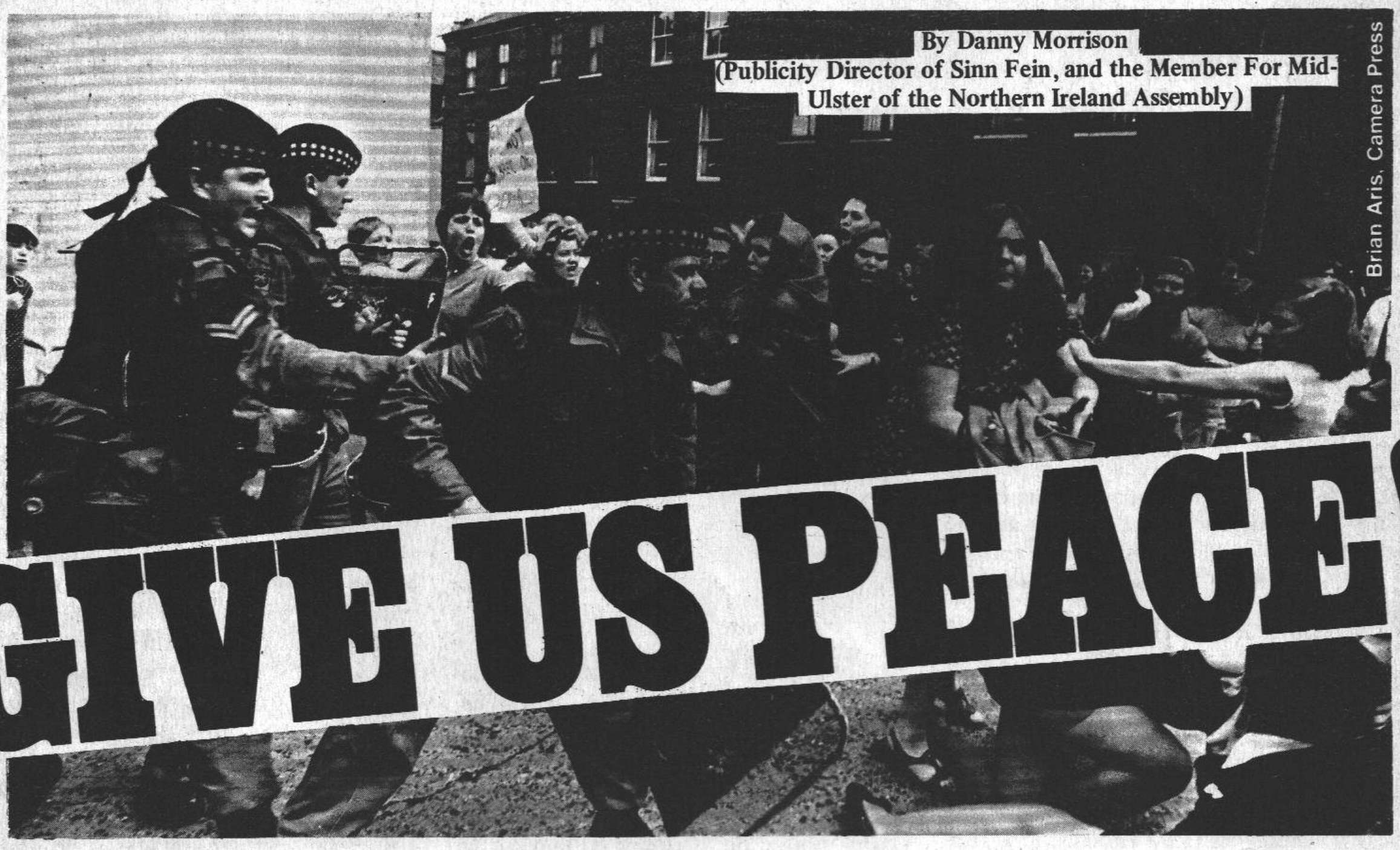
LONDON LABOUR 30p
BRIEFING
No 28 APRIL 1983



By Danny Morrison
(Publicity Director of Sinn Fein, and the Member For Mid-Ulster of the Northern Ireland Assembly)

GIVE US PEACE!

As Ken Livingstone, Cathy and Steve Bundred can attest from their meet-the-people visit to Belfast, the overwhelming desire in our areas is for peace. But it is for a peace based on justice, a peace based on the right of the Irish nation to self-determination, a peace based on respect from Britain for our national and civil rights which will result in an end to the age-old conflict between our countries and the beginnings of a real friendship and solidarity in our common struggles.

Let there be no doubt about this desire for peace – but equally let there be no doubt about the unflinching perseverance of our people in the struggle against British rule. It is this determination which has sustained and will sustain guerrilla warfare against British colonial rule in the north of Ireland.

For 13 years British establishment propaganda has been dismissive of the support which republicans command (militarily and electorally). British army leaders and government officials annually predict the impending demise of the IRA – and just keep changing the mitigating explanations from bomb to successive bomb and, of course, for the need of internment or the H-Blocks or plastic bullets or repressive laws, etc.

What is staring you in the face is a popular uprising, and the political sophistication of the Republican Movement is uncontestable. Sinn Fein's ultimate objective is a 32-county, democratic, socialist republic of which the territorial dispute, the border, has to be settled before the proper development of class politics.

Our three comrades from London saw at first hand the social and economic misery, the military occupation. The people of West Belfast were jubilant about meeting, for a change, English people, not with guns, but with open minds, consciences, prepared to enter into dialogue and reach their own conclusions.

Republicans, more than any other people, want peace in Ireland. We offer those presently tied to loyalism the guarantee of their civil and religious liberty, and we pledge to struggle on behalf of the Irish working class, of whatever religious denomination or none, for a country where the ownership of the means of production, and the process of statute making, will be theirs.

LABOUR – TAKE THE POWER!

WE'RE NOT HAVING HEALEY!

Tony Banks, Tooting CLP

Defending Michael Foot's leadership at the moment is no easy task. The enormous early blunders over Peter Tatchell's candidature in Bermondsey; the utterly irresponsible witch-hunt against Militant supporters; the attacks upon Ken Livingstone and the Labour GLC all add up to a less than inspiring record of leadership.

At the time when our energies should be concentrated on spelling out the socialist alternatives to Thatcherism we are in the ridiculous position of seeking to expel socialists from the Party, watering down Conference decisions and still waiting to select candidates for the re-organised constituencies.

It would be wrong to blame Michael Foot entirely for this mess, but he has allowed himself to become a prisoner of the right both in the Shadow Cabinet and the NEC and none of them are likely to be satisfied with only a few expulsions and a little bit of fudging on vital issues. They are out for the lot and it is now up to the left in the constituencies and the unions to ensure they don't succeed.

IF HEALEY WERE LEADER

The left's problem is how to defend Conference policies and our socialist comrades in the Party. What is quite clear is that neither objective can be achieved by allowing the right to dump Michael Foot. Given the rules of the electoral college it is inevitable that Denis Healey would take over as leader and win or lose the next election; the incumbent would then be very difficult to dislodge.

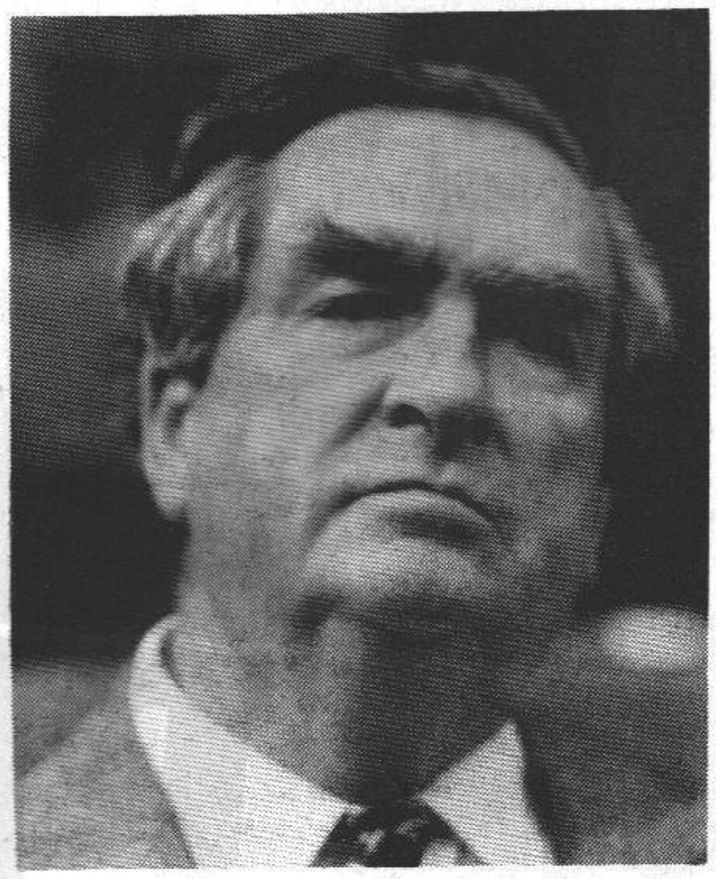


Photo : Labour Party Library

Labour led by Denis Healey allied to a right-wing dominated NEC would be bad for socialism, bad for the party and bad for the left. Denis Healey is a shrewd enough politician to know when to submerge his own views in the interests of party unity. He is also a past-master at attacking the Tories at a level which is highly populist in character but which contains little of socialist content.

No-one can seriously believe that Denis Healey has become a committed supporter of unilateral nuclear disarmament, withdrawal from the EEC and the removal of US bases from the UK. In fairness it must be recorded that his opposition to these particular Conference decisions is probably shared by a majority of the Shadow Cabinet. However, a Labour government led by Denis Healey would doubtless move very quickly to drop such policies and there would be little chance of stopping him.

FLEET STREET MUST NOT CHOOSE

The capitalist press are pushing hard for Denis Healey as Labour leader and this cannot be because they believe such an event would be good for socialism. The attacks in the media upon Michael Foot's leadership must be resisted if only because we must not allow such apostles of capitalism to determine who will be leader of our Party.

Let us give a clear warning to Labour's right-wing gossipers and their Fleet Street allies that the CLPs will not tolerate any move to foist Denis Healy on us as Labour leader.

Let the rank & file decide

John Bloxam.

It takes an effort to remember that no authoritative committee of the Labour Party, no trade union – not even one Constituency Labour Party, as far as we know – has called for the resignation of Michael Foot.

Labour activists have been by-standers as a 'campaign' to replace Foot has developed... in the Tory press.

Step by step it has moved from the first calls for Foot to go, to the assurances that Dennis Healey would be the best successor, the opinion polls registering assent to those assurances, and the quotations from un-named 'left Labour MPs' that Healey is best to lead Labour into an election.

The Left pressed MPs to vote for Michael Foot as leader against Dennis Healey not because we had forgotten Foot's record, his total identification with the record of the Wilson-Callaghan government including incomes policy and the Polaris replacement. His participation in the witch-hunt and the moves to shelve Labour conference policy have been no surprise. But we said that Foot, as deputy leader, should step in for the interim – rather than the leader of the Right, Dennis Healey.

Only for the interim. We think Tony Benn would be a better leader of the Labour Party, more committed to the movement's policies. But the issue is not only who, but how.

Winning an electoral college for Leader and Deputy Leader was an important part of the fight for democracy in the Labour Party – a move from the politics of cabals towards the politics of mass participation. It was a victory to be defended.

The rank and file should decide who will be Labour's leader – according to the procedures the Party has decided. We should not let our decisions be pre-empted or reported to us before we have made them – by Fleet Street.

For Dennis Healey, a man who says he will refuse to serve in a Labour government that carries out Labour's policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament, to be foisted on us by the press would be a kick in the teeth for everyone who has taken part in the fight for Labour democracy.

The recently-launched 'Socialists for a Labour Victory' is the best reply to Fleet Street. We decided Labour's policies, and we're going to fight for them whatever the right wing NEC and Shadow Cabinet do. And we'll decide Labour's leadership, too, in our own good time.

Ealing: the other half of the story

Ruth Clarke. Acton Women's Section

When the two men who've done most to encourage women's organisation in the Ealing Labour Parties wax lyrical about political activity in the Borough without mentioning women once (March *Briefing*) the time has come to put slimline pen to paper in order to redress the balance. (Gentle slap on wrists, gentlemen!)

Cast your minds back if you will to those halcyon pre-Falkland days in the spring of '82 when Labour seemed set to take control of Ealing Council. Canvassing was underway and we were treated to daily horror stories of inadequate or non-existent provision for elderly, disabled or child-rearing women. To our shame the local Party was doing little to help and was perceived to be so.



Southall mourning march April 28, 1979 (*Laurie Sparham Network*)

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Something had to be done, and fast, to get more women canvassers on the doorsteps and to heighten the Party's awareness of women's issues. A meeting was duly called and attended by forty women from the Southall, Acton and Ealing North CLP's. Women shared grievances, their sense of isolation, and resolved to work together to establish a women's rights lobby within the local Parties. Women's sections were set up in all three Constituencies, and women members were actively encouraged to participate in election preparations.

But consolidation was slow and efforts to involve women in election activities weren't always successful. It was only after a shell-shocked election defeat lull that things really got underway. Individual WS inaugural meetings were held and a pattern of regularly monthly meetings was established in each Constituency. A careful balance between business and discussion/guest speakers has helped to maintain the interest of experienced and unpoliticised members alike. Monthly newsletters are now produced, and members of all three Sections now play an active and effective part in the work of their CLP's. Joint public meetings and campaigning activities have taken place, and close and fruitful links between women in the Ealing and neighbouring Parties are developing. It hasn't all been plain sailing; we've all had setbacks and we've all suffered resistance and prejudice, but a great deal of encouragement too!

Meanwhile the victorious Tories wreak havoc in the Town Hall. Cuts in housing, greatly reduced childcare and welfare facilities, school closures, provision for the elderly axed: all measures which particularly affect women. Ealing NALGO, NUT and NATFHE have run spirited and occasionally successful anti-cuts campaigns, and regular Trades Council/LGC liaison meetings have greatly enhanced Labour Movement communication and co-operation. But so often women in the firing line have found themselves un-organised, isolated and vulnerable.

HOPELESS SITUATION?

A hopeless situation? Not entirely. Opposition to proposed school closures, muted and patchy at first, has developed into a groundswell of resistance, to which supporters of threatened playcentres, women's refuges and old people's centres have added their voice. Minor concessions have been won and, sometimes with the help of enlightened Council officers, a borough-wide network of women's protest and mutual support groups is developing.

Within Southall's Asian communities are some of the most repressed of women, who may suffer virtual imprisonment in overcrowded houses because of language barriers and cultural taboos. Rape and incest go unreported, as victims may face disgrace and rejection by their families. Adversity has led to the development of a range of Asian women's groups, some articulate and highly organised, others loose and informal.

The Ealing Women's Group, a small but committed group of feminists, have run effective campaigns on abortion rights, jobs and peace, and have recently co-operated with the middle-class Ealing Peace Register, who in recent months have organised a number of successful anti-nuclear demonstrations and public meetings. The Ealing WS's are developing links with these women, who are actively participating in plans for the Ealing Labour Parties' mid-May Peace Week.

Members of the Ealing LGC's new manifesto study groups have already set to work. In co-operation with the WS's, the Equal Opportunities Study Group will be consulting and liaising with local women (and incidentally the ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups), many of whom are understandably disinterested in or mistrustful of party politics and politicians. Somehow we have to convince them that Labour not only understands and cares about their difficulties but that it could prove a relevant and effective force in the struggle to overcome them.

Our past record in Ealing is nothing to be proud of. One or two last-minute concessions on women's rights were included in the 1982 manifesto, an indication of the Party's ignorance and indifference on the subject. There is hardly a women's rights lobby on the present Council. Only five of the thirty-strong Labour Group are women, and only one of these has ever demonstrated any real commitment to her sex. Other Group members range from the sympathetic and enlightened to the blatantly sexist.

A section on women for the 1986 manifesto will be written from scratch, and all other sections will be scrutinised for sexism and racism. The re-writing process itself will serve to re-educate Party members on the rights of women and other disadvantaged groups. Come 1986 we should have sound policies and we may well have control of the Council. But where will be the drive and the willpower to bring them to fruition? In the Women's Sections? In the Council Chamber? In the community-based women's groups? Sadly, few local women, even the politically aware, see Ealing Council as the forum for their struggles, and few have time or stomach for the battles which must come if we are to establish an effective women's lobby on the Council. Grass roots activity must be encouraged and given direction, but at the same time we must be recruiting for the political action to come. We've come a long way in the last year, but we can't afford to rest on our laurels now!

'WE DO NOT RECOGNISE THE EXPULSIONS'

It came by first-class post, the day after Bermondsey: Jim Mortimer's letter to the Secretary of Central Islington CLP informing us of the NEC's resolution to "exclude from membership forthwith ... Messrs Taafe and Grant. I shall be pleased if you will arrange for their names to be deleted from your membership records."

What did NEC members think we would do. After all, we had sent Jim Mortimer copies of our resolutions on the Register and expulsions, and did likewise to every individual member of the NEC just before the February 23rd meeting.

In accordance with the Party's policy the officers agreed to write back immediately informing Jim Mortimer that "we do not recognise the expulsion of Peter Taafe and Ted Grant from the Labour Party; and that we will continue to recognise them as full members of this CLP." We published this letter as our public response to the NEC's public expulsion. This speedy action in reply was unanimously endorsed a few days later at the General Committee.

UNPRECEDENTED EXPULSIONS

It is unprecedented of the NEC to impose expulsions on a constituency party in this way and completely ignores the legitimate right of parties to decide who shall and who shall not be party members. We defend the right of all those who accept the principles of the Labour Party to argue their views politically within the party. Ironically it was in Islington that party members tolerated the presence of disruptive right-wingers for years: dozens of them, including local councillors, defected to the SDP in 1981.

Why does the NEC consider itself a better judge than the local party of fitness for membership? The NEC's actions smack of authoritarianism and paternalism reminiscent of some of the most insidious aspects of Tory policies. Where this Party's policies differ from those of Militant, as it does notably on women's rights, women's representation in the party, and on Ireland, we argue politically — our response will never be to exclude those who disagree with us.

Nationally the NEC seems oblivious to the diversions it is creating by pursuing a purge instead of actively promoting socialist policies. I am angry and frustrated that my time and energy which should be spent wholly fighting Thatcherism must be spend resisting decisions imposed from above. Yet despite the attacks, Central Islington is an increasingly active party. We helped to run one of the most successful local council campaigns in London last May — winning 51 out of 52 seats. And since then we have campaigned locally against the financial penalties imposed on the Council by the Tory government. The Women's Section of the Party successfully initiated the establishment of a Women's Council in Islington, and the Party has taken the lead in launching a local Peace Canvass with other parties, tenants associations and CND. Wards are already actively preparing for the General Election so that our massive electoral success in 1982 will be repeated.

CLEAR ALTERNATIVE

Labour must win the next General Election. It is the only party with the policies which can begin to repair the damage of four years of vicious Tory government and bring hope *to the millions of women and men who want* a *clear* alternative. The media paints the picture of a party in chaos. Yet all over the country CLPs are engaged in constructive campaigning. The three parties under immediate threat need the support of every CLP and trade union branch in bringing maximum pressure onto the NEC to stop the expulsions, reinstate the members of Militant editorial board and lead the party into victory at the election.

Jane Andrews
Chair Central Islington CLP
(in a personal capacity)

A Letter from Norwood Labour Party

Dear Comrade,

The Norwood Labour Party regardless of major differences with Militant on such issues as the Falklands war, Ireland, Palestine and women's rights, has firmly opposed the witch-hunt of Labour Party members associated with that paper.

Yet at the Greater London Labour Party Regional Conference we experienced an insidious smear campaign of lies and distortion directed against our CLP, and particularly against our chairperson, Ted Knight. This reached the gutter level of delegates being told in behind the scenes discussions that Ted has 'moved the expulsions of Militant members from the Labour Party', and that Norwood was backing the witch-hunt.

The position of Norwood Labour Party is clearly spelt out in our letter to the NEC dated 2nd March 1983 which is reproduced below.

"The Norwood Labour Party GMC meeting on 1st March, in noting your letter of 24th February recorded its total opposition to the expulsions of comrades Doyle and Walsh, and also to that of comrades Dickenson, Grant and Taaffe.

It calls on the NEC to reverse this decision, and to end the witch-hunt against members of the Labour Party associated with the Militant paper.

It is the view of the Norwood Labour Party that the 1982 Annual Conference did not give the authority to expel such members and notes that the letter from the General Secretary does not indicate under which rule the action has been taken. We therefore insist on an answer to this question.

The Norwood Labour Party has had bitter experiences of similar witch-hunts in the 1950s and 1960s, and know that such actions are politically damaging and electorally counter-productive.

The Norwood Labour Party is committed to campaigning within the Labour Party and the trades unions to reinstate the expelled members. Likewise, we will campaign to reverse the decision on the 'Register' and any attempt to reintroduce 'bans and proscriptions' ".

A meeting between the officers of Islington Central, Hammersmith North and Norwood has already been arranged to plan a joint campaign for the reinstatement of the expelled members, and the support of other CLPs and trade union branches will be sought.

The enthusiasm with which the Tory press greeted Ted Knight's removal from the Regional Executive Committee is a tribute to both him and the Norwood Labour Party, but regrettably is a boost to the right wing majority on the NEC.

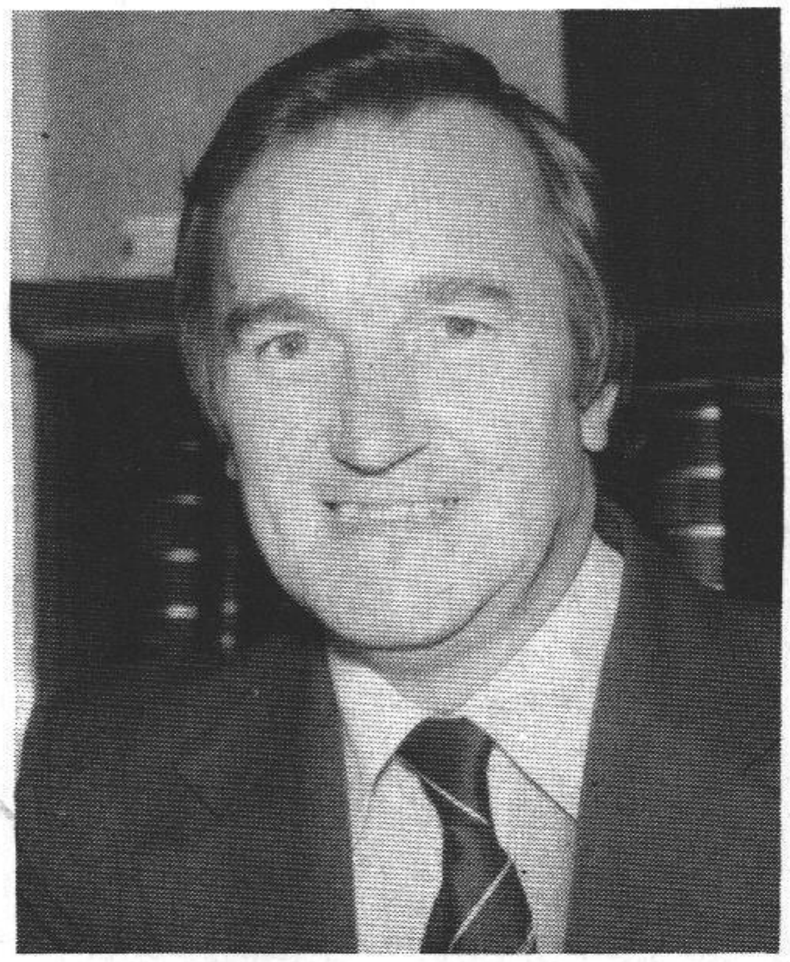
We suggest that all our energies should now be directed to stopping the witch-hunt, and to reinstating those expelled.

