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A SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN FOR VICTORY!

by Reg Race

Mrs Thatcher is now, according to the management at Madame Tussaud's, second only to Adolf Hitler as the most hated and feared waxwork dummy in their Marylebone Road establishment. This important information, if reflected nationwide, would clearly produce a 20% swing to Labour and result in the election of a socialist government. But things are not quite as clear cut as that.

The Conservatives have succeeded in making a virtue out of necessity. Their policy has been to cut inflation at the expense of everything else, no matter what the consequences for public services and unemployment; and to raise profits at the expense of the slice of national income going to labour. This was their monetarist necessity; and they have succeeded in making a virtue in this by persuading substantial chunks of the working class that they are tough, that the medicine is needed, and that there is no alternative.

AUDACITY

The Labour Party therefore faces a critical test of its audacity and boldness, and of its ability to mount a sophisticated rebuttal of the Tories' policies. It also faces a very crucial test in its ability to win sections of the population to support it who are progressive but unused to supporting the labour movement.

How should we fight the coming general election? First, we must recognise that there are millions of trade unionists who have been defeated over wage claims and working conditions by the Thatcher government who will now be looking to replace that government with one that will listen more readily to their demands. But winning an election in the 1980s is not just a case of inspiring the manual working class and a significant slice of the petit bourgeoisie. Like it or not, we now have elections in which only 50% or so of the electorate votes with its "natural class" party.

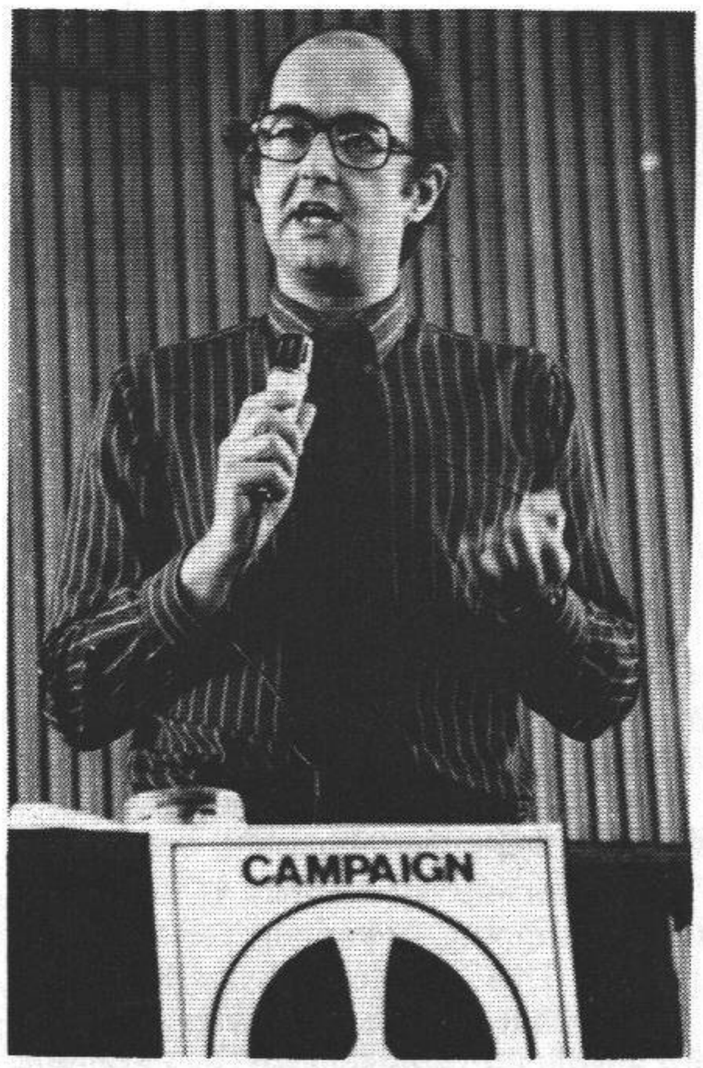


Photo: John Smith (I.F.L.)

CONSTRUCTING A MAJORITY

These developments, coupled with the growth of powerful sectional pressure groups, mean that the Labour Party has to construct an electoral majority by pulling to it sections of the population who do not have close natural connections with the labour movement but who, nevertheless, are oppressed and who have

Continued on next page

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Reg Race (cont.)

progressive ideas.

The prospects for Labour carrying through this process successfully are not, objectively, attractive. This is for two reasons: first, because Labour has neglected the political education of the working class for a generation and more; and, second, because the party leadership seems hell bent on fudging and hedging its way through the process of manifesto writing in order to accommodate the more extreme pro-nuclear NATO supporters and Atlanticists in the Shadow Cabinet.

SECRECY AND STITCH-UPS

The first draft of the manifesto has now been written. The vast majority of members of the Home Policy Committee of the NEC have not seen the draft, and have in fact been refused access to it. There is a real fear amongst the left-wing members of the NEC that party policy, as expressed in conference decisions, will be watered down substantially in the manifesto drafts before it even reaches the final stage of the Clause 5 meeting between the NEC and the PLP leadership.

So what demands should we be making in order to ensure a fighting Labour programme for the next general election? Which progressive ideological forces should we support and ally ourselves with?

First, we must have a clear and unequivocal commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament, including the abandonment of Trident and Polaris, the creation of a non-nuclear defence policy for Britain, disbandment of American bases, and the refusal of Cruise missiles.

We must have such a commitment because it is party policy, carried by a two-thirds majority at conference; and because it is the one single issue which has captured the imagination of the generation aged 14-24. They want to get rid of the Bomb, and we must give them the political means to do so.

Second, we must have clear commitments on unemployment and the construction of a planned economy. Concern about unemployment is *not* limited to those on the dole: it is expressed by young people about to leave school; their parents; and by middle-aged men and women frightened sick of being made redundant before they reach retirement. The problem for Labour is that many people believe that there is no alternative to the present policies of the government, and that unemployment is built into the system. So it is: and the only way to show that an alternative exists is to demand structural changes in the economy. These *must* include the nationalisation of at least 25 major companies; compulsory planning agreements with the remaining private sector; the direction of investment; major increases in public expenditure on consumption and investment; and a new system of worker control through the planning process.

Third, we must have clear commitments on *low pay*. There are now six million workers earning poverty wages, and most of them are women. Many are black people, and substantial numbers are not organised in trade unions. The low pay crisis can be shown by examining the position of the bottom 10% of male manual workers: they are now earning a lower percentage of the average male wage than they were in 1886, when records first began to be kept. The manifesto *ought* to contain a commitment to a statutory national minimum wage as the spearhead of a campaign against low pay.

Fourth, there must be clear commitments to attack *poverty* and radically improve public services. In the inner cities, the number of households on the government's official indicator of poverty — supplementary benefit — has *doubled* since the Tories took power, and there are now seven million people on supplementary benefit or with incomes only fractionally above it.

The manifesto *must* contain clear pledges on increasing the scale rates of social security benefits, including the retirement pension.

Fifth, there must be a wholly new perspective on women's rights. Women are being radicalised by the Thatcher experience; and Labour needs to include in its manifesto a clear commitment to positive action and positive discrimination — as well as commitments to a statutory minimum wage, the extension of childcare facilities, positive abortion legislation, and proposals to radically change working conditions to equalise the shares of work conducted by men and women. Lastly, we need to extend employment rights to part-time workers, who are overwhelmingly women.

Sixth, we need to mobilise the ethnic minority communities against the racist nationality and immigration laws by including clear commitments in our manifesto to repeal the 1981 Nationality Act, and the immigration Acts and Rules which have developed since 1968.

Seventh, there should be an unequivocal statement that Britain will withdraw from the EEC without a referendum.

CLARITY

Such a manifesto, if implemented by a Labour government with a majority in the House of Commons, would not introduce socialism overnight. We would still have to deal with the great centres of extra-Parliamentary power which are not accountable to the people. But such a programme — most of which is Labour Party policy agreed by conference — would be capable of mobilising the millions of women and men who want an alternative, who are working in their own organisations for some of these objectives, and who quite simply want to know where the Labour Party stands.

DEFEND MILITANT!

By Keith Lichman, Labour Against the Witch-hunt

THE LABOUR PARTY'S next NEC is set to take one of the gravest and most damaging measures against the party since the Gaitskell era, when it will discuss proposals to expel five members of Militant's editorial board.

All pretence that the register is to be used has been dropped. On the advice of party lawyers, the basis of expulsion is to be the NEC's decision to declare Militant an organisation ineligible for affiliation.

The NEC has no mandate for this action from conference. It claims as authority the Howard-Hughes report on the Militant tendency. But the report contains no recommendations for expulsions. Nor, in voting for the report, did conference endorse the immense new precedent that has been set by the procedure now to be adopted on the advice of the NEC's lawyers.

Under the resolution passed by the last NEC, it has an obligation to consider the expulsion of every single suspected member of the Militant. To 'satisfy the requirements of natural justice' it will have to launch a purge to prove it isn't discriminating!

'Membership' of Militant is defined as financial support, or support for Militant's activities. This is a McCarthyite definition. It means that anyone who even associates with a Militant campaign (or, as Bermondsey has shown, uses Militant's commercial facilities) can be denounced to the NEC and hauled up to justify themselves. The NEC has discretion as to when it hears a given case, and as to whether the evidence in any given case is sufficient to proceed. But what will decide whether the NEC uses its discretion? It hasn't shown much so far.

Finally, the only way to get out of being expelled is to 'renounce' association with the Militant. But what will the NEC accept as evidence of renunciation? Clearly, if — for example — the Militant's PPCs merely declare they will sever organisational links with Militant, but will continue to advocate their politics, the NEC will not be able to accept it. Only a political recantation will satisfy them. In other words, party members will be subjected to a test of their ideas to ensure they are given a bill of health: the very thing we were promised, by both Michael Foot and Jim Mortimer, would not happen.

Will the NEC get away with it? Their slowness to proceed so far is due entirely to the resistance of the membership and particularly the Constituency Parties. Labour Against the Witch-hunt, which played an important role in co-ordinating this resistance, is now more vital than ever. Briefing readers last month will have seen our first bulletin which has now run to over 10,000 copies, showing the extent of demand. If you have not yet done so, make sure your CLP affiliates (wards, LPYS's, women's sections and trade unions may also affiliate as well as individuals), support the advertisement we propose to put into Tribune, and make a regular order for the bulletin.

TOWER HAMLETS

Labourism's Unacceptable Face

TOWER Hamlets, like many constituencies, is facing serious turmoil. It will certainly be one of those constituencies in the front line of refusing to expel socialists from the Party. What makes it particularly interesting is the presence within it of Peter Shore – the acceptable face of Labour for Britain's ruling class.

Peter Shore's appeal to British capitalism springs from his basic conservative political character. More than that, he portrays a chimera of radical left politics, stealing some of the left's policies, and presenting himself as the credible sane left. Shore, while maintaining these images, is British capitalism's main ally in the Labour Party today.

Despite Shore's position and careful cultivation of a moderate, sensible and Churchillian image for himself, his constituency base is sliding from under him.

Tower Hamlets, for almost a decade, has faced serious political challenges from Liberals. Last May's local government elections were a devastating result for the Labour Party, with many councillors losing seats and others only retaining seats marginally. The right wing has maintained a tight bureaucratic control over the Party – strangling it – while pursuing managerialist approaches to local government.

Many in the right wing have long ago been denuded of socialist politics. The method of control has meant a tightly knitted group of councillors controlling both the Labour Group and the Party machine. Virtually dead branches and inactive union branches have facilitated this. Shore is locked into this – totally dependent upon this right wing rump to secure his interests.

Shore's record in the constituency is not a good one. His period in the Department of the Environment and his social policies on inner cities, in the guise of Urban Renewal Programmes and Inner City Partnership schemes, have not only proven themselves cosmetic, but to the people of Tower Hamlets have meant a negligible effect on the vast social and economic problems. Few constituents would welcome a wages squeeze so thinly disguised in his economic pronouncements, especially when subject to the burden of vast rent increases planned by his own right wing allies locally.

Shore's use and dependency on the local right wing is only an extension of his own basic conservative character, and the use of the same right wing nationally. Locally, historic dock trade union branches have been used by trade union bureaucrats to foster and maintain vested interests. Decaying and virtually defunct trade union branches are maintained alive by union bureaucrats often incapable of mustering their quota of delegates.

Just as Shore, Hattersley and Healey depend on bureaucratic manoeuvres and undemocratic block votes to maintain control over the Party nationally, so it is locally in Tower Hamlets. Recently the Party was faced with its members being solicited by the EETPU from its national office. Last year saw a branch of Solidarity set up in Tower Hamlets to confront the growing activism of the reviving Party and to safeguard Shore's interests.

However, Solidarity has not been successful in portraying a separate image from the established bankrupt right wing. One of its leading figures, Mr Beasley, leader of the Labour Group, sits with O'Grady and Mellish of Bermondsey as a member of the Tory LDDC board. The same Shore ally led the LDDC's delegation to meet his own council over 'development' issues.

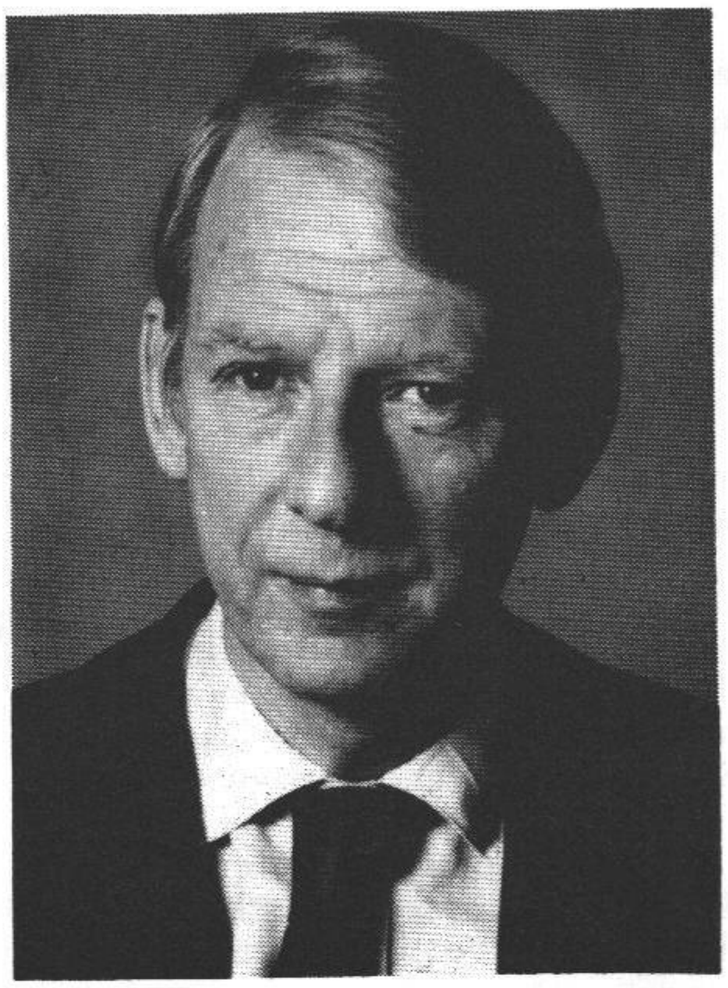


Photo : Labour Party Photo Library

Shore has failed to distance himself from his natural allies. Instead he is increasingly becoming wedded to their interests and politics. Attempts to separate himself from the right wing and appeal to the centre and soft Left have achieved little. Launching an attack on the local Party secretary for personal articles printed in Socialist Organiser and elsewhere was a veiled attempt to discredit Socialist Organiser and polarise the Left.

More recently, with the BBC's new series, 'People and Power', Shore allowed his Solidarity supporters to attempt the same thing. Again the hypocrisy of his position only exposed, since he, Hattersley, and Healey consistently use the anti-Labour capitalist media to damage the Left and reject socialist politics.

The threat posed by the emerging Left in the local party is the same threat confronting the right wing nationally. Locally the stranglehold of the right over the Party machine is being broken, the Party via its branches and Management Committee is reclaiming its sovereignty. The old mechanism of control for the Right is no longer available. It is this factor which forges Shore's links with the local right wing so cohesively.

The same unpopular right wing (having cut social services, increased the cost of old people's meals, spent thousands of pounds on a new mayoral car) is busy attempting to privatise more council services, most importantly refuse collection and disposal, with drastic employment consequences.

Party members in the east of Shore's constituency – long-standing members including ex-councillors – speaking longingly of 'Red Poplar' when they had a Party which was active and fought for their interests. Today the right wing leadership identified with Shore is seen as an apologist Tory remnant failing to represent or fight for working class interests.

Boundary changes pose a serious problem for Shore. To win reselection, especially for the 'safest' seat, he needs control over the Party machine, as has been the traditional Right-wing mechanism for maintaining power. However, it remains to be seen whether Shore's cosy alliance of a discredited right-wing and the tactics of Solidarity produce the goods. Rumours of him seeking a safe seat further north may yet bear fruit. British capitalism's alternative national leader's dependence on union leaders and trade union bureaucrats to deliver the good over their members' interests, on economic policy, in terms of wage control, may yet have to exploit and expose further this link to protect his own interests and implicitly that of British capitalism.

Terry Connolly

School meals

PRICES HELD

ILEA's school meals, already the lowest anywhere in the country, are to be held at 35pence.

This victory for the Labour Movement was achieved at the Authority meeting on February 8th – all the Labour Group voted solidly to hold the price down whilst the Tories tried unsuccessfully to raise the daily charge to 45 pence.

Of course the treacherous SDP led by Anne Sofer advocated a rise to 40 pence.

Up until the day before the meeting, the legal advice strongly indicated that in order to avoid personal surcharge members would have to vote for a rise to 40 pence.

Even with this advice it was clear that a price freeze would be held in the Authority meeting by a majority of the Labour group out voting by one or two votes the combined votes of the Tories, SDP and Labour members not willing to face surcharge.

FRESH LEGAL ADVICE

In the final hours before a decision was taken, fresh legal advice indicated that holding to 35 pence was educationally justifiable and that the leval of subsidy would be similar to the 76% subsidy level of 1977 – the largest subsidy in recent years. Thus members would be taking a "reasonable" decision in voting to hold down the price.

Labour's decision will enrage the likes of Tory Westminster and Wandsworth and if they mean what they say about taking ILEA to court, this will provide them with an added incentive. Just as the Labour Group has been solid so the Movement will be solid behind ILEA in any ensuing court proceedings that threaten our right to fix charges as we believe right.

Andy Harris,
GLC/ILEA Member

TWO VIEWS FROM EALING

News From the Western Front

It's not all that often that readers of *Briefing* are treated to tales of horror from a Tory-controlled borough, so spare a thought for Ealing where we have been suffering under a particularly reactionary Conservative administration for the last 5 years. Since taking control in 1978, the local Tories have happily complied with every spending target set by the DoE. Council house building has almost dried up and services have been cut regardless of the consequences in an Outer London borough which has many inner city problems.

This year, we are fighting a 4% reduction in real terms in Council expenditure. So much has been axed in previous years that the Tories are now planning to:

* stop all grants to playgroups and make substantial cuts in the playcentre scheme which is heavily used by the Under 5s
* charge schools and PTAs for evening use of school premises
* board up 132 school classrooms (which are now in use) so as to save on running costs
* make up to 70 Council employees redundant, and cut the part-time hours of school meals staff (most of whom are women)
* close courses and sack lecturers in our FE/HE colleges. One Tory councillor welcomed the closures by remarking that as the decline of British industry had gone hand in hand with the expansion of higher education, he couldn't see what harm would be done!

HIGH-SPEED RE-ORGANISATION

We've also just been through a high-speed re-organisation of secondary education in response to falling rolls in which parents, staff and the local community were given just 6½ weeks in which to comment on the future of 12-10 education in Ealing over the next 15 years. The Tories then promptly announced the closure of 2 of our 16 high schools — one of which, Enthorne, has had £2.4 million spent on it since it opened just 8 years ago. The Tories' attitude was summed up by their blank refusal to publish copies of the consultation documents in any of the major ethnic minority languages, despite Southall's large ethnic population. So much for consultation.

The above gives just a taste of the Ealing Tories' style of government, and in view of their appalling record we were very disappointed not to have won back control of the Council last May (the current make-up is Tories 37, Labour 30, Liberals 3). However, the Labour Group has emerged 'leaner and fitter' following the resounding electoral defeat of all those former group members who defected during the flight of the social democrats in 1981 (two of them, it is worth noting, have now enquired about the chances of their re-joining the Party). The change in the group's political outlook has been reflected in recent decisions to boycott the proposed Police Liaison Committee and to support fully local gypsies who have been evicted from their homes by the Tories (previously, the old group had tried to duck this issue).

CO-OPERATION

Co-operation between the group and the LGC has also improved greatly, not least because of the new lease of life the LGC has taken on as a campaigning organisation. A lot of effort has been put into developing links with Under 5s groups, local unions and other community organisations, some of whom are only just waking up to the need for political action because of the neanderthal attitude of the Tories. The LGC also publishes a monthly newsletter, LoGiC, which has proved very successful in improving communication between the three Ealing Labour parties, and study groups for the next election manifesto have already been set up.

The 1968 Council elections may be three years away, but laying the foundations of victory must start now.

Hilary Benn
Labour Education Spokesperson, Ealing Council, and PPC, Ealing North.

Slow Progress in Ealing Too

I read with great interest Tim Barnett's article (February Briefing) on the "slow progress in Greenwich", (highlighting as it did, the contrast between that Borough and one such as Ealing.)Unlike Greenwich, Labour failed to emerge from last May's elections in control of the Council, which finished as 37 Tory, 30 Labour and 3 Liberals, and in consequence we are now facing a total of £5.9 million cuts in this year's Council budget, including school closures and amalgamations, Council staff redundancies, privatisation (or voluntarisation of playgroups, as the Tories call it).

Again unlike Greenwich, the LGC in Ealing has blossomed over the last two years, due in part, no doubt, to the fact that several leading activists were among the closest "runners-up" in May — and this has given the LGC a central role, in alliance with the local TUC, in orchestrating the activities of the Party, unions, Trades Council and (although less successfully) the consumer groups affected by the cuts, through co-ordinating bodies such as an Ealing Education Defence Campaign.

However we are experiencing in several areas the gulf between members of the Group and the local parties which Tim outlined. One classic example came at the Group meeting prior to the full Council where the Tories forced most of the cuts through.

UPROAR IN THE GROUP

As Secretary of the LGC, I suggested that — as there was to be a lobby of the full Council, ultimately attended by hundreds of local union and LP activists, users and staff of playgroups and playcentres under attack, teachers, parents and children from the schools affected — it would be better if all the Group members participated visibly in the lobby, instead of actively avoiding it, as has happened in the past. Sure enough, the result was predictable. Uproar in the Group, accusations of unjust allegations — followed the next day by the appearance of (being generous) a maximum of 15 to 20 Group members at the lobby!

Concerted opposition locally has forced the Tories to reduce cuts in playcentre provision by half and to reprieve the two playgroups they threatened to close, although they have been forced to increase charges and reduce running costs. And there is much popular support and sympathy locally for the campaign opposing the school closures and amalgamations.

PRIVATISATION

The total proposed reduction in manual posts is the equivalent of 120 full-time posts (more posts in fact, as many are part-time) and the latest Tory plan is the privatisation of the street cleaning service. Redundancies among white-collar staff and teaching staff have been kept low, aided partly by a majority vote among NALGO members for strike action in opposition to redundancies.

However the main criticism of the local Group is that, having been forced onto the defensive by the need to fight the cuts, they have failed to initiate activity, prefering the soft option of reacting to Tory proposals, thereby reducing any effectiveness they have as an opposition, in the eyes of groups facing the Tory axe.

Our LGC has attempted to overcome this by re-establishing the policy working groups for our local manifesto, so that we can push the policies we believe the Group should be advocating — and the Group is supporting this initiative (some members more actively than others!). Slow progress, it seems, is not limited to Boroughs where the Labour Group is in control!

Kevin Veness
Secretary, Ealing LGC
(in a personal capacity)

CAMDEN BOROUGH CONFERENCE: Back to the drawing board

Marion Chester
Camden Councillor

Camden's borough conference on the 29th January was well attended by party delegates, mainly due to the fact that the borough's decentralisation plans were to be discussed. All in all approximately 100 delegates attended the conference, of which well over 80 were present for the discussion on decentralisation. The resolution, passed by an unambiguous 71 to 5, rejected the Labour Group's proposals for reorganising a range of services into 13 area offices.

