LONDON LABOUR 30p
BRIEFING
No24 NOVEMBER 1982

DON'T MOURN —ORGANISE!

The Blackpool Conference's decision to set up the register must be confronted head on. We simply have no choice. What is at stake goes far beyond the question of the Militant. Were the register to become fully effective, as its architects intend, the consequent process of expulsion of socialists would acquire a logic and momentum of its own. It would pose a threat to ANY organised socialist presence in the Labour Party. It would signal a major shift to the right in the balance of power within the party. And it would undermine all of the advances—in terms both of policy and constitutional advance—which we have won over the last three years.

The time to fight is NOW, before the right are given a chance to consolidate their strength unopposed. How far will the new right-wing NEC go in pursuing expulsions? This does not just depend on the NEC balance of power as between supporters of Foot (who presumably wants to expel about 80) and the camp of Healey and Golding (who would no doubt love to expel thousands of us). It depends on the extent and the speed of reaction from ourselves in our constituency parties and trade union branches. Already BRIEFING supporters have been active in ensuring the maximum possible number of resolutions from London CLPs warning that they will tolerate NO EXPULSIONS arising from the Conference decision. The NEC may well be prepared to shut down a dozen or so parties throughout the country. They will think twice before shutting down a hundred. The CLPs have made it abundantly clear that by an overwhelming majority they oppose the register. This must now be translated into determined resistance to expulsions. The October 30th conference called for this purpose on the initiative of Hackney North CLP is an important and welcome first step, from which we must now develop an ongoing campaign.

MILITANT'S APPLICATION

The pressures against us will be enormous. One factor which may appear to undermine us from the start is the decision of Militant itself to apply for registration. Doesn't this pull the rug from under the feet of those of us attempting to organise a collective boycott? BRIEFING appreciates the very specific pressures which the Militant comrades must feel under. But we regret the decision. No doubt the comrades feel that they have no choice, given the prevailing balance of forces as between the Labour leadership and themselves. We believe that they would give themselves more choice if they were to cease acting unilaterally and instead combine their forces with those of the rest of us—Marxists and non-Marxists alike—who genuinely support them in this particular fight. We appeal to the comrades to do just that, in their interests and ours.

RESPECT FOR CONFERENCE

Secondly, we are under pressure from those who say to us: "Has not Conference decided in favour of the register? And shouldn't we feel bound by that decision, however much we disagree?" That argument weighs heavily enough with us as far as it goes, but here as everywhere there are limits. NO constitution can survive the strains placed upon it if those who happen to form the majority at any one time choose to use that majority, not merely to defeat the minority's political positions, but to expel that minority from the organisation. Such measures simply preclude the possibility of rational political discussion and debate. They would make a mockery of any constitutional procedures at all. For our part, we in BRIEFING are quite willing to respect the sovereignty of Annual Conference as the supreme "parliament" of our movement—but not to the extent of colluding in our own expulsion from the Labour Party itself. This is what is posed now—the right are simply abusing the temporary advantage they have won, and everyone knows that after Militant, BRIEFING will be one of the first targets on their list.

We will not comply. The model response in our view is that made by the G.L.C. BRIEFING group, whose trenchant reply to Jim Mortimer's enquiries we reprint on page two. BRIEFING itself has yet to write to Mr. Mortimer, but when we do it will be in similar vein. The new NEC must be challenged head on. We call on all our supporters in London and beyond to ensure that resistance is immediate, organised and intransigent.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Heresy-Hunt — Who's next?

By Ernie Roberts

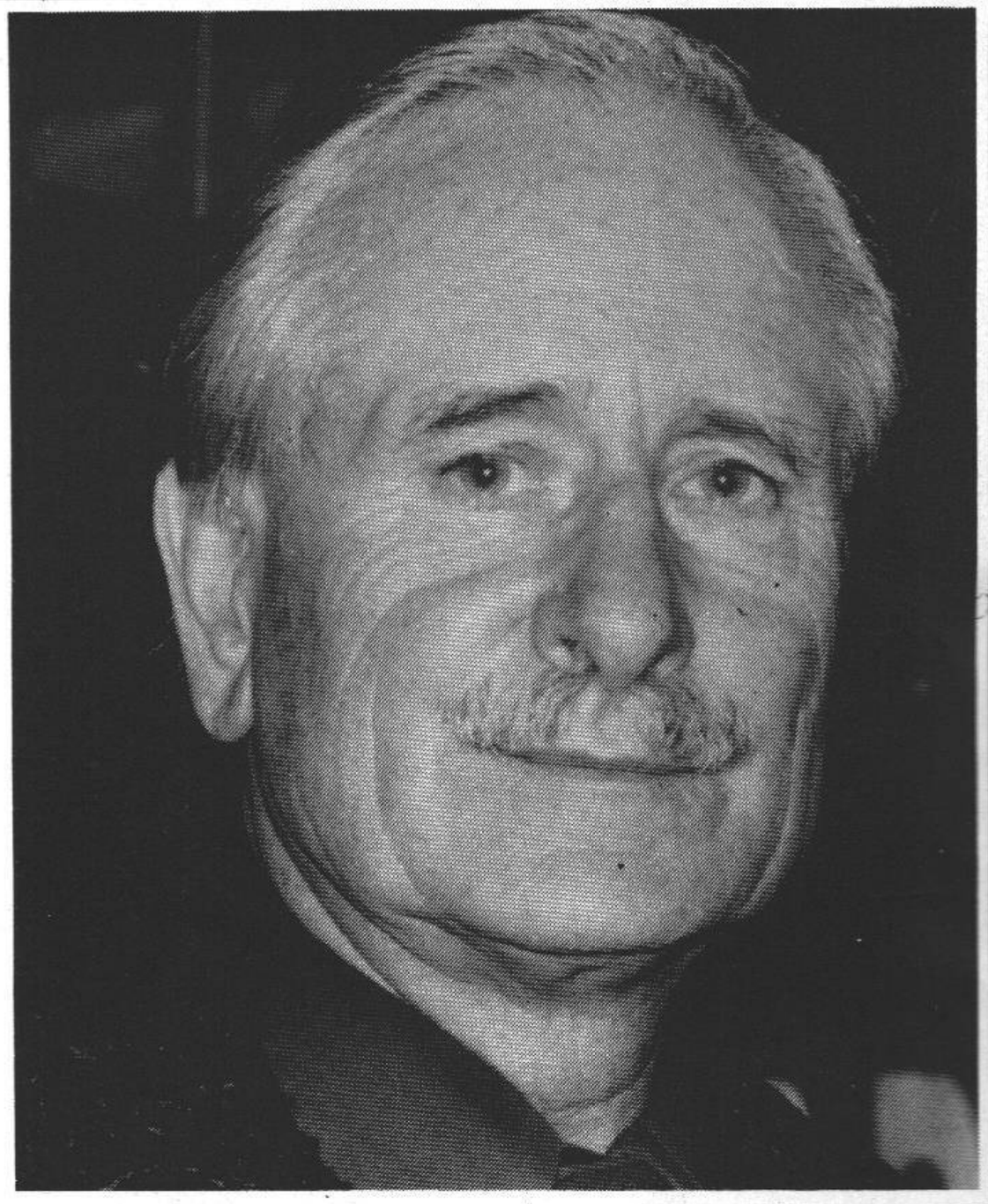
The real danger of the heresy-hunt is not only to the Militant Tendency but to the Socialist decisions taken in Conference — decisions on withdrawal from the EEC, unilateralism, re-selection of MPs, election of the Party leader, etc. — and to all genuine socialists in the Party.

These attacks from the right wing, both of the Party and the trade unions, are using the Militant Tendency as an excuse for conducting a witch-hunt in the Party; whilst beginning with Militant Tendency, the witch-hunt will then be widened to encompass all critics — who are called militants — in the Labour Party and the trade unions. This will include the Young Socialists, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, and those militant socialists in the Parliamentary Party, including the Tribune Group and the new group of Left MPs.

It will include such socialists as Tony Benn, Joan Maynard, Martin Flannery, all of whom have given a lifetime of effort to the struggle for socialism.

This fight is for the socialist heart of the Party, for Clause 4, and democratic accountability and control. To misquote Pastor Niemuller — first they will expel the Militant Tendency, then they will come for the Young Socialists, then the Tribunites ... and then all militant socialists. If you do not speak out, they will come for you!

Come and speak out at the Conference against the witch-hunt, initiated by Hackney North CLP on 30th October at County Hall in London.



A Letter To Jim Mortimer

Dear Mr Mortimer ,

GLC BRIEFING

Our organisation has been in existence since the Labour victory on the GLC in May 1981. It is a caucus of left members of the Labour Group on the GLC and includes the leadership of both the GLC and ILEA. We have held a meeting to discuss registration and we have decided:

i) We will not register our organisation.

ii) We will not open our meetings to any member of the Party.

iii) We will not let you have our constitution.

iv) We will not let you have copies of our accounts.

v) We will not tell you if we receive any money from abroad.

On behalf of GLC Briefing I look forward to your reply,

Yours fraternally,

ANDY HARRIS

Treasurer/Convenor

LARC opposition

At its Annual General Meeting in June this year, the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign resolved to ballot its membership on whether the Campaign should apply to be included on the National Executive Committee's register of non-affiliated groups within the Labour Party.

The result of the ballot is now known: LARC's members voted overwhelmingly against registration, thereby supporting the views of the AGM that registration would render LARC totally ineffective as a campaign.

67% of the membership returned ballot papers, 87% of which were opposed to registration.

The General Secretary of the Labour Party has been informed of LARC's decision.

FIGHT TORIES ~ NOT SOCIALISTS

Following up the impressive Labour Movement's conference FIGHT THE TORIES NOT THE SOCIALISTS at Wembley on 11th September, the Steering Committee which was elected at the Conference to resist moves to expel comrades from the Party, held its first meeting at County Hall on Tuesday October 5th.

The Committee discussed various proposals and suggestions as to how the campaign against the Witch-hunt of the LEFT should proceed. The most urgent proposal arose out of the deliberations of the specially convened meeting of the London Labour Briefing comrades on October 4th, where it was suggested that a model resolution should be forwarded and submitted to the CLPs. The resolution ran as follows:

This CLP resolves:

1. to resist any expulsions arising out of the decision of the Annual Conference at Blackpool to establish a Register of political groups

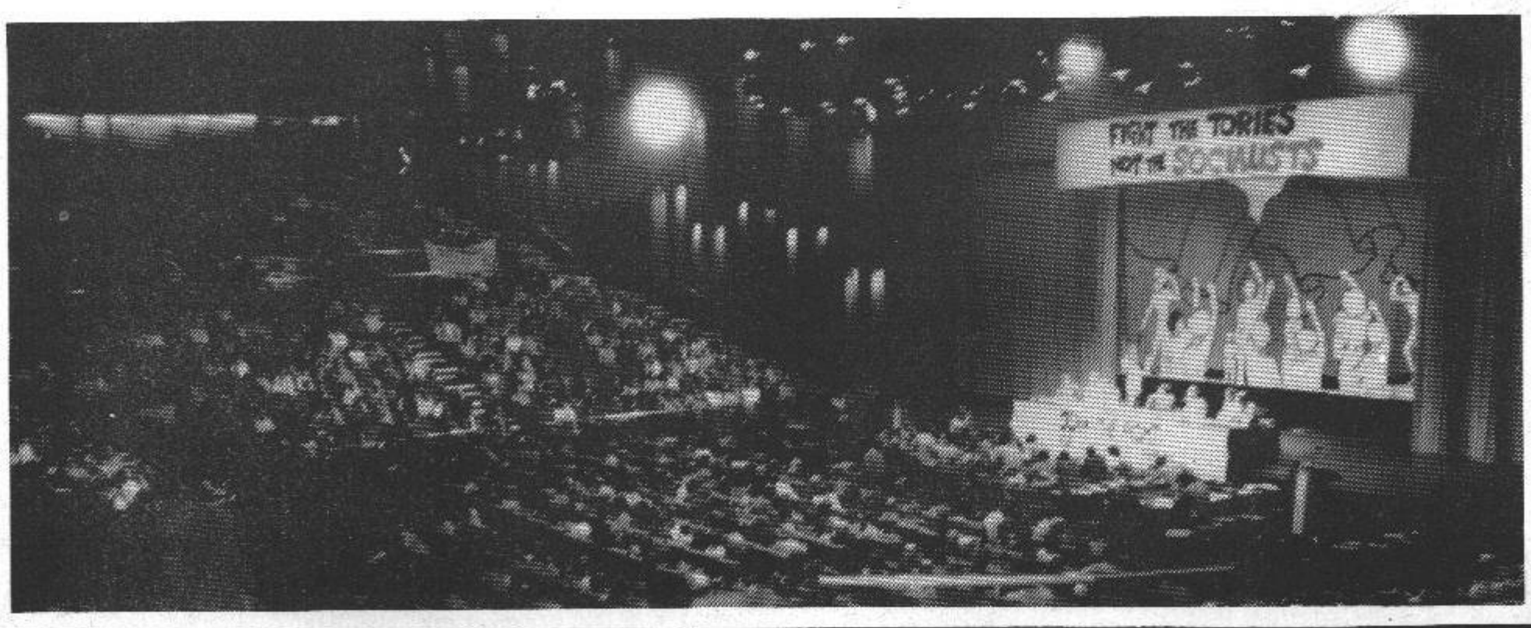
2. to send delegates to the October 30th Conference of CLPs Against the Witch-hunt.

It also asked the comrades on the Regional Executive of the Greater London Labour Party to move a resolution seeking to support the Conference of October 30th. The resolution was accepted.

The Steering Committee decided to organise one day rallies and conferences against the witch-hunt to be held simultaneously on November 27th at London, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Bradford, Liverpool, Cardiff, Brighton, Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester. Regional steering committees to be set up to organise and do the preparatory work.

Terrence O'Neill, President of the Bakers Union — the Joint-Chairperson of the Steering Committee — stressed the utmost need to leave aside differences about the tactics which should not be allowed to confuse the central issue of total opposition to all expulsions on the Labour Left. Only a united Left — devoid of the sectarian squabblings — can mount a strong and effective campaign against the witch-hunt and expulsions.

Vidya Anand
Ilford South CLP



FIGHTING BACK AFTER BLACKPOOL

There is bound to be a General Election in the next twelve months, unless Mrs Thatcher boxes herself in and opts for Spring 1984. So what is the future for the left in the Labour Party, after Blackpool and before the election? We must define clear objectives, and establish organisational structures that will enable them to be realised.

First, we must win back control of the National Executive Committee. Anyone on the left who denies that we need to organise to do this, after this year's events at Blackpool, just can't be taken seriously. The right wing gains are particularly tragic given that it will be *this* NEC elected in 1982 that will probably determine the content of the party's General Election manifesto, along with the Shadow Cabinet. We must not give them the chance to inflict further damage on the party's policies by fudging and hedging.

Second, we must recognise that our objectives are both organisational and ideological; and that to achieve them, we need new forms of organisation that will really begin breaking moulds. That is why the new grouping in Parliament, announced at the Tribune rally at conference, is so important. In my view the new grouping must *not* be just a Parliamentary group of like-minded MPs. We should invite sympathetic CLPs and the broad lefts of trade unions to send delegates to our meetings – in that way breaking down the exclusive Parliamentarianism of the Labour left, and ending the domination of decision-making on the left by a small group of people, most of whom are MPs and nearly all of whom live in London.

Third, we must recognise that in order to win support for specific policies or objectives, we need to change thinking and shift the ideology of the Labour Movement, particularly in the trade unions and the PLP. The Movement is now incredibly weak in terms of its relationship to commonly held ideas in the working class. Thus, support for extensions of public ownership among working class voters has been declining for 30 years; support for the trade unions has been declining similarly; and racism and sexism abound. If we are to gain more leverage over the way in which consciousness in the working class is developed, we need forms of organisation and ways of communicating to do it: that is why it is foolish and wrong-headed to counterpose organisation and ideological work. The two go hand-in-hand; and the role of newspapers such as the new Tribune, Labour Herald and Briefing will be crucial.

The third objective can be put another way. The only progressive ideas which are gaining ground amongst voters at present



are those of unilateral nuclear disarmament and women's rights. Both of these 'issues' have been mobilised by groups outside the normally defined boundaries of the Labour Movement: and this betrays a weakness in the Movement which should not be underestimated. If that were not enough, the Party's ability to recruit and retain members, particularly individuals from manual worker backgrounds, is probably lower than at any time since 1945. The left needs to take action on both these fronts.

Fourth, we need to work for the election of a socialist Labour Government which will do its best to implement the party's existing policy. The efforts which will be made by the right in the Shadow Cabinet and the PLP to defuse and destroy the Party's existing policies, particularly over such issues as unilateral nuclear disarmament, was made clear at Conference. But that is not all. The strategy of the Labour Party is to build an alliance of social groups and interests. around a package of economic reforms and social policies, the main theme of which is to win social control over economic forces. This strategy, when implemented by a Labour Government, would be countered either by destabilisation policies involving foreign powers and sections of the British establishment, or by attempts to split that alliance and seek to prevent the reforms from gathering momentum. We need to be ready for either of these possibilities – and that means building a strong extra-Parliamentary support for a socialist Labour Government.

Fifth, we must change the character of the PLP. It has been suggested that the composition of the present PLP is a brake on the ability of the leadership to implement Party policy. If that is so, then we must change the character of the PLP and its methods of working.

These objectives are far reaching; and they are objectives that can only be achieved by an organisation determined to break out of Parliamentary isolation, and to make a reality of the claim that the difference between the left of the 1950s and that of the 1980s is that we are now *less* dependent on the influence and power of one individual than we were in Bevan's time.

REG RACE



INSIDE THE FORTRESS

BY ALAN CLINTON

Chief Whip, Islington Borough Council

There was a good deal of strong feeling here after the May elections when the article by Keith Veness appeared in *Briefing* with the headline 'Fortress Islington'. Keith denied any responsibility for this headline, and attributed it to those outside the Borough determined to push us into the front line of any possible local government confrontation over the next period. Now that the enemy had captured Lothian and Lambeth perhaps there were those of us now walled up in Islington, who might be prepared to come out, all guns blazing, like the final frame of 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid'.

There may be some dreamy romantics – mostly outside Islington – who might still be hoping for some such denouement. However, the political context is now different from the times of these earlier battles, and the Tories have very carefully arranged the legal and political cards in such a way that martyrdom, however ardently desired, is very difficult to achieve.

All of this of course if not to deny that we have many advantages and many plans. With 51 councillors out of 52, ours is the largest Labour group in London. We have also received a tremendous boost, that as a result of the happy departure of a large proportion of the semi-racist and reactionary right wing to the SDP, we now have a Labour Group that contains a good proportion of committed left wingers, and a majority united in opposition to the cuts.

We were elected on a Manifesto that clearly set out the need to maintain and defend the Council's services. We also argued for the need to decentralise the Council's functions, and to freeze the rents for a year. We have operated on major policy matters, including the election of Group officers, through joint meetings of Group and LGC, and we intend to continue to do so.

Since May there has been a flurry of activity. We put an end to the SDP sales of Council assets. We set up a Women's Committee which is currently in the process of appointing its own staff, and a Police Committee which can claim at least a preliminary victory in getting the SPG removed from Finsbury Park. On the personnel side, we have been dealing with a great backlog of individual grievances left behind by the SDP. We have already begun the expansion of our direct labour force, and have re-opened a children's home in Highbury New Park, which the SDP closed during the strike that they provoked earlier this year. We have begun a programme to open out Council committees through co-options, with clients' representatives on social services, tenants on Housing, and so forth.

There are many other developments that could be mentioned. Our Recreation Committee has discussed bringing the arts onto the housing estates, and expanding community information provision in our libraries. Our Development and Planning Campaign has discussed the campaign against the heavy lorries that plague our Borough, and in particular against the resurrection of the notorious Archway Road scheme.

All of this of course, and much else besides, is brought into question by the way that the Government has been starving Islington and all other inner-city areas of resources that the Tories would rather spend on armaments, CS gas and so forth.

Already Heseltine has announced a real cut in the Rate Support Grant of 2½% for this year. Worse will probably follow when the final RSG settlement is announced later this year or early next.

We have naturally had a good deal of discussion in Islington on the implications of all this. That is why we took the initiative to set up a series of meetings of London Labour leaders to discuss these general problems. This has had some good consequences, such as making it more difficult for the Tories to pick off individual authorities who are being pushed into council house sales. The Labour leaders will soon be meeting Heseltine and this will serve at least to give publicity to the problems that we face.

However, there is no doubt that we need also to develop a political campaign locally to defend our services against what the Tories would like to do with them. We will need to explain, what I think is slowly beginning to get through to the electorate, that the rate rises of recent years have been a direct result of Government policy, and not of the profligacy of local authorities.

But there will come a point when we have to take a decision, and this is the point I would particularly like to pose to readers and supporters of *Briefing*. We will not cut the services. We are already campaigning to democratise them and to defend them. We will freeze the rents this year. Yet we cannot raise the rates to the extent that all this might imply. This would be an attack on working class people just as unpleasant and unnecessary as all the others that we are trying to avoid.

There are many of us who are prepared to go as far as is necessary to carry out the policies on which we were elected. For example, we were not elected to hand over 4 million odd pounds to the Metropolitan Police for purposes we are not allowed even to question. Nor do we feel any particular obligation to the banks and finance houses to whom we pay millions every year in interest charges on loans. If we can find a way to hold back on some of these payments in such a way as to benefit the consumers of our services without in any way threatening the conditions of our employees, then we will try to work out a means of taking steps in that direction.

It is probable that a majority in the Group and the local Party would be quite prepared to go for a shoot out with the Tories on any issues such as these. The problem for us at the moment, is to find a way that we can make concrete the campaigns we have already initiated. That will not be easy. Which is why I end this not with a bold assertion about what we intend to do, but with a question to readers. What can we do? What would you do if you were us?

Briefing interviews Margaret Hodge

Margaret Hodge became leader of Islington Council in May. She was interviewed for Briefing by Nadine Finch. We print the text of the interview below.

Heseltine shows no sign of letting up on his attacks on Local Authority spending, especially with the announcement of next year's 3 per cent for public sector wages. What action will Islington Council take to campaign for more resources?

We recognise that the most critical task facing Islington Council is to ensure that we get the proper resources from Central Government to enable us to mount the programme we know is needed in Islington. It is disgraceful that the Government on the one hand recognises this as an inner urban area of great need, by declaring Islington a partnership authority, yet on the other hand has robbed us of nearly half of our rate support grant in the last three years. The Tories' latent political prejudice against Labour controlled authorities, totally ignoring the desperate needs of the Inner City Areas, is unforgiveable.

We cannot win the fight against Government alone. We must have the support of the Trades Unions and the working people in the Borough. At present too many people blame local Councils for high rates and think that local Councils are wasteful and profligate. Our campaign must show people that the Tories are to blame for high rates, that the services we provide are essential, and that we as employers cannot add to the dole queue by making Local Authority workers redundant. We are working in Islington with the Trades Council and local Tenants' Associations in a campaign on this issue.

We have taken the initiative in Islington in bringing together all the London Labour Leaders so that we can argue the case as a united group. We are firmly into that campaign, we are meeting Heseltine, we are placing our stickers on all Council vehicles in the Labour controlled authorities in London, and we are planning a 'Save London from Heseltine' week in November.

How can the Council ensure that wages rise in line with costs?

Islington cannot do this alone. It is only concerted action by the Labour controlled authorities and the Trades Unions which can break the 3% ceiling. We are determined to concentrate any discretion we have at the local level on our low paid workers.

Islington has one of the most radical commitments to decentralisation. How are the plans for this developing? What impact do you think this will have on the people of Islington?

Our plans for decentralisation are central to our programme. Decentralisation is not the magic answer to all that's wrong or inadequate in our services; however we think it is one of the keys which will help us to improve services. It should make for a quicker, more sensitive and more coordinated response to people's needs. Also through decentralisation we can extend more quickly to the community control over the services the Council provides.

The impact on the people of Islington should be tremendous. With appropriate computer terminals in each office, people will get an immediate response on where they stand on the transfer list, on what their chances are for a particular flat, on when their repair is going to be done, on how long a particular flat has been empty and on what the plans are for that flat. With local control, local budget, local accountability and local teams, repairs should be carried out more quickly, standards should be higher and flats will be let faster and so on.

