LONDON LABOUR 30p

BRIEFING

No 25 DECEMBER 1982

LAMBETH: WE'RE BACK!

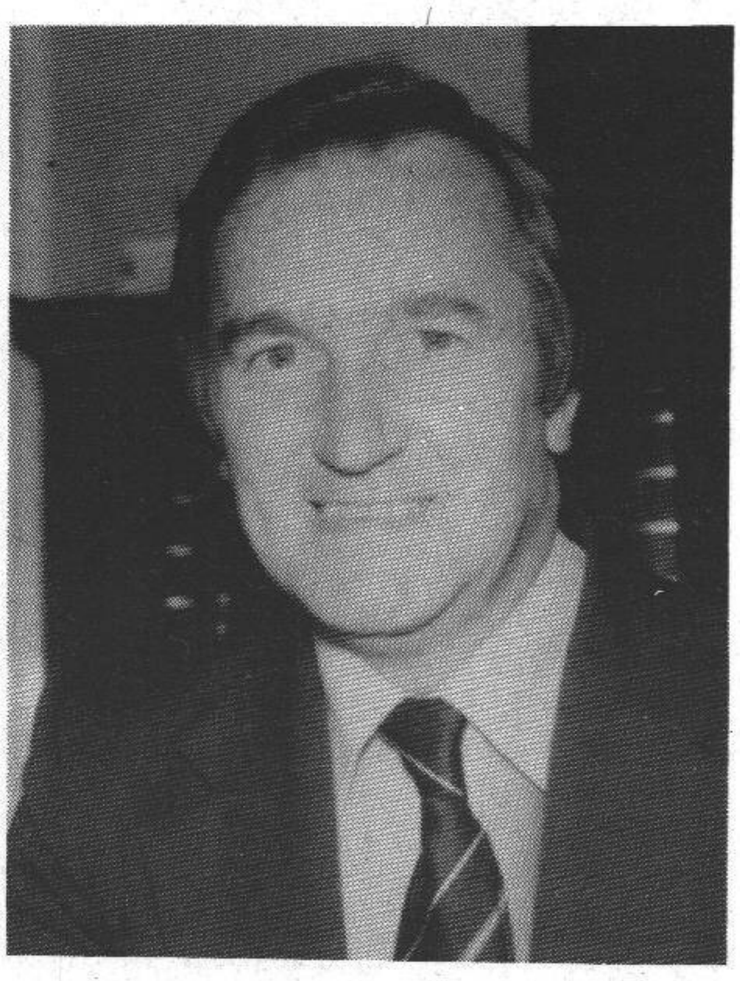
At 12.30 pm on Friday November 12th Labour once more gained control of Lambeth Council when one of the SDP Councillors became an independent. I am once again the leader of the Council. The Council will now have 32 Labour members, 27 Tories, 3 SDP, and 1 Liberal. The Independent (Gordon Ley) has indicated that he will vote with Labour in full Council to give Labour control. Thus ends Tory rule of Lambeth – the greatest prize that the Tories achieved in the May elections – and the end of the coalition with the SDP/Liberals.

The last few months have been a disaster for the people of Lambeth. The Social Services Department has been so decimated that it cannot fulfill its statutory obligations for children at risk or in care. Housing repairs are categorised by urgency; a 24 hour job now takes three weeks, a 72 hour job, takes six weeks. Local Unions have welcomed the new administration; the T&GWU, and UCATT issued press statements applauding our determination to reverse all Tory/SDP/Liberal cuts.

PRIORITY

The effects of the change go further. Labour will now gain an extra seat on the London Provincial Council for manual workers wages. Labour will now control this and the Council workers Unions are looking for a real increase in earnings and not the 3½% that Thatcher thinks they should have, and the consequent cut in living standard.

The absolute priority is to reverse all the cuts of the last six months and for



by Ted Knight

Lambeth to take its place alongside other Labour Councils in the fight for inner city resources. I strongly support the London Labour Leaders Group and their determination to break the bi-partisan attitudes of the past in local government matters. I favour withdrawal from the London Bouroughs Association; it has become a tool of the Tories and is a platform for them to attack the GLC.

MANIFESTO

We are determined to push ahead with the manifesto on which we originally won the election before it was snatched away by the Labour defector, Johnny Johnson. The needs of Lambeth are greater than when we were forced out of office. Unemployment is higher, deprivation is even more pronounced.

Therefore the Labour Councillors will be seeking both the resources and the support of the community to fight this Government. We must reverse the downward path of misery and deprivation that the Tories are forcing on the inner city area. Our aim must be to use our control in Lambeth to strengthen the fightback across London, as our contribution to the nationwide struggle to remove the Tories from office.

LABOUR – TAKE THE POWER!

TATCHELL FOR LABOUR!
LABOUR FOR BERMONDSEY!

Nick Murray
Bermondsey CLP

He has done it at last! After a year of blustering threats and promises to retire from Parliament Bob Mellish, MP for Southwark-Bermondsey, has finally resigned. At last the constituency can go ahead with the task of repairing the damage done by Mellish, and rebuilding the confidence of local people in the Labour Party by giving them the proper representation in Parliament they have been denied in recent months.

Bermondsey Labour Party is fully united behind its choice as prospective candidate, Peter Tatchell, and we are confident that, with Peter reselected and our duly endorsed candidate, and with the full support of the London Labour movement which stood behind us so magnificently when Peter was attacked by the leadership last November, that we can rely on the overwhelming support of local Bermondsey people.

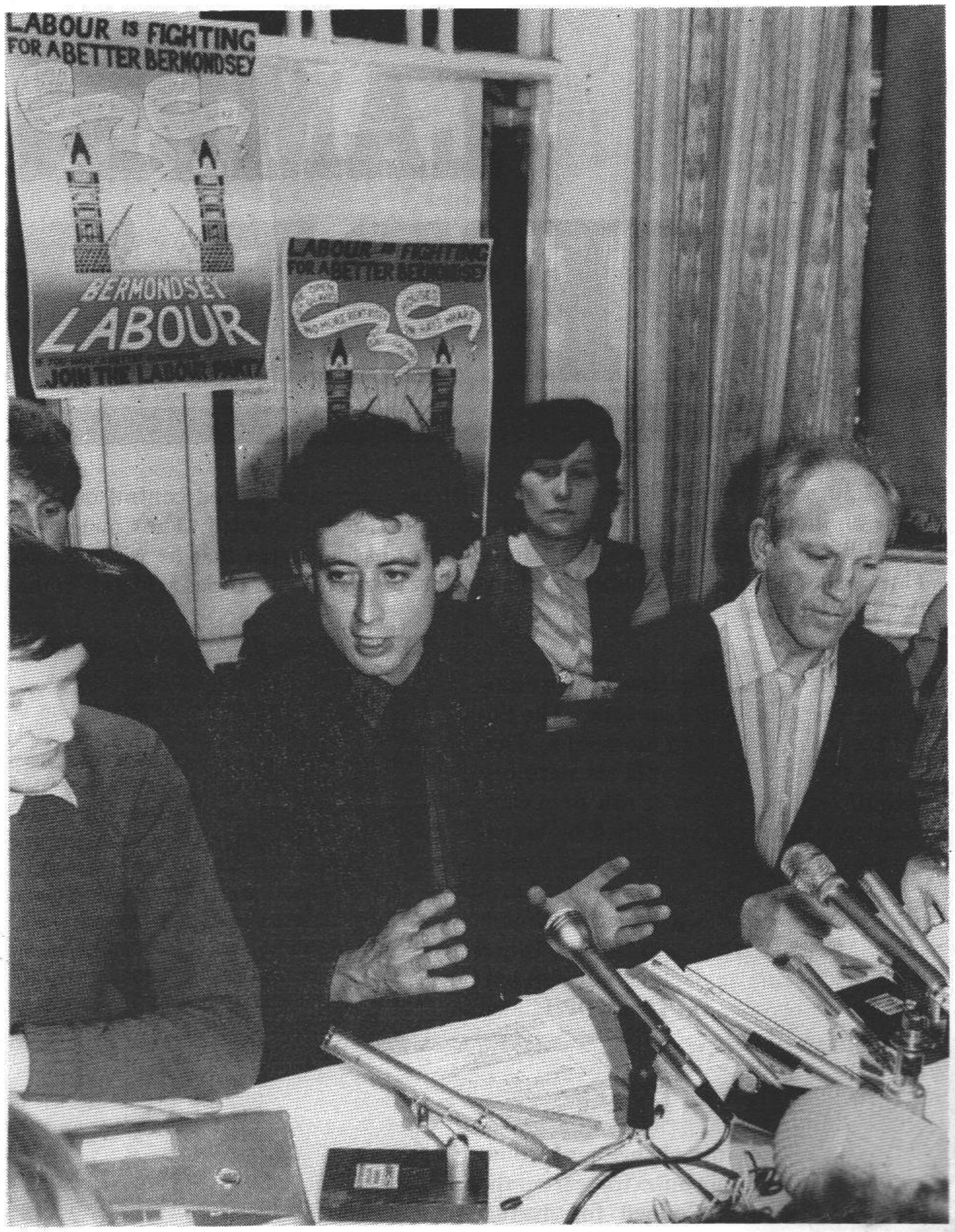
MASSIVE SUPPORT

At the time of *Briefing* going to press we don't know when we will be allowed by the NEC to get on with the re-selection process and when the writ for the bye-election will be issued but we are preparing ourselves now for what is clearly going to be one of the most noteworthy bye-elections of recent years. We are confident of massive support in the campaign from the whole of the Labour movement in London.

The tattered remnants of the "Bermondsey Mafia" have let it be known that they will be demonstrating their loyalty by fielding an "independent" candidate against the Party's choice and this will probably be John O'Grady, for 15 years Leader of Southwark Council until the elections last year when he failed to win the support of the new councillors as Leader.

Students of the media should watch out for an abrupt abandonment of the type of comment we were hearing during the Peckham campaign to the effect that people wouldn't be voting Labour because of the poor state of the borough bequeathed by years of Labour control. When the penny drops that John O'Grady is the architect of that state of things all such comment will be instantly spiked.

The Bermondsey bye-election will be a good opportunity for the Labour Party's senior figures to demonstrate that winning elections is more important than attacking socialists and we look forward to seeing them on platforms backing Peter to the hilt.



Peter Tatchell speaking at a December 1981 press conference in Bermondsey, South London, after Labour's organisation sub-committee decided by 12 votes to seven to recommend that Mr Tatchell's candidacy at Bermondsey should not be endorsed.

The local party chairman Ted Bowman (right) said he 'deplored' the decision to reject Mr Tatchell as prospective Labour parliamentary candidate for the constituency.

STOP PRESS: On 4th November, the London Labour Party Regional Organiser, Janice Muir, attended the Bermondsey Executive Committee and astonished delegates by saying she had been instructed by the Party's National Agent, David Hughes, that Peter Tatchell should immediately stand down as party secretary and take no part in any campaigning locally for the Labour Party. This extraordinary instruction, which appears to have no constitutional basis, was followed by a decision of the Organisation Sub-Committee on 10th November to send David Hughes, John Golding and Jim Mortimer to Bermondsey, we understand, to persuade Peter Tatchell to withdraw from seeking selection.

Preparing for a Labour victory

By Peter Tatchell

The Conference vote to establish the register was a victory for intolerance and dogmatism which gravely threatens the principles of free and open debate and the right of Party members to dissent from majority opinion. Though some supporters of this register may argue to the contrary, it *is* effectively a backdoor return to the dark days of bans, proscriptions and expulsions. The Right is blatantly using the flimsy pretext of Clause two to drive supporters of Clause four out of Labour's ranks. And it is *only* a flimsy pretext! When our General Secretary spoke in the Conference debate on the register, he openly criticised Militant's *policies* making quite clear that the register *is* a witch-hunt against political ideas and not a constitutional issue at all.

If the Right succeed in implementing the register, Labour may well be turned into a narrow and sectarian right-wing rump, depleted of activists in the run up to the next general election. Such a course can only spell electoral disaster for Labour and must be resisted.

The spectre of an intra-Party civil war invoked by the Right, who so often preach "unity", is a wasteful diversion from the urgent task of campaigning to win a massive Labour victory at the polls. Despite the real priority of such a victory, in the aftermath of Conference there must be no let up in the fight against the witch-hunt. We must defend the right of *all* socialists to remain within the party — *including Militant*. Nor must there be any slackening in our efforts to secure greater Party democracy and accountability.

EQUALLY URGENT TASK

However, these necessary internal battles cannot be allowed to obscure or divert us from the *equally* urgent task of creating a mass membership and outward campaigning Labour Party which can win the next election. Probably only twelve months, or less, remain till Mrs Thatcher goes to the country. Within this limited timescale, we face a gigantic effort to persuade and inspire the electorate that Labour has imaginative and workable solutions to Britain's problems. We will not succeed in this effort unless *all* Party members spend *alot* more energy in public campaigning.

Currently, there is a detrimental imbalance between the proportion of time most of us spend on internal Party and union activity — as opposed to external campaigning. Of course, this is largely due to the "slaveholder's rebellion" by the Right which seeks to roll back grassroot demands for real socialist policies and a more responsive Party leadership. Nevertheless, it *is* time we redressed the imbalance between internal and external Party activity.

Throughout history, all profound social changes have been based on large-scale popular movements involving *millions* of people. Frankly, the present 300,000 membership of the Labour Party is an inadequate power base for a radical Labour government to carry through fundamental socialist change against the powerful extra-parliamentary forces of the capitalist class. So to start with, the Party should consider setting a five year target of a million members by 1987.

This, of course, is a long term goal. It does not solve the immediate problem of how we are to win the next election. To achieve this — to revive membership and renew our electoral popularity — action is required both at national and *local* levels of the Party. And notwithstanding the shortcomings of our parliamentary leadership, we *are* weak at local level and there is a lot that can be done to rectify this weakness.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

All Constituency Parties need to draw up their own programme of action. As some Parties have already shown, this can include regular street market stalls and petitions, newsletters distributed to every household and periodic door to door canvasses and questionnaires re housing problems which can then by chased up via councillors. Parties also need to get much more involved in local community campaigns — or better still, actually *initiate* campaigns against hospital closures and for more day nursery places etc. Activities such as these are vital if we are to overcome the bias of the media and take Labour's socialist alternative direct to the electors. Unless we succeed in this task, all our efforts for socialist policies and an accountable Party leadership will be in vain because we will *not* win the next election or be in a position to put these ideas into practice.

Of course, it would be equally pointless for us to win the next election without a radical manifesto and an accountable leadership. A repeat of the lack-lustre capitalist-management policies of previous Labour governments would be demoralising for the Movement and would further feed the cynicism of Labour voters. It is therefore imperative that each Party member and every constituency redoubles their campaigning efforts in the months ahead. To rectify the disproportionate amount of time we spend on internal Party activity, we should each commit ourselves to *at least one night per week* of public campaigning on behalf of the Labour Party in our own local communities. There is no substitute for direct personal contact and persuasion in our own neighbourhood and workplace where we are known and where we know the problems of local people and can relate Labour's policies to their solution.

ACTIONS AS WELL AS WORDS

If the leaders of the Labour Party really *do* want us to "get on with the job of fighting the Tories", let them show it by actions as well as words. The NEC and PLP should start by ceasing their negative witch-hunt of socialists. Instead, *they* should set a positive personal example by spending a night a week campaigning with local Party members at constituency level — and that does *not* include public meetings which are largely attended by the already converted.

It is at this *local* level, on the housing estates and in the workplaces which were formerly the bastions of Labour's rank and file power, that we must urgently re-establish our roots amongst the community. The brutal truth is that large sections of the working class, trade unionists and youth *are* alienated from the Labour Party and socialist ideas. Witness the jingoism and militarism of the Falklands war and the absence of any mass union mobilisation against the Tebbit Bill.

In the last few years, the Tories *have* captured the ideological offensive and we have been reduced to fairly ineffective defensive skirmishes. We must face up to this reality, *not* in order to become fatalist or defeatist, but to take the necessary steps to change it through vigorous new campaign initiatives in our own local Parties.

Finally, our present difficulties also stem from the longer post-war trend towards an increasingly establishment-oriented Labour Party and a growing section of the population which is politically alienated and apathetic. We saw this recently in Peckham with the low turn out of voters in the by-election. And how many times we have heard it said: "Politicians, they are all the same. They are only in it for themselvess."

TOTALLY DISENCHANTED

In contrast to apathy, there are other *radicalised* segments of society which have become totally disenchanted with mainstream party politics. On one level this is measured in the growth of autonomous radical movements outside Labour in response to the Party's failings. On another level, this radicalised disenchantment is expressed in the spontaneous violence of last year's inner city riots — a 'vote' of no confidence in the entire political system!

It is imperative that we counteract these trends so that Labour once again becomes the Party of protest and radical social change. To do this, we have to forge a new "coalition" with autonomous progressive movements outside the Party. We must draw them into a new alliance with a truly "broad church" Labour Party and work with them to help secure their progressive goals. Labour has to be transformed so that it becomes the "organisational focus" for *all* radical ideas and movements such as feminism, black consciousness, gay rights and environmental conservation etc.

This requires that the Party strengthen its links, particularly at local level, with trade unions, tenants' associations, pensioners' groups, youth organisations and ethnic minorities. In this way, *we* can learn from *their* ideas and experiences and we can campaign side by side with them in solidarity. In the long term, we will hopefully encourage their membership of the Party and their commitment to broader socialist changes which extend beyond a single-issue perspective.

Perhaps in the process, we can also widen *our* horizons of what is entailed by human emancipation in a new socialist society.

For Labour to win the next election, we first have to embrace within our fold all the oppressed and disadvantaged classes and minorities in society. Only in this way can Labour truly speak as the voice of the people. It is up to each individual Party member and each Constituency Party to lay the foundations of this achievement. Let us prepare for a Labour victory *now*!

Peter Tatchell October 1982

Hands off Hornsey

WITH THE hard right of the Party now controlling the NEC they have moved very quickly to attack Hornsey Labour Party.

Tariq Ali applied to join the Labour Party in the autumn of 1981 and after being rejected by his branch appealed to the General Committee and was admitted by a two to one majority. BEFORE the GMC had the chance to consider the appeal a letter was received from the NEC informing the party that they were not to admit him into membership. So much for natural justice!

Since then the Hornsey Party has voted on six occasions concerning Tariq Ali's membership; on each occasion the majority in favour has been higher than before.

In the late summer Hornsey was blessed with a visit from David Hughes and Eric Heffer, who gave the Party officers nearly two hours' notice of their coming, and informed the Party that they considered that the NEC had the right to refuse admission to anyone they felt like and that they did not have to hear the individual, they could ignore his completed application or a very lengthy letter of support from the Party and Tariq in which acceptance of the constitution was explicitly stated.

It was also argued that the Hornsey Party would be electorally damaged by his membership; yet in May Hornsey held its nine Labour seats on the Council and in the Harringay ward the Labour share of the vote went up by nearly ten per cent. This is significant as the Hornsey Journal (boycotted by the local Labour movement due to its strike-breaking activities) has waged an unremitting war against Hornsey Party since 1980.

An adjourned GMC meeting on November 9th considered the response from wards to the NEC request for reconsideration. There were no motions hostile to Tariq Ali's membership and the principle of his membership was carried; the closest vote was 17 to 14 in favour of a motion from Archway which stated that the Party was determined to maintain Tariq Ali's membership up to and including the point of disbandment if the NEC persisted with its threats; it also instructed the Party officers to seek an urgent meeting with the NEC to explain the Party position to them.

On 10th November the new Organisation Committee chair, Russell Tuck, told LBC that Hornsey had until December 31 to 'mend its ways'.

Whilst the media and the NEC would like to portray the issue as one of the individual membership of Tariq Ali it is the logical step of the witch hunt. They quite irrationally oppose an individual's membership and then, in effect, instruct Hornsey Party to expel him.



This is the start of the purge and witch hunt by the NEC; it is the start of the hounding of socialists and the battle for the shape of the next Labour Government. The right are determined to go down the rotten old path of wage controls and appeasement of capital and are taking this battle into the Party before the ballot papers are even printed. Immediate declarations of support are needed and support for the campaign against the witch hunt is necessary. Comrades in Hornsey are looking to all Constituency Parties for support in this crucial battle. Please send copies of all motions to Hornsey Labour Party, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 0HN.

Jeremy Corbyn

CIA KNOWS BEST?

Tariq Ali applied for a U.S. Visa in the summer. At the embassy he stated he was a member of the Labour Party. An official checked his file and said, "Well, Mr. Ali, according to our records you are not."

Will YOU stand for Hornsey?

HORNSEY LABOUR PARTY is looking for a prospective parliamentary candidate. We are an active, campaigning, socialist party with a large active membership. Closing date for receipt of nominations is 1st. February 1983, but we'd like to receive applications by the end of November. Applications are invited to submit a political statement of up to 2 sides of A4 (35 copies). Applications and enquiries to Diana Minns, Secretary Hornsey CLP, 28, Middle Lane, London N.8.