The background to this decision lies in a split in the Labour Group and in the decentralisation working party which produced the report. The majority of the working party and the Labour Group, including the leader, Phil Turner, favour a reorganisation of services, whilst leaving the central administration of the council virtually untouched. They also wish to leave any discussion of devolution of control until some unspecified future date. It was these proposals which the conference rejected so decisively. A minority on the Group favour a more radical approach, which would require extensive reorganisation of the council's structure and having as a primary aim local control of services. This approach has been seen to be more needs-oriented and requiring more grass-roots involvement at an early stage. This minority group sent out papers to all delegates outlining an alternative to the Group's proposals, in an attempt to open up discussion on the issue.

LACK OF CONCERN FOR WOMEN'S ISSUES

This debate was due to take place at the end of the day after reports from committee chairs had been discussed and voted on. As it happened, delegates voted to bring the discussion forward on the agenda, thus leaving women's issues, race relations and police until the end of the day. As expected those (male) councillors who pushed for this change were noticeable by their early departure from the conference, annoying women by their obvious lack of concern for other issues.

The debate which followed was kicked off by the leader, Phil Turner, who introduced the Labour Group's proposals. He insisted that the Group was determined to consult as widely as possible before implementing any scheme, but admitted that no consultation had taken place over drawing up the plans. Whilst answering questions he stressed the need to have a scheme which could be fully implemented by the next elections and that this requirement had led to the Group concentrating almost exclusively on relocating service delivery.

The ensuing discussion centred around a composite of seven motions from wards, with amendments. Most contributions were critical of the Labour Group's plans and called for more consultation over what schemes would be put to the workforce and the people of the borough. The major criticism levied was that the Group had ignored politics and had settled for a top-down reorganisation. Delegates were of the view that in order to produce valid proposals, the needs of people receiving services should be taken as the primary reference point. The alternative approach was attacked by some as being too "airy fairy" and at one point a councillor became very abusive towards those who supported a more radical approach, calling them "wreckers".

The outcome of the discussion was that the resolution passed called upon the Labour Group to start again and to produce several different options in consultation with the parties, with a view to taking a choice to the workforce and people of the borough. Conference pointed out the opportunity the Group should not miss of breaking up existing power structures and replacing them with multi-disciplinary teams of workers in small accessible offices. The overwhelming message from delegates was that the housing and repairs service should be decentralised as a matter of urgency, particularly as the repairs service in Camden is on the point of collapse. Tenants and trade unions in the borough have already produced a document outlining ways of doing this.

Since then the Local Government Committee has endorsed the conference decisions and is in the process of setting up a consultative framework to ensure that the parties can make an input into future plans. The LGC also rejected a resolution, drawn up by some councillors, which pushed for a reaffirmation of the original proposals. It is to be hoped that the Labour Group, when it meets, will take the same line.



METAL BOX STAYS

Hackney's Metal Box workers really know what it is line to be employed by a multinational company. They have learnt that they represent an embarrassing surplus of labour for Metal Box, and that a return to "acceptable" profit margins for the London Metal Box plants means unemployment for them.

Under the guise of "re-organisation" and "cost cutting", 298 jobs are to be lost: 170 at the Clapton site, 108 at Palmers Green, and 20 in South London. These proposed redundancies follow the closures of the Riley Road factory in South London, and one of the two Hackney plants, and the loss of 41 jobs in February 1982 at the Clapton site.

CONSULTATION

The much vaunted "consultative" procedures which Metal Box has held so dear have now been exposed as a charade. Indeed, the local MPs, Stanley Clinton Davis and Ernie Roberts, have pointed out what consultation consisted in – a statement read out to the unions on 17th November last year, at a meeting where no questions were allowed. In fact, questions were permitted only the following week, and even then the company failed to reply on how many jobs would be lost. Eventually, on 28th January, Metal Box announced the redundancies, and they did so only a few days after the Hackney Gazette had quoted a company source as saying "no decision has yet been reached."

There is no longer any doubt that management is working to a well-contrived plan. Each statement is timed to the Company's advantage and carefully leaked to the press if they think it will help to demoralize the workforce.

RESPONSE

But the planned offensive against the jobs of Metal Box workers was challenged in early December with the withdrawal of overtime working by the 47 AUEW members who service the factory. The vote on overtime was accompanied by a decision to appeal to all labour movement bodies for the fullest support for the attempts to modify, if not actually reverse, the Company's plan.

By 5th January, Hackney Borough Council, the Greater London Council, Hackney Trades Council and the local MPs were involved and meetings between the MPs, the GLC, HBC and management began to take place. True to form, however, the Company treated the MPs with only a little more civility than they treat the Metal Box production workers, and denied the GLC and HBC the relevant accounting figures for the Clapton plant. But even if it proved impossible to see the books, these initiatives served a useful propaganda purpose and helped to heighten the awareness of the local labour movement. The refusal was significant also because it allowed some of the more conscious workers in Metal Box to start drawing the lessons for the workforce as a whole. The central point was being made – "Your job is at Metal Box – Defend it."

Yet until now the piecemeal savaging of the London workforce was achieved with little trade union objection or concern by the local Labour authorities. In part, this situation was due to the Company's calculated attempts (so far successful) to ensure there are few links between unions throughout and *within* Metal Box factories. The Engineers Combine represents the exception. It has meant that any attempt to save jobs has had to start from scratch. The first steps, therefore, were to spread the information about the Company's plans and their effects. In making the facts known the workforce received valuable aid, particularly from CAITS*, but also from the local Trade Union Support Unit, HBC and the GLC.

What has emerged in the pattern of closures, starting in 1980, suggests a 5-year plan which aims to close all the London Metal Box operations. Research carried out by CAITS, and HBC, makes it seem more than likely that the Company are using the recession as an excuse to move out of London... perhaps to Ireland, where they have bought into a supposedly rival packaging company called "Bredens International Packaging Ltd. (Ireland)". Behind this smokescreen lies the Metal Box corporate strategy – move to areas of low wages, produce cheap and export. It is no coincidence that the Company has subsidiaries in slave-labour countries like South Africa.

SUPPORT

Not surprisingly, Metal Box is experienced in closing its factories, but for the workforce struggling to keep their jobs is a new experience. A Metal Box Jobs Campaign has been established to help put the resources of the labour movement behind the workforce. Its aim is simply to assist in revitalizing the workforce, and to put the maximum pressure on the management. Two full-page advertisements in the local press (see inset) were paid for by the local Trades Council and political and material aid has been given by the GLC, HBC and the local MPs and councillors.

At a public meeting on 4th February, the leader of Hackney Council, Tony Kendall, clearly stated the aims of the Jobs Campaign when he said that whatever decisions were taken by the workforce, up to and including industrial action in defence of their jobs, they could expect the unconditional support of the labour movement and their elected representatives. The theme of wholehearted support for the Metal Box workers was strongly echoed by the rest of the platform.

At the time of writing it is clear that the struggle has reached a new stage. The Company has already started to issue redundancies *on a sel-*

SUPPORT AIR INDIA STRIKERS

Vidya Anand
Member of Regional Executive
Greater London Labour Party

THE strike at Air India by the members of T&GWU is now in its 29th week. Picketing at the Bond Street offices of Air India is continuing four days a week and five days a week at Heathrow Airport at the Cargo of the airline.

This bitter dispute has been precipitated by Air India's UK management who have launched an all-out attack on trade unionists now some 92 who have refused to succumb to the management's intimidation including recruitment of black-leg labour force.

The ninety-two have refused to be forced back to work under humiliating conditions. The dispute must be fairly settled. This official dispute is supported by T&GWU as a whole and the Executive Committee of the Greater London Labour Party has expressed its solidarity with the strikers and has called upon the Indian government to intervene on the side of just claims of strikers.

Support from the workers at other airlines for the strikers is growing. It includes already staff of Aer Lingus, KLM and Air Canada refusing to handle Air India cargo.

Despite several appeals to Mrs Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, to intervene in the dispute on the side of justice she has signally failed to use her enormous prestige to resolve dispute in the interest of fairplay.

More than ever today the strikers need both moral and material support from Trade Union branches and Labour party activists not only in London but throughout the country.

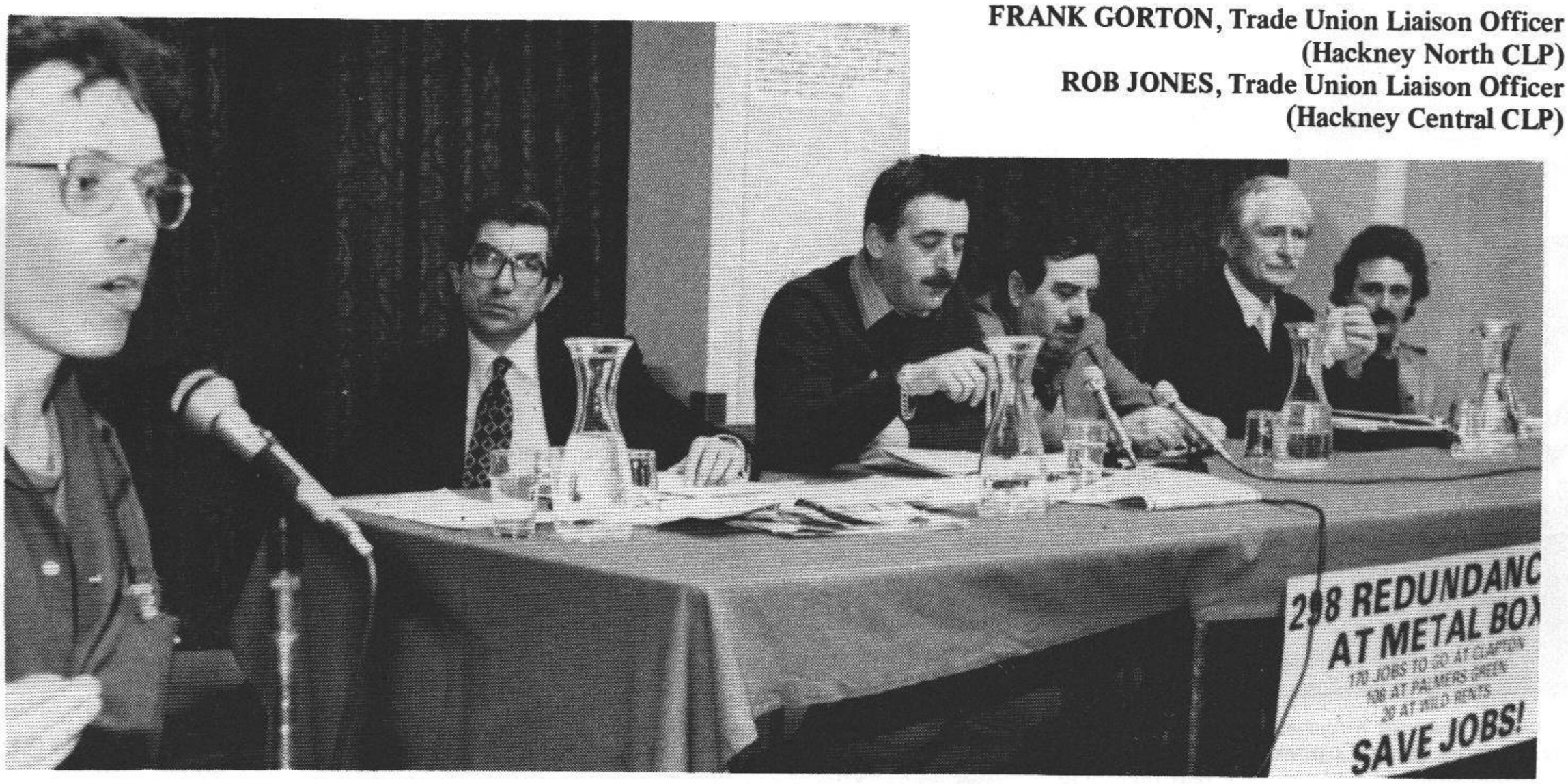
The management at Air India inspired by the divisive policies of the Tory government must be defeated in their nefarious attempts to stifle ninety two members from Ethnic Minorities who are members of the T&GWU.

As at Grunwick only a mass mobilisation of trade unionists at the point of dispute will shake the management out its obduracy.

For further information please contact: Transport and General Workers Union, Branch 1/1305, Transport House, 7/9 South Road, Southall, Middlesex.

IN HACKNEY OK!

FRANK GORTON, Trade Union Liaison Officer (Hackney North CLP)
ROB JONES, Trade Union Liaison Officer (Hackney Central CLP)



GM Cookson

Metal Box meeting, Hackney Town Hall

***ective basis* – ignoring the process of negotiation begun when the AUEW gave notice of its 'failure to agree'. It is yet another calculated device to divide and demoralize the workforce. The jobs of 298 people hang in the balance.**

But it is not just Metal Box workers who are drawing conclusions about their Company. The response of the local labour movement is also hardening and taking shape. The pont has been stressed forcefully – we need to keep a watchful eye on all the local workplaces, to strengthen union organisation, and to co-operate fully around disputes. Most of all we are gearing up to ensure that these phoney "cost-cutting" redundancies will not be a prelude to the closure of the factory. We are determined that Metal Box stays in Hackney.

**Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems.*
Information and assistance can be obtained from CAITS, Polytechnic of North London, Holloway Road, London N7 8DB.

USEFUL ADDRESSES

METAL BOX JOBS CAMPAIGN, c/o Rob Jones, 57, Fairmead House, Kingsmead Estate, London E9 5QN.
FRANK GORTON, Secretary, Metal Box (East London) Joint Shop Stewards Committee, 73, Albion Rd., London N 16.
THE SECRETARY, Metal Box National Combine Committee, c/o 175, Bradford Road, Riddlesden, Keighley, West Yorks.

NUPE vs HACKNEY COUNCIL: PART II

Keith Veness (Hackney NUPE steward)

The current battle being waged in Hackney between NUPE officers branch and the Council over the victimisation of two of its members has intensified. A major victory occured a fortnight ago with the reinstatement of Frank Dillon, one of the two people victimised. The Council, after going through a whole series of 'about-turns', finally backed down and agreed to a proper hearing for Frank Dillon. In order to do this, he had to be immediately reinstated and the Hackney NUPE officers branch has hailed this as an important victory. However it is still fighting on to secure the reinstatement of its other member who was sacked, June Simpson, and also to obtain a pledge from the Council that there will be no repetition of these sackings that occurred without any reference to the agreed procedures.

A whole series of pickets and demonstrations have been held by the NUPE branch in Hackney, supported on many occasions by the other Council unions. On March 8th all three Housing District Committees due to take place that night were stopped due to effective picketing by the Hackney NUPE branch. Also important in this struggle was the support given by a number of Labour councillors who are disgusted by the attitude of the Council leadership.

The leading person in fighting on behalf of NUPE has been councillor Maureen Colquhoun who actually joined the pickets and helped turn people back from attending the meeting. This action was much appreciated by the Hackney NUPE officers branch and provides a good example of how Party members can work with Council unions. It is certainly in marked contrast to the attitude of the Council leadership. At the Council's "Policy and Resources Committee" held the following night, 9th March, leading members of the Labour Group flaunted their willingness to walk through a NUPE picket line and were photographed doing so. This matter will be raised with the Labour Party and NUPE is demanding that they take action against these members for breaking a picket line. This struggle will continue and intensify and Hackney NUPE officers branch is planning a whole series of guerrilla one-day strikes in order to bring this about.

What CLP members and trade unionists in Hackney should now ask themselves is: can they really afford the appalling industrial relations encouraged by the new council leadership? We think that the answer is "No" and that something urgent must be done. The Council is apparantly willing to sabotage its whole plans for the coming year in order to carry out its victimisation of a NUPE member.

The demand being put forward by NUPE now is quite simple: the reinstatement of June Simpson and the guarantee of no sackings in future without adherence to proper procedures.

All party activists in Hackney should write to the leaders, pass resolutions at their wards and support the NUPE pickets. This is a battle NUPE must win.

All messages of support to: Hackney NUPE Officers branch, 43 Durley Road, N16.

SUPPORT THE WATER WORKERS

JEREMY CORBYN



Paul Mattsson (I.F.L.)

Waterworkers at Copper Lane, Walthamstow, vote overwhelmingly against settlement.

THE LATEST group to suffer the ravages of Toryism are the water workers; and to pay their claim in full would cost each customer just 3½p per week.

Such is the determination of the Tories to drive down working class living standards that they have provoked this strike and are linking it to further cuts and redundancies. The ghost of the Health Service dispute looms large and the Thames Water Authority are now talking of 400 redundancies out of a work force of 6000.

Thus once more the public sector workers are put in the position of fighting for their jobs and service whilst being offered a poisoned chalice of being told to pay for their own wage increase out of the jobs of their own members.

The Tories' daily lie machines in Fleet Street faithfully peddle the nonsense about earnings and pay of water workers.

The actual current weekly basic rates are:

Grade 4	£78.20
3	£80.75
2	£83.35
1	£85.85

Average earnings are about £92.00 per week nationally with slightly more in London where London Weighting is payable.

Over the past few weeks the water workers, whose job is dirty, dangerous and very arduous, have been subjected to a barrage of 'greedy worker' statements from the Tory Government, the CBI and the National Water Council – the very people who have refused to invest in repairs and maintenance to the sewerage system and who consistently deny the skill that water workers have to do their jobs.

The chairman of the National Water Council is a perfect specimen of ruling class hypocrisy. He 'earns' £6527 for one day's work per week as Chairman of the National Water Council, and he then goes to the Midlands to 'earn' £24,980 per year as Chairman of the Severn-Trent Water Authority. Just in case he can't make do on £31,507, he has a 1000-acre farm to fall back on, where he is reputed to have a private supply of water.

There has been a historic link between the water workers and the gas and electricity workers which was first made in 1974, since then earnings are £35 per week lower than electricity and £40 lower than gas.

Support for the water workers is very great but they need practical help from everybody in the Labour Movement; their demand for a decent living wage and proper investment in the industry is everybody's fight against Tory pay policy.

HELP: Hold a collection at your place of work and Labour Party branch, and either take it to one of the picket lines or send to the union offices.

PICKET: at one of the works listed below.
Hammersmith Pumping Station, Great West Road (Southside), W6.
Hampton Works, Upper Sunbury Road, Hampton-on-Thames.
Kew Bridge, Kew Bridge Road, Brentford.
New River Head, Rosebery Avenue, EC1.
Broadway Buildings, 50-64 Broadway, SW1.
Crossness Sewerage Treatment Works (STW), Abbey Wood, SE2.
Long Reach STW, Dartford.
Beddington STW, Beddington Lane, Croydon.
Worcester Park STW, Green Lane, Worcester Park, Sutton.
Hogsmill STW, Lower Marsh Lane, Kingston.
Mogden STW, Mogden Lane, Isleworth.
Riverside STW, Manor Way, Rainham.
Beckton STW, Jenkins Lane, Barking.
Deephams STW, Picketts Lock Lane, N9.
Western Pumping Station (PS), 124 Grosvenor Road, SW1.
Acton PS, Warple Way, Hammersmith.
Deptford PS, 101 Greenwich High Rd, SE10.
Abbey Mills PS, Abbey Lane, E15.
Kew STW, Westhall Road, Richmond.

If you need any other information or publicity contact either:

NUPE: Mark Sanders, 13/15 Stockwell Road, London SW9. 737 2011

GMBATU: Bill Holland, 'Thorne House', 154 Brent St, London NW4. 202 0071.

War games challenged

Proposed government regulations which would force Council workers to take part in civil defence 'war games' are being challenged in Nottingham. The proposals* would make it obligatory for all local authorities *and all local authority workers* to take part in these war games. Workers who refused to do so would be open to disciplinary action from their local council.

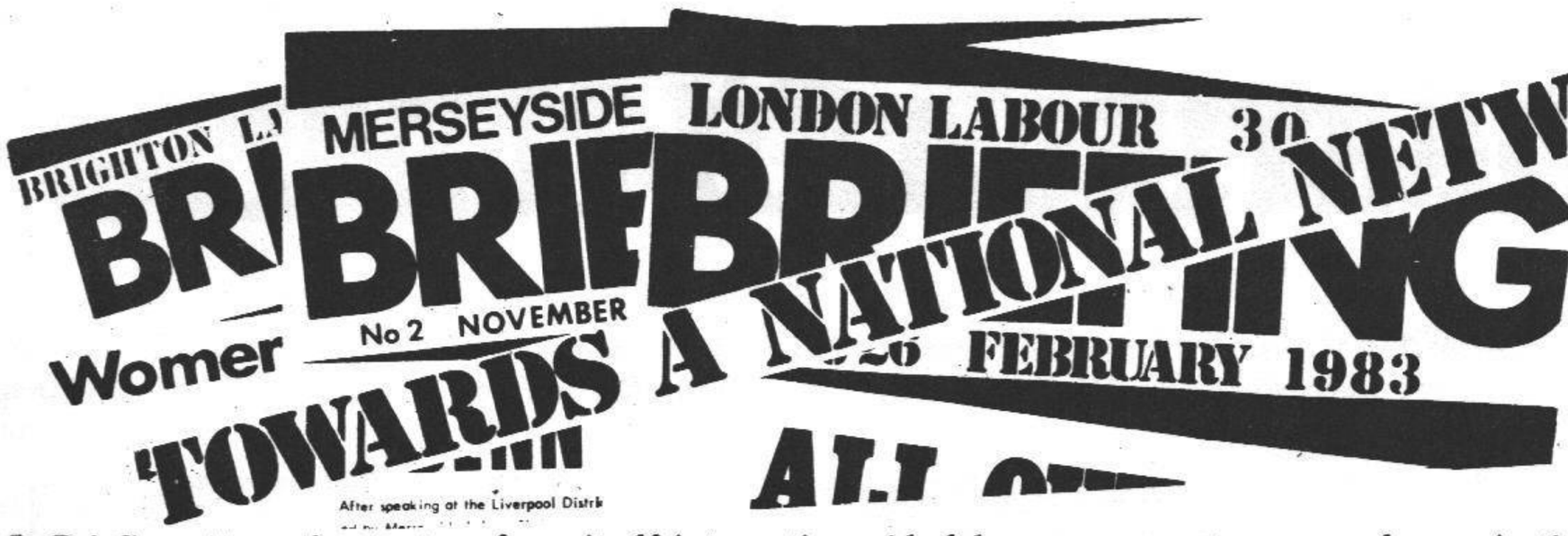
Alan Simpson (PPC for Beeston and a member of the Nottingham Briefing group) has taken up this issue, in an attempt to get the local councils — particularly Tory controlled ones — to give clear assurances that no workers would be victimised or disciplined as a result of refusing to take part.

Both NALGO and NUPE in the area added their weight behind objections to these latest Tory moves to dragoon people into their civil defence charades. Farther afield several Tory controlled Councils are even believed to have expressed grave reservations about being required to conscript their employees into these efforts to dupe the public.

Clearly the Thatcher government believes that the 'con' job it expects to get from J. Walter Thompson for around £1,000,000, it can also expect to get from Council workers for free.

Trade unions and Labour councils throughout the country need to be mobilised to disappoint her.

(* Proposals for regulations conferring new civil defence functions on local authorities — issued by the Home Office, October 1982.)



CONFERENCE REPORT

by Chris Knight
(Lewisham East C.L.P.)

Is *Briefing* attempting to transform itself into nation-wide labour movement paper and organization? There was certainly a strong regional attendance at the "towards a national network" conference held at County Hall on February 4th. We had planned for a small "working conference" of 40 or 50 comrades from around the country with the aim of sorting out the technical details of collaboration as well as determining tentatively the extent to which a political basis for unity existed. In the event, nearly twice the expected number attended, including representatives from *Briefing* groups in Brighton, Merseyside, Manchester, Strathclyde, the West Midlands and Bristol, in addition of course to many from London.

Graham Bash opened the conference and made it clear that a national paper or new group on the left was not, however, being proposed. "It is certainly *not* our intention", he stressed, "to set up yet one more national left grouping as a rival to the very many that already exist. Our aim is the contrary. Not to create more divisions on the left. But to build up structures that enable us – from within our different groups, tendencies, sections of the movement – to overcome our divisions, unify our forces to the maximum possible extent, and to organize for power at whatever level we are operating on, not only within our localities and regions, but across them." He went on to describe the serious isolation in which the left – particularly the constituency left – now finds itself, and stressed that "socialist ideas" in and of themselves can never suffice for overcoming this. "We start from one fundamental principle – the primacy of practice. Only to the extent that we are collectively strong can our consciousness be revolutionary. Our central task therefore is to transcend those divisions which prevent us from feeling our strength." He then outlined the divisions – between the different sections of the revolutionary left, between the revolutionary left and the Bennite left, between the CLP's and the unions, between the labour movement and the women's movement, between our struggles in Britain and internationally, and, finally, "between politics and life itself" – which it has always been *Briefing's* aim to seek to break down.