Social workers will also be located in the local offices, domiciliary social services (such as meals on wheels and home helps) will be run from the neighbourhood offices, environmental health officers may be located there. All this means that more of people's needs can be met in one place and the bureaucracy will be geared towards the needs of the people it serves rather than the needs of the professions involved.

We will be providing a sophisticated welfare rights service in each neighbourhood office which we hope will help ensure a vastly increased take-up of benefit. In all these ways I think decentralisation will mean better services, more extensive services, and greater control by the people of the services the council provides.

Most of the Committees on the Council are also opening up to allow co-options from the Community. Taking for instance the Women's Committee, how ideally would you like these co-options to be chosen?

We are co-opting people onto Committees for two reasons:

Firstly we want to extend control of the Council to the community and, secondly, we want to bring into our decision-making processes all the expertise and experience that is available. It seems obvious to us



that ethnic minority groups have a role in decisions of the Race Committee and the Trades Council have a contribution to make to the work of the Employment Committee and so on. We are of course determined to avoid co-options being used as a means of giving jobs to one's friends and we are extremely conscious of this in the way we decide on co-optees.

One of the difficulties is establishing the most important interests or categories one wishes to see represented on each committee. On the Women's Committee we are allowed three co-options by law and I think I would like to see a woman from an ethnic minority group, someone to represent the interests of women with children under five and an older woman.

Following on from this, Islington has been portrayed in the press as having a feminist leadership. How do you see your role as a woman leader?

One of my early political involvements was with the Women's Movement in the Sixties. It is a real indictment on our society that 20 years on the fact Islington has a leadership of women is still a matter of media concern. I want to see more women leaders across the country. Obviously as a woman I have an interest in women's issues. We have already established a Women's Committee and I will personally be backing policies which are established in the interests of working women.

Finally, what is your reaction to the major decisions that have been taken at party conference and how do you think this will affect the Labour Party's chances in the General Election?

I was delighted by the conference decision on unilateralism after so many years. However the most controversial issue at conference was obviously the register. The idea of any witch hunt is abhorrent and I wait with interest to see how the NEC believe they can implement this retrograde decision. One's fear is that energy and time will be spent on this irrelevant issue, when we would all be far better spending our time unified in exposing the horrors of the Tory administration and campaigning strongly on the policies we have all agreed at conference.

RUBBISH IN WANDSWORTH

Sue Ward

Not surprisingly, politics in Wandsworth have been through a bad patch after the demoralising defeat by the Tories in May. We have attempted to justify ourselves, and produce excuses for our defeat, but however hard we try, the fact remains that we lost when we should not have done.

Our local Tories have gone from bad to worse; the latest news is that they have probably cost the ratepayers about a million pounds in lost grants from Central Government because of a fiddle in the acounts that they used to keep the rates down just before the election. And they are planning to give away another million pounds to British Land, a firm of property developers responsible for a number of monstrosities throughout London, to persuade them to develop the Clapham Junction site, which has lain derelict for years. (British Land bought the site on the promise of huge profits to its shareholders).

What are the Labour opposition doing? Not a lot, it would seem. The May defeat meant that some of the new blood that was badly needed failed to get in, but others did, and there is a group of six or eight younger left-wing Councillors trying hard to shake the longer-standing Labour members out of their defeatist apathy. On one fairly minor matter, much better facilities for Opposition councillors (filing cabinets, use of a typewriter and photocopier) were obtained without much trouble as a result of a request by a new Councillor, in answer to why they had never been obtained before, it was said, "we were never asked".

Against the leadership's wishes, the LGC now sends an observer to Labour Group Executive meetings (and very boring they are too), but to obtain this required the matter to be referred back to the full Labour Group by the LGC, after it had been summarily dismissed the first time with the airy comment by the Group Secretary that "surely they have enough meetings to go to". Another resolution passed by the Labour Group required minutes of the EC to be made available to the full Group, this was interpreted by the Chief Whip as meaning he should take copies to the Group meeting and produce them if anyone asked for them; when this policy was challenged he agreed to get them duplicated and circulated.

One encouraging sign is the development of a campaign against privatisation, in which the Labour Party, the unions and the tenants' groups are getting together to fight the Tory plans to contract out everything in sight, spearheaded by Mike Barley, who is a new but highly effective left-wing councillor. Another is an example of the success of the left-wing tactic of bringing papers based on the manifesto to the Committee so that the Tories have to react. When this was done over racism and discrimination in the Town Hall, the response (more of the bureaucrats than of the Councillors, of course) was to produce a watered down, but still fairly respectable, version of their own.

But against this, the Tories roll on. They have imposed vicious procedural 'reforms' which take away many opposition rights, and they are currently reorganising departments so that rent and rates on council dwellings come under Finance! What is going to happen when the new Housing Benefit scheme is brought in next month is anyone's guess – but it will be pretty bad chaos for the people of Wandsworth.



Photo by Gina Glover (Photo Co-op)

Pritchards, a multi-national cleaning operation, obtained cleaning contracts for Wandsworth streets in spring this year. They gave the promise that they would do great things for ratepayers, the streets of Wandsworth, and employees (in that order!). The ratepayers in some parts of the borough might be happy, others are not. Even by August, five months after the beginning of the contracts, the Council had issued 746 penalty notices to Pritchards, indicating that the streets had not been swept adequately or at all. 45 of these 746 streets were found not to have been swept even after warning notices. All this added up to £7,665 worth of penalties for Pritchards. Meanwhile, Pritchards workers continue to get the dirty end of the deal. The underpaid untrained and ill-equipped Pritchard employees, many of whom are kept on for only a few weeks, simply cannot do the job which formerly was done by many more Council employees.

At the Court of King Alf

NEW members of Hounslow Council have quickly discovered the way in which Labour is ruled in Hounslow.

At our July Group meeting, a large majority of members supported a resolution to invite Ward Branches and the two CLPs to send two observers each to future Labour Group meetings. However, this very small step towards more open government was not favoured by our Group Leader, Alf King. He wrote personally to the National Agent and was able to subsequently produce an NEC ruling that open meetings were in breach of Model Group Standing Orders.

What Camden, the GLC and others have done is thus forbidden in Hounslow. The matter is again to be raised with the NEC, but we have no grounds for optimism about the decision being altered.

More recently, at the September Group meeting, Alf again sought to stamp his authority on the proceedings. A proposal to advertise senior posts in Labour Weekly brought warnings of the possibility of Surcharge for misuse of funds. The Group was persuaded to seek legal advice on the matter before going ahead with the proposal. On another resolution calling for the Council to give a lead on the disarmament issue by declaring a Nuclear Free Week in Hounslow, our leader attempted to defeat the resolution by arguing that political activity of this sort should be confined to the CLPs. Fortunately he failed to convince the Group, and the October Council meeting is expected to endorse and implement the resolution.

To conclude, it is only fair to say that Alf King's leadership in Hounslow is undisputed. What members will be obliged to do is ensure that his powers are kept firmly under the democratic control of the Labour Group as a whole.

JOHN CONNELLY

Class Struggle in Ravensbourne

As a relative newcomer to Briefing, I thought more established comrades might like to know something of the class struggle as it exists in Bromley, Ravensbourne today.

Bromley, you might say, is not one of the most auspicious areas for socialist advance. In the recent Borough Elections, I stood as a candidatc for my ward. Leafleting large detached houses with cars amounting to three in the drive is an experience I won't forget in a hurry. Still, myself and my fellow Labour candidate did manage to poll 270 votes which though not much was three times the vote at the previous election.

Yet despite the problems faced, I feel it is vital that Labour keeps the flag flying in places like Bromley. Some comrades might take the view that places like it are forlorn hopes and should only be given minimal attention. Quite frankly I don't share that view. For any left wing Labour government to carry out socialist policies, it is vital that Government has popular majority support. Simply winning a parliamentary majority will not suffice against a capitalist class determined to protect its interests. In such a situation a Labour Government would have to call on the majority of the British electorate to support it by occupations and the like. It is in places like Bromley where Labour has to pick up more support. Simply relying on past bastions is not enough.

Though comprising only a small number of activists the Party has of late been involved in a number of campaigns. Recently we organised a counter leaflet in Bromley High Street against the National Front, the start of a continuing campaign against racism in the Borough. The Party has also been involved in rallying support for the Health Workers. On the eve of the 22nd September Day of Action several of us gave out leaflets rallying support for the Day. On the Day itself a number of us were on the picket lines from 6am. That may not sound like much compared to places like Islington but in the context of Bromley it was a major contribution.

The whole event certainly was an experience. I and several of my fellow comrades were told to get stuffed on more than one occasion. One dear old lady even suggested she would like to see us run over. Still we did manage to create an impression and show the people of Ravensbourne that the Labour party is alive, even if not totally robust.

At the moment the Party is in the process of setting up a YS branch, not tied to any particular tendency, to draw in the many young unemployed in the Borough.

In the near future I hope the Party will start a sustained campaign against unemployment, including the setting up of an unemployment centre in conjunction with the Trades Council.

A long hard struggle lies ahead in Bromley to promote and legitimise socialist ideas, but it is a vital struggle for the Party as a whole.

Hugh Atkinson
(Bromley Ravensbourne CLP)

SUBSTITUTE DELEGATES —A HOT ISSUE!

Pauline Ashbridge
Hornsey CLP



Which delegate is the substitute?

At the sleepy end of July, when many parties were folding up for the summer break, a little note arrived for constituency secretaries from the London Regional Organiser which ought to make us sit up sharply. It said, simply, that the practices of many London CLPs of appointing substitute delegates to General Management Committees was "contrary to the constitution...and where the practice occurs the matter must be put right."

(For those CLPs who do not have standing orders which allow substitute delegates, a word of explanation of the system. How it works is that a branch, in addition to electin its GMC delegates, also has available other members who are willing to act as a substitute if a delegate is unable to attend a GMC meeting.)

There are, firstly, several procedural issues that need to be raised:

- The system of substitute delegates is a modification to model rules and standing orders which presumably the CLPs concerned (and certainly my own CLP) submitted for NEC approval several years ago. On what basis is that approval now arbitrarily revoked? Has the NEC made a fresh decision on the matter.
- In what way are substitute delegates "contrary to the constitution"? Certainly they are not actually referred to in the constitution, but neither are they forbidden, and as they were previously accepted, it is difficult to see why they should now suddenly become contrary to the constitution.
- The RO gives as the reason for his intervention the fact that "for some time now we have been recieving complaints about this practice, and it has led to some problems in CLPs." Who has been complaining, and on what grounds? Personally, I cannot think of a single practical objection to substitute delegates, and in fact it helps draw more members into active involvement in the party.

The most important objection to this new "directive" is, however, political.

The political issue involved is that of the delegate system itself. If the members that a branch sends to the GMC are its delegates, i.e. charged with carrying out its majority wishes, as opposed to being merely "representatives" in the 18th century Burkeian mould, then logically the branch can delegate a substitute to carry out its wishes.

It is the delegate nature of the members who comprise a GMC that makes most branch decision-making meaningful. Through the delegate system, which extends throughout the party, the debates and votes at grass-roots branch level, open to all branch members, are rendered politically significant in other and wider forms.

I find it difficult to believe that the newly-vocal opponents of substitute delegates do not understand very well what the underlying issues are. the alternative to the delegate system is that old chestnut, the so-called "one person one vote" approach favoured by the EEPTU and some others on the right, with its concommitments of undemocratic, debate-less, referendum-style mass postal balloting, and equally undemocratic periodic mass meetings of party members (proposed a few years ago by the happily now extinct CLV) where in theory everyone has the opportunity to air his/her views but in practice the media, American-style jamboree "democracy", and a few star speakers reign supreme.

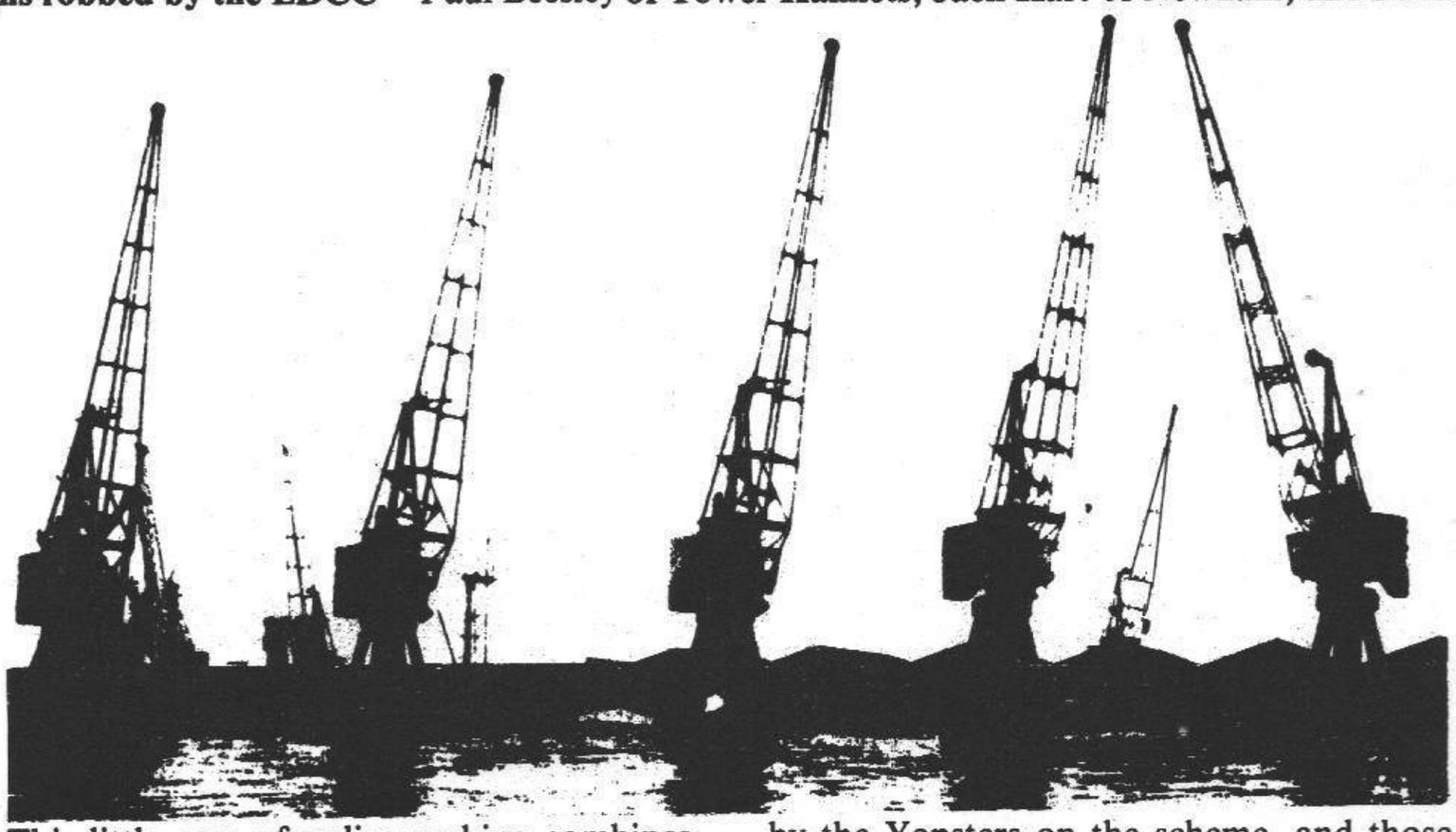
Genuine party democracy begins in debates and votes in the branch. The delegate system is an essential part of that democracy, and substitute delegates are a welcome extension of it.

Any attempt to axe existing provision for substitute delegates is essentially an attack on the delegate system itself. The CLPs should resist such attempts, and demand to know on what grounds the Regional Organiser is suddenly trying to overturn previously agreed practices.

Dirty Deals in Docklands

The so called London Docklands Development Corporation is fast becoming the laboratory where the Tories try out new weapons for the attack on local democracy. In an area covering eight square miles of London, the democratically elected local Councils are deprived of the right to plan and administer, and these powers have been handed over to an unelected, non-accountable clique of 'business men' and their stooges from the right wing of the Labour Party. Most notable among these is one Bob Mellish, Labour renegade, but equally deplorable has been the collaboration of the leaders of the three boroughs robbed by the LDCC – Paul Beesley **of Tower Hamlets, Jack Hart of Newham, and John O'Grady, ex-leader of Southwark.**

The Corporation was set up by Heseltine through his notorious Local Government Planning and Land Act, which allowed it to take away from the boroughs vast tracts of land which were central to their future plans. All this was done under the pretext of the Tory lie that the boroughs were doing nothing to deal with the massive problems of de-industrialisation and urban decay in London's docklands.



COMPLETELY UNTRUE

This was completely unture. Very large programmes of work have been carried out by all boroughs involved in Docklands, and much more could have been achieved if we had not been systematically starved of the resources needed by both Tory and Right-Wing Labour Governments. In fact, if the boroughs had not done all the preliminary work of draining and preparing the waste land in Docklands, there is no way that these areas could have become attractive propositions to the private house builders who have swooped like vultures on the tasty morsels offered to them by the LDDC. Not that housing is a major concern however. Although they are delighted to be able to carry out Horace Cutler's aim of 'driving a wedge of owner occupation into the Labour heartland', Bob Mellish and his capitalist cronies are much more interested in providing hand-outs to industry.

When democratically elected Councils provide benefits to their constituents or employees, these are attacked by the judges as 'gifts' and 'improper preferences to a section of the community'. In the so-called 'enterprise zone' the LDDC-tories distribute such improper gifts on a lavish scale — exemption from rates and planning controls being only the most blatant. To this writer's knowledge not a single judge has thought fit to extract its nose from the port glass to query such misuse of public powers. To this writer's certain knowledge no-one was surprised by this judicial (and judicious) inaction.

The LDDC however show no such reluctance to insert their unsavoury snouts into regions for which they are ill adapted. Of late they are showing a positive enthusiasm for demonstrating their ability to deal with a wide range of municipal functions on a big business basis. They have even had the affrontery to declare a Conservation Area around the dock entrance that leads to their lavish office — a well calculated slap in the face for the nearby Council tenants, whose estates are suffering from cuts in Borough budgets.

ONE VERY SQUALID PACKAGE

But far and away the most magnificent of the LDDC's exercises in arrogance is the 'Community Maintenance Programme'. This little gem of policy making combines most of the Tories' dirtiest tricks into one very squalid package. In essence it means using a small army of unemployed young people to clean up streets, open spaces etc and to provide a labour force for maintenance work on both public and private buildings in the Docklands dirty tricks zone.

The scheme has several advantages for the LDDC-Tories: Firstly, it grabs a large no-cost labour force to serve their ends. It does this by exploiting the Tebbit 'training' plans, which provide fat subsidies (more gifts) to employers who offer 'work experience'.

Secondly, it takes a big step towards 'privatising' (remember back in the good old days of the Heath government we used to call it 'hiving off') the administration of this bogus 'training'. The operation is to be managed by a crew called 'Grand Metropolitan Communtiy Services Ltd', which has previously led the capitalist side in the privatisation fights in several areas. It participated in the takeover of refuse collection in Chelsea, in catering services in a number of hospitals, and is implicated in the privatisation bids in Tower Hamlets.

Thirdly, it contributes to the 'shop window' effect of the Docklands dictatorship. The environment in Docklands will be improved and enhanced in ways which will not be possible in other parts of the boroughs involved, which will boost the LDDC-Tories claim that private business can do everything better.

Fourthly, it provides a link between the LDDC-Tories and the community groups in the area. The Community Maintenance Teams will work on projects developed together with existing community groups or new ones set up specifically for the purpose, where there is local opposition to the LDDC. As a result, those groups which work with the LDDC-Tories will get the benefit of cleaning and maintenance work by the Yopsters on the scheme, and those who oppose the LDDC-Tories will not.

NO DETERMINED RESISTANCE

So far there has not been a determined resistance to the installation of the Docklands Dictatorship Corporation by the Labour Party nationally. In fact, the docklands boroughs have fallen over themselves in the scramble for docklands money, and after some early paper protests are settling into a pattern of cosy collaboration.

Obviously, it is hard to expect the resource-starved Docklands boroughs to reject the chance of big-money bait offered to them by the LDDC-Tories, but in the long term such collaboration reduces the pressure on the Labour Party to abolish the LDDC when it returns to government.

I would like to suggest some elements of a programme of opposition to the LDDC for the Labour Docklands boroughs, not as final and complete answers but as a basis for discussion. Most importantly the Council leaders should come off the LDDC Board, where they serve only to allow the LDDC to promote the fiction that it enjoys the support of the local communities. The Boroughs and the GLC should adopt a policy of maximum obstruction, opposing every planning permission, refusing access to borough imformation and records etc.

Constituency Parties should press for a commitment that the next Labour Government will abolish the LDDC and the 'Enterprise Zones' as an immediate priority, so undermining confidence in these Tory methods. We should give some serious thought to making this change in the law retrospective — threatening to charge for arrears of rates and to insist on changes to buildings and plans which have been allowed by the LDDC and which the Boroughs would not have allowed. (This is no more than the application of the principal of 're-nationalisation without compensation' to the specific local conditions.)

But we also have to look at positive alternatives to the problems of the areas where the LDDC-Tories are able to make these inroads. We must find ways of bringing about rapid improvements to depressed environments created by industrial decline, and we must find ways to involve local communities directly in this process. And possibly most urgent of all is the need to develop a serious and workable alternative policy for youth training.

London Labour Briefing, page nine.

Association of Socialist Councillors is formed

Jeremy Corbyn

The lesson for all to see is that a major ally of the Tory government since May 1979 has been the disunity of Labour councillors.

Bi-partisan policies mean that the Tories get an easy ride and the cuts fall on the worst off.

In three years £500 million has been cut from London boroughs and this has been paid for in jobs lost, vital services cut and rates increased.

Escapism by the national leadership of the Party leaves Heseltine free to pursue his carnage of local government.

It needs little introduction to say that the role of the existing Local Government bodies such as the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and London Boroughs Association has been to pursue a course of action that says Local Government is above party politics and that joint approaches to the Tories will get results.

This naive nonsense has resulted in the cuts, closures and election results like that achieved by Birmingham's Labour Leadership in May.

On Saturday October 9th the Association of Socialist Councillors was formed and the draft statement was accepted. Implicit in this was an opposition to the register and a determination to fight together to make local councils the central kernel of the battle to protect and expand local services.

Margaret Hodge, Leader of Islington Council, outlined the problems faced by inheriting an SDP budget and an unresponsive administration designed to deter working class involvement in local government.

In an excellent contribution GLC leader Ken Livingstone demonstrated the determination of the GLC Labour group to support outside groups and to make the GLC officialdom responsive to the demands of the movement. He also gave very useful advice on the way Labour councillors have to be involved in day to day decision making to achieve their political purpose.

It is a crucial aspect of our activities that council services and administration look outwards to the working class for support in the battle. The days of socialism by bountiful and munificent gifts never worked and are as redundant as their perpetrators.

Formation of the Association is only possible now, because the result of the May elections was the biggest political shake-up since 1971. This was in terms of the hundreds of new Councillors elected in May who are determined to wage a political fight and not sit in the Town Halls as administrators for central government.

Our purpose is to develop new ways of campaigning and for Councils to practically work together. Since 1975-6 the proportion of central government funding has reduced from two thirds to a half of the annual budget on all Councils. The only effective way of getting this money back is by the budget-making process to be open and united with similar objectives for each Council. The days of secret negotiations and discussions with a budget and rate sprung on the people in February must end. The only people to benefit from this are the Government.

The Association already has a large number of supporters but that support must be developed and clearly stated that this is the voice of Labour in local government; not the joint deputations and cosy lunches of the existing local government bodies.

The joint secretaries are Keith Veness and Jeremy Corbyn, and the postal address is 155 Green Lanes, N16 9DB.

Statement by Chairman Arthur Latham at the opening of the foundation meeting of the Association of Socialist Councillors:

The London Labour Party EC at its last meeting received a protest concerning the setting up of this body and objecting to factionalism within the Party.

Herbert Morrison once described London as a collection of villages. The Labour Party can correctly be described as a collection of factions. Without them it has no life, no vitality, no impetus.

I therefore have had no hesitation in agreeing to chair this meeting because I am in favour of like-minded socialists on local authorities meeting together to exchange ideas and experiences and to promote and provoke each other into developing left policies.

I fully defend the need to do it. It is useless trying to work out how to pursue socialist ideals with latter-day Neville Sandelsons. It is no good trying to discuss how to apply common socialist principles to a situation with embryo Roy Jenkinses.