Yours fraternally,
KEN PHIPP,
Party Secretary.

ANOTHER VIEW FROM NORWOOD

Lambeth Norwood CLP's policy of opposition to expulsions collapsed like a house of cards within days of the NEC decision to expel from the party the editorial board of 'Militant'. An emergency motion which merely 'noted' Jim Mortimer's letter expelling Lynn Walsh and Clare Doyle was passed 29-32 by the GMC, the Norwood executive rationalising retreat and dressing up expediency as principle.

What was worse, the motion larded hypocrisy on to self-preservation, the executive claiming to 'reiterate its opposition to the expulsion of comrades associated with Militant' and calling for a campaign 'to reverse these decisions at the forthcoming annual conference' in co-operation with other CLPs and trade union branches. The sentiments were admirable; the effect remains to be seen.



TED KNIGHT

Ted Knight, leader of the Labour Group on Lambeth Council, proposed the EC motion from the chair. He was scornful of an amendment which called for a letter to be sent to Walworth Road refusing to implement the expulsions. It was clear from the debate that many younger members found the executive's sudden change of direction difficult to stomach, particularly as none of those who now saw the difficulties had objected earlier when the policy of opposition was agreed upon. Why, at the first whiff of cordite, were half a dozen persuasive arguments adduced as to the foolishness of defiance?

Comrade Knight, having been the victim of a previous round of right-wing expulsions, and having seen the damage done to Norwood CLP in the past, was understandably reluctant to force a head-on collision. He obviously did not relish the prospect of the party being disbanded and the consequent loss of control of Lambeth Council. Sadly, however, at a moment when many delegates looked for leadership and a stiffening of resolve, they were offered the thinnest of excuses and warnings of doom and disaster.

BAULKING AT FIRST HURDLE

But it was the fact that they were baulking at the first hurdle which really exposed the hollowness of the proposal to campaign against the expulsions. Ted summed it up admirably when he said that refusing to recognise the expulsions would be to invite the NEC to intervene and disband the Norwood Party. He was not interested in manoeuvres, he said, but in fighting the expulsions politically. Other delegates were not impressed. They thought they could recognise a manoeuvre when they saw one.

Perhaps the oddest exchange of the two-hour debate concerned the attitude of other parties in a similar predicament. What would Hammersmith North and Islington do? Members of the Norwood EC seemed confused and unsure, though at pains to emphasise that no formal decisions had been taken. No doubt the truth will emerge eventually. Meanwhile, members of Norwood Labour Party — with the exception of Clare Doyle and Lynn Walsh — can sleep soundly, safe from the depredations of the witch-hunters for a little while longer.

Jacob Ecclestone
(Lambeth Norwood GMC)

No change in NOLS

NOLS, the only student group with a foothold in the labour movement is the controlling force on the NUS Executive. After winning NUS from the Communist Party and their fellow travellers last Easter, students were expecting to see a change in the way NUS operates.

However, things are much the same. Instead of stamping a definite labour movement orientation on NUS, NOLS have continued to push the traditional bipartisan lobbying. We haven't begun the slow but necessary process of re-educating the student movement. And now, with access to education threatened, the grants system in jeopardy, threats of extensive privatisation and the financial (and therefore political) autonomy of Students Unions lost, students urgently need to turn to the labour movement. We cannot hope to win these major battles on our own. Socialist Students in NOLS (SSIN) thinks that for students to win their immediate and longer term demands the integration of student struggles into the labour movement is necessary. While trade unions continue to lose, there is no chance for NUS to win, so we also argue that NUS and individual students should throw their resources behind trade union struggles.

So as well as working for strong local links with campus trade unions, SSIN recognises the need to campaign for a Labour vote. Unfortunately it seems a certainty that the election manifesto will not contain satisfactory proposals. Neil Kinnock is not committed to reversing the Tory loans system should it be well under way, and already Programme 82's intention to give a grant for all 16-18 year olds has been all but dropped. SSIN will be supporting the campaigns which organise around party policy during the election.

Our first success inside NUS was at Christmas 82 Conference. There is a long running battle against the Executive's support for the European NUSs' conference. These meetings have delegations from the Stalinist state unions which are not even remotely representative of students. SSIN and a large number of independent delegates were horrified at the prospect of NUS sitting round a table with the butchers of Solidarnosc and its student wing the NZS. We helped field a boycott slate which was effectively ruled out of order and at the following conference organised to refer back the conference report. We lost, but only by seven votes. We expect to win at this month's conference.

SSIN also has things to say about NOLS and the Labour Party. We consider that NOLS has deliberately cashed in on the witch-hunt. NOLS supported the redistribution of the youth budget. Whatever you consider to be the merits of the previous 80/20% distribution (which seems OK to me as NOLS gets a fair income from Clubs affiliation), that NOLS supported £9,000 being chopped from the YS campaigns budget can only be interpreted as lining up with the right wing witch-hunters. Needless to say SSIN will be taking up the issue at our Conference next month.

SSIN can be sponsored by Labour Clubs (£5) and individuals (£1). Our steering committee has open meetings and any student is welcome to attend. We can be contacted at 13 Buxton Road, London N19 or on 263 9484.

Jane Ashworth, NOLS National Committee

BRENT COMPROMISE

By Cllr. Frank Hansen

ONE consolation for the London Labour Party on February 24th was that despite events in Bermondsey, Labour recaptured control of Brent Council in the Harlesden by-election. In fact, the Labour candidate romped home in a relatively high poll (44%) with Labour increasing its vote by 50% compared with May 1982.

Despite the high rate rises of recent years (and there was a bit of grumbling on the doorstep!) working people, many of them black or Irish, came out in droves to show that they value retaining a Labour council in Brent and are resolutely opposed to the Tory/Liberal alternative.

Labour's resounding victory at Harlesden restores our casting vote majority and will enable us to push through our 1983/4 budget proposals. Fortunately the Tories and Liberals on Brent Council are a pretty brainless and inept bunch. For two weeks they had an effective majority, (32 Labour, 30 Tories, 3 Liberals) and even called a Special Council meeting where we assumed they would take control. Indeed they could have fixed a rate for the year – crippling Labour's budget and placing us in an impossible position. Instead they merely passed an innocuous resolution to freeze all new posts, which tends to suggest that they neither have *the ability nor the political will to run the* Borough.

1983/4 Budget

After three days of intense Budget debates in branches, GMCs and at the Local Government Committee, (the whole process was rather rushed and made a mockery of democratic 'consultation"), the Party finally came out in support of leader Martin Coleman's 'package'. This provides for 1) a 10.4% rise in domestic rates, 2) a rent freeze and 3) overall growth of £2 million (£10 million if the committed growth added in 1982 is included).

Two months ago we were talking about a 30% rate rise just to stand still and a 40% increase to achieve any real growth. However, the financial device of 'spending' our balances this year, by creating special funds, has enabled us to avoid some of the harsh penalties the Tories were intending to impose.

Political strategy

One good point is that the budget proposals contain an overall political strategy. Previously, budget-making has tended to be a rather apolitical bun fight between committee chairs with each trying to defend or expand their own little patch. This year we have highlighted certain priority areas where we intend to concentrate resources, irrespective of which committee they are controlled by.

Resources will be channelled towards the areas of greatest need, particularly the high-rise council estates mainly in the south of the borough.

Many of these areas, particularly those in Harlesden and Chalkhill suffer from a high level of racial attacks – Asian women are the main victims. All of them have a high crime rate – in fact the area I represent (Carlton-South Kilburn) has, according to police statistics, the highest reported crime rate of any local authority estate in London.

Therefore we will be concentrating extra resources to try and meet some of the needs of these predominantly Labour areas, especially housing provision, social services, nursery/child-minding facilities, care for the elderly and job creation. Unemployment in the borough increased by 200% between 1979 and 1982, with over 14,000 now registered unemployed. Much of this is concentrated among young people – particularly young blacks.

Ethnic majority

Brent also has the highest percentage of ethnic minorities in its population in the country – including Irish people they form an ethnic majority. We intend to establish a Brent Enterprise Board (£1 million) and continue to assist ethnic employment provision, e.g. the Stonebridge Bus Garage project, and the Irish Cultural and Welfare Centre. Some resources (too little) £50,000 plus staff will also be made available for the newly-established Women's Committee.

Of course such provision can only really scratch the surface of the problems we face. We now have the worst housing crisis in London with nearly 500 families in bed and breakfast waiting up to one year to be rehoused. 13,000 people are on the waiting list and thousands of tenants are seeking transfers to better accommodation. We need ten times as many resources to even begin to tackle such problems. As a result, any improvements we do carry out must be linked to political and community organisation. It is pointless trying to 'social engineer' from the Town Hall. We need to use our resources on the estates to organise for the battles ahead. Clearly decentralisation of services should play a major part in this.

A compromise

The budget is of course a compromise. Within the Party the left councillors argued for a £3 cut in rents, more growth (£5 million) and a higher rate rise (30%). We argued that the Party should take a more strategic view given the impending General Election. If the Tories won again then they would cut the rates and the only principled strategy would be disengagement.

If Labour won, given sufficient mass pressure, millions would be pumped into the inner cities and the rates could be cut. Either way, a Labour Council in its first



Photo : GLC Press Office

Leaders of the Inner London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Lewisham, Hackney, Barking, Camden, Greenwich, Haringey and Lambeth went to County Hall of the GLC rate precept. While they were, they helped Ken Livingstone, Leader of the GLC, and Illtyd Harrington, Deputy Leader, to raise the GLC Peace Year Flag.

year should be concentrating on maximum assistance to the working class areas. With 70% of tenants receiving some assistance with their housing costs and 50% in arrears there is certainly a good case for a rent cut to balance any rate increase – thus freezing housing costs.

Some comrades – mainly in Brent East – argued for the 'three NOs', but were unable to convince many Party members that their proposals had any real practical significance. Unfortunately, having lost the argument they then proceeded to abstain claiming that a cut in rents was "divisive", (the same could be said of a rent freeze). As a result the compromise package was endorsed by the LGC by one vote.

The Labour right didn't even bother to surface in the Party – all that Party consultation stuff they regard as a waste of time. They believe in 19th century conceptions of democracy, regarding themselves as accountable not to the Party, but to the electorate, which is just a synonym for themselves. In any case the revolt of the Mavericks fell flat on its face in the Labour Group when ex-leader Bryson put forward proposals for an 11% rate increase, a rent rise and cuts in education, and no-one seemed willing to second his motion!

One disturbing feature of the compromise package is that while it provides for overall growth some specific services will be cut, "savings" will be made as the Tribunites put it). Brent has the best pupil/teacher ratio in secondary education in the country. With falling rolls, maintaining the present secondary teacher establishment would mean a further improvement in the situation. While the overall number of jobs in education will be maintained, the centre and right were successful in their attempts to include a cut in the secondary establishment in the budget. We fought against this as a politically damaging reallocation of resources. Hopefully the teacher unions will be able to ensure that this particular "reallocation" never becomes a reality.

STOP PRESS

The Brent Tories may be stupid, but it seems that their learning curve is improving, especially in the dirty tricks department (with a little help from their Liberal friends). We hoped to celebrate our Harlesden victory at the Council meeting on March 2nd, by abolishing the Tory/Liberal job-freezing committee. Things went smoothly until one Labour member, who has a heart condition, decided to retire, having been given a written assurance from a Tory that she was going home too. In fact she did leave, but panted into the chamber 15 minutes later to give the Tories and Liberals a majority. They introduced a guillotine (something they have deplored in the past as being anti-democratic) and carved up Labour's proposals with a series of amendments, (although they forgot to fix the rates again!). Cllr Kathy Soames, the Tory culprit, will undoubtedly be awarded a medal for services to the ruling class beyond the bounds of normal credibility. Indeed, Kathy is already famous in the Borough for her amazing grasp of women's oppression: "Men and women will never be equal as long as men can't have babies and women can't carry hods full of bricks".

Rents Battle in Haringey

Haringey will increase the rents of council tenants by 85p a week from November. This decision was taken in direct conflict with the policy of the Haringey Local Government Committee and the three Borough CLPs.

After an extensive consultation period with the ward parties, two CLPs (Wood Green and Hornsey) decided on an unconditional freeze whilst one (Tottenham) decided "no rent increase without an improved repairs and maintenance service". The issue was debated at the LGC meeting on Thursday 3rd March and an unconditional rent freeze was accepted.

This decision was supported by the following facts:

***Rents have been forced up by over 100% in the last three years.**

***Council policy is that the rental income should only cover the cost of maintenance and management of the properties. Implementing this policy would have meant a cut in rents from an average of £14 per week to an average of £9 per week.**



During the LGC debate the Chair of Housing, Colin Sheriff, gave no indication of what he intended to recommend to the Group meeting the following night, when a rent increase was agreed with centre and right wing support. At the same time, the rates were increased by 16% (an average increase of about £1.50 a week), thus doubling the burden on the council tenants.

This decision will come as a severe blow to the morale of the Party, which had expected the Labour Group to support Labour Party policies and will reduce the confidence of the local community in Labour's ability to deliver its promises.

The Labour Party in Haringey is expected to campaign to secure a reversal of this decision. Meanwhile, in the rest of London, at least nine other Labour controlled Boroughs (and the GLC) have agreed a rent freeze.

FOR THE INCREASE:
Butler, Cave, Dewar, Garwood, Greatly, Toby Harris, Harrison, Jones, Loach, McBrearty, Meehan, Rigby, Sherriff, Ware, Young.

AGAINST THE INCREASE:
Blanchard, Corbyn, Grant, Bob Harris, King, Knowles, Love, Makanji, Mikkides, Simons, Tonge.

ABSENT:
Brennan, Bullard, Fenwick, Knight, Woodger, Zissimos.

by Narendra Makanji

Small Growth in Lambeth

Lambeth Labour Group has set a 28 per cent rate increase — despite pleas from comrades for a larger growth package, particularly to restore cuts made by the last Labour administration.

The 28 per cent rise does, however, allow for a small amount of growth, mainly in housing and social services. Labour members came up with a large set of proposals — growth and restoration of cuts — which in total would have led to a 39 per cent rate rise.

MANY CUTS MADE

It had become increasingly obvious during the final two years of the last Labour administration that many cuts had been made. Officers and members had been able to cover up the measures as 'savings'. Though comrades in the local Labour parties suspected cuts were being made, it is only now that evidence has emerged.

The policy of not filling staff vacancies was particularly damaging, and at its most dangerous in social services. It was estimated that up to 200 children in care or on supervision orders, or 'at risk' were not receiving proper social work support. Cuts were often arbitrary — 20 per cent off the provision of food for children and old peoples' homes, for example.

In an attempt to present an alternative proposal to that of the leadership, we — four newly elected councillors — put together a package identifying the restoration of cuts and priorities for essential growths, following a request from our CLP chairperson.

Our CLP, Lambeth Central, voted for a 30 per cent rate rise and accepted our arguments for a growth programme bigger than that put forward by council leader Ted Knight.

At the Group meeting (which did not even have the constituency party resolutions on the agenda!) a move for an extra package of growth in addition to Ted Knight's proposal was voted down. Thus key commitments, like more decentralisation of services and a borough-wide improvement in the housing officer/council tenant ratio, were lost.

There are two lessons for the left — firstly the need for a proper mechanism to ensure accountability for the parties over what goes into council budget proposals; and secondly a proper mechanism to ensure control for the parties over their councillors.

Cllr Til Wykes
Cllr Graham Norwood
Cllr Helen Crossfield
Cllr Steve Bubb

The Brixton Plan – a mistaken dream

The Brixton Plan has been a phrase used in the Lambeth Labour Party manifestos and council agenda for some years – usually accompanied by a groan from those reading it. A plan detailing how Brixton town centre should be redeveloped has been doing the rounds of committee meetings and smoke-filled rooms for at least 15 years, with successive proposals dismissed as being too grandiose and unlikely to attract the required private investment.

The same fate has — thankfully — befallen the latest Brixton plan. It called for 440,000 square feet of shopping space, matched with very nearly as much office development, and the demolition of two substantial areas of housing presently in relatively poor condition — largely because of the blight hanging over them due to the shadow of redevelopment.

'DISASTROUS FOLLY'

Described by local Labour MP John Tilley as 'a disastrous folly' which was 'even more destructive than the riots', the plan would have taken up to ten years to complete — leaving much of Brixton as a building site in the interim, and only likely to be completed if private enterprise could be relied upon not to pull out if the property market or retail industry declined.

Labour in Lambeth has long agreed with the need to redevelop parts of Brixton, to help arrest the decline of the town centre, and most of all provide improved housing, shopping and amenity facilities for local people. But local opposition to the most recent plan has been enormous. During a public consultation process late in 1982, only 13 per cent agreed with the plan, while 87 per cent had substantial disagreements.

Lambeth Council's planning committee has now agreed to revise the plan in line with the May 1982 election manifesto, which called for a plan with 'any proposed redevelopment on a small scale with minimum disruption to the local community' and a declaration that 'this should not involve the loss of any viable housing'. The revision will be ready by June and — after consultation within the party — should be ready for the public enquiry into the Brixton Town Centre plan expected at the end of 1983.

PLANNER'S DREAMS

The history of Brixton has been a history of mistaken planners' dreams which have contributed to its existing inner city problems. The area was a thriving cultural and shopping centre from the late 19th century to the end of the 1950s. A gradual decline of housing and shopping standards, plus relatively decreasing local income, began a spiral of uncertainty.

The decay was aggravated by the various plans for the town centre, which have contributed to housing blight and have deterred existing and former traders from improving their activities and properties.

In 1963 two major retailers were refused permission to improve their stores because of a £26m proposed redevelopment. In 1967 a grandiose redevelopment of 84 prime sites in Brixton would have involved a five-level transport interchange, 900,000 square feet of offices, ten residential tower blocks of more than 15 storeys each, and an artificial lake that could have been frozen over for skating... In the 1970s other schemes — again reliant on private investment — flopped badly because of the property market slump, which created the conditions in which property speculators pulled out.

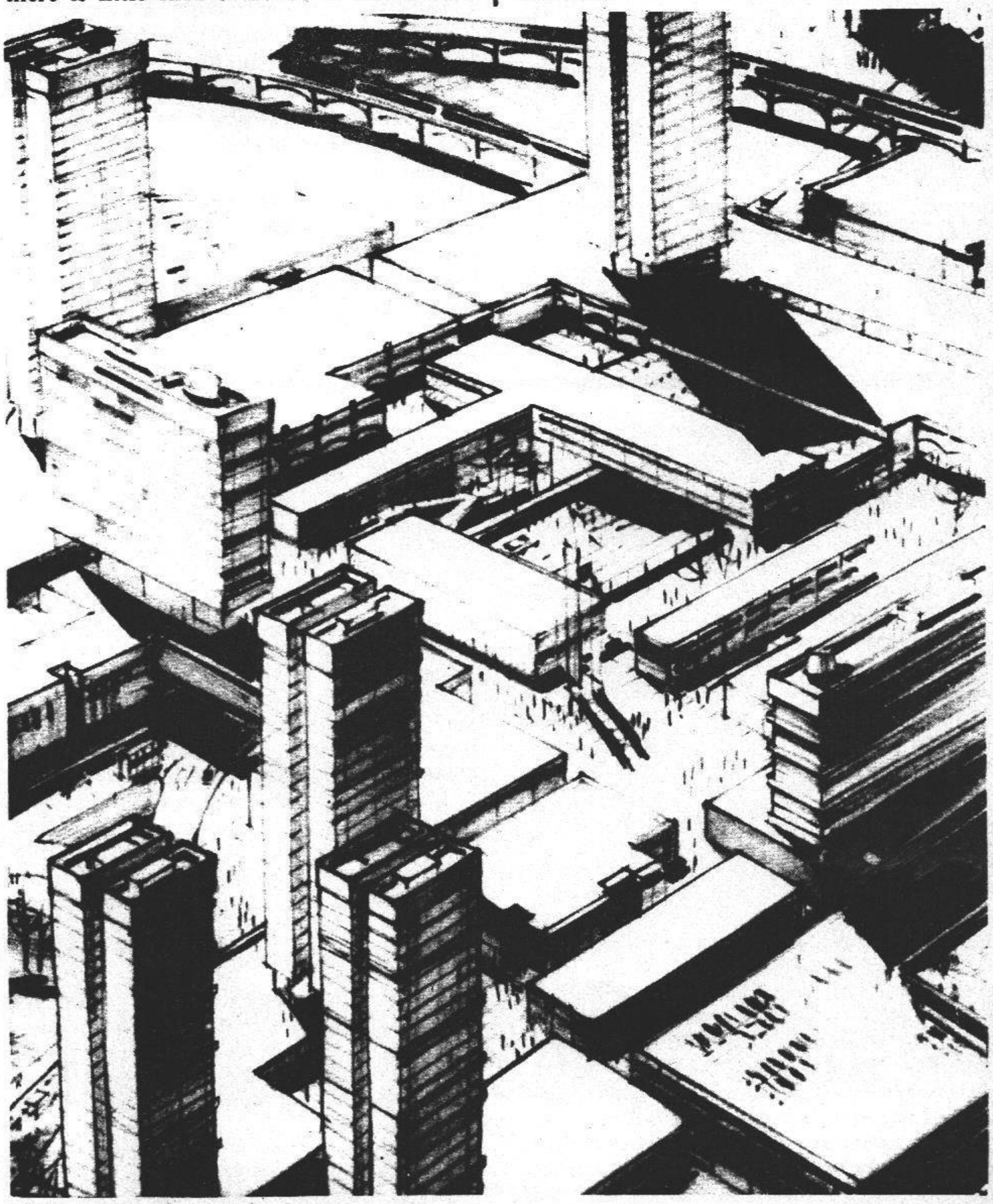
BRIXTON'S DECLINE

The pattern running through this has been clear. Private developers have sought the confidence of Lambeth Council, which has naturally been anxious to regenerate Brixton. Proposals for grand redevelopment have then stunted the desire of existing shops to improve, have caused commercial and residential blight, and have escalated Brixton's decline.

The existing large scale plan, for which there is little firm evidence of substantial support in terms of new retailers moving in to the area, would perpetuate that problem. What is needed now is a more realistic assessment of Brixton's needs — improvements quickly, through the retention of local housing (and the extension of it through some new Lambeth schemes nearby) and the speedy regeneration of its present retailing and amenity facilities.

There has in recent months been evidence that such an approach could attract investment, and would avoid the travesty of seeing Brixton become a derelict shopping centre... despite its grandiose plan.