HORNSEY LABOUR PARTY

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

SATURDAY

4th December

10.30 until 5.00pm
HORNSEY TOWN HALL
CROUCH END BROADWAY N.8

Featuring the HUMAN JUKE BOX

Camden council - a trade union view

When the new Labour Council was elected in May, the Joint Shop Stewards Committee sighed with relief. We had just undergone the worst period in the history of the Direct Labour Department in Camden. We had 600 redundancies and were forced to cut bonus targets under the threat that if we did not co-operate there would be further dismissals or a possible closure of the department.

After the new Council was elected, we were told that the Council had in fact underspent and the redundancies need never have taken place. It's our belief that the chief officers were quite well aware of the facts and are in fact in favour of the Tory government's policies for the closure of Direct Labour departments. These chief officers are still being paid for by Camden (as opposed to working for Camden), and continue to make it difficult for the new council to carry out its decisions. Between them, the officers produce three times more words on paper than is really necessary thereby wasting everyone's time, in particular the councillor's. Bombarded with officer's advice, report after fudging report, councillors are often unable to carry through manifesto policies. The chief officer's control of the bureaucracy has to be one of the main and continuing obstacles to a left labour council.

Committed to Direct Labour

We the JSSC for the Building department welcome the proposed decentralisation of both housing and maintenance departments and believe they can only operate efficiently by working together as one organisation. We are also aware that this council is committed to Direct Labour and is trying to put more work our way, rather than just giving it out to the cheapest contractor. They are at least trying to find ways around Heseltine's Land and Planning Act, because they know the cheapest contractors turn out to be the most expensive in the long run. Nevertheless, there is still 40% of maintenance work going out to subcontractors. A great deal of this is being paid for without even having been inspected by council officers. So, the ratepayers are being ripped off and quite often our people have to go and put bad work right.

There is also next to no financial control over contractors, so that whereas the law imposes strict financial disciplines over Direct Labour, the contractors charge more or less what they like. The law imposes disciplines on Direct Labour, but it is left up to councils to impose like disciplines on contractors.

Links with Tenants

Over several years, the JSSC has built up links with tenants. Stewards have regularly been to tenants meetins, and recently a joint working party has proposed a number of drastic improvements to the service. We believe that unless the Labour Council can deliver the goods, they cannot rely on the vote. The future of the building department in the end relies on the people of Camden being willing to vote for and support a Labour Council which is effective in deeds as well as words. This support is also necessary to the Council if it wants to tackle the power of the chief officers.

Vic Heath
Convenor (UCATT)

Editors Note: Please let us have more articles on how the trade unions view the Labour Councils in London.

Police hooliganism in Lambeth

Les Tate
Lambeth Central

THE RECENT demolition of three key houses on Brixton's Front Line was swift, concerted and planned in military style. The 'Express' had been tipped off in advance, and headlined the action the very morning it took place. Road blocks had been set up all over Brixton on Sunday night. The police moved in with SPG and the new Instant Response Unit (interestingly all 4 arrests were made by the IRU) and swiftly flattened the 3 houses which had been used as meeting places for black youth. Labour councillor Lloyd Leon, black licensee of the Atlantic pub, was quoted as saying, 'What happened on Monday night was pure criminal hooliganism'.

A march on the Town Hall followed and six community groups applied for new premises. The evicted youth have now squatted the nearby Talma Road; but despite the Sun's racist headline on the Tuesday ('Black Mob in Fire Rampage'), local resistance has been low key.

Surprise Timing

The reasons for that are to do with the swiftness and surprise timing of the police moves, and the divided loyalties that the three houses inspired in the black community. They were important meeting places, but they were also involved in gambling, drinking and prostitution; and some local black residents complained of harassment from outsiders amongst the constant street activity.

The police action showed up the impotence of Lambeth's Police/Community Consultation Group. One of the demands that black community leaders had of this 'consultation' group was that outside police units should not descend on Brixton without prior warning or discussion. The so-called consultation group wasn't, of course, consulted, and when it met the day after the demolitions over 100 black people were there to vent their anger.

The problem for Labour is that the previous Labour Council supported this consultation group (which incidentally is intended as a pilot scheme for proposed statutory Police/Community Liaison Groups all over the country), against the advice of the local Labour Party.

Tories in Charge

The demolition exercise was made much easier by the Tories being in charge of Lambeth, and no one seriously believes their promises of building a replacement community centre — especially as they have a shortfall of around £7 million in their planned April budget. So at the moment the Tories are desperately casting round for more cuts than they have already imposed. So far they have raised council rents and heating charges (30%!), and chopped back on staff — with the result that repairs are not getting done, transport and home helps are removed from the elderly and the disabled, and nursery places are being slashed. But as Steve Bubb, shadow deputy in Social Services, pointed out in a recent meeting, Labour, too, has a credibility gap. Many of these reductions are the direct result of the cuts policies pursued (under pressure) by the previous Labour Council in the last 18 months of its life.

The other issue the local Labour Parties have taken up is opposition to the Brixton Town Centre Redevelopment Plan. Unfortunately, once again, the Tories have merely revived a proposal that the previous Labour Council was trying to push through against the wishes of most of the Labour Parties.

(Submitted before Lambeth changed hands).

BRENT: THE CHALLENGES

ALTHOUGH Brent stayed Labour in May of this year, it was a close thing. There are 33 Labour Councillors, 30 Tories and 3 Liberals, but the Mayor is Labour and he has the casting vote. In practice though, things have been easier than expected. A mixture of Tory ineptitude and Liberal opportunism, has meant that so far we have not faced any serious challenge. There is no real reason then, why we should not carry out our Manifesto commitments with the conviction that a majority of say 15 or 20 would give us.

Debate About Priorities

As we begin the budget-making process, now is probably as good a time as any to examine where we stand and whilst this year there is no question of cuts, certainly, there is a debate about both our priorities and the overall levels of growth. It is an important and necessary debate and the signs so far are that there is a general acceptance both within the Party and the Group for growth to meet the needs that exist. What is important though, is that this growth goes to the areas where it is most needed. This is rightly bound up with a number of other issues including very importantly decentralisation. Decentralisation was not a major theme of the Manifesto and this means that we are going to be a lot later starting than other boroughs such as Islington and Hackney. I am not so sure that this is a bad thing as it will enable us to learn from their experience. This is crucially important because if we get decentralisation right then it will have a tremendous political impact. On the other hand if it is a flop then that will be used against us by the supporters of privatisation as further evidence that the public sector is unable to provide decent services.

The most controversial item is likely to be rent levels, even though we were very clear about our commitment at the election to a rent freeze. What I find very disappointing about this though, is the fact that I understand that only Brent and Islington had Manifesto commitments to a rent-freeze. I would have thought that this was an issue on which all the Labour Boroughs could and should combine. Hopefully, other Boroughs will in their discussions with their local parties about the budget, adopt a rent-freeze.

There is another issue on which again it would be particularly useful if there was a united response from the Labour Boroughs. That is the wage claim by the manual workers. It looks as though the Tories — who have a majority on the Whitley Council — are going to offer 3.5%. That is unacceptable.

It would be hypocritical of Labour Councils, who have made so much of the Health Workers' claim to then shed crocodile tears as they offer 3.5% to their own low-paid workers using the excuse that they are bound by a Tory majority.

Many Problems

The future is still unclear and obviously there are a large number of factors outside our control which will be crucial. However, if we are to use the previous six months as an indication, then whilst there are some hopeful signs there are also many problems. On the positive side Brent has generally, adopted a higher political profile. For example we are the first of the London Labour Boroughs to formally take steps to withdraw from the L.B.A. This has been matched by a number of steps taken in other areas. We have withdrawn from Barclays. We have attempted to introduce a realistic level of member-services which is vital if elected members are to be able to get on top of the bureaucracy. All posts which were left vacant during the past year have either been or are in the process of being filled. In addition, about £1½ million has been spent on restoring previous cuts and some new growth in this financial year. Women's and Police committees are at the stage of Public consultation before being set up.

These gains though should be set against the fact that given the composition of both the Labour Group and the Council it is unlikely that we will win major 'crunch' issues in full Council. Indeed it is not certain that we will win them in the Labour Group. This poses problems for the Left, particularly as to how far to push issues that you know you will lose in full Council, particularly if the Left, voting for certain positions could mean the Tories winning votes. Obviously, this does not mean that we should run away from these issues but it does mean that we have to re-examine our perspectives. So there is no realistic prospect of a dozen Labour Councils across London acting to force a confrontation. But we can still use our positions on the Council and its resources to build a mass movement in London. To do this effectively means not only promoting Party policy, but also much more liaison between Labour Councils. There will be a General Election in the next eighteen months. It is vital that Labour wins that election and if we as Labour Councillors are responsible for any climb-downs in that period, then we will be hampering the chances of a Labour victory.

Councillor Mark Feeny

GOING FORWARD FOR ABORTION RIGHTS....

Public meeting, 7.30 pm, Mon. 22nd November at County Hall.
Speakers: Pat Leman, LARC (Labour Campaign for Abortion Rights)
and health service unions.
Bookstalls, discussion groups.
Information: NAC/LARC Trade Union Liaison Committee, c/o NAC, 374, Gray's Inn Road, WC1 (278 0153)

LAMBETH: The Socialist Alternative

Labour is back in power in Lambeth, after the defection of one of the five Alliance Councillors. This gives Labour an effective majority.

After May, Labour will be able to take the position of Mayor and will be able to pursue its manifesto committments.

Between now and then, comrades in the Party will have to ensure that the new Labour Council rights the wrongs of six months of SDP/Tory rule. We have to clear a massive underspend on housing investment, and near collapse of housing repairs and cleaning, cuts in social services, and increases in heating and hot water charges of up to 138%.

Labour has consistently and rightly opposed these policies — now we have to make sure that real socialist alternatives are proposed in their place.

Graham Norwood
(Lambeth Labour Councillor, Angel branch and Planning Chairperson)



Wandsworth privatisation: the costs

Grand Met took over Wandsworth's rubbish collection on October 18th, some months after Wandsworth's Tories had won a victory over their striking dustmen.

Grand Met won the contract against a background of fierce competition from a number of different companies including Pritchards, who presently operate Wandsworth's street cleaning (see *LLB* no. 24). Grand Met's quotation was far below that of Pritchards' which brought forth a torrent of criticism implying that Grand Met's costings were unworkable.

Nevertheless, Grand Met have seemed determined to make them workable. First, they started out with 133 men to carry out work formerly done by 216. Second, Grand Met is paying under the national rate and is breaking the contract that it signed with Wandsworth to pay a 'fair wage'. Thirdly, as became evident in the first two weeks of operation, Grand Met is simply not able to tackle the job – it has been widely reported in the local press that Wandsworth Council has received over 1,000 complaints about unemptied bins. Having claimed that privatising services would save local ratepayers millions at no cost to efficiency and service, Wandsworth Tories have ended up with egg on their faces. The fact is, however, that they will probably be able to ride out the storm of protest as they have done in the past. Opponents of the Council's policies have simply not been able to build up sufficient public support.

What happened to the Wandsworth dustmen? Of the 216 men made redundant only 72 have been given jobs, while fifty men Grand Met promised to employ before taking on casual labour have quietly been forgotten. GMWU stewards recently met with Tory councillors with a list of complaints and received, as would be expected, little sympathy. However, they have had slightly more impact on the Department of Environment who have written to Grand Met drawing their attention to contractual infringements.

The meaning of the "Wandsworth Effect", to use the *Guardian* leader writer's term, is now clear. It is about smashing grass roots trade unionism and using the threat of the dole as a stick to beat their own workforce as well as those workers employed (often only briefly) by their contractors. It's noteworthy that Council Leader Christopher Chope received a standing ovation at the Tory Party conference for his policies, a conference in which there was ample evidence of high pressure lobbying by the "privateers", Pritchards, Grand Met and others, for new local authority contracts. The Pritchard stall declared "Wandsworth Council is saving £2.37 million. Pritchard can save the NHS £400,000,000." Trade unionists in Wandsworth are well aware of these new points of attack. One group, Wandsworth Socialist Health Group, are compiling a dossier of how privatised domestic work would function in the NHS and what can be done about it. Nationally, NALGO is putting a considerable sum of money behind a pro-public services, anti-private campaign. The best contribution to the struggle so far is the SCAT/NUPE dossier and action sheets. The threat to workers' jobs and services posed by privatisation is now clear. We fail to do something about it at our peril.

Geof Rayner

What's T.U.L.V. up to?

Les Huckfield

This is not a piece against the role of trade unions in the Labour Party — of which I am much in favour — but about the way in which some right-wing General Secretaries are trying to use their financial muscle.

Following an article I wrote in Tribune on October 22nd, charting the shift of financial and organisational power away from Annual Conference and the Constituency Parties towards Trade Unions for a Labour Victory and the Parliamentary Labour Party, I anticipated that there would be a response from David Basnett, spokesperson and prime-mover of TULV. But I didn't expect that apart from some minor nitpicking, in his Tribune reply of November 5th, he would lend weight to most of what I wrote.

Though TULV originally came together with the laudable aim of helping the Labour Party with its Walworth Road Headquarters, some of its right-wing general secretaries appear to have set their sights on higher things — including changing some of the basic constitutional relationships within the Party. (To be fair, other unions, including the TGWU, have always approached the TULV more cautiously) First came the demand for the Commission of Inquiry; then its recommendations of a high-power Director of Finance. Having failed to get their man as General Secretary, the right-wingers on TULV won't make the same slips when it comes to the Directors job.

Doubts

What then is TULV and what does it do? To begin with, most of the big unions' General Secretaries or their representatives attend, except from the NUM. Doubts were expressed within the TGWU from the start. The Fire Brigades hesitated. NUPE may even pull out. David Basnett's reply to me confirmed that their annual income up till September 1982 was £240,000. So we're talking about big money. Two years' TULV income could wipe out the Party's current overdraft at the Coop Bank.

But instead of helping the Party out with its bank manager, TULV is granting it money on a "drip-feed" basis, for specific projects of which it may approve, like the "Plan for Jobs" campaign. The Basnett justification for behaving like the International Monetary Fund is that if affiliated trade unions had tried for a straightforward increase in their political levies to help the Party, not all of them would have got it past their Annual Conferences. While it is indeed true that unions raise levies of varying amounts, surely some of them that wanted to help out the party could have found a way of paying more directly for those that had the money?

Cat out of bag

It was David Basnett himself who originally let the cat out of the bag, with his notions of a tripartite constitutional arrangement for running the Party jointly through the NEC, the trade unions and the PLP. This new 'national council' formula would not only increase the chances of perpetual right-wing domination, but would diminish the role and influence of the Constituency Parties. If the ultimate aim of David Basnett and some of his right-wing colleagues is anything less than this, then why don't they exercise their influence and voice their concern directly through their existing representatives on the NEC? After all, through the Trade Union and Women's Sections, Leader, Deputy and Treasurer, they already dominate 21 out of the 29 NEC places, not to mention Conference Arrangements Committee. Instead, they have chosen to set up this new and separate organisation — which now has its own constitution — which is regularly consulted by the Chairs of NEC Committees, and has been aiming for a place on the Party's General Election Campaign committee!

Some of the right-wing general secretaries in TULV have already tried to go further. They have asked for union finance officers to attend NEC Finance Committee, and for joint meetings of NEC and TULV Committees. There have been the two NEC/TULV Conferences this year at Bishops Stortford and Kingston. The Basnett official explanation is that these were only to discuss how the unions might help the Party with organisation, finance and political education. But other statements made afterwards sounded as though they had been talking about the way the Party was going.

Cloak for right

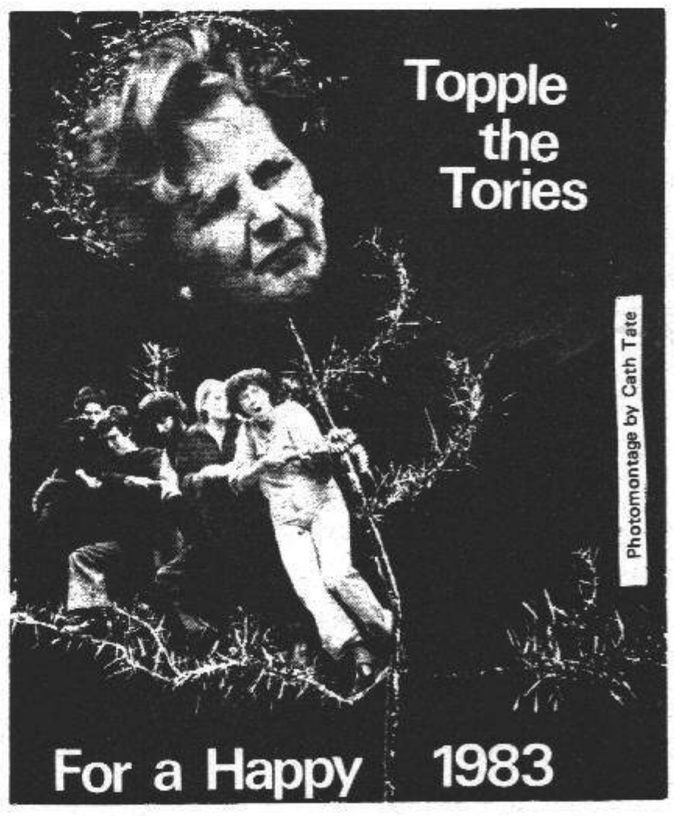
TULV has now sprouted regional offshoots. In some, the same people who feature prominently in Labour Solidarity seem to be in evidence. We have already had the example of Bristol TULV's trying to influence elections in the Bristol District Party. Nationally, some of the big TULV names are also in the St. Ermine's Group. CLPs should be a little wary that some right-wing unions are now using the cloak of TULV to increase their numbers of delegates to General Management Committees, and have already designated officials to coordinate these operations. Right-wing delegations will be increased, with expenses paid. Far better that CLPs themselves send their own trade union liaison officers out to the union branches to assist in recruitment, to counteract this right-wing influx. It could come through the new workplace Party branches too!

What is gradually happening is that a separate, distinct structure is emerging throughout the Party, with strong links with Party regional offices. BRIEFING was right to raise the "files" issue, whereby Party Regional Organisers report to Walworth Road on Selection Meetings they have attended. Though they have now been told to make them less subjective, they will find other ways of communication!

Lessons

The lessons for the left are obvious. First, the left press should give the greatest possible prominence to all this activity. For if the left organised like this, the *Daily Mail* and the *Sun* would long ago have been trumpetting their demands for the expulsion of "this organisation within our midst". Since doubts within the bigger unions like the TGWU and NUPE within TULV, and the NUM outside it, are well known, trade union and constituency party branches should be insisting on full access being provided to all TULV minutes of their meetings, for both union and Party affairs are involved. Especially, trade union branches should be pressing for report-backs on what is happening to the political levy in their organisation.

Finally we should heed the warning from the policy-making front, where the Basnett tripartite model is already in operation. Though we may congratulate ourselves on getting some two-thirds majorities for good Conference Resolutions, look carefully also at the series of Joint NEC/TUC/PLP Liaison Committee Policy Statements that practically went through "on the nod" simultaneously. Most of these take a rather weaker line than the Composites and the NEC-alone Statements. So the precedent is already in operation to warn us, since those same right-wing general secretaries will hope that the Liaison Committee policies will feature in the Manifesto. And what they reckon they can do to the Manifesto, with the help of the Shadow Cabinet, they are hoping they can do with the Party itself.



London Labour Briefing, page nine.

DON'T REGISTER — DEFY THE NEC!

"Don't register – defy the NEC" is the call that I as chairperson of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy make to our registered supporters as CLPD undertakes an advisory postal ballot on registration. CLDP will take its final position on whether or not to register at its AGM in January and the final decision lies with the registered supporters there – but the outcome of the ballot will be crucial in moulding opinion.

On the face of it I suppose it seems strange that someone who has advocated the implementation of Conference decisions for years should be so determined the CLPD should not register. But there are very clear reasons why this Conference decision should be defied and why CLPD above all others should not register.

I actually think a voluntary register is a good idea for at a glance any member could learn about the nature of a pressure group, who to contact to join and whether the financial position of the group is so dire that they'd forever be shelling out money to keep it going! CLPD gave all that sort of information to Walworth Road ages ago and we were quite happy to do so. I think we would even want to comply with a compulsory register if it were a Conference decision.

