign, 123 Greencroft Gardens, London NW6 3PE or telephone 328-5007.

Confronting Self Denial

For want of a better word I call myself a 'transvestite'. It's a clinical term usually synonymous with 'pervert' or 'madman' which was invented as a put-down.

I'm simply a man who wears skirts. Not such a big deal you might say, but in our culture it rates as one of the cardinal sins.

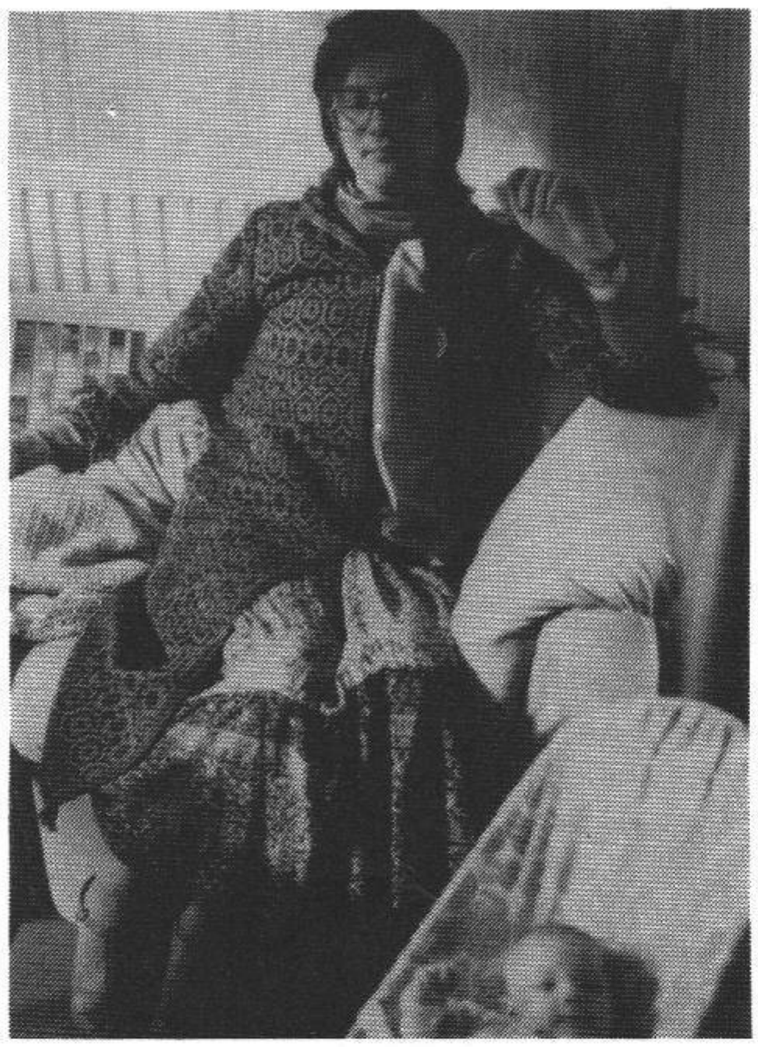
I can think of 'Militant' parties I have been to where the men were silently hostile and contemptuous, and so-called anti-sexist men who have expressed strong physical dislike. Women, on the other hand, tend to value the way it can undermine the 'tough man' image.

So what's bothering these men? First and foremost it's treachery, it's weak and wilful, it's a fatal step down to that inferior state labelled 'woman'. Worse still, it corresponds to these men's secret wishes: every stereotyped tough man is hiding the secret 'woman within'. Of course very few men are such simple stereotypes, but all men partake to varying degrees in the 'dominance/ alternating with extreme submission' mentality. The more decisive and inflexible a man is in public the more helpless and female he is in private, and this fundamental imbalance is why men compulsively seek out women's support to drain them dry and feed off their more rounded emotional lives.

TWO CAMPS

Another element in some men's distaste for me is dislike of their own male body. In their imagination the world is divided into two camps: beautiful, smooth,hairless, curvacious women and rough, coarse, ugly and muscular men. Again, I am reducing to a stereotype a tendency which exists in all men. This kind of man cannot believe himself physically graceful or self-possessed. To avoid having to face up to internal conflict he projects his self-dislike outwards onto a false female image. Instead of being self-possessed he must possess women – and to ensure that possession he must manipulate them into safe images of 'femininity', 'willingness' and 'passivity', at least in his head if not in practice.

When this kind of man meets me what he reacts to is the visual inversion. If I wear 'women's clothes' it places the fantasy of femininity where it belongs – in men. It also makes it more difficult for this kind of man to put only women into an inferior feminine category. His response is to lump all the effeminate men, gays, transvestites, transsexuals, 'weak' men, men with social and sexual insecurities into one inferior sub-class. Which makes male power a very narrow and elitist pyramid which only a very small number of men benefit from. The question we other men have to ask is 'whose interests are we acting in?' There is a danger that anti-sexist men and militant gay men just want to invert this power relationship,



and women are there purely to boost up the 'subjected' males, and to give them the muscle to overthrow the real jocks at the top. Then, of course, the 'effeminists' take over and suppress women again. So when we ask 'whose side are you on?' men should be looking first at how we vote, and whether we organise jobs, childcare, relationships and political meetings on women's terms, and whether we put down women, rather than spending all our time on making ourselves perfectly liberationist men. To put this quite clearly, so-called 'macho' men can be less oppressive on women than anti-sexist males because they are more independent and make less demands for emotional support.

But still people ask me 'why do you want to wear women's clothes?' or they accuse me of oppressing myself and women within a restrictive sexist code of dress and behaviour. The funny thing is that these criticisms often come from people who suppress their own deepest wishes.

The fact is that important feelings, particularly sexual ones, turn to poison if they're suppressed. We all live under the burden of self-denial – the problems we had in adolescence, the repressions drummed into us because of being women or gay or black or working class, but unless we are prepared to make public these barriers we will never be able to become strong, consistent, independent, and place at the top of the agenda the needs of the subjected and the repressed. Our unresolved personal frustrations will always have to be vented on victims or personal 'enemies' – which means in practice our friends, comrades and potential sympathisers get it in the neck.

'So what do you want to wear women's clothes for?' is only a question if it means 'what are you trying to say?' rather than 'you'll be abolished under socialism anyway'. To people who accept that transvestites exist, I would say that we only call it cross-dressing because of the rigid sexual divisions in our society. Everything is sex-typed: our movements, hands, faces, bodies, likes and dislikes, emotional and intellectual patterns, skills, jobs, interests, habits they all get their assigned gender. Is it surprising then, if women have started to break through these restrictions, that men do the same? Ah, yes, says the critic, but it's no real change, it's the old story: 'leech man' muscling in on women's power. Possibly, but women only have power in skirts as long as they are excluded from all positive positions.

STARTING TO UNWIND

But most important of all for me, the contrast between being 'straight' and 'transvestite' is between being very male, awkward, aggressive, repressive, and starting to unwind. In the process of acknowledging so-called 'weakness' it becomes a strength. Mind, it is only too easy to shed some pretences and pick up others. It is highly unlikely that men by themselves can stop being domineering, ill-tempered or stop trying to exercise that insidious and sometimes brutal 'leadership', 'thought control' and hidden superiority complex that they rely on in relationships with women. It is whether women have the ultimate veto that counts.