Nor do I accept that I have to obtain the permission of the National Agent or the NEC to be here: and nor should any of you. That is what I believe the creation of The Register implies.

I think I owe a loyalty to the Labour Party. I do not believe that gives it a right to decide which associations, organisations or groups I can belong to. If any such body pursues aims which are in conflict with membership of the Labour Party that is the same as if I pursue aims which conflict with my membership and I have no complaint if action is taken against me. It is an affront to my dignity as an individual and a challenge to my integrity as a principled socialist to demand that I can belong only to registered organisations.

The Labour Committee for Europe, the Fabians and numerous other factions have felt it necessary and proper to get together. It is in this spirit that I welcome the creation of this Association of Socialist Councillors. If there is to be a Labour CND or a Labour Campaign for Real Ale that is legitimate in my view **without registration.**

So let there be a Campaign for Real Socialism on local authorities. That is what we are about.

Arthur Latham
October 1982

DEFEND THE 18!

EIGHTEEN people have been summonsed for Can't Pay Won't Pay action in the spring Fares Campaign. They have been singled out to take the rap for 10,000 other CPWPers and the million Londoners who dared to vote for the Labour GLC's Fair Fares.

Their defence — a duty for the labour movement — is an excellent chance to prepare for round two of the GLC's battle to cut fares coming in January.

The last defence meeting with a solicitor, voted unanimously for all to plead not guilty and mount a campaign to raise money for all aspects of the defence. Islington North and a number of other Labour Parties have already voted support and cash. Public meetings and discussions are expected later in the autumn.

99¾% SCOTT FREE

Reliable rumours indicate that LT issued summonses against more than 18 but the missing defendants have proved as elusive as LT's improved services. It also appears that LT left legal action as late as possible in a vain hope that the matter would be 'forgotten', but alas by the time they serve any more summonses most offences will fall outside the 6-month 'active period' after which service of a summons for such an offence is invalid. So all you CPWPers breathe a sigh, send your money to the Defence Fund and thank your stars that once again LT has failed to keep more than ¼% of a promise (to prosecute ALL CPWPers).

A MILLION VOTERS ARE WORTH MORE THAN FIVE LAW LORDS!

THE LAW LORDS' SURCHARGE IS ILLEGAL!

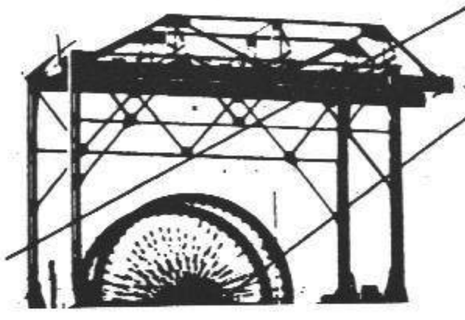
DEMONSTRATE on THURSDAY Oct. 28 at 1.30pm, Lavender Hill, Magistrates' Court, Clapham Junction.

Send cash for Defence Fund and printing debts (specify which if you wish) to Fare Fight (CPWP Defence Fund) c/o Naomi Landau, 6a Compayne Gardens, NW6. Information/Defendants Meetings: phone 672-9698 (Ernest Rodker), 701-5691 (Piers Corbyn), 806-9211 (Charles Foster).

Piers Corbyn

INDUSTRIAL LABOUR BRIEFING







Miners: Moment of Decision

Phillip Sutcliffe, Snowdown Colliery face worker

THE miners are once again in the vanguard of the fight against a right-wing Tory government. The position is very similar to that of 1974, except that this time the miners are not only fighting on a wages issue but on the very survival of the industry.

The Tory government is determined to go ahead with its colliery closure plan. Should anyone be in any doubt as to what those plans are, here is a quote from Thatcher, speaking in the Commons after the 1981 strike:

"It is to the benefit and advantage of this country that we reduce the number of mines which are loss making . . . The increased redundancy payments are designed so that we have mines which are producing coal at very high prices going out of action."

One by One

The Tories could not get away with closing pits in 1981 because of the solidarity of the miners. Now they are starting to box clever by picking off pits one by one. The Coal Board in seven years have closed 43 pits; the level of manpower has dropped from 247,000 to 210,000.

Snowdown Colliery in Kent is a typical example of what is happening to the industry at a national level. Snowdown was one of the pits on the Coal Board's hit list in 1981. It was due to be closed down in April 1981 with a resulting loss of jobs and at least one whole community destroyed. Yet Snowdown has proven coal reserves which will provide miners with jobs for years. What a condemnation of our society. When young miners need jobs, when society needs coal, the Tories are trying to shut pits which will never reopen again.

Coal Board Plans

Following the strike action in 1981 which saved Snowdown from shutting, the Coal Board drew up plans for the development of Snowdown. The gist of the plan is that there should be 500 redundancies in the Kent Coalfield and that the rest of the Snowdown miners would be transferred to the other two pits in Kent. The flaw in the plan, however, as any fool can see, is of course that once the miners leave the pit the Coal Board could come up with any pretext to close it. If Snowdown goes, then the writing is on the wall for the other two pits in Kent and there will be no Kent Coalfield at all. The Kent miners are determined that the closure of the Kent Coalfield will not take place. They are at the moment fighting the Coal Board's proposals. They need all the support they can get. What are YOU doing?

On the wage claim. the union lodged a claim on 15th July. The claim had five basic elements, plus no pit closures or reductions in manpower levels:

1. A demand to increase the surface minimum grade rate to £115 per week, with the same monetary increase being applied to all other grades.
2. The payment of new rates from 1st November on a salary basis.
3. The introduction of a four-day working week without loss of pay.
4. The introduction of retirement at 55 for all workers in the industry, with financial arrangements including a lump sum payment in line with the Redundant Mineworkers' Payments Scheme.
5. A revision of all allowances paid in the industry in order to restore the original real value and an agreement that would keep pace with inflation.

The Union also made it clear to the Board, both at informal discussions and at the Joint Negotiating Meeting, that paramount in our demands was an undertaking that no pits should be closed other than on grounds of exhaustion and that there should be no more reduction in manpower levels in this industry.

Special Delegate Conference

The Board's final offer was 7.2% on basic rates but they would not give any commitment on anything else. In response to this, the NUM called a Special Delegate Conference. The Conference unanimously rejected the Coal Board's offer. They agreed that a full overtime ban would take place as from Monday 11th October, and that a ballot of members would be taken, to give the NEC the authority to take full strike action.

The ballot takes place on 28/29 October. The millionaire press, radio, television and the NCB in cahoots with the Tory government are hell-bent on encouraging the British miners to reject the leadership's call for support in defence of jobs and living standards. The NCB and the government play the waiting game. They are hoping that the miners will reject the call for national strike action. If that should happen, then there is no doubt that Kent and other coalfields will be attacked and then closed.

The miners need your support and solidarity. Their fight is your fight. Start preparing now, put the miners' case wherever you get the opportunity. If it comes to a strike, accommodation will be needed for pickets. Have you, and do you know anyone that would be prepared to offer, beds for pickets? Offers of practical, financial and moral support should be sent to: The Secretary, NUM, 222 Euston Road, London NW1 2BX or to Jack Collins, Secretary, NUM Kent Area, Waterside House, Cherry Tree Lane, Dover, Kent.

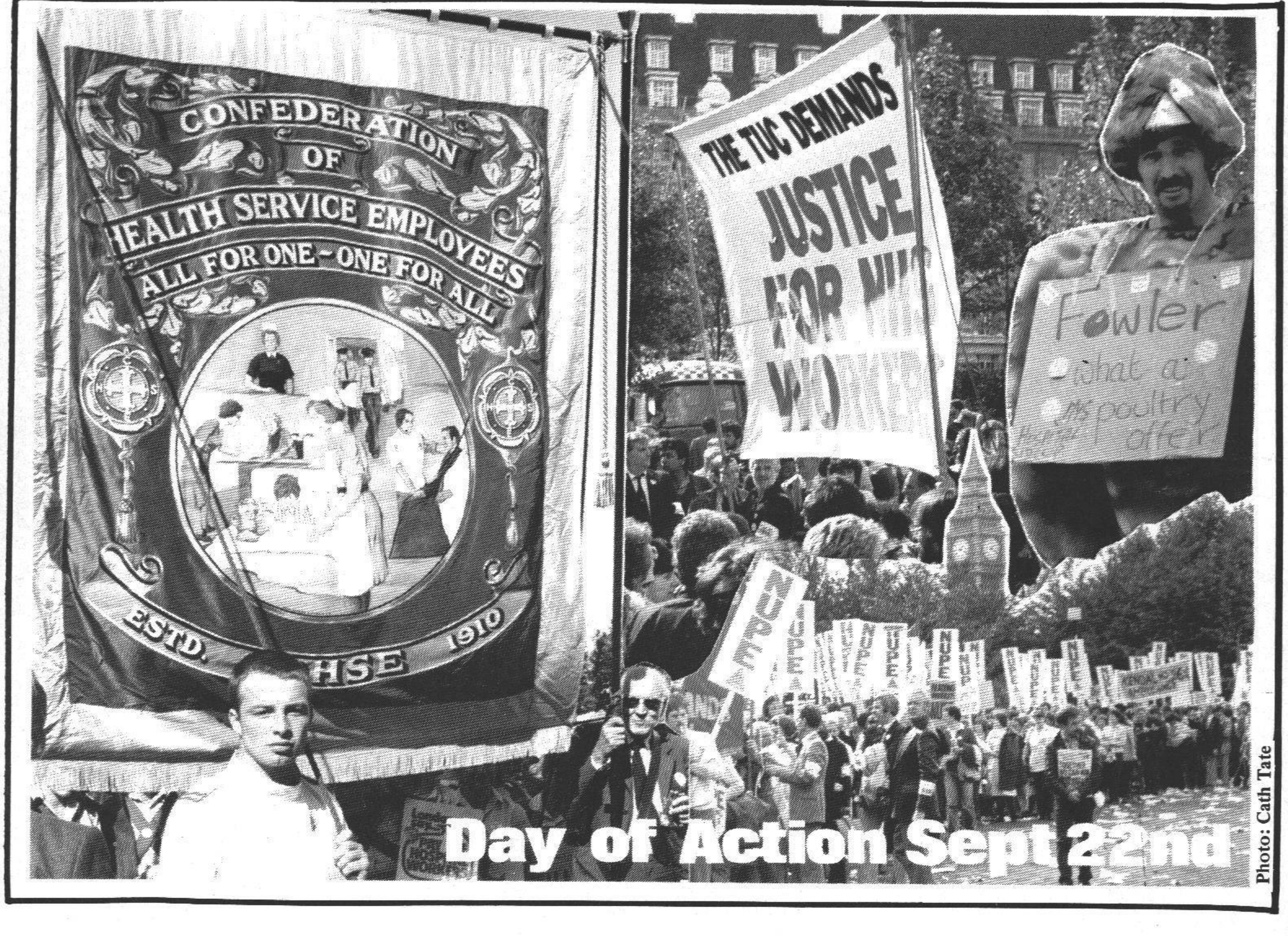


Photo: Cath Tate

NHS: For indefinite strike action

At this time last year health service militants were passing resolutions in branches, districts, and regions, demanding a fight against the 4%. Now, six months after the pay settlement date (April 1st) we are still locked in battle with the vicious anti-working class Tory government.

The NHS dispute has raised the morale of the Labour movement and has set the scene for other sectors of workers to fightback against pay offers which come nowhere near meeting the inflation rate. We saw on September 22nd the most tremendous show of solidarity and strength since the general strike. If a clearer call had gone out from the TUC then there is no doubt that it would have been a general strike.

Millions of people stopped work on the 22nd in defiance of Prior's anti-union legislation. Not one injunction was issued – because the bosses know that they cannot fight a Labour movement which is strong and cohesive.

Hospitals everywhere were virtually at a standstill. London had its strongest action yet. Hospitals which had previously had weak action were out in force – sections of workers who had not taken strike action on the other days were on picket lines. Some GPs shut their surgeries and joined pickets. Town halls, schools, libraries and factories were shut. Throughout the country miners, steelworkers, bus drivers, home helps, civil servants all came out. And yet, Fowler spent the whole next day bleating that the disruption had been minimal!

But, September 22nd didn't bring an increased pay offer – we knew it wouldn't. It did show what could be achieved by harnessing support. However, instead of doing just that the TUC Health Services Committee met and decided on a series of rolling regional "Days of Action" (will they ever actually say the word strike?). Whilst the hospital workers have shown their willingness to strike, predictably support from the other sections during the regional days has been low.

November 8 will provide a national focus, with the transport workers coming out in support of the health workers. It is vital to build as much supporting action as possible for that day in all sections. It is important that Labour Party members give their support to the transport workers and join their picket lines.

With the latest 'Think Tank' proposals for wrecking the welfare state – and replacing the NHS with a private insurance-based scheme – the dispute takes on a new relevance. Health workers have said from the beginning that the struggle is not just about pay. It is about saving the health service. The Oxfordshire Regional Health Authority 'consultation' paper proposing the dismantling of services in that area shows that the government is intent on ruining the NHS and makes a mockery of Thatcher's statement – "Let me make one thing absolutely clear – the National Health Service is safe with us"..

We are in a life and death struggle for rights to health, education, decent wages, and jobs. That is what makes the health workers' cause so popular, and that is what unites us in a class struggle.

Joint shop stewards' committees and strike support committees are linking activists everywhere. It is essential that the Labour Party gives maximum support to these committees.

A whole series of pay claims are about to be submitted – miners are being ballotted on strike action, British Leyland workers have fomulated their claim, and local authority workers have their settlement dates looming up. The stage is set for a full-scale offensive which could bring the Tories down.

It is within the power of the labour movement to crush this government, to launch an attack which will get the Tories out.

The war has been started by the health workers. The generals of the labour movement have tried to divert us. But they have failed to demoralise us and failed to exhaust us.

The NUPE leadership have had a mandate since May to call an all-out strike in the NHS. They have been hiding behind the weaker unions and the 'unity' of the Health Services Committee, and have not pushed their mandate. The TUC Health Services Committee should be forced to call for indefinite strike action (with emergency cover organised by the workers) and should call for a supporting one day general strike. That is what the Tories will understand. That is what will win us the 12%, and that is what will force the Tories out.

Sid Weighell: an Epitaph

Sid Weighell has been defeated in his last great procedural manoeurvre, and has passed away, unmourned by any except the leader writers of the gutter press and the tearful Peter Parker. Only Frank Chappell from any wing of the labour movement could be found to write in his defence. Silent were the St. Ermin's set, neutered were the barons of Labour Solidarity, as the 'grass roots' of the NUR agreed with their 'unrepresentative' Executive that his day was done.

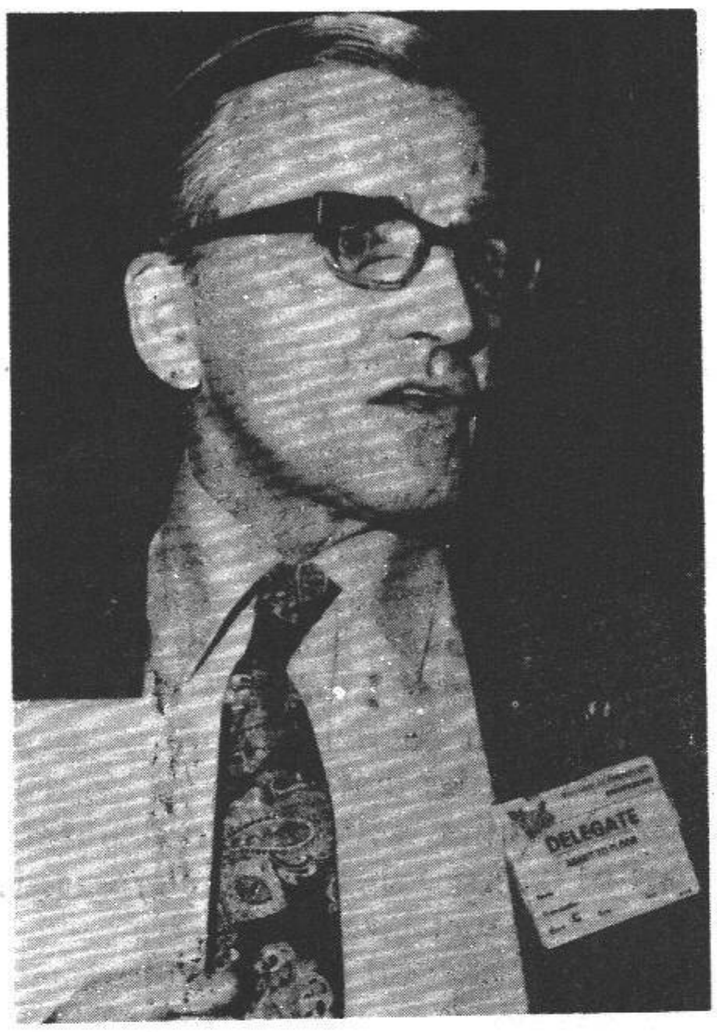
INCREDULOUSLY

We watched incredulously the man who alleged that all his opponents' arguments were "distortions of the truth" and that "intelligence" was his alone to claim, as he firstly 'abstained', then 'didn't vote' for Eric Clarke, and finally kept shamefaced silence as it was revealed that he had voted for Breakell. He had been finally nailed and there is no compassion among his colleagues for a redundant trade union baron who has been stupid enough to be caught with his paw in the till.

Back in the NUR, the division on this was not, as the officers kept proclaiming, one between left and right. It was between people whose only ideological position was one of complete subservience to the General Secretary, from whose hands they believe all blessings flow – and those honest trade unionists who believe that in the labour movement, all office holders are responsible for their actions to the membership.

CONFLICT FAR FROM OVER

That conflict is far from over. Among the contenders for the position are men whose only difference from Sid is that they lack his charm and tact! The leading contender from the point of view of democratically minded members is probably Jim Knapp, who at just past 40 is well placed to bust the seniority principle that has run the NUR into so many ruts before. As Chairman of the South East Regional TUC, he will be well known to many Labour activists and has also previously pledged himself to support regular re-election of officers which could obviate the legitimate apprehension of some people that we could be saddled for a quarter of a century with someone whose views could change.



CONSOLIDATED AT EVERY LEVEL

We cannot rely on personalities, however. The change at the top must be consolidated at every level of the Union so that the ghosts of Jimmy Thomas and Sid Weighell never return to haunt the labour movement.

Now that members can feel that they are part of a democratic trade union, and not a General Secretary's adulation society, we can hope that they will become more involved in the work of their Union, and let their voice be heard directly rather than being 'interpreted' by some self-professed 'voice of the rank and file' like Sid Weighell.

Ian Williams

Support the Iranian Resistance

IN January 1982, 12,000 workers went on strike in the "Iran National" car assembly plant, sister company of Talbot in Britain. They were protesting against the deterioriation in their living standards. Khomeini sent his Guards in. Seven workers were put up against the wall and shot on the spot. The Guards took away 2,000 more workers for interrogation.

The above incident gives us a glimpse of the barbarity the Iranian people have had to face under Khomeini's regime, particularly over the past 15 months. But the terror and poverty unleashed by Khomeini on workers is only one facet of Khomeini's mediaeval rule of terror.

Due to its mediaeval character Khomeini's regime showed an inherent enmity towards democratic rights. The first victims were Iranian women, who played a major role during the 1979 Revolution. Forced to wear the veil and to leave their jobs, women have been effectively reduced to second class citizens. Those failing to comply face abuse and brutal attacks by thugs.

As under the Shah, national minorities, especially the Kurdish people, have been repressed. Kurdistan has been put under economic blockade and thousands have been massacred by Khomeini's Guards.

Khomeini's total incompetence and reactionary policies have taken Iran to the brink of social and economic collapse. Production has fallen to one fifth of capacity and unemployment has risen to over five million. Wages have been frozen since 1980, whilst the inflation rate is at well over 100 per cent, causing a serious drop in living standards.

Workers' councils and trade unions have been dissolved and strikes brutally repressed. Today there are few major factories in which there have not been some workers executed or hundreds dismissed. Workers are thus denied the right to express their demands and if they protest they face the threat of torture and execution.

The regime has tried to compensate what it lacked in programmes by imposing repression and increasingly relying on crises and war. Attacks on the press, political parties, etc., which were not prepared to tow Khomeini's line started a few months after the regime assumed power. The main target was the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran, which was committed to the defence of democratic rights gained during the Revolution. It presented a clear progressive programme.

Khomeini greeted the Iran-Iraq war as a God-sent gift. He used it as a pretext for intensifying the repression. The war was also used to develop links with Israel, which became the Khomeini regime's main supplier of arms.

Repression became absolute on June 20, 1981; the regime decided to physically eliminate the democratic forces and particularly the Mojahedin on June 20, 1981. Since then over 20,000 people have been executed. More than 50,000 political prisoners are now held in prisons where torture is systematically used.

The start of the final onslaught, the massacres and the ending of all peaceful means of struggle for democratic rights, marked the beginning of the popular resistance to the regime. The Mojahedin form the backbone of the resistance. The "resistance councils" the Mojahedin initiated among workers in factories as well as in schools, offices and other places point to the speedy overthrow of Khomeini's regime.

The NCR is the body uniting progressive opposition to Khomeini around a democratic programme. This programme includes the formation of popular councils, equality between men and women, autonomy for national minorities and the paying of special attention to the rights of workers and peasants. The main forces inside the NCR are the Mojahedin and the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran.

Many prominent individuals in the Labour and Trade Union movement, including Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Reg Race, Ray Buckton, Jo Marino and others have expressed their support for the Iranian people's resistance led by the NCR. But to bring an end to Khomeini's atrocities, and to establish a democratic state, the Iranian people and the working class need much greater moral and material support.

If you require a speaker or more information please contact: Moslem Iranian Students Society – Britain, (supporters of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran), Address: M.S.S., BM Box 9270, London WC1N 3XX.

London Labour Briefing, page thirteen.

STRIKES SHAKE POLISH REGIME

A ten month effort by Poland's martial law government to convince Polish and world opinion that Solidarity was a spent force within the Polish working class has been destroyed by the strike wave that began in Gdansk on 11 October. Whatever the outcome of the new crisis — still continuing at the time of writing — General Jaruzelski will emerge seriously weakened, with his reputation for realism and competence badly shaken.

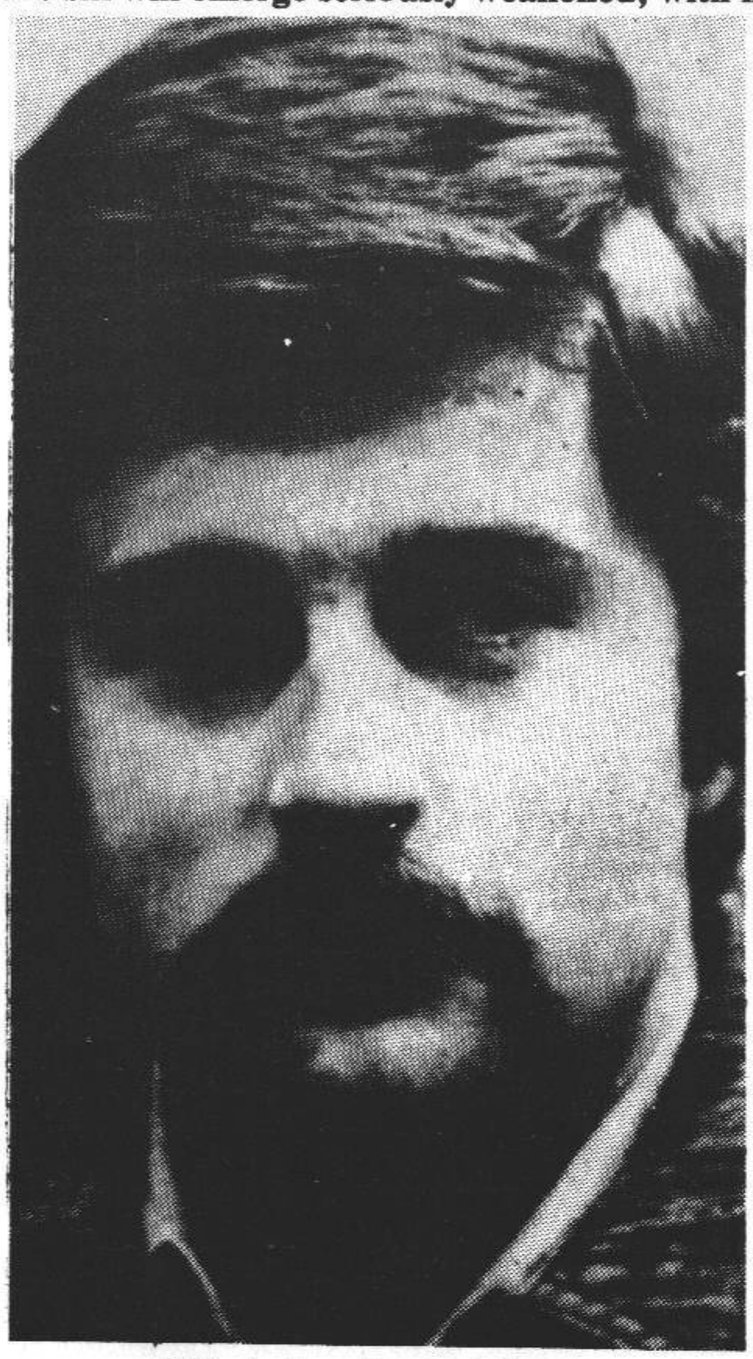
BY OLIVER MACDONALD

The Gdansk strikes were the first protracted working class protest since the Polish armed forces emerged victorious from the confrontations that followed the imposition of martial law on 13 December last year. At 6am on Monday 11 October, workers at the Lenin Shipyard, Solidarity's birthplace, struck and occupied the yard. A strike committee was elected and three demands were raised: for the release of all internees, the restoration of Solidarity and an amnesty for all political prisoners. Television film of the shipyard showed thousands of workers chanting slogans for the release of Lech Walesa and shouting "Solidarity, Solidarity!" and a large banner was strung across the main gate declaring "Solidarity Lives!". Shipyard workers reported that Bogdan Lis, a leader of the August 1980 strike, Vice President of Solidarity, and key underground resistance leader, was inside the shipyard.