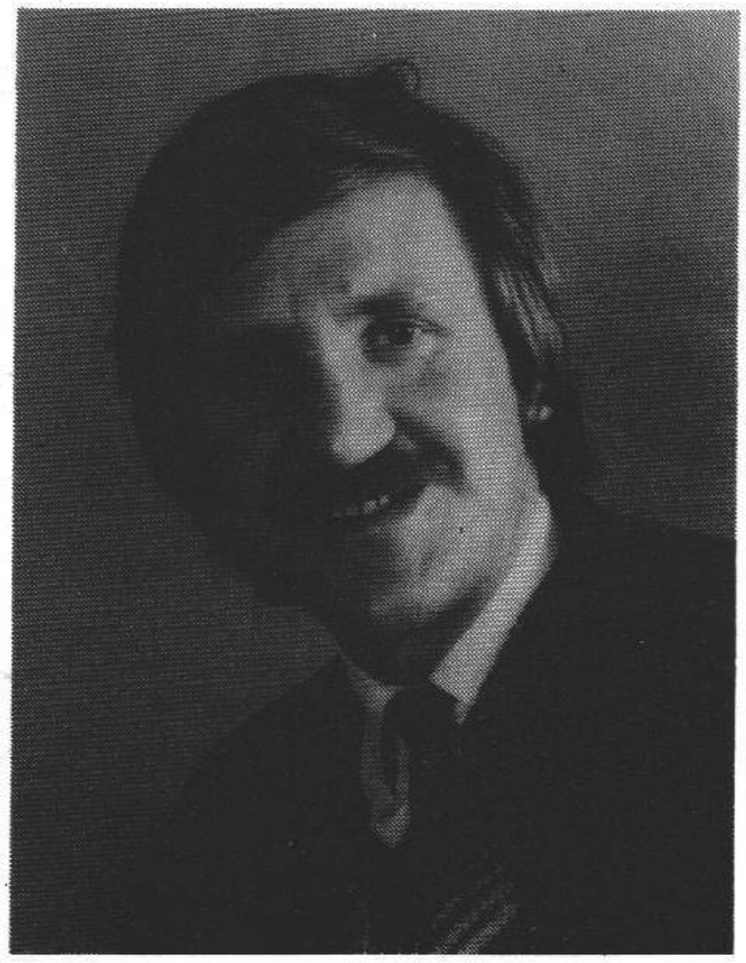
FRAUDULENT VEHICLE FOR EXPULSIONS

But the NEC are not really talking about a register are they? They won't give a second glance at all the information that is sent to them. This so-called register is a fraudulent vehicle for expulsions and I will not accept compliance with a Conference decision that is no more than a licence to expel socialists from our party –and nor must CLPD.

If we are to hold the line on expulsions it is no good saying as Peter Main and Vladimir Derer are doing "support present leadership, comply with the register and fight expulsions". This is a recipe for an almighty defeat. First of all the present leadership is not supportable – Michael Foot is a stumbling liability and is acting as a trojan horse for the Right. How can we be expected to rally round Foot after his Falkland position, his statement on Peter Tatchell and his vote against Paul Boateng's endorsement, to name but a few. Foot has anaesthetised sections of the Left which can't shake off memories of his radical past and he has made it that much easier for the Right to take control of the NEC. Secondly once you comply with the register (and CLPD would be allowed to register) you effectively isolate those still further whom the NEC seeks to expel.

REFUSING TO REGISTER

GLC Briefing has taken a lead in refusal to register. I confidently expect the NEC to 'lose' GLC Briefing's letter of refusal



because although as convenor/treasurer I'm not telling them how many GLC councillors are paid up members of this Left caucus, I can assure them it is far more than the four which is all they would need to expel to bring down the GLC administration. Let them try it! I urge all registered CLPD supporters to vote No to registration in the postal ballot and to attend the AGM in County Hall on January 29th determined to keep the most important organisation on the Left from falling into the Right's trap of legitimising expulsions. Stand firm. We have strength in numbers and elected positions – let's use them to our advantage.

Andy Harris,
GLC/ILEA Member, Putney,
Chairperson CLPD

NOT the way to fight

Statement drawn up by Vladimir Derer and others in the CLPD and Labour Co-Ordinating Committee for signature on an individual basis.

Top priority for Labour over the coming year must be to work for a majority Labour government under Michael Foot's leadership elected on the policies of Labour's Programme '82. Nothing should divert us from this goal. We will campaign in the constituencies, in the unions and in the country to win support for these policies.

In particular the prime objectives of the next Labour government must be the removal of all nuclear weapons from British soil and the implementation of the radical version of the alternative economic strategy as agreed at the 1982 conference. We shall campaign for these to become the centrepiece of Labour's manifesto.

All our efforts will be designed to create the maximum amount of unity in the run up to the election, around the *existing policies, the existing leadership*, the existing membership and the existing parliamentary candidates. We have all campaigned for a considerable period for the sovereignty of conference. We are *therefore bound to accept the decision of conference to establish a register* of non-affiliated groups. At the same time, however, we deplore this decision.

We consider it intolerable that the right of a pressure group of Labour Party members to exist should depend on it being 'acceptable to the National Executive Committee', without any recourse to conference.

It is also quite wrong for Labour Party members to face expulsion simply because of their real or alleged association with a group which the National Executive Committee of the day has refused to register.

This decision opens the door to renewed internal conflict and to victimisation and witch-hunts of party members holding minority views.

While accepting the sovereignty of conference decisions, we resolve to campaign through all possible constitutional channels for Annual Conference to remove the absolute and arbitrary powers which it has granted to the NEC.

We consider that pressure groups of Labour Party members should be free to campaign without needing to gain admission to a register. Annual Conference, acting in line with impartial conditions clearly laid down in the Constitution, should be the only body entitled to curtail their activities, with the National Executive Committee only able to make recommendations in this respect. We call on all those who respect the democratic right of dissent to support such a campaign.

We don't accept that conference in voting for the register voted for a witch-hunt and expulsions. Any attempt by the NEC to make such expulsions will meet determined resistance from CLPs but the most effective way to achieve our common objective is to campaign for these constitutional changes and to refuse to allow ourselves to be diverted from campaigning for conference policies and a Labour victory.

London Labour Briefing, page ten.

LABOUR AGAINST THE WITCH-HUNT

Jane Stockton,
St. Pancras North CLP

The conference on October 30th called to launch a national campaign for CLPs to fight the witch-hunt, ended the day overwhelmingly endorsing a statement opposing the explusion of any Labour Party member arising out of the NEC's register of non-affiliated groups.

It was also agreed to set up a National Council consisting of delegates from all CLPs and affiliated trade unions who support the campaign to organise future activities. Now that the proposals for the first expulsions have been made it is vital that the words are transformed into actions, and that as many CLPs as possible are brought into the campaign to join the 101 that were represented at the conference (54 from outside London).

SIGNS OF RETREAT

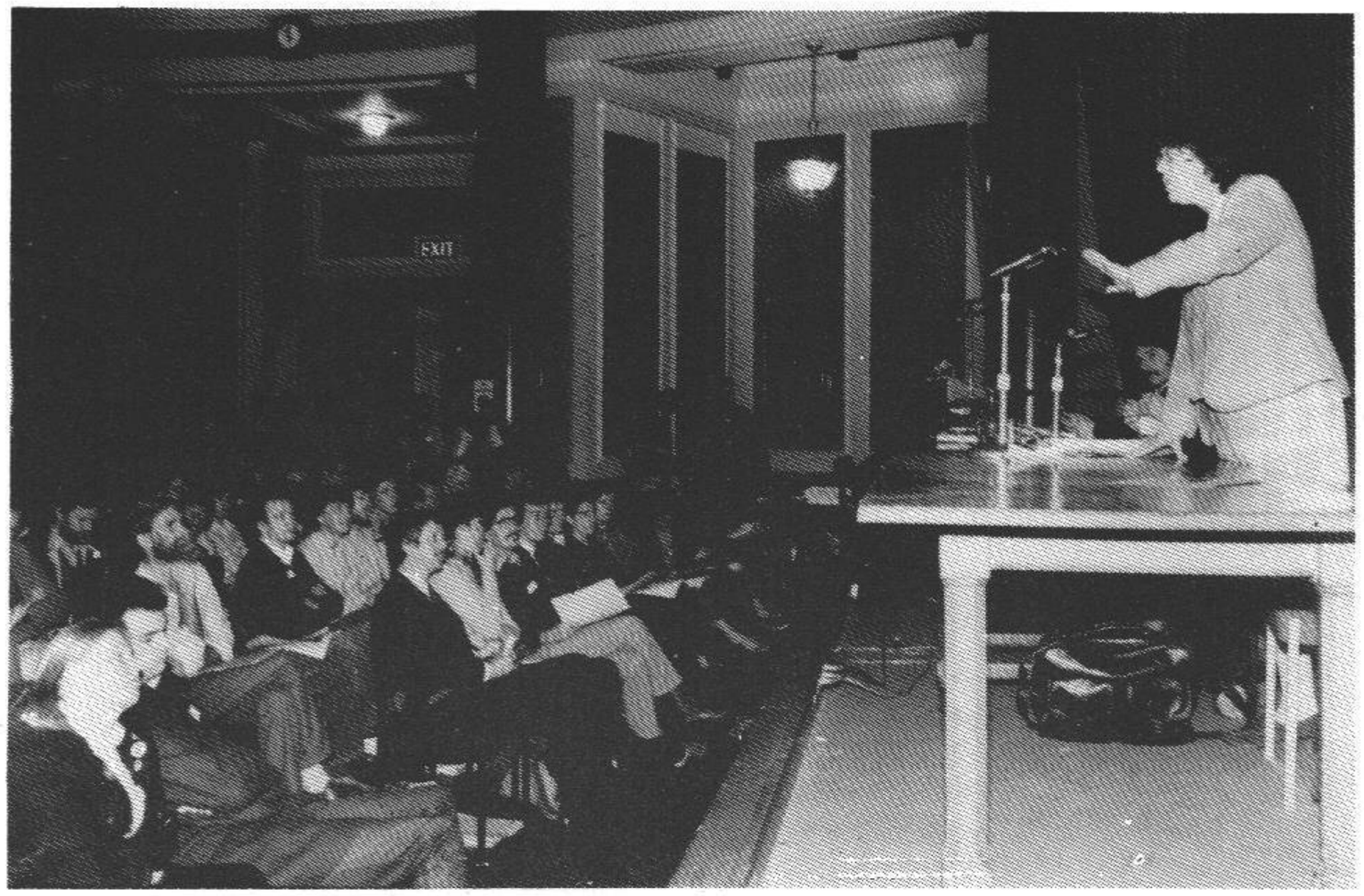
By now it was expected that the first expulsions would have been endorsed by the NEC. The fact however that the decisions have been deferred pending legal advice, should not make us complacent. The constitutional legality of the NEC's proposals to make these expulsions is not and never has been the issue. It is not the law that will stop expulsions but an organised campaign of opposition. The fact that Jim Mortimer's proposals only call for the expulsion of the members of the Militant editorial board and not the Militant supporters who are prospective parliamentary candidates already shows signs of a retreat by some of the Right and could split the NEC. A successful campaign can open wide this split.

WIDER THAN MILITANT

It is unfortunate that Militant will probably not be participating in the National Council. The attitude they expressed, very forcibly (!) at the October 30th conference appears to be that since they are the first group to be attacked, only they have the right to organise to oppose explusions. Whilst it is important to attempt to unite the Left in fighting the witch-hunt, this issue is much wider than Militant, and their attitude must not be allowed to deter the campaign. The attack by the Right is on the whole of the organised Left, and if they had their way they would not stop until the majorities for all the socialist policies won in the last few years had been removed from the Party.

SUPPORTING CLPS

There is no doubt that the large majority of CLPs are opposed to expulsions, but it will be individual CLPs who are picked on by the NEC to implement them. Our task is to ensure that no CLP is left isolated. Once the attacks begin we will need to be organised to support these CLPs. The Left press have a big responsibility to ensure that the campaign is visible and that all organised actions are widely publicised. It is also important to get our Regional Executive Committees and affiliated trade unions involved in the campaign, supporting CLPs threatened with disaffiliation.



JOHN ARTHUR

Audrey Wise speaking at "Labour Party against the Witch Hunt Conference", October 30th, County Hall.

RESIST THE REGISTER

Whilst the October 30th conference decided not to include opposition to implementation of the register in its aims, it is my view that any decision by a Left group to comply with the register will be a setback to the campaign and an admission that the NEC has the right to decide who can or cannot organise within the party. The argument that we should comply because it was democratically decided at Annual Conference surely no longer has any validity. We have clearly seen already that the new NEC is no upholder of democracy. The hard Right have used their small majority to completely destroy Left representation on the NEC and to virtually disenfranchise CLPs – only 2 out of 18 constituency section NEC representatives are on the new Home Policy Committee and there is no constituency representation at all on the Youth Committee! Despite the clear wish of women in the party for more control over our own organisations, the Right have taken power away from us by increasing the NEC's representation on the National Women's Committee from 6 to 8 and filling 5 of those places with right wing men. It is clear that the wish of the hard Right is to go much further in their plans for expulsions than was the spirit of the Conference decision. To comply with the register is to assist them in their aim to destroy the whole of the Left. We must not let them do this, we should not comply.

FIGHTING TO WIN

The struggle will be fought in defending individuals' rights to be in the party, but we should not lose sight of what it is really all about – a fight for the policies of the party and a government that will implement them. Anyone who went to Peckham during the bye-election will know that the appallingly low turnout was not due to the electorate's fears that the Labour Party is too "Left", but to a total loss of faith that Labour will keep its promises. Labour's electorial support has been declining for years and there's been no noticeable improvement since the Right's promises to purge the party of Militant. We should not be deterred as a General Election approaches by accusations that we will lose Labour the election. The Right think they can win by forming a coalition with the SDP. A Labour government which will implement socialist policies will only be elected if we have fought and won!

THE NEW FARE FIGHT IS ON!

The New Fare Fight is on. The GLC plan a 25% fare cut in Spring. Howell-the-wimp is tendering a 10% ticket and plans to wham up fares in all other major Labour-controlled cities. Election year will open with the fight to defend local democracy against the unelected SPG in wigs.

The Can't-Pay-Won't-Pay defence campaign is battling on, ripping the neutral mask off the law. The CPWP flying circus made a great debut at Lavender Hill magistrates court on October 28th when the 18 CPWP defendants made their first appearance along with crowds of supporters, two impertinent impersonations of Lord Denning, the Suffragette 6 (women who chained themselves to a bus in Spring), Battersea Trades Council's magnificent banner, Tony Banks the new Labour PPC for Newham N.W., many press misreporters and a man from City Limits.

GREAT EXPLANATIONS

Councillor Dave Wetzel, GLC transport chair, and one of the defendants pleaded for the hundreds of people killed or injured every year on the roads. Piers Corbyn applied for a witness summons for Lord Denning to give him a chance to appear in Court once again and answer questions on his decision. An explanation is the least one is entitled to, surely! The show, complete with comedian magistrate Cheeseman was adjourned to January 26th to enable the lawyers to wrap wet towels round their heads he said. Be there!

Now the Defendants have referred Lord Denning to the Attorney-General for contempt of Court for his adverse comments about the case on Capital Radio – ". . . It's a question of legal interpretation . . . If it comes in their favour I wouldn't like to say what would happen . . ."

THINK POSITIVE!

Support with money is rolling in from Labour Parties and Trade Unions. It is rumoured that Brent Council Labour Group, a member of which is a defendant, will give one day's attendance allowance to the campaign – a great example. Funds are needed for all aspects of defence and for debts, which must be settled, to the printers of the superb CPWP leaflets which motivated many thousands of CPWPers in the Spring. Please send money urgently for both (specifying both or either as the case may be).

DISBAND THE SPG IN WIGS!

Defend elected Labour policies against creeping constitutional dictatorship!



Resolutions and Funds: Fare Fight (CPWP Defence fund), c/o Naomi Landau, 6a Compayne Gdns., NW6. Information/defence campaign meetings: Jan Wallcraft 444-5896, Piers Corbyn 701-5691, Ernest Rodker 672-9698.
Question; What is bigger than 5?
Answer: A million.

Piers Corbyn

WORKERS TAKE OVER

MICHAEL WARD,
Chair of Industry and Employment

183 engineering workers in Brent are about to take over their factory and run it themselves. Employees at Associated Automation, part of the GEC empire involved in the manufacture of telephone equipment, were told by GEC their plant was to close. They formed their own enterprise – Third Sector Limited – and approached the GLC for help. The GLC are providing a mortgage loan of £405,000 to enable them to buy the land and buildings, and £332,000 as a grant to help the new operation get started. The grant is to be partly repaid when Third Sector becomes profitable.

This support is provided by the GLC on the basis of 'pounds per job week'. In the past, many economic development agencies have paid out flat rate investment grants, of many thousands of pounds per job created. Then, not all the jobs promised have materialised. The Council's approach is to pay in instalments, against actual employment levels. The arrangements also enable the GLC to encourage particular types of work or work organisation – thus the basic level of support is £20 per job week, but extra sums are also added, for example,

- for every job in a co-op, £5 per job week
- for every apprentice employed, £2 per job week,
- for every woman employed, £2 per job week,
- for every ethnic minority member, £2 per job week.

These figures are, of course, upper limits: in the Third Sector case, assistance works out at £25 per job week for 72 weeks.

It is obvious that investment from public funds of £20 per job week is far less than the cost of keeping people out of work. In addition, however, 1980 figures show that the average London worker produces £160 worth of goods or services per week. In turn, this extra economic activity itself generates more demand, and more work – and ultimately more tax revenue, and thus a net saving!

The most pernicious argument at the Government's disposal is that 'there is no alternative'. Every time another factory closes or more redundancies occur, government apologists state again that there is no alternative. Many will want to discuss the basis of the GLC's Third Sector deal – and the parallel agreement at the Austins furniture factory in East London, which saved 120 jobs. There are important issues to be considered in relation to the principles and the detail of both of these enterprises and the many more that are now in the pipeline.

But what they show very clearly is that there *is* an alternative: that jobs need not go, factories need not close – and that, in the process of keeping them going, important advances can be won in the form of increased worker control. Third Sector is a cooperative where before Associated Automation was a private business. Austins has a planning agreement and worker-directors.

Recessions like the current one are times of restructuring. New industries develop, old ones change their shape. Our task is to ensure that that restructuring takes place on Labour's terms: restructuring for labour, not for capital. Saving what can be saved in traditional sectors like furniture and engineering is part of this. Another aspect is ensuring that, where new sectors are growing, their development is favourable to the interests of working people. The GLC has in hand a major initiative on cable communications and broadcasting, seeking to ensure that cable is not simply turned into a bonanza for the private sector.

These first major agreements to save jobs have been concluded while the Greater London Enterprise Board has been in process of establishment. They have shown that local government powers can be used in the innovative and radical ways the manifesto outlined – to the surprise of many inside and outside local government. They have also reinforced the case for an agency – like the Enterprise Board – accountable to local government, but working at arm's length to it, with autonomy to get on with its day to day work. The Board began to meet in August, and will be fully operational over the next few weeks.

The economic policies being developed by GLC, West Midlands, and Sheffield provide the basis for a new inner city and regional economic policy for the Labour Party. Working closely with community and workplace groups in the popular planning of local economics, they show the way in which economic planning can be linked to people's immediate demands.

WHO RUNS THE I.L.E.A.?

This is the question being asked by the Black parents and young people in the Hackney area as the Senior Officers of the ILEA misinformed the left-wing Further & Higher Education Committee into sacking the Black Youth worker — Anslem Samuel, frosm the Clapton Youth Centre.

TIMELY INTERVENTION

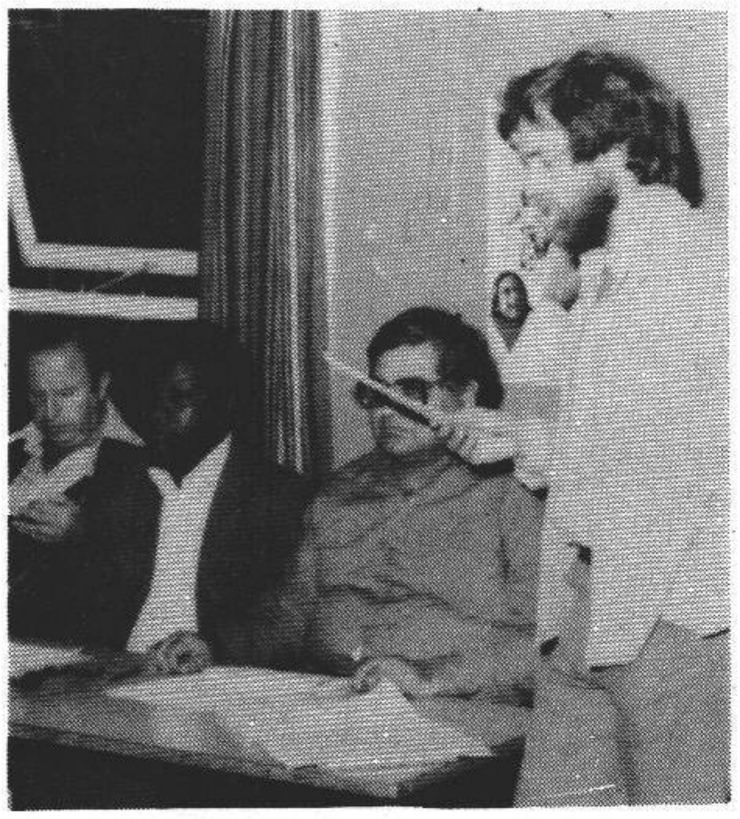
This action was blocked by the unprecedented timely intervention by the Regional Executive of the Greater London Labour Party through the efforts of Vidya Anand, Jeremy Corbyn and Ken Livingstone. Sam was reprieved from dismissal as the ILEA Labour Group overturned its Further & Higher Education Committee's earlier dismissal by 31 votes to 12 and agreed to hold a public enquiry into the vendetta against the Clapton Youth Centre and the Youth Service.