Local reports

Dave Lowney then reported from Brighton. 70 people had attended the launch meeting of Brighton Labour Briefing a year ago, and since then the appearance of the paper had more or less transformed the labour movement scene in Brighton, a particular high-point being the mobilization of a big march through the town, called by *Briefing* against the South Atlantic War. A weakness in Brighton, however, is the relative lack of connection with the trade unions or with members of the labour group on the council. *Stuart Marshall-Clarke* described how Merseyside Labour Briefing had been set up under the sponsorship of the L.C.C. and was now in its third bi-monthly issue, selling 1,000 copies. The bi-monthly production schedule made it difficult to use the paper as an organizer, however, and Stuart criticised a certain lack of focus in the paper, as well as the small level of input from women or from black people. The report from Strathclyde told how Strathclyde Labour Briefing was appearing monthly, with a print run of 400 per month, the paper being now in its fifth issue. Its focus is largely on combatting the right wing of the Labour Group, but there is no editorial control over articles except on size. Reports also came from the West Midlands and from Bristol, but unfortunately Nottingham Labour Briefing was not represented although as far as we know it is thriving. A report from Manchester described the discussions now under way to launch a Briefing there (we are also expecting an Oxford Briefing to appear in the not-too-distant future). In the discussion which followed, there was much self-criticism over the failing of Briefing comrades, particularly in London, to prioritise work in the CLPD; Valerie Coultas extended this into a general criticism of our "parochialism" – we should take national issues (such as CND and the Greenham Common campaign) much more seriously, she said. There was general agreement on the need to make the general election campaign our focus from now on in all regions.

Men's caucus

Over lunch-time, the conference separated into women's and men's caucuses. I can't report from the women's side, but in ours we had a valuable discussion, led by Richard Stanton from Brighton, on the ways in which sexism pervades our lives and distorts our relationships. We tried hard to get away from the usual male practice of talking in generalities – Richard spoke movingly and amusingly about the crippling effects which he felt sexism had had on his own sexual and personal relations – and yet in the discussion which followed the wider *political* necessity for a sexual revolution based on the power and solidarity of women was, I think, clarified for all of us.

Personal politics

My most lasting memory of the conference will be of the session which followed. The discussion on personal politics and the "street-life" supplement for once didn't seem marginalised or peripheral to the "real struggle" but came over as almost the centre of gravity for the conference as a whole. The discussion in the morning had been good by any standards, but it was now, I think, that the most thoughtful and effective contributions were made and that the strongest sense of shared purpose emerged. Cath Tate introduced the session by reading out from the *Daily Telegraph* a predictably apoplectic attack on the supplement in general and on the idea of collectivising family life in particular (see Cath's article in this issue). When we had stopped laughing, the atmosphere had changed and become less formal, so that it was easier from then on for people to speak. Ann Bliss decided not to speak formally on "the role of a feminist councillor" but simply conveyed to everyone her own sense of conflict and weakness in trying to reconcile child-care responsibilities with the almost impossible demands placed on any councillor. There were a few attacks on her in the discussion which followed – "Well, you chose to be a councillor!", as it was put – but Ann's basic point struck home. People shouldn't *have* to be freaks without children or without personal lives in order to be political. Ann said she had stood for council knowing of the risks she was taking precisely because she had thought it important that women with children should be properly represented, and they couldn't be represented by people who had no real inkling of what the problems were. As Jane Stockton put it: "We've got to set up support structures which release women from *having* to make the choice between politics and children, politics and personal life."

Ken Livingstone came into the discussion with a lively account of "personal politics" in County Hall, and remarked that Ann's contribution seemed relevant in that context, too. "What we need is for some of you outseide the Council to appreciate what we have to go through sometimes and be there with us when we need you!" Ken said he didn't mind criticsm, but it just didn't help if, instead of deriving strength to fight with from the movement, all you got was sharks swimming around, waiting to bite your leg off. Part of Ken's contribution – which was later attacked by John Bloxham, from *Socialist Organizer* -– was devoted to stressing that the main gains to be made by the left on Councils or in the G.L.C. was in terms of consolidating links with the local communities (the women's movement, ethnic minority organizations, gays, the trade unions etc.) rather than leaps out of the trenches towards the Tory machine-gun nests at this stage. There was a lot of support for this view, although doubtless on condition that "this stage" is not assumed to stretch on indefinitely.

Ken's contribution was followed by reports from Lesley Lee (read out in her absence) on community politics, Jeremy Corbyn on links with the trade unions and Bryn Griffiths on how to produce a Briefing. After further discussion, the following resolution was passed: "This conference requests London Labour Briefing to take the initiative in sponsoring the call for a meeting of CLP's and trade union activists, together with other campaigning and left groupings in the Labour Party, in order to ensure a manifesto based on Conference policies and to discuss how we campaign for a Labour victory."

CLPD – FIGHTING THE FUDGERS

CLPD voted at its AGM by 297 votes to 270 to apply to join the Register. This vote mirrored the result of the "Consultative Ballot" of the membership, producing the narrowest of majorities for the pro-register faction on the Executive.

For over a year now a bitter and vitriolic battle has been taking place on the EC between those who believed that we should "keep our heads down" and those who have wanted to take the Campaign forward to openly oppose the right in the Party and on the NEC. The political arguments degenerated — on one side of the EC at any rate — into personal abuse; comrades who opposed registration were labelled as infiltrators and pseudo-lefties (sic)! The ruling bureaucrats told us they were upholding the traditions of the Campaign against a "trot" takeover; a stance which culminated in their trot-bashing witch-hunt at the AGM.

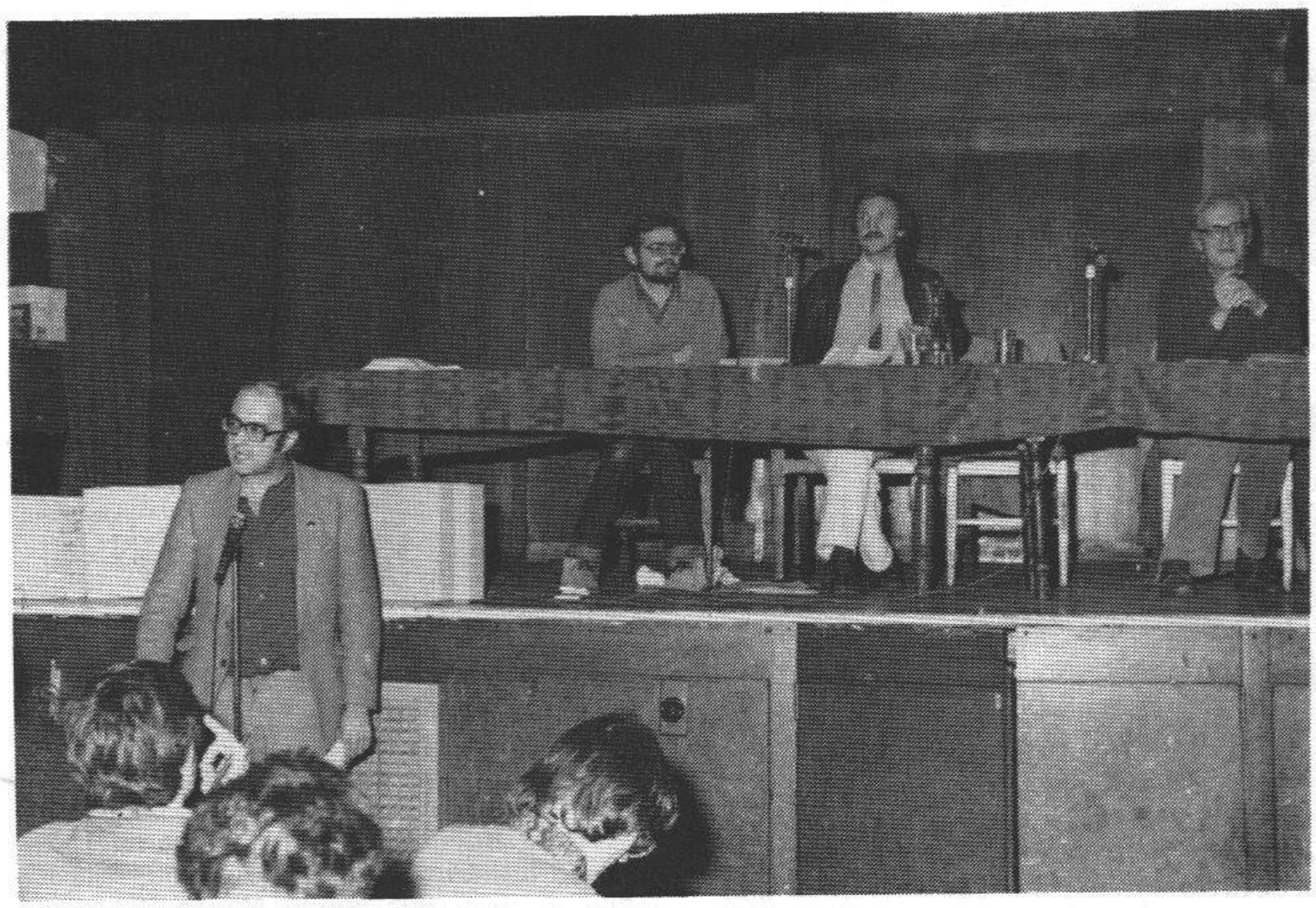


Photo : John Brennan

TIP OF THE ICEBERG

The arguments over the Register, while epitomising the struggle, were by no means the be-all and end-all of it. It was obvious from many arguments on the EC and from looking at other resolutions on the agenda of the AGM — moved either under the cloak of the EC, or by individuals such as Vladimir Derer, Victor Shonfield and Pete Willsman — that acceptance of the Register was just the tip of the iceberg. Others of their resolutions called for acceptance of expulsions — expulsions were apparently a decision of Conference; and for CLPD to frame its proposals so as to be acceptable to a Conference majority — therefore arguing that we have to trim our principles to gain a majority rather than fighting, as we have always done in the past, to win the majority to our point of view. Speeches made in support of these tactics often verged on the hysterical.

However, the CLPD membership had more sense, and CLPD policy was saved from the worst excesses of moderation and emasculation. The AGM opposed these 'cop-out' lines, and instead voted to "call on CLP's not to carry out expulsions and to oppose any consequent action taken against them", and it also instructed the EC to "campaign vigorously" for "total repeal" of the Register. Further, it threw out the appalling 'Manchester Withington amendment' which supports a modified register and which was resoundingly defeated when it reared its head at last year's Annual Conference as the so-called "fall-back" position.

TERRIBLE DILEMMA

Interestingly, before the AGM took place, a number of leading members of the pro-register faction on the EC threatened to resign if the AGM either carried, or did not carry (depending on the issue), a number of what they saw as key resolutions containing the above proposals. This proved a terrible dilemma for them however, as they won control of the Executive but lost vote after vote on their "key resolutions" and they now find themselves in a majority running the Campaign but with policies to which they are diametrically opposed.

The defeat of the anti-register group on the CLPD Executive was engineered by an apparent unholy alliance between leading members of the CLPD and supporters of Clause IV and the LCC in an attempt to "purge" CLPD in ways very reminiscent of Comrade Golding and his friends.

TOTALLING MISREPRESENTED

Similarly, the views of at least one leading trade union, NUPE, were totally misrepresented in the most appalling way by their pro-register delegate. It was said by him that NUPE — my own union — would disaffiliate from CLPD if we voted not to register; no such mandate was given to that delegate; he spoke for himself alone. So much for union democracy!

That being said, we will now have to wait and see how far the new pro-register members of the Executive and the bureaucrats in CLPD will be able to bury the "fighting" proposals of the rank and file membership which oppose the register and expulsions, in favour of fudging and refurbishing their defeated tactics and surreptitiously resurrecting pro-register proposals like the Manchester Withington amendment in other disguises.

And this may not be too far away. There is a resolution on the Agenda for the London Labour Party Annual Meeting which closely follows the Manchester Withington line; and it is down in the name of Hendon South CLP — a CLP not a million miles away from the CLPD Park Drive HQ.

Those of us still left on the CLPD Executive (either by dint of our places from the Women's Action Committee, or by just slipping through the net), will now have to fight for the implementation of the decisions of the AGM. CLPD still has a very important role to play on the left, We are just going to have to try to ensure that it plays that role!

Mandy Moore

ROYAL ARSENAL CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY POLITICAL AND EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEES

MOZAMBIQUE-ANGOLA COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING "SOUTHERN AFRICA — THE UNREPORTED WAR"

Speakers:	**Bob Hughes, M.P. Chairman, Anti-Apartheid Movement**
	Tony Gifford
	Representatives from Angola
Chair:	**Richard Balfe, M.E.P.**
Film:	**CAMAMA — The Struggle In Angola**
Date:	**28th February**
Time:	**7.30 p.m.**
Venue:	**Deptford Town Hall New Cross Road, London, S.E.14**

SILKIN'S LAST GASP

John Silkin is a rich and ambitious man. He wants to be Leader of the Labour Party. There is nothing exceptional about that, of course, except that in his case there is only a handful of people in the entire movement who believe he should or could succeed. But Mr. Silkin is also clever, and very persistent.

Mr Silkin appears to have calculated that, to make any headway in a leadership election, he would have to improve substantially on the derisory four per cent of the constituency vote he won in the deputy-leadership election. His solution is to ensure the support of a newspaper read by many constituency activists. The newspaper was Tribune. The opportunity to capitalise on the hostility of the 'Left' establishment to the 'new' Tribune was irresistible.

Tribune has a long and distinguished past ... Cripps and the Popular Front, Nye and the Bevanites. The decline probably began with Bevan's defection from unilateralism. As far as Tribune was concerned the separation resulted in neither divorce nor reconciliation. As more and more old Tribunites were co-opted by the leadership and defected, the paper drifted alongside and the link with the rank and file Left disintegrated. Never was this more acute than during the campaign for democratic changes in the party.

Suddenly it all changed when Chris Mullin became Editor. The paper reverted to its former role of exposing the establishment within the party. Not only did the editorial direction of the paper become more in tune with the new Left in the party, but the paper actually took steps to bring its readers into ownership and control.

If Nye were alive today he probably wouldn't approve. He would probably be a paid-up member of Labour Solidarity. So perhaps it is fair enough that Mr Silkin claimed the mantle of Nye in his defence. You must expect a reaction after political change and dead heroes are easier to use than political arguments.

It was Silkin's methods which lost him the support of most of his natural political allies. His boardroom manoeuvrings challenged editorial independence, attacked worker participation and sought to prevent the establishment of co-operative ownership. These things are valued even by the Labour Right and the SDP. The staff appealed to the widest possible audience and won support. The Tribune group of MPs which the newspaper had pronounced dead only months before came to their support. Finally, after much dithering, Michael Foot spoke out.

Still we are treated to the spectacle of a member of Labour's shadow cabinet appealing to the Chancery division of the High Court to prevent Labour Party policy being applied to a Labour movement newspaper.

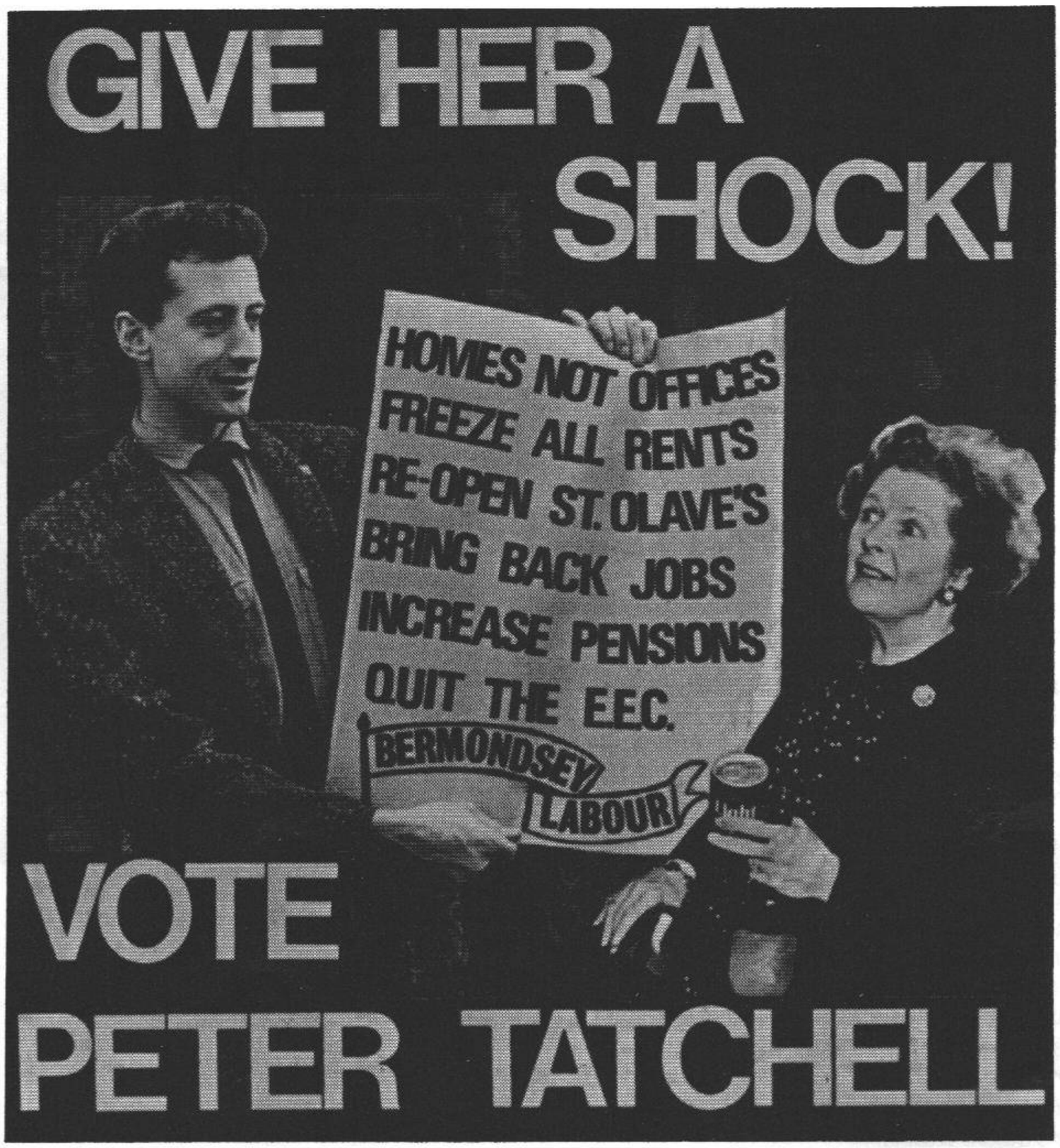
We can only hope for two things. First and most important is that Tribune survives the blows of a career politician's unbridled ambition. The second is that the rise of John Silkin is at an end. For surely high office in the labour movement is incompatible with antics such as these.

Jon Lansman
Tribune staff member

Friends of Tribune Appeal

All cheques to "Friends of Tribune", c/o Jo Richardson, House of Commons, London SW1.

ALL OUT FOR BERMONDSEY



Photomontage: Cath Tate

WE HOPE the NEC's first steps in Bermondsey will have one positive effect: to provoke the party membership to get down to Bermondsey and fight for the biggest possible vote for Peter Tatchell.

There was no excuse for pulping the Bermondsey party's election addresses. Hundreds of labour movement bodies use Cambridge Heath Press, which offers a cheap, commercial service. No other printer has ever been subjected to such a political test by the NEC.

These events should scotch the argument that, in an election year, the right wing should be allowed to do what it wants so as to preserve party unity.

The NEC could not have produced more havoc had it set out to sabotage the Bermondsey election. Consciously or unconsciously, it has placed our party's election prospects in jeopardy to pursue its battle against the *Militant*. If it had dropped this battle, the events which opened the Bermondsey by-election would never have happened.

We urge our readers to draw the necessary conclusions: the party membership can have no confidence that this leadership will win the general election for us. It is up to us: to defend the party's membership, its policies, and its candidate — Peter Tatchell — with every ounce of energy we possess.

Come to 133 Lower Road.
Weekdays at 7pm
Sunday at 11am
Polling Day — all day long!

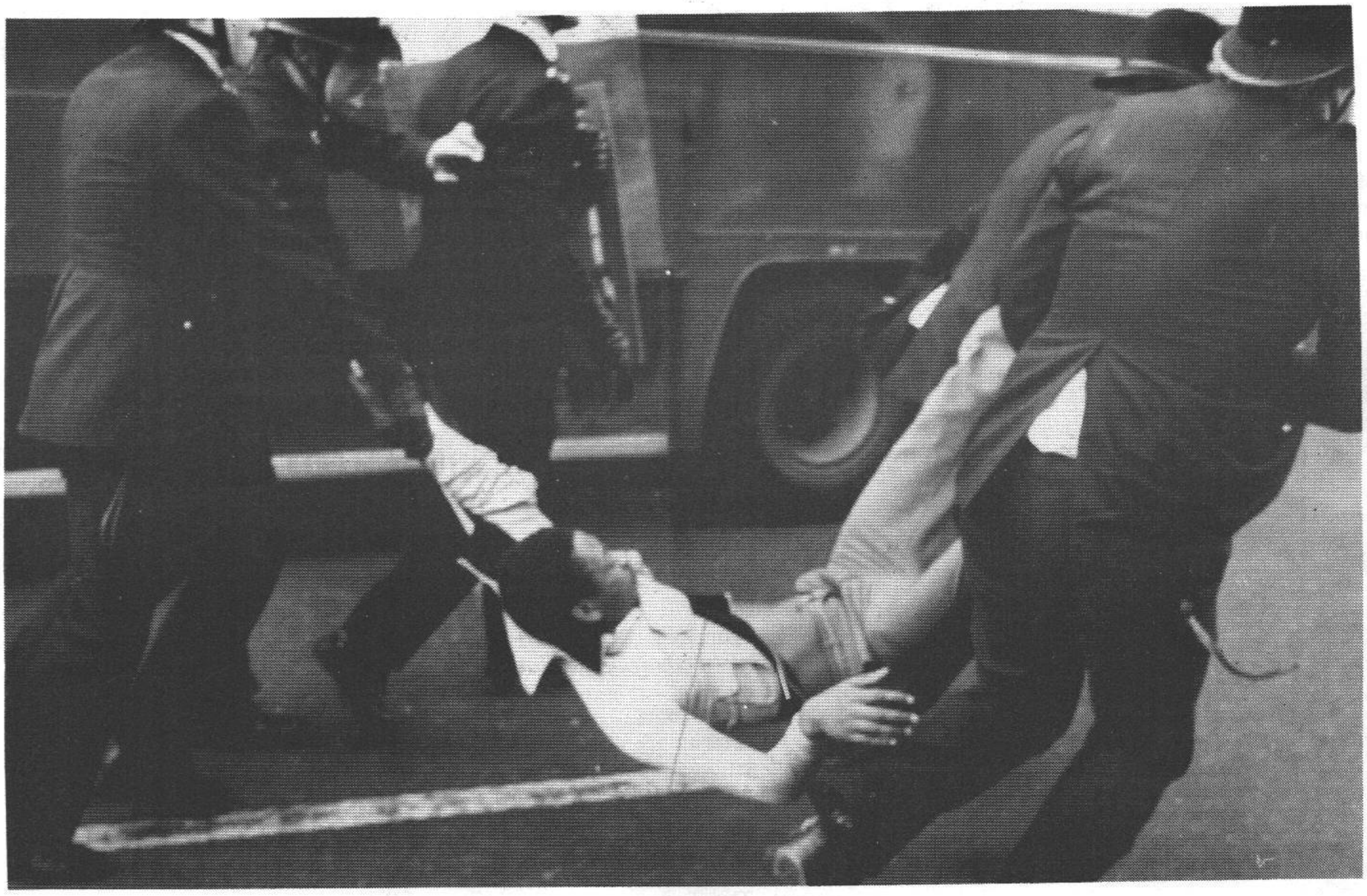


Photo : Keystone Press Agency

Police in action in Brixton.

A CHARTER FOR HARASSMENT

Law and Order was a major plank of the Tory manifesto. They agreed to accept in full the recommendations of the Edmund Davies Committee, and this has lead to substantial increases in both police pay and recruitment. A new regime of detention centres were introduced even though research indicates that these institutions indoctrinate youth into crime, rather than reform.

The Tories are now embarking on their Police and Criminal Evidence Bill which will place draconian new powers into the hands of the police and fundamentally alter the traditional relationship between the police and the community. Even the Law Society has described it as 'a charter for harassment and objectionable in principle' and as a measure the Bill 'tips the balance too far towards the police'. Unfortunately the left has failed to mount any effective campaign of opposition.