The strike spread to shipyards in Gdynia and Sopot and were also reported in Koszalin and Szczecin, further along the coast. Delegates were sent out from the Lenin Shipyard to other Gdansk factories seeking support. The strike was continued on Tuesday 12 October and the strike committee issued a call for an indefinite regional general strike from Wednesday 13 October until its demands were met.

Whatever the outcome of the new confrontation, the workers of the Baltic Coast have destroyed all vestiges of credibility for the government's claims that Solidarity has been reduced to a semi-terrorist group of extremists animated by anti-Communist intellectuals. It has also demonstrated what the workers think of the law issued on 8 October abolishing Solidarity and preparing for a new official union modelled on the official unions in other East European countries.

The law passed on 8 October envisages the creation of a new trade union organisation which will have the classic East European structure, will be subordinated to the Communist Party and will have as its main function the job of controlling workers' access to a wide range of social and welfare benefits. As in other official unions in Eastern Europe, workers will have the formal right to elect the new union's leaders. The one echo of the Solidarity period is a mention in the new law of the right to strike. But this right is to be denied to a wide range of employees including such groups as health workers and railway workers. And in other sectors, a strike can take place only after a process involving normal negotiations, then a hearing by a 'commission of conciliation', then an appeal to a 'special tribunal' where the authorities will be in the majority. Even then, the army is given the power to ban a strike in the interests of 'the security of the state'. The penalty for breaking these legal procedures is imprisonment for up to five years.



Wladyslaw Frasyniuk

NEW UNION IMPOSED FROM ABOVE

Most important of all, the new union is being imposed from above in the context of a drive against Solidarity activists in the factories and it will therefore be seen as one of a number of moves to break the will of the working class. Those who do not join will be marked as unreliable elements and may be denied access to the welfare benefits controlled by the new union.

On 10 October, Solidarity's underground co-ordinating committee called a national four hour protest strike against the attempt to outlaw the union. The strike will take place on 10 November, the second anniversary of Solidarity's registration by Poland's Supreme Court. The underground leadership has also endorsed a call by 9 interned Solidarity leaders for workers to boycott the new official union.

The government is sure to try to turn the protests of 10 November into another bloody confrontation using the tactics they employed during the demonstrations of August 31st when the police shot and killed workers in Lubin and Wroclaw. They will also be making every effort to hunt down underground union leaders. On the eve of the new trade union decree, the police arrested Wladyslaw Frasyniuk, the leader of Solidarity's Wroclaw regional organisation, one of the strongest centres of resistance in the country. The general in charge of the Ministry of the Interior has declared that the security forces have up to now been too soft in their attitude towards the resistance and must take tougher action against it.

DEATH SENTENCE

General Jaruzelski has felt strong enough to pass the death sentence on Solidarity partly because the security forces showed on August 31st that they could maintain military control in the 55 cities and towns where Solidarity protests were held on August 31st, but also because of growing political and social pressures on Solidarity's resistance movement. Of enormous importance here has been the stance adopted for many months by the Church hierarchy and its leader Archbishop Glemp. While presenting himself as a mediator between the Solidarity activists and the government, Glemp has refused to support the resistance and has publicly opposed all forms of popular protest. He urged the population not to participate in Solidarity's August 31st demonstrations and he has now urged Poles to adopt a 'realistic attitude' towards the suppression of Solidarity and towards the new official unions.

Similar pressure on Solidarity has come from intellectual circles previously identified as supporting Solidarity. They have come to regard the union as a lost cause and concentrated on gaining some minimal concessions from the regime in other fields, closer to their own professional concerns. General Jaruzelski has worked hard to generate such moods, hinting at concessions for both the Church and the intelligentsia if they are 'reasonable' on the trade union question. He has made similar overtures to the rich and middle peasants, doubling the permitted size of private farms and legally guaranteeing the indefinite survival of private agriculture.

All these efforts can now be seen to have been based on a fundamental error of judgment. It now seems that the government's attempts to isolate the industrial workers and intimidate them has reinforced their conviction that their interests are inseparable from the fate of Solidarity itself. Poland's military council is learning a bitter lesson in working class politics: that a military coup and a wave of arrests is not enough to crush an authentic labour movement. Unless the ruling group is prepared to plunge the working class into a massive bloodbath of killings its victory will be short-lived and it will eventually be forced to come to terms with the working class movement.

The Gdansk strikes have pushed the government to face this awesome choice. General Jaruzelski must either make new concessions to the workers or must launch a terror against them that will make the breach between the Communist Party and the working class an irreparable one. The British labour mvoement has an urgent duty to bring the maximum pressure to bear on the Polish government to change course and fall back on the promises made when martial law was imposed that Solidarity's right to function would eventually be restored.

Meanwhile, the courage and power fo the workers on the Baltic is a sombre warning to all those, West as well as East, who may be tempted to underestimate the capacity of the working class to defend its basic rights.

TRANSPORT BRIEFING

Paul Moore
GLC Transport Committee
Vice Chair

FIGHTING FOR A RADICAL ALTERNATIVE

Transport Minister David Howell is preparing to push through new legislation to restrict financial support for public transport. The new Tory law will allow the Minister to set guidelines for transport subsidy; this will mean the Tory Party (under the guise of Ratepayers' Organisations) dragging Labour councils into the courts once again. The law will be used to overturn the support at local elections for low fares.

Not just fares, but the services themselves will be in danger. To balance the books, Labour councils will be told to cut back to the level of demand – and with high fares demand will be low! At the same time, the Tories are preventing Councils from investing in public transport to the extent needed to bring people back onto the service. The only investment which finds favour with government is that which eliminates jobs and adds to Tebbitt's dole queue.

EXTRA THREAT

London faces an extra threat. The GLC has demanded a change in the law to bring London into line with the rest of the country on fare subsidy. Instead the Select Committee on transport in London has recommended that the GLC be stripped of its transport powers, and replaced with an unelected quango. The priority for this body would be the Urban Motorway Programme demanded by the road lobby and consistently rejected by the London Labour Party.

What lies behind the Tory attack on public transport? Behind all the bleating about 'never ending subsidies' is something far more fundamental. After all the government's road programme is expensive, and it is widely recognised that heavy lorries are heavily subsidised.

The answer lies in the spectacular success of the road lobby in the last fifty years. Since the principle of a road network was accepted in the 1930s, the Ministry of (Road) Transport has been happily ploughing its way through homes and factories to build that network, using a spurious cost-benefit analysis and a rigged system of so-called public inquiries. The result has been that other forms of transport – rail, water, buses, cycling – have been starved of investment. Even the pedestrian has been relegated to the subway!

PUBLIC UNREST

The government have now recognised a growing tide of public unrest at their policies. They are desperately trying to prevent the 'environmental' lobby from gaining support, while really attempting to sabotage it. To head off the cycling campaigns, the government produced a consultation paper and makes sympathetic noises from time to time. A year after the consultation paper they are still publishing road schemes which make conditions far worse for cyclists. Asked to do something to get cyclists around the impenetrable barrier of the Hanger Lane Gyratory system in West London, Junior Minister Lynda Chalker said that she cannot justify spending £½m. Days later plans were published for an unwanted motorway on the Archway Road – at a cost of £20m!

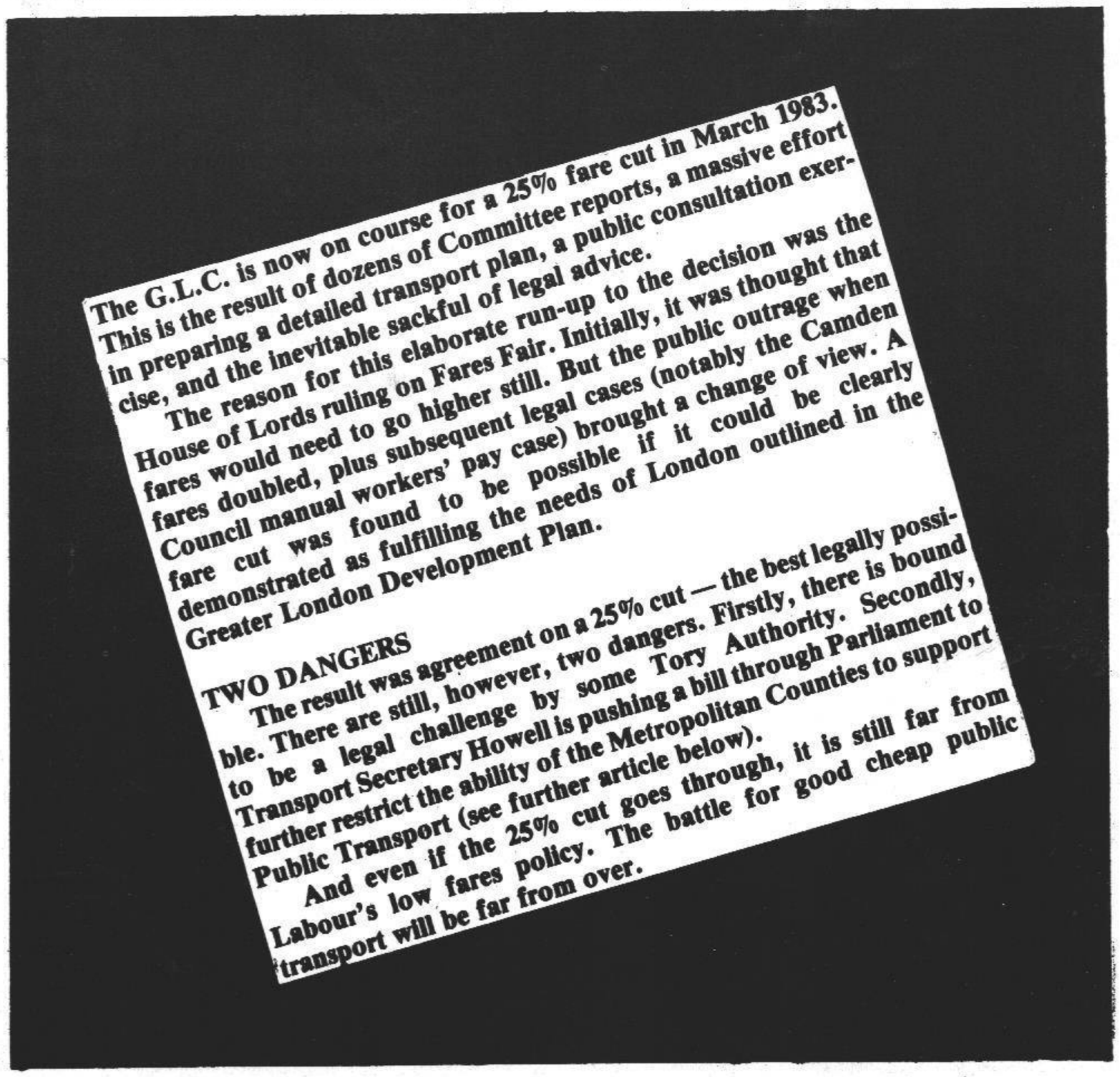
The effect of heavy lorries is a more difficult problem for the Tories, and one on which their own rank and file are rebelling. Their efforts to persuade everyone that they will build a bypass for every town and village, and that 'heavier lorries mean fewer lorries' are collapsing fast. In London the GLC has said it will ban all lorries over 32 tons if the weight is increased – a position which gets overwhelming support. It was unfortunate, to say the least, that the Select Committee passed – without dissent – a recommendation that the GLC should be prevented from making all London restrictions of this kind.

Faced with the Tory attack on all aspects of transport policy, Labour needs a radical alternative. Regrettably, Albert Booth's policy paper presented to conference does not achieve that. On the rail network, it says there will be no closures – no more than the Tories have said! Does this mean we are not even to be as radical as the French Gaullists, building *new* rail lines? On roads it offers more construction. In London it says, the need for more roads is accepted. By whom? Certainly not by the London Labour Party.

Running through the document is a thread of centralisation, when more *local* powers are needed. In London we need trunk roads to be devolved to the GLC, and the ability for GLC to come to a financial deal with BR on fares and services.

A firm statement to give public transport, rail and water freight a fair deal must be the start of Labour's approach. This must be coupled with a commitment to decentralise decision making wherever possible.

A radical transport policy makes good common sense – will the voters get a chance to see one?



London Labour Briefing, page fifteen.

Women's committee: support our budget!

Policies can be about debate, rhetoric and campaigns, but in reality money is power. To carry through our commitments needs money; actions in the real world can be the only measure of our determination to change society. The GLC Labour Group is in the process of drawing up its budget for next year. A draft budget has been produced for consultation with the London Labour Party, via the CLPs and affiliated organisations, culminating in a special Regional Conference. I am writing this article to ask for support for the Women's Committee budget bid as it is coming in for a lot of attack from some members of the Labour Group. In fact it is the only part of the budget which is being attacked!

The Women's Committee has little to spend this year because the Committee was set up after the budget was decided. So obviously it is important that we have more money for next year and so we have bid for a total budget for 1983/84 of £8,329,000. Before everyone drops through the floor let me place this figure in the context of the total GLC budget – we are talking about 1% of the total. It amounts to less than ½p on the precept and will cost the average domestic ratepayer about 2½p a week. In these terms our bid is low. 1% to be spent specifically by the Women's Committee on the needs of the majority of the population. Obviously we will also be looking for all other GLC committees to recognise that a great deal of further work is needed to correct the discrimination against women, but the Women's Committee has to deal with a wide range of projects that do not fall within the remit of any other committee area. Also we intend to use statutory powers that have barely been used by the GLC before.

CHILDCARE

The bid divides as follows: £5m for childcare (using Section 47(4) of the London Government Act 1963), £½m for health, elderly and the disabled (using Section 65(1) of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968), about £2m for other grants, and the rest for staff and other expenses like publicity and conferences.

Lack of good childcare facilities is a major problem for women and is what prevents many women from working, or getting a good job, or just generally being active outside the home. The money will be used to grant aid voluntary organisations whose primary function is the welfare of children and we will be supporting latchkey projects, nurseries, children's centres, toy libraries and playbuses, facilities for children to meet the particular needs of ethnic minority families, etc. etc.

The £½m for health, elderly and the disabled is important as elderly and disabled women lack good facilities. This will enable us to help boroughs to resist Tory cuts in health and social services and provide services in really poor areas of London.

The £2m for other grants covers everything else, for example Women's Centres (our aim is for at least 1 women's centre in every borough), other resource centres and campaigns on various aspects of the women's struggle.

Although the GLC Manifesto did not commit Labour to setting up a Women's Committee the work of our Committee is certainly within the mainstream of the Manifesto. "Labour's objective will be to use the GLC financial resources to redistribute wealth to the less well-off" (page 81, para 1.6). No-one can deny that women form the largest proportion of the poor and less well-off.

The Women's Committee is not a fringe committee to be awarded least priority. Women are the majority of the population and Labour needs to recognise this.

SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S COMMITTEE BUDGET BID. Pass resolutions at your Women's Section, GMC, trade union branch and write letters of support. The Labour Group needs convincing.

Valerie Wise
Chair, GLC Women's Committee

Keep Cruise OUT of London!

Suddenly nuclear disarmament is popular. Even David Steel does it! True the more neandertal members of the G.L.C. mutter 'Moscow' or claim that Chamberlain and appeasement had nothing to do with them; or they go on to allege war is good for the moral fibre.

Yet the support for our Nuclear Free Zone policy and campaign is gathering enormous support in the London area. The first major victory was the aborting of 'Operation Hard Rock'. Weary Willie Whitelaw now threatens us with more compulsory Civil Defence regulations.

The answer to that will have to be arrived at by us and the other 150 local authorities who declared N.F.Z., in the Manchester Conference. After all, we represent over half the population of the UK

The government threat will entail them publishing the planning assumptions of a major nuclear attack. In 'London After the Bomb' a masterly analysis by 5 young scientists is published the unchallenged figures of deaths in the GLC area, two months after the anticipated attack. The column 'a' indicates low protection factor and 'b' more optimistic values.

	DEAD	INJURED	UNINJURED by blast or Radiation
a.	5,351,000	464,000	1,155,000
b.	4,503,000	765,000	1,702,000



No reader of 'Briefing' needs to have the cost of 'protection' to prepare for this holocaust spelled out; particularly from a government which even now wants to dismantle the Health Service: If only 1% of the population in Greater London were exposed to blast there would be 50,000 people with severe and third degree burns.

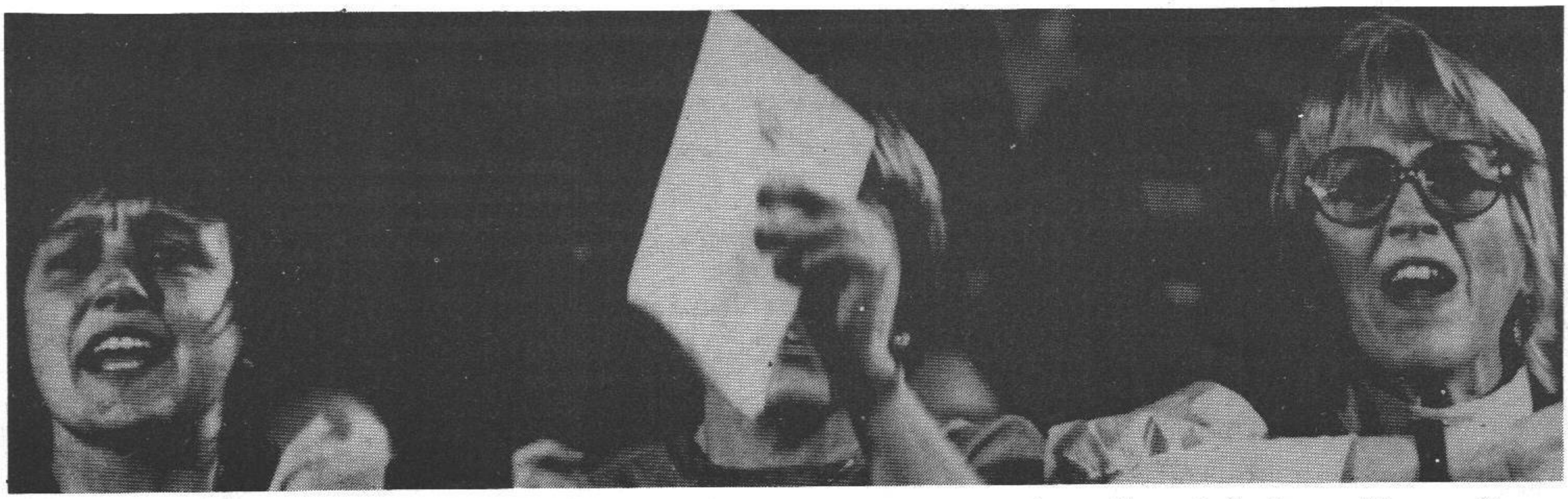
The public debate which we have launched and which we must continue to lead and politicise has less than a year to stop the arrival of cruise missiles in the London area.

The GLC is now beginning its second year of campaigning, and will place resources and high priority on this work. From my experience it will retain the support of the young in particular and the concerned in general.

The prevailing philosophy of a nuclear first strike against the Soviet block places us even nearer the ultimate but the momentum of a mass movement politically organised here and throughout Europe can win.

ILLTYD HARRINGTON
Deputy Leader GLC

LABOUR WOMEN F



Labour women demanding a statement from Gwynneth Dunwoody on the decisions taken at Women's Conference this year. Ms Dunwoody, in her reply on behalf of the NEC, had based her opposition to one demand by arguing that it had been defeated at the Women's Conference. What she failed to point out was that the other three demands contained in this year's resolutions to Annual Conference had all been supported by Women's Conference.

LESSONS OF BETRAYAL

Ann Pettifor
mother of two
and Secretary of WAC/CLPD

In the early 1900s Eleanor Rathbone, Secretary of the Liverpool Suffrage Society, first began to develop a scheme for a guaranteed weekly allowance for mothers; she and other radical suffragists from Lancashire and Cheshire campaigned enthusiastically and tirelessly for the scheme within the then nascent Labour Party of which they were members, as well as in the textile unions where they were active organisers. Then in the 1920s Eleanor wrote a book expanding on her scheme and arguing that the 'family wage' did not take into account the number of children a male breadwinner had to support nor indeed whether he was a good husband or father. The book was called "The disinherited family; a plea for the endowment of the family". How much better, she wrote in it, if the mother could rely on a regular sum to allow her to feed and clothe her children.

Fifty years later, in 1974, the Labour Party finally heeded Eleanor's plea and the generations of Labour women that echoed her call. In the manifesto of October that year there was a pledge "to introduce a new child allowance to be paid (including the first child) usually to mothers". In 1976, soon after the only woman member of a Labour Cabinet, Barbara Castle, had been sacked by Jim Callaghan, a small group of male Labour ministers colluded with an equally small group of male trade unionists on the National Economic Development Council – to ditch the pledge on the basis of its cost and because of assumed opposition from men. Their collusion could have gone unnoticed, as there are very few women and even fewer mothers to be found in the corridors of Whitehall. Outside of Whitehall mothers were dispersed and isolated in their homes – unable to give political or organised expression to their needs. Luckily, an unusually bold bureaucrat leaked the plan to the Child Poverty Action Group; *New Society* published the story and the ensuing scandal forced the Labour Cabinet to think again.

TRUST IN MALE COMRADES BETRAYED

The child benefit scandal left an indelible mark on the consciousness of Labour women; their trust in male comrades had, more markedly and more blatantly than ever before, been betrayed. But their response to the betrayal was slow, considered and – typically for Labour women – hesitant in uttering the accusation of treachery. In examining their position they found there were lessons to be learnt from the betrayal. The most important of these lay in the weakness of the Women's Organisation itself; in its failure to advance, coherently and forthrightly, the demands of working women – both those isolated in the home and those on the shop floor – demands underpinned by demonstrations of popular and organised support. Above all their failure meant that they did not have an organised 'movement' to use as a training ground for women needed to act as leaders and representatives in forums of power within Parliament, Whitehall, the Labour Party and the TUC. It was no wonder then that so few women surfaced in these forums; those being prepared for the role were seldom given voice, let alone organised into popular winning campaigns.

Three years after the child benefit fiasco, women in the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy set up a Women's Action Committee (WAC) "to campaign for action, including positive discrimination, to ensure that women are fully represented at every level of Party life, and thereby to strengthen the fight for a fundamental shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of women as well as working men." The resolution was moved by Frances Morrell who herself had just spent a number of years in Whitehall where, she said: *"if everybody had been in spacesuits except me, that would have been not much odder than being a lone working class woman with a child and a home, amongst men."*

WAC's work has generated enormous interest amongst women's organisations within the Party. Over 1,100 attended this year's Annual Women's Conference – more than twice the usual number – and demanded that the women's organisation be given direct access to the Party's powerful policy- and decision-making bodies. These demands of the Women's Conference resulted in 26 resolutions being submitted to this year's Annual Conference; all of them dealt with the use of positive discrimination as a means of strengthening the women's organisation, and improving the representation of women at "every level of Party life".