COMING OUT

'Coming out' is a step in that direction. I tried for a long time to avoid it: living a double life, even to myself – 90% straight man, 10% ultra feminine girl. Going public has changed that into something less extreme and camp when I dressed up, and I'm less fragmented now. It has taught me how one-eyed men's obsession with their public lives has become, how fragile and unbalanced we have become and how most men are dumb towards their deepest feelings. Men's repressive behaviour is a crippling disease. It manifests itself in alcoholism, work addiction, violence in the home, drug abuse, inability to bear criticism, insensitivity to others, incredible touchiness and sexual paranoia. All of which I have experienced and inflicted on women, and all of which springs from self-hatred. The first step towards loving others is learning to love yourself. To do that in any real and rooted sense the personal must come to the top of the political agenda.

Les Tate
Lambeth Central CLP

My face doesn't fit!

ELIZABETH CANTELL
(Ealing-Southall CLP)

Everywhere I go, I am confronted with images of how I ought to be in order to succeed in society. Above all, I must look sexy.

Well, I'm nearly forty, but I'm slim, not a bad pair of legs, nice hair and eyes, but, oh dear, nine years ago I underwent an operation for cancer of the palate, which has left me with extremely goofy teeth and a slightly lop-sided face. I also have speech difficulties. So try as I may, I know that I can never really be sexy, just like 90% of the population who are too thin, fat, old or disabled or who do not in some way attain the physical requisites of sexiness.

OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

Now I'm aware of sexism, and that one of the main concerns of the women's movement is to not be treated like sex objects. On the other hand, I like having sex, and in a way I feel that the problem I'm raising is the other side of the coin. As a woman, I know how annoying it is to be treated as if sex is all you are for – the constant wolf-whistles, sexual innuendoes, etc – even and often with men in the Labour Party, even and often from 'Left wing revolutionary' men. This happens when you are young, beautiful, able-bodied. But once you become old, or disfigured, or disabled, you suddenly become also sexless. And the same goes for men. I've often heard women, even feminists, say how they don't fancy a man because he is small or fat, and isn't Clint Eastwood wonderful!

The problem is that sexuality is equated with physical perfection, or I should say society's conception of physical perfection. The modern cult of beauty has nothing to do with what people naturally look like. The whole emphasis is for us to be unnatural, to try and change our appearance to fit the ideal which today is like a shop window dummy – tall, slim and brainless.

And so we dye or perm our hair, paint our faces, wear bras and corsets and starve ourselves in order to be slim, wear clothes that are uncomfortable, shoes that are bad for our feet, splash ourselves with deodorants, and daub perfumes and talcum powders. A whole consumer industry centres round the impossible attempts of the majority of us to attain the physical ideal. As long as we continue to be swallowed up by it, the coffers of the cosmetic and fashion moguls will continue to be filled.

DIFFERENT CULTURES

In doing this we are following in the footsteps of countless people in different ages and cultures. However their ideas were not the same as ours. In the Renaissance (1550-1600) women were not supposed to have busts at all. It was said that the devil placed breasts on the female body. Small girls had pieces of lead bound into their clothing to prevent their breasts from growing. Later in the Baroque period (1615-1715) women were supposed to be fat and chubby, like the Rubens' portraits. Women were encouraged to eat a lot. This image of beauty accompanied the expansion of trade in the Netherlands and elsewhere to the East, and the importation of many different foodstuffs. It was at this time that women often had their portraits painted when they were pregnant, this being considered their most beautiful time. In the 1920s women again flattened their breasts, this time with bandages.(1)

In Ancient Greece, it was men who were considered the beautiful sex. All nude statues were male – it was only in Renaissance Italy that men and women were depicted equally in the nude, and from the 19th century onwards that nudes became almost exclusively female. (2) This reflects the treatment of men and women as sex objects. It was only in the 1830s that men gave up being sex objects and rejected flamboyant styles of dress for sober colours, loose jackets and trousers, and that symbol of masculinity, the neck-tie. In recent years we have had the hippy and Unisex cults which allow men to become sex objects again. (Witness the advertisements featuring John Conteh in his underpants.) Why not indeed? – in this way the cosmetic industry can make money out of men too.

TOO MUCH OF A THREAT

What is it like if you actually are one of the beautiful people? In a recent interview, Maud Adams described as 'a famous Swedish model' was quoted as saying,

'people are reluctant to think of a beautiful woman as anything else but beautiful. . . They don't want to allow that you might also be intelligent, creative, talented. That would be too much of a threat, I think.' (3)

Women are supposed to concentrate on their looks, not on their minds. 'Society has so over-valued beauty, that most women given the choice between unusual intelligence and great beauty, would choose beauty.'(2) Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot, for example, both agonised about their looks and would have gladly given up their creativity to be beautiful. Fortunately for us this wasn't possible.

The vain attempts to be beautiful not only cost us money but time which could be spent doing other things. Many women on the Left say they never read anything theoretical, perhaps because they are putting their physical appearance first, because the men they are with prefer them to be attractive rather than clever, or because they genuinely believe they are not clever enough to understand such things, thus fulfilling society's image of women as the ones with beauty not brains.

The people who lose most by society's obsession with beauty are the elderly and disabled, despite the fact that almost everyone eventually becomes elderly and many disabled as time goes on. The women's movement has put personal politics on the agenda. If we want real equality for everyone, then the question of how we view people according to their physical appearance must be put on the agenda.

STEREOTYPES

Here are some basic stereotypes of people according to physical appearance: which many people in society at large believe, but which we should challenge: black people are lazy; fat people are jolly, but skinny people are mean; old people are senile; young, slim, shapely people are sexy, but elderly and disabled people are not; mousey, bespectacled people are intellectual. . . I could go on for ever.

As a socialist feminist, I think we need to think about how we can start to view people according to their personality rather than their looks. But we must also ask how far our own self-images are structured by our physical appearance and why it is so important to us all. (I've written all this, but I still fell the need to shave my legs. Why?) When you think of all the different shapes, sizes and appearances of people in society, it's a pity we can't enjoy the diversity of the human race, rather than chasing after an ideal which only a few can ever attain, and then only ephemerally.

SOURCES

(1) The Agony of Fashion by Eline Canter Cremers-van der Does (Blandford Press 1980).
(2) The Mask of Beauty by Una Stannard (from Women in Sexist Society ed. V. Cormick & B.K. Moran) (Signet PB 1971).
(3) Interview, Radio Times, 24-30 July 1982.



Health Privatisation — the personal cost

Eighteen years lived in the United States, and a subsequent three spent training as an NHS student nurse, has acquainted me with the inhuman face of health privatisation. As socialists might guess, it is far from a pretty sight.

Americans leaving the parental nest need three high-cost items: accommodation, their own transport, and health insurance. Once married and with children, they may be unable to keep up with all the payments. My younger sister and her husband found themselves in this predicament — as my brother-in-law needed his pick-up truck for his job as a roofer, it was the health insurance that had to go.

ANXIETY

Nothing very awful happened. It was just a matter of anxiety, as my sister coped with a new baby and hoped that her husband suffered no worsening of an old complaint — ankylosing spondylitis — which would have required treatment. When he took up work at a factory they became eligible for a job-associated insurance scheme, but this provided only partial coverage, adding fervour to their natural wish that her second pregnancy would be an uncomplicated one.

What kind of costs are we discussing? Well, readers of the dailies will be familiar with the piteous financial appeals from British tourists stranded in American recovery wards. I happen to have a copy of a 1979 hospital bill for the care of a normal new-born baby. Including everything from nappies to blood-tests over two days, it comes to 740 dollars. This is for the baby alone. The mother's bill was much higher!

For the average US citizen the fact of private health care affects life in diverse ways. On the rare occasion when my father gave us children sweets, for example, he never failed to send us to brush our teeth afterwards. Certainly he wanted us to have nice teeth, but there was also the thought of having to pay for every filling. With five children, this could obviously mount up.