Without the involvement of the Hackney Black People's Association, Hackney Asian Association, Hackney Cypriot Association, Newham Federation of Asian Organisations, Caribbean Teachers Association, Black Trade Union Solidarity Movement, Clapton Centre Defence Committee, *London Labour Briefing* and *Socialist Organiser*. Hackney C.R.E., Hackney NALGO, North and Central Hackney CLPs, Hackney Young Socialists and countless individuals, this would have been an impossible task. But yet there were some right-wing members of the ILEA — including Bala Gnanpragasam (he voted against the manifesto commitment on School Meals) who ganged up unsuccessfully in their effort to stop Sam's reinstatement.

The run up to the sacking include disputes over Sam's hours. A decision was reached in 1979 by the Head of the Centre, Head of G.E.C. and the Inspectorate that Sam could work 20 hours per week so as to develop the work of the centre. In January, 1981, a circular was received stating that teachers under the Burnham Agreement working 20 hours or more, can apply for conversion to full time lecturers status. Sam applied in March 1981. In April 1981, the then Inspector had a meeting with the Head of the Centre and informed the H.O.C. that he was going to block Sam's conversion to full-time status. This did not end there. The next thing was that the Senior Officers instructed the Head of the Centre to cut Sam's hours, accused the Head of the Centre of misusing the resources, and proposed that the Centre should be downgraded from a Youth Centre to a Youth Club. The above threat involved service implications for the centre and its members as well as the staff.

DEFENCE COMMITTEE

This information was placed at a meeting of the members and staff and it was decided to



form a Defence Committee to wage a fight to protect the legitimate rights which were apparently threatened. Subsequently, two main demands were specifically communicated to the Authority by Clapton Youth Centre's Defence Committee which were:

1. That Sam be converted to a full time status
2. That the Centre should not be downgraded to a Youth Club.

The Campaign lasted for over ten months gaining momentum at every stage. Members of the Defence Committee met with Officers and members at County Hall and at the Centre. Several public meetings were held at the Centre. As this campaign was going on, an incident occurred *outside* Stamford Hill Youth Club. Sam and his passenger were assaulted by a young man. Sam defended himself and was charged with assault. This was in November 1981. His passenger had to go to hospital and was off work for a week as a result of the incident. However ten days later Sam was charged with assault. Sam and his passenger issued cross summons against the young man for assault. It is understood that the young man was pressurised by senior ILEA officers into bringing the charge against Sam. The case came up at Snaresbrook Crown Court on July 12, 13th and 14th. Sam was found guilty by an all-white jury and fined £250.

The latest provocation has been to ask Mr. Samuel to attend a medical but a medical which is unprecedented — asking him to attend an interview with the ILEA Consultant Psychiatrist! Mr. Samuel has received a number of helpful letters from leading comrades of the ILEA. The time for uncertainty is over. Mr. Samuel must not only be reinstated but on terms that must conform with the work he is doing and the respect with which he is held by the community he serves.

Ossie Noblemann
Chairperson
Mixifren Association

RACS

ROYAL ARSENAL CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY
POLITICAL COMMITTEE

GRAND
CHRISTMAS RALLY

★ PEACE ★ JOBS ★ FREEDOM

Thursday 9th December 1982
Woolwich Public Hall, Market Street, S.E.18
Doors and Bar open 7pm. Rally commences 7.30pm

Speakers:
E.P. THOMPSON
KEN LIVINGSTONE
Leader, Greater London Council
RICHARD BALFE, M.E.P.
GUY BARNETT
M.P. for Greenwich

Chair
HILDA SMITH
Chair, R.A.C.S. Political Committee
FEMINIST FOLK SINGER

REFRESHMENTS AND BAR AVAILABLE
Entrance fee £1 (50p for the unwaged) payable at the door.

London Labour Briefing, page thirteen.

SUPPORT THE ARLINGTON HOUSE STRIKE

44 members of the TGWU staff at Arlington House have been on strike since 10th September for improved conditions and services. Arlington House is a hostel in Camden for men. It has 1066 beds – the largest in Europe – and is owned by Rowtons Hotels, who also own the Mount Pleasant Hotel, the Grand, and the London Park.

Living conditions are appalling with rooms only 7ft by 5ft and only one bath or shower for every 62 residents. The average take home pay of the staff ranges from £28 for a 48 hour week as a bedmaker, to £36 for 60 hours work as a doorman.

Rowton Hotels have sacked the workers for trying to organise themselves into an effective trade union, and they have made several attempts to evict the strikers from Arlington House where they live. Finally on the 11th November a judge ruled that the strikers must leave Arlington House within two weeks.

The workers are determined to fight on. George Walkden, a TGWU shop steward, said after the judge's ruling, "If Rowton think this is the end of the battle, I've got news for them. This is only the start of it. If it takes six months, we will still be outside Arlington House".

More than ever now, the strikers need our support.

* Organise a collection for the strikers, and get donations from your Labour Party or trade union branch.

* Support the mass pickets. There is one on November 25th. Contact the Strike Committee for details of others.

* Invite a speaker from the Strike Committee.

Chris Johnson

For information contact: Arlington House Strike Committee, 8 Camden Rd, NW1. 485 1100.

TOWARDS A LEAD-FREE LONDON

EXACTLY one year ago LLB published an article entitled, 'For a Lead Free London', which drew attention to the health hazards created by lead pollution in graphic terms. Earlier this year Hornsey CLP called on all local authorities in London to take the initiative in leading a campaign which aims at a Lead Free London. It proposed such steps as — (1) publishing a map for all Londoners indicating the levels of lead concentration in all parts of the metropolis; (2) introducing experimental lead-free zones in areas of high pollution; (3) using lead-free petrol for vehicles which are in their ownership; (4) taking action as licensing authorities to ensure that a choice of lead-free petrol is available at garages throughout Greater London; and (5) working together with all environmental, conservation, and cheap fare groups to achieve the above ends.

This five point resolution has lost none of its urgency. In a recent opinion poll, 90% of all people who were asked whether they were in favour of banning lead from petrol answered in the affirmative. It has been asserted that there are about 200 MPs and 20 national organisations in the environmental and health fields supporting the case for the eventual removal of lead from petrol. CLEAR (the Campaign for Lead-Free Air) has been greatly encouraged by the support they are now receiving on a European scale, and the Common Market is being urged to set a date by which all cars should be manufactured to run on lead free petrol. Having just returned from New York, one cannot but be dismayed to find the New York State and City authorities taking far more drastic action against the 'Lead Lobby' than the London authorities have taken in recent months.

It is high time that the GLC, the ILEA, and the London Boroughs woke up to their 'environmental' responsibilities to the people of London — and not least of all — to London's children!

Ellis Hillman,
Hornsey CLP.

PEOPLE, NOT CONCRETE!

Jeremy Corbyn

THE Government is once again trying to build a section of motorway through the Archway/Highgate area. They plan to spend £20 millions on a one mile stretch of the A1 from the Archway Bridge in Islington to the Finchley border.

This project is being fought very vociferously by North Islington, Hornsey, and Finchley Labour Parties because we do not want to see another arterial road coming into London and are not prepared to allow the increase in pollution levels and deterioration in public transport that will follow.

Studies of traffic on the road show that over two thirds of the heavy goods traffic is going through London to the channel ports and the majority of the cars during the peak hours are commuter travellers.

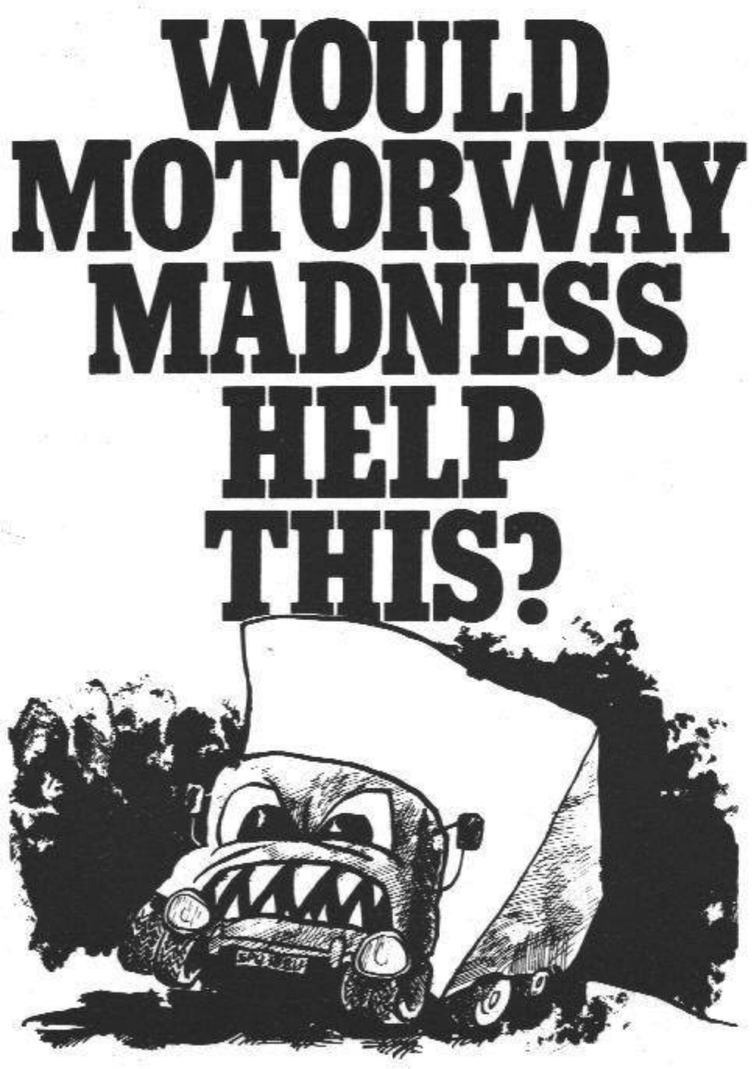
The £20 million that the Tories are trying to spend on this scheme is only a little less than the £26 millions cut from Haringey and slightly more than the £17 millions cut from Islington since the Tories came to power in 1979.

The campaign against the road has gained enormous support; the last inquiry in 1977 was adjourned when the Inspector ordered the Department of Transport to release their traffic projection figures. Five years later they have still refused to do this and insist that the traffic problems of the area must be solved in the area.

The opposition is opposing the holding of an inquiry and demanding that the scheme be scrapped, the blight lifted and a ban on heavy lorries in London be introduced together with a comprehensive policy of shifting freight to the railways and reducing public transport fares.

The people who benefit from roads are the minority who commute by car, the roads lobby and the moguls of the construction industry. In the wards of North Islington nearest to the road and most under threat from the next stage in this rollerball concrete show less than one third of the households have access to a car; amongst the lowest figures anywhere in Greater London.

Opposition to these sorts of schemes is part of the campaign for a socialist transport policy; we are waging a massive campaign up to the closing date for objections on December 23rd.



HOW TO PROTEST

This road can be stopped with your help. Send your objections to the Department of Transport, Room 2/15, St Christopher House, Southwark Street, London SE1 OTE by December 23rd and show that the people of North London put their homes, their environment, and their public transport before unwanted road schemes.

WOMEN: THE FIGHTBACK



The Greater London Labour Women's Conference held on October 30th revealed how in the period since the Annual Conference women had organised to pursue the demands which we lost at Blackpool. Women's Fightback and Women's Action Committee of the CLPD have both been very active in jointly pursuing the five demands on women's organisation.

DIFFERENT ATMOSPHERE

As a delegate to Annual Conference – incidentally one who benefited from the "women's" delegate position revealed to many CLPs by WAC/CLPD, I was amazed at the different atmosphere which existed at the Labour Women's Conference than that which I had experienced at Blackpool. There was no gloom and doom following the disastrous decisions made at Annual Conference. Dismay certainly, at the way the wider Party ignores the demands of the growing section of women in the Party. Anger, definitely, at the loss to the movement for women's rights of Jo Richardson following the manoeuvres of the new right on the NEC flexing their muscles. Strange that they should choose to flex them against us "defenceless women". But there was no air of surrender.

I might suggest to the new NEC that they would have to go a long way to experience the feeling of solidarity which overwhelmed delegates and visitors to the Women's Conference as we listened to speech after speech on issues covering employment, nuclear disarmament, child care, social provision, NHS, rape, privatisation, and positive discrimination. All excellent contributions from delegates who do not often get a look in at their own TU branch or CLPs. The vast majority were from Women's Sections and Women's Councils. This surely is the result of the confidence that women have developed within the more comradely environment of these growing sections of the Party.

DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE

For me, the Women's Conference highlighted that the way forward now for women within the Party is the same as that of the left in general. To ensure that democratic structures exist in order to allow our arguments to surface instead of the situation which exists now where the block vote of the trade unions acts as a straitjacket on the advance of socialist policies. Party members have seen the way in which the block vote at this Annual Conference was cynically used to defeat the demands of the rank and file of the Party, but this is not a new experience for Labour women. We saw at last year's National Labour Women's Conference how the block vote, supported by Militant, was viciously used to destroy the demands of rank and file women. We need to realise that there is no way forward without the unity of a democratic trade union movement harnessed to the Party rank and file committed to equality for women.

It is obvious that over the next few months in the lead-up to the general election we are going to face more attacks from the right in the attempt to defeat our support for left policies, a democratic party and our unity. The National Labour Women's Committee has a vital role to play in campaigning to defend the hard-win advances that Labour women have made over the last few years. It also has a role in spearheading campaigns on women's issues, and in promoting the unity of trade unionists and CLPs; but overall it must have a dynamic public profile. In my view, these are our immediate tasks if we are to pursue and win the demands which we lost at Blackpool.

Madeleine Long
East Lewisham CLP Women's Section
and newly elected delegate to the
National Labour Women's Committee

Justice for Women — Yes! But what about us? — Justice for Blacks!

Vidya Anand — Member Regional Executive Greater London Labour Party

Valerie Wise is quite right. Of course, women have been denied their rightful place in the Labour, Trade Union and Cooperative Movement for generations. Women are fed up of this party being run by men for men! She correctly observes — *we* ought to know! Those of us from the ethnic minorities in the Labour Movement know it so well — that when Madam Cama, an Indian socialist, dared to get up to address the Socialist International at Stuttgart in 1907 — Ramsay Macdonald — the British delegate walked out in protest! He was more incensed at the audacity of an Indian delegate being given an opportunity to raise the voice for Indian independence than he was being lectured to by a woman on the subject! Only Mr. Hyndman we are told — his fellow British delegate — stayed on to applaud and support the cause of liberty.

Yes, blacks and women have been excluded from the corridors of power by the manipulation of their white male colleagues through caucuses run by males and whites for whites. Statistics tell us that there are only two women members out of sixteen on the Regional Executive from CLP sections, one woman member out of sixteen from the Trade Union section, and one out of five from the Coop section. Only seven out of 48 members of the Regional Executive are women. But there is only one E.C. member from the ethnic minorities! Both women and ethnic minorities seem to be there for purely cosmetic purposes. Almost all the Chairpersons of the sub-committees of the Regional Executive — Policy, Finance and General Purposes, Campaigns and Political Education and Organisations and Anti-Racist sub-committees — are white and male. The party should reflect a London in its totality. Otherwise it negates in practice what it preaches. How can the party draw strength from all sections of London's culturally rich and colourful society when it bars representatives from the echelons of power where their fate is being decided. We don't need middle men — women can speak for themselves, as can blacks and Asians. They also have the capacity to speak and uphold principles of socialism as steadfastly as their white male counterparts. Any one who doubts this is living in a different age and in a different era.

Ethnic minorities feel as women in the same way justifiably left behind. For too long their support has been taken for granted. Blacks and Asians, like women, expect to take part in policy making bodies and playing their rightful roles in the furtherance of the cause of socialism in this country and abroad.

Yes, justice for women includes the right of women to be fully represented on the Front Benches of the local authorities in London, including the GLC. Islington, Haringey and Brent have taken the lead. Now all eyes are on the GLC to follow suit!

London Labour Briefing, page fifteen.

How the NEC 'hard right' went for women's power

Mandy Moore

Many of the machinations of the new NEC have made the headlines in the press recently; however, not all aspects have been considered as important as others. The attack on the women's organisation in the Party for instance has passed without note, and yet for those of us who have been trying to clarify the structure and to develop policy for women these moves have been crucial.

The NEC's first blow was the removal of Jo Richardson from the Home Policy Committee. Jo is the only Labour woman MP who has consistently fought for, and been involved in the development of, women's policy in the Party. Now her voice will no longer be present on one of the most important policy-making committees of the NEC. She has also been removed from the Chair of the NEC Women's Committee. This means that she will also, by virtue of losing the Chair, lose her place on the Policy Co-ordinating Committee – the Committee which, along with the Shadow Cabinet, will draw up the next manifesto.

STIFLE DEVELOPMENT

As well as this, the right on the NEC are also trying to stifle the development of the women's organisation in the Party. They have arbitrarily increased the representation of the NEC on the National Labour Women's Committee. This is the Committee which is made up of women from each region, who are elected at the Regional Women's Conferences. However, the Committee also has NEC representatives on it; until this year there have been six, now this number has been increased to eight and includes such defenders of women's rights as John Golding, Ken Cure, Dennis Howell, Roy Evans, and of course Gwynneth Dunwoody (the other three members on 'our side' are Jo Richardon, Audrey Wise and Tom Sawyer). Increasing the NEC represenation in this way is obviously a move to stop the radicalisation of the women's organisations in the Party – a move which highlights yet again the necessity for structural change to provide for the National Labour Women's Committee to be elected by, and accountable to the Women's Conference, and to be an executive of that Conference, rather than a tool of the NEC.

The NEC's third blow, is the impeding run-down of policy making in the Party. Betty Boothroyd moved a resolution at the NEC's meeting calling for the cultailment of the work of the NEC's policy groups, ostensibly so that the Party can concentrate on the run-up to the next General Election. For women this decision is catastrophic.



TONY GAY

Jo Richardson on MP's demonstration against the housing cuts, February 1981.

The NEC Women's Rights Study Group has only been operating for around two years. In that time it has not only begun to develop radical policies which relate to women's rights, but it also took on the task of monitoring every section of Labour's Programme '82 to ensure that sexism was eradicated – as far as possible! – and that the best policies for women were included.

MAJOR IMPACT

On many issues the Women's Rights Study Group was at complete odds with the other male-dominated Committees that had prepared the drafts; however, a great many important changes were fought for and won. It is true to say that the Women's Rights Study group had a major impact on Labour's Programme that would have been completely missing if the Group had not existed.

This major impact, however, was only a drop in the ocean compared to the amount of work that needs to be done to radicalise Party policy for women. It now seems that the NEC is to bring this work to a halt, denying women the one real hope they had for the development of socialist policies which were also for women as well as men.

It is appalling, although highly predictable, that the new NEC should attempt to smother the growth of the women's organisation in the Party in these ways. They will not be successful – the movement is too strong for that. However, they will cause confrontation and bitterness; and will hinder yet again the real work of the Labour Party in trying to win back the mass support of the working class.

LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING ON IRELAND



The British Army in operation in the north of Ireland.

What about Ireland?

Sarah Roeloffs, Islington South Labour Party and Labour Committee on Ireland.

"If you really want to know look in the Mirror!"

For once 'if you wanted to know and looked in the Daily Mirror' you would have found something other than page 3, sexism and Healyism. On Monday, 1st of November the whole of the Daily Mirror front page was devoted to an editorial on Ireland with the 1½ inch high banner headline "HOW MUCH LONGER?" Arguing that 13 years of British troops in Northern Ireland were "wasted" the editorial reiterated the demand of a similar editorial in August 1978 — "Bring home the troops".

Noting that the 'sectarian' murders started shortly after the troops went in, the 1982 editorial asked — "How much longer will it be before Britain faces the fact that it cannot solve the Irish problem — and gets out?" It continued, "We said (four years ago) that the people there should be left free to govern themselves... Years of plastic bullets and plastic solutions have not brought peace any nearer. Bankrupt policies have only produced bankrupt car firms ... Mr. Prior has only his Assembly. But the last thing Northern Ireland needs is another talking-shop, refereed by us. Withdrawal would be difficult. But we have managed it almost everywhere else in the world ... It would be recognition that we cannot solve the problem because our presence is part of it."