Graham Norwood
Chair of Planning,
Lambeth

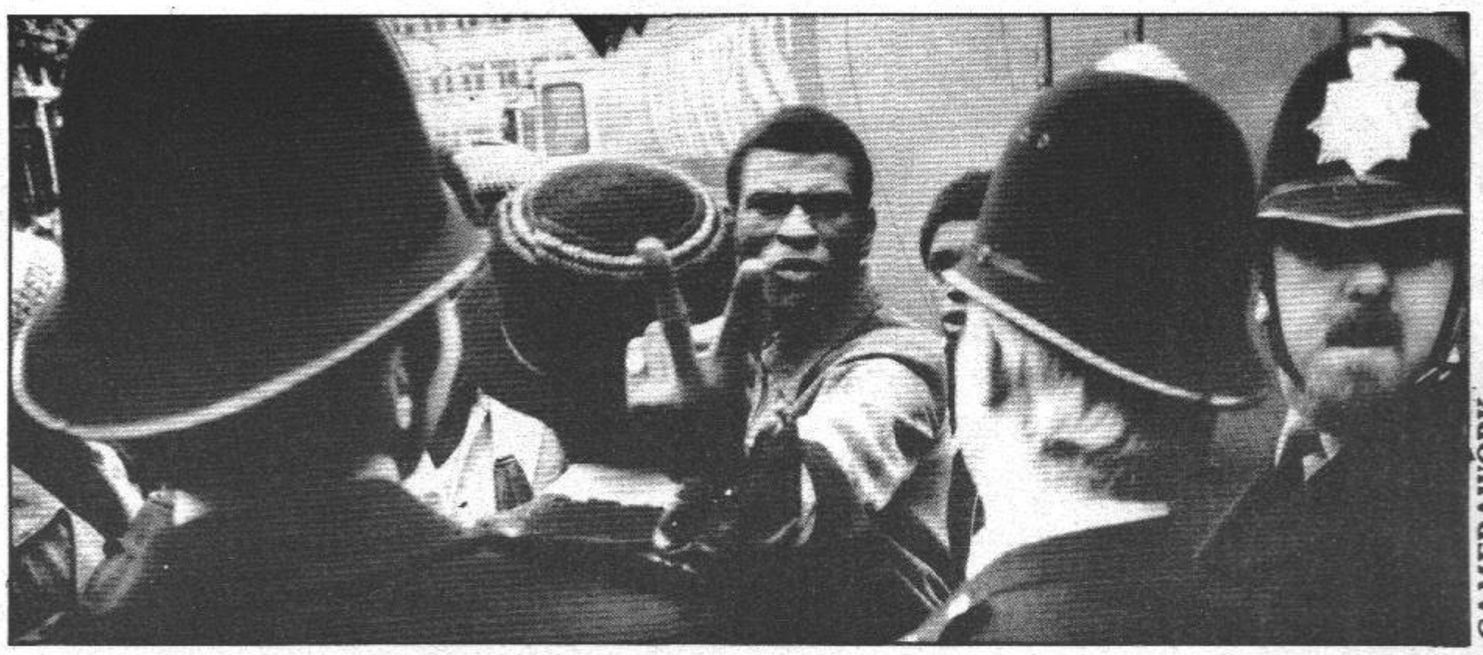


1963 outline proposals.

POLICE AND PEOPLE IN HACKNEY

THE Metropolitan Police chief, Sir Kenneth Newman, has been using Lambeth as a laboratory for the new approaches to police-community relations that he wishes to see. This leaves places like Stoke Newington in Hackney, where the crisis in policing is equally acute, in a never-never position as far as the Home Office authorities are concerned.

The Hackney Borough Council has launched carefully thought-out initiatives on police liaision, training of recruits, lay visiting of police stations and support for the victims of crime within the last year. They have fallen on deaf ears at the Home Office.



CAMERAWORK

The decision of Stuart Holland MP and GLC Councillor Bryn Davies to withdraw from the Lambeth police consultative committee is seen in Hackney Council as confirmation of our approach which has been to insist that liaison must:

*Be about substantive matters of policing policy and practice, not just glad-handing laced with crime figures.

*Be held under the umbrella of the Borough Police Committee in order to prevent the community becoming puppets in the hands of police strategists and to enable the Council to receive reportbacks directly thereby laying the groundwork for an accountable police force.

The suspicious death of Colin Roach in Stoke Newington Police Station has brought to the surface a long fear of the racialism at that establishment. The Borough Council was prodded into calling for an independent inquiry and the spectacular immobilism of the authorities on this and our own police liaison proposals has led us to an intention to withdraw the police precept (the money raised from the rates which goes to the police).

A recent study by the Police Federation in Hackney showed that suspicion of the police and a high fear of personal crimes went hand in hand in Hackney. We look to police accountability to ease some of our problems.

Brynley Heaven
Chair, Hackney Police Committee

IMMIGRATION
A RACIST AND SEXIST AMENDMENT

The Government's latest change in the Immigration Rules, which took effect in February, is a blatently racist and sexist amendment to legislation which is already immensely discriminatory. Ironically, Whitelaw proposed the amendments in order to bring Britain into line with European Community law on discrimination, since there are currently three British immigration cases which are due to come before the European Court of Human Rights. Whitelaw's first two attempts to amend the Rules (last October and December) were defeated by a bizarre coalition of Labour, SDP/Liberal Alliance and the Tory right-wing — some voting against the proposals because they were too racist, others because they were not racist enough!

SEXISTS

The new rules state that only women who are British Citizens (within the terms of the Nationality Act which came into effect this January) may be joined in this country by their foreign husbands and fiances. The foreign husbands or fiances of women who are settled here but do not hold British Citizenship will not be allowed to join them in this country. (Since the implementation of the Nationality Act many black women have been assigned the lesser status of British Overseas Citizenship rather than full British Citizenship). However, *men* who are normally settled here but do not necessarily hold the status of British Citizen *are* entitled to bring in foreign wives or fiancees, so the new Immigration Rules are clearly as sexist as ever.

RACIST

The new rules are also blatantly racist. Firstly, they insist that the couple must have already met. This will have its most serious effect on people contracting arranged marriages, notably people from the Indian sub-continent — which is, of course, the intention. Secondly, if the marriage breaks down or the woman dies within a year, the man will normally be deported.

Furthermore, there has been a shift in the 'burden of proof'. Couples must now prove that their marriage is not a marriage of convenience contracted solely for immigration purposes. In other words, contrary to the normal practice of British law, they are automatically presumed to be guilty of a fraudulent attempt to evade the immigration laws unless they can prove themselves innocent of such a ploy. They must also be ready to prove, throughout their first year of marriage, that they are genuinely living together as a married couple, allowing themselves to be cross-questionned and generally kept under surveillance throughout this period.

EASIER FOR IMMIGRATION OFFICERS

While ostensibly an attempt to make the Immigration Rules less discriminatory in order to satisfy the European Court of Human Rights, the changes actually make it even easier for immigration officers to prevent black people settling in this country. The shift in the 'burden of proof' allows immigration officers to block the entry of anyone they choose simply by asserting that they have produced insufficient evidence that they are not trying to beat the immigration rules by means of a so-called marriage of convenience. Presumably it was the realisation of how the shift in the burden of proof could be used to keep black people out of Britain which finally brought most of the Tory right-wing into line behind Whitelaw.

During the final Parliamentary debate on the issue, the Tories made no secret of the fact that the new rules were intended specifically to restrict *black* immigration. As has been the pattern with all immigration legislation, black people are implicitly defined as a threat which can only be contained by ever more stringent laws to keep them out. Once again, institutional racism serves to define black people as 'the problem' — not white racism.

Nina Biehal
Lambeth Central CLP



NEWS FROM TOWER HAMLETS

HOUSE THE HOMELESS!

by Tower House Residents' Committee

Tower House is one of a group of large hostels owned by Rowton Hotels PLC, three of which are situated in London. The three hostels – Arlington House, Camden; Rowton House, Lambeth; and Tower House, Tower Hamlets – together regularly sleep more than 2,000 homeless men.

The conditions prevailing in Tower House in particular are appalling, and in October 1982 a group of residents from the hostel formed the Tower House Residents Association to fight for better conditions and the basic rights of the residents. Almost immediately, Rowtons were forced to make changes in the hostel after fire and health inspections had been made by the relevant authorities.

To say that Rowtons were not happy with having to make long overdue improvements is putting it mildly, and as well as evicting all known members of the Residents Association they decided that, faced with the prospect of having to make even more improvements in their hostels, they would rather sell the properties with vacant possession. This would mean over 2,000 men being thrown onto the streets.

Last month the GLC announced that an offer of £¾ million had been made to Rowton Hotels for Tower House, but they wanted more than the property was worth. Rowtons now claim to have a private buyer interested in the hostel if it were empty.

Jim Lawrie, chairperson of the Residents Association said *"Tower Hamlets Council has at its disposal a Control Order, signed and ready for implementation, but they will not use it unless Rowton Hotels, owners of Tower House, sell with vacant possession. This is the wrong attitude. Why put the lives of residents at risk any longer than necessary? The time for action is now, and with this in mind and the support of a rapidly growing membership we are prepared to use all means at our disposal to get the Council to take over Tower House."*



It is amazing to think that people who have become homeless, for whatever reason, and those who have been discharged from TB clinics and mental institutions should be dumped by the local authorities into a place like Tower House that has been condemned by an independent Environmental Health Consultant as totally unfit for human habitation, and by Fire Chiefs as a death trap.

It has been proved that the problems of homeless people are not solved by dumping them into privately owned hostel accommodation. With unemployment rising so fast, it is time local authorities accepted the responsibility they have for providing suitable housing for homeless people.

Jim Lawrie says: *"Our Association is putting all its energies into pressing the Tower Hamlets Council to compulsorily purchasing Tower House, to bring the hostel up to a standard fit for human habitation, and implement a phased closure so to rehouse residents according to their needs and wishes. We do see a need for hostels for the single homeless, but not of the kind like Tower House – it and all those like it must go!"*

LABOUR GROUP EXPULSIONS

Michael Shanahan (Stepney and Poplar CLP)

ON Monday 7th March the ruling Labour Group in Tower Hamlets took the decision to expel seven councillors from the group. Nearly a year after the council elections the majority in the group have embarked upon a course which can only do immense damage to the cause of Labour in this borough and will give aid and succour to the enemies of the labour movement, the Liberal/SDP Alliance.

Since last May the seven councillors who have now been expelled have consistently argued that the immense social and economic problems facing working people require a radical solution. Such a solution had to be based on the decisions of the Labour Party, democratically decided by the organisations of the movement through trade union branches, Labour Party branches and conference decisions.

There were disputes over a wide range of issues, and the expulsions were a direct result of these disputes.

Housing

After the disastrous election results last May when the Labour Party lost 12 seats, 11 to the Liberals and one to an independent and came close to losing two other wards to the SDP, the GMC instructed the Labour Group to set up a housing committee. The majority in the Labour Group refused to do so. The resolution was then taken into the Council and was supported by the Liberals. The housing crisis in the borough had reached catastrophic proportions. In spite of the acute shortage in family housing, the Labour Group has persisted against Labour policy, in selling unimproved council housing.

Yet despite the resolution from the Labour Party to set up a housing committee to begin to come to grips with the problem, the leadership refused to have anything to do with the housing committee and have tried to sabotage its work from the outset. All this in a Borough which lost heavily to the Liberals campaigning on housing issues, and where there are 9,000 people on the waiting list, with thousands of empty properties lying idle.

At a full council meeting on 9th March in full range of a packed gallery the leader of the Labour council made an attack on the leader of the GLC over the issue of handing over of GLC stock, saying that he would expect more cooperation from Tom King, the Environment Minister. Not surprising from a Labour Leader who is cooperating with the Tories in selling off Council housing stock, not to mention his cooperation with the Tories via the London Dockland Development Corporation who have plundered our land in the interests of big business and property sharks. Our Leader sits on the Board against the wishes of the local party, with none other than the arch traitors Bob Mellish and John O'Grady.

The decision taken by the majority of the Labour Group to install a new telephone system in the Town Hall using the Plessey PABX system, defeated with the aid of the Liberals at full council, again shows how the right wing leadership are prepared to ignore the NEC guideline document issued in April 1982 calling on all Labour Groups in England and Wales to divest themselves of their South African interests.

Tower House

Tower House is another scandalous example of the Labour leadership's intransigence. 700 men are forced to live in what can only be described as a Dickensian workhouse, some of them too old and infirm to leave the hostel. There was a highly and well organised campaign by the residents themselves. Not, I may add by the Labour Party MP or GLC representatives to their eternal shame. The residents' committee gathered petitions, and lobbied the Council. The right wing Labour Group firmly refuse to take out a management order, which is one of the demands, saying that the Borough in no way is going to spend its money on people who they say come from outside and that other people – whoever they may be – should take on the responsibility.

DON'T MOURN ORGANISE!

By Peter Tatchell

Even in defeat, looking back on the Bermondsey by-election, I can say without equivocation: no regrets! No regrets for advocating radical socialist policies and confronting prejudice. In that process, we bought out the very best in the Labour Movement — an idealism and determination to swim against the torrent of abuse and smears which poured out from the popular press and opposition parties. In Bermondsey, we saw what solidarity and comradeship are all about. People came from all over the country to give us their support. When the going got rough, we didn't scatter. We stuck together and stuck by our principles. My thanks to *everyone* who gave their *everything* for Labour in Bermondsey.

When contemplating defeat, just look at the odds stacked against us:

* We had inherited years of local neglect by Mellish and O'Grady and a deep resentment against their right-wing 'Tammany Hall' council with its endless delays in housing repairs and transfers. For 20 years, the Bermondsey Labour Party had been decaying and moribund. It didn't bother to campaign or recruit new members. The Labour vote was passive and based upon traditional loyalties. There had been no attempt to win an active commitment to socialist ideas.
* Eighteen months ago, the opening salvos of the Bermondsey by-election campaign were fired when Bob Mellish launched a ferocious attack against the Labour Party and declared that he would not stand again as MP. He followed this up with further invective against my selection as PPC and a call for people not to vote Labour in the local council elections last year.

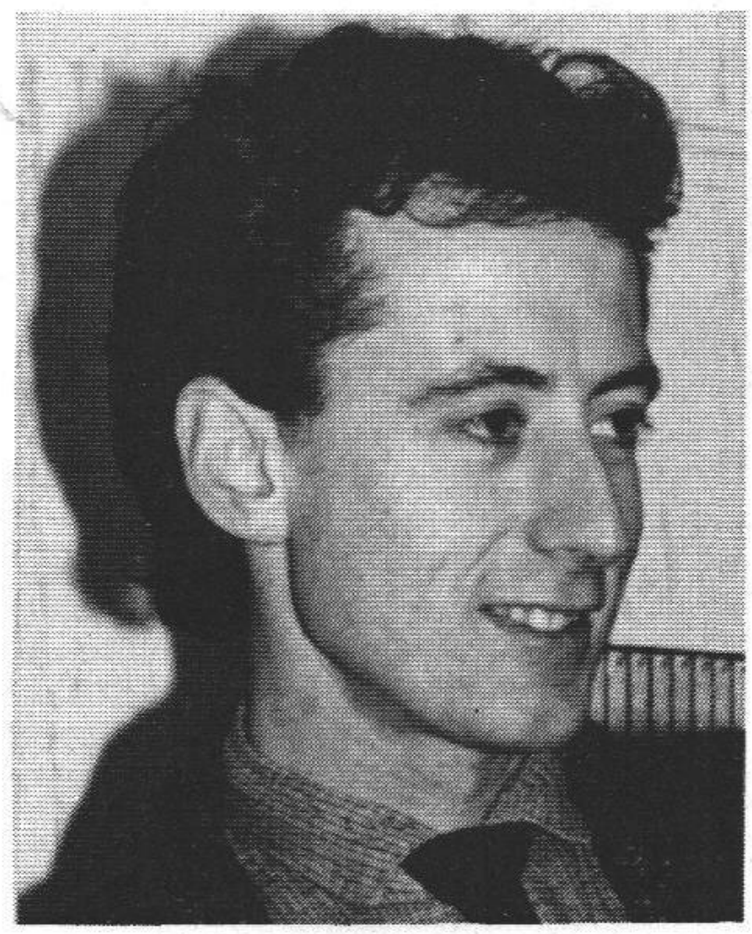
DENOUNCED

* In December 1981, I was denounced by the Party leader and subsequently refused endorsement by the NEC. There followed a year of internal battles to secure eventual endorsement as Labour's official candidate. Throughout that period, we experienced the non-stop 'drip effect' of a hostile press, culminating in eight fabricated newspaper stories clearly intent on discrediting my candidature. These stories, which played on people's fears and prejudices, led to more than twenty death threats.
* On the day the election campaign finally officially opened, our introductory leaflets were impounded and our first press conference was cancelled by the national party officers.
* Throughout the election, the fifteen anti-Labour candidates all sang the same tune: 'Stop Tatchell'. Some of their tunes were a throwback to the McCarthyism of the 1950s; playing on xenophobia, queer-baiting and red scares.
* Three opinion polls came to the aid of our trailing opponents to encourage tactical anti-Labour voting. In the closing stages of the campaign, the press engineered stories about plots to ditch the Party leader. On the even of poll, the NEC expelled five members from the Party in a blaze of media publicity.

After all that, how on earth did we get 7,968 votes?

One of the main lessons from the Bermondsey debacle is that the party cannot conduct witch-hunts against its own members and then expect to win elections. It was the NEC's original non-endorsement which lent credibility to our opponents' claim that I was a dangerous extremist who was unfit to be an MP.

It was that same non-endorsement which gave Fleet Street the signal that I was fair game for scurrilous smears. It was that same non-endorsement which for over a year diverted the Bermondsey party away from constituency campaign work.



I hope the party leadership has learnt the lesson of Bermondsey and will now call off the witch-hunt so we can *all* put *all* our efforts into campaigning for a Labour victory in the general election.

Let's have a few more of those huge Labour Party demonstrations which Michael Foot led against unemployment and the nuclear arms race two years ago.

Let's build a massive extra-parliamentary opposition to the Tories, on the model of the Anti-Nazi League, which can unite all the Left and create a dynamic popular movement as the springboard for a Labour victory at the general election.

Don't mourn, organise!

Deadline for articles for next issue: Saturday April 9th.

Next issue out: Friday 22nd April.

Next Editorial Board meetings:
Tuesday March 22nd at 6.30pm
Tuesday April 26th at 6.30pm.
Both at County Hall.

THE ELECTION

The ghosts of old Bermondsey
Relive the blackout
Dug in behind barred doors.

There's no skyline this brick-grey evening
It's overcast, glum, blustery
Which confines the ghosts to barracks
Where they're bricked into cold boxes
Cross and grumpy
Unhooking their bolts and locks
Grumbling like the Luftwaffe:

A blitz on these reds and blacks
Drown 'em in the trenches
We've a curfew on our daughters
We're under occupation
We've been sold down river
And we didn't fight a war
For the likes of you.

The ghosts creep back into cracked concrete
They sleep around muttering stair-wells
They nag their way in under crumbling doors
They stalk the rotting block as journalists
Spray painting lies on every wall
Eating into the woodwork
Planting their poison pen letters
To broadcast defeat next morning
In ten inch high hissing headlines
The Sun The Mail The Standard The Star at war
A Quizzling in at every door.

Les Tate
(Lambeth Central CLP)

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

Socialists for a Labour Victory



Photo : Angela Phillips

WE may have only twelve weeks to get across a socialist message to a working class denied our message by a right wing media black-out, and confused by the failures of the Labour leadership to campaign for the policies of the Party.

Over 100 people packed into a small committee room at the House of Commons on March 7th to launch Socialists for a Labour Victory.

The campaign is determined to go out now and fight for our policies, as agreed by conference, to win a Labour majority.

Support, money and sponsorship is needed now — the job of all socialists is to be out fighting for and organising for a socialist victory.

Send sponsorship and support to the joint secretaries: Mandy Moore and Andy Harris, c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

JEREMY CORBYN

START THE CAMPAIGN NOW!

SOCIALISTS for a Labour Victory is a campaign pledged to organise for a Labour victory in the forthcoming General Election on the basis of the socialist policies passed at successive Labour Party Conferences.

The campaign must start now. The possibility of another Thatcher government is one of the gravest threats ever faced by the working class and oppressed groups.

Only a fighting lead from the Labour Party can save working people from another five years of Toryism. Labour can gain massive support and win the election if it clearly presents its socialist policies, and mobilises the support of all sections of the community who will benefit from them. SLV believes that Labour conference policies in the following areas should be the core of the campaign.

1. Unequivocal commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament and removal of all nuclear bases in Britain.

2. An economic policy which returns to full employment, nationalises the 25 top companies, returns social spending to 1977 levels in real terms, introduces a 35 hour week, withdraws from the EEC and expands the NHS, and education for all. Massive house building programmes and renationalising of hived-off sections of public industry without compensation.

3. A commitment to raise working class living standards, and that there should be no incomes policy. Defence of trade union rights and immediate repeal of all Tory anti-union legislation.

4. Full campaigning and commitment to all Party policies for women, including positive action in employment, public spending, child care and health, including legislation to give women the right to control their own fertility.

5. The repeal of the racist Nationality Act, the Immigration Acts and a determination to eradicate racial prejudice and inequality.

6. To increase civil liberties, obtain police accountability and repeal repressive legislation.

7. Labour's policies cover many other central areas. A united Ireland; support for liberation movements in other countries. These must also be part of a socialist campaign.

We pledge ourselves to fight for a Labour government committed to implement these policies. We will campaign for the election of a majority Labour government. After the General Election there must be no formal coalition with other parties in the House of Commons. There must be no informal deals with other parties in the House of Commons where a Labour Government agrees to water down its programme in return for Parliamentary support. If Labour has no overall majority in the House of Commons, then we support the creation of a minority Labour Government which will seek to carry through its programme.

We expect and demand that the Parliamentary Labour Party be accountable to the Party and implements Conference decisions.

The fight for socialist policies and a witch-hunt against socialists inside the Party are incompatible. We demand an immediate end to the witch-hunt in the Party, and a united campaign around agreed socialist policies.

If we are to get rid of the Tories and elect a Labour government, Labour's socialist campaign must start now. We will demand and campaign for Labour's socialist policies to be clearly stated in the Labour Party's official campaign document and Manifesto, and that the Party as a whole campaigns for them. We will campaign ourselves on the basis of these policies.

We will reach out to and campaign with all those who want a Labour victory; who are fighting for aspects of Labour Party Conference policies; and who are fighting the Tories. We support the Greenham Common women; the People's March for Jobs and all those taking mass action against the Tories. We call for sponsorship, support and help from all Labour Party organisations, trade union bodies, MPs and PPCs who agree with the need for socialists to campaign now and organise for a Labour Victory.

CLPD MANOEUVRES

Well, I have to admit that I was wrong about the new CLPD Executive. I said in the last issue of Briefing that attempts to resurrect the 'Manchester Withington Amendment' would be made, and that fudging would go on over AGM decisions. I was wrong. Poor old Manchester Withington wasn't even given a decent burial before resuscitation began. And the fudging I predicted turned out to be full blown disregard for the AGM's decisions.

There was an attempt to tell us that the AGM's decisions were 'ambiguous' but this was really pretty feeble; I only wish I had a video film of the meeting – some of the manoeuvring had to be seen to be believed.

A NUMBER OF CO-OPTIONS

The new Executive has now made a number of co-options to the EC. Usually co-option facilities are used when vacancies occur or new situations arise which warrant extra EC members; not so on the CLPD EC. At the first meeting of the EC we were presented with a list of 6 (the maximum allowed): all these 6 had stood in the EC elections at the AGM and been defeated, and all were promptly put on to the EC – with voting rights. Next we were presented with a list of 28 'key persons' who would work in the regions. At the AGM a number of resolutions and constitutional amendments were tabled concerning the role of key persons, but these were not reached due to lack of time. One of the proposals in these was that key persons should be elected at meetings of CLPD members in the regions concerned; this proposal was raised again at the EC meeting. This didn't go down too well, however. One prominent member told us that we didn't have time for 'pissing around in consultation'. So, 28 key persons were then put onto the EC – with voting rights. That first Executive meeting co-opted 34 new members: three *more* than the 31 elected by the AGM.

We then proceeded to discuss the AGM decisions and CLPD's future tactics. It was put to the EC that although the AGM appeared to have voted against 'Manchester Withington' there was some ambiguity about this; there then followed a convoluted process of examining and defining words in an effort to get round the policy decisions of the Annual Meeting.

What was actually carried at the AGM read:

'It would be mistaken and dangerous to incorporate into the Labour Party constitution the restrictions and requirements placed upon groups contained in the Manchester Withington amendment . . . accordingly, this AGM believes that the CLPD should not support such proposals'.

Ambiguous? Well, *I* don't think so.