Drug prescriptions were costing 5-15 dollars several years ago, and are now probably much more. That may be all right for the two-car and fitted carpet suburbanite, but there is a large stratum of the American public on a more precarious cash footing. For these persons a visit to a hospital casualty is as financially open-ended as taking an old car to a garage. I can remember calling in at one with a broken finger and being asked about my method of payment as blood flowed interestingly down my arm. Two sutures, an x-ray, a finger splint and a tetanus jab set me back 40 dollars. That was eight years ago.

"Private", of course, doesn't necessarily mean best. There is a shortage of nurses in the US, and doctors are over-stretched because the American Medical Association keeps the numbers of medical school places down. Over-treatment, iatrogenic or doctor-induced illness, and unnecessary operations have become commonplace topics.

PRIVATISATION GROWING

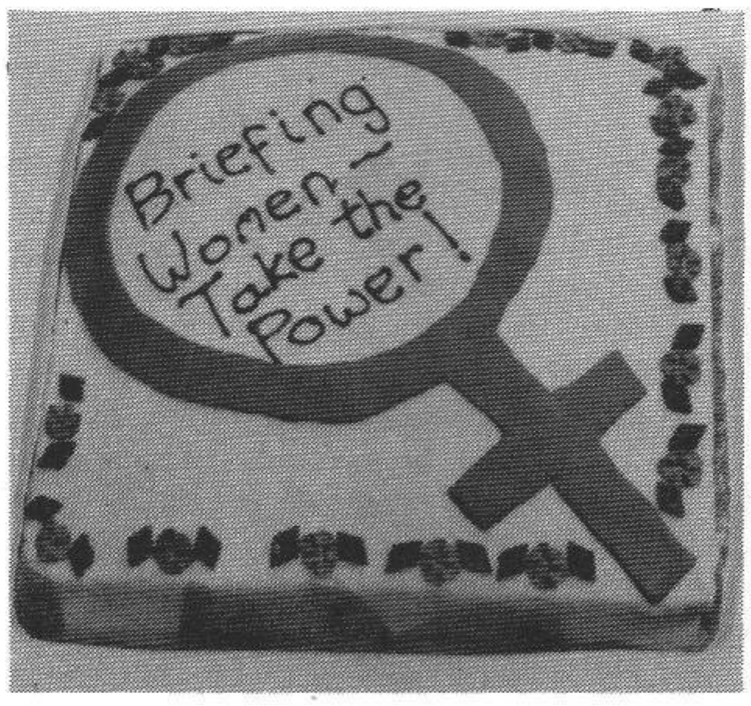
For all its weaknesses, therefore, the under-funded NHS compares well with the dog-eat-dog world of American medicine. Yet in England privatisation and the private ethos are growing apace.

As a student nurse, I've seen the pharmaceutical reps approaching doctors in casualty with glossy coloured brochures of new products. I've seen doctors returning from drug-company sponsored lunches where drink and promotional items flowed. The posh private sector lures away NHS staff. Nursing agencies profit from improper staffing levels. Minicab firms benefit from the lack of hospital vans. And consultants do rather well by the whole system.

At the high altar of the surgical consultant — the operating theatre — I've seen an entire support team immobilised, waiting for the great man to arrive from Harley Street, or from a private hospital across London. He arrives very late, insulting the under-paid scrub nurses, complaining about the lack of facilities, and yet I learn from the charge nurse, confirmed by a district memo tacked on the office wall, that the surgeons are forever borrowing NHS equipment, and that many small but expensive items go missing that are useful to them.

The intermeshing of private with state medicine is a blight, not a remedy, and privatisation means no more nor less than a public sanctioning of inequalities in health.

Ann Rouse,
Islington North CLP and NUPE



NEXT ISSUE:

The next feature will be on the politics of pregnancy and childbirth. We would welcome any contributions on this theme, especially any on personal experiences of pregnancy and/or childbirth, infertility, AID, contraception, abortion.

This does not mean that we will not print articles on any other subject. If you think there is an issue relating to personal/sexual politics/feminism that should be raised in Briefing, please let us know. Or simply, what do you think of the Supplement so far? Encouragement or even criticism would be very gratefully received!

LETTER

Dear Briefing,

As a chronically disabled person, I was deeply moved at Bob Geis's article on the eclipse of employment opportunity in his disablement.

I, too, feel that the Labour Party offers nothing but token sentimentality in the right to work of the disabled. Why is there no funding for the statutory 3% quota system? Why are employers not fined at law for infringing it? Why is there no service support to help enlightened employers take on disabled? Why no investment grants for investing in human stock? Why no protection for invalidity benefit if a disabled person takes on paid employment? Why, why, why!! Does the Labour Party care about this human disaster area?

Yours sincerely,
Joe Platts
(East Lewisham C.L.P.)

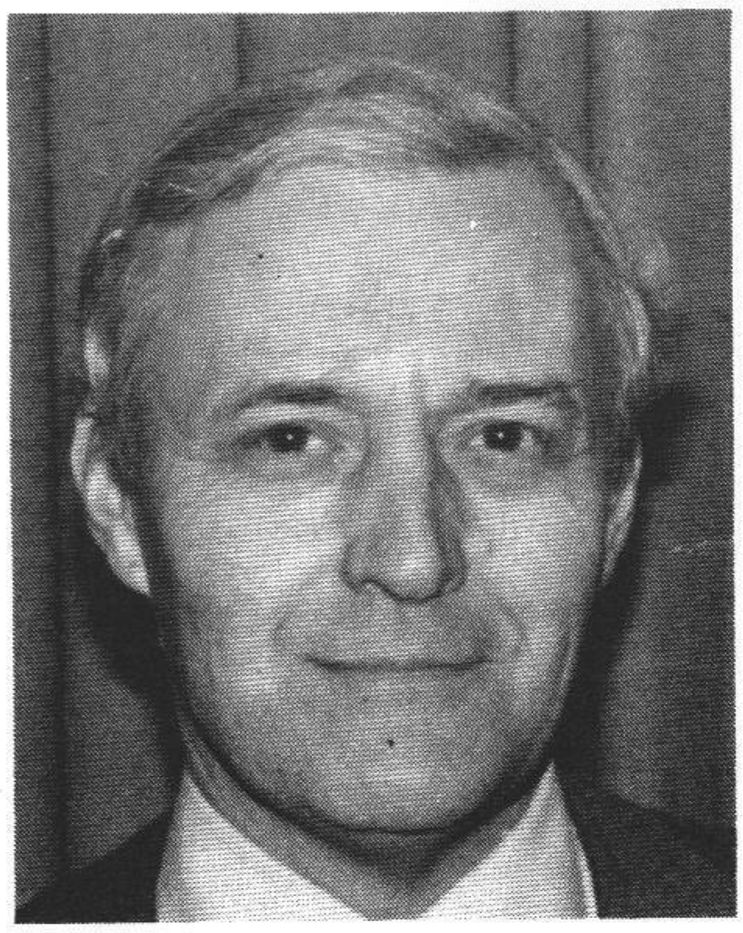
Deadline for articles for next Supplement: articles/letters should be sent to Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, NW1 by *October 8th.*

The next SUPPLEMENT EDITORIAL BOARD MEETING will be held on MONDAY 11th OCTOBER at 7.30pm at 110 AGAR GROVE, NW1.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Benn Heresy

NIGEL WILLIAMSON of Tribune, who has worked closely with Tony Benn over the last two years, reviews a new book about the man and his politics – The Benn Heresy, by Alan Freeman (Pluto Books £3.50).



Books about Tony Benn seem to be one of the few growth areas left in the wasteland of the Thatcher/Howe economy.