The Mirror editorial came eleven days after elections to the latest British 'political initiative' — Prior's Assembly. With none of the Catholic and republican representatives willing to participate in what is seen as yet another Sunningdale-type arrangement, the Assembly has effectively and predictably collapsed. Given Unionist intransigence to any idea of power-sharing, even if it isn't in practice, and given Catholic and republican opposition to power-sharing which is power-less in practice, the Assembly proposals inherently represent a return to Stormont — which was unadulterated Unionist rule.

The election results themselves saw Fleet St. at it again. After years of righteous condemnation of 'terrorism' and virtuous demands to 'use the ballot box', when the so-called 'terrorists' do — and win — right and virtue suddenly becomes outrage at Sinn Fein's temerity. "Sabotage!" screamed the headlines on Friday 21st October after Sinn Fein had won five seats and nearly a sixth as a result of an excellently run election campaign which mobilised their base, particularly the youth. (Interestingly *The Mirror* was the only paper not to lead with the election results — they were confined to a small article on page 7, with the front page given over to Prince Andrew and crime statistics.)

Sinn Fein followed their election victories first with a call for an anti-imperialist unity campaign and secondly with a notable shift to the left at their annual conference on the weekend of 30th/31st October. Both events mark a move towards an investment in mass socialist campaigning politics, as opposed to simply relying on the armed struggle, though the latter was reaffirmed at the conference. The united anti-imperialist campaign against any return to Stormont-type rule is conceived of as including mass meetings and street campaigns. At their annual conference Sinn Fein dropped their traditional federalist concept of a United Ireland in favour of a unitary structure based on decentralised democracy with street committees and people's councils. In addition Sinn Fein said it would be standing in as many constituencies as possible in the next Westminster general election.

IGNORE IT AT OUR PERIL

The point about the Mirror editorial and republican Irish politics in the last few weeks is what it means for British Labour Party members. We ignore both at our peril. That a national bourgeois paper that has always supported the Labour Party from a most right wing standpoint should completely outflank us is an indictment indeed of Labour Party Irish policy. And if the Labour Party continues to let itself be bound and gagged by an imperialist ideology that describes Sinn Fein as 'terrorists' pure and simple, then it will never be the socialist alternative the working class needs. The overwhelming support for the resolution calling for the banning of plastic bullets at this year's annual conference was an important step forward, but the conference also defeated fairly heavily, a withdrawal resolution.

And what of the Labour Left? While Benn spoke at a Labour Committee on Ireland fringe meeting at the 1980 annual conference, apologising for his previous silence on Ireland and arguing for British withdrawal — which in 1981 he qualified by calling for British army replacement by a United Nations force — he has practically avoided the Irish issue since. The Tribune newspaper, under its new so called 'hard left' editorship of Chris Mullin, has also skirted the issue. While (after LCI lobbying) Mullin agreed to Bernadette McAliskey addressing the Tribune rally at annual conference this year, Tribune's response to the Assembly elections was to run an article that argued for support for the pro-imperialist Workers Party because it alone did not reduce the problems of Northern Ireland to the question of the border, but addressed social and economic politics. This myopic argument ignores the fact that the wretched question of the border affects and permeates *every* aspect of Northern Irish politics. It can't be wished away by a simple desire for non-sectarianism, when Protestant privileges and discrimination against Catholics are, and have been since 1921, the very life blood of the Northern Irish state. Tribune, in fact, have an interview with Bernadette McAlisky which they have yet to print. Why?

ACT NOW

There are, of course, some honourable exceptions amongst the Labour Left, mostly around the Labour Committee on Ireland and including London Labour Briefing. But these forces are comparitively small as yet, especially in the unions. There is a feeling that we can never 'win' on Ireland, that it is a 'minority' issue. The Mirror editorial shows clearly that this is not the case and the Sinn Fein decisions will only make our job easier. We need to act now and go on the offensive:

1 *Commit CLPs, trade unions, councils to a policy of British withdrawal (model resolutions are available from the LCI), organise public meetings and discussions, join and affiliate to the LCI, BM Box 5355, London WC1.*
2 *Sponsor and send delegates to the National Plastic Bullets Conference on February 26th 1983 — sponsorship forms, publicity material available from Box 15, 164/6 Corn Exchange Buildings, Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.*
3 *Send letters and resolutions to the NEC and our parliamentary spokespersons asking how they are progressing with their mandate on plastic bullets from this years annual conference.*
4 *Initiate an open and broad discussion throughout the labour movement on how we achieve party policy of a United Ireland, specifically by asking the NEC to call a special national conference.*

In a recently published book, *Troublesome Business* (published by Pluto Press), author Geoffrey Bell concludes by saying:
"The attitudes and relationships of the British Labour Party to Ireland have been neither honourable, internationalist, nor socialist. The use of the last adjective may raise definitional controversies, but the question thrown at Labour MP James O'Grady, by members of the Russian soviets more than sixty years ago lies on the table: **'WHAT ABOUT IRELAND, WHAT ABOUT IRELAND?'**

Editors' Note:

Note: we have been assured by Tribune that it does not have a policy of supporting The Workers Party. It has an 'open editorial policy' and prints articles which do not necessarily reflect the views of the paper.

Review: TROUBLESOME business

Colin Adams (Chair, Brent East CLP)

Troublesome Business: the Labour Party and the Irish Question by Geoffrey Bell Pluto Press

The publication of Geoffrey Bell's latest book, Troublesome Business, fills a gap in socialist history-writing. Despite the huge increase over the past 10 years in literature about the Labour Party, an examination of Labour's approach to the Irish question has been limited to a few pamphlets. Indeed in his introduction, Geoffrey Bell makes the point that it is difficult to understand why the topic has been so neglected.

Bell has produced a well-researched and at the same time a highly readable document. Given the disgraceful behaviour and attitudes which have littered Labour's record, it is understandable that Bell's sympathies and exasperation show through. He claims to have written a record not an interpretation, but the facts are so presented as to need little interpretation. Moreover, it is a book which should appeal to a wider audience than the "Irish caucus". Labour's attitude to Ireland is but a reflection of its world view.

One major theme in the book is the complete lack of interest in the affairs of Ireland shown by Labour and its leaders. All too often, affairs in Ireland have been seen as an irritant — the problems of Ireland have been beyond the comprehension of Labour's leaderships. They have not conformed to the British pattern. Bell does well to look at the origins of the attitude in the organisations which predated and helped form the Labour Party. For example, the Fabians, as was to be expected, looked upon Ireland with a typical air of condescension. So, in 1899, they determined to develop "socialist missionary work" by undertaking "special propaganda" in Ireland. The Webbs had visited Ireland in 1892 and said: "Home Rule is an absolute necessity to depopulate the country of this detestable race." Fabians believed that all Ireland's (and Britain's)

(CONTINUED OVER)

TROUBLESOME (continued)

problems would be solved when everyone had the vote.

LITTLE HAS CHANGED

Matters did not improve with the formation of the Labour Representation Committee. Being dominated by trade union bureaucrats its main concern was "bread and butter" issues. Despite Ireland's future being a major national issue, the topic was not discussed at the first ten conferences of the LRC/Labour Party. Little has changed. At best the problems of the past 10 years have been met with apathy (with a few exceptions), at worst with open hostility and treachery. The latter is well chronicled in this book. It is very easy to draw up a list of Labour traitors — McDonald, Morrison, and Mason would probably be at the top. The prime consideration for Labour leaders has always been the security of the British state. In the great debate between Home Rulers and the nationalists, most leading Labour politicians tail-ended the Liberals because it maintained the supremacy of the Imperial parliament. Herbert Morrison in 1946 wrote glowingly of Northern Ireland and Unionism because of their patriotism during the Second World War. His assessments were the main arguments in favour of Attlee's famous guarantee to the Unionists of 1949. Morrison's approach was purely strategic. He considered an independent, United Ireland to be a military menace to the United Kingdom.

ROY MASON

Of course, in modern times we have the example of Roy Mason. Geoffrey Bell points out that the main push for him getting the job in 1976 came from the Tory front bench. He did the job entirely to their wishes. His arrogant, bullying approach did the Labour Party image enormous damage amongst the Nationalist community. His successor, Don Concannon, is from the same mould. Witness his disgraceful behaviour at Bobby Sands deathbed. All the above have been more "patriotic" than many Tories. None of them has given Irish self-determination more than a passing, derisory thought.

The other main theme running through the Party's approach has been its unswerving loyalty to reformism, and, in particular, parliamentarism. The Better Life for All Campaign were merely carrying the Fabian tradition when claiming that the answer to problems in the 6 counties lay in reforms to their social and economic conditions. Throughout its life, therefore the Labour Party has expected the Irish to believe in its view of parliamentary democracy, and expected Irish people to behave like good British trade unionists.

In passing, the author refers to one of the greatest examples of extra-parliamentary action seen when Carson, fully backed by the Tories, raised the Ulster Volunteers to defy the 1912 Government of Ireland Bill. Come back, Peter Tatchell, all is forgiven.

IRISH NATIONAL COUNCIL

Pat Finnegan
North West London Branch
Irish National Council

The North West London Branch of the Irish National Council held its first meeting way back on the 16th July. Only ten people attended despite a lot of publicity. This, it seemed, reflected disillusionment with mainstream political activity in this country.

At that meeting, chaired by Brent Councillor Frank Hansen, our immediate task was defined as raising the level of political awareness of the Irish community whose low level of participation in public life was partly attributed to the intimidatory effects of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. This infamous Act has helped to snuff out all political debate on Irish matters within the Irish community.

CULTURAL TRADITION

Our branch decided to saturate a small area with thousands of leaflets, advertising the INC. This resulted in only two firm enquiries, so we decided to adopt an alternative strategy. The Irish have a long and proud cultural tradition which has continued to flourish in this country. It seemed logical therefore that we try to reach our fellow countrymen and women through their culture. We organised a cultural evening in September and arranged for a distribution of our 'aims and objectives' document. As a result, our membership greatly increased and we intend to hold two similar functions in December.

Although cultural activity is not our main function, we will support any group seeking to further an Irish cultural identity. We have, therefore, a representative on the Steering Committee for a new Irish cultural centre to be set up in Brent. We were also represented at the meeting called by the Ethnic Minorities Unit of the GLC. A necessary first step to mass organisation of the Irish is to get our people to identify themselves as an ethnic minority.

We are committed to the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and were present in force at Brent Town Hall recently to hear a resolution calling for the repeal of the Act. Our Chairman, Councillor Hansen, introduced an amendment condemning Tory moves to disenfranchise the Irish. Both the motion and amendment were carried.

The main question with which the INC is concerned is the Partition of our country. We will campaign tirelessly for its unification.

INSTITUTIONALISED VIOLENCE

Through our local canvassing we have become acutely aware of the total ignorance of most people – Irish included – of the realities of the situation in the North of Ireland. Very few realise, for instance, the scale of institutionalised violence and the suspension of civil liberties. Our national executive is organising a series of forums with leading speakers of differing views. One such meeting will be on December 3rd at the Irish Club when Clive Soley will speak.

Our branch activity among the Irish in Brent has revealed that Irish voters are mainly Labour voters. But few in fact bother to use their votes at all. It is very hard for the INC to canvass these votes in favour of a Labour candidate, even one supporting our aims, while Don Concannon remains Labour's spokesperson on Irish affairs.

LINKS WITH BLACK COMMUNITY

We have also been actively engaged in establishing links with the black community in Brent, and have made contact with Merle Amory, deputy leader of Brent Council. We have also been invited to present our views to the local Education Department on how the local school curriculum can be improved to take account of Irish ethnicity.

Lastly we wish to improve relations between the peoples of England and Ireland. But how much can we do in this area until our country is united?

There are one or two points in the book with which I would take issue. In the first chapter Bell tries to put Marx's writing on Ireland into perspective. In doing so he says: "it is a long time since the chief manifestation of that trait (British workers identifying with their national interest) has been an anti-Irish sentiment." Recent evidence would seem to point the other way. Although not the prime target of physical abuse (except through the PTA), Irish people are certainly the main targets for racist jokes. A recent *Guardian* article made it clear that after the recent London bombings, many Irish people kept a very low profile for fear of reprisal.

Towards the end of the book, Bell deals with the Troops Out Movement and the build up of interest in Ireland in the Labour Party. He puts the failure of TOM down to a hostile environment. Many would say that it had more to do with its failure to intervene more positively in the labour movement. There was, however, a small group of Labour Party activists who, after solid work in the TOM with little result, formed the nucleus of the Labour Committee on Ireland, mostly responsible for elevating the debate in the Party.

These few misgivings apart, the book is to be welcomed as a valuable addition. Like the author, I firmly believe that until the Labour Party, and other socialists for that matter, get it right on Ireland, the cause of progress will remain but an ideal. The Labour Party has a lot to be ashamed of and a long haul still lies ahead.



'This sort of thing must not be allowed to happen to any woman, black or white'

Cheers went up in Walthamstow Magistrates' Court when a black woman and her son were cleared of charges against the police, on the 25th October. A packed public gallery rose to its feet and clapped as magistrates delivered not guilty verdicts. But for Mrs. Esme Baker, 37, who had been charged with police assault, it was all too much. She collapsed in the dock and wept.

This was the end of a six-month ordeal for Mrs. Baker, which began on the night of April 16 when an Instant Response Unit from Chingford police station was sent to Priory Court Estate in Walthamstow.

The unit is a localised SPG-type, riot police force, designed to counter public disorders on a large scale. But in this instance the unit was called out to a single youth, alleged to be carrying a crowbar. On their arrival they found no one with a crowbar, just three black youths sitting on a wall with a group of 15 white youths opposite. None of the youths was causing any disturbance.

Police alleged one of the black youths – Mrs. Baker's son Emile Faolkes, 17 – had used abusive behaviour. They claimed he struggled while being arrested. But Faolkes, who denied using threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour, said several policemen held him down while another kicked him repeatedly. Mrs. Baker heard his 'terrible screams' and ran out of her flat only to be grabbed by two police officers. A third beat her over the head with a truncheon and punched her in the stomach.

I had no idea what was happening. It took me completely by surprise, she said.

CLOTHES RIPPED OPEN

She was arrested and subsequently charged with police assault, which she denied. But while being dragged into the police van her clothes were ripped open, exposing her breast, stomach and legs.

As they took me to the van I saw a group of skinheads laughing and jeering, she said. *I was placed half-naked in the van with about nine police officers. On the journey one of the officers, PC Anthony Wright, jabbed my breasts with his truncheon and jeered at me in imitation West Indian language saying he didn't know nigger women had breasts. All the others looked on a laughed. Not one of them tried to put a stop to it. I felt so humiliated and degraded. I was sick with mental and physical pain.*

Police denied her allegations, but throughout the case there were inconsistencies in police evidence. Defence lawyer, Mr. Paul Boateng, who is chairman of the GLC's police committee, accused the police of beastly behaviour and covering up evidence. He claimed Inspector Douglas Pye had lost control of his men and then sought to cover up for them by deliberately inventing evidence. *During the journey to the police station Mrs. Baker was being systematically submitted to brutal and oppressive treatment*, he said. It was at this point in the police evidence that most inconsistencies occurred. *These contradictions push us inexorably to the view that the allegations Mrs Baker has made are correct.*

After the case Mrs. Baker said *This sort of thing must not be allowed to happen to any woman, black or white. The verdict of the court has, in my view, vindicated British justice. The majority of police, I am sure, would not have acted in that way.*

Mrs Baker is now determined to proceed with an official complaint against the police. *But I am still very worried*, she said. *I'm afraid there could be reprisals against me or my son from the police over this.*

INSTANT RESPONSE UNITS

Metropolitan Police Instant Response Units were set up in September 1981, to deal with riots and public disorder. Each of the 24 main metropolitan divisions in London has its own unit and each unit has 24 men on 24-hour standby. This means more than 500 men are available at any one time throughout the Met for SPG-type response. The GLC Police Committee Support Unit is keeping a close eye on the IRUs, but as yet they cannot say if the units are armed.

Given that most SPG officers receive firearms training, it can be assumed that a similar kind of training can be given to IRU officers, said a committee spokesman.

The GLC Police Committee cannot envisage any justifiable circumstances where an Instant Response Unit could be called to investigate a single youth causing a disturbance – as in the case at Priory Court.

But we know the police make assumptions about the likely volatility of a situation, said the committee spokesman.

For example, an incident in, say, Bromley involving a white youth might not provoke the same response as an incident in Hackney or Walthamstow involving a black youth.

This substantiates claims made by many residents of Priory Court Estate that the Instant Response Unit is racist in its operations.

HIGHLY PROVOCATIVE

Madge Crute, who heads the Priory Court Tenants Action Group and is also chairperson of the local Labour Party Branch, believes the IRU is highly provocative and, as such, does not help community relations.

A heavy riot police type presence will only inflame a situation, she said. *It is true the estate is known for racist attacks by white groups against coloured people. But I totally deny any racial antagonism between black and white youths living on the estate. In many instances these attacks are provoked by fascist organisations from outside, like the British Movement. They come to the estate, chat to the white kids and encourage them to distribute racist leaflets. The kids are unemployed, bored, with nothing to do. This sort of thing easily winds them up.*

Emile Faolkes agreed there was no racist trouble between black and white youths living on the estate. *There's no point*, he said. *We've all grown up together. It's people coming in from outside that stir up trouble. And the police don't help. When they are called to the estate, it's always the blacks they pick on first.*

Maggie Norton

LABOUR AND THE EEC

Not a single democratic socialist party in Europe would deny the right of their sister parties in other European countries, inside or outside the EEC, to choose and place before the electorate the policy proposals most likely to achieve socialism. It follows from this that, although some socialist parties in Europe might regret our leaving the EEC, not one will deny our right to campaign on the issue and carry out the policy if we win.

Some parties in Europe, for example, the Swedes and the Austrians, see some advantages in having the British party outside the EEC. In some others, including the French socialist party, there is a current of thought which believes that the constant rows between Britain and her Common Market partners are actually injuring socialist co-operation and that this might improve if we were outside.

WHY WITHDRAWAL

Of course, many people, ranging from Enoch Powell on the Right to the New Communist Party, believe that we should leave the EEC. Labour must be clear why it is in favour of withdrawal, as the act of withdrawal on its own does not contribute towards the advancement of socialism. All it does is make it possible. Labour is in favour of withdrawal because withdrawal is necessary to carry out many other commitments in our manifesto, including subsidising jobs, controlling imports, preventing the export of large amounts of capital – often collected from British workers through their pension funds – and promoting the regeneration of British industry through a policy of state intervention and control. These policies just cannot be carried out within the framework of the EEC, which is founded on the principles of the free movement of goods, capital and labour.

Two alternatives are sometimes put forward in Labour party circles. Pro-Marketeers generally talk about the possibility of renegotiation. It is just not possible to renegotiate, because there is a need for a fundamental review of the Treaty itself. The Common Market is no more likely to change for Britain just because we have a Labour government than it is for the Greeks, who are already running into difficulties with some of their policies.

BARBARA CASTLE

So renegotiation won't work, because you cannot change a fundamentally unsound system, but the line being put out by Barbara Castle is in many ways even worse. In essence, what she is saying is get on with your policies and wait till they throw us out. Superficially, this sounds attractive, but what happens when British companies start using British courts to get British injunctions against British cabinets because we are still bound by the Treaty of Rome? Will the Labour cabinet take on the judiciary? What would be likely to happen under the Castle plan is that for the first few months or maybe even couple of years, the EEC would let us have our way, but after that, as soon as our popularity started to fall, the knife would go in and the extremely sophisticated Brussels machinery would paralyse any potential socialism left in the Labour government it was dealing with.

The party is united on the policy of withdrawal, as is the TUC, but there are many powerful voices that will fight to the end. Vast amounts of money and propaganda are available to the Pro-Marketeers, but we in the labour movement must resist these and be prepared to carry out our policy as soon as we get into office.