LOSE CREDIBILITY

We were then told that CLPD would 'lose credibility' *(sic)* if we withdrew support for Manchester Withington style resolutions already down for discussion – and this included Hendon South's resolution to the then forthcoming London Labour Party Annual Meeting. So it was moved that we support this, even though the AGM had agreed that it was 'mistaken and dangerous'. However, any leaflet that went out would state the AGM's position, and so we had the ludicrous spectacle at the London Annual Meeting of CLPD's leaflet stating we could not give 'unqualified support' to Hendon South – but that it did have its good points! For the record, the Hendon South resolution failed miserably at the London Labour Party Annual Meeting.



Mandy Moore

However, this was not the end of the disastrous decisions made by that first CLPD EC Meeting. A 'two-pronged approach' to the Register was agreed involving support for the 'Greenwich Amendment' on the one hand and a new, as yet unwritten, 'fall-back position' on the other. But, again, the AGM's version of a two-pronged approach was different. The AGM agreed that we should:

'campaign for and support only those proposals which seek to completely reverse the 1982 decision, or which seek to establish and safeguard the positive rights of groups of Party members to organise without being subject to extra and special membership conditions (e.g. the Greenwich Amendment)'.

A two-pronged approach? Yes. But one based on outright opposition to the Register, and Greenwich as a 'fall-back'; not two fall-back positions.

The new EC is not keen on 'up front' campaigning against the Register. This was borne out when Vladimir Derer told us that we couldn't implement the resolution carried at the AGM which called on CLPs not to implement expulsions, because this was 'unconstitutional'. Now as I remember, this argument was used at the AGM and the membership didn't accept it. Yet this decision will not be implemented, and has been shelved by the EC.

BLOODY CHEEK

Last, but by no means least, the attacks being made by the ruling hierarchy in CLPD on the Campaign's vice-presidents are disgusting. Vladimir Derer appears to have taken it upon himself – without consulting the EC – to write to the vice-presidents elected at the AGM and inform them that they might disagree with decisions made there; perhaps they'd like to leave the campaign, and – if he doesn't hear from them to the contrary – he'll assume they no longer want to be vice-presidents. What a bloody cheek. This sort of provocative attitude – and the flagrant disregard for AGM decisions – is tearing CLPD apart. Unless we can bring back democracy and accountability to CLPD itself, CLPD won't be able to fight for those principles with any force again in the wider movement.

CIVIL DEFIANCE, NOT CIVIL DEFENCE

Talks with Christopher Mayhew, Tory Minister responsible for drawing up the new civil defence regulations, have revealed once again that the regulations are nothing but a con-trick.

The requirement for nuclear control centres which will withstand the blast means that non of those presently existing are adequate. Nuclear shelters need to be built 500ft underground with 10ft thick concrete walls. So those of us lucky enough to have a place reserved will not be as safe as was thought.

A conscience clause will be introduced for local authority workers, who feel they cannot participate in bogus civil defence and some even claim that Mayhew hinted that authorities would be entitled to turn away 'unsuitable' volunteers. Whether a person's suitability will be a cruical question when it comes down to it, seems rather doubtful to me. There will be no Hard Rock '83, however maybe the Government doesn't need another dress rehersal?

Finally, those of us, not fortunate to have our name on a seat in the Nuclear Control centre, will not be evacuated either. Depite, once offering this alternative, the Government now say it is not as important as the other options (that is crouching beneath the kitchen table, with a bottle of whisky), and will not plan for it. Mayhew told a meeting of local government officers 'It is not for local authorities to determine their own reception areas.' In other words, tough luck, ratepayers.

What we need is Civil Defiance, *not* Civil Defence. Nuclear-free councils must show the way forwards in refusing to co-operate, and exposing the war palns. After all, we may never get another chance.

Adelaide Leslie
Wood Green CLP

DEFEND GREENHAM COMMON

Valerie Coultas

There is an emergency situation developing around the Greenham Common Peace Camp. Having failed to quash the mass support for the actions the women have taken against Cruise through the democratic channels of Public debate, Newbury's Tory Council, a notorious defender of 'freedom and democracy', has now tried to silence the women by taking out an injunction to throw the women off the 'common land' and prevent them from 'conspiring with others to do the same'. This means that if any of the 59 women so much as speak up publicly in support of the camp, they could be thrown in prison for contempt of court.

Newbury Council has been fighting a rearguard action to close down the camp ever since the women set it up after their march from Wales 18 months ago. Now, by using a law that dates back to feudal times, at a secret meeting of a council sub-committee, they changed the legal status of the land. People living in Newbury will have to apply for a special dog licence to be allowed to walk their dogs! Who says the days of Lords and vassals are gone forever?



Photo : Janet Pickering

VANGUARD ROLE

Now is the time for the labour movement to act in defence of these women who have played a vanguard role in the fight to stop cruise missiles being sited in Britain. Why has Greenham captured not only the attention and support of thousands of women and men in Britain but also become a focus, throughout Europe for the Peace movement as a whole?

Firstly the issue itself of opposition to nuclear war is one that concerns women directly. The 'caring role' women are ascribed in our society is one that can focus women's eyes on the social cost of war, the deaths and the destruction. The utter banality of nuclear war — where those that survive would be the unlucky ones — strikes a cord in women even more than men, whose social conditioning encourages them to identify more strongly with militarism. Nuclear weapons, in the hands of imperialist rulers who have stressed their willingness to use them if necessary, provides a target for women's discontent that feminists have very effectively harnessed to militancy.

WHAT MILITANCY

Which brings me to my second point about Greenham. What militancy! Not since the days of the suffragette movement has Europe experienced such stridency from women. If it was a 'psychological necessity for feminists in Britain to get tough over the vote' history certain seems to have repeated itself once again over Cruise. The exact tactics are different of course — Greenham women have not blown up piers or set fire to letter boxes — being committed to non-violent direct action. But there are similarities. The Pankhursts shouted at Tory and Liberal politicians. Greenham women have heckled and tripped over Tory politicians and are, unfortunately for the Labour Party, intending to trip up right-wing Labour politicians in the next general election. The suffragettes again and again besieged the House of Commons demanding the vote. Greenham women occupied the gallery in their anti-cruise cause. Common to both movements was and is the willingness to get arrested and imprisoned, the consistent refusal of many women to be bound over to keep the peace at Greenham is paralleled by the decision of the suffragettes not to have fines paid for them, but to serve their term and to endure force feeding conditions.

WOMEN'S TACTICS

These tactics have a tradition as women's tactics because more traditional forms of protest often exclude women, or fail to mobilise them. The collective power and militancy of women is not something that socialists should condemn. It is something we should enthusiastically support. But while we must mobilise behind the Greenham women and wage a massive defence campaign on their right to protest, it is not enough for Labour Party and trade union members to stand by and applaud. The women at Greenham have given the spark but they alone cannot stop the missiles arriving in Britain. We have to get our own houses — the houses of the labour movement in order — if their militancy is not to be in vain. It would be an awful repeat of history if the British labour movement turned its back on the Greenham women in the same way as large sections of it did with the struggle for the vote.

NO EQUIVOCATIONS

So what needs to be done? We must firstly allow no equivocations, no conditions to be placed on the commitment of Labour to disarm. As the trade union conferences come up we must demand mass action from the trade unions and Labour Party jointly to mobilise against Cruise. And here we must remember that we not only have right-wing trade union leaders to do battle with. The Labour Party NEC has not yet done much to carry out a conference commitment to turn Hiroshima Day 1983 into a day of a massive protest. Clearly calling demonstrations against Cruise is rather dangerous when you want to defeat the unilateralist argument within the labour movement and get multilateralists like Healey in the saddle. Women in the Labour Party and the trade unions, at the Women's TUC and Labour Party conferences must put this kind of pressure on the labour movement leaders. The suffragettes and the hunger strikers were forced to drastic measures such as the hunger strike because the labour movement stood still. We cannot let that happen on cruise. Into the Greenham support groups. Build May 24th as a day of mass action for women against Cruise but don't let the labour movement leaders off the hook.

Greenham Diary

Thursday March 31st. Women's blockade of Greenham.
Friday April 1st. Human chain from Greenham, women only, to Burghfield to Aldermaston. Festival at Aldermaston in the evening.
May 24th. International Women's Day of Action for Disarmament.

For info on Greenham support groups in your area of London ring Valerie Coultas on 359-8371 during daytime.

PROTEST AGAINST WANDSWORTH COUNCIL'S PRO-NUCLEAR POLICIES!
Surround Wandsworth Town Hall during next Council Meeting

Wednesday 23rd March at 6.30pm-8pm
Assembly point: St. Anne's Church, St. Anne's Crescent, SW18 at 6.30pm

Organised by Wandsworth Direct Action CND

Bring candles and objects to symbolise the life that will be destroyed by nuclear war.

LABOUR CND: 'Packed to Overflowing'

Adelaide Leslie
(Wood Green CLP)

Labour CND at its annual conference on February 19th, voted in a new executive with a clear plan to fight for nuclear disarmament by a Labour Government. Resolutions passed called for a campaign to secure the implementation of Composite 51, to campaign for a special Labour Party conference if the Manifesto excludes unilateral disarmament and the production of a popular pamphlet for the General Election arguing CND's policies.

Another resolution which fell, argued for dropping CND's committment of withdrawal from NATO and spoke about 'non-nuclear defences'. Pat Arrowsmith pointed out in the debate that Labour CND is a section of CND in the Labour Party and not the other way round and CND is in favour of leaving NATO.

EUROPEAN WIDE DEMONSTRATION

The outgoing executive presented proposals for the next year. These include campaigning for European-wide demonstration on Hiroshima Day, a People's March for Peace and Jobs, to turn local labour parties out to the Peace Movement and to make unilateral disarmament crucial in the General Election. Other ideas were to select only pro-CND candidates and to support the Nucelar-Free Zone movement.

The conference was attended by well over 100 delegates from all over the country. The organisers were surprised at the response and the conference started late as we had to find a larger room to hold it in. There was no creche although some people had brought their children, and there were no minutes from last year's AGM.
Labour CND can be contacted at:
11 Goodwin Street,
London N4
Membership £2 per year.



On Friday, 25th February, from 8.30am to 5.30pm, members of South London Action for Peace, largely made up of residents of Wandsworth, picketed the London office of Tarmac Construction Ltd., at 50 Park Street, London W1. At the same time 20 people occupied Tarmac's office in Chepstow, and over 100 people picketed Tarmac's main office at Wolverhampton, where the Board of Directors was holding its monthly meeting. The purpose of all these events was to demonstrate concern at Tarmac's involvement with building the silos to house the Cruise missiles at Greenham Common. The Greenham Common contract is worth £11½ million to Tarmac Construction.

South London Action for Peace had previously written to Tarmac Construction asking for a meeting to discuss Tarmac's role in the installation of Cruise missiles, a matter of deep public concern. As the meeting was refused, a delegation of CND representatives, nuclear-free zone local councillors, and trade union representatives asked to see the Board of Directors, in the hope that Tarmac will start to take a more responsible attitude to the part they are playing in the present terrifying escalation of the nuclear arms race. This was also refused.

Composite 51

'This Conference records its alarm at the continuing arms race between the super-powers and the increasing threat of nuclear war within Europe, rejects the policy of the present Government in increasing its reliance on a defence policy based on nuclear weapons and recognises that unilateral nuclear disarmament by Britain will be a vital initiative leading towards multilateral disarmament worldwide.

Conference re-affirms the decisions of Annual Conference in 1980 and 1981 committing the Labour Party to unilateral disarmament by:
a) opposing unconditionally the replacement of Polaris by Trident or any other system and the deployment of Cruise missiles, the neutron bomb and all other nuclear weapons in or by Britain;
b) closing down all nuclear bases, British or American on British soil or in British waters;
c) bringing Britain's military expenditure as a percentage of the gross national product into line with the average of our major European allies;
d) dismantling the defence sales office and developing with the trade union movement a detailed programme for the conversion of the relevant parts of the arms industry to the manufacture of socially useful products so that no compulsory redundancy should arise from this policy.

Conference notes the acceleration of the arms race over the past year and further calls upon the next Labour Government to oppose the deployment of chemical and biological weapons in or by Britain and to halt the supply of plutonium to the United States.
Conference instructs the National Executive Committee to:
(i) campaign for this policy in association with the growing peace movement and those local authorities which have declared themselves nuclear free zones or opposed the Government's arms drive and the Government's civil defence programme; declares its support for the Foreign Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Bases (Prohibition) Bill sponsored by Labour Members of Pariament. It demands that the next Labour Government implements the provisions of this Bill as a matter of high priority;
(ii) discuss Labour's policy with our sister parties of the Socialist International with a view to working with them towards the achievement of a nuclear free zone in Europe and instructs the National Executive Committee to intitiate moves within the Socialist International to support with European Nuclear Disarmament a European wide demonstration on Hiroshima Day, 6th August, 1983;
(iii) Support the Greek Socialist Government in its attempt to remove nuclear missiles from Crete;
(iv) develop the non-nuclear defence policy based on the legitimate defence interests of Britian;
(v) ensure that the next general election manifesto contains an unequivocal, unambiguous committment to unilateral nuclear disarmament and for the Parliamentary Labour Party, including spokesmen on defence to actively campaign on this policy, in its first session in office.'

LONDON REGIONAL

AS a new delegate to Regional Conference I was pleased that my CLP delegation consisted of three women and one man. I thought we were off to a good start – until I was reminded by the general composition of Conference how far we still have to go.

The Greater London Labour Party's Annual Meeting is the first of the Party's Regional Annual Conferences so the 1983 AGM thus provided a timely opportunity for this major Labour Party forum to consider important recent events within the Party. The NEC's expulsion of the five members of the Militant Editorial Board, the Bermondsey by-election, and press speculation on Michael Foot's leadership together shaped the background and context of our debates.

Long shadow of the NEC

The long shadow of the NEC was felt at the very start of Conference with the issue of one of the five Militants' right of attendance as a delegate from his constituency. Hammersmith CLP had but a few days previously reaffirmed Keith Dickinson as one of their delegates. To avert the risk of constitutional invalidity by outright non-compliance with the NEC's decision a compromise was sought to allow Keith Dickinson to stay – with

June Battye
(Brent South CLP)

speaking but not voting rights – through the suspension of Standing Orders. But with a clear trade union vote against, this move was defeated by 264,000 to 451,000. (The rest of the Hammersmith North delegation withdrew in solidarity with their comrade of 28 years Labour Party membership). The debate and decision were taken in a calm manner – but what a sad day. An injury to one is an injury to all, and yet this was not accepted by most trade union delegates. Surely they too recall that the last time the Party was engulfed in expulsions – in the 1950s – Labour was out of power for almost a generation.

The overwhelming view of Constituency and Women's Section delegates was that the NEC have no mandate to take expulsionary proceedings as a result of last year's Annual Conference. Nor has the NEC the right to tread on the prerogative of a CLP to determine who is or who is not a member of the Labour Party. Yet a split has opened up between CLPs faced with the possibility of disbandment as a result of refusing to accept the NEC's expulsions – Hammersmith North and Islington South and Finsbury – and others (like Lambeth Norwood) who take a different view of how to fight back.

Many delegates will now be taking this issue of the NEC's role back to their CLPs and trade union workplaces. I believe that Conference sent a clear message to the NEC: you can have expulsions or you can have unity – but you cannot have both. Only unity can bring electoral success. Expulsions and attacks upon the party are not the route to victory, as the Bermondsey by-election has shown.

Peter Tatchell's strategy

It was ironic that the first proper debate of the weekend was on the campaigning role of the Labour Party. It was rightly argued that members should be back on the doorstep (not in the cheap and shallow Liberal-SDP 'pavement politics' sense) to argue policies and to put the issues. We need to win back the working class vote in London. It was ironic because this was exactly Peter Tatchell's strategy – and much acknowledgement was given to his courage and dignity in the face of the onslaught he faced. If he had been present I am sure he would have been given a deserved ovation. Meanwhile there is still doubt



Photo : John Brennan

LONDON'S WOMEN WELL-REPRESENTED ON THE PLATFORM AT CONFERENCE!

CONFERENCE 1983

that we can start an effective general election campaign whilst there is a lack of confidence in the commitment and record of the Labour leadership on major policy issues. These were only fuelled by the recently announced campaign by some (most as yet unnamed) Labour MPs avowedly pledged to reverse completely our present policy on unilateralism.

It took till Sunday for the Conference to come to life. Yet the debate on the Register shows that the Labour Party Right has still fundamentally to accept that we are, and should remain, a broad church. An Emergency Motion against expulsions was carried (by 496,000 to 254,000) but a more detailed and substantial expression of dissent, Composite E2, went down to defeat (338,500 to 400,500). In its place, by only a slightly wider margin, Conference signalled its reluctant acceptance of the Register albeit with the NEC's arbitrary powers removed, while Hendon's Motion 62 was easily defeated on a show of hands.

Yet it must be said that it was Annual Conference's support for the Register that first gave this NEC the green light for its expulsions. The witch-hunt simply has to be abandoned as being wrong and destructive.

By pushing this witch-hunt so close to a possible General Election, it was argued, the Party was simply risking more Bermondsey-type results. The NEC majority have yet to recognise the force of this argument while some of the trade unions have yet to demonstrate that they are aware of the damage caused by supporting the Register decision and all it has brought in its wake.

So far some 44 London CLPs have taken a stand against the Register and expulsions and more are coming forward.

Campaigning strength

By contrast the Conference decisively shows that our campaigning strength is to be found in the range of socialist policies that are basic to our beliefs. In many areas the debates showed the extent of the evident and widespread agreement. In Education we seek a non-sexist, non-racist, and non-elitist system. On Housing we need to build to cut the huge waiting list of 131,000 and house the rootless and homeless decently. On Employment, we need a regional strategy of regeneration. Conference rejected Tory palliatives, such as the Youth Training Scheme, as well as the obviously undemocratic Enterprise Zones, the London Docklands Development Corporation, and Privatisation generally.

The London Labour Party has vigorously campaigned for the Labour alternative. In almost every area the GLC and ILEA are actively pursuing Labour's policies. On health, peace, public transport, democratic control of the police, employment (with the Greater London Enterprise Board getting off the ground), ethnic minorities issues and on gay rights. London is bringing the labour movement together. What we need is to see this reflected nationally.

I was also pleased that we got, albeit truncated, a debate on Northern Ireland where the composite motion was remitted. The points were excellently put: that the issue comes down to the recognition that the British must withdraw. All efforts to seek reforms as a compromise have failed because they were based on the present sectarian structure. As someone who has been to visit Northern Ireland and who has met both Protestant trade unionists and members of Sinn Fein I could not be convinced that our continued occupation was doing anything to resolve the divide.

Women's representation

The debate on women's representation on the Regional Council for once grappled with the two opposing views in a serious way: the choice between positive action and positive discrimination. The former argues that, with suitable encouragement, those women with merit will come forward; the latter that the current male-dominated power structure prevents that happening. I share the view that it is insulting to say that women should be voted for solely on the basis of their politics as it infers that this is the reason why we are not adequately represented. We must at this stage seek all ways available to get women into the Party structure and give them the opportunity to influence policy in a real way. This weekend saw a minimal step forward, as shown, for example, by the overdue decision to call on the GLC to provide free sanitary protection for women.

On a personal note I am not convinced that the Conference format facilitates the best discussion of policy. Given its democratic, and largely mandated, structure many delegates knew which way they would be voting before the speeches were heard. Certain important debates, such as Northern Ireland and Women's Rights, were squeezed. The Regional Women's Conference last year also adopted the traditional format, which gave rise to counter suggestions that included the idea of workshops as part of the weekend. Perhaps these are ideas that can be applied to the GLLP AGM too. This would enable more contributions to be made and a wider discussion possible. At present, the fringe meetings are often more lively than the Conference itself.

After two full day-long sessions, and having had to guillotine debate to get to the end of the Agenda, I found I questioned whether those on the platform should have as much time to reply as they so frequently took up. Nor am I sold on the tradition of guest speakers – no matter how worthy Jim Mortimer and Sam McCluskie are. I would have gladly traded some of the time to expand our debate on nuclear defence; or given greater attention to the excellent speeches on housing.

Overall my impression was of a sober Conference – (even if it did end with a flourish by voting to relax licensing restrictions!). The London Labour Movement is ready and willing to fight a vigorous and united campaign against this Government and play its full part in the wider General Election Campaign. But this readiness is more than tempered by a continuing distrust of the Labour Party leadership and the uphill struggle that we still – evidently – have to wage in support of our policy and our membership.

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights National Conference

The Labour Campaign for Gay Rights will be holding a National Conference in Bristol on Saturday 9th April.

Considerable progress has been made on the fight for gay rights within the Labour movement, particularly in local government. A number of councils such as Islington, Brent and the GLC have shown a very positive attitude towards the needs of lesbians and gay men.

However a lot more work needs to be done. The policy committements in Labour's draft manifesto are extremely weak and many trade unions seem rather reluctant to protect the rights of their gay members.

Among the topics to be discussed at the Conference will be the fight for gay rights in the trade union movement; campaigning for socialist ideas within the gay communities and work within the Young Socialists. A number of resolutions on gay rights have been on the agenda of the YS conference in each of the last few years but the 'Militant' dominated hierarchy have always prevented any discussion from taking place. Now the newly formed Gay YS Group are fighting back and LCGR will give them as much assistance as possible.



The conference will be at Shepherd Hall, Old Market Street, Bristol 2 on Saturday 9th April from 10.30am, to 5.00pm. The registration fee will be £2 (waged) or £1 (unwaged) and a creche will be provided.

For more information about the conference or the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, please contact LCGR, 3 Raleigh Road, Bristol BS3 1QP. Telephone 0272 634203 (evenings)
Andy Conway

GLC Women's Committee –

The GLC Women's Committee has been in existence for nearly a year. Since its debut in May 1982 it has had an uphill task attempting to implement its terms of reference – 'the promotion of the welfare and interests of women in Greater London . . . implementation of equal opportunities for women . . . advocacy of the abolition of practices which discriminate against women . . .' (Proposal for a Women's Committee Report 20/4/82). Despite the difficulties there have been achievements and new ground has been broken for women's rights. Numerous women's groups have been funded by grants from the Committee and it has passed many policy reports on women's issues ranging from traffic schemes to film licensing to women signing on, women's right to work, women and the health dispute and female circumcision.

Women's liberation has gone where it's never been before – namely the Town Hall – causing, among other things, consternation and even outrage. Local government bureaucracy has been shaken to its patriarchal core by the arrival of feminist working methods and structures. Right wing Labour councillors' racist heterosexism has choked on such occurrences as the setting up of the Black Lesbian working group. And the GLC Tory Opposition Leader, Richard Brew, has been moved to issue the dire warning that feminists are engulfing County Hall.

THE ACCEPTABLE FACE OF FEMINISM

Would that they were! In fact, while there have been some undoubted advances for women's liberation, County Hall could also be witnessing the birth of British 'femocratism'. In sum femocratism is the acceptable face of feminism by means of co-option. In the US such co-option of feminism is well advanced with women's rights -- as opposed to women's liberation – having achieved great credibility. Feminism has been integrated into mainstream society in the manner that Black rights were a decade ago. Among many Black Americans integration is now a dirty word. Once bleeding heart liberalism demanded (token) Black mayors, now it's the single independent women's rights career woman on the faculty board. In New Zealand and Australia they're known as femocrats.

Unless the elected representatives in the hot seats keep their policical wits and understand the political limitations, as well as the advantages, then the danger of feminism becoming femocratism after it has entered the Town Hall, gateway to the Local State, is immense. Good intentions abound, much excellent policy is passed, many demands are met. The provision of grants to many who haven't previously been deemed worthy enables much work for the otherwise dispossessed, disregarded, deprioritised and disenfranchised to continue and expand. Certainly the GLC Women's Committee has facilitated the provision of services for lesbians, older women, women with disabilities, immigrant women, women with child-care responsibilities and many others, that might otherwise not have been provided at all. But if a Women's Committee works only within the Town Hall and doesn't campaign on its policies outside of it, at the same time as fully respecting the Women's Movement's political autonomy, then for all the good that may be achieved the Committee will increasingly become an isolated femocratic Lady Bountiful.