Once again an alliance of Party and trade union leaders combined to defeat the demands by maximum use of the block vote; but whereas in 1976 there was no organisation through which women could register their dismay at this negative reflex reaction to their demands, and prepare to mobilise even stronger forces in support of the demands – this year WAC are preparing to organise campaigns at local, regional and national level.

Work has already begun in putting up candidates in all the regions for the new National Labour Women's Committee, which will this year be elected at Regional Women's Conferences. WAC's nominees for the London Regional Women's Conference elections are **Madeline Long** of Lewisham West – for the South East; and **Lynette Savings** of Islington Central for the North East of London. A new National Labour Women's Committee committed to strengthening the women's organisation will provide an important new impetus to WAC's campaign.

REGIONAL EXECUTIVE

Next WAC intends to campaign to strengthen women's organisations regionally. The first step in this process will be to give Regional Women's Conferences direct access to Regional Conferences, and the Regional Executive. In London

London Labour Briefing, page seventeen

FIGHT FOR POWER

Regional Executive ~ End this male ghetto....

Women are demanding more power in decision making at the level of the Regional Executive of the London Labour Party. Brent East Women's Section have submitted a resolution to the Regional Women's Conference demanding at least 8 places on the Regional EC to be set aside for women. Tooting Women's Section supports this demand in principle but has submitted an amendment suggesting another formulation for getting at least 12 women onto the EC.

Our amendment is for at least 4 places to be set aside for the women's organisation, plus at least 1 place in each area of the constituency section (giving at least 4 places in this section) and plus at least 4 places in the trade union section.

We believe that it is essential that women represent not only the women's organisation of the Party but also the other sections in the Party, particularly the constituency and trade union sections. At the moment some of the constituency area sections are in effect men's sections, as only men get elected and only men get nominated. We have to end this male ghetto.

labour women FIGHT for equality

To overcome the problem of women not even getting nominated to the Regional EC, never mind elected, we have also demanded in our amendment that each Constituency Labour Party would be allowed to nominate up to 2 people, in which case one of whom must be a woman. This will not only mean that women have a better chance of being nominated but also have a better chance of being elected. Who knows, perhaps more than one woman would then get elected in each area!

Our amendment also asks for any working party set up by the Regional EC to contain at least 50% women. This is to ensure that never again do we have working parties writing the GLC Manifesto consisting entirely of men. The Regional EC will probably set up new working parties in the summer to start formulating the GLC Manifesto for 1985. This makes this part of our amendment very important for the future.

The Labour Party has to show that it really does believe in women's rights and positive action. The Brent East resolution and the Tooting amendment give an opportunity for putting words into action. SUPPORT THEM.

Valerie Wise
Tooting Women's Section

(Continued from previous page)

WAC is supporting Brent East Labour Party's call for a Women's Section to be established on the Regional Executive, to be composed of eight London women; and that these women be elected by the London Women's Conference. To this end WAC urges London constituencies to submit the following resolution as their Regional Conference resolution:

"This Conference, recognising that the Labour Party's Women's Organisation could make a major contribution to the London Labour Party's campaigning, policy and decision-making processes, supports the demand of the London Women's Conference that eight places on the Executive be reserved for women, and that these women be elected annually by the Regional Women's Conference. Accordingly Conference instructs the London Regional Executive to bring to the next London Regional Conference, constitutional amendments that will give effect to this demand."

NOW IT'S A FIGHT IN THE UNIONS

BY A vote of 5-1 at Labour Party Conference the male dominated trade unions showed women both inside and outside the Party what they were thought of. That was the strength of the vote against the minimal demands which emanated from the Labour Women's Conference asking for a better chance to contribute in the major debates at Conference; that the women's section of the NEC be elected at Women's Conference; that Women's Organisers be women and that it be mandatory for a woman to be included on every Parliamentary shortlist.

However this is not the time to be depressed, a real step forward was taken at conference – now is the time to keep on the offensive. We have many ways open to us to keep up the pressure to win these issues. We must raise the matters within our trades unions. This is something we have neglected to do very badly. Most of them just did not understand the issues. From the Trade Union delegates I spoke to at conference I feel sure if these ideas had been put across before we would not have had such a massive vote against us. We must raise these basic demands at our trade union branches and from there to our Annual Conferences. So that next time there can be no doubt in the minds of the delegations to Labour Party Conference that women in the unions as well as in the Party are not prepared to continue to accept such a massive rejection of basic demands for equality.

The Women's Action Committee of the CLPD are circulating the following resolution and I would urge all comrades to ensure that it is passed through their own trade union branches to go to their Annual Conference.

"This Union calls on its delegation to Labour Party Annual Conference to support the demands of the Labour Party Women's Conference for the strengthening of the Women's Organisation through the formal constituting of the Women's Conference. In particular we urge them to support Women's Conference demands for greater access to the Party's supreme policy making forum, the Annual Conference. Further, noting the under-representation of Labour women in Parliament this conference urges its delegation to support demands for positive action in the Parliamentary selection process."

Jo Richardson

One other item of immediate concern arising from this year's conference . . . Obviously the new NEC will want the chairs of all the Party NEC Committees under right wing control. Will this mean that Jo Richardson, longtime and steadfast campaigner for women's rights, will be replaced by one of their 'honorary men' as chair of the Women's Committee.

labour women FIGHT for equality

In particular will the woman who used her influence as Chair at this year's Annual Women's Conference to oppose the demands of the majority, namely Anne Davies, be the one to replace Jo? If this happens it must be the signal for a massive outcry from women within the Party.

Sisters – this is just the beginning and we will win.

JANET PICKERING
(Croydon NW CLP Women's Section)



WHERE I STAND

ARTHUR LATHAM . . .

I will be fighting Paddington again at the next General Election. I expect to win it.

In 1979 we fought on socialist policies and just lost by 106 votes. It was an achievement not to go down much more heavily, looking at what was happening all around us.

This time we shall again fight on socialist policies. The Party nationally has caught up with us a bit since 1979. But the handicap then was that many, especially the low paid, could recall most immediately particular non-socialist policies such as the Labour Government's 5% pay limit. Again this time the problem will be to convince potential supporters that we *will* abandon nuclear weapons, that we *will* come out of the EEC, that we *will* redistribute power and wealth to ordinary working people, that we *will* intervene massively in the economy to attain full employment once more.

Since 1979 many new people have joined the Paddington CLP and I estimate that more than half the GMC that selected me was new. This meant that I had to declare my convictions and beliefs afresh, so that selection and accountability were a reality. There were in fact six others shortlisted and the Paddington Party practised what it preaches in terms of the comprehensive and representative character of the slate of nominees appearing before the Selection Conference.

It took more than one ballot to reach a result but I know that I have the virtually unanimous backing of the delegates, in the same way as in Bermondsey, where I was runner-up and not selected, the Party now overwhelmingly backs and accepts the majority choice.

Had the Paddington Selection Conference's decision been different there would have been no sour grapes from me, no allegation of plots, no call for an NEC inquiry, no demand for the expulsion of any group! I do deplore those who give lip service to the idea of reselection and then cry 'foul' if it does not favour them!

Of course, in Paddington, as elsewhere, our biggest task is to get our policies known and to overcome the false image and the bogus agenda promoted by the media. The truth is that radical action is essential to tackle Unemployment, Youth Unemployment, Black Youth Unemployment. The fact is that pussyfooting on bad housing and lousy landlords will not bring results. So that in practical terms so-called 'moderation' means a feeble approach to jobs and homes, whereas what are termed 'extremist' policies offer the only hope of opportunities for work and the chance to live in better accommodation at a reasonable rent.

Yet, no doubt, the 'Express' or the 'Excess' will list me as one of the "forty most dangerous" once again, and some people in bad living conditions and without work will be frightened off by such 'red scares'. The irony is that as well as having no foundation this false propaganda actually contradicts the needs and aspirations of the very people at whom it is aimed. I recall so vividly those who came to see me worried that a wealth tax meant robbing them of their few hundred in the Post Office.

Electors in Paddington know that tough action is necessary to curb private landlords (including the Church Commissioners) and that strong and positive policies alone can halt and reverse the ever worsening unemployment situation. It is on this basis that we shall be campaigning.

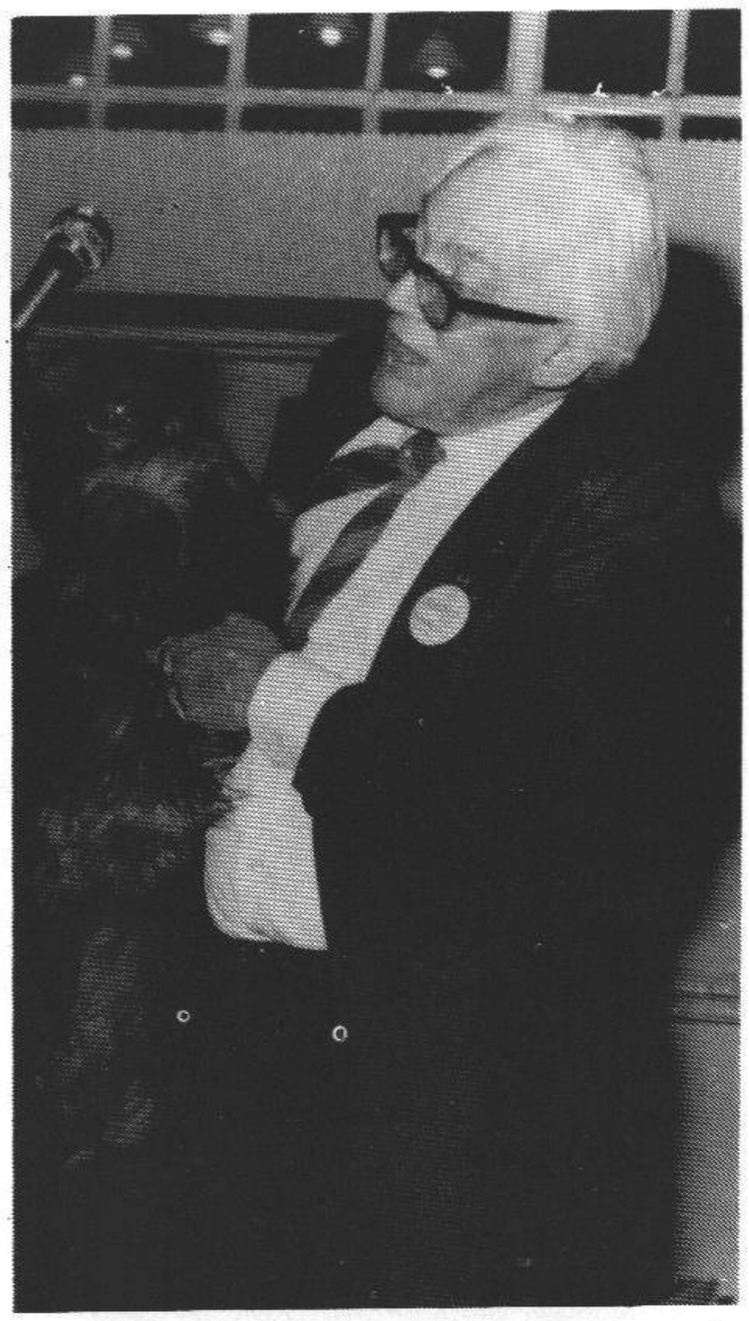
But I know, as all Left realists know, that the battle to win the election will be matched by the struggle we shall have to face afterwards for the implementation of socialist answers to the problems. The Paddington Party and I will be at one in both tasks.

The Death of the Tribune Group

Chris Wild

Those of is involved in the day to day struggles in our local communities and trade unions have known for a long time that the Tribune Group is dead. If some 23 MPs have now also belatedly come to that realisation, the only surprise is that it took them so long.

Of course, the Tribune Group has not always been as ineffective as it is today. In 1969, for instance, the Group played a leading role in the defeat of the Castle-Wilson anti-union *In Place of Strife* proposals. But perhaps the rot set in very soon after when in the 1970 shadow cabinet elections, Reg Prentice topped the poll for the Tribune slate.



DOWNHILL ALL THE WAY

From there it has been downhill all the way. During the 1974-79 Labour Government, twelve Liberals had more effective influence on Government policy than 80 odd Tribune MPs, who were unable or unwilling to prevent the cuts, to force the implementation of the alternative economic strategy or to halt the slide into mass unemployment and wage restraint.

Although individual members played a leading role, as a group Tribune has not been involved in the democratic reforms that have done more than anything else to change the monolithic Right-wing control of the party. Last year, of course, a dozen leading members of the Group handed victory in the deputy leadership election on a plate to Denis Healey. This year they have allowed a damaging and divisive witch-hunt to take place under their very eyes with scarcely a whisper of protest. As the Right-wing Manifesto Group was organising daily deputations to Michael Foot demanding the purging or expulsion of this or that group or individual, no counter-pressure was forthcoming from the Tribune Group in yet another grave dereliction of its duty. Finally, the Group itself, in defiance of virtually all other groups on the Left, decided to apply for inclusion on the witch-hunter's charter or register.

DID NOT ORGANISE OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT

Part of the reason for its failure is historical. The Tribune Group was originally allowed to operate under sufferance in Parliament on the implicit understanding that it did *not* organise or agitate or develop any links whatsoever with the Left outside Parliament. As a more tolerant regime developed within the Parliamentary Labour Party, the Tribune Group saw no reason to disturb its cosy, safe position and continued to operate in isolation from the rest of the movement.

Secondly, the Group lacks any cohesion. Many of its members undoubtedly join merely to create some spurious Left-wing veneer to keep their local parties happy. Tribune rebellions scarcely ever gain the support of more than half the members in the Group, and those on the Tribune slate for shadow cabinet elections regularly receive only half the votes of Tribune members. The Group's weekly Monday meeting scarcely ever sees more than 25 members present, and often only a mere handful will turn up.

But above all, the Tribune Group steadfastly refuses to campaign. No less than 24 Tribune Group members (about one-third of the total membership) are now Front Bench spokesmen, and increasingly the Shadow Cabinet line has become indistinguishable from the Tribune line. In some instances this is because the line of the Front Bench under Michael Foot has swung to the Left. In most instances, the shadow cabinet line remains as reactionary and Right-wing as ever it was.

Two recent issues illustrate the problem well. A large number of MPs grouped together to oppose the Falklands war. An even larger number supported the ASLEF strike when Sid Weighell was holding secret meetings with the shadow cabinet urging them to denounce the strike. In neither instance was the initiative the work of the Tribune Group, but was the work of a small number of individuals within the Group.

NEW GROUP

Initially a new group will inevitably be smaller. But that does not mean that this is a further case of the Left marginalising itself. If the new Group is prepared to organise around specific issues to build a broader base of support for that issue in a way that the Tribune Group has proved incapable of doing, if it is prepared to open its meetings and work with Left activists in the constituencies and the unions, if it is prepared to recognise and support the importance of extra-parliamentary struggle, then a new group will be a tremendous fillip to the Left in general which has lost all confidence in the Tribune Group as the vehicle to express its views in the parliamentary arena.

The Tyndale Affair

In October 1981 I wrote a short article entitled "The Tyndale Affair" in *Briefing*. One year later, the Tyndale Affair has raised its head again — this time not in *Briefing* but on the front page of the *Times Education Supplement*, under the title — *Ellis Makes Job Protest*. In the article it reported that Terry Ellis, the former Head of William Tyndale School, sacked five years ago after a public enquiry, this week accused London's ruling Labour politicians of reneging on a promise to re-employ him.

The so-called Tyndale affair has been described as the Moscow Trials of the Inner London Education Authority and led to great bitterness in the ILEA Labour group and in the Islington Labour Parties and constituencies. Despite the undoubted fact that the Labour Group had unanimously agreed to seek ways and means of re-employing Terry Ellis even before the GLC/ILEA elections, and the solemn assurances given by the current Left leadership of the GLC/ILEA to Terry Ellis in person, no action has been taken. Contradictory excuses such as (i) that no resolution of this nature was ever passed by the ILEA group, or (ii) that Terry Ellis had been offered a post by the ILEA but had refused it, or even (iii) that he had already been re-employed by the ILEA.

The time for dissenting is past and a "Justice for the Tyndale 5 Committee" is being formed to activate our comrades in ILEA. As I wrote previously — the time has surely come for the new Labour Administration fortified by a radical sweep through the ranks to make amends for this affair. These words remain as true today as they were a year ago.

ELLIS HILLMAN
Hornsey CLP

TIME TO CHANGE THE VOTING SYSTEM?

Power to the Constituencies

The initiative of the Institute of Workers Control in calling a conference of constituency Labour parties to discuss the powerlessness of constituency delegates at party conference is a welcome and timely one. The short-comings of a system which gives trade unions more than nine times as many conference votes as delegates from the 635 constituencies were well-illustrated at this year's conference when trade union votes imposed the task of carrying out the expulsion of Militant supporters upon constituency parties whose representatives voted by about five to one against a purge.

BLOCK VOTE MUST REMAIN

But before contemplating any reform, it is essential to understand precisely what it is we are trying to achieve. Firstly, to alter the balance of conference voting is *not* to attack either the federal structure of the party or to interfere with the mechanism of the block vote itself which must remain as the expression of the trade unions' collective, democratic decision-making processes. No, altering the balance of forces must have one end in sight, even above the financial argument that the constituencies' contribution is not adequately reflected in their meagre nine per cent of conference votes — namely, to prevent the industrial wing of the party imposing its views upon the constituency parties, or, indeed, *vice versa*.

The best formula for achieving this, I believe, is one which gives parity to the industrial and political wings of the movement — that is to say, fifty per cent each to trade unions and constituency parties. But within that, there must be safe-guards, because such a system still theoretically contains the possibility of one wing imposing its view upon the other. For instance, there was a proposal before this year's conference calling for a 24-hour general strike. It would clearly be wrong for, say, 49 per cent of the constituency parties to achieve a majority in alliance with two small unions, for argument's sake let us say ACTT and the Bakers, and to impose a strike call upon the rest of an unwilling trade union movement. Equally, of course, it was wrong for the trade unions to impose the Register upon unwilling constituency parties.

PARITY BETWEEN THE TWO WINGS

I believe that this situation can best be overcome within a framework of parity between the two wings of the movement by inserting a safe-guard which requires that in order to be carried, any proposal must receive the support of at least one-third of the voting strength within each of trade union and constituency sections. This would ensure that the constituencies could not impose a strike call upon the trade unions, and that the unions would not have been able to impose the current purge upon constituency parties. At present, even if something enjoys the unanimous support of constituency parties, it requires about 45 per cent of the union votes to be carried. Conversely, at present the unions are in a position to carry proposals with nil support from constituency delegates. Such a reform of the system might also solve the problem of the current unsatisfactory two-thirds card vote requirement for something to be included in the party programme.

SEPARATE CONFERENCE

The idea of a regular and separate conference for constituency parties within the party structure also has much to commend it. After all, the trade unions, the Young Socialists and women in the party all hold their own separate national conferences. If the constitutencies held such a conference in early Spring, it would also play a useful role in giving an indication of the views of constituency parties to trade unions before the round of union conferences began.

Above all, we must not allow such proposals to be denounced as "anti-union" when, in fact, they are precisely the opposite. The precedent has, of course, already been set by the electoral college to elect the party leader and deputy-leader, and such reforms are an essential and necessary step to ensure that the constituencies and trade unions work *together* with one aim and a common purpose.

Nigel Williamson

Those of us who have campaigned for a change in the balance of conference voting over the last few years are used to being denounced as "anti-union". But in fact a growing and influential number of trade unionists are themselves becoming acutely aware of the anomalies of the present system. The General and Municipal Workers in its evidence to the 1980 Labour Party Commission of Enquiry stated that the balance of conference voting had swung too far in favour of the trade unions. Alex Kitson of the TGWU made similar comments last year and they have recently been echoed by Tom Sawyer of NUPE. Those three unions between them control two and a half million votes.

Fragment the Block Vote

Bernard Misrahi (Vauxhall CLP)

It isn't just because Sid Weighell voted for the wrong NEC candidates or that Hugh Scanlon twice, 'by mistake', cast the AUEW's 800,000 votes against mandatory reselection. It isn't just because 4 or 5 union leaders can carve up the vote beforehand. It is also because there's no way a delegation of thirty men (and maybe a few women) can represent adequately the wishes of upwards of a million Labour Party members. We must fragment the block vote.

Three years ago, Vauxhall CLP responded to the Enquiry on Party Structure by suggesting that the blocks be broken up so that each vote was no larger than, say, 50,000 votes. Terry Duffy would no longer hold 800,000 votes, but this block could be broken up, for example, to thirty or so delegations based on the AUEW districts.

How the large blocks would be divided — by district, region, trade group or whatever — would depend on each individual union, but break up they would. This would allow for district rather than national mandating meetings and thus involve rather more members in Labour Party decisions. It might also reduce the influence of General Secretaries and Head Office full-time officials a bit.

What comes to mind when you hear the result of a card vote? 5.2 million for — 1.6 million against. 5.2 million what? Certainly not conscious members of the Labour Party. As individual membership has stagnated, affiliated membership of the Party has increased. Does anyone believe this is a sign of increased support, or is it because unions arbitrarily raise the number they affiliate on. (Don't worry, buying votes costs money — they usually under-affiliate.)

How many of these 6 million political levy payers actually KNOW they are Labour Party members with a vote at Conference? Some leftists talk glibly about making the block vote 'accountable'. But how can it be made accountable to those who don't know or barely know, that they have a vote. How can any ordinary member of, say, NUPE, feel they are influencing such a powerful delegation when they have no access to any mandating meeting. I am a reasonably aware member of ASTMS but I only have the vaguest idea of how my delegation is formed.

The Labour Party structure is shot through with anomalies. Why shouldn't CLPs have only as many votes as they have members, rather than 1,000 minimum. (OK, the scrutineers will need to buy another calculator.) Why should unions have 10 times as many votes as CLPs when they pay only 1/6 of the affiliation fee per member and when in the electoral college to elect the Deputy Leader they have only one and a third times the votes?

You say, "The union barons would never voluntarily share out their power". Maybe, but no-one has pushed the issue yet. Block votes of 50,000 are probably still too large, but their creation would increase the involvement of Labour Party members necessary for any decisions to be actually carried out.

Editors' Note: I've heard this one before. Please let me have your *views. No more than 500 words, please.*

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights

The next step after Labour Party conference

Andy Conway
Croydon North West CLP

Gay Liberation made quite an impact on Conference this year. The Manchester Branch of the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights organised our Fringe meeting and publicity campaign superbly. An abusive series of press articles about Gays in the Labour Party helped to swell attendance. For their pains the Sun, the News of the World and the Daily Mail were expelled from the meeting.