Alan Freeman is the third Benn biographer in four years, following the awful Russell Lewis of the Daily Mail and the slightly-better young Tory Robert Jenkins. In truth, though, Freeman's book is far more than a biography and is certainly the first written from a socialist viewpoint. And it is all the more welcome for that.

Drawing heavily on Benn's own books, Arguments for Democracy and Arguments for Socialism, Freeman traces Benn's conversion from a fairly conventional, traditional Labour politician to his position of pre-eminence on the left today. That road takes in such events as his 1962 renunciation of his peerage, his experience of office in Wilson's first government and the sea-change of events in 1968 in Paris and all over Europe to arrive at Benn's early 1970s conception of 'popular democracy' - the springboard of what today constitutes 'Bennism'.

From that conception of popular democracy stems what Freeman calls the 'Benn heresy', based upon three beliefs — the supremacy of conscience over law, the accountability of power to the people, and the sovereignty of the people over Parliament.

On top of this fairly straightforward account is grafted Freeman's own Socialist Challenge-inspired 'revolutionary critique' of Bennism. Some of that critique provides genuine insights. Some of it is plain silly.

Freeman claims that Benn's notion of legislative change through parliament combined with popular protest is inadequate because it fails to take into account the nature of the capitalist state. He makes an important distinction between parliament and the state, pointing out that the latter does not necessarily draw any authority from parliamentary elections.

Fair enough. But the pessimism of the left that afflicts Freeman means that he dismisses any possibility of transforming the state through parliamentary means. Yes, parliament is based on an undemocratic state and a class society. But does that really justify Freeman's claim that 'the state can rule out any constitutional change not previously agreed within the state' ?

Maybe events will show that it does, but Freeman's book does not *prove* that to my satisfaction. Nor does he do justice to those in the Labour Party who have recently tried to address themselves to the question of the state and how we can transform it. Ken Livingstone, Pat Wall, Chris Mullin in his new novel and indeed, Benn himself, immediately spring to mind as evidence that at least some in the Labour Party are prepared to face up to the problem in some serious fashion. To dismiss this as not even worth the effort and to accuse Benn of turning his back on the movement he inspires is nonsense.

There are other points where I would take issue with Freeman. The Bennite-Bevanite division he draw is, I think, glib and simplistic. And the claim that 'the present leadership of the unions are prepared to see the Labour Party destroyed rather than risk seeing it won to positions that will seriously challenge capital in Britain' shows a basic lack of understanding of the difficulties trade unions currently find themselves in and the rearguard action they see themselves as fighting.

But this is by no means a bad book. On the contrary, it is a lively and entertaining read — and therein perhaps lies the problem. At the end of the day, Freeman's book is lively and entertaining, but lightweight. We shall have to wait a little longer for the definitive book both about Benn and the relevance of the revolutionary tradition in British politics.

Editors' Note: Replies to this review are welcome. No more than 350 words, please!

Pluto Press

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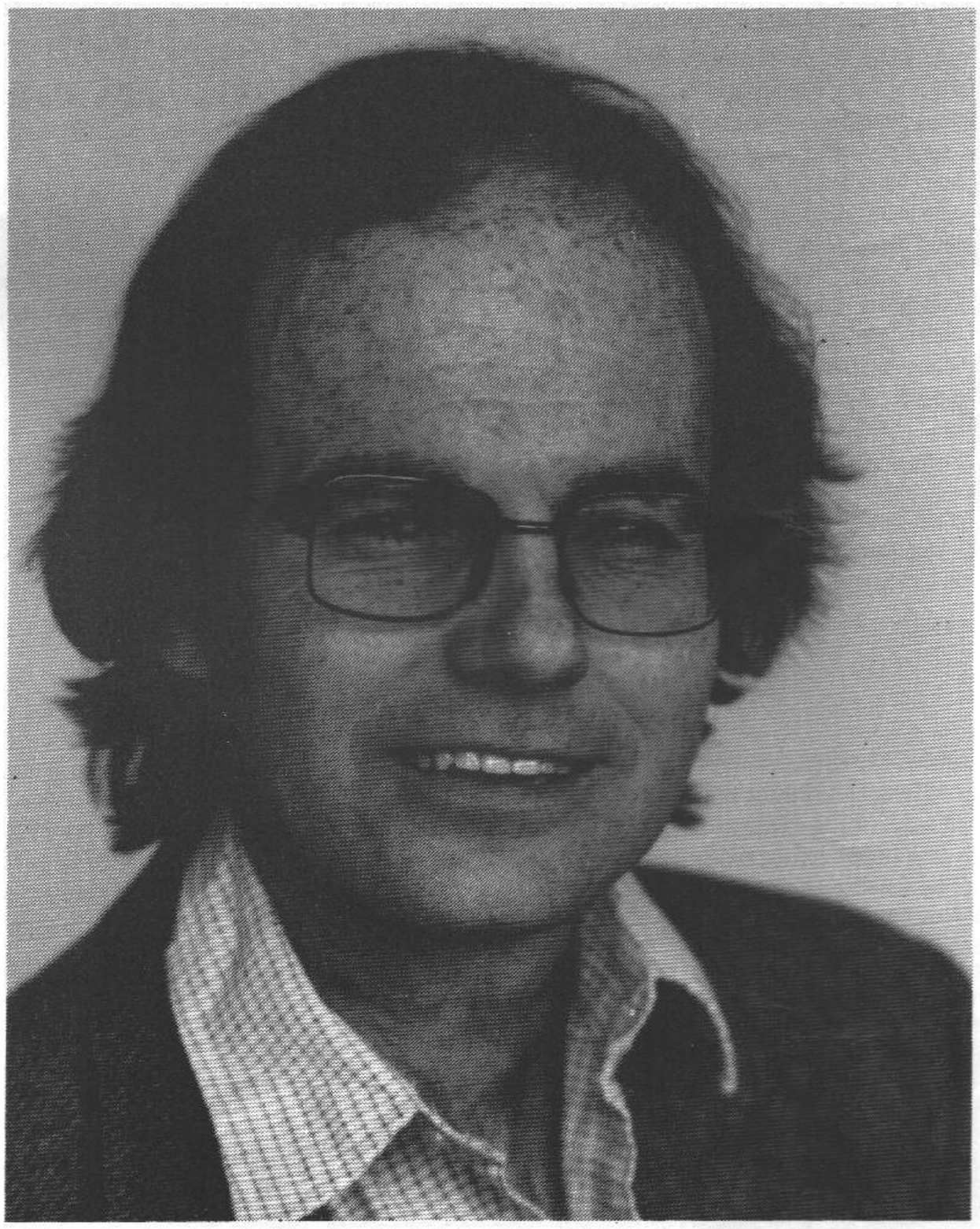
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'A VERY BRITISH COUP'



CHRIS MULLIN

"A Very British Coup" by Chris Mullin, published by Hodder and Stoughton, price £6.95p.

Chris Mullin's first novel is one that I suspect a number of people in the Labour Movement would love to have written. The theme is one of continuing and intense interest within the Left — would a future Labour Government be allowed by the ruling-class to carry out peacefully a genuinely socialist manifesto in what most people describe as a Parliamentary democracy?

Mullin's book is a first-rate, absorbing read which was, as they say, hard to put down. The build-up part was particularly gripping, ... but first an outline of the story.

The year is 1989. In March Britain elects a left-wing Labour Government led by a former steel-worker, Harry Perkins. The Government is elected on a programme which includes withdrawal of US bases and an end to the nuclear deterrent. Import-controls, public control of finance, including the pension and insurance funds, withdrawal from Europe and abolition of the House of Lords, the honours list and public schools. An agenda not unknown to us at present.

The reaction amongst the British Establishment — the senior civil servants, the press-barons and the intelligence service — is immediate. They conspire to bring down the Perkins Government.