FEMINISM OR BUREAUCRACY

There are three main areas for assessing a Women's Committee's record in respect of whether feminism or bureaucracy has the upper hand. These are firstly – to what extent has the Committee been able to practice feminist democracy; secondly – how has it sought to defend women's rights; and finally its ability to indicate, to some degree at least, a feminist alternative. Applying these criteria, together with the principle of women's autonomy, to the GLC Women's Committee gives some disturbing but challenging conclusions.

In relation to democracy the GLC Women's Committee got off to a fantastic start. Certainly County Hall had never seen anything like it. Open meetings, widely advertised, every three months; over 15 autonomous working groups with the aim of formulating, and campaigning on, policy proposals in areas such as lesbianism, child care, employment, planning, transport, violence, media, etc; and a co-ordinating committee to liaise with and centralise the group's work made up of representatives of all the groups and Women's groups in London, but open to any woman to attend, which meets every 6 weeks. Theoretically policy proposals go via the co-ordinating committee, from the working groups to the open meetings. The co-ordinating committee also monitors the formal Women's Committee itself by taking regular reports from its members and by discussing, criticising and making proposals on the reports that go to the Committee. Active mass involvement was sought from the start and attandances have been comparatively high with a fairly broad cross section of feminist opinion not only from the Women's Movement, but also from the labour movement, being represented. Special facilities for the disabled are provided, as is a creche. Positive discrimination in favour of ethnic minorities, lesbians, women with disabilities has been practised. Representatives are mandated and recallable and accountable. Feminist democracy, with its particular emphasis on accessibility, participation – maximum involvement of the maximum number, non-hierarchical structures with a distribution of authority, rotation of tasks, sensitivity to different women's needs, abilities, development and competence, diffusion of information and equal access to resources, has been attempted in a very big way. The idea was mass involvement and for women themselves to make the decisions.

Unfortunately the practice has been somewhat different. Came the time when the women decided, but the GLC elected representatives disagreed, the women were reminded in no uncertain terms who called the tune and paid the piper – the GLC and the GLC alone. Theoretically the open meetings are the sovereign bodies – and so they are, so long as the GLC agrees with their decisions, but if they don't then all and sundry are clearly reminded of the women's real role –

femocratism or feminism

Sarah Roelofs, Islington South CLP The GLC Women's Committee

advisory. The elaborate democratic structures in fact hide the fact that the women themseleves have no effective power. The working groups are 'autonomous' but powerless. They can research, recommend, suggest, advise and even demand, but they cannot decide and then campaign on those decisions. In fact even the working group's autonomy is in question as the Committee's staff proliferate and working groups find themselves being liaised with by numerous staff attending their meetings. One transport group meeting had three staff members attend it. Another meeting of the same group was instructed by a staff member to take minutes. Minutes are, ipso facto, a good thing and so is liaison, but it should be for the women themselves to decide on these matters and to invite staff members to their meetings, if they decide this is the way that they wish to do it.

The last open meeting, at the end of January saw some of the problems and women's, particularly Black women's, frustrations come out into the open. Attendance was down on previous meetings and the role of women who did come was clearer – to passively receive what the Committee in its wisdom had organised. When some Black women tried to bring a problem that they had been having with the Committee to the floor of the meeting, they were greeted with exasperation by Committee members. When another Black woman tried to ask what had been done in support of an Asian woman threatened with deportation, whose campaign the Committee had previously supported, she was met with exasperation and a dismissive remark. Many women left the meeting feeling very demoralised. The following co-ordinating meeting also showed the powerlessness of the women involved – they could comment and even sharply criticise (which they did – the Committee chair was accused of making a racist remark by some Black women), but their net ability to produce change was nil. All they could really do was 'recommend'.

Of course this obviously raised the question is it or can it ever be possible to devolve power from the state to those on the receiving end of the state's activities? Was it realistic to expect that women could be given some effective say, some power, over the County Hall decision making process which affected their lives? In so far as women in London are being consulted about these decisions the GLC Women's Committee has been revolutionary. Women have never been asked for their views in this manner before. And undoubtedly their views have been taken into consideration. But the women themselves have not decided. The GLC has done that. If it is unrealistic to think that power could have been devolved to the women, then are the democratic structures necessary? The balance-sheet to date seems to point to these structures camouflaging women's lack of a real say-so. The answer is not to sweep them away, but to make it clear that they can only ever be advisory. As it is, the result is directly the opposite to what should be happening – women's expectations are being raised, but can't be met leading to disillusionment and demoralisation. Women are being sapped rather than strengthened.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Application of the second criterion, that of defence of women's rights, shows similar weaknesses and problems. Can women's rights be defended, and women's liberation advanced, by working solely within the state?

The answer is quite simply no – there must be political activity within *and without* of the state for women's rights to be adequately defended. The difference is that between so called 'parliamentary' and 'extra-parliamentary' activity; between those who essentially keep people's activity confined to lobbying and letter writing with a few acting on behalf of the many, and those who seek to mobilise people onto the streets in mass action to demand their rights themselves. The GLC Women's Committee has essentially confined itself to activity within County Hall. As there is more than enough work to keep them busy there, it is difficult to see how consistent campaigning activity could be incorporated. But this is an argument for strict prioritisation of the Committee's activities, not for taking on more work on top of the mountain that they are attempting at the moment. The women involved in the working groups, co-ordinating meeting, and open meetings should be involved in the decision making process as to what, where and how should be a priority.

In fact what has happened in practice is that the Committee has de facto decided on behalf of the women. Campaigning activity has not been a priority – very little of it has taken place therefore. The Committee has been on the odd picket, supported demonstrations, travelled to Greenham Common, but the vast – and it really is *vast* – bulk of the Committee's work has taken place around paper. The equation of bureaucracy with paper volume couldn't be more literal. Policy reports on a large number of very important issues affecting women have been written and passed by the Committee – women's right to work, UB671 forms, health workers, film licensing, women wrestling, Afia Begum's deportation, low pay, female genital mutilation, women and peace, effect of immigration and nationality law on women, closure of the South London Hospital. In some instances press conferences have been called, and/or public meetings held, and/or protesting letters to the Home Secretary, or whoever, written. But that is usually the end of the matter. The Women's Committee may plead lack of staff – but that only strengthens the case for prioritisation. Having a base on the 'inside', sympathetic and supportive people in power can make women's fights and struggles much easier, but for this to be really effective the 'base' has got to go out to women and be placed at their disposal. Women's campaigns should be contacted by the GLC Women's Committee and asked how best they think that the Committee and its resources can help their campaign. For example, aside from distributing some literature, attending and speaking at public meetings and passing policy in support, the GLC Women's Committee hasn't really mobilised against the closure of the South London Women's Hospital. For this to happen, other work in the support unit would have to be dropped and this made a priority. After consulting the local campaign one thing that the Committee could have done was to arrange a speaking tour across London, or maybe helped to mobilise the unions through GLC contact with SERTUC, or agreed to organise London wide support pickets, or demos, or brought pressure to bear on the DHSS.

'CHOCOLATE BOXED FEMINISM'

One initiative which the Women's Committee itself feels is a London wide campaigning project is the Programme for Women in London. Much of the policy proposals and demands from the working groups have ended up in what some (maybe uncharitably, but one can see their point) have called 'chocolate boxed feminism'. This is an A4 purple and green booklet comprising the proposals and demands under different subject headings – violence, employment, child care, lesbians, etc – on rainbow coloured paper, a different colour for each subject and with plenty of space for individual women to write back their comments and views. This Programme is being taken around London for consultation by means of a public meeting in every borough. Frequently these meetings have been arranged over the heads of local activists – the Camden one was arranged without even consulting the Camden



Photo : Pete Grant

GOING SLOWLY ON THE ARTS?

At a well attended meeting in the Pit, the Royal Shakespeare Company's studio theatre in the Barbican, on Monday 21st February Tony Banks, the chairman of the Greater London Council's arts committee, defended his policies towards the arts in London. The other speakers were Clement Freud, the Liberal MP and Trevor Nunn, director of the Royal Shakespeare Company. John Mortimer, playwright and barrister, was in the chair.

Tony Banks opened the proceedings with his usual defence of the decision by the GLC Labour Group to channel funds away from the National centres, like the English National Opera and the National Theatre, to community arts centres, on the grounds that these were the Cinderellas of the arts world, long starved of funds and unable to attract support from wealthy business sponsors. The urgent need now, he argued, was to take art to the people, particularly in deprived areas of high unemployment. The national centres could rely on funding from central government and from private sponsors. Clement Freud followed whith his usual comic turn, contributing nothing of importance to the discussion, except the point that the arts were given a low priority by politicians because the general public was little interested. Trevor Nunn's contribution, marked by the despair and nihilism fashionable at present among the middle class intelligentia, was little more than a lament for the precarious state of the theatre in general and the Royal Shakespeare Company in particular. He opined that within 10 years live theatre in Britain could be dead.
The discussion that followed quickly degenerated into the usual fight between the defenders of the national institutions versus the champions of the community centres, interspersed with the odd plaintive plea on behalf of the commercial theatre. This sterile debate is symptomatic of the fatalism which seems to be so widespread. Obviously where funds are limited, as they are just now, then priority must be given to the areas of greatest need, but this is only the beginning — a short term measure for a desperate situation.

Any regular London theatergoer can see the symptoms of the malaise. Audiences are predominantly white and middle class, yet all the most ineresting work is coming from left-wing writers and directors and left-wing fringe groups.

REVOLUTIONARY INTERPRETATIONS

Most extraordinary of all, is the situation in the opera house, where the conservative middle class audience is often confronted by Marxist or even revolutionary interpretations of the great nineteenth century classics. Wagner's 'Ring' is the most obvious case. A revolutionary work, which for years has been stripped of its political implications by sentimental Christian or Jungian interpretations, has now been revealed by Goetz Freidrich at Covent Garden and Patrice Chereu at Bayreuth as being profoundly subversive of all bourgeois, capitalist values. Wagner was trying to appeal directly to the ruled over the heads of the rulers. He truly believed that his music drama, played to an audience of workers and students would change the consciousness of its hearers and that they would then change the world.

And herein lies the true nature of the problem. There is nothing wrong with the operas and plays; it is the audience that is wrong. The theatre is the victim of the class system. The bourgeoisie absorb art into their heirarchical scheme of values. They appropriate certain forms and certain artists, declaring these to be good and acceptable. They erect barriers of intellectual snobbery against outsiders, aided by a self-seeking and narrow minded academic establishement, which sets itself up as the custodian of 'art' and 'artistic standards', to buttress its own claim to a privileged position. By these means artificial barrie rs are created between 'high art' and 'popular art', between one artist and another and between the artist and the working people. Theatres and opera houses become temples celebrating corrupt bourgeois values, quite regardless of the work on stage, which is probably a seering critique of those values. Writers and composers stand helplessly by while their work is domesticated, made cosy and comfortable, and drained of all its social and political significance.

A VITAL TOOL

The solution to this problem should be a coherent socialist strategy starting in the schools, in which children should be helped to see art as a vital and important part of their day to day life. Art has helped to shape our perceptions of reality, the way we think and feel. It is not a pretty ornament to amuse the middle classes in their idle moments, but a vital tool in the development of consciousness. Everyone should be encouraged to express themselves through art and to explore different artistic forms at school, at college, at community centres and at work.

The national centres should not be pitted against the local; both should be properly funded from public money and brought into a close, organic relationship, strengthening and fertilising each other, with a steady exchange of ideas and personnel. The national companies must be reintegrated into the community, sending out individuals and groups to schools, colleges and workplaces to explain and demonstrate their work, which must be made available at prices everyone can afford, better still let us strive to realise Wagner's dream — free theatre for all. Art should be regarded like water — an essential of life available to everyone.

When challenged after the meeting, Tony Banks replied, that with such an audience he had to go slowly, but comrade Banks, the Labour Party has been going slowly for the last eighty years.

Paula Watson
Westminster South CLP

Editor's Note: Tony, I promise you space to reply in the next issue!

(Continued from previous page)

Women's Committee and the Greenwich one without consulting the Greenwich GLC Councillor who was a member of the GLC Women's Committee at the time! Having gathered up everyone's thoughts and comments, proposals and demands, the finished programme will become a Manifesto for Women. In the meantime the South London Hospital may have closed. This is obviously a question of political priorities and of what constitutes campaigning. It is precisely these matters that should be decided by the women themselves and not by the Committee if the democratic structures are to be meaningful.

Indicating a feminist alternative, the final criteria, is an area where the least work has been done. It could be argued that the Women's Committee needs more time to develop this aspect of its work, but demonstrating to all of London's women that there is at least the beginnings of an alternative to their present lives and giving them the confidence to fight back, should be an integral part of the Committee's work in defence of women's rights.

In an article written 2 years ago, in Spare Rib about 'new 1980's style soft focus feminism' Michelene Wandor indicated the dangers of co-option of feminism: 'The emancipation (i.e. individual female enterprise) ideology produces a new challenge to all our more radical feminisms. In one sense it is undoubtedly an advance on ten years ago, but it can easily be absorbed by liberal tokenism' (Spare Rib No. 105 April 1981). And in an article in the New Statesman on the women's committees Anne Wiltsher and Sarah Benton make the point that 'No one knows which is going to prove stronger – the pressure to follow a 'feminist perspective' or the orthodox structures of Council' (New Statesman 14.1.83). Wiltsher and Benton also note that the women's committees need to 'keep faith' with the women activists in order to survive.

This is the heart of the matter. It is essential to keep faith with feminism to prevent it being co-opted into the system, losing its radicalism and becoming femocratism. The danger with the GLC Women's Committee is that after such a innovative start is *is* now losing faith with bureaucracy, and not feminism, appearing to be in the ascendency. Certain strategy changes are now imperative. It is naive to believe that by simply having 'good' rather than 'bad' policies the state can be made to act in women's interests. For effective radical change those on the inside must have organic links with – keep faith with – those fighting on the outside.

To say all this is NOT to argue against women's committees. These structures represent a major step forward for women and should be actively supported. The other women's committees in London, in the boroughs, have encountered similar problems and in different ways have attempted to overcome them. Two with some measure of success are those in Camden and Southwark. As feminists on the outside we need to fight to ensure that the committees do not loose faith, while supporting the even partial attempts of those on the inside to effect change. This may mean sharp criticism at times, but never withdrawing support. The GLC Women's Committee needs to listen to this constructive criticism and heed it. *Note:*
Many of the ideas and criticisms in this article have already been raised in the GLC Women's Committee meetings by myself and other women. The idea of this article came after reading 'Socialist GLC in Capitalist Britain?' in ***Capital & Class*** *No. 18, Winter 1982 from which some concepts have been 'borrowed'. Also used was 'In and Against the State', by C. Cockburn et. al., Pluto Press 1980.*

Women and the witch hunt:

CHALLENGING THE STRUCTURES

The following is an extract of the speech given by ***Jane Stockton*** *at the* ***Briefing*** *fringe meeting of the London Labour Party Conference on 5th March.*

The theme of this meeting is 'Stop the Witch-hunt' – the term coined to describe the attempted purge of socialists from the Labour Party. I think that it is no coincidence that, as in the original witch-hunts of the middle ages, women have been one of the groups most rapidly stamped on. I want to give a few reasons why I think that women are once more a target for attack and why it's important for us to mobilise all our forces against this witch-hunt.

The actions taken by the Right against women in the last few months haven't been as dramatic and newsworthy as expulsions, but they have been aimed right at the root of women's organisation within the party.

SMEARS AND INNUENDOES

The attack on women has also taken the form of smears and innuendoes – we are described as aggressive, dungaree-wearing, lesbian feminists. Of course, none of that is at all insulting to us, but its aim is to discredit those who are fighting for women's power in the party as weirdos, imitation men, not 'ordinary' women.

This attack has been the response of the Right to the real upsurge of political activity by women that is taking place both inside and outside the party. So why is it that they are so afraid of women getting organised? Why is it that the party can overwhelmingly support resolutions which call for equal rights for women in pay, employment, taxation, for improved childcare facilities and for positive action in favour of women, and yet overwhelmingly reject the demands of women for 'equal rights in the Labour Party' in the form of greater representation?

RADICAL AND REVOLUTIONARY

Is it because if we increase women's representation we'll end up with executive committees full of Margaret Thatchers and Shirley Williamses, as our Militant sisters sometimes imply? If so, why is it the hard right (except for Militant) and the TU bureaucrats who are vehemently opposed to these changes? A Militant sister said she was insulted by the resolutions calling for reserved women's places on the Regional Executive Committee. Well, I'm insulted by the comments that say it's tokenism and that women can get there on their own merit. They imply that women have no merit since we haven't managed to get elected to these positions in the past!

I think the apparent anomalies exemplify the distinction between policy resolutions and constitutional resolutions. The Right have long ago given up debating and arguing about policies, because they have realised that what matters is who has the power to carry out the policies. So it is that although the Labour Party has for years and years paid lip service to women's equality in the form of policy decisions, the bureaucracies of the labour movement have ensured that little has been done. In many cases we have witnessed the collusion of the Labour and Trade Union leaderships in selling out women in order to defend the interests of men.

ALL POLICIES ARE AT STAKE!

In addition, I don't think that it's just 'women's policies' that the NEC is concerned at having to implement. I think that the other key policies of the Labour Party, such as nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from the EEC, are also seen to be at stake. More power for women in the Labour Party means more power to the constituencies and more power to the Left.

Over and above the policy issues, though, I don't think I can really blame the male dominated Right and NEC for wanting to stamp on women's power. I think that the upsurge of activity by women in recent years is far more of a threat to existing male power structures than any other current popular movement. It hits right at the heart of the political bureaucracies, but more importantly, I think, right at the heart of our individual personal lives. Women's liberation from male oppression will mean more than just tinkering with the present system to enable women to compete with men within male-determined structures. The present system is and always will be inherently biased against women. No matter how much childcare is provided by the state, whilst the main responsibility for children lies with individual women within isolated nuclear families, women can never be free from oppression. Women cannot be financially (and therefore socially) independent while the concept of the family wage and the family as the basic economic unit of society remains. Women cannot be in control of their lives until they are in full control of their bodies, and are not the sexual property of men. It is from out of the Women's Movement that the demand that the personal is political has come and that the way that the labour movement organises and conducts its meetings and campaigns has been challenged.



GREAT IMPACT

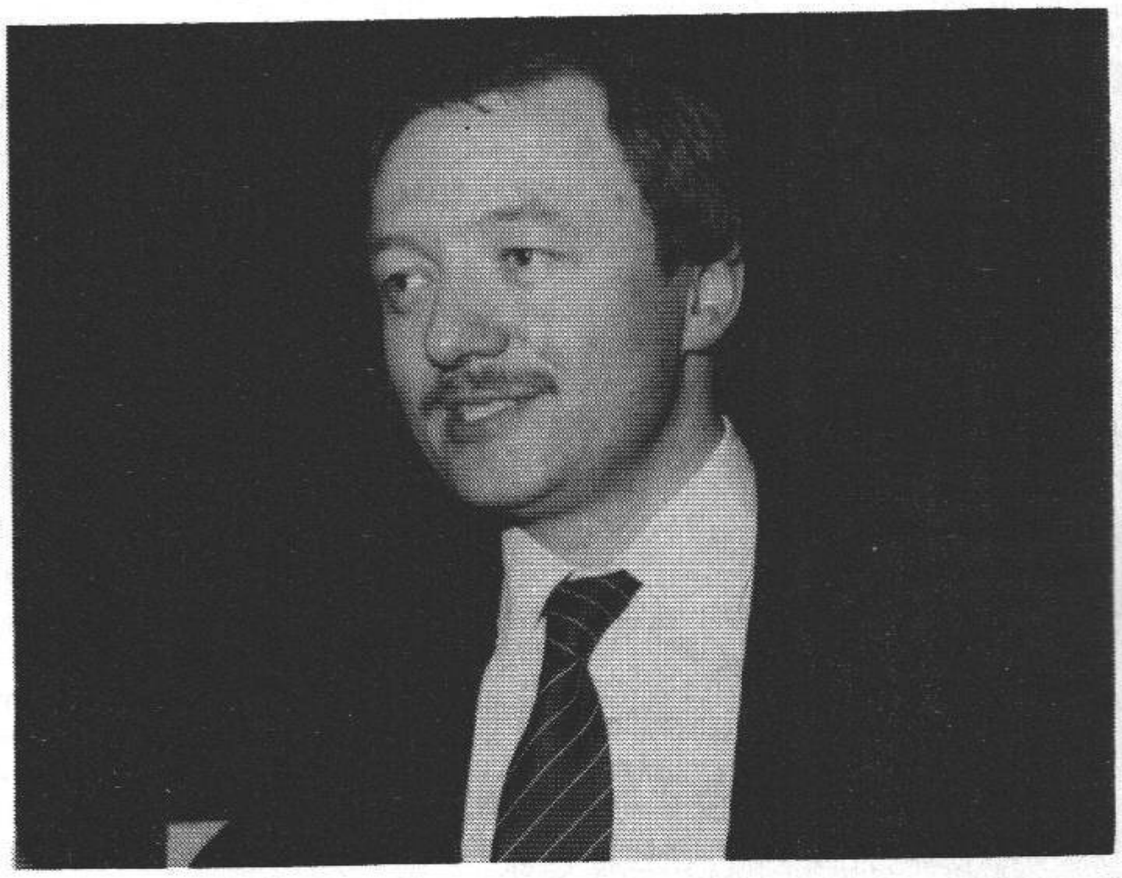
These demands are already beginning to have a great impact on the labour movement. In *Briefing* there has been for twelve months now a supplement entirely on the theme of personal politics. For the first time in an exclusively labour movement publication, issues have been related to people's own personal lives and experiences. Women's Committees set up by the GLC and many London boroughs have drawn in hundreds of women to discuss political issues in a way never seen before. Their ways of organising and consulting with the women they aim to represent have introduced an entirely new concept of the role of local councils. As for the Greenham Common women, the political consciousness they have raised in the country speaks for itself. The fact that all this has been challenging to the establishment and the existing power structures is shown by the vehemence with which the press have attacked all these activities.

UNITING ALL SECTIONS OF THE MOVEMENT

Socialism cannot be achieved without the support of women (nor women's liberation without socialism!). Within *Briefing* we have realised the need to build structures which can unite all sections of the movement, in particular the labour and women's movements. Only if we can unify our forces and feel our combined strengths will we be capable of challenging the existing structures of capitalism and patriarchy. The Greenham Common women and many others in CND do not trust the Labour Party to carry out the policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Can we blame them for standing candidates in elections against such Labour Party candidates as Jim Callaghan? Of course, that is no answer. Only by fighting the witch-hunt can we ensure that a future Labour Government will implement party policies. Only in this way can we break down divisions which exist between different strands of the movement. If the Greenham Common women decide that they can't trust the Labour Party, then we will only have ourselves to blame!

Briefing Interviews KEN LIVINGSTONE

Chris Knight interviewed Ken Livingstone on behalf of BRIEFING during the London Labour Party Conference on March 6th – a week after Ken's trip to Belfast.



Chris: What politcal gains, Ken, do you think were made by your Irish visit?