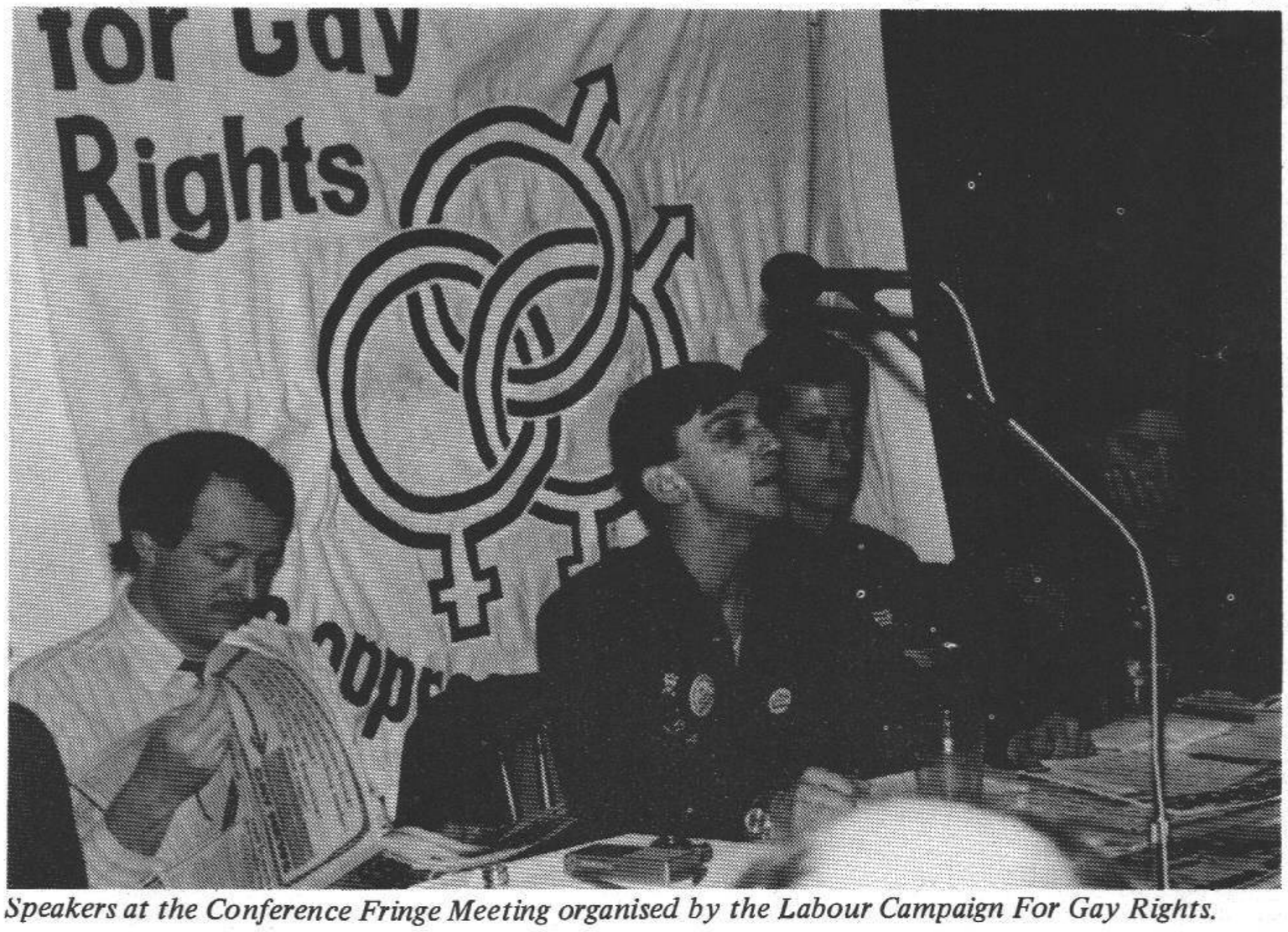
The question now is where to go from here? When reference back was moved at the beginning of Conference Derek Gladwin gave the usual parrot-like response that only one CLP had submitted a resolution on the subject. In order to get a debate at conference we will have to produce a model resolution to be adopted by as many constituencies as possible — a difficult task considering the weight of other issues which Party members are anxious to see debated at Conference. It is also important that openly gay delegates are elected. Our viewpoint on education, employment, housing, social services and the media is never heard at Conference. It always helps to talk of Gays as 'us' rather than 'them'. Amendments to various motions on the Conference Agenda will be required to ensure that the needs of Gays are considered.

The official thinking of the Party on homosexuality seems to remain rooted in the ideas of the Wolfenden Report. Women are considered to have no independent sexuality anyway — so lesbianism is ignored. The attitude towards male homosexuality is that it is rather nasty and unfortunate but can be allowed as long as we 'do it' where nobody else can find out about it and when we are old enough to be certain we know what we want. Gay people have no need to accept this — we must assert the right to live *openly* as Gay without harassment or discrimination. We must demand equal access to all public services and the right to have our needs considered in every area of policy making.

NOT NEARLY ENOUGH

Despite all the waffle about inequalities and discrimination in 'Labour's Programme 1982', the NEC apparently sees nothing wrong with the statement that they will 'consider' introducing equality before the law for Gay men. The programme includes a few useful proposals but they are not nearly enough. Will Lesbians still lose custody of their children under a Labour Government? Will Gay service women and men continue to face Court Martial and imprisonment? Will teenagers be told about local Gay Groups? Will the contributions of Lesbians and Gay men towards politics and the arts be ignored in school curricula? And will the hopelessly inadequate sex education available at schools continue to make the assumption that all the pupils are straight?

Another task for the coming year is to ensure that the needs of Gays are taken into account in local government. Some councils such as the Greater London Council have led the way by opposing discrimination against Gay employees and giving grants to Gay Groups but more campaigning is needed in other areas.



Speakers at the Conference Fringe Meeting organised by the Labour Campaign For Gay Rights.

ROLE IN THE PARTY

Let us also examine the role Gays play in the Party. In the last issue of London Labour Briefing David Poolman pointed out that many CLP secretaries are Gay. We are often assigned these time-consuming administrative tasks which prisoners of the nuclear family strive to avoid. But these can be positions of considerable power should we care to exercise it.

The modest gains we have made are not due to gracious acts of kindness by the Party hierarchy. They are the result of years of determined campaigning by Gay activists both inside and outside the Labour Movement. As Tony Benn said at our Fringe meeting, the oppressed have never won a victory without a struggle. We must not accept the inadequate statement of the NEC with servile gratitude but capitalise on the progress we have made and continue to campaign for all our needs to be met.

Brent Retreat on Gay Rights

In August of this year Brent Council proposed to advertise for community governors of its schools in 'Gay News' (along with the ethnic and feminist press). Following protests orchestrated by Brent North MP Rhodes Boyson the proposal was narrowly defeated, with the education committee chair, Bryan Stark, reversing his position and opposing the proposal, along with Councillors Bryson, Sealy and Shaw. Boyson's attitude (that it was 'an affront to the decencies of the vast majority of local families') came as no surprise but the fact that some members of Brent's Labour Group appeared to agree with him is nothing short of a disgrace.

The extent to which the Labour Group believe in the equal opportunity employment policy which they apparently support must be called into question by this decision. The recent overwhelming support given by the Brent LGC to the placing of the ad is to be welcomed, but this must be carried through the Group before any real progress can be made.

The immediate issue must be to force the Group to agree to the placing of job adverts in 'Gay News'; this demand will in itself force into the open many of the arguments (working with children, etc.) which need to be confronted and defeated if the Party is ever to adequately support gay rights. Until we succeed in committing the Party, and Labour Councils, to a public position of support for the rights of gay people to equal participation in all aspects of the community, the Party has no right to expect the support of those gay people.

Between now and 1983 Conference the issue of gay rights must become a priority throughout the party.

Dave Statham
Brent East CLP

TEBBIT'S NEW TRAINING PROGRAMME

A TORY U-TURN WE DON'T NEED

As well as boosting its war and police-repression budgets the Tory Government is making public expenditure increases of over 100 per cent in the area of youth training. In 1981/2 they spent £460 million on the Youth Opportunities Programme and allied forms of training. For 1983/4 they intend to spend over twice that amount — £950 million, and in 1984 they are going to increase it again to £1.1 billion. The reason for this increase is not just to cover the rising number of young unenmployed being contained on the Youth Opportunities Programme, but also to launch Tebbit's 'New Training Programme', which emerged as the Tories answer to the riots of last year.



JOHN HARRIS

So how does the new scheme differ from YOP? The Youth Training Scheme is aimed primarily at minimum age school leavers i.e. 16 year olds. YOP is currently available to anyone under 18 (and until recently to 19 years old too). Apart from the reduction in age range, the YTS is supposed to offer better training than the maligned YOP. However, the training consists of 3 months training in college, and 6 months work experience on employers' premises (currently known as WEEP). Both of these types of provision are currently available on YOP.

The main difference between YOP and the Tebbit plan is that the employers will be *paid* £1,850 for every trainee they take on. The condition attached to the payment is that the employer has to take on more young people than he or she normally would, and has to provide training. This may seem laudible enough — in practice it works as follows. If an employer normally takes on say 2 young employees a year, he or she would need to increase the intake to say 5, and arrange for training (either college or in their own training school). They would then be paid not for the additional 3 but for all 5, a total of £9,750.

Moreover, employers can get an even better deal for themselves by offering their current young employees the 'training allowance' of £25 per week, if they want to be included in the training programme, thus saving themselves the cost of wages and National Insurance contributions. So while the employer is paid to take on free labour, what kind of deal does the young worker get?

They get the 'allowance' of £25 per week instead of a wage! They are not covered by National Insurance (so what will happen after accidents at work?) In short they have no employment rights. Their only vestige of hope is to refuse the offer of training and try to insist on the status of employee. Their search for employment in 1983 will be even more difficult than it is now. Young people have traditionally entered the unskilled end of the job market, but now the office junior and general trainee posts will easily be replaced by this scheme, because it offers the employer a worker with 3 months training as opposed to none.

A THREAT TO ADULT WORKERS

What price your job too? This scheme poses a threat to adult workers, particularly those in semiskilled and unskilled jobs. It particularly threatens workers in the public sector. There are already pilot schemes running in one London hospital, where trainees learn the work of porters, record clerks etc. Hospitals, town halls, schools and colleges are all being squeezed by Tory cuts and many of them will see this scheme as a source of useful revenue if not of cheap labour. Why should the Tories stop with young workers? They could easily revamp the TOPs courses with something similar for adults and break into the skilled job market.

It comes as no surprise that the Tories put money into the hands of their supporters. What is more surprising is that the TUC leaders have put up virtually no resistence to this package, which strikes at the heart of everything the trade union movement stands for. The only thing they have seriously opposed was Tebbit's threat to withdraw Supplementary Benefit from school leavers who refused to go on the scheme. Tebbit backed down (temporarily) from this threat because of 'opposition by groups closely concerned with the running of the scheme' — notably the TUC and the CBI (who did not want the problem of unwilling conscripts in the factories). By withdrawing the threat to impose SB penalties, Tebbit won the support of the TUC and the CBI, even though he stated his intention to review this position in a year's time.

CAREERS WORKERS ACTION GROUP

Opposition came from another source too — a group called the Careers Workers Action Group, which formed in December 1981 to oppose the Tebbit plan. We drew support from careers workers all over London, from youth workers, teachers and from YOP supervisors. We aimed our opposition views at MPs, Trades Councils and the Press. The Tories rebuffed us, the SDP ignored us and a few Labour MPs allowed us to talk to them.

The only MP who took our campaign seriously was Frank Dobson, who spoke at our public meeting and invited us to talk to the London Labour Groups of MPs. A few trade union branches adopted our position, and some even donated money to the campaign, which was gratefully received. Support also came from a range of people already working with young people, but the diffidence of the Labour Party and the left had to be experienced to be believed. For example, at the Womens Fightback conference earlier this year we ran a workshop which was attended by only 2 people! At the briefing meeting for the London Labour MPs they ignored our grounds for opposing the scheme on principle and wanted to know how we proposed the scheme should be made more acceptable! (This is the handful who condescended to attend)

The YTS needs to be taken much more seriously than this — is will affect all workers of all ages, by pressing down on wage levels and on employment rights. It will also affect the fortunes of the Labour Party. Youth unemployment is an election issue, and the Tebbit package will be sold as the Tories showing their determination to help young people. It can succeed as a vote catcher unless the Labour Party begins to discuss the problem and to organise on behalf of and with young people.

Labour Councils are now in a position of having to decide whether or not to implement the YTS. They can decide not to take part, but this would allow various private sector organisations to apply to be 'managing agencies' for the YTS in the area. At least if the local authority takes on the role of the managing agency it can try to ensure that the schemes do provide training and not just exploitation. They can ensure that the same is not made available to firms who are using it to substitute for full time or part time jobs. I realise this is a reformist 'solution' and probably not a solution at all, but we have to face the fact that the campaign to stop Tebbit is now lost and the YTS will be with us within a few months.

However, we need to demand that Labour Councils attach clear conditions to their involvement. Every Labour Council must state its intention to withdraw from the scheme, and not to make its facilities available to other managing agencies, if the SB penalties are introduced after Tebbit's review. They must also ensure that their Careers Offices are staffed up to the level where monitoring of all the employers in the scheme can be done properly, and should demand that the Government pay for this. They must also state their opposition to the idea that the Careers Service functions be transferred to the Manpower Services Commission.

Most seriously of all, Labour Councillors must begin to develop their own policies for youth training to meet the economic needs of their own areas and of their young people. By the time of the general election the Labour Party must have its own alternative on offer.

For more information, or to subscribe to our bulletin, contact CAREERS WORKERS ACTION GROUP, 24 Montpelier Grove, London, NW5 2XD.

Glenda Bennett (Member of CWAG in a personal capacity).

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

The response we received to our request for articles on gays was so good, that we were unfortunately not able to print them all in last month's Supplement. In addition, the response to the last Supplement both from readers and from the press (those of you who are not Sun, Daily Mail or News of the World readers (!) will have missed this!) took us by surprise. We are therefore delaying the feature on pregnancy and childbirth until the next Supplement, so that we can continue this debate.

Personal Politics:

WE IGNORE IT AT OUR PERIL!

Last month's *London Labour Briefing* Street Life Supplement on homosexuality attracted quite extensive media attention. The *News of the World* of Sunday 26th September under the headline "Gay Row Rocks Labour" said that the Supplement contained "outrageous and sometimes obscene articles by homosexuals, lesbians and a transvestite".

The *Daily Mail* the next day (the first day of the Labour Party Conference), referred to some of the articles as "offensively blatant" and then went on to quote extensively from them and even found it necessary to print the home addresses of a couple of people who wrote the articles. But what seemed to worry the papers more than anything was that there is: "A strident campaign to win more freedom and rights for homosexuals (which) is threatening to undermine the respectable (sic) image of the Labour Party" (*Daily Mail*). The *News of the World* claimed that "Party Leaders (which ones?) are furious over attempts to drag Mr Foot into the row over homosexuals. They see the moves as an attempt to discredit him in the prime conference battle over the future of the far-Left Militant Tendency supporters". In other words those campaigning for gay rights are so much beyond the pale, so unrespectable and 'disgusting' that it is assumed that anyone associated with them (such as Michael Foot) will become automatically discredited. The *News of the World* illustrated their article with a photograph of Ken Livingstone and Peter Tatchell which probably gives the clearest indication of their targets. The day before the *News of the World* article the *Sun* (25th September) had published a disgraceful article



NEWS OF THE WORLD

SEPTEMBER 26, 1982 — BRITAIN'S BIGGEST SELLING NEWSPAPER — No. 7,239 PRICE 25p

GAY ROW ROCKS LABOUR

THE Labour Party was plagued with fresh turmoil yesterday in a row over demands for freedom for homosexuals.

By GORDON LEAK

Daily Mail

Daily Mail, Monday, September 27 1982

BRIEFING

LABOUR at BLACKPOOL

MPs SHOCKED BY EXPLICIT SEX PAMPHLET

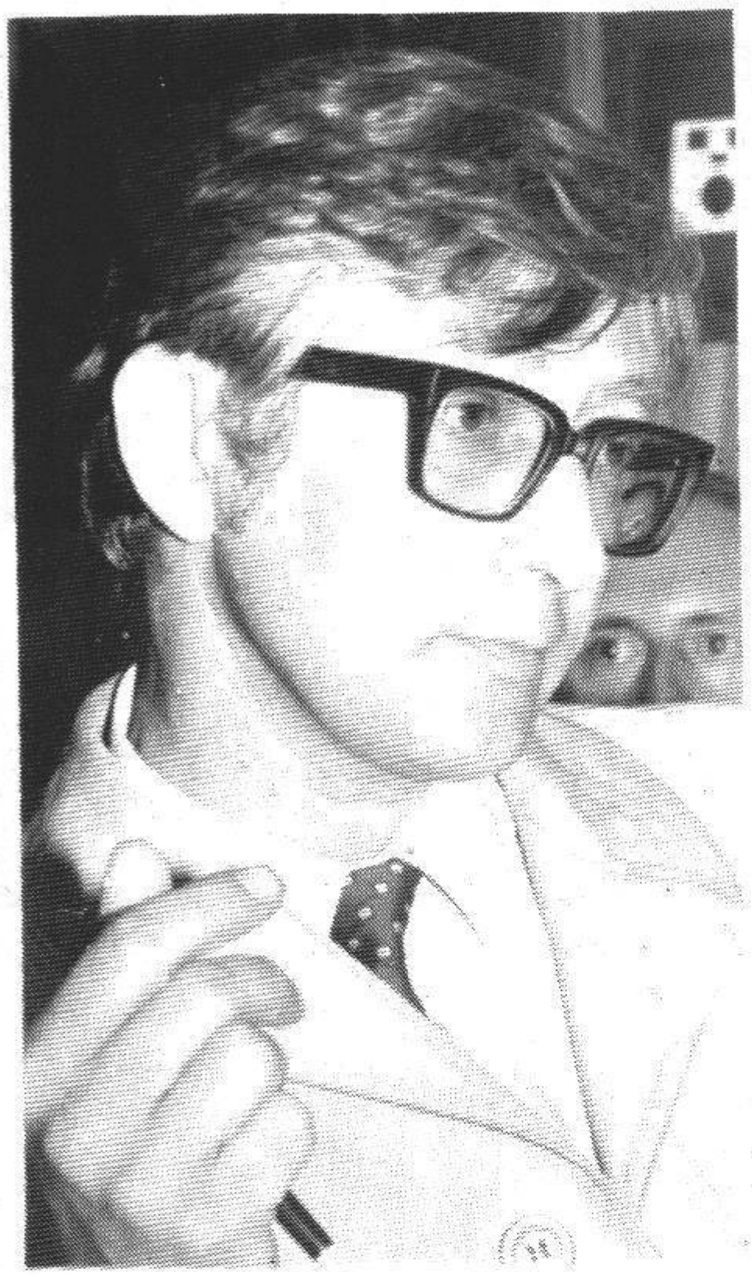
Foot upset by gay campaigners

A STRIDENT campaign to win more freedom and rights for homosexuals is threatening to undermine the respectable image of the Labour Party at Blackpool this week.

By GORDON GREIG Political Editor

The confessions of a transvestite

Continued on next page



Gordon Leak (News of the World);



John Harrison (Sun);



Paul Johnson (Daily Mail).

Photo: Cath Tate

Journalists thrown out at the Labour Campaign For Gay Rights Conference Fringe Meeting.

(Continued from previous page)

about Peter Tatchell which was a mixture of rumours and fabrications about his private life designed to discredit him publicly as much as they could.

VULNERABLE

When the gutter press decides to investigate your private life you become very vulnerable, public property in the hands of unsympathetic journalists. My husband wrote the article about being a transvestite in last month's *Briefing* and some comrades have taken the attitude of "well what did you expect if you write about your private life in *Briefing*". Apart from overlooking the value of discussing sexuality in a non-sexist way, this attitude assumes that the gutter press will always operate the way they do, has to be tolerated in doing so and takes no blame for their actions. It was not necessary for a *Daily Mail* reporter to pester the 16-year-old daughter of Mary Evans, who wrote one of the articles, to question her.

There are people though who have been the subject of continual private harassment by the press. Reporters have found it necessary to lean on Tony Benn's front door bell all night. Perhaps they were hoping he would call the police to get rid of them; then they could write a story about him throwing reporters out and being an enemy of free speech.
Reporters have stood outside Ken Livingstone's flat all night to see who he emerges with in the morning.
Reporters went to Peter Tatchell's family in Australia and told them that their son had possibly had a car accident in England and could they come in and ring to confirm or deny it. His distraught parents let the reporters in, who were then able to gather the information they wanted for further articles. These are not the only people affected. These are only isolated incidents that I happen to have heard of.

NO COINCIDENCE

Why do these incidents matter? They matter because they are not just the harassment of individuals but of the left as a whole. It was no coincidence that the disgusting articles about gays in the Labour Party appeared over the weekend before the Labour Party Conference. Peter Tatchell runs the danger of losing the nomination for the Bermondsey constituency because of rumours put about about his private life. In practice that will mean that the whole idea of MPs being reselected by their local parties will have been undermined because the right wing, who did not want him to have the nomination in the first place, will have had their way.

Fleet Street has learnt a long time ago what the *whole* of the left must start learning very quickly, that the personal is political. It is no good campaigning and leafleting until you are blue in the face if at the end of it all your candidate is knocked out because he or she is gay, does not live with his or her spouse, has a lover or for some reason does not live in a monogamous, exclusive patriarchal household which only a minority of the population does live in. It is no good just complaining about the press. The only reason they can slaughter someone like Tatchell is because there *is* prejudice against gays. The left ignore personal politics at their peril. The campaigns and discussions that have gone on over the last 10 years around a whole range of personal issues (usually way outside the smoke filled committee rooms of the Labour Party) for example: around childbirth, pregnancy, childcare, contraception, abortion, sexism, gay rights, single parent families, lesbian mums, monogamy, patriarchy, collectivism, masculinity, femininity, transvestism etc. etc. etc. are *vital* for the left to survive and prosper. They are *not* the frills that one comes to after the AES has been discussed. The *Briefing* collective feel that the Street Life Supplement articles are a contribution towards these debates.

REACTIONS

I would like to finish by describing the reactions to the media anti-gay abuse at the beginning of conference. On the Tuesday of conference the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights held a fringe meeting to which the press turned up in their droves. The first thing the chairperson did was to throw out the representatives of the press from the *Sun*, the *News of the World* and the *Daily Mail*. A rather startled selection of Fleet Street hacks then found they had no choice but to spend the evening in the bar rather than at another meeting (which probably pleased them rather more than some of their editors). The next day the only papers to run any comment about this incident were the *Daily Mail*, who gave a straight report about their journalist being thrown out, and the *Daily Star* who ran a not unfavourable report headlined "Be proud, Benn tells Gays". They can do it if they try.

The other reaction to the press coverage that I want to mention was less dramatic but probably more significant. Having had our address printed in the *Daily Mail* it was with some trepidation that I returned home from the Labour Party conference at Blackpool. There waiting was a letter to my husband from another transvestite which ran: "For the last 20 years I have wanted to dress like a woman, and have done so in secret, but always feeling a prisoner and longing to be seen and accepted by the world at large. You are the first person I have heard of to be stood up and counted. I thank you for what you have done. You are not alone sir."

Perhaps a bit of reassessment needs to be done in Fleet Street of what people's views really are.

Cath Tate
Lambeth Central CLP

Lesbianism: Women loving women

Sarah Roelofs
Islington South CLP

Mary Evans' article on lesbianism in the last issue of *London Labour Briefing* provoked much discussion – not least, of course, in the *News of the World* and the *Daily Mail*. Labelling the article "obscene" and with much emphasis on the fact that the author is *Mrs* Mary Evans, the media, reflecting society's patriarchal bourgeois values, were in no doubt that Mary Evans is a fully fledged Lesbian – that is a woman who has sex with women. Mary being married added to the glorious shock and horror, serving to reinforce the already loud and clear message – "this is obscene and it is even more obscene because this woman has chosen to do this despite being married and a mother (echo 'not fit to be a mother') and what's more she claims to enjoy it – how sick can one person get?"

The definition of lesbianism used here, i.e. that which is a majority view, revolves around sex (and genital sex at that). Plain and simply it comes down to who you do *it* with. Mary's article itself also seemed to adopt this understanding by focusing on the sexual aspects of lesbianism. And a question that was put to me in rather more serious discussions about the article than those in the gutter press, was – "Is it right, fair, for a woman who may be having sex with a man to describe herself as lesbian, even if she is also having sex with a woman?"

I dispute the question. It also focuses attention on sex. "You can't be a real lesbian if you're still doing it with men." This involves a definition of lesbianism which has been imposed on us in order to demean and debase, and most importantly, render powerless, women's relationships with women. It is, of course, predicated on, in turn, an understanding of sex as mainly wrong and dirty and of female sexuality in particular, as passive if not completely non-existent. The most threatening aspect of Mary's article to those of a *News of the World* mentality was her obvious enjoyment of sex – with a woman no less! But the *News of the World* can precisely dismiss the whole matter as queer – and female queer at that – ravings because it all begins and ends with sex. That we are dealing with male definitions as well, that cannot be applied to women, is shown by gay men. Male sexuality *is* sex, *is* penetration-centric genital sex and gay men's culture and politics are no exception. The law reflects this. Laws against gay men are all to do with who can have sex with whom, and where and when, while there are no laws against lesbians as we were thought not to even exist – women don't have sexual feelings full stop.