In Washington the US President orders that Britain must be destablised "by all means short of landing the marines at Dover".

Ring of Truth

The way such elements set about planning their attack on the newly-elected Government has a definite ring of truth about it. Partly because of Chris Mullin's very careful research on locations — he seems to have had a good look around the Chancellor of the Exchequer's office — and partly because the enemies of democracy have already pulled most of the tricks described in the book.

Recent real Labour Governments, none of which could be called genuinely socialist, have had to suffer the runs on sterling, the investment strikes, the IMF blackmail and the campaigns of vilification in Fleet Street, which are all described in Mullin's book.

Now, if the ruling-class and its capitalist allies abroad will do those sort of things to mildly reformist governments, how much further will they go in trying to destroy a really socialist Labour Government with the political mandate and will to carry it out? I feel certain they would go a lot further than the measures described in the book. The run on sterling is overcome most ingeniously and even the power-workers' action, led by a CIA-backed right-wing union leader is seen off, so I doubt that a sex-scandal alone would have brought the downfall of Harry Perkin's government.

Anyway, read it and see what you think. It really is a most entertaining novel and I look forward to further books from the same author who has an easy style which cleverly combines fact and fiction. Not the least interesting aspect was trying to guess upon which real-life characters the fictional ones were based.

It must be remembered, of course, that this is a novel and not a political treatise. For what it is worth, my view is that a Harry Perkins-type socialist government would find itself being confronted not merely by sex-scandals but by the real threat of the military, armed and on the streets acting on some pretext about "preserving the British way of life".

Vital Questions

"A Very British Coup" might be only a novel, but it raises vital questions for the Labour Party. A truly socialist government is going to need the active support and political awareness of the working-class if we are ever to carry out a socialist transformation of society. Unless such support can be mobilised it would be foolish in the extreme to believe that such fundamental change could be achieved through Parliament alone.

If you don't believe such a statement then read the real quote in Chris Mullin's book which he takes from Sir Ian Gilmour, prominent Tory wet and former deputy Foreign Secretary who, in his own book, "Inside Right" wrote ... "Conservatives do not worship democracy. For them majority rule is a device ... and if it is leading to an end that is undesirable or inconsistent with itself, then there is a theoretical case for ending it."

We have been warned.

Tony Banks
Tooting CLP

PLUCKING BUZBY

Carol Turner, POEU delegate to Vauxhall CLP
Pete Cooper, POEU delegate to Battersea South CLP

THE GOVERNMENT HAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED its latest plans to sell telecommunications to the profit-hungry private sector. Legislation will be introduced in the autumn session of parliament to sell 51% of British Telecoms (BT), becoming operational after the next general election. This is the most recent of a whole series of denationalisational moves by this government.

Telecommunications is *the* most profitable world industry. Publicly-owned BT represents a source of big profits for private capital. The city is keen to get its hands on these enormous sums. Last year BT made a fat £450 million profit, currently ploughed back into recapitalisation and developing new systems and facilities. The *Financial Times* reckons that two-thirds of this profit — that's £300 million! — would be distributed to shareholders. Hence less money available for wages and for investment. Job loss is inevitable if these plans go ahead. Already Chairman of BT, Sir George Jefferson, has announced 25% "savings" over the next three years. This is just a taste of things to come.

SALE OF THE CENTURY

Of course, the Tory government would benefit too. Nobody knows quite how much BT is worth — it could be anything between £5-10 billion. Denationalising BT may well be the literal Sale of the Century. This money could come in very handy to finance the government's fastest-growing areas of public spending: unemployment and nuclear weapons.

This is not the only attack the government has made on Telecoms. You may already have noticed the private 'Telephone shops' which sprung up in many high-streets when last autumn saw the implementation of Thatcher's de-monopolisation legislation. But these shops are just the tip of the iceberg. Project Mercury is a consortium of private capital — British Petroleum, Cable and Wireless, and Barclays Bank — which is planning to develop a rival trunk network, for business subscribers only, between major British cities and internationally, including using BT satellites to the USA. This will help skim the cream from BT profits — it may also prove extremely useful as an alternative business network in the event of industrial action by the telecoms unions.

STEPS TO STOP THE PLANS

Discussions are going ahead on what steps can be taken to stop the Tory government's plans. The Post Office Engineering Union (POEU) has already decided to black any work interconnecting Project Mercury with the BT network. And a recent National Executive meeting decided to call a day's industrial action against the proposed denationalisation, to coincide with the opening of parliament in late October. Other plans by the NEC include a publicity campaign aimed at public opinion, and a campaign to get Tory, SDP and Liberal MPs committed against denationalisation. In addition, it's pledged to supporting the re-election of a Labour government which will drop such plans and nationalise Mercury.

So far, so good. But *Briefing* readers know full well the mistake of relying on persuading Tory MPs to vote against the interests they represent, the mistake of relying on a propaganda campaign aimed at changing public opinion, and the mistake of confusing a token day of action with a determined, on-going campaign which actively involves the trade union rank and files as well as the broader sections of the labour movement.

These issues have yet to be debated and resolved inside the unions concerned. The POEU Broad Left has begun discussing what's to be done to strengthen the already-proposed official campaign. Local joint union committees (called BTUCs — British Telecoms Union Committees) are moving into action too. Our own, covering the Inner South London area, has started a 'Don't Pluck Busby' campaign inside the membership, with leaflets, stickers, posters and so on. Local workplace meetings are being organised to ensure all the members are aware of, and behind, the need for a big fight to save our jobs and our industry.

CAMPAIGN BY THE UNIONS

The campaign by the unions is a vital, but not the only, component of a successful fight against denationalisation. We need the active support of other unions and of the Labour Party rank and file. Labour MPs of all shades are already publicly committed against the Tory proposals, and the front bench has promised to make them an election issue. The Labour Party rank and file must ensure that this commitment is turned into consistent activity, and doesn't rest at a declaration in the next Labour manifesto.

Briefing readers, as Labour activists and as trade union members, can support the campaign right now. Here's what *you* can do:

- *Invite a speaker to your LP and trade union branch;*
- *Pass resolutions in your trade union branch supporting the proposed industrial action and calling on your NEC to do likewise;*
- *Get your union branch to contact the local telecoms unions branches offering to support the campaign;*
- *Get your ward/GC to pass a resolution supporting the LP commitment to renationalising BT without compensation and calling on the LP nationally to take action in support of the unions' campaign.*

If you want more information, or if you want to be put in touch with your local telecoms union branches, you can contact us by writing to 29 Stodmarsh House, Cowley Estate, SW9 or by phoning Carol on 582 3667, Pete on 622 7000. The unions involved are: Post Office Engineering Union, Union of Communications Workers, Civil and Public Servants Association, Society of Civil and Public Servants, and Society of Post Office Engineers.

CONFERENCE

LONDON: AS IT MIGHT BE

OCTOBER 2nd–3rd COUNTY HALL

London As It Is . . .

London has the air of a city in decline. The population has been falling for some time. Factories have been closing. Traditional jobs such as working on the docks have almost disappeared.

The bus and underground system is being run down as a result of Lord Denning's ruling that public transport must 'pay its way'.

It is the same with education. Schools are being closed. Classes are often too big. Nursery and pre-school play provision is woefully inadequate.

Fewer new houses are built today than at any time since the last war. Council house starts have virtually been stopped. Councils are being forced to sell their housing stock whatever the overall needs of the area. Yet at the same time thousands of construction workers are unemployed.

All of this affects London as a place to live. A hopelessly inadequate public transport system turns parts of London into one large traffic jam, with all the noise, stress, aggravation and lead pollution that this means. Unemployment, damp and expensively heated housing and a lack of social and recreational facilities add up to all the reasons why people are moving out, if they can afford to.