THE TORIES' RECORD

Before turning to the provisions of the bill, it is worth looking at the effect of the government's measures on law and order. They have resulted in what has been described as a crisis of policing in London, with the Met's twin problems being inefficiency and unaccountability. According to official statistics, the clear up rate for crime has declined from 21 to 17% and is substantially lower than any other police force in the country. Over two weekends in 1981 law and order totally collapsed in Brixton and elsewhere, the causes being attributed to either oppressive policing over a number of years, or a reflection of the anger and frustrations of a mass unemployment 'no hope' community. Operation Countryman failed to come to grips with corruption in the Met (and indicated that they were obstructed from doing so). Racism in the Met is rife. There is no confidence in the official complaints procedure. A black family from Stoke Newington last year were awarded damages of £50,000 against the Met, for police conduct which was described by a High Court Judge as 'monstrous, wicked and shameful'.

THE CONFAIT CASE

Any system of criminal justice is a balance between the need to ensure that the guilty are detected and deterred whilst the civil liberties of the community and the innocent are protected. The background to the Bill lies in the Confait case. Three youths, one of whom was mentally handicapped, were wrongly convicted of murder and arson on the basis of 'confessions' made to the police. After serving a significant part of their sentences, it was established to the Appeal Court that they could not have committed the offences. A subsequent inquiry by Sir Henry Fisher concluded that the questioning had been 'unfair and oppressive' and in breach of the Judges Rules.

THE POLICE RESPONSE

When a Royal Commission was established on Criminal Procedure, the police used it as an opportunity to demand greater powers. They were fighting criminals with one hand tied behind their backs. In the words of Sir David McNee in his evidence to the Commission: 'many police officers have, early in their careers, learned to use methods bordering on trickery or stealth in their investigations because they were deprived of proper powers by the legislature'.

THE POLICE BILL

The conflicting demands fromt the police and civil liberty groups lead to the Royal Commisstion coming up with a complex list of proposals when they reported in January 1981. On the one hand they recommended extensive powers for the police, whilst they also proposed safeguards to protect the innocent. Overall it was considered that it was the police who had succeeded in getting what they wanted. The Police and Criminal Evidence Bill now tips the balance further in favour of the police. Draconian new powers are created for the police, but many of the safeguards are ignored.

The Bill entitles the police to:

**Arrest any person suspected of committing any offence (however trivial) if the*

Continued on next page

Colin Roach—for a public enquiry

No one knows exactly what happened at Stoke Newington police station on the night of January 12th. A young black man, Colin Roach, was driven there by a friend. He was agitated about something but wouldn't say what. Soon after, he was dead, the police saying that he committed suicide by firing a sawn-off shot-gun into his mouth.

For many black people in Hackney, Colin's death had all the marks of a police job. This is the third time a black person has been found dead at the station in suspicious circumstances.

In March 1971, Aseta Sims dies of what was officially described as alcohol poisoning. She had bruises and a swelling consistent with her having been beaten. Indeed the police doctor would go no further than to say that "It is arguable that some people might die with this level of alcohol in their blood stream."

More recently, Michael Feirreira died at Stoke Newington nick. He had been attacked by racists in the street and brought in to the station bleeding from stab wounds. Yet for about half an hour the police spent their time questioning the friends who had brought Michael in. Finally they called for medical aid for Michael, but by the time that came, he had bled to death.

REPUTATION FOR RACISM

Dalston and Stoke Newington Police Stations have a reputation – of which most of the police seem proud! – for racism. And over the last few years there have been scores of cases of police brutality and racism. Not long ago, a Mr. and Mrs. White were awarded £51,000 damages against the Met after police officers had raided their house, beaten them with truncheons, kicked and racially abused them. At present, Hackney North MP, Ernie Roberts is involved taking up the cases of several black families complaining of harassment.

The press has, of course, presented Colin's death as a straightforward case of suicide – suicide by a "black mugger" not long out of jail, in the case of the Daily Mail. The press has also been happy to present the protests of local people – particularly youth – as more criminal activity.

Hackney Black People's Association recently wrote to Superintendent Moore of "G" Division after police had fed the press with a story that after a protest demonstration there had been looting, including a jewel theft. *"You have produced no evidence to substantiate your manifestly false claim that theft and robbery followed... As far as we are aware, of the 49 people so far arrested in the course of public protest following the death of Colin Roach, not a single person has been charged with theft or robbery..."*

The letter goes on to condemn *"the Police's action in baton charging people on their way home, and the arbitrary arrests which followed".*

The press – the Evening Standard in particular – had a field day with an interview they claimed to have had with Keith Scully, Colin's friend who had driven him to the police station. According to them, Scully said that Roach was carrying a bag when he entered the station (in which a gun could have been concealed), that he had seen Roach standing in the foyer of the station and that Roach had been acting very strangely that night. In an interview with Channel 4, however, Scully repeated none of this.

The campaign on the Colin Roach affair is being conducted by the Roach Family Support Committee, which is backed by the Hackney Black People's Association. The Support Committee has just been voted a grant of £1,500 by the GLC, but the Tories have blocked this.

AN END TO INTIMIDATION

The Support Committee's central demand is "For an independent public enquiry into the death of Colin Roach". To this they have now added a further call "For an end to intimidation and mass arrests".

These demands must be supported unconditionally! In addition there have been demands for the closing of the Stoke Newington Police Station and for the suspension of all the officers pending the report of an independent public enquiry.

Voices have been heard opposing a public inquiry and **counterposing** to it a labour movement and black community enquiry. This is wrong. The labour movemebnt and black community should set up an inquiry right away. The campaign should demand the fullest powers for this inquiry: the right to question the police, to inspect police records and so on.

At the same time we should be demanding a full independent public inquiry – one which includes nominees of the local black community and labour movement. Should the state set up an inquiry staffed by "safe" nominees, the labour movement/black community inquiry should monitor it and produce its own report.

Andrew Hornung

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suspect refuses to give his name and address or if the police officer thinks these details are untrue – a charter for harassment.

**Arrest a person who has a criminal record (simply because he refuses to attend a police station to give his fingerprints – ending the concept of equality before the law.*

**Set up road blocks in an area. The police may take into account the 'pattern of crime in that area' – a recipe for policing by coercion in deprived Inner City areas.*

**Search any premises to look for evidence of more serious crime – even if the occupier is suspected of no offence.*

**Require doctor, social workers or others to produce evidence held on a confidential basis.*

**Detain suspects for up to 96 hours for the sole purpose of questioning them – the common law position is that no person should be required to incriminate themselves and that they have a right to silence.*

These are no more than examples of some of the sweeping powers to stop and search people in the street, to arrest and to detain. Cosmetic changes are made to the system of investigating complaints whereby an independent assessor is to supervise the investigation of complaints. A provision places an obligation on the police to consult and to involve the public in crime prevention. This measure falls far short of even the limited proposals made by Lord Scarman and is an attempt to undermine the campaign in London for complete accountability of the police to the local community.

Law and Order is an issue that the left has sought ot avoid. It is seen as an unpopular public issue on which Labour can only loose. The left tends to concentrate more on the worst excesses of the police and the abuse of their powers, than on peoples' legitimate policing concerns about street crime, burglaries and violence (a particular concern for women and ethnic groups). The Police Bill when ennacted is likely to push a wedge further between the public and the police, and further undermine public confidence in the police. As such public confidence declines the police are likely to be even less effective in detecting and deterring crime.

A SOCIALIST POLICY FOR LAW AND ORDER

I would suggest that the left should not restrict itself to campaigning against the bill and ensure its repeal on the return of a Labour government but should campaign for a positive package aimed at (1) securing the accountability of the police to the community, (2) seeking fundamental changes in the police as the only way to increase public confidence in the police and thereby improve the effectiveness of the police in detecting and detering crime, and (3) protecting the civil liberties of the community.

This package should include

**A democratically elected police authority in London at GLC and Borough levels on the lines outlined in the recent GLC consultative paper.*

**A public prosecution system on the lines of the Procurator Fiscal in Scotland, to take prosecutions out of the hands of the police and to free more officers for beat duties.*

**A completely independent Complaints Procedure.*

**Tape recordings of all interviews at Police Stations.*

**A system of Lay Visitors who attend and inspect police stations.*

**An exclusionary rule of evidence whereby all evidence illegally obtained by the police is inadmissable in criminal proceedings.*

**Racially prejudiced behaviour by police officers to be made a disciplinary offence resulting normally in dismissal.*

Robert Latham
Vice-Chair, Camden Police Committee

HESELTINE GETS THE GREENHAM TREATMENT

Les Tate,
Lambeth Central CLP

On February 7th hundreds of Greenham Women welcomed Defence Secretary Michael Heseltine to Newbury for a Tory meeting in the Town Hall. He got a hot reception. The women blockaded Greenham base in the morning, then descended on Newbury jail to free 60 women who had been arrested breaking through the perimeter fence. The 60 arrested were soon out and all the women then occupied and blockaded Newbury Town Hall. The Tory chair of the local district council was heard to complain of the costs incurred by his council trying to take legal action against the peace campers – all of which increases the penalties on the rates imposed by Michael Heseltine himself before becoming Defence Minister!

The women were brandishing foil snakes in defiance – another symbol they have reclaimed for themselves together with the spider's web.

Inside the base American forces and technicians shop for Budweiser and Michelob beer in dollars, watch piped American television, listen to the stars and stripes played every morning, and until recently the US flag used to fly over the base. British forces and Thames Valley police were also together with them behind the wire. And high-ranking American officers were seen around during the demonstration.

The extent to which the women have got the establishment worried shows in police treatment – which was kid gloves in front of reporters – as well as the Tory threat to spend £1m of government money on anti-CND propaganda. Hopefully our Labour leaders will get the message and not water down the manifesto commitment to unilateralism – as they are threatening to do. In the meantime we can get our local Labour councils to refuse to build the deep shelters that Heseltine is trying to force upon us by law. At a recent meeting in Lambeth the council decided that these deep bunkers were quite useless for 99% of the population and a huge waste of money. They decided to refuse co-operation with the new law and not to allow council officers to do so. Instead Lambeth, and many other councils, are participating in GLC peace year.



Photo: Cath Tate

Gay Labour Party Y. S.

Following the enthusiasm generated by the LABOUR CAMPAIGN FOR GAY RIGHTS fringe meeting, at last year's Blackpool conference, it seemed only natural that a new body, the GAY LABOUR PARTY YOUNG SOCIALISTS, should be set up to raise the issues of gay rights within the party's youth wing.

The immediate focus of their attention will be the forthcoming L.P.Y.S. Conference in Bridlington at the end of March. Feeling is strong within the gay members of the Young Socialists that previous conferences and summer camps have neglected to debate gay issues, and have failed to understand the position of gay people under capitalism. Three resolutions and various amendments have been submitted for consideration by various local groups. There will be a lobby of delegates present, and a fringe meeting is also being arranged. Following the strong support received from many local branches, it is expected that this will be a well attended meeting.

Within the gay community at the moment, there are certain key issues, which have wider implications for the trade union labour movement as a whole.
The forthcoming police bill is a prime example of the present government's oppressive attitude towards working people. Homosexual men and women, who already suffer from both repressive legislation and police harassment, feel that if this bill becomes law the new powers could be used for even more arbitrary victimisation.

Gay Labour Party Young Socialists Meeting Sunday 27th February 6pm at "Gays The Word Bookshop", 66 Marchmont Street, London WC1.
Labour Party members and non-members welcome.

Along with other sections of the population, (women, ethnic minorities, the handicapped etc) gays are particularly subject to unfair treatment at work. With this in mind the G.L.P.Y.S. believe that they must campaign within the trade union movement, for a more progressive attitude among the membership, and a full commitment to the protection of gay workers. The labour movement as a whole must press for legislation to be introduced at the earliest possible moment, banning the dismissal of any worker on the grounds of sexual orientation, and legalising homosexuality within the armed forces and merchant navy.

Sweeping changes must be made to the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which only decriminalised homosexuality among consenting males over the age of twenty-one, with many restrictions. The qualifications imposed are unjust, unnecessary, and do not apply to heterosexuals. We demand that the age of consent be brought into line with that applying to heterosexuals. This is extremely important, since many of our members who are under twenty-one effectively have their sexuality denied, risk legal sanctions, or their partners if over twenty-one face prosecution.

It is obvious that as gays and socialists, our response to the issue outlined above must differ from some other gay activists and liberal apologists to the right of the Labour Party. Clearly socialists, and the labour movement as a whole, have a duty to protect and defend the rights of all minorities, be they based on race or sexual orientation. Failure to take up the issue of gay rights will surely lead to the alienation of many gays, from not only society as a whole, but the labour movement in particular.

BRIAN WEST and GREGORY HAYMAN
Gay Labour Party Young Socialists

MEN : IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

The Street Life Supplement in London Labour Briefing aims to fuse the lessons of the left with the lessons of the women's movement. Capitalism and patriarchy go hand in hand and it is just as important to fight against one as against the other. Over the past ten years there has been a tendency for both fights to go along side by side rather than working together. So we have very deliberately started to put personal articles in a magazine associated with left Labour local councils.

The Street Life Supplement has certainly produced a reaction in the press. For example, the October issue that had several articles by gays, according to the Daily Mail, had 'MPs Shocked by Explicit Sex Pamphlet'. More recently an article in the December issue that talked about children being parented and brought up in a more collective environment than at present was quoted at great length in the Court Circular page of the Daily Telegraph on 21st January with the following comment:

"... These people are, of course, specimens of the small gangs who are trying to take over the Labour Party. They have stolen the once decent and human word 'Labour' and now sprout their fearsome, inhuman jargon in its name.

"London Labour Briefing is full of this kind of ghastly rubbish..."

and so it continues for four paragraphs. The supplement has obviously hit on a raw nerve somewhere. The irony is that articles published in Briefing are considerably less radical than many articles published in other magazines such as Spare Rib which has a circulation countrywide at least ten times that of Briefing. The difference is that Briefing is a magazine that people like council leaders and MPs are also writing in.

Why is it necessary though to bring personal life in to the political arena (apart from giving Daily Telegraph journalists apoplexy)? Politics affects your personal life and in turn your personal life affects politics. For example, women and men with children have their political lives curtailed because they always have to make arrangements for their children when they go out to meetings, etc., so that you end up with an imbalance of childless people in positions of power in public life who are making vital decisions for people who have got children. Creches are all very well and necessary, but I actually want to spend some time with my child so that cuts down other activities.

How many people though find that politics cuts into their personal life even if they do not have children? How many politicos find themselves at meetings most evenings and weekends so that they do not have the time or emotional energy left to concentrate on personal relationships, either to start them or to cope with them when they go wrong? How many people find that when things do go wrong they are in fact *incapable* of sitting down and taking stock of their personal lives so they react by burying themselves ever further into public political activity so they don't have to think about their personal lives (and in anycase public politics is seen by most male politicos as so much more important than their personal lives anyway)?

The left suffers from this. People cannot be truly accountable, democratic, egalitarian and socialist in public if in private they are in relationships that are tyrannical, overbearing and domineering. Unless you expect politicians to be schizophrenic that side of their lives will almost inevitably break out into their public lives. We cannot stop this happening and begin to attack patriarchy until we come out of our isolation, on our own or in couples in private, and talk in public. We are never going to get large numbers of women into politics until we look at and recognise these ways that society expects men to act out their lives in public and expects women to emotionally succour these damn men in private so that women are left with no emotional resources left to break into the male world outside the home.

Briefing held a meeting recently that dealt specifically with personal politics. Many of the political heavyweights, councillors, etc., that usually turn up to Briefing meetings were either not present at all or turned up to give us all a great pile of leaflets and then shoved off to some more 'important' meeting. They are not socialists because they will continue to spend their lives speaking in meetings on behalf of other people in isolation from them.

Reading over the last few paragraphs I am faced with the vision of some sections of the gutter press quoting it wholesale in order to prove that secretly domineering tyrannical people stalk the corridors of left wing County Hall in isolation from other people. The truth of the matter is that *any* politician finds themselves in that position (I only care about the left) because of the structure in which they operate. In fact it is some of the very politicians in County Hall, who are howled at by the gutter press every time they sneeze, who are beginning to question the inhumanity of the structure they are operating in.

Cath Tate
Lambeth Central CLP

Report back from our under-5s correspondant on the conference:—

'That wasn't a conference, that was a creche.'

(Rosemary Tate aged 3)

Extra woman delegate: organise now!

More constituencies than ever sent an extra woman delegate to Blackpool last year. So many, that just before conference Walworth Road started challenging the basis on which constituencies were claiming their extra delegate.

If your party didn't send an extra woman last year NOW is the time to do something with a motion to your GC instructing the Secretary to get it organised.

At present a CLP with 1500 individual or affiliated members qualifies for another woman delegate. There are two ways to establish the number of affiliated women living in a constituency:

1. Either it can be done on the basis of affiliation fees (3p-6p with a minimum £5). Any fee over £5 can be broken down into numbers. So if you have a NUPE branch paying £20, this would represent about 670 members at 3p each, 500 members at 4p each, 400 at 5p or 330 at 6p. Then work out how many are likely to be women and add to your total.
2. The affiliated branch secretary counts the number of women members and divides them up notionally between the constituencies which the branch covers. So if the branch covers 5 constituencies and has 1000 women members the branch secretary would vouch for approximately 200.

This all sounds pretty complicated. Well Jim Mortimer, following lobbying by women at conference, did announce that the NEC would be looking at the rule with a view to simplifying it. We want to make sure that simplifying doesn't mean scrapping the rule altogether. We should take this opportunity to press for the extension of the principle to the trade unions. If you agree send this model resolution to the National Women's Conference (closing date for resolutions 25th February), the NEC and the National Labour Women's Committee:

"Affiliated organisations may send an extra woman delegate or extra women delegates to Annual Conference on the following basis:

— CLPs having 300 or more individual women members may send one second delegate who must be a woman

— Trade unions may add women to their delegation to Annual Conference at the ratio of one extra woman delegate per 200,000 women members. This will not affect the overall vote of the delegation."

Women suffered massive defeats on organisational changes last year. We must start organising now to ensure they are not repeated.

Jane Andrews
For Labour Women's Fightback

Gays and the press

Brian Kennedy,
Larkhall Ward Co-Development Worker,
London Lesbian & Gay Centre

Or, "RED KEN FUNDS GAY I.R.A. MUGGERS PARTY ON THE RATES" (shock, horror)!

There is little doubt that, recently, the popular press has been having a field day with stories of a particularly vindictive kind aimed at lesbians and gay men, having earlier whetted their appetites on Commander Trestrail, the *One in Five* programme etc.

Their methods are reckless, unsophisticated and often just plain nasty, but there has been little effective response so far from either the gay movement, its political allies or any of the "quality" press. Partly this may be due to the overwhelming nature of the onslaught (verging on over-kill), partly because of the reluctance of non-gay society to become involved with a "sensitive issue".

This reluctance on the side of the socialist movement is, in fact, the explanation for the vigour of some of the assaults. The populars are using lesbian and gay stories as a big stick to beat the progressive left and the campaigns it supports. Thus, many of the stories concentrate on GLC funding for gay counselling agencies, feminist publishers, community centres etc. Others attempt to "smear" Peter Tatchell's candidacy or the Greenham Common protest with a "homosexual tag".

Some of the techniques used are familiar shoddy journalism. Selected use of quotation marks, e.g. "a 'befriending and counselling service' for homosexuals" (*Daily Telegraph*) implies that things are not what they seem, not above board. Quotes are clumsily re-directed. Thus, in an article I wrote for *London Labour Briefing* I quoted from a *Gay News* report. This quote was ascribed in the *News of the World* to "the far left"!

Quotes are manufactured. The *Daily Mail* reported Peter Tatchell's view on the same issue as "he thought the aims in it go too far". Tatchell denies saying any such thing. Similarly, the *Mail* used banner headlines of "Foot Upset By Gay Campaigners". In a letter to me from his office in Westminster, I was told:

"I can assure you that Mr Foot had no discussions with, nor was there any reference made to him by either the *News of the World* or the *Daily Mail* or any other newspaper for that matter. What you read was indeed speculation by political journalists and I should advise you not to pay any attention to that kind of report."

Some of the methods used presently are less familiar. Peter Tatchell accused one Fleet Street paper of re-touching a photograph of him, for effect. Jackie Forster of the GLC Women's Committee is disturbed that a reporter taped one of the Lesbian Working Party meetings without declaring she was from the press, completely against NUJ rules.

All in all, the approach is highly objectionable and gay groups and individuals are beginning to take up the issue. Reaction elsewhere is negligible, with the notable exception of the GLC Labour Group and a handful of Labour MPs who weather the media flak. Andrew Lumsden, editor of *Gay News*, sums up the Fleet Street response:

"We've seen sub-judice regulations broken over the Elm Guest House affair, a competitive search for 'gay' material to blacken Channel 4, efforts to prove the Eire Attorney General scandal was a gay one, a hunt for 'gay' material on Tatchell in South London, a welcome to any 'story' on public funding 'wasted' on gays, and the rise, especially among columnists, of the phrase 'lesbian mother' or 'lesbian . . . anything' as a smear, to create a knee-jerk response of laughter/scorn over the word lesbian itself.

"The 'qualities' (dailies and Sundays) have not responded with any serious articles whatever – none – . . . as they would be expected to do if an ethnic minority were under comparable rabble-rousing attack."

Andrew Lumsden suggested, because of these attacks, that he review press coverage in "What the Papers Say". He was told:

a) They'd never thought of having a gay journalist review the press.

b) On reflection, it would be wrong in principle to have a gay journalist do the press when gays were in the news – but would be considered as a possibility when gays *weren't* in the news.

Nothing has happened since (except that Mary Whitehouse has reviewed the press!).

Labour politicians have, in the main, knee-jerked on demand and scattered under the "homosexual" whip wielded by the Fleet Street press barons, further encouraging its regular application, almost to saturation point.

One indication of the way forward came at last year's Labour Party conference, when the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights threw the popular press out of its meeting (no-one should feel under any obligation to read the press with ammunition to be used against themselves) and turned the shock-horror reports around on themselves to provide a campaigning platform.

A second approach is to convince whatever publications are not homophobic to take gay issues seriously and to provide at least a balance for the anti-gay coverage. Encouraging their own gay staff and journalists to cover such issues is one way of getting informed reports. Thirdly, the NUJ code on non-discrimination will soon be a dodo, if the union does not follow through on its commitment. Some monitoring process seems long overdue.

Finally, the issue has wider implications, raised by Tony Benn in "The Case for a Free Press", concerning the seven multinationals or wealthy families who own all the mass circulation newspapers in Britain. It is no coincidence that the two papers not so owned (*Guardian*, *Morning Star*) are the least likely to initiate a homophobic campaign. In the long term, only a free press is capable of being responsive and responsible to underprivileged and minority groups in our society. The rest have shown where their print-presses are based: firmly in the gutter.


NEWS OF THE WORLD
SEPTEMBER 26, 1982 BRITAIN'S BIGGEST SELLING NEWSPAPER No. 7,239 PRICE 25p
GAY ROW ROCKS LABOUR
THE Labour Party was plagued with fresh turmoil yesterday in a row over demands for freedom for homosexuals.
By GORDON LEAK
Daily Mail
Daily Mail, Monday, September 27, 1982
BRIEFING
LABOUR at BLACKPOOL
MPs SHOCKED BY EXPLICIT SEX PAMPHLET
Foot upset by gay campaigners
A STRIDENT campaign to win more freedom and rights for homosexuals is threatening to undermine the respectable image of the Labour Party at Blackpool this week.
By GORDON GRIFFIN Political Editor
The confessions of a transvestite

HOUSING: REHABILITATION OR REDEVELOPMENT

By Angela Birtill & Steven Taylor

Housing is one of the least politicised areas of struggle and yet it remains one of the most central and crucial aspects of our lives. Not only do we all need somewhere to live, but the sexual, racial and class inequalities which pervade our society are almost exactly mirrored in the way in which housing resources are allocated. To the women, lesbians, gays, blacks, ethnic minorities and working classes go the slums; and to the men, straights, whites, middle and upper classes go the adequate and luxury homes.

Over the past two decades, housing has invariably been singled out whenever successive governments have introduced cuts, and apart from special interest groups such



Tenant in Iverson Road, Kilburn

as CHAR, Shelter, and some Tenants' Associations, there has been a minimum of positive responses. In tandem with cuts, there has been a subtle and yet devastating change in central (and by inference local) government housing policy.