Richard Balfe
(Member of the European Parliament)

ALL Controls are Racist

Bernard Misrahi
(Vauxhall CLP)

The Campaign Against Racist Laws is alive again. On October 23 it gathered over 300 delegates from anti-deportation campaigns, black groups, trade unions and even a few Labour Parties to discuss a programme of action, including a demo in London on Sunday 27 March 1983. The demo will demand

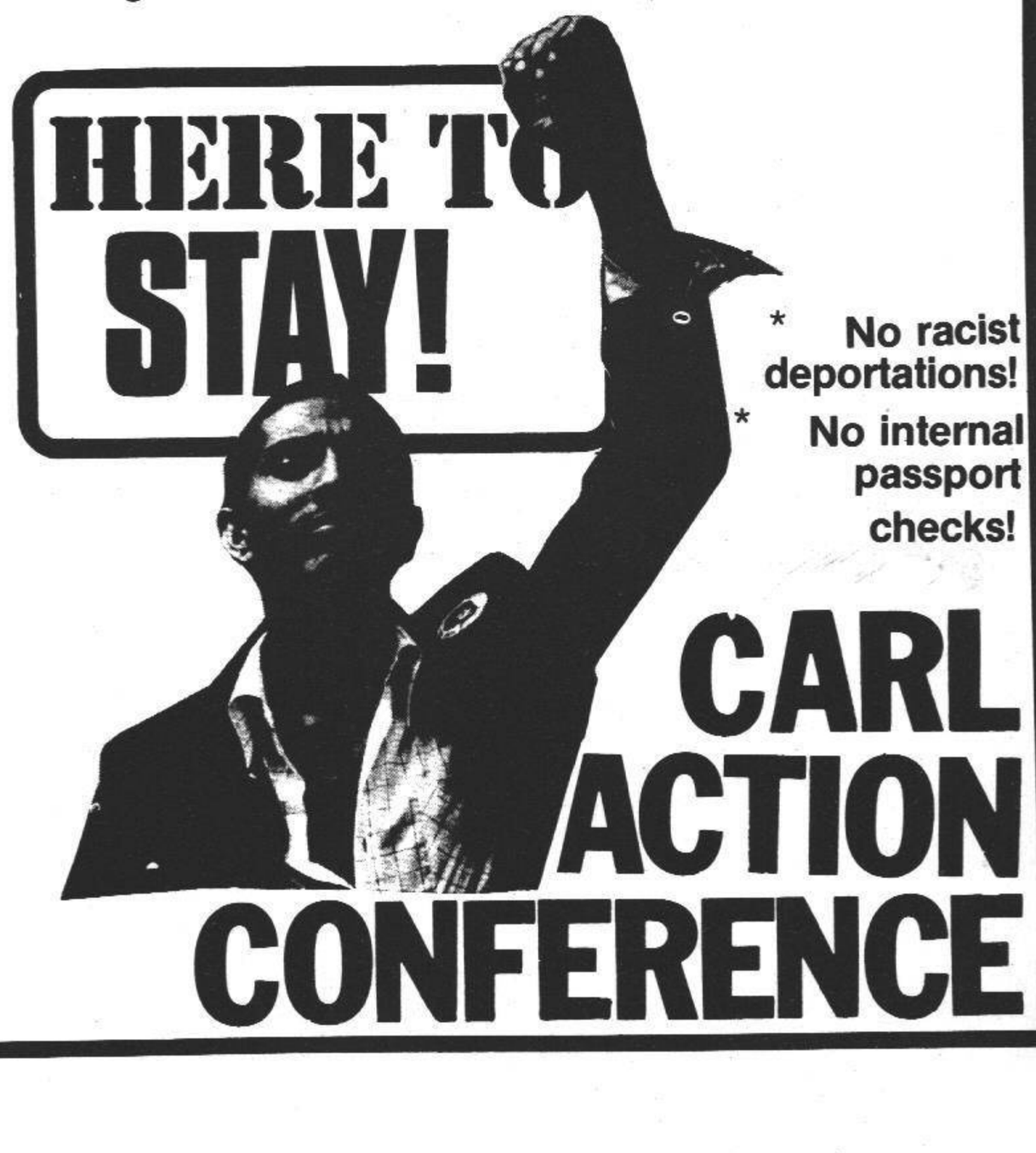
*** Repeal the 1971 Immigration Act and 1981 Nationality Act**
*** No internal passport checks**
*** No racist deportations**
*** End the waiting list of dependents and UK passport holders**
*** End the ban on foreign husbands and fiancés**
*** An immediate amnesty for all alleged illegal immigrants**
*** No deporting women when they are separated from men on whom their immigration status depended.**

Labour Conference 1982 passed a policy, "Immigration — Labour's Approach" which while it doesn't allow for much new immigration actually agrees with most of these demands. Some critics argue that ALL controls are racist — so why bother putting any policies forward? The problem is not that the policy is too moderate but that it won't be publicised. I fear that Conference passed it unanimously (just as they overwhelmingly passed motions on women's rights) because they weren't interested in the issue.

Will the efforts of Roy Hattersley, John Tilley and Jo Richardson plus a few others in the leadership be enough to make this policy on immigration as well-known as Labour's pledges on the bomb and on jobs? Local Labour activists aren't usually any better. You will pass a radical resolution at your GC, then ensure that any mention of immigration or race in the election is confined to a few bland phrases. If that.

CARL Conference insisted that organisations represented there, especially trade unions and the Labour Party, thoroughly inform their members about the racist regulations and mobilise them for the demo. The Labour Party nationally is affiliated to CARL — make sure they do their job. We want to ensure that by the New Year at the latest your Party Secretary receives Labour Party leaflets on the demo and on Labour's own policy.

Lets be optimistic. Labour movement interest in fighting racism is increasing. Will it improve substantially until black militants organise in the Labour Party as some feminists have begun to. How can we persuade them it will be worth the effort?



Lewisham: Safe Women's Transport — towards the launch

THE Lewisham support group of Safe Women's Transport was formed following a public meeting held at the Riverdale Hall, Lewisham, and is made up of women who attended this meeting. Initially we decided to operate in an unstructured way but we have since formed a core which is firmly committed to the cause of ensuring that Safe Women's Transport gets off the ground and is successful.

The support group has had its fair share of difficulties since it has been in operation. From time to time we wondered if the GLC would eventually provide the funding for the scheme. Because of the uncertainty of whether the grant would be received, and if so when that would be, we were unable to predict when the bus service would be on the road. This was due to the delay in the grant being agreed. We were hoping to have the service on the road by September, before the dark nights. Alas, that was not to be.

Originally Safe Women's Transport was publicly promised £67,000 which would have covered the purchase and conversion of the mini-bus, 4 full-time workers and revenue costs. However the figure finally awarded was £26,000. This would only allow for 1½ full-time workers which would mean that the scheme would be understaffed and unsafe, particularly for the workers.

The existence of SWT is to ensure that the women using the service arrive home safely and in order for this to be possible, our aim was to provide a door-to-door service. The bus would have 2 workers on it, one to do the driving and the other to collect fares, gather information in order to provide a statistical breakdown, and to escort women living on estates to their door. The service would operate between 6.30pm and 12 midnight. Funding for 1½ workers will not make this possible.

At the meeting at which the news of the final figure was announced, we unanimously agreed to appeal to the GLC and request that they reconsider their decision. A lot of time and effort has and is still being spent on working out job descriptions, the running of the scheme etc so that we can be sure of the scheme operating efficiently. It will take more than 1½ workers to ensure that it does.

On The Roads

In the meantime we are anticipating that the service will on the roads of Lewisham at the beginning of 1983. We have decided to appoint Mary Evans for a period of 3 months in order to set up the scheme because she would be the best person to do so. We have also decided that, in terms of the support group, once the service is in operation we will be holding open meetings which women using the service would be invited to attend. They would also be invited to join the support group.

Let's home that by the time the next issue of Briefing is published, Lewisham Safe Women's Transport will have a date when the service is to be launched!

Jo McBride,
E. Lewisham CLP.

You're not taking us seriously!



Now that the round of reselection procedures is almost completed, the Left in the London Labour Party ought to be looking critically at the success or otherwise of their plan to ensure that the PLP at the next general election reflects to a greater degree, the multi-racial nature of the Labour Party and this society in general.

That to date, Paul Boateng is the only black person selected to fight a winnable seat, with Russell Profitt and Ben Bousquet still to face the final hurdle in this most competitive of races, must make a few progressive feet shift with self-conscious unease.

That one or two black MPs must be considered an improvement, goes without saying. But are we seriously to believe that this is the sum total of the strength of the Left in the Labour party, or is there an underlying reason? Namely, that the need for greater black representation is not really taken as seriously, as it is frequently stated. Certainly that is the feeling of many members of the Standing Conference of Afro-Caribbean and Asian Councillors and black activists.

The argument that there aren't many black people willing to stand would hold more weight if serious attempts had been made to contact organisations like SCACAC to find out if there were unknown or less well-known black representatives and activists prepared to stand.

Just as in the past – much has been said about female oppression and the need for proper representation of women for women without too much action being taken in this respect to break down the male domination of the PLP – so now we are hearing regularly of the need for more black people to come forward. The nature of racism precludes black people from being able to step forward into positions and it is only with the assistance and *support* of white Labour Party members on the Left that any real meaningful breakthrough will be achieved. Suspicion for the motives of the Left will continue, until they show themselves to be truly committed to a multi-racial party at all levels. And the need for unified action against the right, both in the Party and outside, has never been greater.

Merle Amory (Deputy Leader
Brent Council)

Industrial fight–Political solution!

THE trade union movement has been put very much on the defensive by two victories for the Tory government.

BL car workers, by rejecting a union proposal for weekly one-day strikes, have accepted a two-year wage deal giving about 5½% this year and 5½% next. The Edwardes management has quickly followed up this victory by picking off a long-time target. Alan Thornett, TGWU deputy senior steward at the BL Cowley Assembly Plant, has been victimised – sacked for a traffic offence that normally would bring no more than a ticking-off.

The miners last month voted not to strike on pay and closures. Signs are that the Coal Board will seek to follow this up by an accelerated closure programme. NCB documents obtained by Arthur Scargill indicate a closure schedule of 2 million tonnes capacity per year.

In the wake of these two defeats, the NHS pay campaign is precariously placed. Many NHS union leaders would clearly like to accept *anything* with a minimum face-saving cover. David Williams of CoHSE responded to the Government's offer of an extra ½% next year by asking for... just another ½% on top of it.

After seven months of token protests and days of action, health workers are weary.

The two-year deals imposed in BL and proposed in the NHS seem to be the start of a trend. The TGWU has signed a *three-year* deal for 6,000 members in Scottish and Newcastle Breweries. Chancellor Geoffrey Howe has told a City dinner: "In the not too distant future the idea of an automatic annual pay increase must become exceptional".

This means a longer span for inflation to erode wages – and, if multi-year deals are to become the norm, almost certainly new anti-union laws to police the deals by restricting strikes except at contract expiry dates.

There is no question but general economic factors underlie these defeats. The rapid rise in unemployment, and the even more rapid fall in manufacturing industry employment – from 7.1 million in summer 1978 to 5.6 million in summer 1982 – could not fail to weaken the trade unions.

But both general political factors, and specific factors in each industry, also have a role. The problem is not simply one of waiting for an economic upturn!

The *class* solidarity action for the NHS workers was the most tremendous such action since 1926. That shows the will to fight has not been crushed. However, especially in the midst of a slump, the will to fight is not enough. Trade unionists also need to be convinced that a particular fight is winnable.

The actions of most union leaders show them as resolutely convinced that practically no fight is winnable. And such views have a way of being self-confirming.

The BL wage review was an object lesson. Mass meetings in the plants voted overwhelmingly to reject the principle of a two year deal. A conference of convenors and senior stewards overturned the mass meetings' mandate, and decided to try to negotiate the best two year deal they could.

After negotiators secured a grand 50p per week improvement, they reconvened to consider their response. There were three proposals: weekly one-day strikes plus an overtime ban; all-out strike; or to accept the deal.

After a sharp debate the one-day strikes resolution, which was essentially motivated by Longbridge convenor and Communist Party member Jack Adams, was carried. It is difficult to believe that Adams and other would not know its effect on rank and file BL workers, who were not looking for token gestures but for indications from their union leaders that they were serious.

Token action – with the living example of such action being the health workers, six months into their dispute – would obviously give out very negative signals.

While there is no way of assessing every plant, the piecemeal policy appears to have been decisive in swinging the vote against action.

The main union full-timers involved – Ken Cure of the AUEW and Grenville Hawley of the TGWU – pushed hard throughout for the two-year deal.

The NUM was a different case. Here Arthur Scargill's regional meetings, so hated by the right wing, were a breath of fresh air in the trade union movement. A trade union president was going out of his office to do what he should be doing, campaigning among the members for policies to defend wages and jobs.

So why did Scargill lose the vote? It seems that the vote was decided by the wages issue. Over the last decade or so, miners have moved a long way up the table of relative wages. In the late '60s, for example, they were way behind car workers; now their rates are nearly twice as high as BL's. The offer of 8.2% was higher than most other workers got. Judging those facts against the scale of the battle posed, miners decided that now was not the time for a fight on wages.

With hindsight it seems clear that making wages and closures the subject of the same vote was a tactical error. The two issues *are* linked. But with no concrete names or dates for closures, the lies of the NCB could confuse the issue and allow the wages issue, which did have figures and dates attached, to dominate.

Closures should have been the subject of a separate question on the same ballot, or a separate ballot. Even now the NUM executive is considering a new ballot on closures alone. Damaging though the October ballot result was, it did not indicate a basic shift to the right among miners, and, as Arthur Scargill rightly insists, the fight on closures is by no means over!

Arthur Scargill made his campaign in the coalfields openly political and anti-Tory. And in conditions of acute capitalist crisis, a convincing *political* alternative to the Tories' monetarism is more and more an essential part of showing that industrial battles are winnable.

The bitter fact is that at present Margaret Thatcher's claim that 'There is No Alternative' is more than half true. On crucial economic issues, Labour's left advance over recent years has gone no further than vague bureaucratic schemes to reduce unemployment (maybe, possibly, if everything goes right...) to one million within five years. And with the right wing now rampant, Labour's economic programme could rapidly be reduced to the replacement of Thatcherite monetarism by... Healeyite monetarism.

The problems are serious. But the left surely has the resources to turn the tide – if we face up to the tasks.

Martin Thomas

Campaign for Trade Union democracy

Dear comrade,

The articles in November's Briefing on 'changing the block vote' at Labour Party conferences although topical, barely scratched the surface of the problem. For those of us who spend out time campaigning in both the Trade Union and Labour Movement, it has been apparent that many Labour Party activists have ignored the trade unions at their peril, a fact only too clearly shown by events at Blackpool.

Many of the advances won within the Labour Party and those still being fought for, are equally applicable in the trade unions. If the block vote was altered tomorrow, the principal question of accountability would remain untouched. What is needed is a 'Campaign for Trade Union Democracy'.

'JOBS FOR LIFE'

The Labour Party may now have an electoral college, and mandatory reselection, but how many trade unionists ever get a chance to elect or reelect their General Secretaries or Regional Officials; all too often these posts become 'jobs for life'.

In the Party we continue to fight against 'shortlists of one' but all too prevalent in the trade union movement is the 'Buggin's turn' formula, where power is handed down in many cases without the membership being fully consulted.

If women, blacks and other minorities are underrepresented in the Labour Party, the situation in the trade union movement is in many cases worse. For instance the NUT, a union which has a majority of women members, has only 6 women executive members out of over 40, and there are no women district or regional officials.

RARELY CONSULT

When it comes to making decisions affecting the movement, who makes them? The General Council of the TUC is massively dominated by trade union officials not members of the unions. A similar picture can be painted of many delegations to TUC and Labour Party Conferences. In fact it is clear that some unions rarely consult their members over casting the 'block vote'.

The relationship between the unions and the Labour Party is fundamental to our future as a movement, but in the past all too often comrades have chosen either the political or industrial arm of the movement — this is no longer an option. If we are to make the movement accountable and accessible to all its members, then Labour Party activists should attempt to devote some time to trade union work — if we do not we allow the present system and leadership to continue by default.

Fraternally,
Paul Jeater
Havering NUT/Ilford North CLP

Palestinians at the Crossroads

The evacuation of the PLO fighters from Beirut is usually held to be a military defeat with the Israelis at the same time suffering politically. In fact withdrawal has been politically disastrous, witness the PLO silence over the Fez summit proposals, despite militarily coming out relatively unscathed despite the enormous disparity in forces. The PLO left Beirut because of the pressure from the United States and the Arab regimes after having received guarantees regarding the security of the Palestinian refugees left behind. It is in their continued reliance on the Arab regimes combined with a policy of doing nothing to endanger these regimes, that the inability of the PLO to mount an effective challenge to the Zionist state lies.

THE ARAB REGIMES

The initial success of the Zionist colonisation, the failure of the 1936 General Strike, the substitution of religious sectarianism for a national liberation struggle — all this can be laid at the door of the Arab ruling classes. Every Arab leader of significance, including Nasser, has attempted to come to terms with the Zionists. The Arab regime first and foremost fear their own populations. What possible reason can these regimes have for supporting the PLO other than from a fear of the Palestinians' potential for destabilising the region? Therein lies the dilemma — the more successful they are in coopting the PLO leadership into the diplomatic and neo-colonialist intrigues of the Fez/Reagan plans, the less reason there is for supporting the Palestinians. Eight years of Arafat's diplomacy was crystallised in the siege of Beirut when the Arab regimes were conspicuous by their silence and the Arab masses stayed at home.

THE DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY

Israel's intentions in Lebanon have been to establish a dependent Maronite state strong enough to deal with the Left and the Palestinians. In this they had the tacit support of the Arab regimes (Syria excepted on account of its own ambitions). This is consistent with Israel's policy in the region for the last 30 years as summarised in the prestigious paper, Ha'aretz: "strengthening Israel helps the Western powers to maintain equilibrium and stability in the Middle East. Israel is to become the watchdog ... if for any reason the Western powers should sometimes prefer to close their eyes, Israel could be relied upon to punish one or several neighbouring states whose discourtesy towards the West went beyond the bounds of the permissible." In September 1970 the Israelis moved in support of the Hashemite regime in Jordan just as the British had done over a decade earlier. Israel too has an interest in the continued existence of the divided but pro-Western Arab regimes. Imperialism created the Zionist state and hence the Palestinian diaspora, yet the PLO's diplomacy is based on the need to win imperialism over to support the creation of a Palestinian state by exploiting inter-imperialist differences between the US and eg. Europe. Even though these differences centre around the question of how best to exploit the peoples and wealth of the Middle East. As the PLO's capacity to threaten the Arab regimes diminishes, so too does its ability to achieve anything diplomatically.



PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat tours the front line and meets Palestinian fighters defending the southern approaches to the city. Two days earlier, Israel's Chief of Staff claimed the Palestinian leader had taken refuge in a foreign embassy (Photo: AP).

Recognition of Israel to the 67 borders will in reality mean recognising the legitimacy of the Palestinians' expulsion in 1948. There are those who suggest that the main purpose of solidarity work in this country is to force the British government to recognise the PLO. Certainly this is the view of the Labour Party's Arabists in the Labour Middle East Council. Such a strategy explains why the London office of the PLO works so closely with MPs, diplomats etc., whilst ignoring or treating with hostility attempts to build a solidarity movement in this country.

WHAT OPTIONS ARE LEFT?

A West Bank state is not on offer by the Zionists. If one were to materialise it would become a mini Southern Ireland where only the religion/nationality of the oppressor would change.

Repartitioning Palestine is no solution. To a large extent the solution lies with those Palestinians under occupation and in pre-'67 Israel. The PLO has never envisaged the need for a socialist Palestine. It has never challenged Imperialism per se, instead hoping that imperialism would change horses and withdraw support from Israel. The task remains to challenge both the class and national aspects of their oppression. Outside Palestine the PLO can only mount guerilla raids and establish a power centre if one or more of the Arab regimes is toppled. It is in fact conceivable that Zionism will be overthrown in isolation from socialist revolution in the rest of the Middle East. For the PLO itself, the diplomatic, neo-colonialist solution that it seeks is unattainable.

Tony Greenstein
Brighton Kemptown CLP

LONDONERS FIGHT FOR RADIO for ALL of us!

Richard Barbrook for CRADLE
(Hampstead Central Branch)

On 5 October, a forum on radio in London was convened by John McDonnell, Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. As he himself admitted, its purpose was for the GLC to discover the nature of the debates about the future of radio in London. A whole host of organisations were present, from representatives of the BBC, Capital and LBC, through pressure groups such as COMCOM (Community Communications), Apna Radio, Local Radio Workshop (LRW) and CRADLE, to the pirate radio stations such as DBC (Dread Broadcasting Corporation), Radio Zodiac and Our Radio.

At the meeting considerable dissatisfaction was expressed at the way the existing services are run, from their rating-centred programming to their failure to cater to certain sections of their potential audiences. It is now a commonly held outlook within the Labour Party and the trade union movement, reinforced by the studies of the Glasgow Media Study Group, that the media displays a constant bias against left-wing and socialist viewpoints. But this discrimination is felt by a large number of other people too. At the meeting gays, women, ethnic minorities, specialist music fans all stood up to complain how the present stations did not cater for their needs as listeners. Britain is a pluralistic, multicultural society but its media aims to reduce its diversity to a single style of programming. Ironically this was confirmed by the representatives of the IBA/BBC services who showed a great reluctance to commit themselves to broadcasting more 'minority interest' shows.