London As It Might Be . . .

Clearly all these problems are not going to be solved overnight. Yet there must be some way that London could be better organised

To bring about the kind of society which we would like to see will require the conscious action of many people, whether as workers, tenants, housewives, pensioners, passengers or patients. We are all affected by many decisions taken on our behalf.

If you would like to get together with like-minded people, who are also sympathetic to the ideas in this leaflet, why not come along to an open conference on 'popular planning for London' to be held on 2-3 October at County Hall.

For further details of this event fill in the form below.

Name. . . . . .

Address. . . . . .

and return to Charlie Owen
41 Brunswick Square London WC1.

Police Accountability Group has Phone Tapped

East End police monitoring group CAPA (Community Alliance for Police Accountability) suspects that its telephone calls are being tapped. While trying to dial out from the office, CAPA staff member Vicki Carter heard a recording of a telephone conversation which she had held only moments before with a police officer at a local police station. Not only was she able to hear her own conversation, but also derogatory comments made over the recording about the subject of that conversation.

CAPA's reation to this extraordinary incident was one of outrage. They had suspected for some time that their calls were being tapped as their phone showed all the known symptoms of tapping (frequent inability to obtain lines in or out, crackling noises on the line, incoming calls being faintly audible for the initial 10-15 seconds, then becoming clear after a clicking noise is heard on the line, etc). Knowing that contacting the police or the GPO on this would be fruitless, CAPA sought advice from the Labour MP for Bethnal Green and Bow, Ian Mikardo. His reaction has been to table a Parliamentary Question to the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, in which he asks when the tapping of CAPA's phone was authorised and for what purpose. He has also issued a press release to the same effect, which has resulted in coverage of the incident by Thames TV 6pm News, BBC Nationwide and local newspapers. A Scotland Yard spokesperson was unable to comment on the incident, but added that any complaint would be fully investigated.

GROWING DISSATISFACTION

CAPA began in May 1981, the first police monitoring group in London, and operates from Oxford House, Derbyshire St., E2, covering the borough of Tower Hamlets. It was created in response to the community's growing dissatisfaction with policing methods within the borough, especially with abuses of police powers and the lack of any democratic accountability for police behaviour. CAPA's overall aim is to help create a locally accountable police force in London. In furthering that aim, it monitors the activities of police forces operating in the borough, gathering detailed information on polices in general and behaviour in particular and feeding that information to local councillors, MP's and the GLC Police Committee. A 24-hour emergency service provides legal advice and assistance to those detained by the police or wanting to bring a complaint against the police.

If CAPA's suspicions are well-founded, and their phone is being tapped, the implications are more than merely sinister on a political level. In providing advice and assistance on legal matters, CAPA liaises between clients and solicitors to whom they have been referred. Discussion of evidence and potential defences in pending criminal trials may frequently take place over the phone. The interception of such information by those preparing the case for the prosecution would be more than an invasion of privacy. 'If the defence were to employ such measures against the police and the state prosecutors they would without doubt be charged with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice' (Tony Bunyan, The Political Police in Britain)

Chris Robinson

24 HOURS A DAY 7 DAYS A WEEK

★ *If you or a friend is arrested:*
CAPA
provides a 24 hours emergency advice service and can:–

give free legal advice
help you get legal representation
help you lodge a complaint

★ *CAPA works with:–*
students in schools and colleges
individuals tenants youth clubs

SRI LANKA
TAMIL NATIONALISTS SENTENCED TO DEATH

Two Tamil youths, Kuttimani and Jegen, have been sentenced to death in Sri Lanka. This is the latest of a series of repressive measures against the Tamil Nation by successive governments in Sri Lanka. In the last five years Tamils speaking people have been subjected to two Pogroms — August 1977 and August 1981, in which hundreds of innocent Tamils were attacked and their property looted. Tamil plantation workers in the Tea plantations are denied citizenship and civic rights although most of them have lived and worked in Sri Lanka all their life.

In the recent past a growing number of Tamil youths have begun to organise themselves in order to resist these attacks, and to fight for a separate state of Eelam in the traditional homelands of Tamils in Sri Lanka. The government has responded with increased repression and the enactment of draconian legislation such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act which enables the Minister of defence to hold any person suspected of a criminal offence to be held in custody for a period of 18 months, in any place he determines, without the Courts having the power to supervise the conditions in which they are held.

Kuttimani and Jegen were arrested in April '81 and held incommunicado for a long period until a Habeas corpus application was held. This year they were charged with the murder of a policeman and their convictions were based almost entirely on 'confessions' obtained by the Army and the police whilst in custody. The trial judge dismissed the very weighty evidence that they had been tortured by the Army and the Police and these 'confessions' were not made voluntarily as 'improbable' despite the fact that everyone in Sri Lanka knows that the Police usually use third degree methods on suspects, whether they are Sinhala or Tamil. These two youths were also denied Jury trial, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The trial judge however admitted that these two youths were held in a 'lonely place, without access to friends, relatives or lawyers' and 'amidst armed and unarmed soldiers'. But he concluded that the Prevention of Terrorism Act does not permit him to disallow the 'confessions' for those reasons.

They have now appealed against their sentence; and if the Appeal Court affirms these sentences it will further heighten the tensions between the Tamil and Sinhala Communities. The right wing United National Party government is seeking to divert the attention of the working class and other oppressed people from the massive attacks on their living standards and democratic rights by whipping up Sinhala racialism.

We appeal to all those who cherish democratic rights to voice their opposition to these hangings by sending Telegrams to Mr. J.R. Jayawardene, The President, President's House, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka.

* Stop the hangings of Kuttimani and Jegen
* Release all political prisoners
* Repeal the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act

SRI LANKA RESEARCH AND INFORMATION GROUP, 9, Grays Inn Buildings, Rosebery Avenue, London EC1.

SOUTH AFRICA:

BLACK MEDIA WORKERS RESIST

THE MEDIA Workers' Association of South Africa (MWASA) is an independent, unregistered union of black workers in South Africa's media industry. It was preceded by the Union of Black Journalists – which, together with 19 other black consciousness organisations, was banned by the government in 1977, and by the Writers' Association of South Africa (WASA).

The journalists in MWASA see themselves as black activists first and journalists second, and describe their task as 'commitment journalism' – to aid the struggle for national liberation by making it their business to express the ideals and aspirations of the black majority. They believe that it is not in the interests of the so-called liberal press in South Africa, by whom most of them are employed, to tell the truth about the condition of oppression, and that the objectivity of the press is a myth.

In October 1980 they changed the name of the union from WASA to MWASA – and to open membership to all unorganised black workers in the media industry. Since then they have published a monthly tabloid called KWASA and sub-tiltled 'Voice of the Workers'. In its eight pages they carry news of interest to all workers including those organised outside their own union and in other independent trade unions with which they work in cooperation. They have initiated debates on some of the key issues affecting the organisation of black workers under the present political conditions. Among these are questions such as the democratic control of the unions by the workers, the relation of a trade union to community-based organisations in a society in which unionists are exploited as workers and oppressed as a people, and on whether unions registered under apartheid laws can fight in the interests of the workers. It is no surprise that MWASA has come under increasing attack from the government. Addressing itself to these attacks, the June issue of KWASA stated:

"Four prominent members of MWASA were detained by Security Police this month. It seems to be another vicious attempt by the State to crack down on MWASA. An unknown number of other trade unionists are also still in detention. Hardly a single black trade union has not suffered at one time or another under this onalsught.