Ken: Well I think the key one is that we've been able to establish links with Sinn Fein. For years, now, the Labour Party has had no links at all. The only previous connections between Sinn Fein and the Labour Party were confidential meetings with the Labour Government in 1975 when Sinn Fein and the I.R.A. agreed to a ceasefire in Northern Ireland provided the Labour Government was prepared to withdraw the troops. That ceasefire broke down because the Government was never prepared to state publicly it would withdraw and since that time there's been no discussion at all. Now, since then a completely new leadership has emerged within Sinn Fein, very akin to the sort of radical socialist elements now involved in the Labour Party over here in Britain. It does seem to me that we should be establishing a dialogue between the Labour Party and Sinn Fein. On top of that, I think that the mere fact that we've been able to go to Northern Ireland and challenge the normal conventions which operate in terms of contacts between Britain and Northern Ireland has most probably advanced the day when we can see a British withdrawal, because it's advanced the debate within the Labour Party. It's no longer the case that you just have a series of ritual denunciations of the I.R.A. without denunciations of the Protestant terror or the killing of innocent children with rubber bullets. We've been able to put the thing in a wider perspective. And it's also shown quite clearly that the overwhelming majority of people in Britain do support talking to Sinn Fein and d o support getting out of Ireland.

Chris: What were your impressions of the Sinn Fein leaders you met?

Ken: If these people had been born and brought up in London they would most probably be on the Labour G.L.C. Exactly the same style of operation, a very collective approach to leadership. I was particularly impressed in their bookshops to find the same tracts about feminism that you have in left bookshops over here. I mean, not just a couple of little feminist books tucked away but virtually half the bookcase was filled with radical feminist literature. I think these are the important things to put over to people here in Britain: that all the things they've been told by British Governments about the republicans over the last ten years are no longer valid even if they ever were valid. I think it's also important from Sinn Fein's standpoint to realise that there is a different strand of opinion in the Labour Party to that of Rees and Mason and Concannon. That's particularly helpful to them because it does give Sinn Fein a particular lift, in the sense they know the I.R.A. cannot possibly win a military victory over the British army just as the British army cannot win a military victory over them. So they know that at some point there has to be a negotiated settlement and the knowledge that there is a growing body of opinion in the Labour Party in favour of that will strengthen the position of the socialist elements within Sinn Fein as opposed to those who see things in military terms.

Chris: Do you see much possibility of any breakthrough in winning support from the Protestant working class community in the period ahead?

Ken: Sinn Fein had tried to approach people in the Protestant paramilitary organisations and had discussions with three of them. They were all assassinated by other Protestants. I think there is clearly going to be an attempt to destroy any elements within the Protestant working class that start to talk to Sinn Fein or the I.R.A. And therefore I don't think that until Britain announces it's withdrawing there will be any real dialogue between workers on the Catholic and Protestant sides. It's too easy for those Unionist leaders who need to maintain their hold by preventing a dialogue to continue to do so. Basically, I'm talking about the official unionists: there's a real difference between those who support Paisley – working class, with Presbyterian origins and a history of oppression at the hands of the Tories – and those who are part of the official Tory machine.

Chris: What support do you feel you've had in all this from the London Labour Party, and particularly the London Region E.C.?

Ken: Well, the Greater London Labour Party initially when it debated it had to deal with a censure motion from the electricians' representative John Spellar. That was roundly overturned. That was the first time we'd seen a majority on the Executive of any positive nature behind Ireland. Unfortunately at the present Conference the Executive voted not to back what I thought was a very good resolution on Ireland. All of the trade unions and the 'Militant' tendency voted together against the motion and that gave them a majority. There's a major problem. 'Militant's' position on Ireland is the same as on Algeria and almost everything else – hopelessly Utopian. But for the trade unions the problem is that in Northern Ireland there's 20 per cent unemployment. For male Catholics, that's 50 to 60 per cent. So trade unions with members in Northern Ireland are going to be overwhelmingly Protestant. And many of those Catholics who *have* got a job belong to a southern Irish trade union. So the trade union view that comes through is heavily influenced by an overwhelming preponderance of Protestants and Unionists. So when we're debating Ireland, we shouldn't just be asking: 'What do our brothers and sisters in the trade unions say?' but 'What do people in the trade unions North *and* South say?', and get a real picture.

Chris: How does this relate to our position in London?

Ken: Well, it's quite interesting. The G.L.C. in convening a meeting of all Irish community groups was the organisation which brought those groups together for the first time. We've now established that as a regular forum. We're about to co-opt as part of the ethnic minorities unit a worker to deal solely with the problems of the Irish in London. And the decisions on things like opposition to the 'Prevention of Terrorism Act', cancelling advertising in the Standard because of their racist cartoon, etc., has identified in the minds of Irish men and women in London the fact that for the first time, here is a section of the Labour Party which is solidly on their side. The previous record of Labour Governments and the Labour Party, going right back to its inception, has been very, very bad on the issue of the independence of Ireland. And I think we're starting to redress the balance and undo the damage done. I've no doubt at all that at the next G.L.C. election there'll be overwhelming support from Irish men and women in London because of the stand the G.L.C.'s taken.

Chris: How has it felt like to have to put up with all the press attacks and Tory denunciations over the visit?

Ken: When I came back from the visit, the popular press was filled with virulent criticism for having gone. And yet I found myself walking down Stockwell Road for a mile and during that ten minute walk I must have been stopped about eight times by people saying they supported what we were doing. On the tube, people kept saying 'We agree with what you're doing!' No-one was critical. Part of the problem for the Labour Party and for a whole layer of activists is that they see all that stuff in the press and they're panicked into stampeding. It really does require quite a degree on self-discipline not to be stampeded. This is the weakness there is in a vast number of people on the left.

Chris: Turning now to other issues, how do you evaluate the left's position at the moment?

Continued



May 7th Demonstration Organising Committee



BRITAIN OUT OF IRELAND
SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE

At the Labour Party Conference in 1981, 700,000 members voted in favour of resolutions calling for a withdrawal of troops from the north of Ireland and an end to partition. These two demands are also the policy of the Greater London Labour Party.

Yet, in February 1983 an application for funding of a P.T.A. monitoring project was unanimously rejected by the GLC Police Committee after the direct intervention of Michael Foot. The project was designed to monitor 'the application of the PTA in London' and to provide a support service for detainees. Last year over 800 people were detained under the PTA in London, less than 2% were charged with any offence. There are over 200,000 members of the Irish community living in London. Should they not have a right to be protected against such blatant intimidation and harrassment which is a result of the war in Northern Ireland?

The argument goes, that the reason for the rejection of the application was that firstly, the Troops Out Movement lacks political credibility, and secondly, that it was too contentious an issue for London Labour party members to be seen to be supporting on the eve of a major bye-election in Bermondsey. If the first assertion is correct, then why did 700,000 vote for resolutions calling for the main demand of the TOM in 1981? If the second is correct, then what implications does this have for the pro-withdrawal forces inside the Labour Movement during the run up to the equally crucial Darlington bye-election and indeed the General Election before the end of the year? Does it mean that such voices will be obliged to remain silent for fear of upsetting the electoral apple-cart?

In 1981 the Hunger Strikers in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh brought the demand for British withdrawal from Ireland right to the forefront of the Labour Movement's political consciousness, and while the Hunger Strike continued, the support grew.

Since 1981 conditions in the 6 counties have not substantially changed, plastic bullets continue to kill and maim men, women and children, the prison population continues to increase in leaps and bounds, and one out of four houses continues to be designated unfit for human habitation. According to an EEC report, West Belfast and Derry are the most deprived areas in Europe alongside Southern Italy. We urge Labour Party members to revive the momentum of support for withdrawal built up during 1981, and to argue strongly within the movement for an end to British interference in Irish affairs and to support initiatives made to protect the rights of the Irish community in London.

A demonstration is being held on May 7th to mark the second anniversary of the death of Bobby Sands M.P. The Organising Committee comprises representatives from Troops Out, I.R.S.P., L.C.I., Cumann na Phoblachta, the London Students Organisation and the Armagh Coordinating Committee. We believe that there is no British solution to the situation in the six counties, and call for the one thing that has not yet been tried. Support the march and support the demands 'Britain Out of Ireland' and 'Self-determination for the Irish People'. The march has so far been sponsored by Ken Livingstone, Steve Bundred and Andy Harris, GLC Councillors, Gerry Lawless, Hackney Councillor, Ron Brown MP for Leith.
For further information, leaflets and sponsorship forms: Contact May 7th Committee, Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

1916 1981

(A letter to the poet Yeats, after 65 years.)
Yeats, you must write it once again
—Sixty-five Easters on—
How Bobby Sands
With nine friends,
A company of ten
World-brave men
Like Cuchúlain fought the overwhelming sea
Of English tyranny.
How in these days
Revolutionary soldiers die in different ways:
Instead of drowning, choose to die
Naked, hungry and thirsty to set Ireland free.
Denis Knight (Troops Out Movement and Brighton Labour Party)

Ken: Since the failure of the Benn Deputy leadership campaign there have been a series of set-backs. It's added to the normal tendency of the left to disintegrate internally with sectarian attacks on each other. There seems to be a search for scapegoats within the left. 'Who's fault is it? Who's let us down? Who's betrayed us?' That's culminated this weekend with the quite scandalous result of Ted Knight's being thrown off the Executive of the London Region, because of the position which Norwood Labour Party took on the question of how you respond to the NEC's letter demanding that local party members be expelled. It would have been equally wrong to have attempted to throw Bob Labi off the Executive simply because of Militant's appalling position on Northern Ireland. You cannot find on the left anyone you agree with one hundred per cent than yourself. If we start fighting amongst ourselves, that only strengthens the right.

Chris: But wasn't it that Islington Central and Hammersmith North have taken a tough stand against the NEC and were expecting some solidarity from Norwood, found that they haven't apparently got it and that that's a natural and spontaneous reaction from delegates?
Ken: That would be fine if there'd been a meeting of those three CLP's to discuss a common line. But in any case you cannot judge a person on one particular decision of their CLP whether or not they agree with it and ignore a whole track record going back over the last thirty years.

Chris: I want to press you on this. Do you support Islington Central and Hammersmith North in refusing to make expulsions and challenging the NEC head-on even up to the threat of disbandment?
Ken: Norwood will reject any expulsions as well. The question is how you respond to a particular letter. Do you respond in a way which allows the NEC to determine the next move, or do you respond in a way which denies the NEC that option? That's all Ted has done.

Chris: How do you see the lessons of Bermondsey?
Ken: If the NEC and the Party leader totally condemn and rubbish a candidate, it's not going to help him get elected a year later. On the same night as the Bermondsey election, in Brent an equally safe Labour seat showed a 40 per cent increase in the Labour vote and a 5 per cent swing to Labour and it's a massive re-affirmation of support for the Labour Party in that area. It's quite clear that the Bermondsey party must stand firm and reselect Peter Tatchell, because if they don't then what we're doing is giving the right wing and the press a veto over who we run as candidates. It wouldn't have mattered who the candidate was in Bermondsey: with the party leadership opening the door to a press campaign like that, would probably have lost. And I've no doubt at all that after a period of time and continuing work we will get that seat back with Peter Tatchell as candidate.

Chris: Where do we go from here? How do we approach the election?
Ken: We need the kind of broad campaign set up previously through the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory. That was a very useful forum whilst it remained a broad alliance of all the political groupings. I will certainly support the new campaign which BRIEFING and other groups are now setting up. Entertaining for a moment the idea of Labour after the election forming any kind of coalition with another party grouping in the Commons if we become the largest party but if we don't have a majority, which could very well happen. If it does, we must present our programme to Parliament and challenge the other parties to vote it down, and then go back for another mandate in another General Election. Were we to drift into another alliance with the Liberals, the S.D.P. or the Ulster Unionists, I think it could destroy the Labour Party completely. The Government would be the third failure in thirty years, and this could be our death-knell. We've got to ensure that all parliamentary candidates are committed in advance to oppose any coalition whatsoever and provide the electorate with a real choice. If we did this I think we would win.

'Israel in Lebanon'

Mike Hanley (Marlowe Ward, Deptford CLP)



Ein el-Hilweh camp, Sidon, the Palestinian refugee camp which suffered the worst damage during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. 95% of it was destroyed.
(UNWRA photo by G. Nehmeh)

'Israel in Lebanon' – Report of the International Commission to enquire into reported violations of International Law by Israel during its invasion of the Lebanon. (Ithaca Press, 13 Southwark St., London SE1. Price £4.50).

THE International Commission continues the tradition of the Vietnam War Crimes Tribunal. Both were set up as a result of international public outrage. They attempt to by-pass the deliberations of governments and out pace the snail like proceedings of the UN. Such Commissions try to seize what is pertinent and relevant in International Law and systematically deliver the facts of these wars to the judgement of open forums and public opinion. The Report of the International Commission is to be strongly welcomed.

The International Commission, chaired by Sean MacBride – former UN Commissioner for Namibia – deals comprehensively with Israel's invasion and continued occupation of Lebanon. Its terms of reference led it to examine Israel's war aims, the weapons and techniques used for waging war, the treatment of civilians and prisoners, the destruction of the Lebanese economy and Israel's occupation policy. In a revealing contrast, the Israeli Commission of Enquiry, run by Judge Kahan, only looked at Israel's involvement in the Sabra-Chatila massacres. The Kahan Enquiry agreed with the conclusion of the International Commission that Israel was not only legally (under the IV Geneva Convention) responsible for the massacres, but it was also involved in their preparation *"and played a facilitative role in the actual killings"*.

Our media and the Kahan Enquiry amongst others have isolated the massacres from what preceeded and would have us remember those three days of carnage as the sole significant occurance of the whole Israeli invasion and occupation. One of the achievements of 'Israel in Lebanon' is that it places the massacres in their proper context. The report concludes that the massacres were only part of a wider Israeli war aim to disperse the Palestinians and that that aim was pursued throughout the war by the destruction of the refugee camps and the relentless bombardment of Beirut. The uprooting and displacement of Palestinians in Lebanon continues today. The Report leaves us in no doubt that the massacres were no less than a logical fruition of a process which was unleashed on 4th June 1982.

The Report uses international law (especially the Geneva Conventions and Protocols) – despite their limitations – as an objective standard by which Israel's action in Lebanon can be judged. After all Israel claims to be a democratic and law abiding state – let's see how it fairs when measured against those principles and standards which it so loudly espouses. In non-technical language, but with painstaking attention to detail, the Report establishes that Israel was an aggressor in Lebanon and remains there in illegal occupation. The relevance of the 1967 Occupied Territories to the invasion is touched on, and Israel's economic interests and territorial aspirations are given exposure. This study of the war in Lebanon deals also with questions relevant elsewhere in the Third World, e.g., there is a succinct presentation of the legal status of Liberation Movements. There is also a detailed investigation into anti-personal weapons and their use against civilians. Beirut was clearly an experimentation laboratory for US designed and manufactured weapons – and they are now being purchased by South Africa and Central American dictatorships in vast quantities.

It could be argued that 'Israel in Lebanon' doesn't give an historical introduction to Zionism, doesn't deal with the racist and colonialist momentum which has led to the tragedy in Lebanon and doesn't offer any analysis of the role played by the reactionary Arab regimes; but these factors have been adequately

KAHAN: A COVER FOR GENOCIDE

The so called independent commission of inquiry into the massacre at Sabra and Chattilla camps, held by Kahan, has been described by the Zionist press as an example of Israeli democracy. For the Palestinians however, it is a travesty of justice. A whitewash of genocide and an insult to the word 'justice'.

Ariel Sharon may have been denied his Defence ministry, yet Begin has repaid him by offering him two 'minor' Cabinet posts instead. His replacement, Moshe Arens, has shown a committment to the policies of his predecessor. For he too is a hard liner determined to maintain Israel's expansionist approach. Rumours have it that Israel is planning a final push against the Palestinians which will make the Lebanese invasion seem a small skirmish in comparison.

While Begin naturally welcomed Kahan's cover up, the streets of Jerusalem saw bloodshed and civil war. In front of the Knesset Parliament, a Begin supporter threw a hand grenade into a crowd of 'Peace Now' supporters, who were demanding Begin's resignation. Talk of a military take over spread as Israelis fought Israelis for the first time.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

Another less publicised International Commission of Inquiry into Israeli violations of International Law has also just issued its report. Headed by Sean MacBride, and aided by numerous international lawyers and academics, their conclusions are quite different to those of Kahan. They state that Israel acted outside of any form of International Law by invading, and discard the excuses for 'Operation Peace in Galilee'.

The treatment of Palestinians, the use of internationally banned weapons, and the debarring of even the Red Cross, is contrary to any moral or ethical code. *'Israeli authorities were legally responsible as the occupying power. Israel was was involved in the planning and preparation of the massacres and played a facilitative role in the actual killings.'* This was borne out by the numberous statements they took from eye witnesses.

It calls for leading Israeli officials and politicians to be tried for war crimes, and for Israel to pay reparations to Lebanon and world relief organisations. Further it states that *'there can be no justice or peace in the Middle East until the Palestinians have national self-determination'.*

While the report is not a global analysis of the political situation, and fails to refer to the recognition of the P.L.O as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, it clearly points the responsibility of the massacres at the hands of Israel. On that basis it should be read to arm comrades in defending Party policy against the N.E.C.'s attempts at sabotage.

Alf Filer
Brent East C.L.P.

For the report by the International Commission, write to Ithaca Press, 13 Southwark Street, London, S.E.1 price £4.50

ZIONISM, WOMEN AND ISRAEL

Tony Greenstein
Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine

Israel's murderous invasion of Lebanon made many question the nature of the Israeli state. This questioning affected both the Labour and Womens Movement. This prompted the re-emergence of a 'Feminist' Zionist current. Great attention had been paid by the Zionist Movement to the need to win over the Womens Movement and in particular Spare Rib. As Nira Y Davies and Dina Hecht wrote: "With the resurgence of Western feminism, Israeli propagandists found not only a new market but also many enthusiastic mouthpieces to further laud the so-called advances and achievements of Israeli women." Below I will try and outline a) why support for feminism is incompatible with support for Zionism b) the response of British feminists to the Israeli invasion and state.

ISRAEL AND WOMEN

Only by understanding the specific characteristics of any society can we understand the different forms that womens oppression takes. Israel is, above all, a COLONISATORY society which sought to replace the native Palestinians with European Jews. The form of colonisation adopted was a collective one — the Kibbutzim and Work Brigades. Because of the need to replace Arab labour, 'Jewish Labour' had to be economically efficient in order for it to be profitable for Jewish employers to employ Jews rather than Arabs. Jewish men performed the 'economic' work and Jewish women performed the 'rear' duties ie collectivised domestic labour. This meant in practice that one woman serviced 4 or 5 men; with the reproduction role being assigned to Jewish women outside Palestine. There resulted an INTERNATIONAL DIVISION OF LABOUR between Jewish women inside and outside Plaestine. A 'pure' labour force inside Palestine was created.

Today Jewish immigration to Israel has virtually dried up (there is a net outflow) — this is a 'Jewish' state with a high Arab birthrate. Women in Israel are, according to Zionisms logic, expected to substitute for this lack of immigration and giving birth is termed 'Aliyah Pnimit' (internal immigration). Abortion and family planning facilities have been severely restricted. Women are substituting for men in the economy, as men spend more time in the army. Women concentrate in the service sector allowing Jewish men to replace Palestinian men in the productive sector. Jewish women are also replacing Palestinian men for 'security' reasons.

There is no civil marriage in Israel, divorce is impossible without a man's consent. Women are legally their husbands property and cannot testify in Rabbinical courts (they deal with personal affairs). Because of Zionism's need for a racially pure nation and its obsession with the Arab birthrate, there are constant exhortations for Jewish women 'to be fruitful and multiply'. Jewish womens oppression is the price of the alliance between Religious and Secular Zionism. The relegation of women to the rear is a direct consequence of Zionist colonisation.

Since the early 70s, there has grown up in Israel a Jewish (mainly Western) Feminist Movement which has sought to challenge the oppression of women within a Zionist framework. An example of which is Natalie Reins book 'Daughters of Rachel: Women in Israel': 'There are few recorded acts of bravery of women in that (1948) war, no memorials to women, no women generals... Yet it is clear that this role was a real and important one for which they received no recognition.' (p48) Even women's role in Begin's terrorist Irgun which slaughtered 250 Palestinians in Deir Yassin is mentioned without comment. Israeli feminists have fought WITHIN the Zionist community for an EQUAL SHARE in the oppression of Palestinians. As Avishai Erlich wrote 'Feminists who flinch from questioning Zionism and its effects on the social structure of Israeli society wish to imagine another possibility — a Zionism which would have had equality from women.' (Zionism, Demography and Womens Work, Khamsin 7)

THE SAME OLD DILEMMAS

Bernadette Devlin noted that: 'The people who are more conscious of their oppression as women are the people who are less oppressed for other reasons.. that's not a problem if in struggling for your own corner you become aware of the contradictions... The women in the feminist movement who can take that on board and cope with it will grow, and those who can't end up taking reactionary positions.' (Spare Rib 111) This referred to Ireland but applies equally to Palestine. Women are divided into pro/anti-imperialist factions. Do you ignore national oppression and impose a false women's unity eg. by arguing that Women in Armagh is not a women's issue or do you take sides and risk alienating the radical/pro imperialist feminists?

With the invasion of Lebanon, a Women for Palestine article appeared in Spare Rib. After much Zionist pressure, an article by the Jewish Lesbian Feminist group appeared counterposing anti-Semitism to Palestinian genocide, arguing that anti-Zionism was really anti-Semitism. Another WfP article (co-written by an Israeli woman) carefully explained the differences between the two. January's SR Editorial came down clearly on the side of the Zionist Feminists stating 'aspects of those (WfP) articles were incomplete and open to anti-Semitism interpretation. It asked 'How do we deal with differences between feminists, What is a critical support for Israel and Can women be anti-Zionist and fight anti-Semitism?' It ignored national oppression and its role in fostering patriarchal relations. In February extracts from a book by US Zionist Lesbians went further. It argued the INEVITABILITY of anti-Semitism 'A Jew must learn to recognise who is Jewish and who isn't, to trust only Jews to be wary of all non-Jews', repeated anti-Semitic stereotypes 'it had never occured to me to count noses but I counted noses. They didn't look Jewish' and ended up using an unsubstantiated racist pamphlet by Tory/Zionist historian Martin Gilbert, to attack all Arabs. It blamed the exodus of Arab Jews to Israel on Arabic anti-Semitism ignoring bombs planted in eg. Iraq by the Zionists to 'stimulate' such emigration (Haolem Haz eh 20.4.66) and the role of the colonial authorities in using Jews as a middle strata. In March this is completed with an attack on Outwrite — the anti-imperialist feminist paper, insinuating it supports Khomeini. The Zionists have exerted enomous pressure on Spare Rib to achieve this. The Left cannot close its eyes but must counter this pressure by giving support to Women for Palestine and by writing to Spare Rib protesting at their pro-imperialist, racist coverage.

I would like to thank those women who helped me by their comments and suggestions re this article in particular Kate Askew of WfP and Liz Godden of Brighton Briefing. The responsibility for the views expressed is my own.

Reply from the Editorial Collective of the Briefing Streetlife Supplement:

We are extremely angry at the audacity of the author of this article in submitting it for publication in *Briefing*. It's not *so* much the fact that it contains a distortion of the articles and comments on women and Zionism which have appeared in *Spare Rib*. It's not *even so* much the unbelievably patronising way that a man has written to lecture to feminists on how to '... *understand the different forms that women's oppression takes*' and to tell us which other groups of women we can or cannot have unity with. What we object to is the author's use of *Briefing*, which has always attempted to give support to feminists, to attack the most widely read feminist magazine in Britain. *Spare Rib* should not have to defend itself to criticism from men on the terms defined by a male-dominated publication. Quite frankly we are fed up with being told, by men, how and what we should think!

covered elsewhere (e.g. 'The Gun and the Olive Branch' by David Hirst), and an attempt at such a comprehensive study would have detracted from the Report's specific task.