Such narrow definitions of female sexuality and lesbianism are obviously useful for a society which relies heavily on the ideology and material existence of the nuclear family and women performing a certain traditional role within that structure, in order to sustain itself. Central to women's role in the family is the negation, in some form or other, of female sexuality. The totality of women's relationships to each other is also thus negated as the family is pivoted on a male 'head of household'. Female friendships are treated as trivial and second-rate, female sexual relationships as sick and/or obscene. Moreover, as Adrienne Rich in her pamphlet *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence* has pointed out, "As the term 'lesbian' has been held to limiting, clinical associations in its patriarchal definition, female friendship and comradeship have been set apart from the erotic, thus limiting the erotic itself. But as we deepen and broaden the range of what we define as lesbian existence, as we delineate a lesbian continuum, we begin to discover the erotic in female terms: as that which is unconfined to any single part of the body or solely to the body itself, as an energy not only diffuse but . . . omnipresent . . .".

Adrienne Rich's concept of a lesbian continuum as "a range – through each woman's life and throughout history – of woman-identified experience; not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman", is substantiated by Lilian Faderman in her 500-page study of women's relationships with each other since the Renaissance, *Surpassing the Love of Men*. Faderman writes, "women's love relationships have seldom been limited to the sexual area of expression, that love between women has been primarily a sexual phenomenon only in male fantasy literature. 'Lesbian' describes a relationship in which two women's strongest emotions and affections are directed toward each other. Sexual contact may be a part of the relationship to a greater or lesser degree, or it may be entirely absent." Historically she notes that "it is likely that most love relationships between women during previous eras, when females were encouraged to force any sexual drive they might have to remain latent, were less physical than they are in our times. But the lack of overt sexual expression . . . could not discount the seriousness or the intensity of the women's passions toward each other – . . . if by 'lesbian' we mean an all-consuming emotional relationship . . . then these . . . friendships were 'lesbian' ".

Adrienne Rich develops this broad understanding of lesbianism "to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support", which thus allows us to "grasp breadths of female history and psychology which have lain out of reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical, definitions of 'lesbianism' ". Such definitions, whether from the *News of the World* or wherever, collaborate in denying lesbian existence – "the rendering invisible of the lesbian possibility" by means of both subtle and horrifically unsubtle methods. Taboos, sanctions, punishments, censorship, lies, distortions have been, and are, used to remove lesbian existence, even more than women's existence as a whole, from history. As independent, autonomous, strong, sane, women loving women making free choices, enjoying our lesbianhood, we simply do not exist.

Nowhere is this more true than of Black women's lesbian continuum and existence – "Black women have a long tradition of bonding together . . . [it] has been a source of vital survival information, psychic and emotional support for us. . . . Because Black women were rarely among those . . . who gained access to literary and other acknowledged forms of expression, this Black female bonding and Black woman-identification has often been hidden and unrecorded except in the individual lives of Black women through our own memories of our particular Black female tradition" (Lorraine Bethel, quoted by Adrienne Rich).

It is for these reasons that I reject the term 'bi-sexual'. It may be clinically correct – in patriarchal terms – but says just that – having sex with both men and women – and no more. It is another purely sexual definition that can also be used to deny lesbian existence. Any woman who chooses to say "I am a lesbian" is making a political statement of woman-identity which subverts one of the primary institutions of patriarchal bourgeois society – the family and women's role within it. I, for one, am not going to quibble about that woman's actual sex

Continued on next page

Sources:
Surpassing the Love of Men, by Lillian Faderman. Junction Books, 1981.
Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence, by Adrienne Rich. Onlywomen Press, 1981.



A gay perspective on war and disarmament

Andrew Kirby

My first realisation that the matter of sexual roles could have a direct bearing upon political issues came as a result of watching a television play by Ian McEwan, a novelist who has shown great insight into the nature of sexuality.

The heroine of 'The Imitation Game', takes a great interest in her menial work in a cryptography unit in the Second World War, the setting of the play echoes that of Bletchley Park during the ENIGMA project. She manages to obtain documents relating to the secret work, reads them, and when discovered it is made clear to her that she will have to remain interned for the remainder of the war, such is the nature of the information. In her final speech she makes the accusation that the only reason that men are able to go out to fight and to sacrifice their lives is because of the non-combatants they leave behind and for whom they can consider themselves to be fighting. This inspired me to consider what the situation would be in the case of a gay, or at least a non-straight society.

Of course a gay sexuality is not inconsistent with warlike attitudes. It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which this actually was the case in the past. It may well have been the case in Sparta for example, where young men lived communally on military service and only married on discharge.

RESTRICTIVE LAWS

Of course the potential threat of gay sexuality to military endeavour is well recognised in the fact that a completely different and far more restrictive set of laws applies to homosexuality within the armed forces of the United Kingdom than does in the country at large. Indeed, during the Falklands crisis, the Ministry of Defence made it quite clear that in the event of conscription gays would not be allowed to join the Forces. Quite why there is this establishment belief that if soldiers love each other they might not



hate the enemy quite so much is a moot point. It would seem to be more than the mere question of increased opportunity. The case of Wilfred Owen shows that even the most platonic love for one's fellow soldiers can have a devastating effect on one's willingness to send them to their deaths.

If McEwan is right (here I am attributing to the author – possibly unjustly – the sentiments of his character) then the threat that gay consciousness poses to the sources of the fighting instinct stemming from the nuclear family is a real one.

EXPLOITATION

The exploitation of sexual as well as class divisions is of course to the benefit of the ruling elite, particularly in the case of wars of all kinds, which (in the case of war proper – as opposed to revolution) only benefits the ruling elite. Exploitation is necessary for war, in the case of women it forms the only opportunity for women to assume traditional male roles (as in WWII) when it is for the first time in the interests of the elite for them to do so. It would further appear that men are being exploited at the same time.

Hopefully with these psychodynamic factors recognised and disposed of, the folly of war and of current massive armaments programmes can be more easily recognised on rational grounds. This is of course only one of the ways in which the values of the nuclear family serve to further the ends of the ruling elite. Economic policies which generate unemployment serve the same ends by restricting the opportunities for the young and for women to find careers, and forces them to assume 'traditional' family roles.

OPPORTUNITY

Gay consciousness offers an opportunity to destroy such roles, so long as we do not fall into the trap of adapting roles to new circumstances or to replacing them with equally limited ones. It would be mistaken and divisive to assert that homosex is superior to heterosex, but a world in which people respond to one another – sexually and in other ways – as individuals rather than as gender-objects is one within which they would be less willing to die for one another to serve the ends of others, as well as one within which they would be more sensitive to social injustices.

Although thriving, the gay subculture is marginal, in the sense that it is not integrated and is invisible to straight people who are physically surrounded by it, as we are by the manifestations of straight social life. My hope is that it does not therefore become insular and that gays realise that they constitute a potent force for change in society as a whole.

Women loving women

(Continued from previous page)

life. Coming out, refusing to pass as heterosexual, is of crucial importance for the affirmation of lesbian existence. Quite frankly it's as simple as the more the better – never mind the merrier!

But there remains the major problem of heterosexual privilege. Any oppressing group gains an abundance of advantages over those whom it oppresses – Protestants over Catholics in Northern Ireland, whites over Blacks, men over women, heterosexuals over gays and lesbians. The relationship of heterosexuality to lesbians by virtue of their womanhood is a very particular one that is not very comparable to that of heterosexuality to gay men. The reason is simple – heterosexuality as an institution (i.e. not including women battling out new forms of relationships with men or those women throughout history who, by various means – including woman-bonding! – have fought, survived and triumphed over male oppression) is male. Heterosexual privilege therefore, has a particular meaning for lesbians. But any woman who does not choose a separatist life-style can gain heterosexual privilege – a lesbian sharing a flat with a male friend will gain from neighbours seeing 'a man about the house'. I personally do not think the solution to this is for women to withdraw from men entirely, any more than the solution to Ireland's British problem is for all good anti-imperialists to go and live in Belfast or become uncompromising republicans. Just as all good anti-imperialists should campaign vigorously and vocally for Britain to withdraw completely from Ireland and combat anti-Irish racism explicitly wherever it arises; so I expect all those with heterosexual privileges to expose and condemn heterosexism whenever and wherever it arises and to support all the struggles that lesbians have to have to fight against their oppression and suppression. It is also true that the very act of coming out can mean that the basic human right of being able to have your children with you becomes instead a 'heterosexual privilege' – lesbians are deemed unfit to be mothers. It is a supreme irony that this is practically the only instance where custody will not go automatically to the mother. Actively supporting lesbians' right to be mothers is but one example of how heterosexual privilege can be opposed.

My final words are ones of deep warning to the left. In her pamphlet Adrienne Rich quotes a woman from Mozambique – "I am condemned to a life of exile because I will not deny that I am a lesbian, that my primary commitments are . . . to other women. If I am forced to denounce my own love for women, if I therefore denounce myself, I could go back to Mozambique and join forces in the exciting and hard struggles of rebuilding a nation, including the struggle for the emancipation of Mozambiquan women. As it is, I either risk the rehabilitation camps, or remain in exile." *London Labour Briefing* and the Supplement Collective are to be congratulated for alone out of the left papers being prepared to publish material by and about lesbians, which isn't simply about ensuring lesbians their liberal democratic rights (which is not to say these rights aren't important – they obviously are, but lesbian liberation isn't solely a matter of 'rights' as most on the left seem to believe). To borrow the words from the Irish national liberation struggle – "those that enslave others will never themselves be free".

'Streetlife' Letters

LESBIANISM – HARD TO BEAT?

Dear Briefing,
I have heard Mary Evan's arguments that what women do together is 100% better than what they can do with men many times before, both from male and female homosexuals, and I feel I really must take issue with it.

I am also a wife, mother of three, etc., and to no-one's great surprise, I have several friends of both sexes whom I fancy like mad. But, I would consider doing things in bed with any of them something that would hurt my husband to a great degree, so I don't. Nowhere does Mary say what her husband thinks about her activities. Perhaps she doesn't know. However, that is not what I want to discuss here.

Lots of heterosexuals do all the things she describes, when they have the time, energy, and freedom from interruption by the results of their heterosexuality. It is very rewarding doing them with the opposite sex. Too many homosexual people think that only a member of the same sex can understand what turns them on. It just isn't true. There's no harm in asking, is there? Or in simply doing something and finding out your partner's reaction? The whole body is an erogenous zone, for both sexes. Why be selfish about it, because some men exploit some women? I speak from experience here, this is not my first marriage, my ex-husband was an exploiter of the first degree.

Yes, I am a feminist, but I also like men, some better than some women. What we need is more understanding between the sexes, not warfare. I learned many years ago that make-up, permed hair, shaven legs, etc., are not what please men at all, but something imposed on us by the media, and other women who feel threatened if we do not conform to their standards. The female body in its natural state, thin or fat, old or young, will still turn men on, if the person inside is an outgoing and loving person. All the other things are merely icing on the cake, don't let media propaganda fool you into thinking otherwise.

Surely, all of us, homo, or hetero, would do much better to forget these pleasant side roads and concentrate on the real issues at stake. I don't mean to decry the need to explain why gay people feel as they do, or say that they shouldn't, but I feel very strongly that the women's movement has lost ground through its concentration on Lesbianism and general attitude that men are invariably The Enemy and a deep loving relationship with one is not possible. Exploitation is the enemy, and women are just as capable of it as men are, the prime example being for ever before us. I blush to admit that I share her first name.

Yours in love,
Margaret Grant

UNFORGIVABLE CRIME

Dear Streetlife,

In my article last month about coming out as a transvestite I wrote that "cross dressing rates as one of the cardinal sins in our society". I was wrong. As far as the press are concerned it is an unforgiveable crime.

This is obvious not only in their choice of language about me: "The *Confessions* of a Transvestite" (you confess to sins and crimes of course), but also in their latest campaign. Recently the *Mail* have been investigating my past. They came on the telephone with a copy of a harmless article I wrote about job sharing months ago for the Lambeth Under Fives Campaign. The reporter stated that he had been contacted by the Tories in Lambeth who were anxious to cut money to the under fives because of my article. The crime? Writing, of course. The *Evening Standard* headline said it all: "Labour Transvestite writes for under-fives newsletter". That was all; not even a mention that the article was about job sharing, not a single quote. "He's a transvestite, well that's good enough, he shouldn't be allowed to write, even in a newsletter with a circulation of 300", that's the attitude.

What is probably more relevant to the Lambeth Tories' indignation is the fact that they have to find £7 million cuts, and a smear job against mothers and young children might give them a perfect excuse.

But what was also interesting was the tactics used by the *Mail* reporter. This defender of family life rang up trying to provoke my wife, Cath, against me by suggesting that the provision for our daughter might be cut because of an article that her husband had written. This followed a mysterious telephone call 10 minutes previously by a so-called 'job sharer' who pumped the Lambeth Under Fives Campaign for information about me.

The lessons, comrades?

1. Never speak to the press. Give them only carefully vetted press statements which they then might have to print because of the lip service they pay to journalistic 'balance'.
2. Don't be fooled by the so-called quality dailies. The *Guardian* and *The Times* printed sarcastic and twisted accounts of my article – and 'our' paper the *Mirror* launched into an attack on transvestites a day after we had allowed them to stay in the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights conference meeting.
3. Always ask who's calling on the telephone and don't believe likely sounding aliases.
4. Never think you're too insignificant to get press assassination.
5. Above all, don't take the blame. Other people will say "what did you expect from the press?" but they haven't experienced reporters as secret police. Reporters will lie, harass you, impersonate others on the telephone, follow you in cars, then ask you why you are behaving in a paranoid fashion. There's nothing that they aren't allowed to do to you, especially if you're gay.
6. Most of all, if you're straight, stand up for us lesbians, gays, transvestites etc who are suffering the day to day brutality of the system and its thought police – the press. We're in the front line, where are you?

Les Tate
Lambeth Central

REGAINING OUR INNER INTEGRITY

Dear Street Life,
I was most encouraged by Les Tate's article on being a 'transvestite' in issue 23, since I share his desire for greater freedom of dress for men. But I was disappointed that in explaining his attitudes he seemed to create new stereotypes of men rather than describing his own feelings and frustrations and saying what he gets out of wearing 'forbidden' clothes. He also implies that he was trying to imitate women in some way rather than simply being himself or being more human or more natural; this suggests some lingering stereotype of women.

My own desire to wear dresses, blouses, tights, nail varnish or whatever is not so much to do with sex stereotypes as it is to do with elementary human freedoms – the freedom to dress in the way I choose, in order to express my personality, feed my imagination, have fun and be more comfortable. I think men oppose such freedom not so much because we're afraid of the 'woman within' (we already wear jewellery, long hair and knickers) but just because we're afraid of pleasure, afraid of being more inventive and flamboyant. When are we all going to take the plunge and wear dresses to work? And will our unions defend us if we do?

Of course accepting restrictions of dress is only one instance of the way men limit themselves, and Les puts his finger on the full extent of our plight when he refers to men's repressive behaviour as a 'crippling disease' and lists all the handicaps it causes, such as alcoholism , work addiction, domestic violence, drug abuse and sexual paranoia. We've still got a long way to go from seeing all these outward problems as inevitable male traits ('anatomy is destiny') to seeing that they are a direct result of emotional and psychological repression and working wholeheartedly to regain our inner integrity. Thank you, Les, for sharing your very personal thoughts.

Yours,
Nick Rogers

Obey the heart's commands

"On Tuesday morning as the bell went at 9 o'clock I went down from the staffroom to my form room to register my class as usual. Before I unlocked the door some of my class said to me, 'Have you seen the paper?' 'Have you seen your picture, sir?' My heart skipped a beat. I had seen the paper.

A friend had phoned me the night before to tell me there was a picture of me in the *South Kensington News and Chelsea Post*, illustrating 'Your guide to the gay side of the Royal Borough'. 'It's either you or your twin brother, sir.' 'Is it you?' There I was smiling, with one arm round Larkin, my other hand holding his hand. Taken in the sun in Sloane Square just before the *Gay News* demo moved off. I hadn't even noticed the photographer, but after all you go on demos to be seen, don't you?

We were all in the classroom now, with the paper open on the desk in front of me. I was unable to make my lips move to ask them to sit down. So they milled around. 'Is it you?' For a moment I thought I could say, no, it's not, it's someone else. I could bluff, it is easier. 'Yes, it is me'. 'Is it true what they say, that you are homosexual?' 'Yes, it is.' 'What, a poof?' 'The word is gay, not poof, poof is an insult.' The words I had often planned saying now came out of me, torn out by their questions. After the first yeses, silence, and they looked at me. Now they will hate me, I thought, the relationship I have with them will be destroyed, and I can't bear that."

ASSERTING OUR IDENTITY

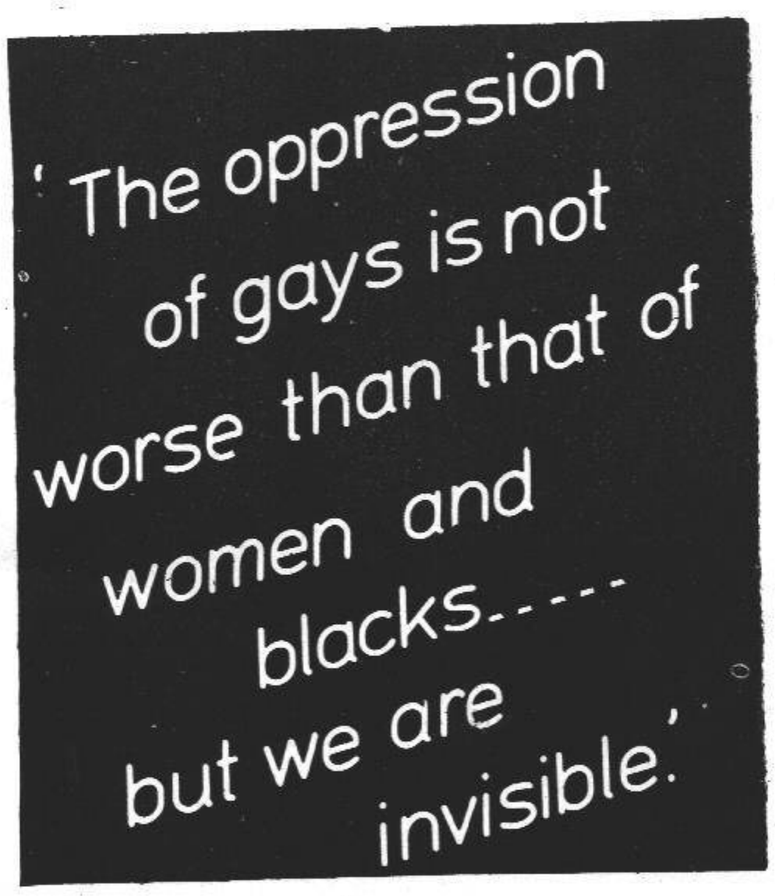
I wrote that five years ago, shortly after it happened. It wasn't the first time I'd come out as gay to pupils in a school, but it was the most dramatic. A lot has occurred since then but it still seems to me to sum up many of the issues raised by gays in society, and in employment, especially in 'sensitive' areas like teaching issues such as finding and asserting one's own identity, honesty in one's relations with others, and fears for one's job if one pursues the first two issues. The issue *not* raised by this is corruption: for though as a teacher coming out for me means coming out to pupils (and colleagues), that is incidental – it could be a nurse coming out to her patients, or a plumber to his mate. The principle is the same for all of us – coming out is not a case of corruption, of infecting others with a disease, it is an assertion of identity, and the creation of honest relations with all around us. These simple assertions have complex ramifications when one tries to work them out in society.

The oppression of gays is not worse than that of women or blacks but it has this difference, we are invisible. Firstly, one's gayness can be invisible to one's own self and be discovered only slowly and painfully. Secondly, we are invisible to one another and therefore find it hard to make common cause. Thirdly, we are invisible to others and can therefore be turned into a vague threat and be oppressed more securely, because anonymously.

PROUDLY VISIBLE

The only way to break out of this vicious circle – we're oppressed because we're invisible, we're invisible because we're oppressed – was discovered just over a decade ago in New York – become proudly visible, create an openly gay identity for yourself that you can inhabit, that can give you dignity in the world, happiness in your relationships with yourself, other gays, relatives, friends, fellow workers, everybody! Again, it's easily stated, but not easy to do. You have to overcome the blocks and fears in yourself. You have to face an outside world whose reactions range from favourable to fatal.

But you don't have to do it on your own. The years since the Stonewall Riots have seen the emergence of an openly gay movement and there is a dialectical relationship between the gay individual and the gay community: a strong community helps individuals gain strength, and strong individuals similarly make for a strong community. . . . The community must be multi-faceted if it is to cater for the range of people who are gay, lesbian mothers, gay fathers, gay teenagers, transport workers, handicapped, elderly, Irish, trade unionists, disco-goers, bar-propper-uppers. . . .



SUPPORT

My own road to my gay identity has at every step been with the support of the gay community. Early on, I found that support from books written by openly gay people and the books encouraged me to go to gay liberation groups, where I began fleshing out my gay identity in my 'private life'. Parents, friends, acquaintances, all were told. I started going to gay pubs and clubs. I felt increasingly more relaxed as the areas of lying decreased. But in one huge area I continued to live a lie – my work as a teacher. For several years I was living the ideals of gay liberation by night and dropping them when I walked through the school gates. I gave good reasons for my silence. Indeed I wanted to be out. It just seemed so difficult I should wait until I'd become a good teacher, I should wait until I knew my colleagues better, I should wait until I'd developed a good relationship with the pupils. . . . And the longer I waited the more difficult it became to come out at school the sharper the contrast between my life in and out of school, the deeper my shame and frustration. Here I was, expecting standards of honesty from my pupils that I did not come up to in my relations with them. The situation became more and more intolerable. I realise of course that my problems are of no particular interest to readers of *Labour Briefing* if they are only my problems. But if they stem from society?

TERRIFIED

Around this time I went to my first Gay Teachers meeting. It terrified me: a petition supporting John Warburton was circulated and I was too frightened to sign it. But the meeting also began to break up the log-jam of my life. I met others in exactly the same position and could share experiences with them. I heard teachers who had done the unthinkable – who had come out themselves – and went on to support and encourage me, leading me to the point where I too could say in a class, 'Yes, it is me. I am gay'. It is that support, of the Gay Teachers' Group, as of the wider gay community, that has always sustained my coming out and continues to do so. Socialists who fail to recognise the importance of the gay community for gay people and who omit to learn about its rich variety – our groups, switchboards, counselling organisations, our clubs – can only give token support to gay rights.

ENCOURAGEMENT

The first aim of the London Gay Teachers' Group is to support gay teachers and this happens in several ways: we hold regular meetings where people can come and share experiences or discuss topics of interest; teachers phone and write for advice or support generally, or with specific problems e.g. with the law; finally, I suppose the mere existence of a group that affirms that you can be gay and in education can of itself act as encouragement. Secondly, we are a campaigning group, seeking to make people aware of what we see as the two major issues concerning gays in education, a recognition that there are gay employees in the education system, who make a great contribution to it, but are discriminated against and need protection against that discrimination; secondly, a recognition that there are gay pupils – at least half a million in the UK – in our schools whose needs are almost wholly ignored and that this implies curricular changes to meet their needs and increase the awareness of other pupils on this issue. Our campaigning on these issues is in many places, but especially within the NUT.

CAMPAIGNING AGAINST I.L.E.A. DECISIONS

As the *London* Gay Teachers' Group some of our campaigning on these two issues over the eight years of our existence has naturally been directed at the major employer of teachers in London, the ILEA. I regret to say that they have given us plenty to campaign about. The Group was refused permission to advertise in 'ILEA Contact' (the Authority's weekly journal) and to hold meetings on Authority premises (which presumably makes us worse than the National Front). These decisions, bad as they

Continued on next page

Obey the heart's commands

(Continued)

are, are minor slights compared with the Authority's hounding out of his job of a teacher, John Warburton, for coming out as gay in class. That decision will forever be a blot on the reputation of this "socially enlightened and tolerant" Authority. It destroyed the teaching career of one person and gave a signal to the world that the ILEA would not tolerate openly gay teachers. For years we campaigned, getting petitions, addressing meetings, publishing a book; and the politicians and the bureaucrats of the largest education authority in the world turned a deaf ear.