WHAT RESPONSE!

The question facing the GLC and the Labour movement is what should be its response to this discontent? Two distinct strategies are being proposed which, though not necessarily contradictory, point to different solutions. The first approach is promoted by the programme-making group, Local Radio Workshop, who were featured in LLB no.21. It aims to persuade the IBA and BBC to live up to the Reithian promises in their charters to serve the whole community. They also have a 'modest proposal' for the GLC to press Capital or LBC to have an access slot of a half hour a month (!) to cater for the unrepresented members of their audience. Given the great number of groups and interests that would seek to use such a service, this seems to be totally inadequate. Whatismore such a programme would be lost among the general trivia produced by these stations. However the more fundamental problem with such solutions is that they believe that the existing services are capable of reform. Apart from the legal shield of the need for 'impartiality' behind which the IBA and BBC hide, the reason community programming fails on such stations lies in their structure. They are hierarchical and undemocratic, with their programming the exclusive responsibility of a charmed circle of professionals. The faults of LBC and Capital Radios can be traced to their need to attract the audience their advertisers want. However the BBC stations are equally divorced from the community they claim to serve, motivated by the ratings war rather than the pull of profits. For too long the British Left has been trapped by the Fabian/Stalinist illusion that a state run system of broadcasting is somehow socialist. Captivated by the necessity to correct the glaring bias shown in the present media, the temptation is to legally enforce some form of 'fairness' within the existing system. Though this seems the most direct solution to Labour's problems with the



STANDING FOR PARLIAMENT

I was selected as PPC for Brentford and Isleworth on September 22nd from a shortlist of six. I was a member of the CLP for two years up until the last year, and now live in the adjacent constituency of Feltham and Heston, two hundred yards from the border, so I can claim to be local!

But perhaps more to the point is my involvement with the local Hounslow Trades Union Council which covers the two constituencies mentioned above, and of which I was secretary for ten years until earlier this year. During that period I was involved in a variety of disputes and campaigns, particularly on cuts, unemployment and anti-racialism. The 14 month occupation of Hounslow Hospital was the most publicised of these.

The constituency has no natural focus, with Chiswick at one end and the boundary cutting throught the centre of Hounslow at the other. In between are the distinct locations of Brentford and Isleworth. It includes what was the major industrial location of the Great West Road which had been subjected to savage rundown in recent years. Two factory closures alone in the last — Fitestone and United Biscuits — have accounted for the loss of 3,500 jobs, while many other closures have occurred.

The constituency is varied in composition. At the Hounslow end there is a substantial Asian community, part of the larger community located in the adjacent constituency. In Brentford and Isleworth a degree of "gentrification" has occurred, although those areas also contain large council estates. Chiswick is cosmopolitan, and there are strong Tory bastions elsewhere in the constituency. It is held by Barney Hayhoe whose majority in 1979 was about 5,000, although in 1974 it had been reduced to 200. Peter Walker was candidate in both elections. It is the sort of seat we can win and must win if there is to be a Labour government next time, and we are fighting to win. The Alliance candidate will be from the SDP. The contest will be fierce in what can be regarded as an important marginal in London.

Pete Rowlands, Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, Brentford and Isleworth.

RADIO (continued)

media, it is also the one likely to meet with the greatest opposition within society as a whole. For instead of being seen to transfer control of the media from one elite group to another, Labour should be seeking to establish new and democratic forms of broadcasting. This should include the promotion of a right for people to learn the skills of programme-making and to participate in broadcasting. It should also contain the commitment to ensure that the media is controlled by the people it claims to serve and not be run by corporate or state bureaucrats.

NEW RADIO STATIONS

Such an opportunity now exists for new radio stations. In the VHF or FM spectrum there exists at present the space for an extra 10 to 12 more radio stations in London. With the publication of the Hunt Report, the Tory government is already committed to a massive expansion of the TV services. The Home Office is now turning its attention to legalising more radio stations. The pressure being applied to the Home Office is not for more commercial stations, for these would be strongly resisted as competitors by the existing IBA stations. Rather the Home Office is looking at ways to legalise radio stations that will serve those interests not served by the present system. So a second solution is presenting itself to the GLC and the Labour movement, to support the demand for new types of radio station.

At the 5 October meeting were the various unlicensed stations now operating in London. On Fridays on 103.8FM, DBC (Dread Broadcasting Corporation) presents a black music service, programming everything from reggae to African rhythms. They demanded the setting-up of a black station, designed to serve the city's ethnic minorities. In this they were backed by Apna Radio, an Asian pressure group seeking a license for a multicultural station. Our Radio, which goes out on Wednesday on 103FM, also made representations. It is presenting programming by gays, women, Solidarity exiles and specialist music. Its members felt the new stations should include the opportunity for all the unheard groups in London to participate. London Open Radio, another campaign group, supported this position. Such groups are coming together to form an organisation called CRADLE, which stands for Community Radio Licensed Experiments. If the Home Office moves toward some kind of legalisation, then a body must be formed that can represent the very diverse interests that will wish to use such a service. Local Radio Workshop's limited demand for access should be expanded to setting up whole stations run on this bases.

Ideally there should be a number of stations catering for different states. For example, in London, there could be West Indian, Asian, Women's, Gay, Cultural, News and specialist music stations set up. Radio is a cheap medium to establish and use, especially when compared to the capital costs of a TV station. The skills needed for radio broadcasting are also easily learnt. It can be an effective way of communicating within minorities scattered across London, as well as a way of offering an insight into different cultures.

This proposed service is not an unrealisable dream, instead it is a type of service existing in many places abroad. The Socialist government in France has legalised a large number of stations based on the community radio model. Examples of successful stations can be found in Italy, Yugoslavia, Australia, USA, etc. It is possible for us to learn from their experience. Firstly, these services are run as non-profit-making organisations. This ensures that the airwaves are not diverted for commercial gain. Secondly, all the stations are based on the concept of listener access to the airwaves. People can join programme-making groups to pariticipate in the output of the stations. Finally, they have some form of democratic accountability to the listeners and broadcasters who utilise the radio station's services. These measures are all designed to ensure that the community radio stations serve the people who listen to them, rather than become the preserve of a small minority.

FINANCING THE SERVICE

Establishing such a system in London will not be trouble-free. Numerous other questions must be settled before a successful service can be launched. These include the most crucial problem of all — financing the service. Abroad, stations are financed from many different sources — listener subscriptions, benefits, sponsorship, advertising and government or local authority grants. Decisions need to be taken by the Home Office on how community stations will be allowed to raise funds. Similarly the role of professional broadcasters has to change from being the sole presenters of material to being the helpers of those who wish to broadcast. Legalisation will also bring the difficulties of regulation and license-granting. It is likely that there will be many more applicants than station licenses available.

CRADLE sees that it needs to fulfill a variety of needs. It wants to bring together those groups that would wish to use community radio. Collectively they must work together the solutions to the problems indicated above. If the Home Office at first only grants one or two licenses, then CRADLE should act as the organisation where diverse interest groups can unite to run a short-term experiment. This could act as a period of learning from which groups will progress to running their own stations. Immediately, CRADLE would like to be able to set up broadcasting studios where its supporting bodies could learn these skills necessary for receiving a license for a community station. Members of CRADLE attended the GLC meeting of 5 October to win support for the arguments put forward in this article. It is looking for backing from the Labour and trade union movement. It believes that the GLC, local Labour councils and trade unions should not just verbally support the principle of community radio but also become actively involved in promoting the establishment of such a service. This is a chance to dramatically advance the freedom of speech within our society, allowing people both to participate in broadcasting and receive services catering to their needs. The Labour and trade union movement can only benefit from such developments and, for that reason, should do all in its power to help community radio. CRADLE calls on all Labour Party and trade union branches to pass motions of support for community radio and to send them to the Party's Media Group. It would also like them to urge the GLC and Labour councils to help CRADLE in fighting for community radio. Let's make community radio a reality in Britain now.

"FREE THE AIRWAVES"

CRADLE can be contacted c/o 35 Marsfield Gdns, NW3. For further information read 'NOT the IBA/BBC: The case for community radio by Simon Partridge (Comedia/Minority Press Group 1982)

Socialist councillors launch animal welfare campaign

Valerie Veness (Deputy Leader
Islington Council)

On a wet Friday night, at very short notice, over fifty councillors and animal activists met at Islington Town Hall to launch the *Campaign for Animal Rights in Local Government*.

The sort of issues that we will be pushing for Council action on are such items as a ban on all circuses that use animal acts (twelve London Boroughs already bar them) strict control of pet shops and animal markets with no new applications being granted, a ban on dissection in classrooms and a code of conduct for all municipal bodies that keep animals.

A representative of GEECAP (the 'animals in politics' pressure group) said, "We intend to make animal abuse and its outlawing the major issue in the next general election.'

As local politicians we have many statutory powers to lessen the suffering of animals but Councils rarely use them. This situation can – and will – change. Thousands of animal activists are demanding our support and as a local representative I pledged that we will do all we can to support the cause of animal liberation.

CHALLENGE

We have agreed to challenge all councillors in the London area to state where they stand on animal issues and in the next few weeks we will be circulating a questionnaire to this effect. We are also going on to push for action from two Labour councils in London.

One issue is to get Tower Hamlets to shut down the appalling street market at Club Row, where animals are kept in very poor conditions and involved in very real suffering. We will also be pressing Hackney Council to implement a ban on circuses that use animal acts. Islington has already passed such a ban and we aim to see all of London is barred to this form of animal cruelty.

Two working parties have been set up, one to formulate the 'Charter' and the other to begin a campaign of information and pressure on local councillors in London. Their membership is as follows:

Drafting Committee

Councillor Valerie Veness (London Borough of Islington).
Denise Bennett (British Union Against Vivisection)
Angela Walder (British Union Against Vivisection)
Melanie Roots (Compassion in world farming)
Joan Watson (British Union Against Vivisection)
Councillor Jeremy Corbyn (London Borough of Haringey)

Campaign Committee

Kim Stallwood (British Union Against Vivisection)
Bob Gilbert (Animal Aid)
Councillor Keith Veness (London Borough of Islington)
Councillor David Aitchison (London Borough of Islington)
Councillor Graham Good (London Borough of Camden)
Maureen Rice (Animal Aid)

The next open meeting is fixed for Friday, December 3rd at Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1, at 7.45pm.

VESTED INTEREST

Socialists have a vested interest in support ing the animal rights movement. It is not surprising that many activists came out of the women's movement. It has taken a long time for us to realise that capitalism has its own insane logic that requires the oppression of women, the crushing of minorities and the wholesale slaughter of animals.

Campaigns we have fought against the stupid farming systems of the EEC, against germ warfare being developed at Porton Down and in defence of the rights of people in the 'Third World' are all linked to the struggle for animal rights. Recently, over 40,000 people demonstrated in Bristol for animal issues – socialists must support and join this movement. It will be a tremendous ally to us.

Social security: a new threat

Martin Evans
Lambeth Central CLP.

A typical example of the Social Security system at work is the recently constituted 'Special Claims Control Unit'. The SCCUs are regionally based squads who move into local Social Security offices with no local control and pick out claimants who they accuse of fraud. Who are these claimants? Of course, single parents, women and to a lesser extent unemployed skilled workers who could be 'moonlighting'. The main attack is on those at the bottom of the pile.

SUPERSNOOPERS OR STATE POLICE

We have all read in the gutter press of the fraud investigators who spy on women claimants for tell tale signs of cohabitation, the so-called 'supersnoopers'. But as Socialists we need to be aware that the DHSS is no joke. The Social Security system is part of the class apparatus of political control. It is cold hearted and totally undemocratic. To claim, you have to accept that you have no power and no rights and have your personal needs determined by a bureaucratic machine. This machine judges people on sexist and racist lines. So, for instance, if you claim benefit as an immigrant on limited leave to remain, even if you have worked here and 'contributed', your passport will be checked and details sent to the Home Office.

Many Socialists see Social Security solely as a way of 'buying off' those workers who get the rough end of the Capitalist system. They are mistaken, as it also keeps wages low, and by excluding women and immigrants from benefit it creates a reserve pool of labour who can be set against those already in jobs. It divides us and increases our exploitation.

Thus the DHSS is *not* a liberal institution, and the 'supersnoopers' are in effect plain clothes state employed secret policemen.

ABOVE AND BEYOND THE LAW

Before a team of Specialist Claims Control Unit comes to a local office (usually for three months), staff are asked to look out for possible cases of 'fraud'. Almost invariably it is women who are single parents who are picked out. This is because a woman who shares a household with a man is defined as a 'dependent' and forbidden to claim benefit. In the eyes of the DHSS *all* single women are suspected of secretly living with men, and it is up to them to prove their 'innocence'.

When the SCCU squad move in they interrogate, abuse and frighten claimants and threaten prosecution until the 'suspect' signs a form saying they no longer wish to claim benfit. The SCCU squad uses techniques such as one interrogator being verbally and physically intimidating and threatening gaol, leaving the 'nice' one to come later with a firm promise that if you sign the paper everything will be forgotten. The claimants are not advised of their rights and the Judges rules are ignored. Generally the proof laid before them would not stand up in a court of law, but the claimants are not to know that.

Once the claimant has signed off the savings are calculated, which turn out to be only slightly in excess of the cost of employing the SCUU squads. Recently the Law Centre in Coventry has dealings with the SCCU and estimated that 90% of affected claimants signed on again and were legally entitled to do so!

The two unions in the DHSS are opposed to the Specialist Claims Control Unit. The SCCU are next in operation in Brixton and there will be a campaign of complete non-cooperation which the local Labour Parties will be joining in.



Dear Comrade,

I enclose an article which you might, or might not find space for in London Labour Briefing. Hope you will.

I think your mag is great. Can't understand why I haven't seen it before. One day I'll take out a subscription, but can't afford it at present. Will certainly buy a copy off our Branch seller each month, till I can.

All the best!
David Staniland.
(Tooting CLP)

SOCIALISTS TAKE POWER!

The blue-eyed boys of the Right get full backing from the press, television and radio, **when they are striving their utmost to witch-hunt those members of the Labour Party who are just fighting for real socialist policies. But lo and behold, when those same blue-eyed boys (and girls, now and then) are running the country for the betterment of the rich, why the media turns on them with all the venom at its disposal — anyone would think that they were doing something positive in government to help the British working people.**

But of course, it's useless expecting the Right to "learn" — they have no intention of trying to. Why don't they leave the Labour Party, and let real Socialists get on with the job of fighting for working people's interests? What, we might ask, is the strange attraction of the working class movement to these people with Tory ideas? Why don't they get off our backs? For years they, and their forerunners, have committed treason with the Labour Movement, and for decade after decade they have got away with it. Surely it's time *we* kicked *them* out of the Party — what say you, Comrades? How about a proscribed list for the real fifth column in our midst?

For they are really conservatives with no other aims than to tie the hands of the Labour Movement behind its back, so that their class allies can execute the destruction of the workers' government, time after time. And when they have succeeded in sabotaging the elected peoples' government (run of course by Tories in disguise), they hand out their honours to the lackeys of the ruling class. A knighthood here, a peerage there, and these traitors lap it up and go off to the House of Lords to crow, sitting more comfortably on their, by now, over sized bottoms.

It really will not do. It is time the Left picked itself up *again*, and this time disposed of these renegades for ever. Yes, Labour Take The Power, but first, Socialists Take The Power In The Labour Party.
D.J. Staniland.

Dear Comrade,

At the October meeting of Manchester CLP the following resolution was passed in response to the register:

'This Constituency resolves to oppose any expulsion resulting from the decision by Annual Conference to set up a register of affiliated groups and further we will refuse to implement any instruction from the NEC which as a result of the register requires us to expel members from this CLP.'

Yours Fraternally, John Chapman,
Secretary

Dear Sir

It is OK for the Right of Labour to lend its support to the Mojahedin-backed, Iranian National Council of Resistance (NCR) by giving it space in their paper; for you to do the same is ... well, careless to say the least. (See November issue).

The NCR is thoroughly capitalist in its make-up, its programme and its personnel. It does *not* believe in socialism or in a healthy labour movement or even, in fact, in the simple right of workers to down tools (strikes will be permitted but only if an acceptable period of notice is given).

It has amongst its supporters the type of arch-reactionary beside whom even Dennis Healey would take on a warm, red, radical glow. Bani Sadr himself is a dyed in the wool bourgeois and a mass murderer to boot, having killed many protesting students and many Kurds.

The NCR plan of a democratic Islamic regime is almost indistinguishable from Khomeini's of 1978 and the Council in power would almost inevitabley degenerate into another despotic dictatorship, and for exactly the same reason — third world countries just *cannot* be democratic if they reject the socialist road. That is the truth of the matter. The only strategy that can succeed is that which is based on the activity of labour, and it is precisely this that the Council rejects.

It must be said, however, that most ordinary Mojahedin members are magnificent — some of the most courageous people on Earth. They are taking on a most vicious, tyrannical and overwhelmingly more powerful state machine in a violent confrontation they cannot possibly win and fighting it in the most appalling conditions of repression imaginable. The tragedy is that the ideas, tactics and strategy of their leadership is catastrophic to the achievement of their aims — they result in an actual strengthening of the regime.

In Britain a broad campaign against Khomeini degenerated because it was used by sections to peddle the unsavoury NCR. Now, however, the ISF (International Solidarity Front (Iran)) exists 1) to inform the Labour Movement of the true nature of the Khomeini regime 2) to attempt to initiate activity against British trade and arms deals with the regime. It is open to anyone, from almost any party or none who find the Iranian dictatorship unacceptable, wants to do something about it and is not pro-Shah.

* Invite a speaker from ISF-Iran.
* Affiliate to ISF — organisation £10 individuals £2 unwaged £1
* Write to ISF B.M.KAR London WC1 N3XX

Yours fraternally
Peter Clarke

PUBLIC POLITICAL MEETING
'THE LABOUR PARTY
– UNITY AND THE WAY FORWARD'
Speakers:
Neil Kinnock MP, Joan Lestor MP

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 27th 1982
2.00pm - 5.00pm
EALING GREEN HIGH SCHOOL,
The Green, W5
Near Library & Town Hall
Bus 65, Tubes: Ealing Broadway, South Ealing

Admission by ticket
Unwaged 50p; waged £1

After this year's Labour Party Conference many questions concerning the Party and the Trade Union movement remain unanswered.

What IS the way forward? Does it mean that the gains made by the Labour Party will be clawed back? Will the Party secure the policy for unilateral disarmament? Will the Party continue to be dominated by men and ignore Women's Conference? Is there a place for flexible mandating? How will the idea of a register be put into practice? . . .

The answers to these questions are of vital importance so come along to the meeting at Ealing Green High School on Saturday November 27 starting at 2pm. The meeting will consist of a short talk by each of the speakers followed by YOUR questions and opinions from the floor.

Creche facilities available. Wheelchair access to hall but not toilets. For tickets and further information ring Mick Strobel: 567 0803, or David Haywood: 567 6285.

Northfield Ward Labour Party,
Southall CLP

Harrow Co-op

Dear Colleague,
Launch Meeting for a Harrow Borough Co-op Party Branch.
On Monday, November 29th, at 7.30pm we are holding a public meeting at the Co-op Hall, Masons Avenue, Wealdstone, to launch a Co-op Party Branch in Harrow.

Speakers at the meeting will include a member of the C.R.S. London Regional Committee, Ted Graham, Labour Co-op MP for Edmonton, a member of the Political Committee and Dr. Alan Taylor, leading expert on the workers' co-ops.

We feel it very important to establish an active Co-op Party presence in Harrow to ensure the promotion of co-op principles, and support for Labour's Socialist Programme in the run-up to the next General Election.

I hope that you be able to help me publicise this important meeting. For your information, I enclose a copy of our pamphlet on 'Co-operatives and Socialism'.
Yours sincerely,
Jerry Hughes
Political Assistant

London Region Labour Committee on Ireland

CONFERENCE ON PLASTIC BULLETS

May 14th 1983

For further information contact:
Jasmine Ljuhar
20 Durlston Road, E5.

Advance Notice

Women's Section, Croydon North West CLP
Second Annual Winter Wassail

Sunday December 12th, from 12 noon, at 13 Limpsfield Avenue, Thornton Heath, Croydon.

Hot meal plus pudding. Please bring bottle.
Cost: £2 per person, £1 unwaged, 50p children.
Tickets from Janet Pickering, Flat 10, Scoresdale, 13 Beulah Hill, London SE19.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Pregnancy and childbirth

Regaining control of our bodies!

Whilst in the last two or three hundred years, we as women have struggled for and in some cases won increasing control over many areas of our lives, in the same period we have seen the complete takeover by men and science of control of our bodies during pregnancy and childbirth.