SLUM HOUSING

The massive post-war redevelopment programmes have been superceded by area-based improvement programmes aimed, not at demolishing slums and building new homes, but at the rehabilitation of sub-standard or slum housing. These area pro-

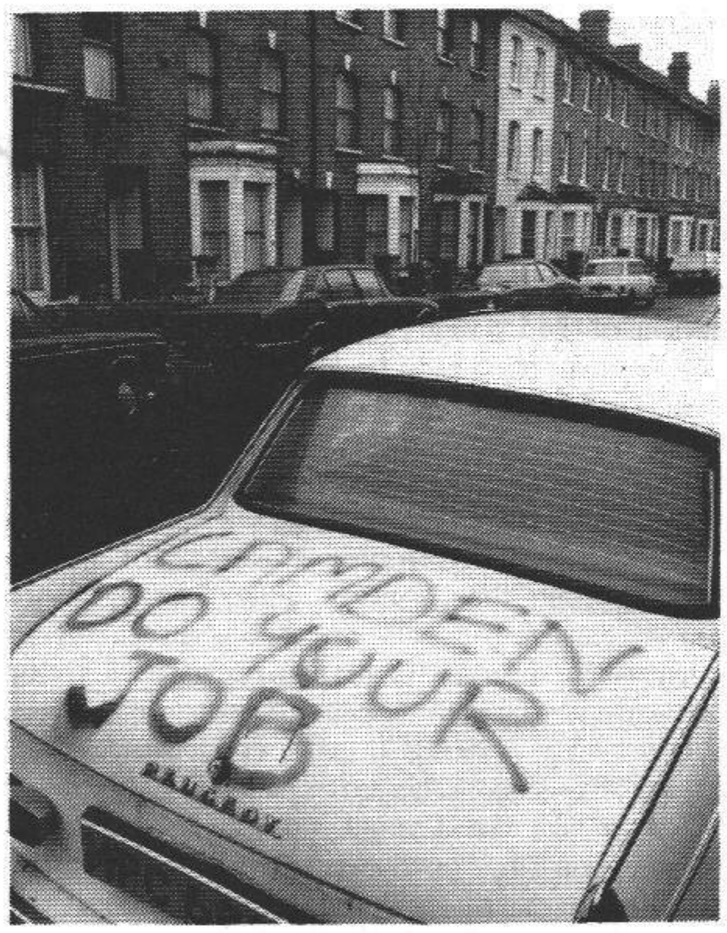


Kilburn Housing Action Areas Consultative Committee picket Geoffrey Finsburgs house.

grammes are smaller in scale and much less expensive than redevelopment and they have formed the basis of all government policy since the early 1960s. They have also been completely unsuccessful.

Additionally, Council house building has given way to Housing Association acquisition and rehabilitation, echoing the trend that first emerged late in the 19th Century, when central government was afraid that state provision would lead to socialism. At the present time, Council house building is virtually at a standstill, and local authorities are referring an unprecedented number of houses to Associations.

The area based policy has also led to a concentration of available resources in those small, geographical areas, thus starving other neighbourhoods which have not been designated as 'special'. The area policy has led to the obvious, and totally incorrect conclusion, that 'if you don't live in a

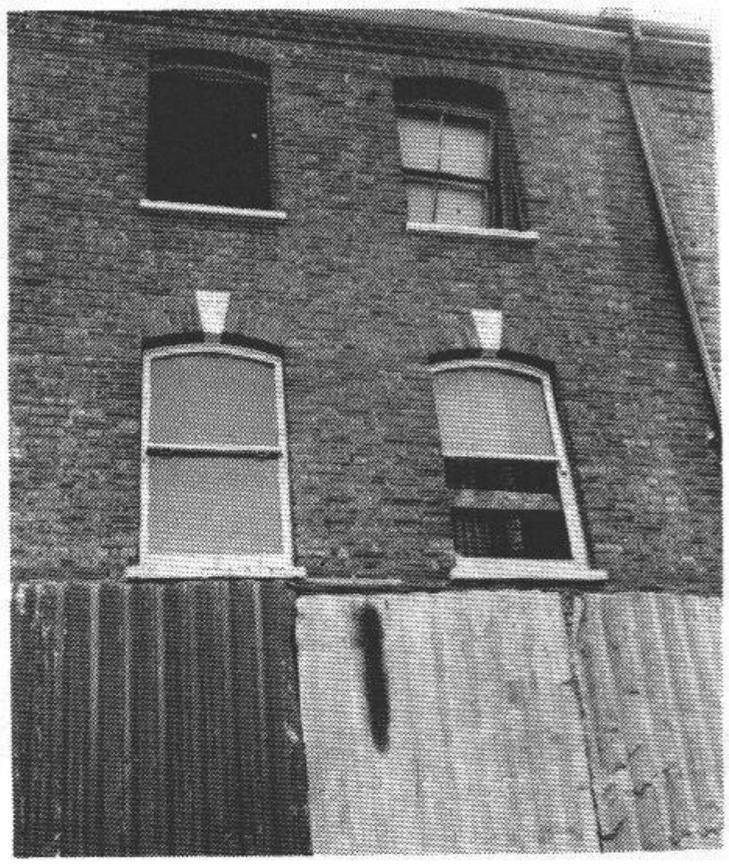


designated area, then you can't possibly be living in a slum'.

NON-EXISTENT OPPOSITION

In the face of these attacks on housing provision, and the pro-Landlord legislation which has been introduced on a massive scale, overtly political opposition has been virtually non-existent. Labour Shadow Ministers have made their usual and totally ineffectual noises, while the principled left both inside and outside the Labour Party has remained virtually silent.

It is not difficult to understand why this has been the case. Private and Council tenants do not have the same political muscle as the Trade Union Movement, and neither do they have the charisma that attaches itself to International Campaigns. Housing is largely an 'invisible' issue, affecting only those who live in slums and not those of us who are fortunate (or rich) enough to live in adequate housing. The



Many properties remain derelict years after a Housing Action Area is declared.

organisation of such people is invariably local to begin with, and it is often difficult to 'link-up' different Tenants' groups and build towards a more national campaign.

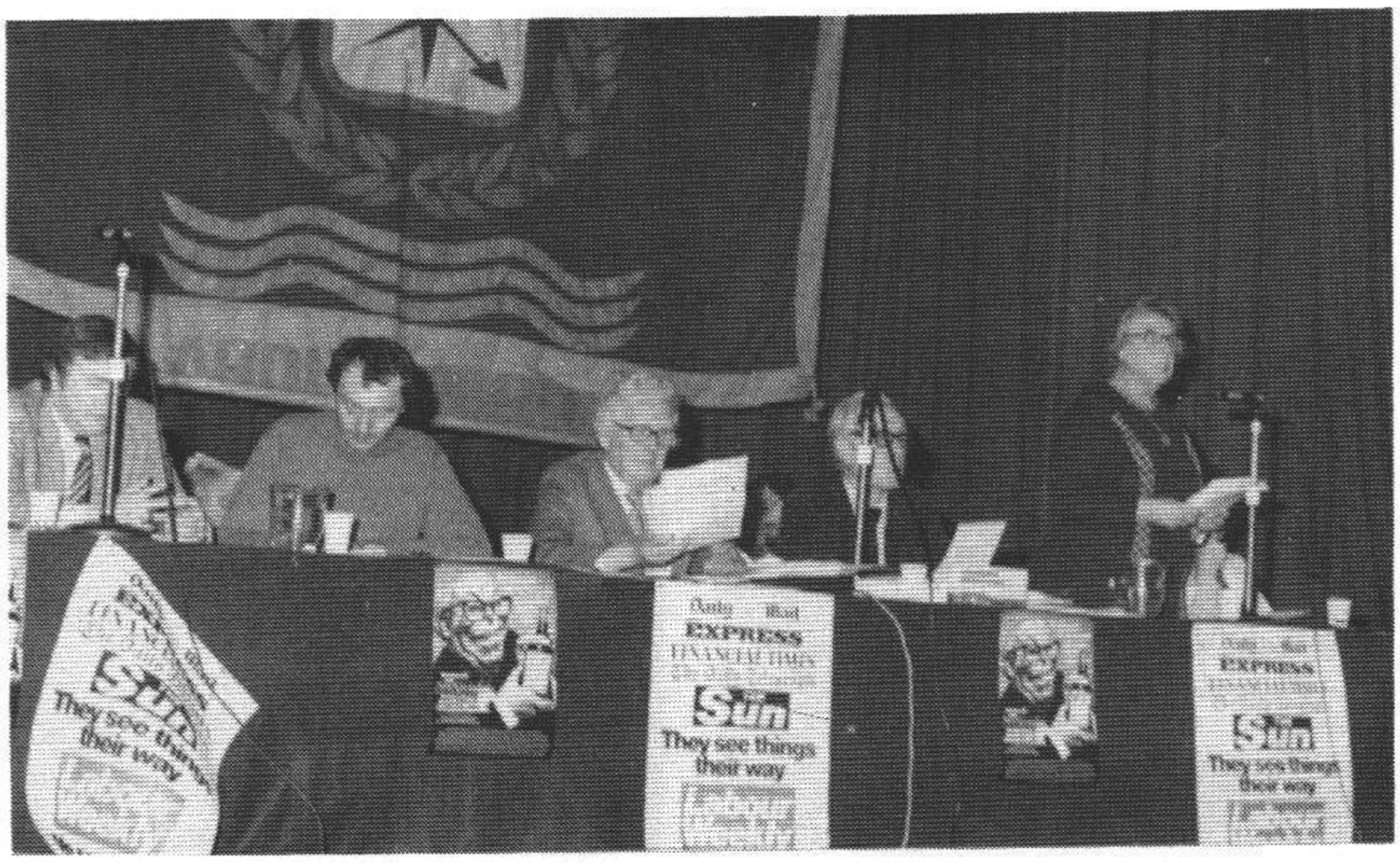
However, we ignore housing as a political issue at our peril. Those who are most subject to the inequalities in our society are often more likely to become involved in housing campaigns, whilst 'fighting shy' of the more esoteric (but equally important) campaigns favoured by the Left in this country. It is these very people who we must win over if we are to achieve a more equal and just society, and it is essential that we pay more attention to where people actually are, rather than where we (theoretically) would wish them to be.

It is also worth pointing out, that housing campaigns can also achieve changes in the policy and practice of local government, and that this achievement is often more binding and strengthening than a score of marches through the City of London on a Sunday afternoon. We are not deriding such marches, but we believe that it is important to put the problems faced by the Left into perspective. We will win when we are believed, and belief is based on practice as well as theory.

'HOUSING ACTION? The myth of area improvement' is published by CDPPEC, Brookside, Seaton Burn, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE13 6EY. Price £1.50 (£1.80 incl p&p).

Angela Birtill is a Labour Councillor representing Kilburn Ward on Camden Council.
Steven Taylor is a member of Kilburn Ward Labour Party and a housing worker.

Photos: Philip Wolmuth



LONDON REGIONAL CONFERENCE PUBLIC MEETING

SAT MARCH 5th 12.30 pm
Camden Council Chamber

London Labour Briefing/Labour Against the Witch-hunt/Labour Steering Committee Against the Witch-hunt.

"Stop the Witch-hunt – Defend Socialist Policies"

SPEAKERS:

Ken Livingstone
Jane Stockton
Reg Race
Bob Labi

FOR A FIGHTING LON

LONDON has more people unemployed than any other region in Britain, has had over £500 million cut from local government and now has the unenviable distinction of having three Authorities which receive virtually no grant from central government: the Greater London Council, Inner London Education Authority and Camden Borough.

Yet during the last year the amount of public campaigning by the Party Regional Executive has been limited due to inertia from some members of the Executive, a chronic lack of money and an incredible system of staff control which means that London's officials are appointed and employed by the National Executive and answerable to the NEC and not to the London Party.

Officials are spending most of their time in 'policing' functions and attending selection meetings rather than organising the campaigning work that is so vital.

During the year the Regional Executive agreed to set up an International Committee to build real links with the labour movement overseas: this proposal met with a flat refusal to cooperate in any way by the General Secretary, George Page. Apparently on the instructions of the National Agent, he was told it was not in the rules of the Party to do this. Despite a delegation of Ted Knight and Richard Balfe asking him exactly what rule prevented this committee being established a golden silence came back, with a stubborn refusal to staff it by George Page. The Committee is in existence anyway and is being staffed by RACS.

In order to overcome this lack of public campaigning the London Party needs more money and proposals are being advanced to increase income and a plan for a major Labour Movement Festival to raise money and attract thousands of Labour supporters is being prepared but needs sponsorship to achieve it.

Since the last Annual Meeting the Committee structure has been radically altered with the establishment of fewer committees and the principle of a detailed report from both the GLC and ILEA Labour Groups being established.

In the coming General Election year it is vital that the Party establish an effective campaign committee which will lead and organise the campaign in London around the issues of unemployment, unilateral disarmament, women's rights and Nationality/Immigration Law. In this pre-election period the constituency representatives on the Executive are meeting representatives of each Constituency in their area to try to plan and coordinate a series of public meetings and rallies on economic policies.

This Regional Conference will be the last before a General Election; it is vital that the new Executive get the message that their job is to organise and lead a campaign and that the NEC do not have the right to obstruct and delay the work for socialism. The National Agent might be more interested in witch hunts than socialism. The Labour Party in London is not.

JEREMY CORBYN

WOMEN WILL GET MORE THAN ONE VOTE!

Nadine Finch
One of the 7 women on the executive.

The Greater London Labour Party Regional Executive is putting an amendment to standing orders forward to the Annual Conference on March 5/6th, which aims to ensure that women have more (though still not 50%) of the representatives on the executive.

The amendment proposes that 8 women be elected from the Greater London Women's Conference (which is the conference that brings together women delegates from trade unions, women's sections and women's councils).

At present, the GLC Labour Group, ILEA, LBA and others also send representatives to the Regional Executive. So this is not some attempt by women to be unaccountable to the GLLP Regional Conference, but an acknowledgement that the Labour Party women's movement is a distinct part of the Greater London Labour Party.

The amendment also sets aside a minimum of 4 places out of 16 in the CLP section of the executive and a minimum of 4 places out of 16 in the Trade Union section of the executive.

As a further safeguard to ensure women are initially nominated and so available to be selected, the amendment proposes that each Constituency Labour Party can nominate up to two people, in which case one of them must be a woman.

With the increasing activity of women in the unions and constituencies and the increasing impact of unemployment, low pay and cuts in social services on women, it is essential that women are present on the executive.

This year, there was one woman in the trade union section, 2 in the co-op section, 2 nominated by the Greater London Women's Advisory Committee and 2 from the CLP section. That is 7 women out of a total membership of 47 members.

When I was proposing this amendment at the executive, one man said that he was worried that if we set aside places for women they would be lucky to get one vote. Prove him wrong.

BRIEFING'S SLATE FOR THE REGIONAL EXECUTIVE

Constituency Section

Area 1.

Angela Brittain	(Brent East)
Jeremy Corbyn	(Hornsey)
Mildred Gordon	(Hendon South)
Narendra Makanji	(Wood Green)

Area 2.

Vidya Anand	(Ilford South)
Nadine Finch	(Islington North)
Conor McAuley	(Newham N.W.)
Keith Veness	(Islington C.)

Area 3.

Tony Banks	(Tooting)
Neil Coleman	(Paddington)
David Nicholas	(Battersea-Putney)
Mike Ward	(Battersea N.)

Area 4.

Ted Knight	(Norwood)
Eddie McParland	(Greenwich)
Nick Bradley	(Deptford)
Russell Proffitt	(Lewisham E.)

Women's Sections

Area 3.

Valerie Wise

We print above Briefing's slate for the London Regional Executive – to be voted for at the Annual Regional Conference on March 5th and 6th.

Briefing's endorsement does not necessarily signify total political agreement. Nor does non-endorsement necessarily reflect our political disagreement or opposition. The slate indicates those whom we consider most suitable for the available places.

For instance, in Area 1, we wish to make it clear that both Laurence Spiegel and John McDonnell – who are not on the slate – have been or are both associated with Briefing. Area 2 gave us the most problems. We have decided this year to back Keith Veness, one of the founders of the Briefing network. To do this we have had to leave Bob Labi off our slate, a particularly difficult decision in view of the current witch-hunt against Militant, of whom he is a leading supporter. A critical factor in our decision was also Bob's failure to suppport on the Executive the struggle for women's rights. In Area 3, we had the opposite problem, where the shortage of really good candidates obliged us to support both Mike Ward and David Nicholas – both of whom have contributed to Briefing, but who are some distance from our general political thrust.

DON LABOUR PARTY!

WOMEN AND THE LABOUR PARTY

Angela Brittain.

One bulging file and a whole year later I still don't really understand exactly what the Executive Committee of the London Labour Party is supposed to do — and I certainly don't feel part of the bureaucratic power structures. As one of the two delegates on the Executive Committee from the Regional Women's Committee I spend once a month looking at a sea of men's faces feeling like a fish out of water.

Looking forward to this year's Regional Labour Party conference — to be held on 5th and 6th of March — I can see it will be dealing with many worthy resolutions from public transport to the register. All of which are very important, especially as we are now beginning to think about the next GLC Manifesto. Very few, however, actually put any pressure on the London Labour Party to do anything to mount a strong campaign, or to develop an identity.

LOST CAUSE

My obvious interest lies with women's issues. A lost cause you may think when I serve on an executive committee made up of 7 women and 48 men. But things are changing! 1981 Annual Conference actually put up the women's reserved places to the enormous total of 4. And on the executive committee we can actually challenge sexist remarks — it's strange no-one ever has.

This year, women's sections and councils can send delegates and resolutions to the annual meeting. The election for the 4 women's places will also take place at the annual meeting. Small concessions and we have a long way to go.

Under 'women's rights' at this year's annual meeting there are resolutions on: prosecution for rape in marriage; committing the NEC to put positive legislation and a women's right to choose in the manifesto; guidelines for equal opportunities in ILEA schools; applauding the GLC women's committee and calling on all Labour councils to set up women's committees; and a resolution deploring Jo Richardson's removal from the Home Policy Committee and the curtailment of the Women's Rights Study Group.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

The majority of the women's resolutions — 9 in all — are on women's representation. These resolutions ask that the Women's Regional Conference elect 8 women to the executive committee and that places be set aside within the constituency and TUC sections on the EC for women. Also that each constituency be allowed to send 2 delegates to the Annual meeting — one of whom must be a woman — and that all working groups to set up with 50% women.

These resolutions express the feeling that before women can really start campaigning for women's rights through the Labour Party then we need women at the power base of that organisation. The resolutions, however, were merely words without amendments to the Constitution of the London Labour Party — and to our utter surprise we managed to get the executive committee to agree to put forward an amendment itself to the Annual meeting. Several of the men probably felt quite safe, however, because they know the NEC has to approve the action.

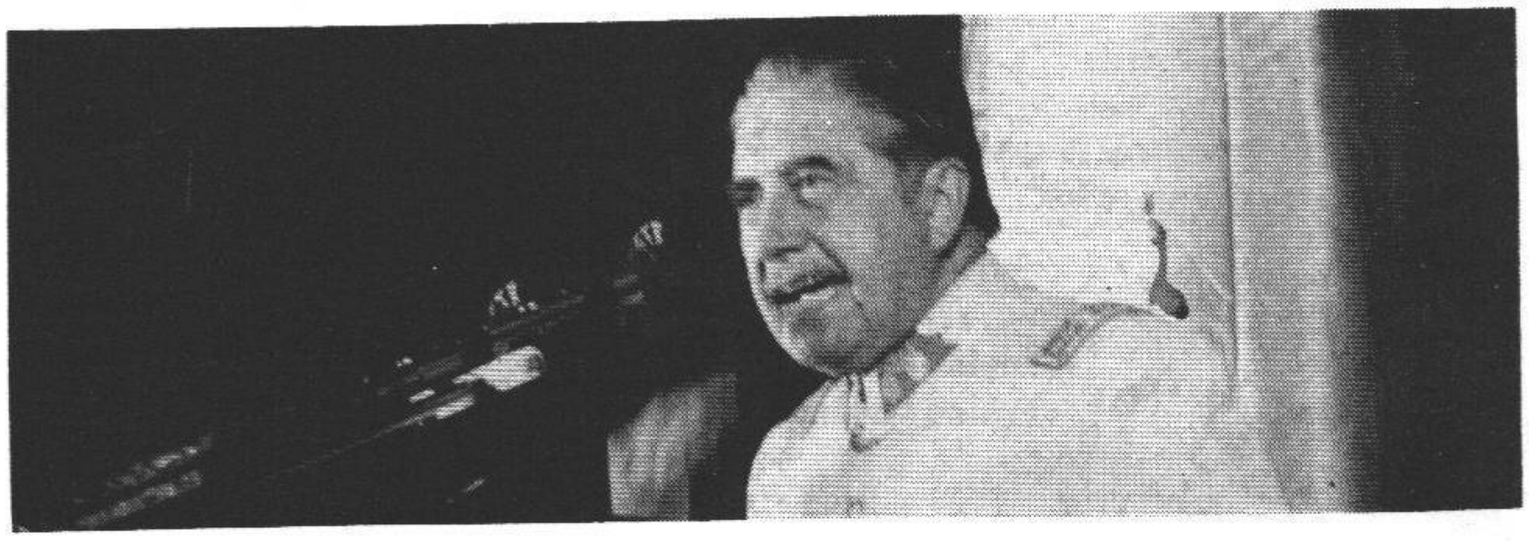
ON OUR WAY

Anyway sisters, we're on our way — a male bastion like the London executive committee can be challenged. And I would encourage any men out there not just to vote for the amendment to the constitution but also to encourage women to stand for the executive.

CHILE
TEN YEARS ON

Quentin Given
National Organiser
Chile Solidarity Campaign

Pinochet's junta, that seemed so secure one year ago, is teetering on the brink of collapse. His traditional supporters in the ruling class are deserting him, disillusioned by a deep recession, a flood of bankruptcies, and now a mammoth foreign debt crisis.



General Pinochet

CRISIS OF MONETARISM

The economic crisis stems from the hard-line monetarist policies that Pinochet has favoured. These have opened the country to the multinational companies, resulting in a flood of luxury imports and the collapse of local manufacturing. Private debts contracted abroad gave Chile the highest per capita debt in the world — $1,500 per person, $17 billion in total. Nationalised industries and natural resources were sold off, and social spending slashed.

The goal was to restructure Chilean society into one of individual consumers, with no popular organisations or solidarity. The result has been to reduce much of the population to economic desperation. Unemployment is probably about 35%, wages are forced down to starvation levels, and homelessness is soaring.

RESISTANCE AND REBELLION

Despite unemployment and the harsh repression, which includes expulsion, detention and torture as routine, and occasionally murder — popular resistance has grown. The last few months have seen numerous co-ordinated demonstrations involving tens of thousands of people in all the major cities, and in many smaller towns. Acts of rebellion, ranging from non-payment of electricity bills, through road-blockings and sabotage, to the bombing of electricity pylons and attacks on security forces, are spreading.

The ruling economic groups, alarmed at the growing unity and combativeness of the labour and popular movements, are now manoeuvring to ditch Pinochet and restore some form of limited democracy which will exclude the Left from political credibility. But once the lid is off, it will be hard to stop the mass movements half-way to democracy.

BRITAIN'S ROLE

Thatcher made her support for Pinochet obvious from the moment she got in to No. 10. Diplomatic contacts, arms supplies, loans etc. were resumed soon after the Tory victory in 1979. This despite the unexplained disappearance of a British subject in Chile, and the torture and imprisonment of others.

But since the Falklands conflict, and Chile's considerable aid to the British war effort, Thatcher has become the butcher's Number 1 ally in the world. We haven't just SOLD arms — we've GIVEN Chile Hawker Hunters and Canberras (the latter for the high-flying reconnaissance of Argentine forces?). Tory trade minister Rees spoke in glowing terms of Chile's politics and (monetarist) economic policies, after a recent visit to Chile (and Paraguay). Britain supported the $900 million IMF loan to Chile last month, and the British delegation to the UN lobbied hard to soften the General Assembly resolution condemning Chile's Human Rights record (which was nonetheless passed). Even Reagan, with his hands tied by Congress, has not been able to supply arms or military aid to Chile.

The Left here then has a special duty to challenge Britain's role. Not only is it a crucial period for the struggle in Chile — it will also help to weaken Thatcher, if her monetarist allies are discredited and defeated.

For many socialists, the military coup in Chile on September 11th 1973 was a personal tragedy, the end of a dream. The horrors that followed left us numb. But the mushrooming of a world-wide solidarity movement kept the spirit of Popular Unity alive, and aided the rebirth of militant trade unions and resistance.

This year, the tenth anniversary of the coup, the Chile Solidarity Campaign will be mounting its biggest ever series of public events, with two major concert tours and a national demonstration on September 11th. We ask all socialists to join us.