Until May 1981. After the GLC elections we invited the Labour Group to send a speaker to our Gay Pride Week meeting in June. Councillor Andy Harris came, listened and said he would discuss with the Labour Group what could be done in response to all the questions raised at the meeting by gay teachers, pupils, librarians, EWOs, lecturers, ratepayers. He and Councillor Deirdre Woods, with the ultimate long-stop of support public and private from Ken Livingstone, embarked on a year's hard work. In that year, Gay Teachers' Group got the right to advertise in 'Contact' and to meet on Authority premises. The Gay Teenage and Lesbian Groups got grants and youth workers. The GLC and the ILEA in turn adopted an equal opportunities statement which included sexual orientation. There is talk of a GLC-funded gay centre. And the Inner London Education Authority lifted its ban on John Warburton. . . .

ONE-SIDED

If there is a dialectical relationship between a gay individual and the gay movement, there should be a similar interchange between the gay and labour movements and these recent happenings in London are a good example of such an interchange. Unfortunately it usually seems very one-sided, with gay socialists generally feeling we give more support to the labour movement than we get in return. It's not that we want a quid pro quo – 'you scratch my back . . .'. It's a question of a socialist perspective that supports gay rights, not as a token nor a new way of getting scarce votes, but as a serious issue involving the happiness of many, a socialist issue, requiring thought and informed action. Indeed the whole wider area of sexuality and relationships as a subject of political concern is in some respects less thought about in the '80s than in the much maligned '60s. Yet this vast area, re-opened in the '60s by the women's movement, is of central importance and socialists must find answers to its question: relations of sex and love, arrangements for living together and raising children, searches for identity. These are political questions; their neglect causes untold suffering; and they are being neglected by mainstream socialism, though not by the women's and gay movements or the labour movement in the past. As E. M. Forster, a closet homosexual, said in 1944 of the pioneering socialist and gay, Edward Carpenter, now unknown and unread outside the gay movement: "Though it is possible to organise, organise, organise, which is all that political parties do at present, it is also possible to obey the heart's commands. If labour ever changes its course, he (Carpenter) will come into his own . . .".

Peter Bradley

L. P. Discussion Documents on Taxation and Social Security

Perpetuating the nuclear family

The 1882 Married Women's Property Act may have given married women the right to property and to keep their own income, but for tax purposes a married woman is still bound by a law dating back to 1805 which deems her income to be that of her husband.

A man, on the other hand, is under no obligation to disclose his earnings to his wife and many women have no idea what their husbands earn. Further, since 1918 a married man has received an additional allowance against tax (the MMA), which means that where both husband and wife work and earn the same gross pay the wife will take home around £4.50 *less* than her husband. Against this background we wish to make a few specific points about the approach taken in the Labour Party's discussion document on taxation.

1. The Use of the Family as the Reference Point throughout

The situation of women – and the relationship of low pay at work to unpaid work in the home – is masked by the tradition whereby the family is treated for the purposes of fiscal and social policies not as a collection of mutually interdependent individuals but as a single indivisible unit. By predicating its discussions on these norms, the Labour Party helps to perpetuate them.

2. The Married Man's Allowance

It is argued in the policy document that the MMA would have to be phased out gradually if at all because "even in families which were net gainers married men could suffer a loss of take-home pay as a result of a less favourable tax allowance than at present". There is some acknowledgement in this statement that the financial interests of different members of the family do not necessarily coincide with those of the 'head of household'.

But we note that 'the family', which stands to gain perhaps, here takes a back seat when men's interests are at stake. The MMA is not a progressive relief – it is worth proportionately more to high earners than low earners and is particularly worth more to married men than any woman. The Labour Party's ambivalence towards this allowance makes it appear more concerned to protect men's privilege over women and endorse the ideology of man as sole breadwinner than to demand an equitable tax system.

3. Sex Discrimination

We want to see feminist criticism of the taxation system recognised in the very framework of the discussion and not ghettoised into one subsection. Discrimination against women is not simply a technical problem, it's about a whole set of assumptions and practices which underpin and riddle both taxation and social security policies. For example, we read the following account in this document of the transferable unisex tax allowance:

"Where only one partner in a married couple was in paid employment the partner at home would be able to transfer all or part of her tax allowance to the earning partner."

Why 'HER'? Why married? Why couple?

4. Influencing Behaviour

In the introduction to the pamphlet we are told firmly that "aspects of taxation policy can play an important part in influencing the behaviour of both individuals and companies." We believe this is an excellent argument for using taxation policy vigorously as an instrument for social change. It is accepted that higher taxes on tobacco may discourage smoking – but the Labour Party shows little recognition of the ways taxation policies can regulate and reinforce relations of inequality between women and men and even less determination to actively reverse this tendency.

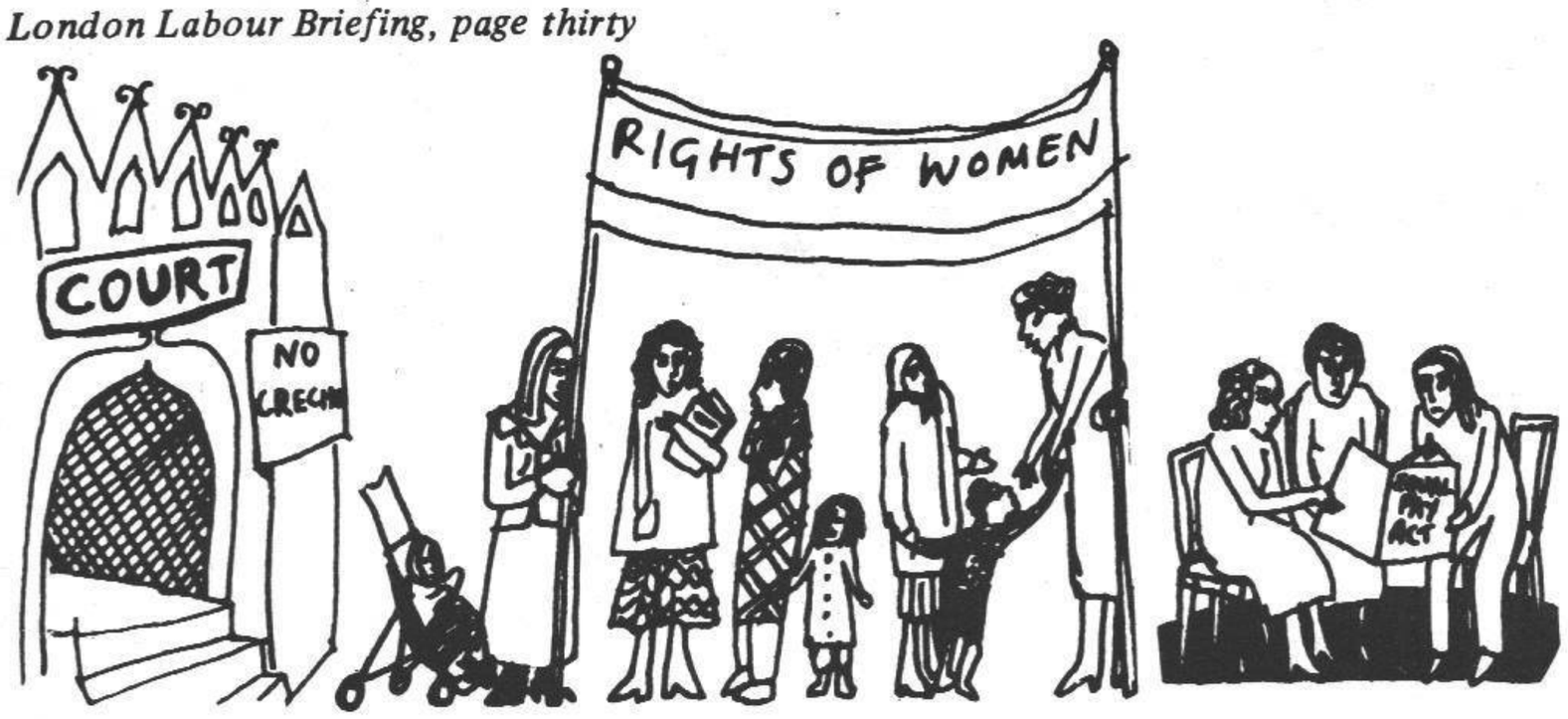
It is said that social security has a central part to play in reducing "the inherent inequalities of British society" because it distributes income "according to need rather than economic power". We would argue then that particular attention should be paid to *women's* needs as our economic power is limited by the disproportionate responsibility we have historically had thrust upon us for the welfare of children, the elderly, the ill and the disabled. The 'welfare state' in other words is premised on and reinforces women's role as carer and economic dependant. Radical reform of the Social Security system involves confronting the domestic division of labour and recognising women's individual needs.

The Labour Party's document on Social Security is subject to much the same criticisms as its Taxation document. The data is not used to illuminate the gender specific effects of much Social Security provision and women's disadvantage remains largely hidden.

At the moment all the mainstream political parties are vying with each other to be seen as THE party of the family. But in its idealised form, the one taken by the Labour Party as its model, the family is an institution which conceals and coerces women. No Party that



Continued on next page



FUTURE ISSUE:

We hope in the near future to have a feature on housing. We are also hoping to hold a Supplement readers meeting (women only) soon. Look out for details in a future issue. . .

(Continued from previous page)

organises its politics around support for this institution can expect the whole-hearted and self-interested support of women. By talking in terms of the family (the word household is sometimes used but it's clear that it refers to the same entity) these Discussion Documents fail to confront the political challenge involved in redistributing resources from men to women and stripping men of their privilege.

Feminists are often accused of being sectional in their advocacy of women's interests across class divides. But the Labour Party's advocacy of working class interests is often a thinly disguised appeal to men's interests.

The Labour Party Social Security Campaign has, amongst other things, called on the Labour Party to "actively encourage discussion about the equal sharing of housework and childcare". This is an urgent demand because unless and until such work is equally shared a preoccupation with and a 'natural' bias towards men's interests will remain implicit in most Labour Party politics.

We hope our comments will widen the debate on these important issues.

Rights of Women Disaggregation Group

Deadline for articlesfor next Supplement: Articles/letters should be sent to Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, NW1 by November 6th.

The next SUPPLEMENT EDITORIAL BOARD MEETING will be held on THURSDAY 18th NOVEMBER at 7.30pm at 110 AGAR GROVE, NW1.

WOMEN—TAKE THE POWER!

A woman's view of Conference

Nadine Finch
Women's Delegate
Islington North

In replying to the debate on women's organisation, Gwyneth Dunwoody assured conference that she had had to fight her way up in the Labour Party. For once, she reflected the experience of most women in the party. We all do have to fight. Firstly, for acceptance and then if we do achieve political post, to prove we can do it 'perfectly'.

I, like many other women delegates, had to prove my claim for women to represent in my branch was correct, before even arriving at Blackpool.

In general, at conference, the first distinction women had to make was between their claim for 'equality' within the present system, which was acceptable, and their claim for special consideration for women's needs, which was not. Therefore, it was consistent for conference to vote 6,127,000 to 147,000 for a composite which promised women equal pay for work of equal value and equal rights to pensions and social insurance and yet vote 6,317,000 to 522,000 against women's conference presenting five motions on the conference agenda, as of right.

I, and other women, were being offered a role in a system that was essentially unchanged and sexist. For instance, there were many extra women's delegates, but how many found that the other delegate hung on to the card votes? And could the NEC really be serious, when the platform relied on the women's organisation debate in terms of Labour Party members not wanting to be 'part of one tiny unrepresentative group' ie. women?

The fact that the women's movement has brought new analysis, development of economic ideas and added credibility to the Labour Party was totally ignored by those in power.

Others were not so myopic. Delegates were aware that the issues of feminism and socialism were allied and fringe meetings dealing with women and rape, gay rights, and childcare were well attended. Women were also centrally involved in organising around the emergency motion on Palestine, on unilateral nuclear disarmament, against plastic bullets and in defence of wide political debate within the party.

ONE OF THOSE LIBBERS

And yet, as a woman, I was still referred to as 'one of those libbers' by the Conference Arrangements Committee, and had to accept that at least one union delegation voted against the women's organisation motions without any discussion. Stand up AUEW?

I had to see women like Betty Boothroyd elected to represent me. I listened attentively to her speech at the Solidarity Rally, but didn't hear her mention women once.

I had to blink when Jim Mortimer disingenuously attacked Militant for not accepting the women's movement, when only 3 members of the new NEC voted for all the women's motions.

Women had fought for issues to be on the agenda this year and were present in slightly larger numbers, but there was still no acknowledgement of the particular needs or strengths of women.

I was impressed by the weight of women's understanding and strength, but conference by rejecting the motions of organisation denied that there is a women's view, in the same way that there is a trade union view.

Male prejudice and the fears of the right wing also colluded to ensure women were at conference but remained in their traditionally powerless role. The main message to women now, must be to organise with women and for women for a stronger Labour Party.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Finally, I would agree with the woman delegate who said that 'the demand of the Labour women has (often) not been represented and has not been supported even by our own MPs' and although 'the women on the executive do excellent work . . . there are times when they see themselves more in the light of officials of the party than representatives of the women'.

The fact that the delegate was Dora Russell speaking at conference in *1929*, asking for election of 4 women NEC members by women's conference and for 3 motions to be accepted from women's conference, says it all.

MONITORING 'THE LAW'

Those who sought direct political control over the police represented the most dangerous influence at work in public life today, Mr Whitelaw, the Home Secretary, said yesterday....(The Guardian, October 7th, 1982).

The policing of London is in a state of crisis. Public confidence in the Metropolitan Police has been seriously eroded in recent years and in some areas is virtually non-existent. Allegations of corruption in the force abound, while over 9000 complaints by members of the public about police behaviour were investigated during 1981...by the police themselves. Policing methods involving the use of the SPG and Instant Response Units in any Inner London areas have received widespread criticism, while the clear-up rate for serious crime in 1981 was a mere 17% of such crimes reported (the lowest rate of any metropolitan area in Britain). Allegations of racism in the policing approach of the force have been on the increase, yet out of more than 25,000 officers on the force, less than 1% is black. Every officer in the Met. is trained in the use of riot-control equipment, while lip-service is paid to the concept of community policing and peace-keeping on a localised basis by home-beat officers..."hobby-bobbies" as they are known to their colleagues.

THE CRISIS

The crisis centres on the issue of the democratic accountability of the Met. to the people of London. Public servants should always be accountable for their actions to the community which they serve in a democratic society, especially, as in London's case, the ratepayers contributed over £300m towards financing the Met. in 1981. The government response has been to propose the introduction of statutory police *liaison* committees, arguably not what was intended by the Scarman Report. Such committees, which have existed in some areas on a voluntary basis, would give Londoners merely the right to *consult* with their police on policing methods. This would not guarantee that their suggestions would be implemented. Furthermore, the appointed successor to the former Commissioner Sir David McNee is the former chief constable of the RUC, Sir Kenneth Newman, an appointment which will hardly convince Londoners that their local community policing needs will be fulfilled. During his time in N. Ireland, complaints of police assaults on suspects during interview increased alarmingly and were largely substantiated by the ensuing Bennet Report; plastic bullets and CS gas were used widely to control public disorder, the former causing the deaths of several young people; the Judges Rules were officially relaxed in relation to intelligence gathering questioning. He is opposed to introducing police acccountability, prefering mere liaison, and has been reported as describing the Jamaican community as 'constitutionally disorderly'.

GLC's POLICE COMMITTEE

The response of the GLC has been to create a Police Committee, a move opposed by the Tory opposition on the Council, with the main aim of setting up a Police Authority for Greater London — an objective expressed in the Labour manifesto at the last GLC elections. The committee holds public meetings at County Hall every six weeks and is chaired by Paul Boateng. It has a Support Unit which provides research and liaison assistance. The committee is empowered to provide financial assistance from its budget to London organisations which were or are created to monitor the behaviour of the Met. Grants have been made available to new and existing monitoring groups operating either on a local basis (usually within a particular borough) or on a



London-wide basis to assist them in their monitoring activities. Generally, the funded organisations should monitor police activities and feed the information gathered to the appropriate borough and/or GLC bodies, provide advice on investigating and bringing complaints on police behaviour and liaise with other organisations providing a police monitoring service in or, where relevant, outside London. The organisations may cover all or at least one of the above activities.

DEMOCRATICALLY ACCOUNTABLE

The shared aim of all monitoring groups in London is to work for a democratically accountable police force, but their approach towards monitoring differs according to their resources, the needs of the areas in which they operate and/or the specific issue of policing they were set up to monitor. An example is the Community Alliance for Police Accountability (CAPA), London's first monitoring group, set up in May, 1981 to operate in Tower Hamlets. It perceived the need early on to operate a 24-hour emergency phone service, through which it could provide legal advice and assistance to local residents having problems with Tower Hamlets police. Through this service, staffed by volunteers, CAPA has been able to build up a body of casework which has been developed by its full-time staff, often in conjunction with local solicitors. The casework in turn has enabled it to base its campaigning on solid evidence of police misconduct. The type of cases vary from harassment of both white and black residents (especially youngsters), with the general abuse of their civil rights, to police failure to prosecute in cases of racial attacks on the Bengali community.

Other areas of London in which monitoring groups in one form or another presently operate are Brent, Camden, Croydon, Ealing/Southall, Hackney, Haringey, Lambeth, Newham, North Kensington, Southwark, Waltham Forest and Wandsworth, and a London Association of PMG's has recently been set up. At its September meeting, the GLC Police Committee approved grants totalling £75,000 for monitoring groups in Hayes and Islington, and for specific projects by the City of London & Westminster Trades Council (on policing policy regarding trade union activities and trade disputes), the Institute of Race Relations (on specific problems of black community-police relations) and the Gay London PMG (to finance the production of a "bust card" giving legal advice to Gays on the specific problems they might face if arrested and their legal rights on arrest).

Police monitoring groups have developed from within the community in response to London's policing crisis. They have developed in response to the realisation that existing mechanisms for controlling police policy and behaviour in London are in many instances contrary to the needs of the community. Good, efficient policing, as the police themselves admit, requires the consent of those being policed. No adequate means exist at present in London to enable the police to discern whether that consent to particular policies is present or absent. Police accountablity to the local authority exists in other Metropolitan areas of Britain, albeit in an unsatisfactory form, so why not in London? Is the desire of Londoners to gain democratic accountability for their police force 'the most dangerous influence at work in public life today?'

(For further details on the work of the GLC' Police Committee and London's PMG's, contact the Support Unit at County Hall.)



Dear Comrades,

A left wing constituency?

Ref. the letter in your October issue from Putney Party Secretary Lindsay Thomas protesting the CLP's credentials as a "left wing" and "democratic" constituency. I believe that (one) good criticism of these qualities at the present time is the attitudes of members to the Register of permitted groups. It is certainly true generally that the Labour left opposes the Register.

However it seems that Putney must now lose its reputation as our GMC accepted a motion from its Secretary supporting the establishment of the Register, (and a ruling was subsequently made that East Putney branch which had agreed to send delegates to the September 11th Conference could not do so as this would be against constituency policy).

An alternative GMC motion opposing the Register and calling for party unity was defeated.

But all is not lost! The former motion *also* rejected expulsions, so we have it both ways for the time being.

Those of us who are supporters of "Militant", and other individuals and groups who believe that more advanced policies are needed in the fight for socialism, will be anxious to find out if we will be allowed in fact to continue the common fight alongside both our comrades in the CLP and LP members grouped otherwise.

Yours fraternally
ROBIN M. KEMPE

Dear Editor,
The Political Committee of C.R.S. Limited London Region have decided to launch a financial appeal in order to assist the Palestinian Trades Unions in rebuilding the co-operatives that were destroyed following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

We would be grateful for any publicity that you could give to this appeal.

Yours sincerely,
J. LAYZELL
Political Secretary.

Editors Note: Please rush cheques to C.R.S. Political Committee and send to Political Secretary C.R.S. London Region, 54 Maryland Street, London E15 1JE

Dear Comrade

I bought a copy of the October issue at a recent meeting of my Labour Party Branch. I find myself in agreement with most of the text in your publication particularly when Ken Livingstone writes: "the advances of the left within the Labour movement have been around *policies*". But several of the articles are illustrated with photographs of personalities. There is a marked contrast between the style of photos that you use in the Street Life Supplement and in the rest of the magazine.

If a picture is, as you say, worth a thousand words, we need to pay careful attention to how we choose and use them. It is sad when a well written argument maintaining the primacy of policy over personality is undermined by its illustrations.

In solidarity, yours sincerely,
DAVID DAVIES
Member of Hackney Central CLP

Comrade,

I found Michael McKeever's article (October issue) on the "Dangers in Dagenham" interesting on several points.

I would first like to point out that his reference to a remark I made during a local teachers' dispute, was taken out of context. I was partly responsible for a resolution supporting the teachers, in their dispute with the Barking and Dagenham Council, appearing on our General Committee Agenda. However, during the debate I was critical, rightly in my view, of the NUT, because they appeared to ignore the fact that the jobs of a number of low paid ancillary educational workers were also at risk. I pointed out that the issue affected them both. The criticism seemed to have an effect, as later NUT leaflets did mention the other low paid workers. As a matter of interest, my daughter was one of those in dispute and was a most active NUT member.

We believed that the pressure from the Party and Local Government Committee (of which I am Secretary) had an important bearing on the dispute being resolved.

Michael McKeever, in his article, either through lack of knowledge (he is a comparatively new trade union delegate) or possibly through lack of space, gives no credit to those of us who have been critical of the local authority, not only now, but also when previous Tory and Labour Governments demanded cuts in expenditure. Admittedly, previous Government cuts bear no resemblance to that demanded by our present local government Dictator — Heseltine.

It is a fact, and I have repeated this at Barking and Dagenham Group meetings ad nauseam, as well as to individual local Councillors, that a limit to acceptance of demands from on high must be reached at some stage. Heseltine is likely to demand further retrenchment next year, possibly in order to finance a cut in income tax, as a bribe to the electors prior to the General Election. I hestitate to advise anyone in local government to break the law, a responsibility (at Borough Council level) I cannot share, but there are issues on the Greater London Council where I am prepared to say; "enough is enough". The items that spring immediately to mind are, London Transport and cheap fares and the right of the GLC to award contracts only to those firms who are trade union organised. I recall, during a previous Labour GLC administration, trying to set up a T.U. 'Fair List', but was defeated by GLC officers and the apathy of the then Chairman of the Committee.

To return to two points made by Michael McKeever, I agree with him that even in a Constituency like Dagenham, it would be fatal to take the electorate for granted. I assume that Michael is aware of our plans to counteract apathy. I also agree that it is essential, particularly in Boroughs where Labour is in majority, that Councils should work closely with CLPs and when it is necessary, for some reason, to change policy, policy previously agreed in a manifesto, CLPs should be fully consulted, *before* a final decision is taken. Too many Groups merely inform the Party after the decision has been taken.

Yours fraternally
HARRY KAY
Secretary Dagenham CLP and GLC member for Dagenham

NEW SOCIALIST DEBATE

"WHICH ROAD TO SOCIALISM IN WESTERN EUROPE?"

TONY BENN and GIORGIO NAPOLITANO
(Parliamentary Leader of the Italian C.P.)

FRIDAY 29th OCTOBER 7.30PM

At Friends House, Euston Road, NW1 (Euston Tube) **£1**
75p unwaged

Creche available

co-sponsored by New Socialist and Marxism Today

TAKE OUT A SUBSCRIPTION

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The annual sub. to Briefing is £4.50. Please complete the form below.

NAME . . . . . .

ADDRESS . . . . . .

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

BECOME A 'BRIEFING' SUPPORTER'

Both in an effort to raise desperately needed funds, and also to provide the *Briefing* network with a tighter structure, we are now introducing Briefing Supporters Cards. These will entitle 'Supporters' to vote at both our Editorial and monthly Briefing Meetings, and to go on Jeremy Corbyn's mailing list (a monthly mailing with details of our activities).

The cost will be £10 per year for waged comrades, and £2.50 for unwaged. Those who already pay at least this amount by Standing Order will automatically receive a Card.

Help us become more organised and better financed. Make cheques payable to 'London Labour Briefing' and send to Jim Ring: 55 Stonard Road, London N.13.

LONDON BRIEFING MEETING
MONDAY NOVEMBER 1st
AT 7.30pm at COUNTY HALL
And on the first Monday of every month.

Deadline for articles for next issue. Saturday November 6th.
Next issue due out. Friday November 19th.

Typeset by Bread 'n Roses (TU), 30 Camden Road, NW1 and by Folrose Ltd (TU), 98 Gifford Street, London N1 and by Lithoprint 329 Upper Street, London N1.

Published by London Labour Briefing, 23 Leghorn Road, London NW10.

Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd (TU), Forster Road, London N17.