Guilty of genocide

Supporting the report there are nearly 100 pages of Appendices. Appendix I contains the majority view of the Commission that Israel is guilty of genocide against the Palestinians – *"the massacres at Sabra and Chatila . . . (are) genocidal massacres"* and the *"deliberate destruction of the national and cultural rights and identity of the Palestinian people constitutes a form of genocide"*. Appendix 5 contains large extracts of eye-witness evidence and a particularly useful study, with diagrams on Cluster Bombs – again there are parallels with Vietnam; *"they (cluster bombs) have become the napalm of the Middle East"*.

'Israel in Lebanon' is a written record of the devastation and genocide Israel wrought on the Palestinians and Lebanese. After nine months Israel is still in occupation, thousands remain in the Ansar Concentration Camp, little has been done to mend the human and economic destruction and Israel steers Lebanon ever deeper into sectarian and communal strife. This Report will provide sober reading for people like Tony Benn, and other not so closet Zionists in the Labour Party, who are either silent or openly hostile towards the Palestinian cause. It is also an important counterblast to the Zionist campaign which is being mounted against 1982 Conference Resolutions supporting the PLO and calling for self-determination for the Palestinians.

Letters



Dear Comrades,
I thought you might like to see a copy of a statement I am trying to circulate within the CLPD. You yourselves have to take a little bit of blame for whipping up personality clashes but would you not agree that now is the time to start making all our debates over policy a little more than theoretical exercises. We have to get a Labour government elected with or without the bloody register.
Yours fraternally
Colin Sinfield
Sevenoaks CLP

WHAT PRICE UNITY ON THE LEFT?

On Saturday the 19 February I attended my first Executive Meeting of the CLPD as a participant observer.

I did so as a democratic socialist who believes in the arguments as put forward by Tony Benn but who voted for the CLPD to register because I believe conference decisions are sovereign.

At this meeting I saw an EC that I had previously supported overturn our own AGM's policy, by use of a constitutional discrepancy. CLPD is now going to give 'critical support' to the Manchester Withington amendment at various regional conference where this resolution is already on the order paper. I agree with both Vladimir Derer and Victor Schonfield that this amendment was a viable fallback position. However our AGM has voted for Nigel Williamson's resolution, carried on a recorded vote that: 'it would be mistaken and dangerous to incorporate into the Labour Party constitution the restrictions and requirements placed upon groups contained in the Manchester Withington amendment submitted to the 1982 conference. Accordingly this AGM believes that the CLPD should not support such proposals...'

This leaves the EC's position very clear in that the majority are using their position to sanctify the kind of tactics usually associated with the right wing of the Labour Party. Thus I call upon all sections of CLPD to write, support the sanctity of conference AND our own AGM. For heavens sake let's settle our differences; oppose the Manchester Withington amendment and support the Greenwich amendment. We need to really start talking and think up a new fallback position acceptable as far as possible to *all* viewpoints — and this is within our power. We cannot allow continued sectarian battles to rip the CLPD apart, it is a battle that nobody can win so let us forget the past otherwise we will lose the possibility of a Socialist Labour Government in the near future — the choice is yours comrades.

Dear Briefing,
I had to chuckle when I read Laurence Spiegel's piece, 'Ban the Box: M-Way Enquiry' in February's issue of LLB. Leaving the everyday world far behind Comrade Spiegel transports himself and his readers into a fantastical region of make believe where we can, if we wish, join him in his great jousting contests with the nightmarish giants of his fevered imagination.

I happend to live in Finchley so I am reasonably familiar with the Labour Party scene there. It was no surprise that we won East Finchley ward last May. It is traditionally Labour. The sitting Tory councillors fled to a safe ward before polling day. In 1978 we lost East Finchley by only a few dozen votes. The building of new council estates in the intervening period really made the ward safe for Labour.

Laurence Spiegel's campaign against (yes against) a lorry ban in Finchely High Road must have lost us support rather than otherwise. Plans were well advanced to ban the juggernauts from the shopping streets of Finchley. They had the full support of the Labour Group on Barnet Council and of Finchley CLP. But early in 1982, by the dubious use of the 'emergency resolution' gambit Spiegel managed to overtun Finchley CLP's support for the ban and we went into the election with the foolish policy, on that subject, of being against its introduction.

The eventual result was that the Labour GLC cancelled the arrangements. Today, £12,500 worth of new road signs are mouldering away somewhere in Council stores and the juggernauts still trundle among the shoppers in the High Road.
Fraternally, Bill Adair

Dear London Labour Briefing,
As London Constituency party activists, we are writing in response to the sectarian account your February issue gave of work in the Labour Party in solidarity with the stuggle of the Palestinian people. There is no other way to describe the omission of any reference to the longstanding work of the Labour Middle East Council (LMEC), the Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFP), the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS), or indeed the activities of the Emergency Committee Against the Invasion of Lebanon.

From its inception in 1969, LMEC has worked consistently for the principle of self determination of the Palestinian people and has enjoyed the closest working relations and co-operation of the PLO. At a time when LMEC's stand was deeply unpopular in the Party, and LMEC's leadership was subjected to regular and vicious campaigns of distortion, LMEC worked to build the broadest alliance of Party members in support of the Palestinians.

The fruits of these sustained efforts are to be found in the passage of Composite Resolution 27 through 1982 Party Conference, which committed the Party to support the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to a national independent state of their own, and to recognition of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Equally, TUFP and LMEC members were at the forefront of getting the 1982 TUC to condemn the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and to support the Palestinians. Comrades will see that contrary to what Tony Greenstein has written that there is no way this could be the work of 'four short months'.

LMEC's 1981 AGM committed the orgnaisation to a strong campaigning profile, and its work since then has brought a vastly increased number of CLP affiliations. LMEC is resolutely opposed and fighting NEC effort to ignore Conference decisions on Palestine. Much remains to be done to consolidate the new attitudes at all levels in the Party towards the Middle East, and we would urge LCP and LMCP members committed to this end to join LMEC and promote its activities. Details of LMEC can be obtained from the LMEC Secrtary, 21 Collingham Road, London SW5 (phone: 01 373 5227)

Yours fraternally,
Hilary Barnard (Vice Chair, LMEC)
John Rolfs (Treasurer, LMEC)
Ros Spearing (LMEC Executive)
Martin Kender (LMEC Executive)
John Lyons (LMEC Executive)

Dear Briefing,
Your report of the 'Towards a National Network' conference unfortunately contained some wishful thinking.

The attendance from outside London and Brighton was actually rather poor, and nobody was a representative of an active Briefing group. One reason for the poor attendance (at least from Merseyside, in which I was active until recently) was the lack of a pooled fare. It's about time comrades in London realised that the cost of travel represents real discrimination against attendance at national meetings.

As a result of the unrepresentative attendance, the concern over whether a briefing should follow London's example of becoming tighter and more factionally-aligned, or remain a board-based publication was barely mentioned, although this is a key debate on Merseyside. As the CLPD conference showed, the Left outside London does not always share the views, assumptions and priorities of those who rarely venture north of Watford.

Graham Barrett

Dear Comrades,

The unfortunate advertisement for 'Iran Aid' in the March Briefing, adds yet more weight to the campaigns against the Iranian Revolution. British socialists should have no truck with this outfit and concentrate on their main task, winning the labour movement to anti-imperialist politics that would make any intervention against Iran impossible.

'Iran Aid' is not the 'independent' and 'humanitarian' body it claims to be. It is a front for the Paris based 'National Council for Resistance' headed by ex-president Bani-Sadr. Its main component is the People's Mujahedeen Organisation which has conducted a terrorist campaign against the Iranian government since mid-1981. It claims mass support, but the response to its first major bomb outrage was a million-strong demonstration protesting its politics. This group is linked to the pro-imperialist Iraqi dictatorship which is still engaged in the US inspired war against Iran. The Iraqi deputy prime minister revealed the extent of these links on January 9th when through Le Monde he announced that Iraq and the Mujahedeen had 'a common political understanding' and that he wanted its leader Masoud Rajavi installed in power.

Against this, the revolutionary government of Nicaragua has quite a different assessment. Minister of Trade Alejandro Martinez Cuenca visited Iran back in December and reported on exhaustive talks with the Iranians assessing the 'just positions of both countries against world imperialism'.

The Nicaraguan revolutionaries are right to put emphasis on the anti-imperialist policy of the Iranian government. This has included cutting links with Israel and South Africa, sending an official representative to the funeral of Bobby Sands MP, the Irish freedom fighter, and dispatching troops to the Lebanon to aid the PLO last summer.

British socialists must put solidarity at the top of the agenda. That is what Iran itself is doing. Iran's deputy minister of trade, Heda'i Atzayeh explained their policy to the Nicaraguans as "developing a relationship with Nicaragua to give necessary aid to the people of Nicaragua and their revolution. This is based on the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to support all oppressed peoples of the world".

Briefing readers have a choice, aid Iran's revolution or support counter-revolutionary 'Iran Aid'.

Fraternally,
JOHN HARTNELL,
Islington North CLP

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

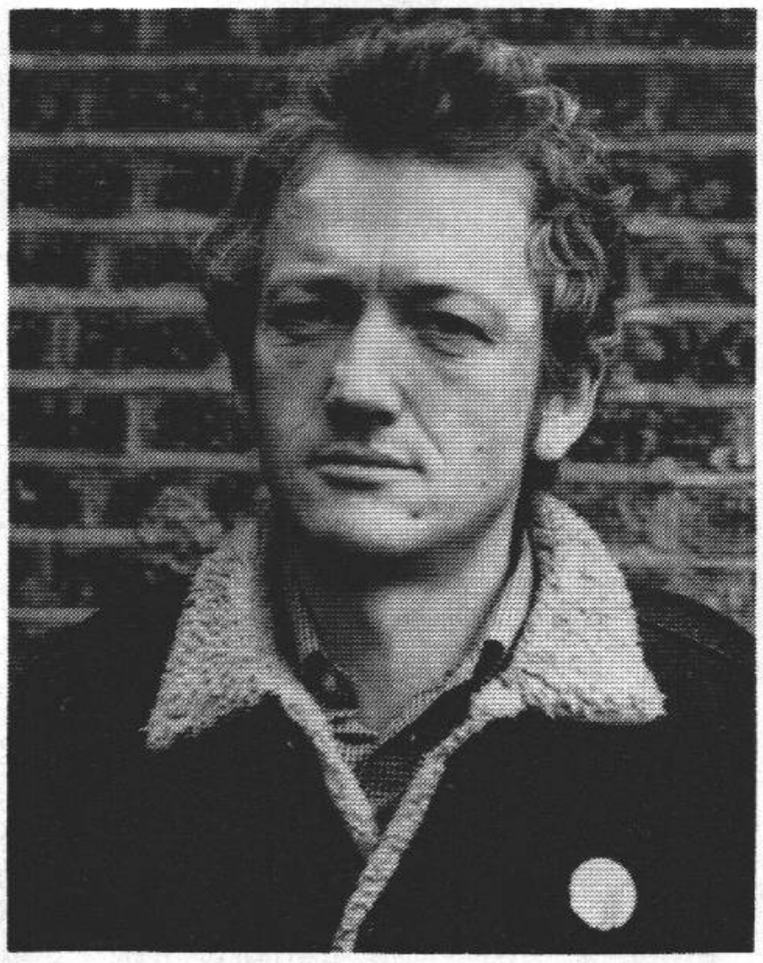
BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

For various reasons, articles we were hoping to receive on the theme of law and order did not meet the deadline for this issue and we are therefore holding back this topic for a future issue. We do however think that the Left must begin to take law and order seriously, and so we have published the article below in an effort to stimulate discussion, and hopefully a response. In the remainder of the Supplement we have published the responses we have received to the last issue.

YES — WE WANT LAW & ORDER!

People who become socialists and feminists tend naturally to dissociate strongly from the 'law and order' approach to both politics and life. We tend to believe in the goodness of human nature. Give ordinary people a chance, we think, and they'll organise their lives amicably without need of policemen and laws, prison sentences and courts. At the back of our minds somewhere is a libertarian instinct which tells us that governments, authorities and laws not only cannot protect us from anti-social behaviour but are the prime cause of it themselves.

I have not changed my views on this, but I must admit to feeling that we need a change of emphasis in the way we put the message across. If capitalism and the state are the prime causes of vandalism and crime, then why not say it and draw the obvious conclusion – that what we need is *more* law and order, not less? If the chief criminals in society are those most successful in crime – those who, in the course of history, have by the sheer scale of their success managed to buy off even Parliament and 'the law' itself – then why not turn the tables on the 'law and order' brigade and expose the whole fraud? I think that the language of 'law and order' is quite a potent weapon precisely because people *do* have a sense of justice and *do* want all in society to be subjected to the same collective rules as themselves. There is simply no need for us to leave this field unchallenged in the hands of the Establishment – that gang of 'respectable' terrorists, crooks and swindlers who, as a body, fix 'the law' just to suit themselves and hire official violence to enforce it.



Chris Knight
Lewisham East CLP

MORE 'LAW & ORDER' – NOT LESS

We need more 'law and order', not less. There is not a working class community in London or in the country which doesn't insist on this, and we ignore the sentiment at our peril. A 'libertarian' attitude to law is actually a middle-class – indeed, a ruling class, – trait. People with the wealth or power to make up rules as they go along, or people with the ability to escape the consequences of the anarchy they themselves create, can *afford* to be 'libertarian' about collective rules. Working-class communities get absolutely furious about this because vandalised public phone booths, piles of rubbish dumped on pavements, noisy neighbours, insensitive Council departments and so on hit the working class far, far harder than they hit people whose middle-class life-styles enable them to rise above it all. And

Continued on next page

WOMEN—TAKE THE POWER!

YES — WE WANT LAW AND ORDER!

(Continued from previous page)

problems like these appear to be all interlinked. 'Nobody cares any more!' 'People nowadays just do as they damn well please!' The vandalism and brutal insensitivity of thieves, burglars, sexual molesters and holders of excessively noisy parties become identified in the mind with the official vandalism of architects, planners and others who seem to have smashed up the old working class communities of our inner city areas completely, and with the wider economic and social vandalism of a Government and system apparently hell-bent on destroying local industry and life. Ordinary people can't afford to be 'liberal' in these matters. It is their lives which are at stake.

FAILURE OF THE LEFT

The failure of the left to relate to this psychology has been stupendous and utterly disastrous. It is small wonder traditional working class communities treat us as 'them'. Our 'liberal' attitudes immediately connect us with the whole system itself, which is, after all, based philosophically on liberalism. Whilst canvassing on the doorstep on council estates in Lewisham, I have heard time and time again the complaint that all we can do is 'knock' the police. It's no good raising our hackles or assuming that the complainants are irretrievably 'reactionary' or 'racist'. Consciousness is determined by conditions. In actual fact, I've rarely come across much love for the police either. When called to the scene of some local assault, street-robbery, burglary or whatever they are not usually the slightest bit polite or helpful. Possibly a few stupid questions will be asked, like 'Do you live here?', and that will be all. The police cannot function on this level because they are completely alienated from the local communities they are supposed to serve. In any case, there are not many people around who have not been gratuitously abused at some stage or other by the police and people generally don't like being seen to be too friendly with them. The result is for the general exasperation with lawlessness to extend to the police as well.

PROVIDING AN ALTERNATIVE

BRIEFING's record of fighting for police accountability must be kept up. It's no good being seen as 'undermining' the police, however, if at the end of the day there is no-one else but a policeman to turn to when we are in trouble. We have to provide an alternative. For some time last year I was loosely associated with some patrolling in East London which was being organised by ELWAR—East London Workers Against Racism. It was a useful experience and convinced me that there was an immense amount of work to be done. However, the comrades around ELWAR seem to be incapable of organising an effective force, mainly because they are hampered by an extraordinary weight of academic ideology and by a tragic belief in the material force of ideas (this led them, ludicrously, to put up a candidate in Bermondsey as part of the *opposition* to Peter Tatchell – they got 38 votes!). It looks as if any future patrolling will have to be organised by ourselves. My own view, however, is that before this can become effective we need to revolutionise most of our ideas on law and order. Ideologies may not be a material force in themselves, but they can certainly get in the way! A start towards shaking off some of them might be to organise a Conference in the Autumn linking (a) architecture and street-life to (b) the politics of the family and (c) new approaches to law and order, particularly in the areas where we live.

GAINING WORKING CLASS SUPPORT

A strong Labour Government would gain solid black AND white working class support if we made genuine law and order central to our programme, and tackled capitalism as part and parcel of our onslaught against criminal and anti-social behaviour generally. Yes, we can continue to believe in the potential goodness of human nature and the possibility of doing without external compulsion or force in the management of our social lives. But the precondition of this is that *all* unaccountable forces are first curbed, then dismantled, and all social power – exercised through extended systems of kinship and family life – are firmly seized and then devolved within the interconnected streets and housing complexes where we live. **Until then, we'll have to defend ourselves as best we can.**



POLICE SURROUND LOUGHBOROUGH PARK ESTATE IN BRIXTON

Photo: Cath Tate

Why can't men be normal human beings?

Deborah Knight, Brent East CLP

I read the article 'Is Politics Compatible With Life?' with great interest. I would like to take this question further and ask 'Is It Possible To Be A Political Activist And A Normal Human Being?'

Again and again the question is asked, why aren't women more active in politics and political decision-making? The usual answer given is that women are pressurised by society into accepting traditional roles in child-care and maintaining family structure. Consequently women give all their energy and strength to their children and husbands/lovers. These very same men, succoured by women, go out and ACHIEVE at work and in the political arena. This must surely be true of women who have such responsibilities, but how about unmarried childless women who are quite free to participate in politics?

MIND-CRUNCHING BOREDOM

My attitude, as one of the latter, is that I would very much like to participate more, but one thing puts me off: the mind-crunching boredom of most political meetings. I believe women are far too imaginative and dynamic to get anything out of endless, boring, tedious, repetitive discussions which is precisely what most political gatherings consist of. When the question of women's involvement is raised men seem to assume that we should be given provision to join in on their level – ie that the *nature* of politics on the left is fine, all we need is baby-sitters and more domestic help from our menfolk and everything will be OK. I challenge this attitude as a fundamental misreading of the whole question. My argument is that women feel alienated by the whole fabric, traditional as it is, of party politics.

Because of the 'democratic' nature of Labour politics, everyone should be free to express their points of view in open debate. However, the male ego is such that men rarely seem to actually *listen* to what their comrades are saying. So one sees (and hears!) man after man get up and make virtually the same speech as the guy before him, all convinced that they are putting some original, enlightening point of view across to their captive audience. As about one in twenty actually speaks well, this doesn't make for exciting, stimulating debate. Why they *don't* listen to one another and think, as I do, 'I can't contribute anything that hasn't either already been said or is so obvious it's not worth it', and so refrain from speaking, used to be a mystery to me.

MEN ACTUALLY LIKE IT!

It's not difficult to work out that women are loathe to join in debate because they are (a) alienated by the waffle and (b) they don't wish to be part of the circus, ie behave like the majority of men. I often feel annoyed by men on the left who are aware of sexual politics and the 'male dominance at meetings' theory, yet still persist in their egotistical sexist practices. Yet I still believed the few who would leave a meeting and say 'God, that was boring.' No more! After months of reflection I have arrived at a conclusion that leaves me wondering if I can face a possible lifetime of male-dominated political meetings – they actually *like* it! Not some or most of them, but *all* of them.

Like many boroughs, Brent has recently been involved in the rates debate Followings meetings to debate our positions and ward meetings to establish them (along with many discussion in pubs, on buses and in our homes – it's an inescapable issue at this time of year!) we then spent 3 hours on Saturday morning going through the whole thing again at GMC. Certain delegates then went on to repeat the process at the LGC on Saturday afternoon. Councillors then met on Sunday at the Labour Group to go through the whole gruelling procedure once more. Imagine my horror on being told there would be a further meeting on Sunday evening to analyse what had happened over the weekend and in effect perform a pointless post-mortem. Perhaps some of this is necessary, but the manner in which these meetings are conducted is so repetitive and ultimately sterile that I feel myself growing more and more indifferent to the outcome. Men have succeeded in steering me towards a 'Oh, let them get on with it' attitude. Talking with some of my women comrades since the weekend has left me in no doubt that my feeling is a shared one. Yet to virtually all the men on the left, dreary repetitive debate is the stuff of life.

Take it away from them and their lives would be without foundation or meaning. A good friend (male) of mine recently confirmed this to me, without realising exactly how much he was giving away. He said he didn't understand people who could spend all their leisure time socialising '. . . I would be so bored without political meetings . . .' Well, *I* can understand them perfectly – until two years ago that was all *I* did, and I often yearn for those days of simple stimulation. If it wasn't for my Women's Section, women-only meetings and fledgling Women's Committee I couldn't stay in Labour politics. So much sacrifice of leisure time for so little stimulation in return just wouldn't be worth it without the revitalising hours spent with other women.

DISENCHANTMENT AND PESSIMISM

To return to my original question, I find myself with two alternatives. Both make me feel very disenchanted and pessimistic about Labour politics in the long-term. If I remain in politics will I become like a man? (Heaven forbid!) If I remain a Normal Human Being am I wasting my time with politics? Looking at the sort of well-meaning men who dominate Left politics, is it really any wonder that women like me feel alienated and loathe to speak out even when strongly motivated to do so? Is it surprising that many young women never go further than the fringe of political activity? So many join the Labour Party and quickly lose all initial enthusiasm, it is quite literally suffocated after a meeting or two.

I remain a person on the fringes. Aware of the fact that I am in a position to contribute, and deep down wanting to, I am nevertheless unable to operate on a male level. More importantly, I am never going to do so, nor will the vast majority of left-wing women. Joining in the male circus is the province of pedantic right-wingers and those young women unfortunate enough to have been influenced by the 'diversion from the class struggle' theory of the Militant type. Unless men are really prepared to face up to their faults and flaws – ie their need to compete, their need to dominate one another vocally and their undying love for themselves and the causes they have embraced – nothing will change and women will remain largely in the wings of political life.

THE MALE PERSONALITY

In summation I would like to state that I have also reached a terrible conclusion about the male personality which would seem to preclude even the least arrogant men from ever changing sufficiently to allow politics to become the dynamic activity it should be. When a man identifies with a cause or issue (or even a hobby or sport) the issue in question ceases to be a separate entity, it becomes just another filter for the man to push his personality at the world. Next time you see a man passionately defending or presenting a political argument ask yourself 'Is he really so passionate about Ireland/Palestine/the Waterworkers (you can substitute any number of things: soccer, flyfishing, trainspotting) or is he passionate about *himself*? I believe when a man embraces a subject his ego reduces it to being just another aspect of himself: it is important because it is important to *him*. Women, I feel, are generally more sincere in this respect, because their natures are less competitive and more generous.

Continued on next page

Is politics compatible with life? — A response

Thanks to Briefing for being so honest about the problems of combining politics with everyday life – something so many grumble about in the labour movement, but rarely coming out into the open about it. I for one gained an enormous amount of reassurance just from reading the experiences of others, and realising (not for the first time) that I wasn't alone in facing difficulties. In so many other publications, one gets the impression that all other political activists find life easy – not so in Briefing.

Like Ann Bliss, I too decided a year ago that our Labour controlled council was not facing up to the problems, purely and simply because so many of its members were distanced from them. Sufficient of the electorate seemed to think likewise, and instead of making a start at putting things to right, I find myself in opposition, our council now being controlled by a Tory-Lib alliance.

If that was not enough, I realised after a few months on the council, that as a young parent with supposedly plenty of time to spare during the day, I was in grave danger of slipping into the trap of devoting the whole of my time to council work, and becoming the type of careerist councillor I had resented for years. The only solution I could see was to embark on the full time degree course I had promised myself.