"Former MWASA president Zwelakhe Sisulu was recently held in detention for 251 days. Emma Mashinini, general secretary of the Commercial, Catering, and Allied Workers' Union, Samson Ndou, president of the General and Allied Workers' Union, and Rita Ndzanga, its organising secretary, spent more than five months in detention.

"The list is endless. Thozamile Gqweta (president), Sam Kikine (general secretary), and Sisa Njikalana (national organiser) of the South African Allied Workers Union are detained regularly.

"The secretary of the South African Black Municipal Workers' Union, Philip Dlamini, was also detained this month. Then came MWASA's turn – Joe Thloloe, Mathata Tsedu, Quraish Patel and Vas Soni.

"The recent spate of detentions is a futile attempt to crush the growing resistance to the repugnant policies of the government. The reason is simple. This struggle does not depend on individuals, but on the whole nation.

"Detentions are the only alternative left to the State after the Wiehahn Commission's proposals – a subtle attempt to gain control over the black workforce – were unceremoniously rejected. The State has now run out of patience to control the labour movement through 'reforms'. And, because more and more unregistered unions are gaining a strong foothold in the factories, direct repression is the only answer.

"There is also a growing alliance between unions and community organisations. It cannot be otherwise – the State has silenced other channels of political expression. Some unions, like MWASA, have openly taken an anti-apartheid stand. The reason for this emerging alliance between unions and community organisations is the growing realisation that the struggles in the factory and the struggles in the community are closely linked.

"Low wages, for instance, are a direct result of the limited education opportunities available to blacks and the minimum wage scales determined by parliament. Unions are therefore beginning to confront political issues head-on.

"The struggle for proper housing, lower rents and adequate community facilities is ultimately a political struggle. MWASA recognises and accepts this – 'to engage in activities that would benefit the black community' is thus one of the aims entrenched in our constitution.

"Is this why MWASA has suffered such constant harassment and intimidation from the State? Is this why MWASA presidents Sisulu, Mtimkulu and Nqakula have been banned in such rapid succession? Is this the reason behind the spate of detentions of MWASA members this month? It is too much of a coincidence not to be.

"But we in MWASA refuse to be intimidated. Our cause is a just one – a government which is based on the interests of workers".

SUPPORT THE MEDIA WORKERS OF SOUTH AFRICA (MWASA) and its monthly newspaper KWASA – the voice of the black workers in South Africa.

The banning or detention of a MWASA member means in most cases that a family loses a breadwinner.

Send donations to. MWASA Support Fund, c/o Briefing, 23 Leghorn Road, London NW10.

International

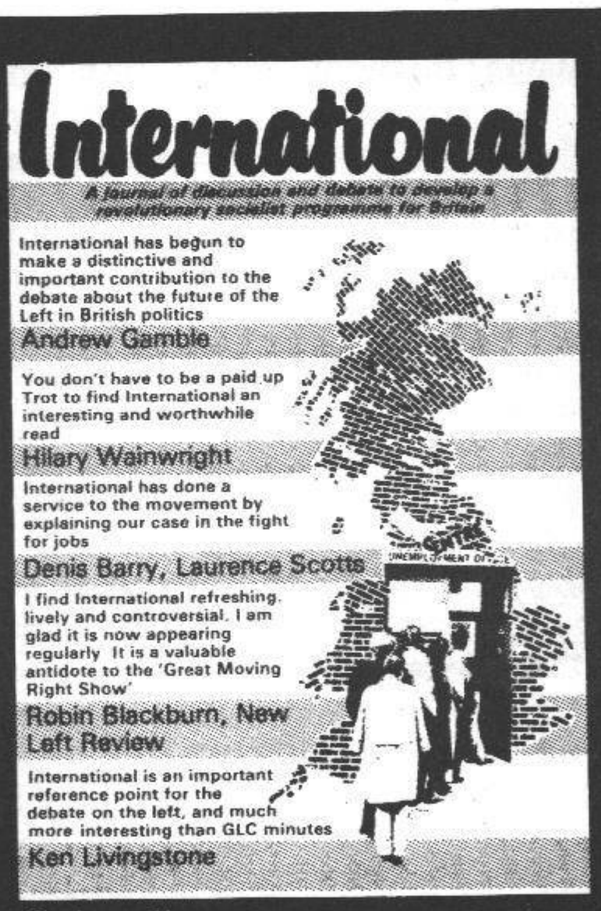
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Kingsway Princeton College, Sidmouth St, off Grays Inn Road, London WC1. A weekend discussing a socialist programme for the British crisis.

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- **John Harrison** on the British economic disaster
- **John Ross** on the break-up of British politics
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Dear Labour Briefing,
May I first congratulate you on the article "Palestine the forgotten issue". However the letter by Rosella Whelan (July 1982) is not only the product of a faulty memory but is typical of the deceitful zionist propaganda which the Labour Party has been swallowing since Ramsey MacDonald issued "The Black Letter".

Firstly she refers to "The Palestine mandate", I can only assume she means the British government mandate which aided and abetted the zionist movement in the suppression of Palestinian nationalism and the destruction of Palestine. Furthermore one of the avowed aims of the Histadrut was, "the conquest of Hebrew labour," i.e. the exclusion of 'non-Jews'. Palestinian Arab labourers did and do work in the groves for considerably less then Jewish workers. In fact then as now citriculture was primarily in the hands of private enterprise (although most Jewish owned citrus was marketed co-operatively, a subtle but importance difference). The Israeli Histadrut still seeks the exclusion of Palestinian labour. In 1936 Ms Whelan must have been resident in British mandate Palestine when Palestinian workers were burned alive in a hut in Petah Tikvah area by Histadrut 'protesters'. In the same year Jewish socialists protesting against zionist apartheid were attacked by Histadrut demonstrators in Tel Aviv.

As for 'introducing democracy' the Histadrut withheld membership to Palestinians in Israel until the mid 1960's. Israel may claim to be a democracy yet it is first and foremost a Jewish state affording privileges accordingly. Why is it that on the executive of the Histadrut, which has over one hundred members, not one Palestinian has a seat? Yet Palestinians living in Israel form 17% of the population and 20% of the labour force employed in the worst paid and least secure sector of the economy. Why do Histadrut owned companies (the Histadrut owns more than 25% of Israel's industry including arms manufacturers) allow 'illegal' Palestinian child slave labour to be employed? Why does the Histadrut control 25,000 acres of citrus stolen from Palestinians in 1948? Why does the Histadrut finance settlements in the occupied territories of West Bank, Gaza Strip, and the Syrian Golan Heights, where 30% of the land and 40% of the water has been stolen? Democracy? Yes, the same democracy which Reagan's administration has allowed the people of El Salvador to experience. Interestingly Israel supplies El Salvador with 'advisors' and at the personal request of Reagan 'loaned' El Salvador $23 million last year.

The final paragraph of Ms Whelans' letter scarcely deserves a reply. The PLO is dedicated to the founding of a democratic secular state where people can live regardless of their religious/ethnic affiliation. Israel has been condemned by the UN in formal resolutions more times than any other state, including South Africa. The PLO observed the cease-fire on the Lebanese border despite Israel's constant bombing raids of refugee camps and Arab towns. Only when Israel bombed and invaded on June 6th did the PLO retaliate, causing no civilian casualties.

Ms Whelan, 'as a traditional Jewess', may 'thank the almighty' for the butchery carried out by the Israel regime. So does Mr Begin.

Yours Faithfully
Jim Lister (Hamilton CLP)

Dear Comrades,
Once again comrades in the Labour Party are in danger of polarising an issue to which there are rights and wrongs on both sides. As a socialist and a zionist I can only say that Tony Greenstein's 'Holocaust in Lebanon' (August edition) was as much one-sided as any article in the 'Jewish Chronicle'. It is impossible in the short space available to respond fully to this article but particular attention is drawn to the following:

1. Equating zionism with Nazism is a cheap platitude, unworthy of the Labour Party and certainly shows a lack of understanding of the facts of the case (unless you have a selective view of "the Facts"). I know of no Israelis who wish to "...wipe out whole Palestinian communities in Lebanon".