The AGM of the Campaign will be held on February 26th in County Hall. For more information contact Chile Solidarity Campaign 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG, tel. 272-4298.

TURKEY PUBLIC MEETING
STOP THE TRIALS

Tony Benn MP will speak at a public meeting organised by the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey (CDDRT) on Saturday 16 April 1983. Tony Benn will be the keynote speaker at the meeting entitled 'STOP THE TRIALS'. It will start at 6.30pm in Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1. There will be speakers from Kurdistan and Turkey.

CDDRT General Secretary Jim Moody said, 'Urgent action is needed to put a stop to political trials in Turkey. By confronting the junta with our accusations we shall be issuing this warning: democratic opinion challenges the validity of all these trials.

'In welcoming Tony Benn and the platform speakers from Kurdistan and Turkey we shall be rebutting the lie that Turkey is of no concern to us in Britain. As fellow NATO members Britain and Turkey have very strong military links. So this underlines the importance of the Peace Association trial and the need to support the 30 accused leaders.

'Everyone who supports the right to have trade unions and political parties must demand them for Turkey. 62 leaders of the most active trade union confederation, DISK, are on trial for their lives. 2000 other DISK activists have cases pending. And as for political parties — they are all banned, too. Several thousands of left parties' members are on trial, with prosecutors demanding execution.

When you come to the Kurds, you see their national identity completely denied by the fascist junta. We refute utterly the junta's charge of "divisiveness" toward the Kurdish nation. We accuse the Evren regime of attempting genocide. Many trials under way are of Kurds who actively reject Great Turk chauvinism. About one half of Turkey's 150,000 political prisoners are Kurds.

'Our meeting on 16 April will draw closer the labour movements in Britain, Kurdistan and Turkey. It will challenge the kind of complacency that can allow Turkey to remain in the Council of Europe. It will confront the military fascist junta with the demand to STOP THE TRIALS. And it will encourage and activate that growing number of democrats who see the need to strengthen the fight against Turkey's junta.'

IRAN

IRANIAN REFUGEES NEED YOUR HELP

Today, few people remain unaware of the rule of repression imposed on Iranian society. Since June 1981, more than 25,000 people have been executed and 60,000 are being held on political charges. Most of the victims have been democrats, socialists and trade unionists who had been active against the Shah's regime and are struggling for democratic rights today.

Any form of independent trade union activity is met with harsh punishment. Armed guards are stationed on factory premises and workers have even been executed on the shop floor.

In January 1982, for example, thousands of workers in the Iran National car assembly plant were fired on by guards. Seven workers died on the spot and hundreds were arrested.

When a person is killed or jailed, his entire family is persecuted by the authorities. They become deprived of the most elementary rights others take for granted. Those with jobs are often automatically dismissed and their children are expelled from school.

While rationing of food and provisions is strictly enforced in the country, the families are denied their ration cards by the authorities. Unable to shop at official prices, they are forced to spend whatever savings they may have to obtain goods at skyhigh prices on the black market. Since many families have lost their breadwinners, the victims' dependents — including wives and children, younger brothers and sisters, and ageing parents — are on the breadline. Hence a large number of families, particularly those of workers arrested or executed, face the threat of starvation.

Moreover, the families live in constant fear of raids on their homes by guards. In many cases, members of the victims' families have themselves been arrested and even murdered.

Under such conditions, thousands of Iranians have been forced either to live in hiding in Iran or to flee the country. Large numbers have taken considerable risks in crossing over difficult terrain on foot and often in severe weather conditions to seek refuge in Turkey and Pakistan, two countries neighbouring Iran. There they are living under harsh conditions, for having left behind all their possessions, they are destitute. They have been in urgent need of helping for a long time in order to survive.

It was for this reason that IRAN AID was formed in Britain by concerned British and Iranian individuals. As a humanitarian body, it aims to raise £100,000 in the next few months and to channel these funds directly to Iranian refugees in Turkey and Pakistan as a priority.

Help from the labour movement is urgently needed for publicising the plight of these Iranian refugees and in raising funds for them.

For speakers from IRAN AID to address your trade union or Labour Party branch meetings contact: IRAN AID, BM Box 2323, London WC1N 3XX.

Donations can be sent directly to: IRAN AID, Acct. No. 23082733, Midland Bank, 90 Baker St., London W1, Britain.

EL SALVADOR

Why Involve the British Labour Movement in El Salvador?

LABOUR MUST BUILD A SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

Ten years ago, millions of people took to the streets to protest against America's war on the workers and peasants of Vietnam.

Today the US government is using the same anti-communist smokescreen to cover bloody suppression of workers and peasants in Central America. Like the people of Vietnam, the people of Central America are struggling for democratic liberties and control over their lives. United States big business rightly feels threatened.

In the front line of this United States aggression are the people of El Salvador, led by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR).

Success in Uncle Sam's 'backyard' for the people of El Salvador will be a massive blow to US efforts to police the world, backed by a mounting armoury of nuclear hardware.

A victory for the people of El Salvador is a victory for the oppressed people worldwide. It is a victory for the millions campaigning against Reagan and Thatcher's missile madness and it is a victory for the idea of solidarity which Norman Tebbit wants to outlaw.

When the people of Vietnam defeated US aggression, they did so with the help of a massive solidarity movement throughout the world.

Today the British labour movement has a particular responsibility to build a solidarity movement with the people of El Salvador. The Tory Government is Reagan's most faithful ally. Britain and the United States were the only governments to give credibility to the phoney El Salvador elections last March by sending observers.

The 1982 Trade Union Congress recognised this responsibility in a resolution which called on the British Government to withhold moral and financial support from the El Salvador regime and called for the Labour Party and trade unions to pursue a policy of self-determination.

This policy needs to be translated into action by trade unions and Labour Party bodies.

The Labour Movement Conference organised by the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign will allow labour movement delegates to discuss just how this can be done.

Get your branch to send a delegate and support the conference.

Trade Unions, Labour Party and LPYS branches are invited to send two delegates.

Information from: El Salvador Solidarity Campaign. 29 Islington Park St. London N1

The El Salvador Solidarity Campaign is sponsored by, among others — Michael Foot, Jo Richardson, Denis Healey, Tony Benn, Judith Hart and has affiliated unions including ACTT, ASLEF, COHSE, FBU, NUM, NUPE, NUSeamen, Sheet Metal Workers, SOGAT, TGWU, USDAW, NGA, CPSA.

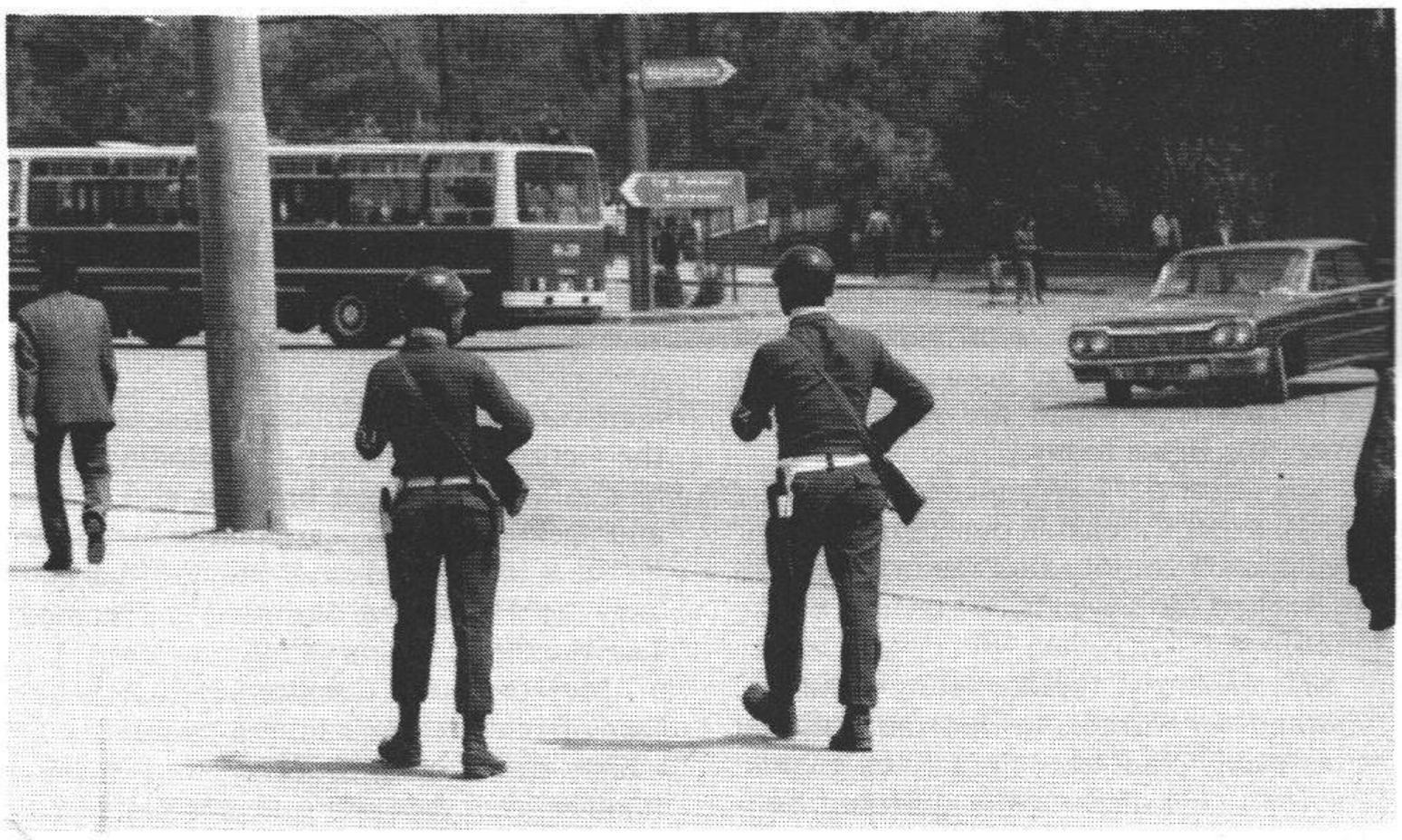
DID YOU KNOW?

General Jarozelski was getting worried about the crisis in Poland so he sent a telegram to Lenin (in heaven) saying 'Lenin, Lenin, there is a counter-revolution afoot, what shall I do?' Lenin sent back a Telemessage by CCCP satellite 'Arm the workers!"

TURKISH MINERS BRAVE TORTURE IN DEFENCE OF TRADE UNIONISM

Andrew Hornung

Last month two exiled Turkish trade union officials, Yugel Top (European representative of the left-wing trade union federation DISK) and Gültekin Bekdemir (General Secretary of the miners union Gesten Mardin) came to London. One of their aims was to put before the TUC and the NUM the facts concerning the trial of 689 people arrested in connection with the occupation of a coal mine in northern Turkey, at Yeni Celtek.



Those facing trial include 510 mineworkers, 105 farmers, 43 small tradesmen, 18 teachers, 9 students, 3 engineers and a lawyer. The authorities simply arrested all those giving any support to the occupation, which had, in the words of one of its leaders "leapt over the walls of the mine" to the poor of the surrounding region.

The arrests were a direct product of the Evren coup of 12th September 1980 – indeed, it was on that very day that the arrests and raids on workers' homes started.

But just as the roots of the coup go back a long way, so do the roots of the struggle of Yeni Celtek: it is the same story enacted at different levels of society.

The miners at Yeni Celtek – a state controlled mine with a minority of shares in private hands – had been organised by the union, Cevher-Is. Cevher-Is collaborated with the employers and fascists, was involved in illegal trading and was staffed by members of Alparslan Türkes' fascist party.

Conditions in the mine were terrible: Turkey stood at the top of the international statistics for deaths by gas poisoning in mines. 70% of the miners suffered from silicosis. Redundancy pay and pension rights came on after 30 years work – and few workers ever lasted that long. Pay was appallingly low, legally stipulated medical check-ups were not provided and fascist attacks took the lives of two workers.

NEW UNION

In 1975 the miners founded a new union there, Yeralti Maden-Is, and in the following year, when the regular two-year pay and conditions negotiations was due, Teralti Maden-Is put forward a list of demands. Naturally, management refused both to agree to the demands and to recognise the new union. They hoped to force a strike, believing that Yeralti Maden-Is would be smashed in the strike.

After a 23 day stoppage, the strike was won and those workers who had not left Cevher-Is to join the new union now did so. One of the keys to victory was the connection the mineworkers had built up with workers, farmers and others in the region. This in turn led to unionisation moves among some of these.

The fascists, having lost their power and their perks, stepped up their attacks. Early in 1977 they hired an assassin to kill Cetin Uygur, the president of the new union. He was hit in the face by a bullet and, along with two other colleagues, was seriously wounded.

Later that year, Yeralti Maden-Is underwent a considerable expansion – not just within coal mining, but within other branches of the mining industry: iron-ore, antimony, copper and chromium.

Once this spread to other forms of mining occurred, the US Embassy became involved, for the Americans have a monopoly of chromium, borax and antimony in Turkey. The exposure of the link between the US Embassy, the state officials and the fascists, however, led to the government being forced to declare two of the Embassy officials personae non gratae.

The victory of Yeralti Maden-Is did more than improve wages and conditions for the miners. It enormously increased the democratic rights of the workers: every 20 workers elected a "shop steward", the stewards formed a council which in turn elected delegates to represent them at the discussions at the union's Ankara offices. In addition three miners sat on a works committee facing three representatives of management; failure to agree at this level meant that the matter was referred to a higher committee in Ankara made up again of three workers representatives and three management (from the State Coal Board). If negotiations at these levels collapsed a strike could be declared legal.

Yeralti Maden-Is officials received no wages – only payment of living expenses. Even when they travelled they stayed not in hotels but in the homes of miners' families.

A second strike in 1978 further improved pay and conditions. But it did more: the mine now had to supply the union with 10 tons of coal a day which Yeralti Made-Is distributed to democratic and union organisations and to poor families. Like the nearby developments in Fatsa, the struggle for self-administration by workers threatened the very existence of the capitalist powers. Widespread developments of this kind could not be tolerated for long.

The National Front government of Demirel – which included the fascist leader Türkes – decided to act. A meeting was held in the Yeni Celtek region at which Türkes (as Vice Prime Minister and Minister of State) drew up plans with the local governor, the local fascist parliamentary candidate and Ali Sefci Erek from the Ministry of Youth and Sport. The object was to break Yeralti Maden-Is.

April 1980 saw the third big strike as, again, the bienniel negotiations broke down. This time the workers occupied the mine so that conditions would not deteriorate so far that it could not be re-opened.

Several attempts were then made to have the strike declared illegal, but each time the procedures were investigated, the investigators were forced to report that the strike was legal. When General Evren went to Fatsa to put down the revolt there, he passed through Yeni Celtek declaring that he soon would deal with matters there.

Before he was able to do that, a considerable degree of self-administration had developed at Yeni Celtek. Coal was mined, sold to nearby villages and factories and, later, to cities a little further afield.

TORTURE

When the crackdown came, it was sudden and merciless. After the arrests came the torture. Many received electric shock treatment: electrodes were fixed to the sexual organs, mouth, tongue, ears and breasts of women. The effects of the shocks were often increased by wrapping the prisoners in wet blankets. Cigarettes were stubbed out on prisoners, prisoners were beaten – some were strapped to chairs for days or even weeks on end while a drop of water repeatedly fell on the same part of the head.

Fake executions and other forms of psychological terror were used. The prisoners were – appropriately – held in an old slaughterhouse. Wives, sisters and daughters were raped by guards in front of their male relatives.

The fate of the Yeni Celtek miners depends partly on the degree of solidarity that can be organised. Just as they leapt the walls of the mine to create a strike solidarity movement, their voices now must leap the walls of their jailhouses to create another solidarity movement.

For information write to Turkey Solidarity Campaign. BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.

WOMEN ARE 'THE UNEMPLOYED' TOO!

Working women are under-represented in positions of influence and authority in the trade union movement at all levels, elected and unelected, and regardless of the actual number of women members in individual unions. Women within unions are fighting to take their rightful position as equals with men inside the organised labour movement, despite the prejudice and conservatism of many trade unionists. But do similar problems face unemployed women? Are there the same traditional barriers inhibiting women from becoming involved in struggles against unemployment?

One level of involvement is the 170 TUC Centres for the unemployed throughout the country. Many centres are limited in the amount of political work they can undertake, but nevertheless they are an important resource for the jobless, providing a base where the unemployed can meet, breaking down the isolation and apathy associated with unemployment. But how responsive are the Centres to the needs of unemployed women? Centres will have to make positive attempts to encourage the participation of women. Making contact with unemployed men is difficult enough, and traditionally done through leafletting the dole, etc — but these methods will simply not reach the majority of unemployed women, many of whom are not even registered as unemployed.

IDEOLOGICAL PRESSURES

Women are constantly faced with ideological pressures designed to keep them in the home. "Women only work for pin money", "Children need their mothers at home with them", etc — and at times of mass unemployment another argument is pushed, that the jobs that are available should go to men. Because many women do not themselves prioritise their right to paid work, and often do not define themselves as unemployed, they will not see the necessity in becoming involved in the fight against unemployment. There are many women who would do paid work if it were available, and if their childcare needs were met, who simply do not see themselves as unemployed. For most women, who effectively have a full time job caring for their children, and doing housework, the stereotype of the daily life of an unemployed person does not fit. Their time is fully taken up with childcare and housework, they're not entitled to any benefit so they do not sign on, and the boredom and isolation associated with unemployment is the background to the lives of many women at home anyway.

The TUC has recognised that centres for the unemployed should take positive steps to encourage the participation of women, stressing the need for childcare provision, organised by both sexes and for recognition of the particular problems of unemployed women. Yet over one third of centres surveyed did not undertake any activities directed at women. Women who have been involved, or tried to become involved, with some centres have voiced fears that the Tory views on the rightful place of women — in the home — are shared to some extent by some of the men involved with unemployed centres. They warn that *"women face not just the Tory attacks but also obstruction from men on the left ... women, be careful that your local Unemployed Peoples Centre isn't just a mis-spelling of Unemployed Mens Centre"*.

GROWING STRENGTH

The TUC's efforts to encourage centres to be aware of the need to involve women should be welcomed, and probably reflect the growing strength of women within the trade union movement. But these efforts are obviously no substitute for demands made on centres at the local level. The experience of positive action in the unions has shown that special measures to involve women can work. The following have been tried, or will be tried, in some centres — i) regular womens days/afternoons with activities aimed at women; ii) providing a weekly pregnancy testing service; iii) womens discussion groups; iv) going out to make contact with women at community centres, mother/toddler groups etc; v) special courses aimed at women (women and health courses have been very successful); vi) having creches for meetings and all centre activities, and providing a service to collect children from school.

The growing interest in local women signing-on campaigns, and the demand for a well-organised womens presence on the 1983 Peoples March for Jobs, could also be co-ordinated through centres for the unemployed.

There is a desperate need for a major offensive by the labour movement against mass unemployment which will unite the employed and the unemployed in action together. But it must be firmly based on the belief that mass unemployment is the result of economic policies pursued by governments, both Tory and Labour, and that the solution lies in the application of socialist policies, not in attempts to wrench from women the few gains that they have made.

Lesley Lee
East Lewisham CLP,
Womens Campaign for Jobs

WELCOME SOCIALIST ACTION!

Alan Freeman: editor (of Socialist Action, not BRIEFING!)

A new newspaper — Socialist Action — is coming out next month.

It comes into a Britain which, perhaps five years ago, many would not have believed possible. A Britain of mass unemployment, growing militarism and economic failure.

It is a Britain whose labour movement is on the defensive. Labour is lagging in the polls, its leadership attacking its policies and membership, its left divided and unsure.

We aim to revive a dormant tradition in the labour movement, in the hope that it can help resolve this crisis and re-unite the left: the tradition of Tom Mann, John Maclean, James Connolly and Sylvia Pankhurst. We see this as a tradition of militant struggle by the oppressed, without concession or compromise to the establishment or its wealthy backers, coupled to an appeal to the labour movement to take on its shoulders the construction of a new society.

We welcome *Briefing* and *Socialist Organiser's* call for a socialist campaign for a Labour Victory. We will seek with them to build a united coalition of Labour Party and trade union bodies, to campaign for a manifesto which includes Labour's socialist policies adopted by conference — above all unilateralism and a rejection of incomes policy — and for an alliance with extraparliamentary action which offers the best prospect for putting these policies into practice.

Socialist Action will be an open paper. It will not be the house journal of a select few. It will be open to contributions from everyone fighting Thatcher and Reagan. We do not see ourselves as a rival to others on the left, but as the partisan of a particular point of view which deserves a voice.

We welcome *Tribune's* new editorial policy under Chris Mullin's editorship, and the invaluable work of *Briefing* and *Labour Herald*. We look forward to collaboration with these papers and have agreed to provide members of *Briefing's* collective with a weekly column.

We differ with the approach which led *Militant* to refuse to join the above papers in calling for the British Fleet to withdraw from the South Atlantic. But this disagreement takes second place to a united defence of their absolute right to remain in the Labour Party.

Of what will we be partisan? Of the interests of working people the world over. We intend to battle against imperialism wherever it surfaces because with Marx we think that 'No nation that enslaves another can ever itself be free'; we believe that the unity of working people is a higher aim than national unity.

We stand beside the liberation movements of the third world as strongly as Solidarnosc, and its movement for workers' self-management which we regard as the best model yet proposed for the type of socialism we should seek to build.

We think that the journal closest to the views we shall be advocating is *Socialist Organiser*, particularly since it amended it previous editorial position on the Falklands war. With patient work and discussion we hope that the efforts of *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Organiser* can be united.

TARGET MAY 22nd

On May 22nd, we should see cheaper fares on London Transport, together with a new completely zonal fare system. And passengers will soon be able to buy combined passes for use on buses and tubes as part of a move to encourage more people to make full use of the transport system. This follows the High Court judges' decision that the GLC's new fares cut plan is legal. This new plan is not a return to "Fares Fair", but is still a big step in the right direction.

TWO SOURCES

It has been achieved by pressure from two sources. Firstly, the efforts of the GLC to prepare a plan for transport in London. Exhaustive efforts at research, consultation, debate and discussion produced a plan for which lower fares are essential. Secondly, and far more importantly, is the constant campaigning pressure exerted by the transport campaigns, community groups and trade unions from the time of the Law Lords infamous decision.

But the battle is not yet won. The Tory Westminster Council is preparing to challenge the entire GLC budget in the courts. The ground for that challenge is now much shakier, but it is still an important hurdle to cross.

If all goes well with the GLC plan, by June London will have a new cheaper and more efficient fare system, bus lanes will be appearing on the streets in noticeable numbers, and the wheelclamp will be helping to keep car commuters out of central London. But these are only the beginning of London's transport needs.

TORY ROAD LOBBY

The road lobby is already planning to undo our work with government plans to abolish the GLC and it has already set guidelines for fares — similar to today's level. That means if they succeed, fares will go up again. Worse still, government road planners will be set loose on London to try a revival of the urban motorway plans they still long for. Only a Labour government can guarantee stability and sanity for transport in London.

Paul Moore
Vice Chair, GLC Transport Committee

TRANSPORT TICKET

"A very reasonable and well thought out plan . . . not at all like the other one" stated the judge in summing up in favour of the GLC in the recent court case which 'legalised' the new Fair Fares scheme.

So the £100m. susbidy was declared OK, whereas £180m subsidy last year was not. Of course there is no fundamental difference between the schemes so one presumes the judges were bowled over by the international joke London 'Transport' and took heed of public opinion.

BEWARE BROMLEY

However the battle is not over, there is still a possibility that Tory boroughs would scheme to bring the courts to attack the GLC's budget (which includes the transport subsidy) when it comes up in April.

LITTLE LOCAL LAKERS

Tory businessmen are trying to bring in privatisation of public transport through a particularly nasty little set up called AMOS which stands for something like Anonymous Minibus Operators Stealing. This scheme was mooted shortly after Mrs Snatcher returned from Hong Kong where she had been admiring such an operation. LT in typical pathetic response are organising a 'neutral enquiry' into the scheme (which probably means business interests will be excellently represented). How pathetic! They should be drumming out this scheme which is just the thin end of a monstrous plan to steal profitable routes for little local Lakers and relegate LT to a kind of relief service for decaying inner city dwellers to travel from dole queue to Job Centre. Those who remember private buses in London recall that they essentially only ran in the rush hours and different employees *physically fought* each other to take passengers from bus stops.