MESSAGES ON THE PIN-BOARD

In theory, as Ann Bliss says, it should be possible – a full time degree, council work, and two children, one now safely at school. In practise I am very conscious of the fact that in our house, it's my husband who ends up sacrificing so much of his time to look after the kids. Despite his willingness to spend most of his evenings at home, to do at least half the housework, and to reduce our relationship to messages on the pin board and a few hours in bed, I still don't feel I am devoting as much time as I should to any of my commitments. Constituents' correspondence lies unanswered for longer than it should. My relationship with the party is not as good as it should be. Working in opposition, I can see the need to question every report on a council committee agenda – yet I seldom have the time to do so. At the back of it all, memories of leaving a screaming three year old with an unfamiliar babysitter to attend what turned out to be an inquorate meeting, when I should have been studying for an



exam the next day, do little to ease my conscience.

Yet why should either of us – let alone both of us, need to sacrifice so much? I don't think the answers lie in any of the Briefing articles. It's not just a question of wards and CLPs taking steps to safeguard the right to a personal life for councillors (Janis Morton) or organising childminding (Jo Marshall-Clarke). I am not sure what Ann Bliss meant by 'integrating this commitment into the wider political struggle' or 'developing supportive structures for our children' – they don't use that kind of language where I come from. Her daughters seem to put the answer much better. Until society as a whole accepts its responsibility for the rearing of the next generation, until we are all able to share equally in the mechanics available to relieve the humdrum of housework, until we are all able to fulfill a reasonable day's work – and not expect some to work till all hours, whilst others lay around idle, then the practical problems of combining politics with work, kids and leisure will still remain – and wasn't that why we all started out in the first place.

NOT GIVING UP

I for one, am not giving up the struggle yet. I know that standing up in the council chamber and admitting that I've mistreated my kids through sheer frustration has had more impact than any distanced theory could have done. When we can internalise the problems – not necessarily our own, but those of people close with us, then going in the right direction becomes far easier. When the task becomes difficult, I simply spend a few hours chatting with those who are far worse off than I am – my Asian neighbours, the families on the estate across the road, or other parents at the local school. I am sure it is only by showing that politicians are human beings too, that we are affected by our own decisions, that the Labour Party will ever gain the confidence of the electorate. We have become too remote. Being a politician and a person is not easy. My children may be suffering (by other people's standards). Our social life is non-existent. But at the end of the day, if political positions were left to those so cut off from the realities of everyday life that they had plenty of time to fulfil their political activities properly, then the Labour Party wouldn't deserve to win another election. Labour politics must be personal – and as such they can only be an uphill struggle.

Thanks for the opportunity to let off steam!

Anne Smith, Walthamstow CLP &
London Borough of Waltham Forest

Why can't men be normal human beings?

(Continued from previous page)

Until and unless men on the left are willing to take a backseat and actually analyse their behaviour they will continue to put off women who could otherwise contribute a great deal to socialism. I have the greatest admiration for women who are brave enough to sit on Councils and stand for Parliament. Apart from the sacrifices they must have to make in their social lives and at home they have to live through my greatest nightmare: daily, rather than occasional, meetings dominated by men, all deeply in love with themselves and all eager to perform their roles and rehearse their speeches at interminable length. I simply do not have the strength or patience to do it.

So, can men actually be Normal Human Beings to behave in this way? I would be interested to hear other women's views on this and fascinated to hear from any men brave enough to come out and admit that, yes, tedium is a turn-on. Alternatively, there may be male Briefing readers who feel alienated from their political brothers. Perhaps they'd like to say why they don't get a hit from oratory?



TAKING FEMINISM SERIOUSLY

Dear Street-Life,

Tony Greenstein (letters, March issue) seems to want to participate in a debate between men as to the relative merits of different strands of feminism. I really don't want to have anything to do with this – any more than I want to participate in a patronising debate among whites as to which are the 'most constructive' ways in which black people can combat racism. My article in the February issue – 'The Primacy of Practice' – was directed at left-wing *men*. It has long seemed to me that we have got to take on board some responsibility for *each other's* consciousness in relation to sexual issues and stop leaving the whole responsibility for this all the time on women, who are getting quite justifiably fed up with having to educate us as well as nurturing us and all the rest.

The whole of Tony's letter is completely beside the point and provides a good illustration of the problem. It is all about ideology. Tony knows perfectly well that I am programmatically socialist and therefore, where ideology is concerned, closest to those feminists who share my positions on imperialism, Zionism etc. etc. – positions identical with Tony's own. But my article was an appeal to Marxist men like myself to take very seriously the arguments of feminism *as a whole* – including those 'radical' strands of it (as these relate to our own sexual practice) which the male left all too often (like Tony in his letter) dismiss with a few cheap jibes about 'bourgeois feminism', jibes which in my view usually conceal chauvinism in exactly the same way that British 'socialist' comments about Irish republicans being 'bourgeois nationalists' usually conceal chauvinism. If 'the nationalism of the oppressed must be distinguished from the nationalism of the oppressors' (Lenin), then the separatism of the oppressed must be distinguished from the separatism of the oppressors. In my view, this formulation deals quite adequately with all of Tony's references to Zionism, which is racialist, murderous and imperialist in its Israeli context, reactionary through and through yet understandable – and to be approached sensitively – when expressing the despair and exasperation of persecuted, genocidally murdered, stateless Jews. Surely this is clear? No doubt Tony would press me to concede that I think radical feminist separatism is, like Zionism, 'reactionary through and through'. But I don't think it *is* for me as a man to say that: it is up to us men to *prove* to the most consistent feminists that separatism isn't their only option. And I must say I really think Tony has a nerve to write as if there weren't plenty of women in the women's movement capable of criticising feminists who support Zionism and writing at least as effectively as he does. It doesn't become a male revolutionary to lecture the women's movement about its 'political lurches and confusion' as if the male left weren't just as bad if not worse.

I am annoyed with Tony because his letter has simply got *nothing to do with* the issues I raised in my review of Christine Delphy's 'The Main Enemy'. He seems to be saying that since I support women in their sexual struggles against men, whereas not all women are programmatically Leninist and anti-imperialist, I am guilty of being soft on imperialism. Where this argument would lead if applied to the working class, I hardly dare to think. Or are men – including working class men – *less* affected by militarist, imperialist ideology from time to time than women are? Tony's letter simply reeks of sexist assumptions. Moreover, he knows perfectly well of my record as a Leninist and Trotskyist within the revolutionary movement. We can't 'take the power' without an armed insurrection to smash the present apparatus of state – an insurrection which would have to be legalised in the eyes of the labour movement. That is my position on the question of the state, as I think I have often enough made clear. So why on earth try to bracket me with, of all people, Sue Slipman of the SDP – on the flimsy pretext that she has (allegedly) used some phrases superficially like some words of Marx's which are profoundly revolutionary and which I quote? Kinship-based 'primitive communist' societies give us the only models for the kind of 'transcendence of politics' to which Marx was referring, but this is an argument I can't go into here. But it is also disgraceful of Tony to equate supporters of Christine Delphy in the women's movement – women who want 'a revolutionary struggle to overthrow the basis of all known societies' – with plain traitors like Sue Slipman and, by implication, Shirley Williams: traitors who, phrases apart, have about as much in common with the women's movement in this country as Margaret Thatcher.

My article wasn't about ideologies or programmes, but about the relation between these and social practice. *How* do we change people's ideas? Tony says nothing about this at all. He behaves as if you do it by haranguing people constantly whilst giving them no practical support whatsoever until or unless they finally give in and 'agree' with every last dot and comma of your 'programme'. Delphy thinks people change their ideas by conquering on whatever level their own power *first*, so that from then on ideas can flower on the basis of each actual gain in strength. I think she's right. As a man, however, I know from experience that the other side of what she says is right, too. Men's status as a class is defined by their specific relationship to the 'instruments of reproduction' (women's bodies). This is not biologically-determined: it can be changed. Becoming human involves changing it. But until men are in a real sense 'broken' with respect to their old power and psychology of rule, they are just not going to bother to think too much about finding other ways of finding fulfilment as men. As long as we can *get away with* intimidating women, whether physically or psychologically, we will inevitably keep doing so, no matter how much we 'know' that it's 'wrong'. Tony's final sentence 'pointing out' to men that they will remain oppressed as long as they oppress women is in my view therefore self-evident to any man who has thought about things at all, but completely academic and lame. We all need to be given strength by our sexual partners, but personal revolution has to come first. It's the same with any ruling class: only *after* their power has been seized from them by armed insurrection can individual members of the ex-ruling group find themselves in a position to experience what they can gain in personal and other fulfilment by relating to the rest of the population on equal terms as human beings.

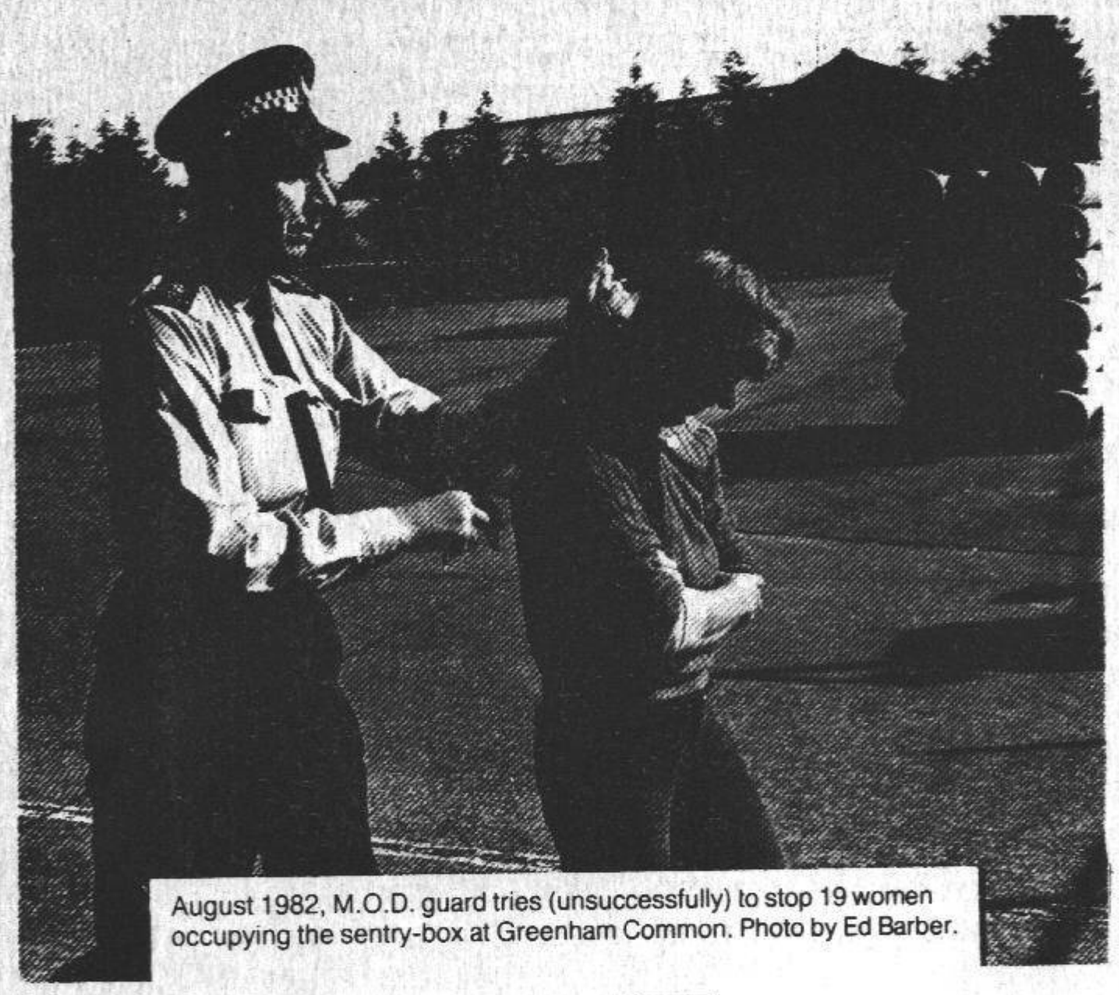
Chris Knight

Editorial Comment: This is *most definitely* the last correspondence from Chris or Tony that we will publish on this subject – please continue it somewhere else!

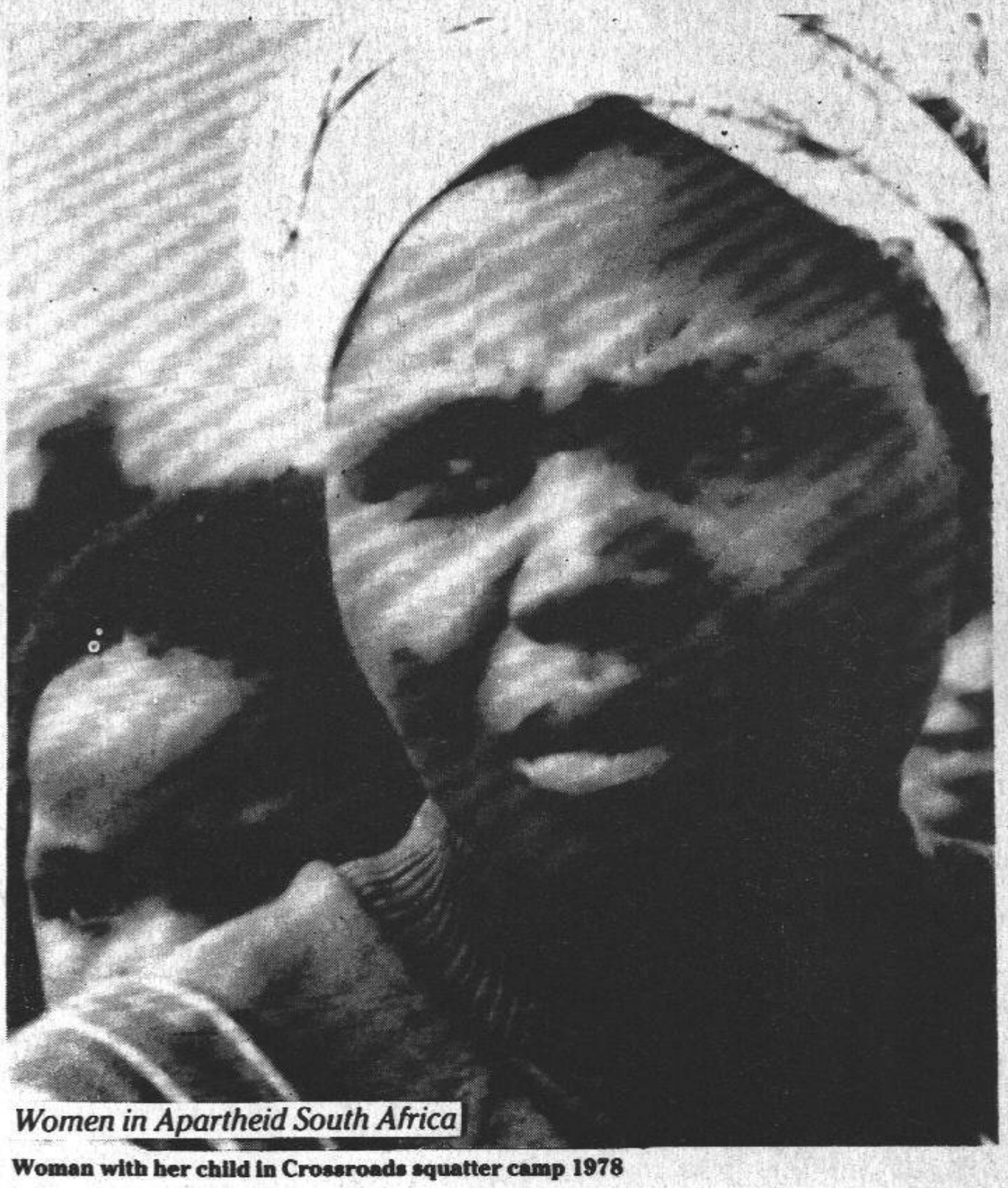
SUPPLEMENT MEETINGS

An open meeting of the Streetlife Supplement to discuss some of the issues raised in the topics covered so far is taking place on Wednesday 30th March, 8pm at County Hall. All readers are very welcome to attend.

The next Supplement editorial meeting will take place on Tuesday 19th April 8pm at 110 Agar Grove, NW1. All women welcome!



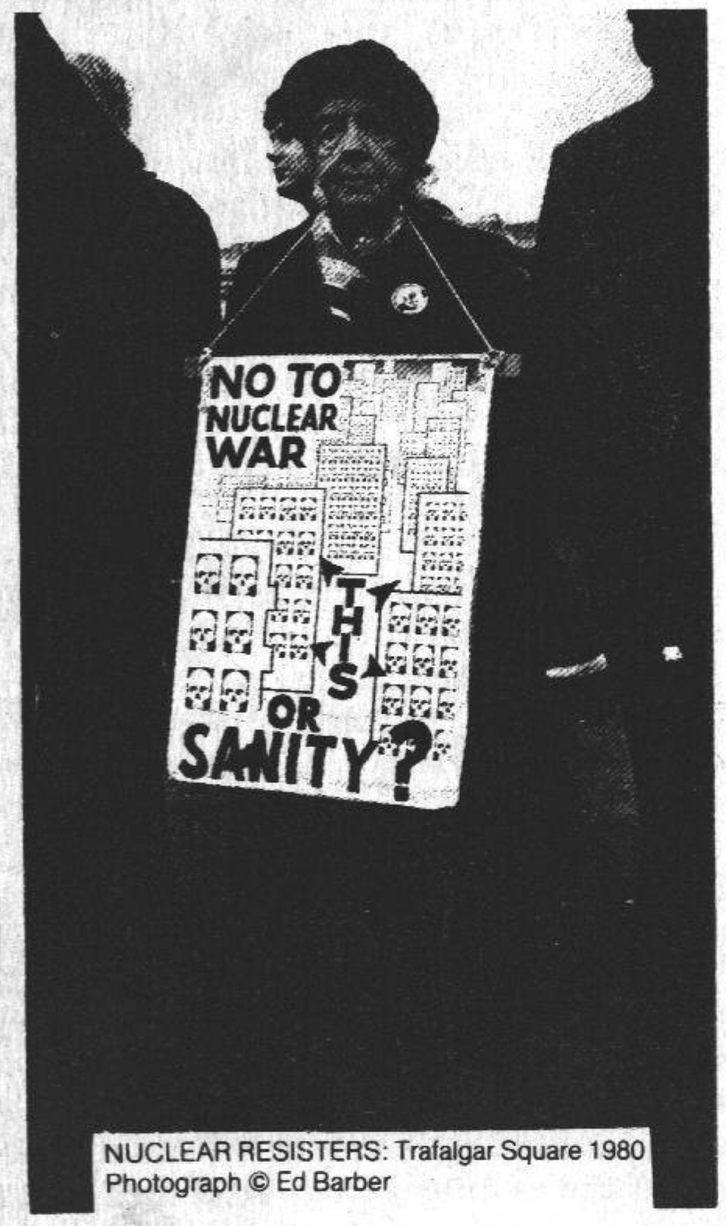
August 1982, M.O.D. guard tries (unsuccessfully) to stop 19 women occupying the sentry-box at Greenham Common. Photo by Ed Barber.



Women in Apartheid South Africa

Woman with her child in Crossroads squatter camp 1978

Photo by Eckhard Supp. From the photobook 'Women under Apartheid'.



NUCLEAR RESISTERS: Trafalgar Square 1980
Photograph © Ed Barber

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8th MARCH

WOMEN FIGHTING FOR PEACE

We are intending to continue the theme of peace in the next issue of the Supplement. Women have taken a vital lead in politicising this issue and many women's lives have been changed through their struggle against the siting of US nuclear missiles in Britain. The GLC has followed by declaring 1983 'Peace Year' and organising a series of events to publicise their policies on civil defence and nuclear disarmament. The Labour Party as a whole is beginning to recognise that more and more people are concerned at the threat that nuclear weapons pose on them and their children's future lives, and that the peace movement could be a valuable ally in the General Election. This in turn poses the question: can we trust a future Labour Government to get rid of nuclear weapons unilaterally?

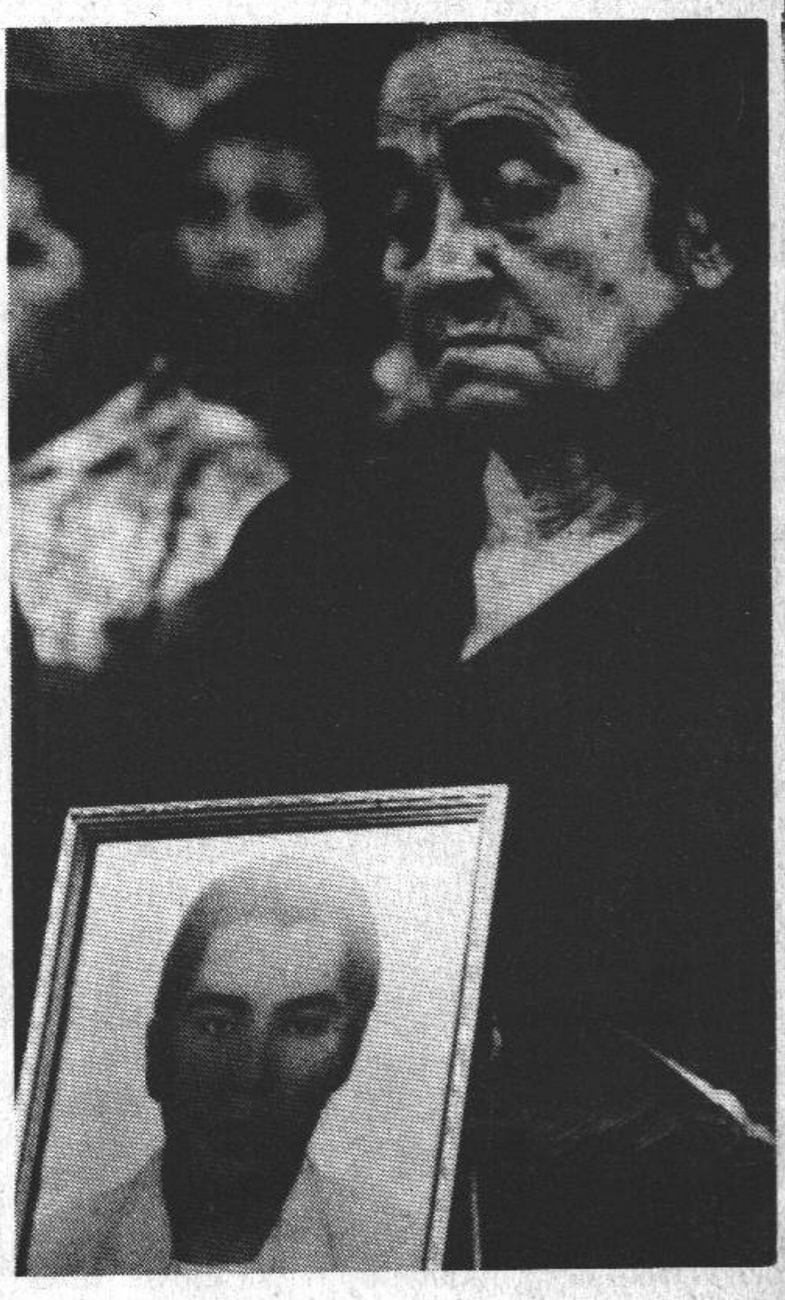
Articles and letters on this or any other relevant subject should be sent to Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, London NW1 by Saturday 9th April.



WOMEN AND EL SALVADOR SERIES

Large numbers of women have joined the fighting forces of the FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation) armed popular militias. In one of the FMLN's constituent forces, women make up as many as 40% of the fighters.

Women and El Salvador Group, 29 Islington Park Street, London N.1.



With the huge number of people who have disappeared in El Salvador, the 'Mothers of the Disappeared' have become an important popular grouping, denouncing the massacres and the kidnappings which go on every day in the country. Copyright Christian Poveda from the Camerawork Exhibition 'El Salvador.

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