2. Don't judge the whole population by its leaders. A rally recently held in Tel Aviv against the Lebanese invasion was attended by 60,000 people. In a country of about three million this is equivalent of one million attending a rally against the South Atlantic war (CND are over the moon when ¼ million get to Hyde Park!).

3. Nobody really knows the extent of the death and destruction the fighting in Lebanon has caused and figures of 10,000 dead are no more meaningful than the 500 Tony Greenstein says the 'Jewish Chronicle' is asserting. Once again selecting one side's propaganda over the other leads to a loss of perspective and ignores the real issues affecting the mass of Middle Eastern people.

In a recent resolution, the Twickenham CLP identified, amongst the issues, the need for mutual recognition of Palestinians and Israelis. Such recognition must be the first step towards reaching a socialist solution for these people. I agree entirely with Tony Greenstein's concluding sentiments but the way forward must be for the Labour Party to build a Labour Committee on Palestine and Israel and not to bolster the polarisation that already exists. This only aids the interests of the superpowers and reactionary regimes of the area.

yours fraternally,
Rob Markless, Twickenham CLP

Dear Comrades,
I am writing in response to the article entitled 'A Witchhunters Charter' in the August briefing.

One of the hallmarks of Putney CLP's reputation as a left wing constituency has been the general openness of our debates. The contributors did a disservice to that reputation: confused the GMC might be; sinister it is not.

The motion debated and agreed by a large majority at the GMC pinpointed many of the worries in the Party that we are losing political power permanently. While differences in the Party can, and should be debated it is also vital that our common purpose should show through. Naive unity which papers over the cracks may be misplaced; unity which draws on our basic comradeship and fraternity is not. The article in question illustrated the ease with which vicious and uncomradely accusation can lead to needless acrimony at a local level.

Putney does have a long history of commitment to furthering democracy in the Labour Party. We have consistently supported the CLPD motions on constitutional change and submitted a motion on the same subject to this year's Women's Conference.

During the debate on motions for annual conference the motion on changes in the organisation of the Women's conference was overwhelmingly supported and then came second in the final vote to prioritise one motion. This was not sinister, but open and democratic debate.

I hope all members will support our decision in the knowledge that it is a genuine attempt to improve and advance the atmosphere of comradeship within the Party.
Yours Fraternally
Lindsay Thomas
(Secretary Putney Labour Party)

CAST PRESENTS NEW VARIETY

New Varieity came to life in January 1982 when CAST – a socialist theatre group – realised its ambition to open venues where black artistes, revolutionaries, poets, women who are all these things, new style street variety acts, theatre groups, bands and anything that sounded or looked like New Variety could appear.

The acts must be paid, the presentation professional and the audience, while paying an affordable ticket, must get value.

But most of all it was CAST's wish to hold the door open for political and social expression – in fact encourage it in the environs of London where it is most needed.

We underwrote the experiment with our labour and our Arts Council of Great Britain grant (much to their chagrin).

New Variety is a great success. We asked for £85,000 from the GLC to do it in one big leap. The County Hall types got it down to £4,000 and Tony Banks overruled them to give us £25,000.

Come to the shows – your support is welcome and vital. More important, bring your contacts and friends.

Every Thursday 8.30pm At the BUSH HOTEL, Shepherds Bush Green, Goldhawk Road W12.
Every Friday 8.30pm At the OLD WHITE HORSE, 261 Brixton Road, SW9.
Every Saturday 8.30pm At the CRICKLEWOOD PUB, Cricklewood Broadway, NW2.
Every Sunday 8pm At the BRABART ROAD CENTRE, 2a Brabart Road, Wood Green N22.
For enquiries phone 487 3440.

HEALTH WORKERS MUST WIN

AFTER nearly five months health service trade unionists are becoming more and more impatient with the official union policy of action in dribs and drabs.

The pay campaign started on March 23 with a half-day strike and lobby of the Regional Health Authority in Manchester. The settlement date was April 1. NUPE conference voted for all-out strike action with emergency cover on May 24.

Yet the Tories, who could find extra millions so easily for the Falklands war, are still telling us that not a penny more can be found for health workers and indeed that some of the present 6%-7.5% offer must be paid for by service cuts.

Shop stewards from some ten hospitals in London have started holding regular joint meetings. We have.

* Worked to establish continuous daily picket lines at an increasing number of hospitals,

* Jointly with the national Health Workers for the Full Claim' group, lobbied the TUC Health Services Committee on August 26,

* Sent a contingent to lobby the TUC on September 9,

* Decided to mobilise for September 22.

In Islington, a Health Workers' Pay Campaign – set up by the NHS unions, other unions (mainly council workers), and the Labour Party – was able to organise a day of solidarity strike action in the borough on September 3. This should be a model for other areas.

A general strike on September 22 – for our 12% claim, for working-class solidarity, against the Tories' anti-union laws and against the government – can set us on the road to victory. We need the active support of every Labour Party member and trade unionist.

* London Health Service Joint Shop Stewards' Committee. contact Ron Lynn, St Thomas's Hospital, 928 9292 x 2305.



Photo by John Arthur

Pickets outside, DHSS, Elephant and Castle.

* Health Workers for the Full Claim. contact Andrea Campbell, Hackney Hospital, 533 1525,

* Islington Health Workers' Pay Campaign. contact Syed Boukhari, Whittington Hospital 263 2069, or Jeremy Corbyn, 340 9069.

COLIN KENNY,
ASTMS, St Mary's Hospital W2.

SEPTEMBER 22
DAY OF ACTION
ASSEMBLE 11.30 am —
JUBILEE GARDENS, SE1
RALLY AT HYDE PARK 2 pm

TAKE OUT A SUBSCRIPTION

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Send to Graham Bash, 23 Leghorn Road, London NW10.

Next London Briefing Meeting
Monday October 4th, 7.30pm at County Hall "After Conference, What Now?"

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIALIST COUNCILLORS FOUNDING CONFERENCE

SPEAKERS INCLUDE: KEN LIVINGSTONE (LEADER GLC)
COUNCILLOR MARGARET HODGE (LEADER ISLINGTON COUNCIL)
COUNCILLOR JOHN PLANT (NEWHAM COUNCIL)
COUNCILLOR TED KNIGHT (LEADER OF LAMBETH'S LABOUR OPPOSITION)
CHAIR: ARTHUR LATHAM (CHAIR OF LONDON LABOUR PARTY)

SATURDAY 9th OCTOBER 1982

CAMDEN TOWN HALL, EUSTON ROAD, WC1
11.00pm to 4.00pm

DELEGATES FEE £5
OPEN TO ALL LABOUR COUNCILLORS AND CO-OPTEES AND TO DELEGATES FROM G.M.C.S.

Credentials from: Flat C, 155 Green Lanes, London N16 9DB.

London Labour Briefing Conference Meeting
"Our Struggle for Power"
Sunday 26th September, 7.30pm
Claremont Hotel, 270 North Promenade, Blackpool.
Speakers: Amdiaya (General Secretary, Working Peoples Alliance of Guyana); Margaret Beckett (prospective parliamentary candidate, Derby South); Ann Bliss (Lewisham Councillor); Lesley Lee (Brighton Briefing); Valerie Wise (GLC Councillor). Chair: Janet Pickering.

Deadline for articles for next issue: Saturday October 9th.
Next issue due out: Friday October 22nd

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