The pedestrian attitude of LT management toward AMOS makes one wonder what they are trying to do. Do they want LT run down and privatised so that they can get more lucrative jobs in new transport enterprises?

PASSENGER COMMITTEE

In this crisis of transport the GLC's Labour Group decision to broaden the membership of London Transport Passenger Committee and make it more effective – and actually do something for passengers is especially welcome. A bit of real passenger feedback could improve LT amazingly.

CAN'T PAY WON'T PAY

Meanwhile the CPWP 18 are still battling on. At the last Court case (Jan 26) a mock trial was held on the steps of the Court and the 18 declared not guilty and honoured with the star of London struggle as fighters for freedom and democracy. A topical placard 'Don't shoot I only know someone who looks like someone HE used to know' was displayed in Court. Various applications for witnesses by Dave Wetzel who brought a stuffed monkey with him, were again turned down but the appli cation to get ex LT boss Sir Peter Masefield along might be repeated. At least one defendant Jan Wallcroft is determined to go to jail rather than pay a penny in fines for the antidemocratic views of 5 unelected Law Lords.

The real case will begin on April 18 at Lambeth Magistrates Court. It'll be fun and relevant – another battle against *all* attacks on public transport. Be there!

Support the CPWP18 defence campaign now, speakers are available. Wandsworth Fare Fight have organised a series of public meetings on transport. Money is needed for the defence fund and print bills (and we thank very much those LPs who have already generously responded). Join the transport ticket!

Piers Corbyn

Money/Information/Speakers:
'Fare Fight (CPWP Fund)', c/o Ernest Rodker, 28 Wandle Road, SW17.
Phones: 626 9698/701 5691/444 5896.

Militant: Don't use the courts!

On Wednesday, February 23rd, the 5 Militant Editorial Board members have been summoned to the NEC to be present at their expulsion from the Party. With all the hallmarks of a medieval witch-hunt, they will be asked to 'disband' an organisation whose existence they have consistently denied. If they did that, the NEC have promised they will relent!

Defence of the rights of these and other Militant comrades is an issue of principle; reneging on that the equivalent of scabbing. But that fact can't and shouldn't stop socialists discussing what tactics are right and wrong in fighting the purge.

Bermondsey CLP defeated the NEC's attack by their own firmness, and the strength of the campaign mobilised in their defence. They never once threatened to use the courts. Militant has adopted a different apporach. Although the judges kicked out their attempt to get an injunction in December, they have said that they will continue to go back to the courts to stop the NEC.

The issue is an important one for socialists, and cannot just be confined to the immediate case. The witch-hunt, unfortunately, will not cease on February 23rd. Should use of the courts be a part of the continuing resistance to that?

I think Militant is making a serious error in taking the Labour Party to court. But it be wrong and indecent to let that error affect our support for Militant against the witch-hunters.

Militant is the weaker side by far in its conflict with the right wing and the trade union barons who back them. The mills of the bureaucratic exclusion process seem set inexorably to grind at least sections of Militant out of existence as a Labour Party force. Militant's resort to the courts is therefore an understandable action by desperate people.

That doesn't stop it being a grievous error and a lapse from socialist principle.

The principle involved is this: we do not set up the courts and the judiciary as the arbiters of the affairs of the labour movement. We must, on the contrary, fight every inch of the way to stop the courts assuming such a role.

Right now the entire labour movement is faced with having to defend itself against the Tory government's attempt to enthrone the courts and the state as the regulators and arbiters of our movement.

Militant's statement justifying its action does not even bother to consider this basic question, and how it interacts with what is now the central political question, of defence of trade union and labour movement rights. Instead it sets up an Aunt Sally and easily knocks it down: socialists should, in general, be willing to use the courts, says Militant.

Of course we should, where it may be to our advantage and if it does no harm to our movement. Only an unusually strict anarchist would disagree. But this has nothing to do with the case.

Militant says that the conference decisions were 'rigged'. Of course it is grossly undemocratic for 80-plus per cent of the CLPs to be steamrollered on the register by the union clock vote. That is why it is quite democratic to *resist* the register.

'Rigged' is the wrong word, though. The trade union bureaucrats are not an outside force but part of the movement: our task is to win the unions as we won the CLPs. We can't, and we should not try to, go to the courts to secure a democratic trade union movement for us.

Nor can John Golding and the NEC right wing be dismissed as the agents of the class enemy in the Labour Party, against whom it is proper to use the courts. They *are* that, in effect – but they are also *of* the movement. We must first defeat them politically in their stronghold – the trade unions. There is no substitute for that, and no political shortcut either. And the logic that one can set up the courts as arbiters of the affairs of the movement because one side in the dispute consists of 'agents of the class enemy' doesn't make much sense. That is not how to fight the agents of the class enemy in the labour movement – or how to help the fight against Tebbit's onslaught.

Practically the argument against Militant's action is that it cannot work except in the short term. It would only work indefinitely if the Labour Party Leadership and the trade unions can be prevented at the next conference from making the rules legally safe for the course they are steering. They can't. Or if they can, it will be because of the rank and file, and not because of the courts.

Militant should fight politically. Strangely, their initial response was to pledge that they would not resist individual expulsions to the point of forcing the NEC to disband parties. They thus encouraged the witch-hunters and deflated the fight against the register. Now they go to court!

The way to fight the witch-hunt is by rank and file resistance to the register and to expulsions, all the way to forcing them to choose either to back off or to take on the CLPs. And we must take the fight into the unions.

Militant should abandon the courts and help us organise this resistance.

John Bloxam.

Editors' Note:

I'm sure a number of Briefing readers will not agree with this. We asked 'Militant' to produce an article, defending the use of legal action, but unfortunately it didn't come in. Any replies to John's article to be limited to 500 words, please.

BROMLEY AGAINST RACISM

Despite all the fine sentiments and past legislative attempts racial discrimination is still endemic in our society. Black people still regularly suffer racial attacks. In my own constituency Black and Asian shopkeepers have had their property attacked with bricks and petrol bombs on several occasions.

The National Front may not be securing the kind of electoral support it did in the early 1970's yet this does not mean that the racist vote is on the wane. Rather it has been transferred to the Tories. The Tory Party has so to speak stolen the racist clothes of the NF. Thatcher's famous statement of the British fear of being swamped by alien cultures may not be as explicit as the statements of Tyndall, Webster et al. but its underlying message is the same: Black people are a problem, therefore immigration must be stopped and black people 'voluntarily' repatriated.

RACIST IDEOLOGY

As socialists we must combat this racist ideology. Opposition should, I feel, be on two levels.

Firstly, **from a moral viewpoint it is plainly wrong that people should be discriminated against because of the colour of their skin or for that matter because of sexual preference, physical handicap or whatever.**

Secondly, **racism needs to be attacked on a political level. As socialists we seek a radical transformation of our present iniquitous system. Any such transformation can only be achieved by the struggles of working people. Racist ideas pose a major threat to such struggles, dividing working people and playing directly into the hands of the capitalist class. The need to combat racism is clear for all socialists. The question is what direction should that fight take.**

SHIFT GROUND OF DEBATE

To my mind one thing is clear. Socialists need to shift the ground on which the debate takes place. Too often attempts to combat racism are merely negative responses to the racists. This must be changed. An old ANL leaflet I recently read fell into a classical trap. Attempting to allay fears it produced figures of the percentage of ethnic minorities in the U.K. However by playing the numbers game this leaflet implicitly accepted the view that black people are a problem, though as yet only a small one. We must reject this approach. Black people are not a problem. It is society's attitude towards them that creates the problem. Our response must be more positive incorporating an educational perspective. Developments such as multi-cultural education must be welcomed as an important step in this direction.

Secondly, when fighting racism, non-blacks in the Labour Party must avoid the pitfall of elitism. It is not up to us to tell black people what is best for them. Ultimately as in all struggles of oppressed people it is only they who can liberate themselves. It is the role of socialists to help provide the framwork for this liberation, offering all necessary support.

In an attempt to combat racism in Bromley, my own GMC has helped initiate the Bromley Against Racism Campaign (BARC) The campaign is as yet only in its formative stages but should get under way early in the New Year. Though initiated in the Labour Party, the campaign is intended to be a broad based one, working on the assumption that the fight against racism like that against nuclear arms can draw on the support of varying political viewpoints. Already local churches and trade unions have indicated their support.

POSITIVE ALTERNATIVE

The principal aim of the campaign is to provide a positive alternative to racist ideology. A support service for victims of racial harrassment is also envisaged. However I do not for one moment underestimate the problems BARC will face. Expressions of support are one thing; effective action another. The fight against racism is an integral part of the struggle for socialism. I hope BARC will make an important contribution. I will report on its progress in a future edition of Briefing.

Hugh Atkinson

Resist London war-plans

Adelaide Leslie
(Wood Green CLP)

From April, local authority workers will be legally compelled to take part in civil defence exercises. If the regulations now before Parliament become law, then local councils will be required to start planning for the unthinkable, a nuclear strike on London.

Councils will have to begin building "control centres" and preparing procedures for mass evacuation. The absurd policy of telling us to paint our windows white, unhinge the kitchen door, prop it up against the living-room wall and crouch there for two weeks, seems to have been abandoned. However, despite forcing local authorities to make plans, the Government has refused to make any extra funding available for the "defences". Even Tory boroughs have protested at the lack of any real planning for protection of the population. What the Government knows very clearly, and what we must be equally clear in our opposition, is that there is no defence to a nuclear strike.

In Haringey, the park gardeners, who are members of NUPE have voted against taking part in any war exercises. All workers in local authorities must do the same, and all councils refuse to implement the regulations. Nuclear-free councils should black any contracts being awarded to firms or sub-contractors engaged in war work. Last month, Southwark Council voted not to employ Tarmac or its subsidiaries, next month let's hope another fifty London Boroughs follow suit. Local Education Authorities must if not already, refuse to allow pro-bomb propaganda into our schools.

LABOUR LEADERSHIP

But all this relies on a Labour leadership, unequivocally in favour of Peace and opposed to the war-drive. The 1982 Annual Conference voted overwhelmingly for unilateral disarmament and the removal of American bases from our soil. Now all the indications are that the Election Campaign Committee wishes to fudge the issue. It is our task as Labour Party activists to stop them from doing this. If there are members of the Labour leadership who cannot stomach such a policy for fear of offending their American friends then they have no place in the Labour Party and some of us will not be sorry to see them go.

Any disarmament anti-war movement must also recognize the crucial role of the trade unions. 12 million workers in this country are organized in unions and we must win them to the position of non-cooperation. Water workers must refuse to lay pipes to nuclear shelters, electricians must refuse to wire them or to work on the wiring systems for missiles, builders must refuse to build silos and so on.

We must be as bloody, bold and resolute in our opposition to the ruling class's planned nuclear holocaust as they are in forging ahead towards it.

In opposition to the rates option

This article is very much a response to Frank Hansen's in the February issue of Briefing, but I would hope that its implications are wider and that the arguments are taken up by other socialists who are actively involved in local government.

Frank's primary position is that the left on Labour-controlled local authorities, should adopt a policy of no cuts in services (including specific Manifesto commitments on growth), and an increase in rates to cover this projected expenditure.

MISTAKEN POLICY

In Camden this policy is even more attractive, given that 60% of income from the rates is derived from the commercial sector. Additionally, the Department of the Environment cannot penalise Camden by cutting the Rate Support Grant. It is already nil. However, I believe that this policy is mistaken, both politically and tactically. I believe that it is mistaken for the following reasons.

Firstly, services (even allowing for projected growth) will remain entirely inadequate to meet the needs and demands of working people. It is unlikely that projected growth will even keep pace with the increase in demand for service provision, and it is certainly a fact that present resources do not, and cannot, constitute a proper defence of working class living standards and conditions. It therefore seems unlikely that working people will feel compelled to defend the present, or projected, level of services in anything more than a piecemeal fashion.

Secondly, even taking into account the numerous plans for decentralisation, working people are profoundly alienated from service-providers, whether these be local Councillors or Council Officers; feeling that the bureaucracy presided over by Labour Councillors is, to varying degrees, inefficient, unaccountable and undemocratic. Again, it seems highly unlikely that working people will rush to the defence of such institutions, especially when their own experience informs them that they are almost entirely unsatisfactory.

LIVING STANDARDS

Thirdly, rate increases *do* effect the living standards of working people. It is not sufficient to state that the commercial sector and those people in receipt of rebates or supplementary benefit form the material bulk of ratepayers; any rate increase will undoubtedly worsen the financial position of those people in whose interest we were elected.

Fourthly, an increase in rates is the policy advocated and adopted by several local authorities, Camden amongst them, prior to the May '82 elections. Although Labour did retain its support in Camden, it is certainly true that the level of rate increase alienated working people rather than won them over to socialism. I would argue that the main reason for Labour's continuing support was simply, that in the majority of cases, working people had no viable alternative. It was primarily a question of Tory or Alliance cuts, or Labour rate increaases. That it was a choice between the lesser of two evils should not be used as a defence of socialism. And indeed, the extent to which rate increases were seen as important can be judged by the attempts, on the part of virtually all Labour-controlled authorities, to keep rate increases to a minimum immediately prior to the May elections.

We need to win working people over to socialism, and we will only succeed in doing this if we put into practice the basic tenets on which we were elected in May. This must include the specific committment to put ourselves, our position as Councillors, and our newly-discovered bureaucracies, on the line in defence of working people.

The policy I would propose is as follows:

1. A basic and primary position by left Councillors of no cuts and no rate increases.
2. Guage the support which this position has won both within the Labour Party and the broader labour/tenants' movement, and then make a principled decision between either:
   a. Out and out conflict between ourselves and central government.
   or —
   b. A strategic retreat to a position of no cuts and rate increases.

To adopt this latter position immediately, as Frank proposes, would be neither perceived nor believed as anything to do with the radical socialist alternative we promised the electorate in May. It would be seen by working people as, pure and simply, a cop-out on our part.

Even if we lost the political battle to win support for a policy of no cuts and no rate increases, it would at the very least, make our political intent public. I also believe that it would gain, for

ORGANISE A SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN FOR A LABOUR VICTORY

February 5th's London conference of Briefing groups has called for a national meeting to discuss how to campaign for a Labour victory, in the light of growing speculation that Labour's manifesto will not include unilateralism, and the NEC's continued attempts to expel socialists from the party. A first planning meeting is scheduled for Monday evening, 7th March in the House of Commons. What reasoning lay behind our decision?

How do we campaign for a Labour victory? The movement for democratic reform and accountability, led largely by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, was born of the Wilson/Callaghan government.

On one point the Left was agreed: the labour movement could not afford another labour government like the last one. Reforms were needed to ensure that future labour governments carried out conference policies, rather than launch the sort of assault on the living standards and social services carried through by Wilson, Callaghan and Healey.

Thatcher's election was largely the result of the last Labour government's failure to carry through its pledge of 'a fundamental shift in wealth and power to working people.'



Today the debate has turned the full circle. Michael Foot is already fudging the decisions of the 1982 party conference for unequivocal unilateral disarmament.

It is more likely than not that this policy will be omitted from the document that is to form the basis for labour's general election manifesto. Peter Shore is talking of a new 'Social Contract' and Incomes Policy — which wrecked labour's support in the trade unions last time around.

To round it all off some sections of the Party are talking of possible coalition with the SDP/Liberal Alliance.

Taken together all of these moves are an attempt to force the labour movement to accept a re-run of the Wilson/Callaghan formula for how to win a labour government. This formula has been tried and proven to be a total failure. In order to carry it through, or its logical complement — a coalition with the Alliance — a deep going purge of the left-wing of the labour movement would be necessary.

In the immediate future this policy spells electoral disaster for the Party. It means watering down Labour's most popular policy which is for full nuclear disarmament by Britain. It means deepening the divisions in the Party rather than uniting in the real fight against the Tories and the SDP/-Alliance. It means breaking links with those trade unionists fighting today against the Tories' pay policy, for example for the water workers. It means driving a wedge between the Labour Party and the hundreds of thousands of activists in CND.

Everything that the left-wing of the unions and party have fought for four years is at stake in 1983.

The Left itself is deeply divided. This was the lesson of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy AGM. Those who argue that in the face of the witch-hunt and the retreat from socialist policies we should bury our heads in the sand are paving the road to disaster. The opposite is necessary.

The Left must put its house in order and launch a socialist campaign for a Labour Victory. The first step in this must be a campiagn for the manifesto to be based on full implementation of conference decisions, in particular, unilateralism. But whatever the decisions on the manifesto the voice of the Left must be heard in the run-up to the election. A socialist campaign for a Labour Victory can maintain and extend the alliance between the Labour Party and the CND and Greenham Common supporters, militant trade unionists, women, black people, youth and the unemployed. It is the next necessary step: we hope the planning meeting on 7th March will help the left to take it.

The following statement is the suggested basis for a national meeting of CLPs, trade unions and campaigning groups in the Labour Party:

'The current speculation about the contents of Labour's Manifesto into the forthcoming general election is of vital concern to all Labour Party and trade union members. The issue involved is how we campaign for a Labour Victory in the general election. We are of the view that the most effective way to campaign for a Labour Victory is to end all action against groups within the Labour Party and unite around a Manifesto which is clearly based on Labour Party conference decisions and in particular Labour's commitment to full British unilateral nuclear disarmament.'

Planning Meeting

Monday March 7
House of Commons

(Room booked in the name of Ernie Roberts, MP)

Called by London Labour Briefing

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the left, a greater degree of support from Trade Unionists and working people than we might expect at present.

FINAL OPTION

A policy of no cuts and rate increases *is only viable as a final option,* once we have fought and (perhaps) lost the political battle to win people behind a position of no cuts and no rate increases. Just as the Fares Fair campaign fought against the increases in principle, so should socialist Councillors fight against rate increases in principle. At the very least, the left must openly identify itself with this position, not as a radical 'posture', but as a statement of political intent.

Additionally, to adopt this position, would distance the left from those people on the right and centre of our party, who are quite willing to inflict a decrease in living standards (or conditions, in the case of cuts) on working people. The immediate past, especially in London, is littered with the studied regret of the right and centre's imposed rate increases and cuts. To identify ourselves with this position, is to ally ourselves with all that has gone before, and all that we (I hope) rejected in the run-up to the May '82 elections. It is to sanction the very Councils and Councillors whom we partially displaced and is completely unacceptable.

UNTENABLE POSITION

To increase rates in order to perpetuate (or marginally increase) services is not enough, especially when those services are totally inadequate. To pursue this policy would place us in a completely untenable position, having to justify cuts in living standards on the one hand, whilst arguing for more resources on the other. I do not believe that this delicate juggling act would be recognised by working people as socialist.

Steven Taylor,
(Hampstead C.L.P.).

NEXT EDITORIAL BOARD MEETING
Tuesday February 22nd at 6.30 pm at County Hall
Next issue out: Thursday 17th March
Deadline for articles: Monday 7th March

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.



Dear Labour Briefing,
I noticed in your November issue an account of Maggie Norton of the Esme Baker case, where a Black woman was found not guilty (which in effect meant that the police were guilty of sexual assault).

That account gives no indication that the case was won
1. Because of the involvement of the Women's Movement, in particular, Women Against Rape and Black Women for Wages for Housework;
2. Because of the picket line and publicity that they organised; and
3. Because Madge Crute, one of your own members, was determined to get this involvement and this organising, and called me for that purpose as soon as Esme decided to fight the case fully; that is, to hold nothing back about her humiliations by the police. Madge obviously didn't get the support Esme needed from the Labour Party.

It is important that your readers know this for three reasons.
1. History, even very recent history, is always rewritten to exclude those who actually made it. In this case, the result is to hide the activity of women in fighting the first case against the police on the grounds of their sexual misbehaviour. Those of us who were active in the sixties remember the number of times that Black women were pulled in after demonstrations and forced to strip before male police. I don't remember one case every being publicly raised, for many reasons, not the least of which was that there was no Women's Movement.
2. Another result of leaving out women's activity is that readers will get the impression that one need not organise anything in order to get justice from magistrates. You wouldn't want to give that impression, would you?
3. Finally, we expect Labour Briefing to defend, and in fact expose, the need for extra-parliamentary action — such as this picket line of Black and white women (and some men too) in defence of a Black mother and her two sons. Unless such cases are reported, the term extra-parliamentary will never be understood, as a living necessity which can strengthen the parliamentary hand of those that want to see justice.

At a recent conference of Housewives in Dialogue (Bringing it all back home: Black and immigrant women speak out and claim our rights), 350 women gave Esme and Madge a standing ovation for their fight and their victory, which is of course our victory too.

We appeal especially to the women in Labour Briefing and among its readers to keep their eyes open and prevent such ripoff of women's activities and victories from recurring.

Power to the Sisters,
Selma James

Dear Sir/Madam,
I am writing to you as a subscriber and of course as secretary of the 'May Day' committee, which is affiliated to the local Labour Party (Bridge branch, Wanstead & Woodford.

On Sunday May 1 1983 we are holding a 'May Day Fete' which will hopefully raise money for the Labour Party, our committee, and indeed many local charities. My reason for writing to you is in the hope that your publication may be able to help me obtain a 'socialist singer' or folk singers to play at the fete at random times and sites as an added attraction for members of the public.

The fete itself is on a vast housing estate (council) in the London Borough of Redbridge at Broadmead Road, Woodford Green, and will be an all day affair.

If you will consider publicising my venture I, and I'm sure many people, would be more than grateful. I feel that you may contact through an entry in London Labour Briefing just the person or persons that would like to help in the way I envisage.
Yours fraternally,
Roger A. Sell

Dear comrade,
On behalf of MWASA, I wish to thank "London Briefing" for helping to publish the plight of media workers in South Africa through the article: "Black media workers resist".

We also appreciate its gesture of solidarity of appealing for funds for MWASA. It is reassuring for us to know that we are not alone in our battle.

I have sent copies of our fourth issue of "Kwasa" to you in October. Please inform me whether you have received it. Enclosed are copies of the fifth issue published this year.

If possible, we would appreciate it if "London Briefing" can be sent to us regularly. Other publications of interest to us would also be welcome.

You are free to publish articles from "Kwasa" in "London Briefing".

Our bank account number, should you receive any donations for your MWASA Support Fund, is 090 303 5 (Standard Bank, Jeppe Branch, Johannesburg).

Once again, thank you for support and good will.
Yours most sincerely,
Tyrone August
(Assistant National secretary and Kwasa Co-ordinator)

Dear Editor,

Re: Article: Council Leader Puts Mass Resignation on Agenda

I refer to the above article in your February issue, in which Phillippa Jones puts a question to Councillor Peter Kahn on the corruption in the Hackney D.L.O.

I take great exception to the fact that my name was mentioned in the reply to the question in which a very clear inference was given that I was in some way directly, or indirectly, connected with possible illegal practices and corruption in the dealings of the D.L.O. during the period in which I was a Hackney Councillor.

I am asking you, as Editor, to publish a suitable apology in your next issue and the confirmation that there was no intention by your publication of any deliberate suggestion that I was involved in any way in any dishonest practices.
Yours faithfully,
G. Ross
GLC Member

Editor's Note: We confirm that there was no intention by Briefing of any deliberate suggestion that Gerry Ross was involved in any way in dishonest practice. In view of the seriousness of his letter, we contacted Peter Kahn, whose response we print.

Dear Comrades,
With references to your interview last month, I am writing to correct what might be a false impression. I most certainly did not intend to imply that Councillor Gerry Ross (GLC, Hackney North) was personally involved in any irregularities or corruption in Hackney DLO while he was on the Council.

What I was saying was two fold:

Firstly, I accused Councillor Ross of being a mason. According to my records he was initiated into the Finsbury Lodge (No. 3901) on 4th February 1972. I would be surprised if he denied that!

Secondly, and quite separately, exposing corruption and irregularities has been extremely difficult because of the involvement of police, contractors, and Council officers in the masons. The masons swear an oath of loyalty to each other and aim to help one another in every way possible. Obviously, then, it is recognised that when one of them is in trouble, his chums will rally round.

They are a sinister, secret and sexist organisation, and one has only to look at the way they reacted to the exposure of their corruption in Italy (not to mention Vatican banking circles and Blackfriars Bridge), to see what a dangerous stranglehold these people can exert.

In Newham, the lodge roll (No. 8627) reads like a local Who's Who, and as the BBC Checkpoint programme showed, their activities were/are not confined solely to small fiddles!

It is my belief (and I understand that the GLC Labour Group has now taken this position), that membership of the masons is incompatible with membership of the Labour Party. I call on Councillor Ross either to publicly resign from the masons, or to resign from the Labour Party and the GLC.

I am sure that we all look forward with interest to hearing his reply.
Yours in socialism,
Peter Kahn
Deputy Leader, Hackney Council

P.S. I am an avid collector of masonobillia, and would welcome any information, letters, lists, photos, certificates, etc. that other comrades might have.