Until the 18th century, childbirth was overwhelmingly the province of women. Male physicians held midwifery beneath their dignity. The lowly position of women led to a disgust and to some extent a fear by men of women's reproductive processes. Thus women were left to look after themselves and as a result exerted a great deal of control over their own bodies. For several centuries, the knowledge of pregnancy, of childbirth, of female anatomy and methods for facilitating labour were accumulated entirely by women. Of course we have little evidence of this now – women did not write books and much of women's expertise has been blotted out in the history of male obstetrics.

RISE OF MALE ELITISM

The suppression of women healers during the years of witch-hunting, persecution and murder coincided with the rise of an elitist male medical profession which forcibly excluded women. Some men realised the fame and fortune to be gained from midwifery among the upper classes and the transformation of obstetrics into a male profession began – it is rumoured to have dated from the attendance of a court physician during the labour of a mistress of Louis XIV in 1663, the fad spreading quickly within the French upper classes. Concern for their own reputations and careers rather than for women and children, is nowhere better revealed as the source of men's interest in obstetrics, than in the history of the invention of obstetric forceps. Before their invention, difficult births were often dealt with by using hooks to extract the foetus, invariably in pieces. The availability of an instrument which could deliver the foetus intact was obviously greatly needed. However, the family that invented forceps kept their invention a secret, only to be used by themselves, for nearly a century. A mystique grew up around them and when they chose to attend a birth, no doubt for large sums of money, they hid their instruments in a large chest and revealed them to no-one (the women they delivered were blindfolded!). They finally sold their secret to a Dutch practitioner, but not before the lives of thousands of women and children had been needlessly sacrificed.



Doctor delivering under a sheet 'for modesty's sake'!

OLD WIVES' TALES

Whilst much of the knowledge accumulated by women was stolen and 'reinvented' by men, the knowledge of new aids and improvements in obstetrics was completely denied to women. Women's continued practices were condemned as heathan charms or old wives' tales. So it is that today any role for women, any acknowledgement that we may have some special understanding or knowledge to offer because we can actually experience childbirth has disappeared under a mass of 'scientific and technological advances'

Continued on next page

The feminine myth

Today, most babies are born in hospital, as unfortunately hospitalised childbirth has become the norm. Safety aspects aside, one of the most significant results of this medicalisation of childbirth has been that women themselves have little control over the birth process. Dissatisfaction with the lack of control women are allowed to exercise during childbirth is being voiced by women in increasing numbers. Not only does this lack of control (eg. as brought about by induction and use of some anaesthetics) cause many women to feel they have failed in their most 'feminine function', but it also reinforces sex stereotypes of women being passive and dependent since they are required to adopt a 'passive patient role' at a time when they are supposed to represent the epitomy of femininity.

PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES

Psychological studies by Oakley[1] and Breen[2] have indicated that the creation of situations (ie pregnancy and childbirth) in which women are required to play a passive role, may in fact be antithetical to the psychological well-being of the mother, and quite possibly to the requirements of motherhood itself. Oakley found an association between technological score in childbirth and depression post-partum; specifically that women with a high technical score were most likely to exhibit depression post-partum.

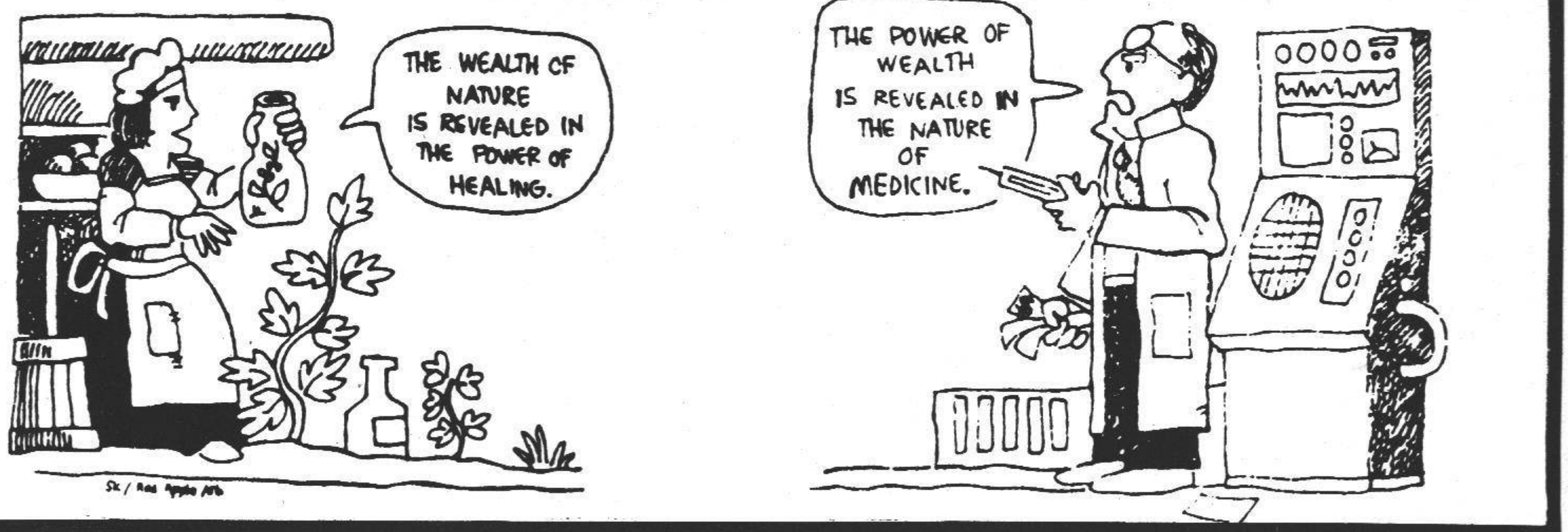
'FEMININE NATURE'

Furthermore, Breen has shown that for primaparous women, those who adjusted best to becoming a mother were the least 'feminine'. As Breen concludes "it seems legitimate to question this self-image of passivity as representing feminine nature since it turns out to be maladaptive to childbearing, the most feminine (I would prefer to say female) function of all". Thus pregnancy and childbirth are instances where the antagonism between the requirements of sex and gender (ie femaleness and femininity) become more explicit.

References:

1. Oakley, A. 'Transition to Motherhood' study in "From Here to Maternity" Penguin Books (1979).
2. Breen, D. 'The Birth of a First Child' Tavistock Publications Ltd. (1975).

Amanda Hopkins



Regaining control of our bodies (Continued)

totally under male control. From the introduction of the lying-down position through to the use of induction, anaesthesia, episiotomy etc, our control over the birth of our children has been wrested away until now our only role is a totally passive one.

HORRIFIED

Any women who watched the recent Horizon television programme entitled 'The Scientist and the Baby' must have been horrified as I was at the prospects for future developments. In the programme, pregnant women were treated purely as vessels for incubating foetuses. Extensive techniques developed to monitor foetuses were shown and it seems likely that it will soon be possible to alter foetuses by surgical operations whilst still in the mother's uterus. That this will lead us to 'quality control' of babies and abortion of 'non-economically viable' foetuses was quite clearly hinted. Throughout the programme the only women seen were the mothers or rather subjects, who were invariably flat on their backs and totally passive.

NOT ANTI-SCIENCE

Whilst I am not anti-science or anti-technology (I am a scientist myself), and I recognise the benefits to women of many of the advances that have been made, such as decreasing infant and mother mortality and allowing formally infertile women to have children, the price we have paid for losing control is the dehumanisation of the experience of childbirth. An experience which should be one that strengthens us as women, now appears as a source of weakness. We can never be in complete control of our own lives if we do not have control over our own bodies. The setting up of women's health centres is a recognition of this and an important step, but it is only scratching at the surface. We must begin to challenge the male dominated medical and scientific professions and begin to take back control.

Jane Stockton

Sources:

1. *Of Women Born* by Adrienne Rich. Virago 1977.
2. *Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers* by B. Ehrenreich and D. English. Writers and Readers Publishing Collective.
3. *The Scientist and the Baby*. 8th November 1982. BBC1.

Fatherhood, the family and my right to a baby

After trying for a child for four years without success, it was discovered after tests that my partner Graham, with whom I live, could not biologically father a child. Once we got over the initial shock we had to decide by which method we would have children. The main choice was between adoption or A.I.D. (artificial insemination by donor).

We concluded that love and commitment to children was not something biologically determined, but would come with the day to day responsibility of childcare. As I wanted the experience of actually carrying and giving birth to a child, we opted for A.I.D.

The hospital referred us to a private doctor for the treatment. It is very hard to get A.I.D. on the National Health Service. After six months, I got pregnant. Graham was very pleased at the news, and also a little sad as it fetched home the point that he couldn't biologically father a child.

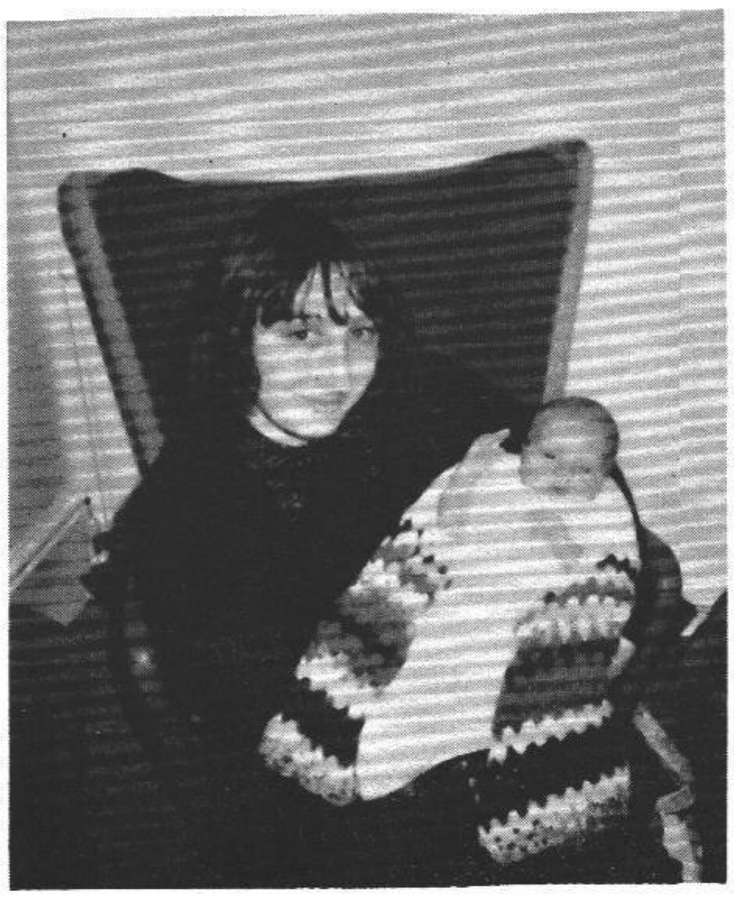
MISCARRIED

As my pregnancy advanced he got more and more involved. But at 25 weeks, I miscarried. Seeing Graham's grief and naturally receiving his full support in the emotional crisis that hit me, made me realise that in reality Graham had become the true father of that child. He had taken on the responsibility for her. The fact that he wasn't the biological father was irrelevant.

After the miscarriage, we had to start all over again. Luckily, this time I was able to receive my A.I.D. through the hospital, not the private doctor. But whether for physical or emotional reasons I was unable for several months to get pregnant again.

ADDITIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Then over the summer I began an additional relationship with another man.



I was faced with some immediate decisions. My choice was whether to try to get pregnant through A.I.D. or this other man. I decided on both methods with the encouragement of Graham, my other partner and his wife, with whom I discussed the matter.

In September, I worked out that I was due to ovulate over a weekend – when A.I.D. facilities were not available. I had to decide whether to risk becoming pregnant in circumstances in which the biological father would definitely be my other partner. After some further consideration, I decided to proceed. Success! I became pregnant again.

SOCIAL FATHER

I'm now three months pregnant. I still have friends and comrades telling me about their doubts. 'Wouldn't it be difficult for Graham, knowing who the real biological father was?' We don't think so. For Graham will be the social father, responsible with me and others for the day to day care of our child. The biological father will, I hope, also be involved but to a more limited degree, because he had a wife, child and commitments of his own (he *is* secretary of his Labour Party branch, after all). I hope he will be involved in the upbringing of our child along with our other friends and comrades.

I have written a lot about the role of social father. But I do not think the responsibility for childcare should stop there, with just two parents, however defined, or else we will be reproducing the nuclear family in a different form. I think we can take the first steps in extending our support structures, by beginning to break the divisions between family units so that we can start to collectivise not only childcare but the whole of our social existence. Perhaps then we can release our feelings of love and commitment, at present so restricted within the individual family set-up, so that they can then form the basis of a broader and more meaningful support structure for ourselves and for our children.

Ann Flowers
(Brent South CLP)

The domino scheme

The birth of my first child was long and painful. After I'd been given an emema in hospital I felt sick and my blood pressure went up. I had to lie down throughout labour, sedated by pethidine, and my baby was born by forceps delivery. I felt sure that without the enema and consequent medical intervention I would have had a better time. So when I was expecting my second child I felt determined to be more in control. I did not want another technological birth, but neither did I feel confident enough to have a home birth. I talked to the district midwife at my doctor's, and she arranged a 'domino' scheme delivery, when your district midwife goes into hospital with you to deliver the baby and you go home after six or twelve hours if everything is OK. This scheme was not offered to me as an alternative by my doctor, who only gave me the choice of Kings College Hospital or St. Thomas's. But for me it was a really good thing, because the midwife and I got to know each other before the birth and she understood my reasons for wanting a 'natural' birth. I had a five hour labour – no enema, no drugs, no episiotomy. I walked round and stayed upright right up to the birth, and helped my baby's head through as she was born. I found contractions easier to cope with and less painful than being flat on my back, even with drugs. Although second births are commonly easier than the first, I'm sure it was easier, both physically and mentally without unnecessary medical intervention. My only problem was coping with the anxiety of the doctors who wanted me strapped down with fetal heart monitors, but under the 'domino' scheme it is generally recognised that your district midwife is in charge and hospital staff only called upon in an emergency.

The South East Thames Regional Health Authority is in fact, recommending that the domino scheme be made available more widely.

Val Harding
Norwood CLP

Women's health - Beyond defending services

Robina Smith
Brent East CLP

This autumn, a double-pronged campaign of policies designed to discriminate against women and ethnic minoroties made a discreet entrance without undue protest or publicity from the Labour movement as a whole.

First, as part of the calculated destruction of the N.H.S., the notorious British Nationality Act is being used against members of the black community seeking hospital treatment. New patients are presented with questions about their immigration history, and may even be subjected to the anxiety and humiliation of having to wait for their status to be confirmed by the Home Office before treatment is begun.

Hospital administrators will be able to decide who is entitled to free treatment and even demand payment in advance from those who fail to qualify. (William Whitelaw made a parliamentary speech in June during which he claimed that the intention of the Act was not racist!)

Terrifying implications

These regulations, together with the proposed privatisation of family planning clinics, have terrifying implications for women and for those working in the field of women's health.

As one G.P. explained "Because of the cuts, many vital programmes such as screening for cancer are suffering. Diseases of the reproductive system are among the biggest killers in women and early detection can be crucial. This passport to health business is a disaster for us, because it raises barriers between doctor and patient. It's bound to deter many people from ethnic minorities from keeping hospital appointments, particularly if they have a language problem. Women will be particularly vulnerable – anyone who works in health or social services will tell you that women often put their own needs last and fall to the back of their own family queue . . ."

Form UB671

Secondly, the Tory drive to shed a percentage from the unemployment figures and force women back to the kitchen sink gathered momentum on October 19th with the introduction of Form UB671 "Availability to work". Unless claimants answer an unqualified "Yes" to questions like "Do you have child-care facilities AT PRESENT?" they are liable to be classified as unavailable for work and will lose their benefit.

One of the most despicable aspects of this form (which resulted from a Tory masterpiece called the Rayner Report) is that it is being dealt with by newly-recruited Fresh Claims clerks who



are unlikely to challenge their intructions. The mere fact that it has come into use at all with only token protests from the trades unions illustrates how superficially the rights of women to a fair deal in employment are supported.

Poor conditions

Not only are women's jobs at risk, but their working conditions are often dangerously poor. Certainly men have traditionally had some of the most hazardous jobs in mining and construction, the most obvious health hazards such as dust and noise affect workers of both sexes.

But many of the low-paid, repetitive tasks involved in processing and packaging tend to be performed by women, who are required to stand for long periods in one place in close proximity to chemicals, hormones, detergents and dyes. Thousands of substances are now in use in factories and laboratories with no thought of the risks to health, particularly the effects they may have on fertility and pregnancy. Hardly surprising when you consider that the health and safety inspectorate, like management and trade union leadership, is still dominated by men.

Right to decide

Every woman has the right to decide whether or not to become a mother, every foetus has the right to be born healthy. Yet each year, large numbers of women are made sterile, miscarry and give birth to handicapped or underweight babies because they have been exposed to harmful substances.

And how many women are obliged to take the harrowing decision to have their pregnancy terminated, since they cannot face the prospect of bringing up a child in lousy conditions or giving up the other activities they wish to pursue?

Females are the members of our society who have always been expected to cope – somehow. But at what cost? 75% of all doctors prescriptions for tranquillisers are issued to women and twice as many women as men become patients in mental hospitals.

Sick society

The contributory factors in ill-health among women are not hard to locate – bad housing, shortage of money, lack of child-care facilities, etc. But these are often symptoms of a sick society expressed in ruined lives.

Of course we must fight to protect and improve services. But if we are truly socialist, we must also fight for sinificant social changes. Previous Labour governments have failed to make real improvements in the quality of life for those people who need them the most. As Brent Community Health Council argued in a recent report, "Good health is the least you can expect from any society". There can be no excuses.

Conference at County Hall all day Sunday 12 December. Further information from 'NO PASS LAWS TO HEALTH CAMPAIGN' c/o 146 Kentish Town Rd, NW1.

'Streetlife' letter

CONGRATULATIONS

Dear Briefing,

Congratulations on your personal politics supplement. The Labour Party badly needs a considered approach to sexual issues which are, after all, central concerns in everyone's life.

All organised sections of the Labour Party have ignored personal politics from the right wing – I remember one revered gent squirming with embarrassment at the mere mention of breast feeding – to the Militant Tendency whose dogmatic puritanism has turned a generation of young people off Socialism in some areas.

I think the central problem is that Labour Party members have accepted the family as the basic social unit and have seen sex only in terms of the family or of young men and women in monogamous relationships – tolerated as a pre-family unit.

This excludes from sexual consideration all those who are not young, heterosexual and monogamous. That is, it excludes the majority of members of society while actively discriminating against some – gays, the elderly, the disabled and all those who have difficulty in making and maintaining relationships for whatever reason.

By accepting a narrow definition of the place of sex in society and by not equating sexual freedom with political freedom the Labour Party endorses the denial of what can only be regarded as a basic human right to whole sections of society. To put it a little less strongly: by their conservative attitudes party members themselves ensure that people who are in any way 'different' either don't get sex or have to be secretive about their desires or feelings.

A series of Briefing discussion groups (as opposed to a conference where hectoring excludes understanding) on personal politics would be valuable. We could also take on board the pornography issue – several Acts of Parliament and innumerable local council discussions have come and gone with the Labour Party offering no consistent policy and its members wavering between the Whitehouse/WAVAW camp and a sort of wet liberalism which says nothing should ever be banned.

Yours,
Jad Adams
West Lewisham CLP

NEXT ISSUE OF SUPPLEMENT:

The feature in the next issue will be on the theme of housing and architecture. The condition of our housing, the space and amount of privacy we have, the way the space in our houses, estates and streets in designed and used, can all have drastic effects on our lives. Contributions on this and any other other subject relevant to the supplement should be sent to Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, NW1, by Saturday 8th January 1983.

BRIEFING MEETING

Monday 6th December
7.30pm County Hall

The next Briefing meeting will be on the subject of personal politics and the Briefing Streetlife Supplement.

- What role do you think the Supplement can or should play in raising the issue of personal politics in the Labour Party?
- How successful has it been so far?
- What can we do to involve more women in Briefing?
- How can we stop sexism in Briefing both in terms of its structure and in the behaviour of individuals?

If you have views on these issues please come along to the meeting. This will be the first time that personal politics have really been discussed at one of these regular meetings, so come along and ensure it is not the last!

WOMEN—TAKE THE POWER!

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.

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.

There will be no issue of Briefing next month because of the holidays. The next issue will be the 'February' issue out on January 21st. Deadline for articles: January 10th.

Next Editorial Meetings
MONDAY 29TH NOVEMBER
TUESDAY 4TH JANUARY
Both at 7pm at County Hall.

BRIEFING: TOWARDS A NATIONAL NETWORK!

Working Meeting: February 5th 1983, County Hall, 10.30am to 5.30pm.

Briefing supporters in London, Brighton, Merseyside, and Nottingham have decided to organise a working meeting to discuss ways of building unity between existing Briefing groups and helping new groups to develop.

Further details to follow.

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