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OUR RADIO would like to hear from anyone who wants to contribute, contact: BM Box 103FM, London WC1 3XX, stating which programme you want to help.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Many readers of **Briefing** *will be familiar with the pressures and commitments of being a "political activist" – out every night at one meeting or another. But what about the people "left behind" at home – often women and children? What about our personal lives? Can we really be acting in the interests of those we purport to represent when we are often distanced from the responsibilities of family life and childcare? Is it possible to break down the separation between our political lives and personal lives? These are some of the questions raised by the following articles – questions which we must begin to find answers to if we really do believe* **"The personal is political"**

Is politics compatible with life?

A year ago I had a sort of revolutionary optimism that I could be a councillor, carry on working part-time and still adequately care and spend some time with my two daughters.

I believed I would get enough support to be able to go to as many meetings as anybody else (and thereby operate as if I didn't have children). This of course has not turned out to be true and I wish I had listened a bit more closely to those people – men and women – who asked me how I could possibly consider going on the council with two young children and all the responsibilities that that in itself entails. My reply was that that was part of the reason I thought it was important to be on the council to try to reflect and represent the views of ordinary women with children – who are so under-represented at this level. The reason why we are so under-represented has become even more crystal clear to me! For all of us on the council there are just so many demands and expectations placed on us and together with child-care responsibilities it all becomes totally overwhelming.

I APPEAR AN UNCARING MOTHER

I think in *theory* it should be possible to be a woman with childcare responsibilities and be on the council, but whilst those children have only me to depend on it seems that I appear an uncaring, unloving mother. My daughters are eight and five and whilst they are used to being cared for by a few consistent friends there is no-one else that shares equally with me in the sort of day-to-day responsibility for them, or shares the emotional dependence they have on their father or I. Since I now no longer live with their father (my choice) this has naturally put more pressure and demands on me. The conclusion then is that we must have a sufficiently strong shared responsibility for our children if as mothers we wish to step out into the public world of politics. And in this way, we can begin to challenge and change what most people take the word politics to mean – we have to redetermine the meaning of the word to include what happens in our personal/political lives which is what actually prevents us from participating in a wider public life in the first place.

The problem for me was not making that foundation for collective responsibility for my daughters – by people they could take love from – strong enough in advance of becoming a councillor. Here, though, I must acknowledge the level of support I do get from several close sisters and comrades.

However, having said that, I think for all of us, men and women, if we're *honest*, we share a common problem in that "politics" still takes us away from our friends and family, particularly children, and often tends to separate us from those very people we think we are representative of. I'm sure a lot of people would agree with this, but I can't help seeing this as also part of a political and structural problem that needs political solutions.

CHANGING OUR LIVES

This is where I think feminism has helped clarify my thoughts. One of the main tenets of feminism is that the personal is political and that part of the struggle is changing the way we live our personal lives but *not* at the expense of

WOMEN—TAKE THE POWER!

How I lost my husband to politics

Last Wednesday was my birthday and my first ante-natal class (expectant fathers welcome). It was also the evening of the council meeting which, since Lambeth is a hung council, my husband had to attend. However sincere his intention to participate equally in caring for our child once it is born, I fear that, inevitably, each evening there will be a meeting where his attendance is just that bit more important than staying at home to look after his child.

When people ask me what it is like being married to a councillor, I truthfully say that it is exactly like being single. I currently enjoy all the advantages and have to consult anyone before I decide to disadvantages of the single state. I never go to the cinema or out with friends. I can always have whatever I like to eat in the evening when I want it and watch whatever programme I like on the television. On the other hand, I often have to go to things on my own when I would really rather have someone to go with and there is never anyone there to listen to me, make a fuss or cook me a meal when I have had a bad day at work, am feeling depressed or have a cold. The position must be much worse for the wives of older or more traditionally minded councillors. At least Mike does not expect me to cook, wash and iron for him in return for his occasional presence. Nor are the responsibilities very great. Apart from attending the odd social event, my only duty is to answer the phone.

RARELY IN

Constituents and members of local voluntary organisations are invariably telepathic, know when he is out and make sure to phone then. This is understandable as he is so rarely in and I get to know some of these people I never see, quite well. My assertions that I do not know where he is or when he will be in are treated with evident disbelief. How can a wife lose track of the whereabouts of her husband? Sometimes it is assumed that I act as a secretary and can make appointments for him or that I am privy to the same information and can give advice. Then I can symphathise with vicars' wives!

So, on the basis of this rather flippant description, all in all, being a councillor's wife is not too bad. To be honest, I think I would find it hard now to adjust to a 'normal' marriage and do everything as a couple. Also, to some extent I have chosen my lot. Politics is not my main interest outside work and I prefer to pursue my own leisure interests rather than to participate more actively in the affairs of my local party which, even if it did not mean I saw more of Mike, might lead me to sympathise more with the demands political activity makes upon his time.

A SINGLE PARENT

However, assuming my pregnancy has a successful outcome, the prospect of becoming a single parent is much less enticing. What worries me most is that it is so easy for men to opt out of fatherhood or to imagine that by changing the odd nappy they are doing their bit. Women councillors with children, unless they have very willing partners, have to

Continued on next page

Is politics compatible with life?

(Continued from previous page)



My daughters: Rosanna and Olivia Knight. "If our house was as big as the world, we could all live together." Conversation overheard in April 1980, from Rosie to Olivia.

our children – not to deny us the right to have children if we want because of our political commitment to changing the world!

One of the biggest pressures for me to think of giving up being a councillor is the effect I and everyone thinks it's having on my youngest daughter. It's very difficult to feel confident at a meeting when you've left behind a child pleading for you not to go to yet another meeting. This pressure was not quite as bad when their father lived with us, but I was not prepared to live with him just for my child's sake.

I do think it is important for the children that they *can* retain their relationship with their father, but this relationship has a validity of its own and should not depend on the father and I having to live in the same house. Hopefully, now that we both live separately but near to each other, we can remain part of the same kinship structure and pop in and out of each other's places so that the children do not feel any loss.

SUPPORTIVE STRUCTURES

As a feminist and a mother, I don't want to give up my commitment to children. Instead we need to integrate this commitment into the wider political struggle, but until, as feminists, we can develop the supportive structures for our children, our involvement will seem by necessity (and not by choice) to be at the expense of our children. (That is the point where I feel I am at the moment and I'm not sure what to do.)

Ann Bliss

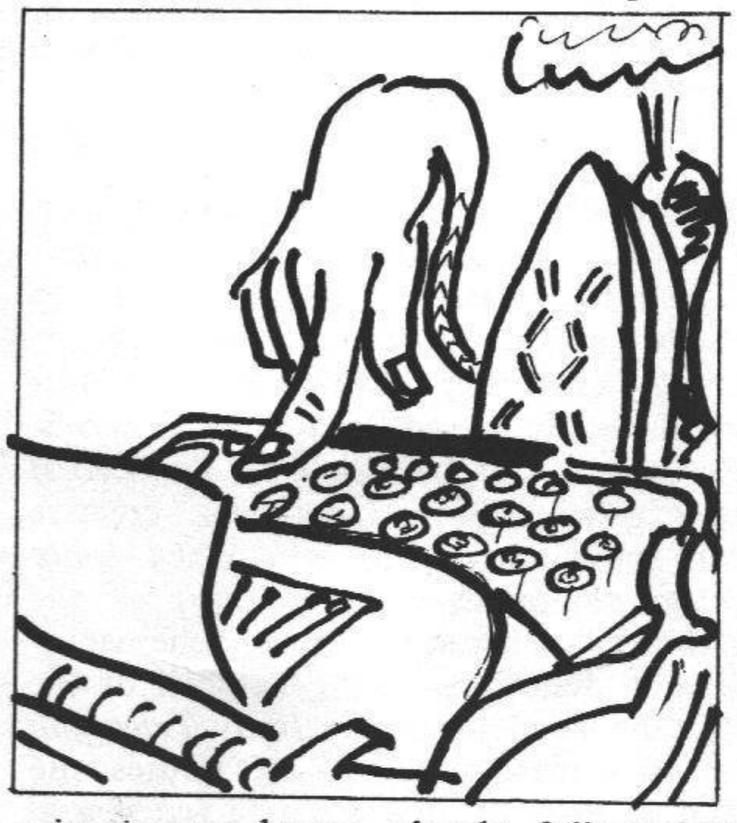
The typewriter versus the iron

Here we go again, another evening watching the telly alone. Kids washed and polished and in bed, and the evening stretches on in loneliness!

Not the cry of a single parent, but the lament of an activist's wife! In this last fortnight alone he's been out/involved nine evenings out of fourteen; granted on one of these evenings the meeting was held at our house – but I was excluded and so did the ironing. Another evening I went out with him! – but to the Labour Club, to a play about the history of the Labour Party. The other five nights were accounted for by numerous telephone calls – in and out – and hours at the typewriter, stencils and duplicator.

WHY NOT GET INVOLVED MYSELF?

You may, and probably do ask why don't you get involved yourself instead of carping; but it's not that easy. We are a family of four and I am a working mother – a nurse, with the shift work that that entails – so where do I find the time to be active. And if the time is available, what about the children, who is to mind them on nights when we are both out? Often enough now I walk in from work at 8.45, and Stu walks out to the tail end of a meeting – you can't trail children of eleven and seven out to evening meetings and expect that they stay awake at school next day. Anyhow they have views of their own on how to spend their time. They would like to see more of their father – "He's not going out again, is he?" is one of the most familiar



cries in our house, closely followed by – "But we are too big for a Creche!" Babysitting on a reciprocal basis works quite well for social occasions, but no one would be prepared to sit the number of times I would need, and when would I reciprocate.

Here is the obvious place to suggest that we try to organise child minding, to enable people like me to attend at least Ward Meetings. I know that in some areas this is under way, but in the outback of the Wirral Peninsular members seem too few and far between to organise anything on a regular basis. I know that at many Ward Meetings, families are represented by one parent, simply because of baby-sitting problems. Some of us are roundly criticised by those whose partner is the babysitter, for not attending meetings!

HELLO! GOODBYE! RELATIONSHIP

A big problem is that these are all ways to let me become "Active", to the same degree as Stuart, but I'm not sure that that is what I want. What I know I want is to see more of my husband and to have less of a 'Hello! Goodbye!' relation-ship with him. I don't like sleeping with strangers, and in my experience activism doesn't make for an active sex life!

The future concerns me. One day instead of being rude to whoever it is that phones for the sixth time in one meal, or instead of going to sleep on the floor in the middle of some deep conversation with friends, will I get up and go? At times we see so little of each other that I think I wouldn't even miss him and perhaps I wouldn't be missed either, until the washing wasn't done or there was no bread! Despite the word service paid to equality, more often than not politics come before household tasks, the type-writer comes before the iron and the meeting before the washing up.

Perhaps though – as is most likely – we'll carry on as usual and I'll have a moan now and again to get it off my chest; someone might even listen one day and take on their share of the political work in response to my moans!!

Jo Marshall-Clarke
Wirral CLP

(Continued from previous page)

find a way of reconciling caring for their children with their duties as councillors. Men, because they are not socialised to think that they are primarily responsible for their children, or domestic life in general, are inclined to think that caring for their children can be fitted in round their other activities rather than the other way round. I have concentrated on child-ren because this is an issue of concern to me at the moment. However, all councillors, whatever their domestic situation, have personal and, usually, working lives to which they wish to devote some time. I think that most people in the Party would acknowledge their right to do so.

PERSONAL FAILING

Attitudes of party members are, how-ever, often conflicting. When a councillor is chauvinistic in his marriage or, perhaps, appears to have no personal life, this is seen as a personal failing. Yet many party members seem to have quite unrealistic expectations of their councillors and do not see the implications of this for those councillors' personal lives. Ordinary council duties, at least for a chair or committee, take up four full evenings a week. Yet councillors are still expected to participate in the normal party meet-ings, jumble sales, leafletting, membership drives and party socials and are castigated if they fail to do so. A councillor who refused ever to attend a Saturday street meeting because that was their time for taking the children swimming or doing their share of the housework would be unlikely to be reselected, even by those who pay lip service to the desirability of equal participation in domestic life. Often the provision of babysitting facilities is seen as the solution for those with child-ren. To me this sidesteps the issue since what needs to be acknowledged is the right of a councillor or other political activist to have a personal life and to spend time with their partner, children or on their own, even if this is at the expense of political activities.

IMPLICATIONS NEVER DISCUSSED

Because our local party is relatively young and progressive, my positive sounding resolution on child care or women's rights goes through on the nod. I suspect the same is true of many London CLPs. As a result, the issues involved and their implications are never discussed in any depth. Would the same people vote so readily for Mike's right to attend the ante-natal class instead of the council meeting if this was put as a specific question?

Local wards and CLPs need to set aside time to discuss personal politics, particularly the effect of political activity on personal lives and the positive steps that might be taken to safeguard the right to a personal life for councillors.

Janis Morton
Lambeth Central CLP

Squatting: Breaki

What marks off squatting activity and struggle for all other campaigns and political action is that you cannot just go home to get away from it.

OPENING UP

You can't squat part-time. You can't conveniently compartmentalise your life into 'personal' and 'political'. You can try of course but these categories have an inconvenient tendency to get mixed up all the way from when you use the crow-bar to 'open up' your squat to when you argue your right to your home with some well-housed housing official, politician, or judge who wants you to live in a gutter.

FEAR OF YOURSELF

I think this all-pervading, involved, nature of squatting really scares many left activists at a personal, perhaps sub-conscious, level. It is strange that the record of the English left on support for squatting action in the last decade is so patchy. Strange because this was the largest and longest-lived squatting move-ment in Britain since the Norman con-question (and it's still going in a smaller way). Over ¼ million people have squatted in Britain in the last ten years, and the movement achieved world fame. Squatting struggles were the *only* part of the housing front where the working class scored *any* victories in the last decade.

'EASY' OPTIONS

The standard dismissals of squatting by some revolutionary groups (all of whom had some members squatting) as 'middle class' (a claim refuted by all surveys), 'not a long term solution', 'reformist', 'anarchist', and so on, of course explain nothing. The fact is almost all other activity on the left could be dismissed in the same terms. Why, then, this belittling by the left of such a successful, large-scale, creative self active movement which the *Daily Telegraph* regularly denounced as the harbinger of revolution more vehemently than it denounces Peter Tatchell or the Militant Tendency? The *Daily Telegraph* saw the mass squatting of houses and land in Portugal in 1976 as a warning of just what could come to this green and pleasant land. The relative indifference or even hostility by many individual members of revolutionary groups must, I suggest, have been because they could not cope with the idea of getting their whole lives involved in their politics – or their politics involved in their whole lives.

'Unconditional support for all those struggling against imperialism' is one thing but bringing your home and emotional self into your political being is another . . . Help! Any other political campaign is much easier – and much less fulfilling.

NO HIDING PLACE

Of course as well as benefits, the all pervading nature of squatting does bring problems into the life of a squatting activist. When I started squatting in 1972 I noticed how totally involved my brother (no, another one) became. I, cautiously, only got involved myself, I thought, on a short-term basis to stop our street (Elgin Avenue) being evicted, before going back to 'more important things'. This 'short-term' involvement lasted ten years (five of which were 'full-time' while on the dole)!

I was normally 'on call' round the clock – resist evictions, find someone a home, argue with police, write an 'EASY' leaflet, met a lawyer, go to Court, get arrested, join a squatters festival and so on. I don't put a festival in a separate category of 'enjoyment' because in fact all these things were fulfilling in their own way and all part of the enjoyable whole. Rather than bemoan these 'burdens' I accepted and enjoyed the interconnectedness of all aspects of this creative way of life.

OR ESCAPE TO HYPERACTIVITY SPACE

However the sheer time involved, irregular eating, and tiredness, did tend to strain 'relationships' and make 'a commitment to someone' extremely difficult. Probably I was hyperactive – as are many people on the left – partly to avoid precisely such relationships (although squatting life was itself also fulfilling).

TOGETHER WE CAN BUILD

The most important overall aspect of squatting was the feeling of 'together-ness' which these communities of struggle generated. The spirit didn't just last for a few days, as in a student or factory occupation, but for years and would be deeper – carrying on beyond the life of a squat.

This feeling existed even though there were also many seamy sides of squatting: drugs, fighting, robberies, discomfort, squalor, leaky roofs and so on. These aspects somehow, I think, made one more aware of the overall togetherness.

RAINBOWS OF CREATIVITY

In comparing squatting struggles with other political fights the greatest practical difference is the whole rainbow of creative activity opened up *as part of*



Squatters creating a home out of an abandoned building

ng down barriers!



Huntley Street squatters

the necessary task to defend our homes... Street cafes, community-work-tokens, playgroups, newsheets, festivals, bonfires, street meetings, disruption of Councils, Peoples' Courts, pickets, barricades, anti-eviction fares.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

The collective consciousness of squatting communities by necessity swept away many of the architectural divisions imposed on living-forms by house design. In all the well known squatted streets: Villa Road, St Agnes Place, Tolmers Square, Charteris Road, Elgin Avenue, Prince of Wales Crescent etc, internal walls between many rooms and houses were broken through. Raised beds were built. Gardens were extended into each other. Roofs were used. Open-door living abounded. In the more recent Squat Against Sales Campaign 1980-81 structural alterations were not possible but communal/meeting houses or flats were always established. In all squatting communities new power over the environment was realised and examined.

AND CHANGING OUR LIVES!

The political impact of squatting onto squatters (and also judges, lawyers and housing officials on some occasions) was normally very personal and very radicalising. Almost all squatters started doing so for no reason other than desperate homelessness and had only that, initially, in common with their fellow squatters. After a while the squatting experience – especially where there were struggles – produced remarkable changes in people. In times of struggle people who were till then very 'untogether' and 'lumpen' became effective, capable and purposeful. Or, often peoples' outlooks simply changed through the realisation that those who have nothing give the most, and that together WE have strength. The two examples of changed outlooks below are from Elgin Avenue but all big squats have hundreds of people with similar tales to tell.

A woman with a child who lived in the street a while, and then tried an alternative place away from squatting which didn't work out, came back. She wept on return because she said she just realised how she could feel with friends and be at home and safe there.

One man declared after the rehousing victory from the barricades at Elgin Avenue (Oct 15, 1975) – 'We couldn't have left. I've never done anything political in all my life, staying was the most important thing I've ever done, I'm going to tell everybody about it. Everyone can do things like this too.'

Piers Corbyn

The politics of the family

"The politics of the family" is the theme of a conference being organized on March 26 and 27 by the Socialist Society. It should be a major event: the Tories purvey their version of family politics day in, day out, whereas this will be the first time for many years that the labour movement will have the chance to thrash out *our* ideas on the subject. The atomization of family life is a central precondition of class society and capitalism and unless we take seriously the idea of extending our kinship relations and support-structures collectively, we won't have much chance of demonstrating the practicality of an alternative.

As one who has been involved with the organization of this conference from an early stage I would strongly urge *Briefing* supporters to attend. There are four basic sessions: 1. "The family through time and space"; 2. "The cultural meaning of 'family'"; 3. 3. "Dependency and need"; 4. "Change". Some of the speakers will be (subject to confirmation) David Morgan on the Royal Wedding, Martin Durham on families and fascims, Erroll Lawrence and Pratiba Parma on black families and the media, Angela Carter (and possibly myself) on fairy tales, Angie Weir on the theme "beyond marriage" and Paul Morrison on "men and change". Jenny Taylor will discuss the family in nineteenth century novels, Mary Thomas will speak on Building Society ads., and there will be several slide-shows and exhibitions. Personally, I would have liked to see more emphasis on ways in which *we* can change our own family lives – there is perhaps an over-stressing of "images" and "concepts" of the family in place of the material factors responsible for atomization – but then, this is the Socialist Society, not *Briefing* "Street-Life". Doubtless, *Briefing* comrades will make their own contributions in the many workshops and debates.

Registration: 9.30-10.30 Saturday morning. Admission: £3.00 (unwaged), £6.00 (members/waged), £8.00 (non-members/waged). Place: Sir William Collins School, Charrington St., N.W.1. Enquiries: 7 Carlisle St., W.1. (734-8501). There will be a creche.

Chris Knight (Lewisham East C.L.P. and "politics of the family" organizing committee).

SUPPLEMENT MEETINGS

One common criticism of the Streetlife Supplement is that whilst many articles are published which relate people's personal experiences, there are very few which theorise the issues raised and which give practical ways forward. Of course publishing articles about people's personal experiences is not enough on its own – the issues need to be politicised – but in many cases, the issues and the questions that have been raised in the Supplement are only just beginning to be discussed in the labour movement and there are no well worked out answers or "lines'.

One way we hope to go forward is to start holding regular monthly Supplement meetings to promote and continue these discussions. The intention is to hold the meetings two to three weeks after the publication of each *Briefing* and to discuss the topic covered by that month's Supplement. We are planning to hold the first meeting early in April following the Supplement on "Law and Order". Details will be published in the next issue of *Briefing*. Look out for the details and come along.

NEXT ISSUE

The theme for the next issue of Streetlife will be "Law and Order". For a long time this issue was the property of the Tories. However the kind of concern expressed in last month's Supplement on the level of vandalism and violence occurring on some of our streets and estates means that the Labour Party can no longer afford to ignore it. Some ideas were raised by Chris Knight in the March '82 issue of *Briefing* in an article entitled "The Fight for Workers' Law and Order". Since then we have seen the setting up of Police Committees by the GLC and some boroughs, and increasing demands for police accountability. So, what more can we do?

Articles on this or any other relevant issue should be sent to Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, NW1 by Saturday 5th March.

Let's be sociable socialists!

One thing that strikes me most at many Labour Party meetings is their impersonal nature.

New members in particular suffer from this. All too often they feel alone and isolated, being mere bystanders in the endless battle between left and right. This experience can alienate potentially good comrades, with the result that they may be lost to the movement.

Simple things could remedy this. Why not try being nice to them, make them feel welcome, treat them as human beings?

Many left wing activists are as guilty of impersonal behaviour as anyone. Invariably meetings cease to be between people but between socialist automotons, viewing each other as merely supporters or opponents of some particular line. I'm not suggesting for one moment that political discussion should not be central, only that personal aspects should be brought into play.

I hold the view that socialism is not just about obtaining a more rational economic system but also about creating a society in which people actually relate to each other in a more caring and compassionate way.

We ought to be starting that process now.

It might not be a bad idea if at the next Briefing meeting comrades introduced themselves. Then we would know the person sitting opposite as Kate or Bill rather than as the one with the red hair selling *Socialist Organiser*. That would be a start.

Hugh Atkinson
Bromley Ravensbourne CLP

Streetlife letters Continued

Dear *Briefing*,

The description of the Angell Town estate, in your February issue, could almost describe the Becontree Heath estate, Dagenham, where I live.

In 1959-1961 period, I was Vice-Chairman of the Housing Committee on the previous Dagenham Borough Council and, at the time, we held lengthy discussions about (a) the desirability of building an estate with a major busy road running through the middle, (b) whether, if the estate was built, tower blocks should be included and (c) type of garages for use by tenants. In those days, a sufficient number of garages had to be built (by Government edict) for tenants. Also the higher one built, the greater the housing subsidy.

The Chairman and I fought a long hard battle and we only agreed on certain conditions: that permission be obtained to divert the main road round the estate before building began, and that tower blocks would only be occupied by single people or childless couples. Unfortunately however, both the Chairman and I had to leave the Council, him through health and me due to work. A new Chairman was elected and all our previous conditions were overturned, with the result that we now have tower blocks full of couples with children and a dangerous major road cutting the estate in half, with now very little chance of being able to divert the road. This has, for one thing, made the formation of a tenants' association extremely difficult. It has become a North Side against a South Side. The garages are now disaster areas – tenants are afraid to garage their cars (they prefer, for safety reasons, to park their cars in the open); people are afraid to go through the garages, even in daylight. The garages have become havens for gangs and vandals. Whilst we are right to criticise the police, when necessary, for their lack of help when called upon, the style of many of our estates appears to have been planned to aid crime and deter detection.

Modern architecture, in many areas, seems to give tenants in blocks of flats, a feeling of isolation. Whilst we all deplored the poor, and slums in many cases, homes in East and South London, there did exist a feeling of comradeship, a feeling that has been virtually destroyed in estates which are likely to turn into slums long before they are very old.

I have always advocated that planners and architects of council flats should be forced to live in them for at least two years. We would, I am sure, see a vast difference subsequently.

I say, "back to the drawing board for planners and architects". Perhaps the fault lies with the fact that so few women are involved at the design stage.

Yours fraternally
Harry Kay

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